

JUST AFTER THE WAR. A STORY OF THE SOUTH.

Written for The Weekly Sentinel by Eleanor M. Jones, of New Berne, N. C. Author of "Miss Littlejohn."

CHAPTER XV.

Delacourt has been gone five weeks. Our school is up, and I've had my illness, which mother said "excitement about the prize caused," that cause suits about as well as the other, and I suppose it did help. I couldn't be present at the closing exercises, but my prize was sent to me, a handsome book, and a grand note with it; I kept them on my pillow ever so long to look at. I haven't been dangerously sick, but was right dangerously threatened with congestion of the brain, brain fever or something connected with the brain. I'm up now though, but three weeks indoors does make a body a trifle weak, especially one who is not accustomed to being sick.

Leonard kept me supplied with fruit, while he was here; he and Oscar left several days ago.

Archie has actually gone to that man Delacourt in New York. He would go; said he'd gotten him a fine situation. Father begged, commanded, threatened, but this time Archie held out, said he'd run away, and never let us know where he was, if he didn't give his consent. So he's gone father never saying anything after that threat. He writes often, seems delighted, and sends mother money too. Says Belle lost a "trump" in Mr. Delacourt. I don't like his letters, they are too full of blowing, neither does mother, but she's glad to get any kind, and she's made up her mind to take the world, and Archie with it, as it comes.

Poor father he worries a great deal about him, and is much broken in a short time. When Archie left, I felt I hadn't done my duty by him; he'd never been my favorite brother, he had teased me so, but I resolved to write to him, and told him so, when I kissed him good-bye; he appeared quite pleased for he said, "why I didn't know you cared that much about poor Archibald."

It almost made me cry, in fact I think it did, for I've thought ever since perhaps he would have been better to me, if he had thought I loved him more. I've thought over my own faults since I've been sick, because I was afraid I might get worse and die I've written to him twice, and told him how sorry I am he's gone, and how we miss him, which is true, for he was the noisiest and newest, and kept the house in a whirl, and now his faults are out of sight, it's astonishing how many good things we can remember. God grant he may come back to us some day, and be a comfort to father.

I was strolling about the house the other day, not knowing exactly what to do with myself, (it's August again, and hot too) when Miss Rebecca came in to see mother on business, which was to beg mother to let her take me to the Spring.

Her father isn't so well, and they are going and she thinks the change will benefit her pet also she says.

As the trip is to be a present from her and she really seems anxious to have me, mother gives her permission, which sets me perfectly wild, for I've never been anywhere in my life, except out in the country, in Litty's, and here.

Marye Louis Martyne comes to say good-bye, and to tell all about her grand winter in New York, where she's been as a parlor-boarder in some fine school (I wonder if they recite in a parlor). She says Pierre will regret my being absent when he comes, (I can't help sneering at that), says I'm the only girl he can endure here (that may be I think, and I not feel much complimented then). I learn he's coming for a short vacation, as he's at College still. St. John is over in Europe, she informs me, and tries to be confused when she talks about him, twirling a big diamond ring round her finger all the time to attract notice to it.

Kitty Nucombe also comes to see me. Joel brings her to town, and leaves her to stay all night with me. He doesn't come up after tea now, as he used to do; it seems a long time ago when he did.

Kitty is thirteen now, just Jack's age, and Jack's sweetheart ever since they could talk. She is a little fat dumpling, with a round chubby face, rosy cheeks with lovely deep dimples in them; big blue eyes, set way back in her head, and short curls dancing in every direction, for she shakes her head so much, she keeps them in a continual tumult.

Jack thinks she's a beauty and so does mother. At any rate everybody thinks she's a beauty in disposition, for everybody loves her, she is so affectionate and merry. She talks like a nigger, (though I've never seen one, and only take other folks word for it that they do a lot of talking). She chatters all the time, and fast too. All of our boys are perfectly devoted to her, she is a perfect pull thing for them. Archie used to pull her curls, until she had to get on her knees and say she loved him, he thought it fine sport, I used to quarrel about it, but

Kitty never seemed to mind his roughness, she liked him all the same.

She's awfully disappointed about my not going out to her home, but mother says I may go if I get back before school opens. Kitty has lots of news to tell; all about Joel too. She thinks he is perfect; says "he's getting the place in ship-shape order, and that he's going to run for the Legislature next term." She and I both know he'll get it, whatever it is, she knows all about it, and undertakes to explain to me, but it seems like Greek. He is so good, but mother says "goodness doesn't always tell in politics," but she thinks he ought to get it.

Kitty tells me privately that Joel is never going to marry, going to live single, and take care of her. She admires me very much, thinks I'm very wise, and all I say and do is right.

I tell her about Belle's conduct to Joel, and she agrees with me, that Belle will never do as well, in fact, that she couldn't.

In a few days, I'm packed, good-byes have been said, and I'm being whirled away in double-quick time. Miss Rebecca sits with her father, and Miss Jessie and I are on the same seat.

At every station, I think it time to get off, and I'm constantly asking every time they stop to get water, if the train has run off the track. I know I appear green, but to tell the truth I am a little afraid. We stop all night in Petersburg, as the trip right straight through is so fatiguing for Mr. Livingstone, and two hours in Richmond where we change cars. So I see cities for the first time. I make the drivers of the carriages laugh, because I ask them who live in all the handsome houses we pass. I think it must be fine to own such grand homes and live in such style, but Miss Rebecca says I should have seen them some years ago, to have beheld their greatest elegance.

They all take great pains to explain all places of interest to me as we go along. When we get to the Springs, we have the whole floor of a lovely little cottage all to ourselves, as Miss Rebecca wants quiet for her father, and we go to the hotel to eat. The hotel is the biggest house I've ever seen, and isn't far from our cottage, just a little walk. Lots of people are up there, having a good time. We soon get acquainted, and a lady named Mrs. Hunt takes Miss Jessie and me to a ball. Miss Rebecca won't leave her father, but wants us to go.

This is my first ball, and it beats all the parties I've ever attended. The light dazzles my eyes at first and I feel bewildered. The people go whirling by me, looking like they are floating in the air. I only wish Belle could see the fine dresses. I know she'd take it all in, and go home, and manufacture something like them, she's got considerable taste. I can dance a little, but I tell a young man, whom Mrs. Hunt introduces to me, that I'm afraid to try. He looks afraid too, the floor is so slippery, so he asks me to walk on the piazza with him instead. Miss Jessie is dancing, so I ask Mrs. Hunt if I may and she nods her head, then I take his arm and walk out with the first grown gentleman who ever asked me in my life, except Joel. How I wished Belle could see me, wouldn't she be surprised. I never was bashful, but I didn't know what to talk about, but somehow after we once got started, you'd think we'd known each other all our lives.

He is a distant cousin of Mrs. Hunt's, but never met her before, until by accident they saw each other here. She lives in Baltimore, and he is a doctor and practices in Richmond. We stay together all the evening. He asks me lots of questions about myself and friends. He wants to know where we live, and why Miss Rebecca didn't come out to-night. I tell him very candidly how I came to be with the Livingstones, &c.

He doesn't seem to mean to be inquisitive, and I like him very much; he's so gentle, and so quiet in his manner. He walks home with us all, Mrs. Hunt also, she stays at the hotel, but goes over to see us safe, she says.

She tells me next morning at breakfast, that she thinks I've made a conquest at my very first ball, for her cousin said he admired me very much, I was so natural.

Of course I have to blush, like a goose, and then she pats me on the cheek and asks her husband, who is forever reading a newspaper, and who'd say yes to anything she'd ask him from force of habit I know, if he wouldn't like to have me for a cousin.

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All this of course, makes me look very conscious when our new acquaintance joins us after breakfast and proposes a walk to the springs. I don't know how it happens, I'm sure, but Dr. Fenwick and I are always getting together. I meet other gentlemen, but he seems to be the only one who likes me. He is neither

handsome nor fascinating. Is very thin and doesn't seem to be strong. He came here for his health.

I knew his attentions to me meant something, but I must say I never dreamed of the cause, until one afternoon we were out strolling together, he told me he wanted my assistance in an important matter, and desired to confide a secret to me, if I could keep it. I have much curiosity and I'd have promised anything to find out this secret. He then went on to say, that whenever he met anyone named Livingstone, he always took an interest in them, as he has a dear friend, who was due to marry a lady of that name and from that he goes on to tell me the history that I already partly know of Dr. Emory Deane. He tells me how this friend has wrecked his hopes of domestic happiness by breaking this engagement which bound him to the daughter of his father's murderer, as he called it, and rendering a reconciliation impossible in his estimation, by his bitter denunciation of his former benefactor.

Dr. Fenwick asks me if I can't see some way to bring matters to a better pass.

Seventeen years, he says have mollified his friend's views of that tragic affair; have thrown more light on the subject and made him less revengeful in his feelings.

Of course I'm perfectly frantic to have things set all right. Would delight in going up to Richmond, where he lives, bring Dr. Deane down, throw him at Miss Rebecca's feet, and have quite a tragic scene, but Dr. Fenwick says he mustn't know anything about Miss Rebecca's being here; he doesn't know where she is, and he is to remain in the dark.

Dr. Fenwick is to prevail on him to come out here, and I'm then to get them together.

So we two become regular plotters, and dear Miss Rebecca little thinks, how I'm arranging, all to suit myself her future happiness.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

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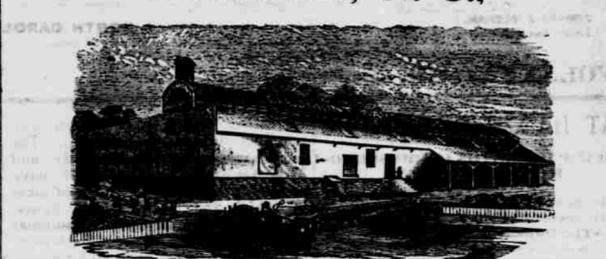
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