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NECK OR NOTHING.
A SOUTHERN STORY OF ANTE BELLUM DAYS,
BY JEANNETTE H. WALWORTH

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CHAPTER V.

—Drawing memories passed in with her through the opening door of the morning room, outwardly trying her composure sorely. She bore herself with the complaisance of a captive princess. She advanced well into the room before speaking, and stood there pressing her tiny, gauntleted hands tightly upon the handle of her riding whip. Her large eyes were fixed calmly on Mrs. Strong's high bred face. They were red rimmed as from recent tears. When she spoke, the soft culture of her voice was a distinct surprise to her hearer.

"Drake tells me you want to see me, Mrs. Strong. Mamma thinks I should have paid you my respects before, but I preferred waiting for a summons. Things have changed so, you know."

Looking at her now for the first time at close range, listening to her, saying what she had to say with a quiet directness equally free from flippancy as from awkwardness, Mrs. Strong was conscious of a passionate longing and of a brief sensation of thankfulness. If her Gabriella could but have been spared to come back to her radiant, self-poised, cultured as this child of Eben Martin's, a plebeian overseer, had come back! It was well! She was glad that Adriem was from home at this juncture. Some disposition must be made of this child before his final home coming.

She assumed her scepter with quiet decision.

"Sit down, child. Yes, I wanted to see you. I have some things to say to you that perhaps you will understand better, coming from me, than from your mother. I hope you will receive what I have to say in the right spirit."

Liza walked over to a chair, neither hurriedly nor shyly. She was not oppressed by any disconcerting sense of space between her and this patrician lady, who had been born into possession of all the elegances surrounding her.

She regarded Mrs. Strong's high bred, refined beauty with the girlish enthusiasm she accorded everything that was best of its kind. If good breeding had



"I wonder what he did?" allowed, she could have smiled as she recalled the unreasoning awe of Gabriella's mother that had filled her ignorant little soul in those bygone governess days in the morning room.

"I was educated into it," she said, in silent self-expecting, "just as I have since been educated out of it." Aloud and with unruffled dignity. "If we are going to talk of my affairs, Mrs. Strong, as I suppose we are, I should prefer being alone with you."

She glanced toward the window, where black Suzanne had located her hassock to get the best light on the skirt she was hemming. At the sound of that impelling young voice she rose, swept Liza's bright face with a look of eager curiosity and awaited further orders.

It was hard to believe that this young lady with her gloved hands and imperious ways was little Liza Martin, who had been born down in the quarter lot.

"You can go, Suzanne. You can keep busy too. Weigh those crab apples for the jelly. I will measure the sugar when I come out."

A wasted moment was the worst of crimes in Mrs. Strong's kingdom. Suzanne went out, closing the door noiselessly behind her.

A wondering smile broke over Liza's face.

"And so that is black Suzanne! How tall and stately she is. She looks like an Indian princess. Gabriella and I used to call her Pocahontas and teach her our lessons at second hand. She looks much more like an Indian than a negro. I suppose she is invaluable after all these years of training. Mother tells me she is quite an accomplished maid—sews, does your hair, preserves and does a little of everything."

"Suzanne is very well in her way," Mrs. Strong said curtly. She was fumbling among the papers on her desk for her eyeglasses. They were rarely ever just where she could lay her hand on them.

"And mother tells me old uncle Dolbear is still driving you."

Liza was purposely multiplying words. Mrs. Strong had found her glasses and poised them accurately upon the bridge of her delicate nose. She was scrutinizing Eben Martin's daughter with that cool deliberation that finds its only justification in acknowledged

social superiority. She was a devoted adherent of the hereditary theory. There was a delicacy and a refinement in this girl's personality that offered an intensely interesting physiological study. Liza afterward informed Strong that she was prepared to give an accurate description of a fly's sensation under the microscope.

"Dolbear is still active and hale."

It came to Mrs. Strong slowly that a remark had been made and perhaps politeness demanded a reply, but this young person's self-possession was, under the circumstances, a trifle disturbing. She had completed her physiological survey, so she took off her gold rimmed glasses.

"It is of yourself and your own affairs I desire to talk, Eliza. You have been exceedingly ceremonious with me since your return."

Liza met the issue with a pretty gesture of despair. Why should she submit to the probe held in that delicate, aristocratic hand.

(To be Continued.)



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