TRUE TO A ✳ ✳ ✳ ✳ MURDERESS.

Romance of a N. C. Moonshiner's Love.

Correspondence of the Washington Post.

RALEIGH, N. C., Feb. 27.—From Polk county, in this State, comes a thrilling story of romance, tragedy, and prospective marriage, arising out of the illicit distillation of whiskey and "blockade distilling."

In the town of Tryon City, Polk county, named for Lord Tryon, who camped for some time with his army during the revolutionary war on the site of the town, there lives a family by the name of Parris. One of the members of this typical mountain family was a beautiful daughter about seventeen years old. She was the belle of the town, and her only deficiency was the lack of education. Her youth had been spent in making the farm and helping her mother with her housewifery. Her parents had considered schooling a luxury not to be thought of, and she could barely read and write her name.

About four miles from Tryon City is the Parris farm. Here the daughter, whose name is Louise, was raised until she was sixteen years old, when the family moved to Tryon City to run a private boarding house for summer patronage, for which this mountain town is noted. Adjoining the Parris farm was the homestead of a family by the name of Redmond, being near relatives of famous outlaw and moonshiner of South Carolina. The son, Ralph Redmond, was a few years older than Louise Parris, and they saw much of each other as they grew up. The little schooling received by Lou was at the log cabin with Ralph. As they became older their intimacy ripened into a warmer feeling, and when the Parris family changed their residence to Tryon City, Ralph and Lou were engaged to be married.

DID NOT TELL HIS SWEETHEART.

Ralph was a moonshiner, but he had religiously kept this fact from his sweetheart. As soon as the family took up their abode in Tryon City, Louise blossomed into the acknowledged belle of the town, and a young man by the name of William Johnson became desperately smitten with this rustic beauty. The attention of the town beaux was something new and novel to Louise, and her woman's wit soon developed those coquettish manners which most women possess, and she led the Tryon City boys a merry dance for a few months, but remained as true as steel to Ralph Redmond.

After some months of general association of this kind, the young men of town gave way to Johnston, who pushed his suit to the test, and was quietly but firmly rejected. This was a dreadful blow to him. He became fearfully jealous of any young man whom Louise permitted to pay her any attention. But as one after another was politely refused, it began to be suspected that Ralph Redmond, who came now and then to see Miss Lou, might be the happy man.

John knew that it was reported that Redmon was a moonshiner, and a little effort brought fourth positive evidence that Ralph had been running a moonshine distillery for several years, but his "plant" was so well hidden in the Tryon Mountains that the revenue officers had never been able to detect him. The necessary information was furnished Special Agent Vanderford, and this officer laid his plans so well that he caught Ralph Redmand and several of his helpers red-handed with the "still" running at full blast.

They were all put in Columbus jail, but with the assistance from their friends on the outside they all soon escaped and took to the mountains. Redmond's enforced absence gave Johnston a clear field, and he renewed his suit. Miss Lou treated him as though he had not addressed her heretofore. In the meantime the friends of Redmond had not been idle, and they had satisfied themselves that Johnston had furnished the information to Vanderford on which Redmond and friends had been arrested and the distillery seized and broken up. Miss Parris was informed of this fact and she was fearfully wrought up, and when Johnston made his next visit he was charged with treachery to Redmond, and was shown the door and advised not to return unless he was sent for.

Johnston now became desperate. He endeavored to destroy the character of Miss Parris by slandering her to the other young men of the town. His declarations were soon made known to Miss Parris, and she sent him a note asking that he call to see her. He came promptly, and she met him on the porch, and after accusing him of telling the lies about her, she plunged a penknife into his bosom and he died at her feet. Miss Parris did not show any emotion when she saw Johnston breathe his last. She expressed no regret for her hasty and fatal act. She was committed to jail without bail, and was sent to Hendersonville for safe keeping to prevent her rescue by Ralph Redmond and his friends.

At the next term of the Superior Court, with Judge Boykin presiding, Miss Parris was indicted for murder. She was represented by the best lawyers who attended that court, and by their advice she pleaded guilty of murder in the second degree and was sentenced to the penitentary for fifteen years. The acceptance of this plea was an act of mercy on the part of the prosecuting attorney, because the State would have proved premeditation and preparation to commit murder, and if she had gone to trial she would have been convicted of murder in the first degree and the pardon of the Governor could only have saved her from death by the hangman.

TRANSFORMED IN HER CONVICT GARB.

She was brought to the penitentary near this city, and there confined. With short hair and coarse, striped clothes, as she assisted in washing, mending, and making garments for the other convicts, she presented quite a different appearance to what she did as the belle of Tryon City. She was exceedingly cheerful and said she did not regret what she had done; that her reputation as a virtuous and honest woman was more to her than life, and that under the same circumstances she would take the life of any man who attempted, by slander, to destroy her good name and reputation and make her an outcast in society.

In the meantime Redmond was hiding in the craggy cliffs of old Tryon, and his relatives and friends brought him the news of the murder of Johnston and of the punishment of his sweetheart. Had she been confined in the jail of Polk county, Redmond and 100 of his friends might have destroyed the jailhouse from "turret to foundation stone" in their efforts to have liberated Miss Lou.

As soon as Miss Lou was removed to the prison near this city, Redmond left the mountains and came to Raleigh, where he had never been before, and therefore was entirely unknown. He found work here, and through a friend his sweatheart was informed of his presence in Raleigh; and through the assistence of his friend he had a personal interview with Miss Lou without the prison authorities knowing that he was a moonshiner, a fugitive from justice, and a lover of the belle of Tryon City.

The press of the State at the time of the homicide gave simple facts of the slander and the killing of Johnston and the illiteracy of Miss Parris. After she was brought to the penitentiary the King's Daughters of this city, under the lead of Miss F. Hayes, took great interest in the fair female convict. They visited her in prison and did all they could to alleviate her condition as a prisoner.

SURRENDERED TO THE KING'S DAUGHTERS.

Being young and unsophisticated, without education and training, and appearing to have the making in her of a good and true woman, and desiring to remove her from the walks of life to which she had been accustomed, and to surround her hereafter with new environments, the King's Daughters set to work to procure a conditional pardon for Miss Parris. They readily induced Miss Lou to sign an aggreement that she would voluntarily surrender herself as soon as released to the King's Daughters, and go with Mrs. Hayes to the House of the Good Shepherd, in Maryland, and there remain until she had been thoroughly reformed and trained so that she could go out into the world and make an honest living. She was pardoned on this condition on the 8th day of December, 1894, and was carried immediately to the House of the Good Shepherd, where she has been ever since.

Time has added to the charms and graces of Miss Lou. She is now a well-developed woman. Her education has been much advanced and she has seen some little of the world. She has accepted her detention in the House of the Good Shepherd in good faith and in some respects as penance for the life she took. She looks forward to the time when, by the consent of the Governor of this State, she can once more breathe the air of freedom and become the wife of the man whose affections for her has increased as her perils and trials and punishment came thick and fast. Her cropped hair and striped clothes only made him love her the more because in his heart he had already enthroned her for better or for worse until death separates them.

And what about Redmond? He succeeded in having the indictments against him in the Federal Court settled, and he followed his lady love to Maryland. He is now in Baltimore employed as a conductor by one of the electric railways. Now and then he sees Miss Lou, and a few miles from the city he has a neat little cottage, a flower yard and garden, with the cottage well furnished, awaiting the release of his betrothed, when they will be married and commence life anew.

J. C. L. HARRIS.

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