

# **Love's Labor Won**

BY

MRS. E. D. E. N. SOUTHWORTH

## **Table of Contents**

CHAPTER I. THE IMPROVVISATRICE.

CHAPTER II. "THE LOVE CHASE."

CHAPTER III. THE FUGITIVE BELLE.

CHAPTER IV. LOVE.

CHAPTER V. THE EXCESS OF GLORY OBSCURED.

CHAPTER VI. THE WIFE'S RETURN.

CHAPTER VII. THE VISITOR.

CHAPTER VIII. LOVE, WAR AND BETROTHAL.

CHAPTER IX. FALLING ASLEEP.

CHAPTER X. THE ORPHAN BRIDE.

CHAPTER XI. THE MYSTERIOUS CORRESPONDENT.

CHAPTER XII. THE DAUGHTER'S FIDELITY.

CHAPTER XIII. PERSECUTION.

CHAPTER XIV. MARTYRDOM.

CHAPTER XV. NIGHT AND ITS ONE STAR.

**LOVE'S LABOR WON.**

## CHAPTER I.

### THE IMPROVVISATRICE.

“Hers was the spell o’er hearts  
That only genius gives;  
The mother of the sister Arts,  
Where all their beauty lives.”

—VARIED FROM CAMPBELL.

“Beautiful.”

“Glorious.”

“Celestial!”

Such were the exclamations murmured through the room, in low but earnest tones.

“So fair and dark a creature I have never seen,” said the French ambassador.

“The rarest and finest features of the blonde and the brunette combined; look at her hair and brow! It is as if the purple lustre of Italia’s vines lay upon the snow of Switzerland’s Alps,” said a young English gentleman, of some twenty years of age, and from whom the air of the university had scarcely fallen.

“You are too enthusiastic, Lord William,” gravely observed an elderly man, in the dress of a clergyman of the Church of England.

“Too enthusiastic, sir! Ah, now! do but see for yourself, if it be not profane to gaze at her. Is she not now—what is she? Queenly? Pshaw! I was, when a boy, at Versailles with my father; I saw Marie Antoinette and the beautiful princesses of her train; but never, no, never, have I seen beauty and dignity and grace like this. You have the honor of knowing the lady, sir?” he concluded, turning abruptly to a member of the French legation, standing near him.

“Oh, yes, monsieur, I have that distinction,” said the affable Parisian, with a bow and smile.

“And her name is——”

“Ah, pardon me, monsieur—Mademoiselle Marguerite De Lancie.”

“Oh! a countrywoman of your own?”

“Excuse, monsieur—a Virginie.”

“Ah, ha! Miss De Lancie, of Virginia,” said the young Englishman, who, having thus ascertained all that he wished to know for the present, now, with the characteristic and irresponsible bluntness of his nature, turned his back upon the small Frenchman, and gave himself up to the contemplation of the lady seated at the harp.

This conversation occurred in a scene and upon an occasion long to be remembered. The scene was the saloon of the old Presidential mansion at Philadelphia. The occasion was that of Mrs. Washington’s last reception, previous to the final retirement of General Washington from office. The beauty,

talent, fashion and celebrity of the “Republican Court” were present—heroes of the Revolutionary struggle—warriors, whose mighty swords had cleft asunder the yoke of foreign despotism; sages, whose gigantic minds had framed the Constitution of the young Republic; men whose names were then, as now, of world-wide glory and time-enduring fame; foreign ministers and ambassadors, with their suites, all enthusiastic admirers, or politic flatterers of the glorious New Power that had arisen among the nations; wealthy, aristocratic or otherwise distinguished tourists, whom the fame of the young Commonwealth and the glory of her Father had attracted to her shores; women, also, whose beauty, grace and genius so dazzled the perceptions of even these late *habitués* of European courts that they avowed themselves unable to decide whether were the sons of Columbia the braver or her daughters the fairer!

And through them all, but greater than all, moved the Chief, arrayed simply, as a private gentleman, but wearing on his noble brow that royalty no crown could give.

But who is she, that even in this company of splendid magnificence, upon this occasion of supreme interest, can for an hour become the magnet of all eyes and ears!

Marguerite De Lancie was the only child of a Provençal gentleman and a Virginia lady, and combined in her person and in her character all the strongest attributes of the Northern and the Southern races; blending the passions, genius and enthusiasm of the one with the intellectual power, pride and independence of the other; and contrasting in her person the luxuriant purplish-black hair and glorious eyes of the Romaic

nations, with the fair, clear complexion and roseate bloom of the Saxon. Gifted above most women by nature, she was also favored beyond most ladies by fortune. Having lost her mother in the tender age of childhood, she was reared and educated by her father, a gentleman of the most accomplished cultivation. He imbued the mind of Marguerite with all the purest and loftiest sentiments of liberty and humanity, that in his country somewhat redeemed the wickedness of the French Revolution. Monsieur De Lancie, dying when his daughter was but eighteen years of age, made her his sole heiress, and also, in accordance with his own liberal and independent principles, and his confidence in Marguerite's character and strength of mind, he left her the irresponsible mistress of her own property and person. Marguerite was not free from grave faults. A beautiful, gifted and idolized girl, left with the unrestrained disposal of her time and her ample fortune, it was impossible but that she must have become somewhat spoiled. Her defects exhibited themselves in excessive personal pride and extreme freedom of thought and speech, and some irradicable prejudices which she took no trouble to conceal. The worshiped of many suitors, she had remained, up to the age of twenty-two, with her hand unengaged and her heart untouched. Several American women had about this time married foreign noblemen; and those who envied this superb woman averred that the splendid Marguerite only waited for a coronet.

When at home, Miss De Lancie resided either at her elegant town house in the old city of Winchester, or upon one of her two plantations, situate, the upper among the wildest and most beautiful hills of the Blue Ridge, and the lower upon the banks

of the broad Potomac, where she reigned mistress of her land and people, "queen o'er herself."

Marguerite was at present in Philadelphia, on a visit to her friend, Miss Compton, whose father occupied a "high official station" in the Administration. This was Miss De Lancie's first appearance in Philadelphia society. And now that she was there, Marguerite, with the constitutional enthusiasm of her nature, forgot herself in the deep interest of this assembly, where the father of his country met for the last time, socially, her sons and daughters.

In accordance with the elegant ease that characterized Mrs. Washington's drawing-rooms, several ladies of distinguished musical taste and talent had varied the entertainment of the evening by singing, to the accompaniment of the harp, or piano, the national odes and popular songs of that day.

Then ensued a short interval, at the close of which Miss De Lancie permitted herself to be led to the harp by Colonel Compton. She was a stranger to most persons in that saloon, and it was simply her appearance as she passed and took her place at the harp that had elicited that restrained burst of admiration with which this chapter opens.

She was, indeed, a woman of superb beauty, which never shone with richer lustre than upon this occasion that I present her to the reader.

Her figure was rather above the medium height, but elegantly proportioned. The stately head arose from a smoothly-rounded neck, whose every curve and bend was the very perfection of

grace and dignity; lustrous black hair, with brilliant purple lights like the sheen on the wing of some Oriental bird, was rolled back from a queenly forehead, and turned over a jeweled comb in a luxuriant fall of ringlets at the back of her head; black eyebrows distinctly drawn, and delicately tapering toward the points, were arched above rich, deep eyes of purplish black, that languished or glowed, rocked or flashed, from beneath their long lashes with every change of mood; and all harmonized beautifully with a pure, rich complexion, where the clear crimson of the cheeks blended softly into the pearly whiteness of the blue-veined temples and broad forehead, while the full, curved lips glowed with the deepest, brightest flush of the ruby. She was arrayed in a royal purple velvet robe, open over a richly-embroidered white satin skirt; her neck and arms were veiled with fine point lace; and a single diamond star lighted up the midnight of her hair.

Having seated herself at the harp and essayed its strings, she paused, and seemingly unconscious of the many eyes riveted upon her, she raised her head, and gazing into the far-off distance, threw her white arm across the instrument, and swept its chords in a deep, soul-thrilling prelude—not to a national ode or popular song, but to a spirit-stirring, glorious improvisation! This prelude seemed a musical paraphrase of the great national struggle and victory. She struck a few deep, solitary notes, and then swept the harp in a low, mournful strain, like the first strokes of tyranny, followed by the earliest murmurs of discontent; then the music, with intervals of monotone, arose in fitful gusts like the occasional skirmishes that heralded the Revolution; then the calm was lost in general storm and devastation—the report of musketry, the tramp of

steeds, the clashing of swords, the thunder of artillery, the fall of walls, the cries of the wounded, the groans of the dying, and the shouts of victory, were not only heard, but seen and felt in that magnificent tempest of harmony.

Then the voice of the *improvvisatrice* arose. Her subject was the retiring chief. I cannot hope to give any idea of the splendor of that improvisation—as easily might I catch and fix with pen, or pencil, the magnificent life of an equinoctial storm, the reverberation of its thunder, the conflagration of its lightning! Possessed of Apollo, the light glowed upon her cheeks, irradiated her brow, and streamed, as it were, in visible, living rays from her glorious eyes! The whole power of the god was upon the woman, and the whole soul of the woman in her theme. There was not a word spoken, there was scarcely a breath drawn in that room. She finished amid a charmed silence that lasted until Colonel Compton appeared and broke the spell by leading her from the harp.

Then arose low murmurs of enthusiastic admiration, restrained only by the deep respect due to the chief personage in that assembly.

*“La Marguerite des Marguerites!” said the gallant French attaché.*

“A Corinne! I must know her, sir. Will you do me the honor to present me?” inquired the English student, turning again to the Frenchman.

“Lord William!” interrupted the clerical companion, with an air of caution and admonition.

“Well, Mr. Murray! well! did not my father desire that I should make the acquaintance of all distinguished Americans?—and surely this lady must be one of their number.”

“Humph,” said the clergyman, stroking his chin, “the marquis did not, probably, include distinguished actresses, Lord William.”

“Actresses! have you judgment, Mr. Murray? Do but look with what majesty she speaks and moves!”

“So I have heard does Mrs. Siddons. Let us withdraw, Lord William.”

“Not yet, if you please, sir! I must first pay my respects to this lady. Will you favor me, monsieur?”

“Pardon! I will make you known to Colonel Compton, who will present you to the lady under his charge,” said the Frenchman, bowing, and leading the way, while the clergyman left behind only vented his dissatisfaction in a few emphatic grunts.

“Miss De Lancie, permit me to present to you Lord William Daw, of England,” said Colonel Compton, leading the youthful foreigner before the lady.

Miss De Lancie bowed and half arose. She received the young gentleman coldly, or rather absently, and to all that he advanced she replied abstractedly; for she had not yet freed herself from the trance that had lately bound her.

Nevertheless, Lord William found “grace and favor” in everything the enchantress said or did. He lingered near her

until at last, with a *congé* of dismissal to her boyish admirer, she arose and signified her wish to retire from the saloon.

The next day but one was a memorable day in Philadelphia. It was the occasion of the public and final farewell of George Washington and the inauguration of his successor. From an early hour the city was thronged with visitors, who came, not so much to witness the installment of the new, as to take a tearful last look at the deeply-venerated, retiring President.

The profound public interest, however, did not prevent Lord William Daw from pursuing a quite private one. At an hour as early as the laxest etiquette would permit, he paid his respects to Miss De Lancie at the house of Colonel Compton, and procured himself to be invited by his host to join their party in witnessing the interesting ceremonies at the Hall of Representation.

The family, consisting of the colonel and Mrs. Compton and their daughter Cornelia, went in a handsome landeau, or open carriage.

Miss De Lancie rode a magnificent black charger, that she managed with the ease of a cavalry officer, and with a grace that was only her own.

Lord William, on a horse placed at his service by Colonel Compton, rode ever at her bridle rein; and if he admired her as a gifted *improvisatrice*, he adored her as an accomplished *equestrienne*, an excellence that of the two his young lordship was the best fitted to appreciate.

Afterward, in the Hall of Representation, he was ever at her side; nor could the august ceremonies and the supreme interest of the scene passing before them, where the first President of the United States offered his valedictory, and the second President took his oath of office, win him for a moment from the contemplation of the queenly form and resplendent face of Marguerite De Lancie.

When the rites were all over, and their party had extricated themselves from the outrushing crowd, who were crushing each other nearly to death in their eagerness to behold the last of the retiring chief; when they had seen Washington enter his carriage and drive homeward; in fine, when at last they reached their own door, Lord William Daw manifested so little inclination to take leave, and even betrayed so great a desire to remain, that nothing was left Colonel Compton but to invite the enamored boy to stay and dine, an invitation that was unhesitatingly accepted.

Dinner over, and lights brought into the drawing-room, and Lord William Daw still lingering.

“Unquestionably, this young man, though a scion of nobility, is ignorant or regardless of the usages of good society,” said Colonel Compton to himself. Then addressing the visitor, he said: “The ladies, sir, are going, this evening, to the new theatre, to see Fennel and Mrs. Whitlock in *Romeo and Juliet*. Will it please you to accompany us?”

“Most happy to do so,” replied the youth, with an ingenuous blush and smile at what he must have considered a slight

departure from the formal manners of the day, even while unable to resist the temptation and tear himself away.

In a few moments, the carriage was at the door, and the ladies ready.

Miss Compton and Miss De Lancie, Colonel Compton and Lord William Daw, filled the carriage, as well as they afterward filled the box at the theatre.

The play had already commenced when they entered, and the scene in progress was that of the ball at old Capulet's house. It seemed to confine the attention of the audience, but as for Lord William Daw, the mimic life upon the stage had no more power than had had the real drama of the morning to draw his attention from the magnificent Marguerite. He spoke but little; spellbound, his eyes never left her, except when, in turning her regal head, her eyes encountered his—when, blushing like a detected schoolboy, he would avert his face. So, for him; the play passed like a dream; nor did he know it was over until the general rising of the company informed him.

Every one was enthusiastic. Colonel Compton, who had been in London in an official capacity, and had seen Mrs. Siddons, averred it as his opinion that her sister, Mrs. Whitlock, was in every respect the equal of the great *tragedienne*. All seemed delighted with the performance they had just witnessed, excepting only Lord William Daw, who had seen nothing of it, and Marguerite De Lancie, who seemed perfectly indifferent.

“What is your opinion, Miss De Lancie?” inquired the youth, by way of relieving the awkwardness of his own silence.

“About what?” asked Marguerite, abstractedly.

“Ahem!—about—Shakespeare and—this performance.”

“Oh! Can I be interested in anything of this kind, after what we have witnessed in the State House to-day? Least of all in this thing?”

“This thing?—what, Marguerite, do you not worship Shakespeare and Mrs. Whitlock, then?” exclaimed Cornelia Compton.

“Mrs. Whitlock? I do not know yet; let me see her in some other character. Shakespeare? Yes! but not traditionally, imitatively, blindly, wholly, as most of you worship, or profess to worship him; I admire his tragedies of Lear, Richard the Third, Macbeth, and perhaps one or two others; but this Romeo and Juliet, this lovesick boy and puling girl—bah! bah! let’s go home.”

“That’s the way with Marguerite! Now I should not have dared to risk my reputation for intelligence by uttering that sentiment,” said Cornelia Compton.

“Never fear, child; naught is never in danger,” observed Colonel Compton, with good-humored, though severe raillery.

While Lord William Daw, with the morbid and sensitive egotism of a lover, inquired of himself: Does she intend that remark for me? Does she look upon me only in the light of a lovesick boy? Do I only disgust her, then? Thus tormenting himself until their party had entered the carriage, and driven back once more to Colonel Compton’s hospitable mansion, and

where his host, inwardly laughing, pressed him to come in and take a bed and breakfast.

But the youth, doubtful of the colonel's seriousness, piqued at his inamorata's scornfulness, and ashamed of his own devotedness, declined the invitation, bowed his adieus, and was about to retire, when Colonel Compton placed his carriage and servants at Lord William's disposal, and besought him to permit them to set him down at his own hotel, a service that the young gentleman, with some hesitation, accepted.

In a few days from this, General Washington left Philadelphia for Mount Vernon. And Colonel Compton, who went out of office with his chief, broke up his establishment in Philadelphia, and, with his family, set out for his home in Virginia.

## CHAPTER II.

### “THE LOVE CHASE.”

“——When shines the sun aslant,  
The sun may shine and we be cold;  
Oh, listen, loving hearts and bold,  
Unto my wild romaunt,  
Margaret, Margaret!”  
—E. B. BROWNING.

Colonel Compton and family, traveling at leisure in their private carriage, reached the Blue Ridge on the fifth, and Winchester on the seventh day of their journey, and went immediately to the fine old family mansion on the suburbs of the old town, which was comfortably prepared for the occupancy of the proprietor.

Miss De Lancie’s elegant house on Loudoun street, under the charge of an exemplary matron, was also ready for the reception of its mistress; but Marguerite yielded to the solicitations of her friend Cornelia, and remained her guest for the present.

Compton Lodge was somewhat older than the town; it was a substantial building of gray sandstone, situated in a fine park, shaded with great forest trees, and inclosed by a stone wall; it had once been a famous hunting seat, where Lord Fairfax, General Morgan, Major Helphinstine and other votaries of St. Hubert, “most did congregate;” and even now it was rather

## Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

