

THE CHARITY GIRL

By EFFIE A. ROWLANDS

CHAPTER IV.—(Continued.)

He immediately sent the girl to a Parisian school, and then he set about trying to force his way into the ranks of the upper ten. His money, his political views, and his power, as determined by the fact of his being a large employer of labor, and, therefore, of controlling a large percentage of votes, brought about an acquaintance, and then a friendship, with Sir Edwin Gascoigne, an impetuous but most aristocratic baronet. By Sir Edwin's aid, Mr. Fraser was returned in the Conservative cause, and his step planted on the first rung of the ladder. He was a decidedly clever man, and although too mean and niggardly to be altogether popular, he was not long in finding some friends. Among these, however, could not be classed Constance Gascoigne. Sir Edwin's second and only surviving daughter, Miss Gascoigne was a very beautiful girl, but she had won the reputation of having a bitter and unkind tongue. Every one knew that Constance Gascoigne did not share in her father's infatuation for Mr. Fraser, and yet she exhibited the whole social world by suddenly becoming his wife. There was the nine days' gossip, and then the Fraser marriage became a thing of the past, although there were some of Constance's women friends who still discussed the subject.

"There has been something mysterious about the girl for the last two years," cried Mrs. Fanfare, the biggest scandal-monger of the time, "and I for one always thought that young Frank Anstruther's sudden death had a great deal to do with it. Constance was madly in love with him, poor girl! Well, she has done very well in one sense. This Fraser man is rolling in money—positively rolling, my dear!"

In a vague, yet uncertain, way Sheila felt that it was only through her stepmother's popularity and undoubted social position that she was received and welcomed as the friend of the county families around the neighborhood, and possessed the entrée of the best houses in London when they stayed there for the season; and, bearing this in mind, it was only natural she should be very careful to keep on good terms with one who was so very indispensable to her. Deep down in the girl's shallow pretense of a heart there lurked a rankling jealousy for the delicate, aristocratic, still beautiful woman who had been her father's wife. Sheila had never quite understood Constance Fraser, and she was just a little bit afraid of her; she knew how bitter the sweet, refined voice could ring sometimes, and how contemptuously the pale lips could curve when occasion merited it. She felt vaguely that Mrs. Fraser knew her at her exact worth; and yet the young stepmother had never, by word or sign, been anything but kind and affectionately considerate to the girl whose guardian she was.

Sheila turned away from the mirror with a frown, and throwing herself on her lace-trimmed pillow, again took up her letters. The frown vanished as she read the warm and pressing invitations from two or three of the best houses around to luncheon, dinner, tea, and the like.

"Bah! I am a fool!" she said to herself, and she laughed shortly. "I was only half awake just now, and what if this girl is pretty, how does that affect me? I am Miss Fraser, of Dinglewood, and heires a good hundred thousand pounds. I don't think I need trouble my head about a servant maid's face!" She read through the rest of her letters, and then rang her bell sharply. "Why doesn't the girl come back? I must get up, or Jack will be off before I have half dressed!"

The bell rang sharply in the corridor outside, but Audrey neither understood nor heeded its purpose. She was very frightened, and very full of pity at that particular moment.

She had gone direct, as Miss Fraser had commanded her, to Mrs. Fraser's room; she knew it, because Bircam had pointed it out to her the evening before; she had knocked gently, and on receiving an answer, she had gone timidly in. The room was large, airy and pretty; it was hung with dainty chintz, and was, compared to Sheila's magnificent apartment, simple beyond description; yet Audrey felt, in a sudden and indescribable way, that she liked it much better; it was so fresh and dainty looking, and there was plenty of room to move about. A fire was burning brightly, and a large bowl of daffodils and tulips made a spot of color in the window. A woman, in a white mob cap and large apron, was just placing a tray by the bedside, and Audrey, raising her eyes very nervously, saw a delicate, lovely face lying on the pillow.

"Who is it, Marshall?" inquired Mrs. Fraser in a low, but singularly sweet voice.

"If you please, I—I am come from Miss Fraser."

Audrey stammered out the message as easily as she could. She was not exactly frightened, and yet her heart was fluttering, for she felt rather than saw that Mrs. Fraser's eyes were fixed upon her. Marshall was replying in a brisk yet respectful way when her mistress stopped her. She stretched out a fragile hand, white as snow, toward the girl.

"Who are you?" she asked in eager, hurried tones. "Where do you come from? Come nearer! Come close! I want to see your face."

"If you please, ma'am, this is Miss Fraser's new maid as Mrs. Thorngate has got for her," said Marshall.

Mrs. Fraser had pushed herself up in bed; her deep blue eyes were shining like stars, and a rush of color had come into her white cheeks. Involuntarily Audrey had drawn nearer, and had put her small, work-stained fingers into those other delicate ones. Mrs. Fraser pushed the girl round with her face to the light, paused for an instant, and then gave one broken, sobbing cry:

"Merciful heavens! It is—it is—"

She struggled with her breath, stretched out her two hands as though to some unseen yet precious protector, and then gave an inarticulate moan and dropped

back on her pillow insensibly. Audrey, trembling in every limb, hastened to obey Marshall, as she directed her to bring some eau-de-cologne and salts from the large chintz-hung dressing table; she did not know why, but the sight of Mrs. Fraser's death-like face pained her beyond description. Marshall evidently was not unused to this sign of weakness in her mistress.

"She'd one of her bad nights," Audrey heard her mutter; "poor lamb! I knew it when I first saw her this morning. Poor Miss Constance! Poor, pretty Miss Constance!"

She whisked away a tear while she rubbed some of the scent across the pale brow, and held the salts to the delicate nostrils.

"I've been with her ever since she were a child," she said, huskily, to Audrey, who stood with her hands tightly clasped together; "and she'll never be nothing to me but Miss Constance, poor dear!"

"Is—she always ill?" Why was it that Audrey could not control her voice?

Marshall nodded her head, and just then the bell pealed through the corridor again, and Mrs. Fraser opened her thick-fringed eyes with a start and looked blankly around her. Marshall motioned Audrey away. Audrey reluctantly withdrew her gaze from that sweet, suffering face, and with the memory of those deep blue eyes clinging to her, she returned to her mistress's room.

"Another fainting fit?" observed Sheila, impatiently. "Dear me, how tiresome! I suppose she won't be able to go to the Glaston hunt ball to-night. Maxse, you seem to me inclined to dawdle. I can't have lazy people about me. Bircam, my white serge tea gown. I suppose the breakfast gong has sounded?"

"Yes, miss, ten minutes ago; and I met his lordship a-goin' down as I come up. You'll just have time to run into Mrs. Fraser's room and—"

"I shall have nothing of the kind," retorted Sheila stamping her foot impatiently, as Audrey's cold fingers moved slowly in their task of buttoning her dainty shoe straps. "You must go in and tell Mrs. Fraser I will see her after breakfast. Bircam, this girl is simply a clumsy fool! If you can't teach her to manage better than this she must go!"

Audrey's eyes were blinded with hot tears. She was doing her very best, but Sheila had no pity for her awkwardness, and could willingly have kicked her for looking so beautiful.

CHAPTER V.

"What time do we start?" Sheila Fraser asked Lord John, as breakfast drew to an end.

She was not alone with the young man; an elderly lady, a poor relative of her mother's, was present. Had Sheila been left to her own inclinations, this quiet, grim, and undoubtedly middle-class Mrs. Watson would never have been given a place in her home; but Constance Fraser had spoken so direct and to the point on this subject that her stepdaughter had given in, and offered in as gracious a manner as she could the post of housekeeper to this impoverished connection.

"Do you seriously think of going to-day?" she laughed, turning to the girl, who looked very fresh and pretty in her picturesquely draped white serge gown.

"Why not?" demanded Sheila.

"Remember the ball."

"Oh, the ball!" with an airy laugh. "My dear Lord John, I could follow the hounds for a week at a time, and then dance through two balls."

"Sheila has excellent health," Mrs. Watson remarked, monotonously.

Sheila rose abruptly. How slow their friendship advanced. He was perfectly aware that it was his mother's most earnest desire to see Sheila Fraser his wife, but he was equally well aware that he had no such desire himself. He was in no hurry to be married, and he certainly would never marry for money.

All this, however, he kept to himself, and although he was so intimate with the heiress of Dinglewood, he had never by word or deed given either Sheila or any one else reason to suppose that he held any deeper feeling for the girl than that of an ordinary friend.

Later Sheila had some dinner in her room, having ascertained that Mrs. Fraser would be well enough to accompany her to the ball; and when the time came she arrayed herself in her magnificent diamonds, and even gave "the charity girl" a smile, as Audrey, overcome with the brilliant spectacle, put her hands together, and exclaimed aloud with delighted admiration.

"Let Maxse sit up for me, Bircam," she ordered, and then she swept away and joined Mrs. Fraser's tall, elegant figure in the hall below.

"My mistress ought not to have gone out to-night! It is enough to kill her!" exclaimed Marshall in indignation. "If I had my way, I'd have told Miss Fraser pretty plain what I think of her, dragging a poor, sick, suffering creature out a cold night like this, and all for her selfishness! It's heartless, that's what I call it!"

Bircam made no reply, although she overheard this speech; but Audrey felt her heart beating with sympathy, too. How fragile and ill Mrs. Fraser looked! Surely Miss Fraser could not have known how weak she was!

"Now, keep up the fire, and you may go to sleep, if you like," Bircam said. "See that Miss Sheila's slippers are warm, and everything out that she wants. They'll ring the bell when they come, but I don't expect they'll be home till quite morning."

Audrey glanced at the clock and sighed wearily; she sat down timidly on one of the richly covered chairs, and dictated to herself that she must not and should not go to sleep. Needless to say, before half an hour had gone, soothed by the warmth, the luxurious cushions at her back, and lulled by the silvery ticking of the clock, she was fast asleep, dreaming of Jean.

All at once she was awakened, a bell went pealing through the silent house. She started from her cozy nook and rubbed her eyes. Nearly half past twelve!

They were home early. She stood at attention, and went to open the door for Miss Fraser. There seemed to be some little confusion, and then Audrey heard a frank, determined voice.

"I tell you I'm going to carry you upstairs. I will not leave you till I see you safe in your room."

There was some murmured protest, and then Audrey perceived Jack Glendurwood, coming along as easily as possible, carrying Mrs. Fraser's slight form in his arms. He saw the girl in an instant.

"Which is the room?" he asked, quick to read and appreciate the sympathy in her great blue eyes.

She led the way and opened the door. Marshall was dozing by the fire.

"What is it?" she cried, starting up hurriedly; then, as she grasped the situation. "Ah, Miss Constance, I know how it would be; you weren't fit for it, my lamb! Bring her here, my lord. I'm richly thankful to you for carrying her up; she's as weak as an infant, that's what she is."

"Don't believe her, Jack," said Constance Fraser in her sweet, feeble voice. She was lying back in a great wide chair, looking inexpressibly beautiful, though as white as a ghost, in her long, black velvet dress, with the rich Valenciennes lace about the neck.

Jack Glendurwood folded his arms and looked down at her gravely.

"Promise to go to bed at once," he said. "I shall not leave until I hear you are at rest."

"At rest?" A faint, bitter smile flickered across the pale lips, and then Mrs. Fraser stretched out her hand. "Good-night, my friend. Heaven bless you and thank you for your loving care of me. I—I am not worth it, Jack, dear; I am not worth it."

For answer he bent down and kissed the white hand, and then Mrs. Fraser caught sight of Audrey standing behind.

"It was no dream! It was no myth! Come to me, child! Ah, do not be frightened; I will not harm you. I will only kiss you, and gaze into your face."

Jack Glendurwood had turned with a start, and made way for Audrey to pass him. She moved slowly across to that black-robed form and knelt down. She was not frightened, only awed and strangely stirred.

"Lift up your eyes, Ah!" as Audrey obeyed her. "Child! Child! Who are you? What are you, with your face that comes up from the past?" She bent forward and touched the girl's brow with her lips; she clung to the girl's hands and a moan escaped her. Suddenly she released her hold, and her head dropped on her breast.

"Take her away, my lord!" cried Marshall, bending over her mistress. "She has got something on her mind! She has done nothing but talk of this child's face all day. It's only weakness, I fear, poor Mrs. Constance!"

"Come," said Jack to Audrey, very gently.

As one in a dream she rose to her feet and followed him out of the room, and then, when she was outside, she burst into a flood of irrepresible, nervous tears, leaning against the wall, regardless of any one or anything but the strange, wild tumult and pain in her breast. Jack stood by in silence, but as her sobs died away he put his hand gently on her shoulder.

"Poor child! Poor little child!" Then, as she lifted her tear-stained, eloquent loveliness to his face, he drew both her hands in his. "Don't cry, child," he said, quickly. "I—I hate to see you cry. You seem very lonely; you are strange here. Come; shall we strike a bargain? You let me help you yesterday, you must let me help you again. Shall we be friends?"

"Friends, my lord?" she faltered. "You and I? Oh, it cannot be! I am only a servant, a charity girl, and you—"

"Are you not the friend of that charity girl?" was his answer, and with that he bent and kissed her hands as he had just kissed Constance Fraser's, and with a tender smile and gentle "good-night" went slowly down the stairs and out of the house.

(To be continued.)

NATION OF SALT EATERS.

A Barrel a Year Is Consumed for Every Three Persons.

The United States consumes 26,872,700 barrels of salt annually, or a barrel for every three persons in the land. Last year it went abroad for only 1,151,133 barrels. In 1880 63.5 per cent of the salt used in our country was of home production. Last year 95.7 per cent of the product consumed was produced within the borders of this country. In 1880 the consumption in this country was only 9,384,233 barrels. Thus we see that the people of the United States are using annually three times as much salt as they used twenty-six years ago.

Only 5,961,090 barrels were produced in this country in 1880, and the consumers were forced to go abroad for 3,427,639 barrels. Last year the total production at home was 25,993,122 barrels.

The chief salt-producing States are Michigan and New York. Statistics recently gathered by the government show that the combined output of these two States amounts to more than two-thirds of the total production of the United States.

No attempt has ever been made to ascertain what per cent of the salt consumed in the United States is used for culinary purposes. The annual output is consumed in the industries of meat-packing, fish curing, dairying and the like. The chlorination of gold ores demands a large quantity, and great quantities of salt in the form of brine are used in the manufacture of soda ash, caustic soda and other salts. Salt is cheap. The average price for 1905 was a little over 23 cents a barrel, which is lower than that reported in any previous year. Dry salt, of course, brings a higher price than brine. The average price for dry salt last year was 31.51 cents a barrel.

Strenuous Job.

"Has young Dundeigh any occupation?" asked the dear girl's mother.

"Indeed he has," replied the d. z. "He's raising a mustache."



"That friend of yours, Skilliven, is certainly one of the most charitable men I ever met," remarked the passenger with the fur-lined overcoat.

"I haven't noticed him giving away anything," said the passenger with the leatherine suitcase, folding his newspaper and pocketing it. "What happened to touch his heart?"

"I don't mean that exactly," said the passenger in the fur-lined overcoat. "I don't know whether he's easy or tight, but I know he takes charitable views."

"That's easy," commented the man with the leatherine suitcase. "His ideas may be liberal, but he isn't—not to speak of. Borrowed his wheelbarrow last spring and I happened to break one of the handles. At least, I didn't break it; it was broken already, or splintered. Well, I offered to pay to have it repaired, of course, and darned if he didn't take me up on it!"

"That was pretty small," agreed the man with the fur-lined overcoat. "I don't wonder you're sore on him."

"I don't know that I'm sore, particularly. It was only 25 cents, but it didn't seem to me very neighborly. Kind of a cranky disposition, too."

"Well, of course, I don't know anything about that, but I was talking with him about old Brackenburk. Talk about a crank, Brackenburk is one for your whiskers. He's got a grudge against humanity. Hanged if I ever knew such a mean old rooster. I was telling this Skilliven about the way he acted up all the time in his office. I guess there isn't one of his clerks who wouldn't poison him if he got a good chance. Skilliven, it seems, knew him."

"I believe all that is greatly exaggerated," he says. "Of course, he's a little irritable at times, but he's suffered with dyspepsia—a good deal to my certain knowledge. We must make allowances. He's a pretty nice old man, when you know him."

"I know him pretty well by reputation," I said. "He's got the reputation of being the meanest old skintint that

Uncle Sam provides for his postmen. In every case the fortunes were made through shrewd investments in real estate.

London now has six underground electric railways (tubes) in operation, and five more are under construction or projected. The railways of London, underground and surface, carry more than 600,000,000 persons each year, of which underground lines accommodate 258,000,000. There are nearly 600 railway stations in Greater London, and into the trunk line stations alone there pour annually more than 300,000 passengers.

A dip into an official return showed that there are 1,204 London cabs between the ages of 60 and 70, 249 between the ages of 70 and 80, while 7 return their age between 80 and 90. One almost suspects these seven old patriarchs of having carried sedan chairs in the progreiver days. At all events, they are a living advertisement of London as a health resort, with beef-steak, overcoat and muller.—London Chronicle.

The name "Polly," applied to the parrot, is said to have been brought to the North in an early day by flatboatmen, who took grain and provisions down the Ohio and Mississippi rivers to New Orleans. Parrots were in cages at the doors of many French shops and the Westerners heard the French say to the bird, "Parlez, parlez," pronounced parley, and meaning "speak! speak!" This word, as they brought it back, came to be polly.

DUCKS 1,200 MILES AT SEA.

Birds Circle Around Steamship, Taking It for an Island.

The Oceanic Steamship Company's liner Mariposa, Captain Lawless, arrived from Tahiti with twenty-three passengers and a cargo of tropical products. Among the passengers was W. F. Doty, former American consul at Papeete and recently promoted to represent Uncle Sam in Persia as United States consul.

The interests of America in Persia have been represented hitherto by the secretary of the British legation at Teheran, who acted as United States vice consul whenever necessity arose. This government, however, recently appointed three consuls for Persia, among them Mr. Doty, whose post will be at Fabriz. This is in the same latitude as San Francisco and is one of the most inaccessible consular posts in the world. In journeying to his new station Consul Doty will have to travel camel back for 1,500 miles.

On the afternoon of Nov. 9 Captain Lawless was surprised to see twelve black and white ducks flying overhead. They came from the eastward. After circling around the Mariposa a number of times, as if they were wondering what kind of an island the liner was, the ducks wheeled into line and resumed their flight, heading due west. The ducks were 1,800 miles from San Francisco and 1,200 miles from Hawaii, the nearest land.—San Francisco Call.

Oil Painting of Ancient Days.

Oil painting was an art thoroughly understood by the ancients, but was lost sight of and only revived about the end of the thirteenth century, A. D.

ROMANS USED SAFETY PINS.

Collar Button Among the Articles Found in Ancient Tombs.

Every now and then it is discovered that some extremely "modern" invention is in reality exceedingly old. For example, the safety pin, far from being a novelty or even of recent origin, is decidedly ancient—a fact made certain by the finding of a great many such pins, fashioned exactly like those of today, in old Roman and Etruscan tombs, dating back to a period a good deal earlier than the birth of Christ.

The safety pin in truth was an article of common use in Italy long before the Roman empire attained the height of its glory. Some of them were exactly like those of today, utilizing the familiar principle of coiled spring and catch, but the material of which they were made seems always to have been bronze. They took on a development, however, far more remarkable than our modern safety pins, many of them being quite large affairs, ten inches or so in length and hollow, as if designed to be attached to the gown in front and possibly to contain something or other—conceivably flowers. Not infrequently they were ornamented with gems.

Another ancient invention was the collar stud. It is true that the ancient Romans did not use buttons to fasten their garments, but for this very reason safety pins were more urgently required, and the latter seem to have been supplemented by studs of bronze, which were in shape exactly like those of today. Of course, people in those times wore no collars, but the little contrivance in question was utilized in other ways. Probably—and indeed the assumption is not a rash one—it had in that early epoch the same habit as now of rolling under a piece of furniture on slight provocation for the purpose of eluding observation and pursuit, with the usual perversity of inanimate objects.—Scientific American.

"MR. EDWARD."

In 1883 the Prince of Wales was much interested in the creation and organization of the College of Music in London. He caused it to be intimated to the late Sir Henry Irving that it would show the interest of another and allied branch of art in the undertaking if the dramatic artists would give a benefit for the new college. The prince even suggested that "Robert Macaire" would do excellently for the occasion, with an all-star cast.

Of course Irving was delighted to help, and the result was a splendid performance, at which the Prince and Princess of Wales attended, and a sum of more than one thousand pounds was turned over to the college—the entire receipts. Irving himself, says Mr. Bram Stoker in his "Personal Reminiscences of Henry Irving," paid all the expenses.

In the first year of its working, when the class for dramatic study was organized, Irving was asked by the director to examine it, which he did cheerfully, and in due time made his report. Soon afterward he received a letter of thanks for his services.

Although quite formal, it was a most genial and kindly letter, and to the signature was appended "chairman." In acknowledging it to Sir George Grove, the director of the college, Irving said what a pleasure it had been to him to be an examiner, and assured Sir George that he would gladly hold his services at the disposal of the college. He added to his letter this postscript:

"By the way, who is our general friend, Mr. Edward, chairman? I do not think I have met him."

He got a horrified letter sent by messenger from Sir George, explaining that the signature was that of "Albert Edward"—then Prince of Wales, now his majesty, Edward VII.

In the Surface Car.

A fat Irishwoman, bearing a number of bundles, entered a crowded street car. The only semblance of a seat she could find was a small space at the right of a smartly dressed youth. Into this space, sufficient only for an individual of ordinary size, the fleshy Irishwoman squeezed herself, much to the annoyance of the youth.

After a moment or so the Irishwoman produced a cheese sandwich, which she proceeded to devour with every evidence of relish.

At this the youth gave her a look of ineffable disgust and drew the skirts of his frock coat closer to him.

"I suppose, my lad," good-naturedly said the woman, "that ye'd prafter to have a gluttenam sittin' next to ye."

"I certainly would," snapped the youngster.

"So would I," calmly responded the fat person.—Exchange.

"Deprived of His See."

As an example of the ability of the juvenile scholar to evolve an unexpected meaning from his text, a correspondent relates that the following question was put to a history class: "What misfortune then happened to Bishop Odo?" The reply came quite readily, "He went blind." An explanation was demanded, and the genius brought up the text book. "There, sir," triumphantly, "the book says so." The sentence indicated by an ink stained digit read, "Odo was deprived of his see."—London Spectator.

First Insurance Company, 1699.

The Society of Assurance for Widows and Orphans was the first known life insurance company and was established in London in 1699.

Education is a great thing, no doubt, but the best housekeepers didn't get their knowledge out of books.