

THE CHARITY GIRL

By EFFIE A. ROWLANDS

CHAPTER XII.—(Continued.)

Next day, about lunch time, the countess, her children and attendants, arrived, with much clatter and importance. Sheila—by accident, of course—was just coming down the stairs as Lady Dalewater was ascending them.

There was a mutual start, and then a cordial greeting. Sheila was looking wonderfully pretty in her long sea-king mantle of bright gold beneath her neat hat to match. Lady Dalewater was pleased to approve of her probable future sister-in-law.

"You here, Miss Fraser?" she exclaimed. "This is quite a delightful surprise. I pictured you in Mountberry, enjoying yourself."

"I was compelled to come to London on business matters, and," Sheila added, with a tiny sigh that did not escape Lady Dalewater's keen ears, "Mountberry is not particularly lively just now."

"Can you give me any news of my brother—is he really so dangerously hurt? Mamma is such an alarmist, you know."

Sheila assumed a sad, anxious look, although in reality she was not aware exactly how Jack was at that particular moment, and had never been very much frightened even at the verdict of the London doctors.

"I am afraid he is very ill," she said in a low voice.

Lady Dalewater did not seem much impressed.

"I hope you are not returning home immediately? No! Oh, that is delightful, and still more delightful that you should be staying here. You must come in and dine with me to-night. Mrs. Fraser is with you?"

Sheila explained that her chaperone was her cousin, Mrs. Watson.

"We shall remain in London for a little while," she said, "and I hope to see a great deal of you. Perhaps I may be able to prevail on you to come down to Dalewater House when I go back there. It will be very dull, my dear Sheila; but—"

"But my dear Sheila," would be gladly welcomed mouths of dullness to get such an invitation as this. Her spirits rose brilliantly, and she laid herself out to please Lady Dalewater.

Three days later the Earl of Dalewater arrived in London, and immediately, at his wife's instigation, went down to Mountberry to see how matters were, and the very same afternoon, as Sheila sat yawning over a novel by the fire, the door opened and Bentley Rochester was announced. She started up eagerly to greet him.

"Where have you been? I thought you were never coming back," she declared.

"I have been busy," he said. "I have not been wasting time, I assure you. You wonder what took me out of London? Well, I will tell you. I went down to see the last moments of my dear old father. Yes, it sounds curious, doesn't it? But fate for some strange reason brought this man to our rescue just when we needed him."

"How can he help us?" asked Sheila, incredulously, although her face was flushing with excitement. "More especially if, as I understand you to infer, he is now dead?"

"You shall see, Miss Fraser. Anstruther met me out in Africa; he then went under another name. I always liked the man, there was something grim yet wonderful about him. When he found I was coming to England he gave me a packet of papers to bring to his lawyers; before delivering them I took the precaution of sounding these lawyers first, and as easily as possible I soon discovered my companion's real name. Needless to say, I did not deliver the papers, more especially when I found that Anstruther was in England, and supposed to be dying—he had evidently found his end coming, and rushed over to see Mrs. Fraser before he died. I at once traveled off to seek him, and, of course, had to tell a few dozen lies or so to explain why I had done so. Fortunately, the man was too ill to protest or question much; all he asked, all he wanted, was to see Constance Fraser, and confess the truth of his treachery toward her and his brother."

"And you call this helping us, Mr. Rochester?"

"As Roderick is dead, and did not confess to Mrs. Fraser, I certainly do. To please him I drew up a sort of written statement, which he managed to scrawl his name just at the very last. Here is the document. Shall I tell you what it contains, Miss Fraser?"

Sheila nodded her head.

"This is the last dying confession of Roderick Anstruther, in which he owns to having separated his brother from his wife for sheer malice, in which he also confesses that his brother's child did really die, and that the girl now living is the offspring of a secret marriage between himself and some country woman."

"And she is that really?" Sheila asked.

"No, certainly not. Audrey, according to her uncle's dying confession, is the child of Frank and Constance Anstruther. You forget, I am reading what I wrote, not what Roderick Anstruther told me to write."

"Well," the girl said after this, as her brow cleared.

"This document then goes on to will the whole of the dead man's fortune and possessions to this aforesaid child on one condition, viz., that she become my wife before six months elapse; if she refuses, she is to be placed once more in the Female Orphan Asylum till some definite and equally disagreeable abode is found for her. You will see that I have been very careful and very explicit, Miss Fraser. I have left nothing undone that can possibly help us."

"You forget, she may always refuse," Sheila said, gloomily. "This is not what I had expected."

"I am not so nervous of failure," Beverly returned. "Audrey will be a rich woman if she becomes my wife, and her lot will not be an enviable one if she refuses."

"There is Mrs. Fraser to be faced," Sheila said. "Mrs. Fraser will cease to have any guardianship over the girl when this document is read."

"Who will be her guardian?" asked Sheila.

"I am left the sole and entire guardian of Miss Audrey Anstruther. To describe him was easy, to explain to the lawyers a trifle more difficult; but it was soon done. When you peruse this paper carefully you will see that the reason Roderick Anstruther reposes such trust in me is because a few years ago I saved his life at the risk of my own, and because we were firm and never parted friends out in Africa together. I give myself great credit for those two lies."

Miss Fraser; they come in so neatly, and they carry the day, you see."

Sheila looked at him quietly. She was much impressed, yet not quite satisfied. As you invented so quickly and easily, why did you not put in some clause about her being forbidden to marry any one but you?" she asked.

"The time was so brief; at any moment the lawyers might have come down. Considering all things, I am very pleased. Remember, I am her sole and entire guardian, and I, for my part, do not fear success."

They were suddenly interrupted by a sharp knock at the door, the handle was turned, and Lady Dalewater swept in.

Her face was very white, her lips compressed and pale; in her hand was crumpled a telegram. Sheila ran to meet her quickly.

"Dear Lady Dalewater, what is the matter?" she cried.

"This is from my husband. My brother John has disgraced himself and his family. Instead of lying at the point of death, he has married my stepmother's supposed daughter. He has tied himself and his honorable name for life to a wretched charity girl!"

CHAPTER XIII.

If she lived to be a hundred years, Audrey would never forget that scene. Her mother had come back from Craiglands deeply moved and agitated; and the girl's great, sorrowful eyes had asked the question her frozen lips could not frame.

Constance Fraser had drawn the slender form to her arms without a word at first. Words, indeed, were not easy. It was a strange thing that had happened; her brain reeled every now and then as it all came back to her. Constance Fraser kissed the sweet, quivering lips.

"Jack wants you; he wants you to stay with him always. Do you understand me, my darling?"

"He wants me to nurse him?" Audrey said simply, her every limb quivering with eagerness to be gone.

"To nurse, comfort and love him!" The mother's hand stroked back the soft locks. "Audrey, he has asked me to give you to him, as his wife."

A flood of color burned on each pale cheek, and then the girl paled again white as gain.

"As his wife?" she repeated, slowly; and then, more quickly, "Does he want me now?"

"As soon as every arrangement can be made, my own dearest. Does this frighten you, Audrey? A great shock at first, but you will see how good it is for you. If he wishes it, that is right. I am glad!" Then, catching suddenly at the two slender hands held out to her, "Mother, can I see him soon?"

"You shall go to him to-morrow, my darling. It will not do to excite him too much. The marriage ceremony will take place to-morrow, we hope. You must rest and take care of yourself, my little flower, my darling."

Audrey sat down as in a stupor. She did not half realize what was going to happen; she only knew that in a few short hours she would see him again, her hero, her beloved; that was joy enough to daze her; she could not grasp the fullness of it all at once.

It was his hand that clasped hers, and yet how changed. Audrey could not see the pale, weak, clear face for the mist of tears that rose before her eyes.

The girl uttered a great sob at sight of him she loved lying prostrate on his pillow, barely able to speak or to smile. The duchess had kissed Audrey tenderly. "She is lovely! Perfectly beautiful!" she had said to Constance Fraser. "No wonder my poor boy loves her so deeply."

Mr. Thorngate read the service, and Mrs. Thorngate stood with the others round the bed.

Dr. Sentance was close at hand; he watched his patient narrowly. Certainly it looked most as if the small flicker of life would suddenly go out. The pulse before her great pale and pained, his hands weaker in their hold. As the doctor pronounced the benediction, the duchess gave a cry.

"He is gone! He is dead! My Jack! My boy!"

The brisk, kind-hearted little doctor read the conditions in a moment.

"We must now have you fainting too, Lady John," he said, sharply. "Come, hold the bottle to your husband's nose, and pass your hand slowly across his brow. I expect you to help me, you know. A great deal depends on you now. It is pressing. Complete and utter exhaustion. Now, Lady John, I want you to kneel down, so that your husband can see you the first thing he opens his eyes."

Audrey obeyed him instantly. The faintest flicker of life was visible in the drawn, white face.

"Bend down and kiss him," commanded Dr. Sentance.

A flush spread over the girl's beautiful face. She did not hesitate; stooping, she pressed her fresh, sweet lips to those dry, parched ones. A low cry escaped the sick man.

"Audrey, it is you—no dream—my own darling!"

Dr. Sentance nodded his head again, and then he lifted Audrey from her knees.

"Now, Lady John," he said, authoritatively, "your duty is not nearly ended; you are to sit here and watch your husband. Don't let him sleep, only now and then moisten his lips with a little of this liquid. Let him see you and know you are here. You will be the best doctor for him, after all."

So saying, Dr. Sentance moved out of the room, and beckoned Mrs. Thorngate to follow him.

"Well," she asked, breathlessly, once outside.

"I do not say for certain, but my belief is he will live," was the doctor's reply.

CHAPTER XIV.

All through the night and late into the following day, Audrey sat like a statue beside her husband's bed. Toward evening he had sunk into a deep, silent sleep.

"It will be his salvation," declared Dr. Sentance to the duchess and Constance Fraser, as they sat together in poor Lord Iverne's room. "Nothing could be better."

"Oh, Dr. Sentance! Then there is really some hope?" cried the poor mother, her haggard face lighting up into something like its former self.

Two days later the Earl of Dalewater came down to Mountberry unexpectedly. He was a plain, weak, indolently conceited man, who was ruled entirely by his wife, and he held forth on the impropriety of this terrible marriage in a manner worthy of his wife herself.

"Now that you are quite finished, George," said the duchess coldly, "I think the best thing you can do is to return to London and Gladys as soon as possible."

"Am I to understand that you turn me out?" he asked furiously. "Do you forget who I am?"

"I think it is I who should ask that question, Lord Dalewater," the duchess replied, rearing her head with dignity.

"You have addressed me in a manner which I would never tolerate from my nearest and dearest. You have been pleased to pass censure on my actions, and vilify a young and lovely young girl who is my son's wife, and against whom neither you nor any one else can launch a single objection save that she has had an unhappy childhood, and that she is poor. My daughter Gladys should congratulate herself on the result of her schooling; you are an apt pupil, my lord."

"Your grace will please to understand that from to-day all intercourse between myself and my wife is at an end," the little man went on, getting quite insolent in his anger.

The duchess made no sign while her son-in-law ran on in his infuriated and insolent manner, but as the door opened and he came to an abrupt end, she turned on him.

"The carriage is ready, Lord Dalewater; you have really no time to lose."

Lord Dalewater's brows turned purple with suppressed fury; rage, insults rushed to his lips; but somehow the sight of the tall, commanding woman, regal in bearing and dignity, and the quick sense that she had conquered him, quelled the moment without a word or sign; he turned and strode out of the room.

(To be continued.)

BLUE FLOWERS OF THE ANDES.

How Pretty Girls Sell the Blossoms to Mountain Travelers.

Some of the smaller of the railroad towns of Chili are well worth braving a trip by the slow train to see. There is one I remember in particular, situated near the summit of the divide between the valleys of the Maipo and Llal Llal, where the great mountain blue flowers and the little Andean deer are brought down.

The strangely beautiful blue flower of the Cordillera blossoms only for a few weeks in the spring, at which time it is gathered high up at the snow line by the lithesome village maidens and brought down to the train to sell. The petals, blue as the sky, are as delicate, soft and pliable as the palm of a fine kid glove, and resist tearing almost as strongly. If a petal is twisted and wrung between the fingers it exudes a drop of liquid possessing a most powerful and penetrating, but thoroughly pleasing odor. This juice is as strong as a flavoring extract, and a drop of it will give a perceptible taste to a gallon of water, from which arises a practice in witchery by the wily mountain maids.

They wait until you are finishing your breakfast, when one slips up to your side and holds a big bunch of flowers for you to bury your face in by way of sampling, while another executes a flank movement on your unprotected side and drops some bruised petals into your coffee. When your face comes out of the flowers and you begin to sip your coffee, they both laugh and clap their hands and tell you not to be angry, as it is only a "costumbre del pueblo"—a custom of the village. Of course, you are not angry; and if you are not pretty mean, you are sure to buy blue flowers from then on till train time at prices as lofty as their habit. This blue flower or craze doesn't hold you long, but while it lasts it would be cheaper to be an orchid farmer.

It is much cheaper, in fact, far more satisfactory in the long run, to buy deer than blue flowers; the deer you can ship in the baggage car, while the blue flowers require personal attention. And even if you enter Valparaiso with the deer in your arms your friends will not ask you if you were drugged into buying it. That's the trouble with the blue flowers—every one knows where you got them, and from whom you got them. They don't know how much it cost you to get them, except that it was a lot more than they are worth.—Los Angeles Times.

Patience Plea Not Lost.

Governor Folk once told of a lawyer in Arkansas who was defending a young man of notorious record. Ignoring the record, however, the counsel proceeded to draw a harrowing picture of the white-haired, aged father in St. Louis, awaiting anxiously the return of the prodigal son to spend the Christmas holidays with him. "Have you the hearts," declaimed the lawyer to the jury, "to deprive the poor old man of this happiness?"

The jury, however, found the prisoner guilty. Before passing sentence the judge called for the prisoner's jail record and after a careful examination of the same he blandly observed:

"I find that this prisoner has some five previous convictions against him. Nevertheless, I am happy to state that the learned counsel's appeal will not remain unanswered, for I shall commit the prisoner to the Little Rock jail, where, at the present moment, his aged parent is serving a term of ten years, so that father and son will be enabled to pass the ensuing Christmas under one roof."

Willing Victim.

Mayme—I made an election bet with Jack, and I won.

Edyth—Did he pay up?

Mayme—Yes, indeed. He paid double.

Edyth—Foolish boy!

Mayme—Oh, I don't know. We bet kisses.

Machine Made.

"What do political machines manufacture, pa?"

"Bolts, Bobby."—Kansas City Times.

FARMS AND FARMERS



Growing Fruit.

Larger areas are annually being devoted to fruit. As the demand for fruit increases it is apparent that new fields are opening in those sections not adapted for special farming or stock raising. Steady hillside that are now unprofitable can be made to blossom with each returning spring. The grape will grow on soils that refuse nourishment to cereal crops, and the blackberry is successfully grown on the lightest sands. With all the boast of favored sections, there is not a state that averages the net profit per acre that is possible with small fruits. Lands that will not grow a blade of grass pay the grower in pears, blackberries and raspberries, and the better qualities of soil produce the best of strawberries. If there is a failure in growing fruit, it is sometimes due to carelessness of the grower. Trees and vines, like anything else, must receive the care and attention of the grower, must be properly cultivated and pruned and the fruit judiciously prepared for market. The curculio must be fought, the borer killed and the miller and caterpillar destroyed. If the work is well done, and the grower is patient, his excellent opportunity for enterprising fruit growers to increase their profits by producing fruit of the best quality. Low prices occur at times because the market is oversupplied with inferior fruit, but there is always a good demand for that which is choice, and at good prices.

Fresh Air for Poultry.

The poultry manager of the Canada experiment station, A. G. Gilbert, has recently published a summary of extended experiments in poultry feeding and breeding from which the following notes are taken. Hens kept in cold quarters and fed heavily produced eggs with strong germs which hatched well. On the other hand, poultry kept in artificially warmed houses laid eggs with weak germs which hatched weak chickens. The results were considered in favor of fresh air and plenty of it even if it was cold. In a study of the duration of fertilization after the removal of the male bird, records were kept of the number of eggs which hatched or which were shown to be fertile. The last trace of fertility was noticed seven days after separation. The unfertilized eggs had superior keeping qualities, so the author recommends that as a rule male birds should not be kept with hens dependent upon for market eggs. Experience showed that where there is a variety in rations and care in them, and sufficient floor space, there is little likelihood of egg eating or feather picking. Steamed lawn clippings were fed to the station poultry three or four times a week and eaten with evident relish. Clover leaves treated in the same way were also much liked.

Horse Doomed Again.

Edison says he has solved the electric motor problem at last—solved it some time ago, in fact; but the material he found suitable for cheap and effective storage batteries—cobalt—was too scarce to be used commercially for the purpose. But by diligent search ample deposits have been found, and now a motor will be made so cheap that no other agency for moving vehicles of any kind will be used.

The horse is to become extinct, or nearly so. "In fifteen years," he says, "we will be paying 50 cents to see one in a side show." If this last proposition proves true there will be one compensation, the draft station faker will be extinct. But don't begin to sacrifice the horses for a few months yet.

Nux Vomica to Kill Hawks.

Mrs. Emma Vaught writes Farm and Ranch that for fourteen years she has been feeding nux vomica to young chickens to kill hawks, and finds that the remedy is a good one. She says: "It will not hurt the chicks at all, for I never have lost a chick from its use. If everybody would use it the hawks could be all exterminated in one season and we would not have any further trouble with them. I give directions for feeding the chicks. Take dough, made of cornmeal and give one teaspoonful of nux vomica for every twenty chicks, and I assure you it will not hurt the chicks at all. It will all out of the chicks' system in nine days, so there is no danger in using the chickens for table food."

Study the Cow's Needs.

Each individual in the herd should be studied and given the care that she requires for best production, says Farm Journal.

Two sisters stood side by side in a herd. One required bulky, light food to cause her to do her best. The other required more concentrated food with less bulk.

No herd of cows can ever be really profitable unless they receive just this careful attention.

Controlling Growth of Cabbages.

Some gardeners practice a method of stopping the bursting of too rapidly growing cabbage heads. The idea is to check the root growth, which is sending too much sap into the head. Either some of the roots are cut away or else the roots are somewhat loosened by pulling the cabbage partly out of the ground. Either plan will check growth sufficiently to save the cabbage.

Subsoiling.

It is urged in favor of subsoiling that the land improves every year, although it may have been subsoiled once. In viewing the effects it should be in the light of injurious effects are recovery, as no injurious effects are noticed at any time. It is also claimed that if a narrow roller should follow the subsoil plow, so as to compact the soil, after the subsoil plow has passed, the capacity to hold water would be greatly increased and the benefits of subsoiling be more immediate.

ENGLAND'S NEW \$20,000,000 HOSPITAL FOR DAMAGED WARSHIPS.



ENTRANCE LOCK TO NEW NAVAL DOCKS AT DEVONPORT.

England's new naval works here shown have made Devonport the best equipped and largest war port in the world. They include a fine tidal basin, with an entrance direct from the Hamoaze, and a closed basin, which has been provided with an entrance from the Hamoaze, which can be used for dry docking men of war. Devonport has now three new docks, which can take even the biggest men of war, apart from the entrance lock. It need hardly be pointed out that the final issue of naval warfare depends to a considerable extent on the rapidity with which the opposing nations can refit and replace on the active list battle ships and other war vessels damaged by the enemy. Thus the north extension of the dockyard at Devonport, which was opened by the Prince of Wales recently, must be reckoned among England's most valuable naval assets. The closed basin has an area of thirty-five acres; the extension covers nearly 120 acres. The total cost of the new work was about \$4,500,000.

PAPER RUINED BY GERMS.

Microbes Spot the Surface and as Last Wreck the Fabric.

Germany has been looking into the question why paper does not last forever and has come to the conclusion that its decay is largely due to bacteria. They not only injure the texture but destroy the color.

The brownish spots which appear in old books and which are known to English bibliophiles as foxing are really due to the bacterium prodigium. This tiny destroyer is especially fond of starchy media and its propagation is promoted by damp. It has long been known that damp produced foxing, but the share of the microbe in the operation has not been suspected.

Then there is the tiny fungus, or mold, penicillium glaucum. It is responsible for gray and black marks upon old papers and in spotting the surface it helps to break down the fabric and hasten its destruction.

There are many other microscopic enemies of paper and they abound chiefly in those which are glazed with gelatin. Given a little moisture and a little heat and these will multiply in the surface of a picture or a diploma on highly finished paper just as they would in the culture tube of a biologist.

Several methods of fighting these bacteria are proposed. One is to substitute for animal glue in finishing fine paper glazes made from rosin.

These, it is said, give equally good results and totally defy the invasion of microbes. It is also proposed to introduce chemical agents in the manufacture of paper which are known to be fatal to microbes. This, however, involves many complications.

Where the paper is to be used for color color painting and printing in waters almost every chemical is barred, as they are apt to combine with the pigments in the course of time and destroy them. But for ordinary writing papers small quantities either of bi-chloride of mercury or of antiseptics of the carbolic class may be introduced without impairing the use of the paper for ordinary purposes, whether writing or printing, and at the same time rendering it proof against the ordinary processes of decay.

EDITING CONSULAR REPORTS.

All Statements Calculated to Hurt Foreign Nations Are Cut Out.

In the bureau of trade relations the consular reports are carefully read and, when necessary, so revised as to eliminate everything unsuitable for publication from the standpoint of the interests of the government, says the Atlantic. Not infrequently a report of such character as to make it inexpedient to publish any portion, in which case it is filed in toto in the archives of the department of state for future reference. All statements in the reports calculated to cause adverse criticism in a foreign country, or to bring about diplomatic representations on the part of another government, or to embarrass the administration of any executive branch of our government are omitted from the material transmitted to the department of commerce and labor for publication.

Under the head of matter that is objectionable because of its probable effect in a foreign country come slighting allusions to any nationality or race; adverse criticism, even implied, of the political, social, or religious institutions; disparaging statements in regard to the enforcement of the laws; charges of dishonesty and inefficiency of the officials, etc. In short, anything that reflects on the integrity and efficiency of the foreign administration, or that might offend the sensitivities of the people of the country, is eliminated in the state department, which, of course, is the best judge of the diplomatic propriety.

Never Thought of Love.

Visitor (at studio)—I do not see how an artist could paint such a beautiful woman without falling in love with her.

Great Artist—I assure you, madam, that while painting that picture I never thought of love.

Yes. You see, the model was my wife.

Is it possible?—Tit-Bits.

Handicapped.

"Alas," moaned the leopard, "I can't sneak out of reiterations any more. I'm always spotted."—Harvard Lampoon.