

THE CHARITY GIRL

By EFFIE A. ROWLANDS

CHAPTER VI.

The news of Mrs. Fraser's sudden increase of weakness and ill health reached Mrs. Thorngate the following afternoon, as the vicar's wife was returning from some of her parochial ministerings.

"What is wrong with her?" she asked Dr. Sentance, anxiously, as she met him riding homeward.

"I confess she puzzles me," he answered. "I sounded the heart this morning, and, except for extremely weak action, I can trace no definite signs of a malady."

"I think I will go on to Dinglewood and see her," Mrs. Thorngate said to herself, as she was alone again. Constance Fraser and she were warm friends. "I want to see how that child is getting on, too."

She was just passing her own gate as she thought of this, and was suddenly astonished by being confronted by a young man, who proceeded to fold his arms about her and kiss her cheek most heartily.

"Well, Aunt Agatha, here I am once again, you see," said a soft, singularly pleasant voice.

"Beverley, my dear boy! How you startled me! Oh, dear!" said poor Mrs. Thorngate fairly gasped for breath.

"Poor Aunt Agatha! What a shame! I am awfully sorry, dear. I thought you saw me. Come in and sit down, you dear old thing. Where's Uncle Gus?"

Mrs. Thorngate allowed herself to be led up to the rectory by the strong arm. Her surprise was vanishing and only pleasure remained. Beverley came home once again! She could scarcely believe it. Beverley, that dear, handsome, scion-prince son of her dead and gone, yet still beloved sister, Margaret! Mrs. Thorngate's child-bereft heart clung to this young man with the tenacity of an ivy plant. He was, after her husband, her dearest and most treasured possession on earth. Once inside the cozy dining room she embraced him warmly.

"Let me look at you, darling," she said, holding him off at arm's length and feasting her eyes on his extremely handsome face, with its dark oregano skin, clear-cut features and short-cropped beard. "Oh, my dear! I am glad to see you once more. You bad creature, never to have written me a line all these months! And now you want something to eat, and there is nothing decent in the house."

"You will sit down and take your ease. I have already ransacked the larder, and with very good results. Your cold beef was beyond reproach, my dear aunt."

Mrs. Thorngate laughed.

"How good it is to see you in your old chair," she said, tenderly. "How I wish Gus was at home."

"He will be back in a few days, I suppose!" Beverley Rochfort observed casually, after having learned the reason of his uncle being away. To an onlooker it might easily have been perceived that the young man had no very great regret in the rector's absence; but Mrs. Thorngate did not observe it.

"And now you will make up your mind to stay with us, will you not, my dearest? I can assure you we are not very dull down here, now; we have the Duchess of Harborough, with the Marquis of Ivorne, and Lord John Glendurwood at Craiglands. The Frasers are at Dinglewood; the Everests settled in Gladson for the hunting; no end of smart people one way and another."

Beverley smiled complacently and stroked his short, silky beard. Since necessity would force him to make the rectory his headquarters for at least some few months, he was not at all averse to hearing his aunt's news.

"I am not surprised they should come here: it is a good country. I don't know a better, and I have traveled through a good many in my time. I suppose I can get a sort of mount in either Ginston or Montberry?"

"No need to go so far," smiled Mrs. Thorngate. "Your uncle has two hunters in the stables, and he will be infinitely obliged to any one who will give them: a little exercise, more especially as he cannot be here to use them himself. Would you like to go and have a look at them, my dear boy? You will find Potter still in the stables; in fact, very little is changed in the year and a half you have been away."

"I don't mind if I do. But where are you off to?"

Mrs. Thorngate explained her reasons for going to Dinglewood.

"I think I will leave the horses, and accompany you," he said; "it is just as well to resume acquaintanceship with the folk around."

And so, chatting languidly in his soft, musical voice, Beverley Rochfort walked through the muddy lanes to Dinglewood. He remembered he had made a distinct impression on Sheila Fraser when he met her before, and, although he had no definite plans in his mind, he felt he should be wise to renew the friendship with this extremely wealthy young woman.

He let Mrs. Thorngate's cheery tongue run on, and was not very communicative about himself.

"Just back from the Cape," he observed, when his aunt pinned him on this point, "and an uncomfortable time I have had of it. Gold mines, indeed! More like treadmills. Never worked so hard in my life, and nothing for it!" He laughed softly. "Aunt Agatha, I have come home with empty pockets!"

A slight shade passed over Mrs. Thorngate's face.

"We must not let that last, Beverley,"

she replied; then a little more hurriedly, "you still have your small income, of course?"

"I am sorry to say, dear aunt, that my income is a thing of the past. I realized the capital when I was in England before. I had absolute need of the money, and there was nothing else to do, I thought I told you of this."

Mrs. Thorngate uttered a quiet "No, dear, you did not," and somehow the lane grew misty before her. She recalled how hard her sister had struggled to keep this small amount of money safe for her boy. Beverley's indifferent tone jarred on her a little, but she was too fond of him to let that last.

"You must have a chat with Gus when he comes back, and until then, dear, look upon me as your banker," she said, gently.

"Dear Aunt Agatha!" Beverley murmured, pressing her hand. His gratitude was entirely assumed, since he had settled this arrangement in his mind before he left Port Elizabeth; but Mrs. Thorngate never doubted it for a moment.

"You will be a rich man some day, Beverley, you are so clever. Brains like yours always succeed."

"They certainly have served me very well so far," agreed Mr. Rochfort. There was a curious smile on his face as he recalled how often his brains had carried him through disagreeable and awkward crises. "I must tell you all about my plans to-morrow, Aunt Agatha. Are those the lights of Dinglewood? I had an idea it was much further away. What a fine property it is! Miss Fraser is a lucky young woman. Is she appropriated yet?"

"There is no definite engagement; but I don't think I am far wrong if I say Sheila's fancy leans toward Lord John Glendurwood. I think you met him when you were here before."

A grim look settled on Beverley Rochfort's handsome face; his lips compressed themselves into a tight, ugly line.

"Yes, I know Glendurwood," was all he said; but a keen listener might have detected something hard and strange in his voice. "He is a very decided prig, Aunt Agatha."

Mrs. Thorngate made no reply to this, for, truth to tell, she had a weak spot in her heart for Lord John, and was one of his warmest admirers.

"I hate prigs! I knew one out there" —with comprehensive nod backward at some unnamed bourse—"to whom I took a fancy." Beverley laughed softly. "He was the surliest chap I ever came across, out what a plucky one! We knocked against each other pretty often. I felt sorry for him, somehow; he seemed always so glum. He gave me a packet to bring home to some lawyers here, and made me swear I would honestly deliver it. He called himself John Marsh, but I am quite sure that was not his name. He must have been a good-looking fellow when he was younger, with eyes as blue —well, as your large sapphire ring, Aunt Agatha, and coal-black hair. A strange combination! I never saw it before."

"Why, that's just what that child is like!" cried the rector's wife.

"What child?"

"Miss Fraser's maid, and a protege of Gus! Such a lovely little creature. I wish you could see her, Beverley."

"I never waste my admiration on servants," he said as they reached the low, wide porch-like entrance of Dinglewood House.

Miss Fraser was dispensing tea to her grace the Duchess of Haileborough and one or two other people. She received Mrs. Thorngate in the warm, pretty fashion she always assumed before Jack's mother.

"How good of you to come! Dear mamma will be so pleased to see you! Thanks, she is really better this afternoon —at least I hope so. Oh! she frightened me terribly when she fell down in that fainting fit! I did not want her to go, but she would do it. Mr. Rochfort, will you come and sit here? Dear god-mamma, may I introduce Mr. Beverley Rochfort to you? He has just come back from foreign parts, and will entertain you. I am sure!"

The duchess moved her ample skirts so that Beverley might sit down. Lord John was speaking very plainly and earnestly.

"Sheila," he said, as he drew the girl apart from the rest for a moment, "how comes that man here?"

"What man? Oh, Mr. Rochfort?

Why he is dear Mrs. Thorngate's nephew. Stupid Jack, as if you did not know that!"

"I did not know it, or I should not have asked the question. I have never seen him down here before, and I have never heard Mrs. Thorngate speak of him."

"Oh, he is her joy and her beloved. I call him handsome, don't you? But, of course, no man ever admires another; I forgot."

"Whoever he may be, I know him as one of the greatest blackguards it has ever been my lot to meet."

"Good gracious, Jack, how awful!"

"Mr. Thorngate has nothing to do with him. I doubt if he would ever let him inside his house if he knew as much about him as I do."

Beverley was in the best of spirits.

He had carefully noted that whispered conference at the fire, just as he had noted that Lord John Glendurwood did not vouchsafe him any greeting. He was much relieved as Sheila came up to them

and treated him to a smile. He did not quite understand her expression, but he studied it well and determined to think it over. He was a most amusing man; he could tell an anecdote with just enough disregard for the truth as to point it well and make it more palatable. His voice was so pleasant, his bearing so graceful, and his face so handsome, that he won everybody's heart.

"You must come to Craiglands," cried the wench, with decision.

Meanwhile Jack Glendurwood was strutting through the chill February afternoon; a slight frost and fall of snow had prevented the meet that morning, and he felt a trifle bored.

By this time he was at the stables, and, going in, he examined Sheila's mare Diane and gave a word of praise to the head groom. As he was sauntering across the court yard he ran against a man hurrying in from a side avenue, which was the servant's entrance and exit from Dinglewood and the village.

"What, Downs, you are! Is Lord Ivorne ill, or what is the matter?" he exclaimed in surprise, as he recognized his own servant.

Downs stammered out some sort of explanation about having left something belonging to him at the house the day before.

Jack looked at the man. He had not had him long, and did not particularly care for him. He felt that Downs was lying at this moment. He whistled to the dogs scattered about, and turned down the avenue from which his servant had hurried. He had not gone many steps before he came to a standstill. There, just in front of him, her hands pressed close to her breast, clutched in the black cloak and veil in which he had first seen her, stood Audrey.

She was perfectly erect, and held her head proud and high. The light was fast growing dim, but he could see how white her face was, and how her eyes were glowing.

"What are you doing here alone?" he exclaimed, almost peremptorily, coming close up to her. As he did so he noticed that her breath was coming in great panting sobs, as from some one who had been mortally frightened. "What is it? What is the matter?" he asked, hurriedly.

"I have no friends," she said in a voice that was hoarse with agitation and excitement: "I am all alone in the world. Even Jean cannot help me now."

Jack Glendurwood moved a step nearer, and his foot kicked against a bag that was on the ground; but he did not notice it. "Something has happened," he said, earnestly and kindly. "Will you tell me what it is?"

Audrey gazed before her in a set, fixed dazed fashion for another moment or so; then she gave a little cry, and pressed her two hands before her eyes.

"Oh! if I could have only killed him!" she said, fiercely, yet kindly. "How dare he! How dare he!"

Lord John started and his pulses thrilled. He was about to question her, and then, like a flash of lightning, the truth came to him—Downs' stammering awkwardness, the girl's shame and misery. The man had evidently insulted her—perhaps had kissed her! A hot tide of color surged to Jack Glendurwood's face.

"It shall not occur again," he soothed her, and still clasping her hands; "you must not come out here in the dusk alone if you can help it; you are too young, too—too pretty, my child. New you are going to be brave, you will not cry any more!"

But the tears were fast coursing one another down her fair, white cheeks.

"I am going away," she said, as well as she could speak. "Miss Fraser won't keep me any longer. She said I was to go at once. I—I know I am stupid, but if she would only give me a chance I should do better—but she won't, and now I must go back to the home and they will scold me, and—"

"Sent you away like this—at this time of night? Oh, there must be some mistake!" Jack's voice was full of just indignation.

Audrey assured him it was only too true, and eased her sorrowful little heart by pouring out her disappointment and misery, until suddenly she remembered, with a start, that she was presuming dreadfully on his kindness, and came to a premature stop.

"I shall never, never forget all you have done for me!" she said in low, broken sobs, and then she had loosened her hold and was out of sight.

He stood gazing after her, and then, as though urged by some wild, unconquerable impulse, he lifted his arm and kissed the spot her lips had touched.

"I love her!" he said to himself, vaguely, yet with a rush of joy filling his heart. "I love her! My darling! My darling!"

(To be continued.)

Unreasonable.

Little Claud Brownback—Glimmer some 'lasses!

Papa Brownback (reprovingly)—Yo' orthuh be mo' grammatic, muh son! Don't say 'lasses; say molasses.

Little Claud Brownback—How's I gwine to say molasses, poppy, when I isn't had none a-tall yit?—Puck.

Looking Ahead.

Foote Lights—I hear your brother is saving his money now.

Miss Sue Brette—Yes, he is.

"What's that for?"

"He's going on the road with a company very soon and he's discovered that a man is fined for walking on some railroads."—Yonkers Statesman.

Their Brand.

"Did you know that politicians have a particular kind of sweets to which they are partial?"

"I didn't know it about politicians especially. What is the kind?"

"Candied dates, of course."—Balts more American.

PE-RU-NA A MEDICAL COMPOUND

In any medical compound as much depends upon the manner in which it is compounded as upon the ingredients used.

First, there must be a due proportion of the ingredients. Each drug in the pharmacopeia has its special action. To combine any drug with other drugs that have slightly different action, the combination must be made with strict reference to the use for which the compound is intended. The drugs may be well selected as to their efficacy, but the compound ENTIRELY SPOILED BY THE PROPORTION in which they are combined.

It takes years and years of experience to discover this proportion. There is no law of chemistry, of pharmacy, by which the exact balance of proportion can be determined. EXPERIENCE IS THE ONLY GUIDE.

In compounding a catarrh remedy Dr. Hartman has had many years' experience. In the use of the various ingredients which compose the catarrh remedy, Peruna, he has learned, little by little, how to harmonize the action of each ingredient, how to combine them into a stable compound, how to arrange them into such nice proportions as to blend the taste, the operation and the chemical peculiarities of each several ingredient in order to produce a pharmaceutical product beyond the criticism of doctors, pharmacists or chemists.

WE REPEAT THAT AS MUCH DEPENDS ON THE WAY IN WHICH THE DRUGS ARE COMBINED AS DEPENDS UPON THE DRUGS THEMSELVES.

The compound must present a stability which is not affected by changes of temperature, not affected by exposure to the air, not affected by age. It must be so combined that it will remain just the same, whether used in the logging or mining camps of the northwest or the coffee plantations of the tropics.

A complete list of the ingredients of Peruna would not enable any druggist or physician to reproduce Peruna. It is the skill and sagacity by which these ingredients are brought together that give Peruna much of its peculiar claims as an efficacious catarrh remedy.

However much virtue each ingredient of Peruna may possess, the value of the compound depends largely upon the manner and proportion in which they are combined. The right ingredients, put together rightly, is the only way a medical compound can be made of real value.

Shirt Protector.

When a man buys a dress shirt nowadays he can depend on the bosom being absolutely spotless, since owing to a new device that has been thought of, the shirt is protected from the touch of soiled fingers that so often were wont to leave their mark on the fair surface.

This new style of protection consists of an envelope of transparent paper that is large enough to hold the shirt, keep it absolutely clean, and yet enabling one to see the size numbers through it. Without adding much to the cost, the envelope is a great economy to the dealers and makers, since with its use there is never any cause for the return of shirts to the factory that have been soiled in the handling, as there is in the case of collars and cuffs.

FITS