

# THE CHARITY GIRL

By EFFIE A. ROWLANDS

## CHAPTER VIII.—(Continued.)

When Frank was gone, at first she felt as if she must rush madly after him, but she restrained herself; and fortunately she got her father's permission to return to her aunt, and try to cheer the poor woman up. Roderick was back at her home, and proved a courteous and kind friend to his brother's wife. He besought her not to speak to her father about the marriage, urging all sorts of reasons for the delay. Roderick also advised her not to confide in his mother; and, bearing in mind Frank's wishes, she did all the young man advised.

So the days went by. Four months were spent; the time was drawing near for her father's annual winter visit to the Riviera, and Constance felt she ought to accompany him, when suddenly the current of her life was changed by two events, the first of which brought the color to her cheeks and the thrill to her heart, the second of which plunged the girl's soul into the deepest, darkest misery a woman can ever know.

Just as the letter in which she had written, in timid, gentle words, the maternal hopes she might assure herself of, a blow fell upon her which all but crushed her heart, as it successfully broke her heart. One day a woman presented herself at Lady Anstruther's house and asked to see Miss Gascoigne. Marshall, who guarded and shielded her young mistress by every means in her power, would have refused this woman admittance, but Constance took the matter into her own hands, and a meeting followed.

When Marshall went in to look after the girl, thinking she had given the stranger enough of her time, she found Constance standing before the fire, her face ashen white, her eyes staring and expressionless, like the eyes of the dead. "Marshall," she said, with tones that were husky with emotion, "Marshall, I—I have been deceived. I am not Frank's wife!"

"Not Mr. Frank's wife! Oh, come, Miss Constance, you are altogether wrong! Why, didn't I see you a-standing before the altar with my own eyes, and didn't I hear you swear to belong to each other?"

Constance put out an icy-cold hand. "Dear, true friend," she whispered, between her pallid lips, and then she took up a piece of paper and gave it to Marshall.

"Read that, and you will see I am not wrong," she said, with a wintry smile. "The wedding you assisted at was only a farce. Here is the certificate of Frank Anstruther's first marriage, ay, first and only one, for that woman who has just left me is his lawful, legal wife."

"I will not believe it! I will not believe it!" So cried Marshall over and over again, while the poor girl crouched down by the fire and rocked herself to and fro, asking herself in a wild, mad way, what was to become of her.

"Mr. Roderick will put this straight," was Marshall's verdict, and for a brief time a flame of hope sprang up in the wretched creature's breast; but alas! it soon died down and was crushed out forever.

Roderick took the matter up immediately. He sought out every clew, followed the truth up to the bitter end, and, lastly and sorrowfully, had to own his brother a liar and a villain.

Constance seemed turned to stone. She shed no tears, she made no moan; she bore herself with a pride that was something marvelous.

"What was to become of her? What of her child?" The question haunted her day and night.

Fortunately, her aunt's health became so bad, she was permitted to stay buried in the country house without further molestation from her father, who went off to Monte Carlo and enjoyed himself, doubly free from his daughter's presence. Letters arrived from Frank by every mail, but they were tossed into the fire unread.

"I leave you to communicate with your brother," the girl had said in her one and only interview with Roderick, and the hot blood of triumph had surged into his veins.

How well his evil, jealous plan had worked! Better than he could have hoped or dreamed. Frank was miles away; he could not stand forth and refute the horrible lies. Constance, bound up in pride and misery, refused to do as she should have done, write to him direct, and so learn the real truth. His two puppets worked at his will and hastened his revenge.

Revenge on the brother he had always hated; revenge on the woman he had loved in a wild, unreasoning, passionate way, and who had shrunk from his very friendship in a manner that had chilled him to the heart. It was a cruel, wicked, unmanly act—the act rather of a demon than that of a man.

As day after day went by, the time approached for the birth of Constance's nameless child. She had made no plans, arranged nothing. Roderick did everything. He it was who guarded the girl in her mother's house, where, with no one about her but Marshall, not even a whisper of her condition caught the wind; he surrounded her with every comfort, every care, but he never saw her, and she sent him no thanks.

The day her child was born, Marshall came to him; she had no liking for Roderick—in fact, so great was her anger and hatred toward poor Frank she could scarcely bring herself to address any one

connected with him; but there was nothing else to do, and even the old woman, in common justice, admitted that Roderick was acting with more than a brother's love to the unfortunate girl.

"She refuses to see the child," Marshall said, "and when I urge her, all she says is, 'Let it die! Let it die!' We can't do that, you know, sir. What are we to do?"

Roderick had already foreseen this contingency and was prepared.

"The child must be removed. I know a woman who will take it and be thankful for the money. The mother will never ask for it, never wish to see it."

And thus, despite Marshall's longing to keep the helpless, hapless child, was the matter arranged. Constance never asked after her baby, and when she was told by her faithful maid what had been done with it, she made no sign, either by word or look. The doctor who attended her had been taken into confidence by Roderick, and he pitied the poor young mother from the bottom of his heart, for he saw that a blow had been struck which could never be healed.

Constance was scarcely convalescent before she received a visit from her father, who was in a state of much perturbation.

"Knew how it would be," he said, when he first saw the girl's white face. "Boxed up here with a dying old woman—enough to kill you in reality. And who could have put this into the papers? Anstruther says it must have been some officious person in the village who thought you were ill, and must needs kill you."

Constance took the newspaper from her father's hand, and read the announcement of her own death in a short paragraph. She was silent for a moment, and then, as she handed it back, she said, with a faint smile:

"It is a pity you have to contradict it, father."

"Eh! What nonsense! Now, Con, I shan't let you stop here any longer. I never saw such a change in any girl! Pack up your trunks at once and come away! Why, you look forty!"

How little did poor Constance think, as she journeyed to London with her father, that at that very time Frank Anstruther was reading the account of her death, not only in a newspaper, but in a loving, tenderly indited letter from his brother Roderick, who had hit on this idea of separating Frank from his wife as being the best. If he had hinted at anything else, Frank would have rushed back to England at once, but with Constance dead and buried, what was there to bring him back?

Roderick's shrewdness was verified; Frank never came home. And when the London season was at its height, and Constance Gascoigne was winning fresh laurels for her beauty and wit, the news arrived of an outbreak of fever in Burma, and Frank Anstruther's name was among the dead. They called him a hero; they sent home accounts of his courage, self-sacrifice, and bravery, and Constance's heart turned with a despairing, yearning agony to the man she had loved so well, and she longed to be buried with him, shut out of the world forever. She saw Roderick as little as she could. It was from his lips that she learned of her child's death; the woman who had taken it had reported always how delicate it was, and the end, always expected, had come at last.

Then it was that Roderick spoke; that he showed himself in his colors. He pleaded for her love; he told her how he had adored her ever since their childhood's days; how he had given place to Frank against his longing, and entreated her to forget all and become his wife.

When he left her that day Roderick knew his plan had failed; come what might, Constance would never be his wife. To lend aid to his final coup he had lied to her about her child. He knew that it lived, although if neglect and poverty could have killed it the poor little thing had its share. Stung to the quick with the bitter words that came from Constance's lips at his offering of love, he determined she should never be told the truth. He had one interview with the woman who had charge of the child, and after giving her a large sum of money and sworn her to secrecy, he went out of England, and was lost to the world that knew him forever. He had lived for one thing only during the space of four years, and when he knew he had lost his triumph, he cast the dust off his shoes and vanished.

Then came the time of George Fraser's wooing, the miserable hopeless time when Constance learned that her hand was the price of silence over her father's dishonor and dishonesty. The rest we know up to the day that Audrey came to Dinglewood as maid to Sheila Fraser.

## CHAPTER IX.

"And you are my mother?" They were the only words Audrey could utter. She was bewildered, amazed; her heart was beating with a nervous excitement in which pride and joy mingled largely. She felt as though she were in some sort of dream, or waking trance; every now and then she passed her hand over her eyes as though to clear away the confusion that existed.

She was kneeling beside Constance Fraser's slender figure, the pretty, white hands were clasping hers, the soft, musical voice was ringing in her ears. And this was her mother! She—Audrey Maxse—the waif and stray, the nameless

nobody, she was this delicate aristocrat's child!

"You are my child, my darling. My own, my very own!"

Audrey gave a little cry and nestled close to her new-found mother.

"It is too beautiful, too beautiful to be real!" was all she could say; and then, as she felt the soft, tender lips pressed to her brow and cheeks, she began to wake from her dream.

"Tell me, tell me how it all happened, how you found that I was not dead."

"It was your face that first seemed to whisper hope," Mrs. Fraser replied. "When you came in that morning it was as though Frank stood before me again. You have his very eyes; the expression in them is exactly what lived in his. I began to wonder, to dream. I was not happy till I had learned your history. Now you know why I have had so many long chats with dear Mrs. Thorngate. I determined to confide in her; I knew I could trust her, as, indeed, that has been proved. At once she took matters into her own hands. She communicated with her husband, who made every investigation about you, my darling, and discovered, thank heaven! that when you were placed in the home through the influence of Sir Henry Bulstrode, certain things belonging to the woman supposed to be your mother were deposited in the care of the matron, Miss Irons. I examined these few poor things—an old satchel, a Bible, a bundle of old letters; and in the satchel, hidden away in the lining, we discovered the certificate of your birth, together with the last letter Roderick must have written to the woman before she died. Oh, my darling! my darling!" she cried, holding Audrey pressed close to her. "How can I ever describe the exquisite joy that came to me when I knew what heaven had sent me? I seemed to live again—to grow, as I once was, strong and full of courage. Kiss me, my child, my baby! Kiss me, and let me hear you say you love and forgive me for my cruel desertion of you!"

"Forgiven you! Oh, my poor, dear, sweet, new mother, don't say such a thing! When I remember how you must have suffered, how cruel that wicked man has been to hide me from you all these years, I feel almost mad."

That eventful night ended in more excitement, for the report spread to the house of the discovery of Jack Glendurwood, insensible and horribly wounded, and in the tumult that ensued Sheila worked off some of her violent feelings. She broke in abruptly upon the lengthened conference between Audrey and her mother, and blurted out the news without any warning; but her eyes glistened gladly as she saw the color leave Audrey's face and lips, and heard the moan that came from the sorrow-stricken heart. Constance Fraser turned pale, too, but the sight of her child's face gave her courage. As though she had read it in large letters, she knew the truth then. "It may not be so bad, Sheila, these things are always exaggerated," she said, as she put her hands tenderly on Audrey's shoulders. "It seems to me incredible that Jack should have been attacked like this. Surely such a man can have no enemies."

"He has been robbed of all the jewelry and money he had on that will be a clew," Sheila said, apparently with indifference, but watching Audrey keenly as she spoke. All at once she seemed to realize that things were not so bad for her. This sudden illness of Lord John's might, after all, prove a good friend to her.

At any rate, it would separate him from Audrey, and that was a great deal. She noticed with the keenest pleasure the anguish that had dawned on the young girl's face. She must not let her step-mother notice her hatred of the girl that had stepped in between her and her happiness.

"But I am forgetting," she said, in a frank, pleasant manner. "I have to offer all sorts of congratulations to you, mamma. Why, it is like a fairy story. And so this pretty little girl is to be my sister?" She had come up to the slender drawn-up figure. "We must be good friends, you and I, Audrey," she said, glibly. "Let us seal that bargain with a kiss."

Constance Fraser's delicate face flushed. This was not what she had expected; her generous, noble heart was deeply touched and she trembled visibly.

"Thank you, dear Sheila," was all she said; but she gave the girl a look of unutterable gratitude. "You have always been kind to me. I—I should like to think you and my Audrey were friends."

Sheila stood silent for a moment, then, laughing softly, she pressed her lips to Audrey's cheek. "There! It is done!" she said. "And now for the latest news of poor Jack." Audrey had stood motionless all through this little scene; but her mother's hand felt the tremble that ran through the young frame. She fathomed only too well all that her child was suffering. As the door closed on Sheila, and they were alone once more, she wrapped her arms round the slight figure.

"My darling!" she said, in tones of the deepest tenderness.

Audrey gave a little cry, and turning, clung to her new-found comforter and protector.

"Oh, mother, mother!" she whispered, brokenly; "and I—I love him so! What shall I do if he dies?"

Then, with those loving arms still about her, she went out the story of her simple love. It was an old and a new story; and though her heart was torn with anguish at this calamity that had befallen her beloved, the girl's sorrow was inexpressibly soothed by the remembrance that the heart she leaned on now beat only for her, and would be hers henceforth and to the end.

(To be continued.)

Circumstances are beyond the control of man, but his conduct is in his own power.—Beaumont.

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GUARANTEED under the Food and Drugs Act, June 30, 1906. No. 324.

### Self-Defense.

"I'm surprised at you," said Jigley, "trying to borrow a dollar from that fellow Harduppe. You're surely not in such awful need of money."

"No," replied Shrude, "but I felt sure Harduppe was. Anticipated him, that's all."—Catholic Standard and Times.

### Juvenile Idea.

Little Johnny (in cemetery)—Say, paw, why didn't the man who is buried here go to heaven?

Paw—Perhaps he did, my son. Little Johnny—But it says on his tombstone, 'Peace to his ashes,' and it must be a hot place where there's ashes.

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### Collusion—Not Collusion.

The Judge—In this divorce suit there seems to be some collusion between the man and his wife.

The Wife—Collusion? No. It's been collusion ever since the ceremony!—Pittsburg Gazette Times.

### Immune.

Elsie—Oh! you better leave those preserves alone. Ma said if she caught you at 'em again she'd dust your jacket.

Tommy—I know, but I ain't wearin' any jacket. I took it off on purpose.—Catholic Standard and Times.

# CATARRH BLOOD DISEASED AND SYSTEM DISORDERED

Catarrh is not merely an inflammation of the tissues of the head and throat, as the symptoms of ringing noises in the ears, mucous dropping back into the throat, continual hawking and spitting, etc., would seem to indicate; it is a blood disease in which the entire circulation and the greater part of the system are involved. Catarrh is due to the presence of an excess of uric acid in the blood. The Liver, Kidneys and Bowels frequently become torpid and dull in their action and instead of carrying off the refuse and waste of the body, leave it to sour and form uric acid in the system. This is taken up by the blood and through its circulation distributed to all parts of the system. These impurities in the blood irritate and inflame the different membranes and tissues of the body, and the contracting of a cold will start the secretions and other disgusting and disagreeable symptoms of Catarrh. As the blood goes to all parts of the body the catarrhal poison affects all parts of the system. The head has a tight, full feeling, nose continually stopped up, pains above the eyes, slight fever comes and goes, the stomach is upset and the entire system disordered and affected by this disease. It is a waste of time to try to cure Catarrh with sprays, washes, inhalations, etc. Such treatment does not reach the blood, and can, therefore, do nothing more than temporarily relieve the discomfort of the trouble. To cure Catarrh permanently the blood must be thoroughly purified and the system cleansed of all poisons, and at the same time strengthened and built up. Nothing equals S. S. S. for this purpose. It attacks the disease at its head, goes down to the very bottom of the trouble and makes a complete and lasting cure. S. S. S. removes every particle of the catarrhal poison from the blood, making this vital stream pure, fresh and healthy. Then the inflamed membranes begin to heal, the head is loosened and cleared, the hawking and spitting cease, every symptom disappears, the constitution is built up and vigorous health restored. S. S. S. also tones up the stomach and digestion and acts as a fine tonic to the entire system. If you are suffering with Catarrh begin the use of S. S. S. and write us a statement of your case and our physicians will send you literature about Catarrh, and give you special medical advice without charge. S. S. S. is for sale at all first class drug stores.

I had Catarrh for about fifteen years, and no man could have been worse. I tried everything I could hear of, but no good resulted. I then began S. S. S., and could see a little improvement from the first bottle, and after taking it a short while was cured. This was six years ago, and I am as well today as any man. I think Catarrh is a blood disease, and know there is nothing on earth better for the blood than S. S. S. Nobody thinks more of S. S. S. than I do. **M. MATSON,** Lapeer, Mich.

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