

# THE CHARITY GIRL

By EFFIE A. ROWLANDS

## CHAPTER X.

As early as possible the following morning, Sheila Fraser ordered her horse, donned her habit, and, without waiting for breakfast or groom, left home in hot haste for Craiglunds. She wanted to be first at an interview with the duchess. Much depended on how she acted now.

"If I can just drop a few hints, and so prejudice her against that girl, not all Mrs. Fraser's sweetness, or her daughter's artfulness, will have much avail. I am a rich woman! I never felt so glad of my money before."

She had diverged a little from the ordinary route to Craiglunds, because there was a better road by so doing, and as she trotted along fleetly, she suddenly came upon a dog cart, in which was seated Beverley Rochfort, looking wonderfully handsome in his fur-lined coat.

"Miss Fraser, this is an unexpected pleasure," he said, as he lifted his hat and motioned the groom to take the reins. "You are out early."

"I am going to Craiglunds, to make inquiries," she said curtly.

Beverley only smiled, but she saw at once that he attached a good deal of meaning to this hasty ride. He got down from the cart.

"Drive up and down until I am ready, Jones," he commanded, as he walked up to Sheila's horse and stroked the smooth neck. "Is there, then, so much cause for anxiety?" he asked. "Are you nervous about Lord John, Miss Fraser?"

Sheila pursed her lips. She resented his manner, and she did not quite understand it, either.

"I feel that it would be altogether a pleasant and a wise arrangement if you and I called ourselves friends," Beverley said, after a slight pause. "We have so much in common."

"I don't think I understand you," Sheila was startled into saying.

"I must try and explain myself clearly. I know the reason of your hurried visit to Craiglunds. It is not sympathy that takes you there, but something more akin to self-interest. Oh! do not be angry, there is no occasion, for, my very dear young lady, I think you are perfectly right. You see, although I do not credit you with any great amount of sympathy, I have plenty myself. Believe me, I am quite sincere. Just now," Beverley went on, "I said I thought it would be not only a pleasant, but a wise thing for you and I to become friends. Union is strength, you know, Miss Fraser; a good old maxim."

"Don't you think you had better leave conundrums alone, and speak out straight, Mr. Rochfort?"

"I will," he answered, quietly. "Sheila, we are both persons of determination and ambition. My ambition takes one form, yours another; but on one point we are alike—we would sacrifice much to gain our ends; would we not?"

Sheila's cold gray eyes flashed as she nodded her head.

"You hate the girl; I hate him! You are determined that John Glendurwood shall make you his wife; I am as equally determined I shall make her mine. Arrived so far, the rest should be easy."

Sheila drew a sharp breath. She loathed him for his shrewdness in having read her mind so clearly, but his words had brought a new aspect altogether.

"It is for you to suggest," she said, speaking swiftly and in low tones. "As you said just now, union is strength, and so—"

"So you agree to be friends, eh?" Beverley smiled.

He had never had the smallest fear of falling. He had not watched Sheila so carefully these past days for nothing. He held out his hand as he spoke and Sheila put hers into it.

"Have you any plans?" she asked, abruptly. She was no longer so eager to be gone. One glimpse at this man's smiling, handsome, evil face told her that he would do all he wished. Even in the midst of the satisfaction that came with a rush, she could not repress a feeling of jealousy and envy that he should love Audrey and be indifferent to her, Sheila.

"I will tell you more when I return from London. My journey there is not wholly unconnected with this matter. And now, I think I must say 'Au revoir.' I sincerely trust you will find Lord John not so bad as rumor reports. Carry my sympathy and regards to her new grace; she is a charming woman, and will make an altogether excellent mother-in-law."

Sheila smiled mechanically, and gathering up her reins, she rode on. She gave a sort of shudder as she went, and the memory of Beverley's dark, glittering eyes lingered with her. She felt, somehow, so powerless when she was with him.

Sheila always felt a thrill at her heart as she rode or drove up to Craiglunds. Now as she passed up the avenue and drew rein at the covered doorway, a man with powdered hair and grave face came forward to meet her.

"Her grace's love, miss, and she begs you will excuse her this morning; she does not feel equal to leaving his lordship's room. She begs, also, to thank you, miss, for having taken the trouble to ride over and make inquiries."

"Does Dr. Sentence think there is any danger?" she asked, and there was genuine anxiety in her voice.

"Dr. Sentence considers his lordship's condition very serious," replied the servant.

Sheila rode back to Dinglewood cross and anxious. She met Dr. Sentence com-

ing down the avenue, and stopped to question him.

"The poor fellow has not recovered consciousness yet," the medical man answered. "I have telegraphed up for Rawson and Locksley. Miss Fraser, it is horrible, a dastardly affair, and for the life of me I can't understand it. Lord Glendurwood never seemed to have an enemy in the world; but upon my word this looks to me like a malicious attack. It has turned out he had next to nothing in his pockets. Of course, his watch was valuable. But who on earth is there about here who could have borne him a grudge for anything he has ever done and said? I suppose you have sent for further police assistance, Miss Fraser?" he went on.

Sheila confessed she had not even thought of it.

"Are not the Mountberry men sufficient?" she asked.

"This is pre-eminently a case for an astute detective," he said; "and I should telegraph up at once to Scotland Yard, if I were you. As the affair happened in your grounds, of course, it would be pleasanter for you to have it sifted thoroughly."

"You are quite right!" Sheila said, warmly, although she could have struck him with her whip for daring to dictate to her. "I will send up to London at once."

As she said this, the thought of Beverley Rochfort came into her mind, and all at once she determined to learn his address from Mr. Thorngate, and telegraph to him to send down a detective, why, she could scarcely have told.

## CHAPTER XI.

It was long before poor Audrey closed her tired, aching eyes that eventful night; she had shed no more tears after that one passionate outburst; she felt too much pain and anxiety for this natural relief. All she could think of was Jack Glendurwood, lying alone in the brackets, insensible, half murdered. She accepted her mother's tender comfort, in a vague, dreamy way. All the sudden joy and pride that had sprung into being early in the evening, as she listened to the story of her birth, seemed to have vanished beneath this great sorrow.

The sun was shining high in the heavens when she opened her eyes, and found her mother bending anxiously over her. Constance Fraser gained strength at sight of her child's suffering. She was now the strong, courageous woman; she put aside all her invalid ways, and rose supreme to the moment.

"Look after her well," she said to Marshall, as she donned her outdoor garments, and prepared to drive over to Craiglunds.

The duchess, proud, self-reliant, self-possessed as she was generally classed to be, was after all only an ordinary woman, with a mother's heart beating quick and strong in her breast. Her two boys had been her darlings from the earliest days of their childhood; she had never been so fond or so proud of her one daughter, who was too much like her father in nature and character to prove a comfort to the other parent.

The tears came to the mother's eyes as Constance Fraser, after speaking all the consolation and sympathy she could think of, mentioned the countess's name.

"I will stay with you till Gladys comes," she said, gently; "I am sure there is much I can do."

"Gladys will not come," the duchess answered, quietly enough; and then all at once she broke down. "Oh, Constance! My dear! My dear!" she moaned, "what shall I do if I lose both my boys? Duncan's days are numbered—I know it only too well—and Jack, my bonny, my dear, good, noble Jack!"

Then Constance knelt beside her and cheered her again.

"You are alarmed by this insensibility; it is nothing; it often happens with concussion of the brain. I prophesy that in a week's time you will have Jack out of bed, or very nearly so. Now I want you to look at me; don't you see a change in my face? Yes, I see you do; shall I tell you all about it?"

And then, as gently, as briefly as she could, Constance bared the secrets of her heart to her friend.

"And you have found your child, Constance? I am glad. I rejoice, my dear, in your happiness. You must let me see her soon. I shall love her for your sake and for poor Frank's; he was a great favorite of mine."

Constance Fraser covered her face with her hands, and when she drew them away it was ashen white.

"Hush!" she said, almost inaudibly; "do not let us speak of him. The pain is too deep, too great. Such horrible remorse comes over me when I begin to think, that I fear for my reason. I know now I was deceived, that I doubted him wrongly; but—but that is all I dare let myself know just yet, it makes my heart bleed."

The duchess bent and kissed the sweet, white face.

"Have courage! Remember your child!" she whispered.

"I do! I do!" answered Constance, brokenly. "In her I must live again. God-mamma, I want you to promise to befriend her, to stand by her always."

"For your sake and for hers, I promise this, Constance; she shall never want a friend while I am alive."

John Glendurwood's condition showed no change, and although Dr. Sentence

declared he would pull his patient through, he nevertheless felt much doubt and anxiety as to his ultimate success.

"It is the mind that is keeping him back," he declared over and over again to Mrs. Fraser, and at last ventured to express the same idea to the duchess.

That very same evening as Constance was dressing for dinner, a carriage arrived from Craiglunds with a hurried message from the duchess.

"Would Mrs. Fraser kindly drive over as soon as possible—her grace wished to see her particularly."

Audrey sat before the fire in her mother's room; she was clad in a pretty little white gown made in picturesque fashion, and her hands already had lost the work stains that had seemed so out of place on them. She was scarcely conscious of what was going on around her. The past few days had sapped her strength, she cared to do nothing, could do nothing but sit and wonder how her beloved, her hero, was. How little did she guess that, as she sat there fearing, dreading every fresh moment, that her lover was then speaking her name as Constance Fraser bent over his bed.

"He has called her so often," his mother whispered, with quivering lips. "Oh, Constance! My dear, you will do as he asks! It may be his last wish!"

Constance pressed her lips on the brow above those eyes that, only a short time ago had been laughing and sparkling with life, happiness and manly vigor.

"Be comforted," she said, gently, for was he not lying on the edge of that dark, dread river? "It shall be as you wish."

"And—Audrey—my wife—before—I die?" the words were uttered so faint they were scarcely audible.

"And Audrey, my child, shall be your wife at once, without delay."

A smile of joy radiated the poor young fellow's face; he tried to clasp her hand, to murmur thanks, but he could do nothing but lie there, helpless as a child in his utter prostration.

## CHAPTER XII.

The following morning, before Constance Fraser had had time to compose her thoughts, and begin to prepare her child for what lay before her, Sheila came into the room.

Audrey was lying very quiet in her little bed, and the other girl noticed, with anger in her heart, how exquisitely lovely was that pale young face, pillowed among the delicate lace-edged linen and shadowed by the pink-lined curtains. It made her even savage, in her jealous hatred, to notice what daintiness the mother already gave to her new-found child.

"I came to tell you," she said, very abruptly, "that I am going to London for a few days. Janet will accompany me. Is there anything that I can do for you?"

Mrs. Fraser shook her head. Sheila went away in total ignorance that the most vital turn in events was to take place immediately.

It was no unusual thing for her to go to London for a few days, as she was a shrewd business woman, and superintended nearly all the movements of her affairs. This time, however, there was nothing that would demand her attention, except this former marriage of her father's widow.

She determined during her absence from Dinglewood to go herself to Broadborough and make full inquiries about Audrey.

"I will not rest till I have full and complete proof that she is Frank Anstruther's child. If only I can be successful and discover any flaw, I think I shall know how to make it disagreeable for Mrs. Fraser and her charity girl."

To Sheila's annoyance she found that Mr. Chester was in possession of every fact relating to Audrey's birth, and in a very short time placed these facts before her.

"There is not a shadow of doubt, Miss Fraser," he said quietly, "that this young girl is Miss Anstruther. I have been myself to Broadborough and made every inquiry, and if these inquiries had failed, the appearance of the registration of birth and the marriage certificate would settle the question. I have been down to the church where Miss Gascoigne married Captain Anstruther, and have procured another copy of the certificate. Here it is."

"Which is so much worthless paper, considering that Captain Anstruther was married at the time and had a wife living," Sheila remarked curtly.

"I am happy in being able to assure you that this romance is not true, and congratulate you that your stepmother has at least one joy left her in life. Fate has treated her harshly, poor lady."

She arose abruptly, and went away. As she re-entered her hotel, she saw a pile of luggage being carried in, and in her preternaturally sharp way she recognized the livery of the footman, who was superintending the portmanteaus and huge boxes, as that worn by the servants of the Earl of Daleswater. She whispered to her maid, Beecham, to find out if the family were about to stay at the hotel, and passed upstairs with the first sensation of pleasure she had experienced for some time, which grew stronger as she learned that the countess and her children were expected up the following day from Daleswater House.

## (To be continued.)

Nothing But the Truth.  
Buncum—My physician tells me I am working too hard.

Marks—The M. D. evidently knows his business.

Buncum—Why do you think so?

Marks—I have been comparing notes with a few of our mutual friends and I find you have worked us pretty hard.

## His Temperament.

"What kind of a disposition has our dyspeptic friend?"

"None at all—only an indisposition." Washington Star.

## Substitute for Celluloid.

The many uses and inflammable character of celluloid have led to an active search for substitutes. The new material of C. Trocquet, a French inventor of celluloid, asbestos and the organic matter contained in oyster shells. The cellulose is obtained by treating seaweed successively with acid and alkali, and washing. The asbestos is ground with petroleum oil, while the ground oyster shells are treated with hydrochloric acid and the insoluble residue is boiled with water, washed with weak alkaline solution, and collected on a filter. The mixtures contain from 25 to 65 parts of the cellulose, 2 to 12 parts of the oiled asbestos, and 20 to 45 parts of the oyster shell substances. The mass is treated with formaldehyde, suitably colored, and then pressed into any form or object for which celluloid can be used.

## What a Doctor is Good For.

Life is such a constant rush to a well-known physician that to secure a little recreation he has recourse to roses. A visitor called one night and began a speech to the servant.

"I want the doctor to come as quickly as he can."

"He can't do it," the servant answered. "He left orders that he was so busy that, unless it was absolutely a matter of life and death, he couldn't go out at all this evening."

"But," said the caller, "it isn't illness at all."

"What then?"

"We want him to come over and take a hand in a game of whist."

"Oh, that's different."

The servant disappeared, and reappeared a moment later.

"The doctor says he'll be over in ten minutes, sir," he announced.—Tit-Bits.

## Snow and Rain.

The first man to whom it ever occurred to find out how much rain was represented by a given fall of snow was Alexander Brice of Kirkcubright, who in March, 1765, made a simple experiment with the contents of a stone jug driven face downward into over six inches of snow. What he learned was that a greater or less degree of cold, or of wind, when the snow falls, and its lying a longer or shorter time on the ground, will occasion a difference in the weight and in the quantity of water produced; "but if," he added, "I may trust to the above trials, which I endeavored to perform with care, snow, newly fallen, with a moderate gale of wind, freezing cold, will produce a quantity of water equal to one-tenth part of its bulk." So that a fall of snow of ten inches represents a rainfall of one inch.—London Chronicle.

Made on His Own Specifications.  
Mrs. Jones—Mr. Jones sent these trousers back. He says they are not anywhere near long enough.

Snip (tailor)—That's funny. When I went to collect my bill from him he told me he was shorter than he ever was in his life and I made these trousers accordingly.—Toledo Blade.

## A TERRIBLE EXPERIENCE.

How a Veteran Was Saved the Amputation of a Limb.

B. Frank Doremus, veteran, of Roosevelt Ave., Indianapolis, Ind., says: "I had been showing symptoms of kidney trouble from the time I was mustered out of the army, but in all my life I never suffered as in 1897. Headaches, dizziness and sleeplessness, first, and then dropsy. I was weak and helpless, having run down from

180 to 125 pounds. I was having terrible pain in the kidneys, and the secretions passed almost involuntarily. My left leg swelled until it was 34 inches around, and the doctor tapped it night and morning until I could no longer stand it, and then he advised amputation. I refused, and began using Doan's Kidney Pills. The swelling subsided gradually, the urine became natural, and all my pains and aches disappeared. I have been well now for nine years since using Doan's Kidney Pills.

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## Good Tip.

"Do you think I can reach the heart of the haughty beauty?" sighed the sentimental youth with the guitar under his arm.

"Better try tunneling, old man," advised his friend.

"Tunneling?"

"Yes. I heard her say that you were a great bore."

## Great Blow.

"What makes your uncle look so seedy, Harker?"

"Why, he blew in ten thousand last year."

"Blew in ten thousand? Why, I never knew your uncle to be dissipated."

"Oh, this wasn't dissipation. You see, he invented a patent bellows that turned out a failure."

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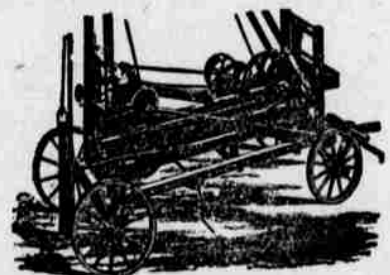
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