

THE CHARITY GIRL

By EFFIE A. ROWLANDS

CHAPTER XXIII.

As Audrey gave that cry and turned, Sheila Fraser and the man with her looked keenly after her.

"Quick," Sheila muttered, hoarsely. "She has seen, she believes it all! Make haste, go after her. You must stop her in case he has come and she should meet him! Quick! Give me that domino! I can hide it under mine!"

Beverley Rochfort—for it was he—hurriedly threw off the gray cloak, and without a word strode after Audrey.

It was against Beverley Rochfort's form that she stumbled in her blindness and weakness, and in his arms she rested as she lay insensible. Beverley paused only for a moment, then glancing to right and left he picked up his burden and went quickly through the trees to the rustic house near where Audrey had seen what she supposed to be her husband clasping Sheila Fraser in his arms. Reaching this, Beverley removed the mask from the lovely face that was white and cold, as though death itself was printed on it, placed the girl's senseless form in one of the long, cushioned garden chairs, and then stood with folded arms surveying her.

"After to-night your pride will be humbled," he said to himself, "and that husband of yours will find out what it is to have made an enemy of me."

Then, stooping, he kissed Audrey's unconscious lips passionately, fiercely, many times; but so deep and swift had been the blow struck to her young heart that not even at this degradation did nature awake to protect and repel.

"It must be time now," he muttered, and he laughed softly to himself as he closed the door of the garden house and turned the key in the lock.

"I have you safe now, my lady!" he said, as he put the key in a pocket of his domino and hurried away.

He had not gone far into the crowd of dancers and promenaders before he became aware of a form close beyond him which, if he had not known so well to the contrary, he could have sworn was Audrey herself. There was the black and silver domino, the white satin skirts peeping below, and the dainty black lace mask; the hood arranged exactly as Audrey's had been.

"It is excellent, upon my word, Sheila is clever when she likes to be," he said to himself, with much deliberation.

He was standing close beside Lady Daleswater; he knew her by her hard mouth and chin, even if Sheila had not carefully taught him all the colors of the dominoes who were necessary to the little drama they were enacting to-night. With Gladys, there were Mrs. Fairfax and several women whom he knew were all jealous and envious of Audrey—enemies, every one. He moved up to Mrs. Fairfax.

"Can you tell me who that black and silver domino is?" he asked, sinking his voice.

"Oh, that is Lady John Glendurwood. She seems to be enjoying herself, does she not?"

"She does indeed," Beverley answered. Behind his mask he frowned. This supposititious Audrey was acting a little too much, in his opinion, flirting and laughing in the most outrageous manner.

"Sheila must give her a hint, she mustn't stay too long. Glendurwood might arrive at any moment."

Fortunately for him, Sheila came up to him then, and she readily saw the wisdom of his words.

Going up to the woman disguised as Audrey, who was none other than Murray, the discharged lady's maid, she made some sort of excuse and walked away with her and her partner just as Jack Glendurwood, in his gray domino and mask, came up to where his sister was standing.

"Halloo, Gladys!" he said, laughing. "Guesed you easily enough, you see. Where's Audrey?"

"Your wife is just leaving the ball room with Miss Fraser."

Jack glanced down to the other end, and just caught a glimpse of a black and silver domino leaning rather heavily on the arm of some man.

"Who is the man, I wonder?" he thought to himself, and he was just rushing off after them when Lady Daleswater stopped him.

"Jack, give me your arm; this room is so hot, and—I want to speak to you."

Lady Daleswater was unconsciously aiding Sheila's drama, though, apart from her own desire to speak out strongly on Audrey's extraordinary behavior, Miss Fraser had asked her to keep her brother engaged as long as she could when he arrived. With a grimace Jack agreed.

"It is rather hot; and I am not in the best of tempers," he said, frankly. "I have driven all the way to Belmont and back to see Benson, and then found that there was a mistake—he had gone to London. His secretary swore that no telegram had been sent to me; but, of course, he had to change his tune when I pulled it out of my pocket and showed the message to him. Then he wanted to say it was some hoax; but who on earth would want to hoax me?"

"Strange things happen sometimes," Lady Daleswater said, curtly.

"Yes, and from all accounts they happen sometimes at masked balls," laughed Jack. "Even the short time I have been here I have heard nothing but gossip about the way some woman has been behaving, quite scandalizing the old ladies by her outrageous flirting. Have you seen her, Gladys? Do you know her?"

Lady Daleswater removed her mask with a jerk, and then stared straight into her brother's eyes.

"Yes, I have seen her, and I do know her," she said, very slowly. "To my utterable shame I say it, Jack, for that woman was none other than your wife."

"What?" Jack recoiled as though he had been struck, then rearing his head proudly, "How dare you say any such thing, Gladys? How dare you throw shame and discredit on a pure, sweet girl who has never done you a moment's harm, who has nothing but good, gentle thoughts for you and yours? How dare you?"

"Because it is the truth! Yes, the truth," repeated the countess, curtly. "Had you been here but a few moments ago you would have seen her with your own eyes! You would not have given me the lie in this way! I say again, Jack, that it is your wife who has disgraced herself and us this night, who has made herself the gossip and the scandal of the place for months to come."

"Gladys, I will not listen to you," Jack had torn off his mask; his face had grown as white as ashes. "From to-night, though you are my sister, I will never speak to you again for traducing my wife's name. I thought you had and cruel, but I thought also that, with all your faults, you had an honorable nature. I shall find Audrey, and take her home. This is no place for her."

Jack was turning abruptly, when a soft exclamation beside him and a hand on his arm stopped him.

"Lord John, and without your mask? Oh! I cannot allow this, it is against all rules."

It was Sheila who spoke.

"Have you seen my wife, Sheila?" Jack asked, hurriedly. He replaced his mask as he spoke.

"I left her a few moments ago. She was with Mr. Rochfort. Shall we go and find her?"

Sheila put her hand on his arm, and Jack moved away with her without another word to his sister.

"Where did you say you had seen Audrey?" Jack asked, harshly.

Sheila's eyes, shining hard and clear through her mask, were going quickly round. Where was Alice Fairfax? She should be at hand now to give the cue for the last act in the comedy that for two hearts this night would be bitter tragedy.

Before she had time to grow angry a pale-pink domino fluttered up to them; the owner gave a girlish giggle.

"Sheila, is it you? Yes, I see it. Such fun! I have just seen the loveliest bit of spooning you ever saw. That very proper Lady John Glendurwood and—who do you think?—why, Beverley Rochfort! Oh, I assure you they were going on like anything. They have gone to the old summer house and—"

Sheila checked her accomplices with so well-acted an air of anger as to astonish Miss Fairfax.

"Alice, how dare you! What are you saying, my dear child? You must not; it is very wrong!"

Miss Fairfax pretended to lose her temper. Really she had been an invaluable ally, and took as much delight in sharing in this wicked plot as though she were joining in the purest and best work on earth.

"I am only telling you the truth! If you don't believe me, go and see for yourself! I, for one, am not surprised, after the way she has gone on to-night," and with that Miss Fairfax founced her pink domino out of sight.

Jack Glendurwood had made no sign; not even the smallest exclamation crossed his lips. He stood erect and still, like a statue of stone, as they were alone again. Then suddenly he turned to Sheila.

"Where is this summer house she speaks of? Is it the old one I know?"

Sheila bit her lip. She had never heard anything so terrible as the sound of his voice, the passionate constraint, the hollowness of acute misery.

"My dear Jack," she said, laughing nervously, "you surely do not mean to say you take any notice of that foolish girl's—"

"Will you answer me?" Jack replied, fiercely.

For one moment Sheila's heart faltered. She began to see her work in its full vileness and sin. What if she had gone too far? What if he should murder Audrey when he saw her? There was a sound in his voice that spoke of rage un governable and mad pride.

"Do not take any notice of such gossip, Jack," she said hurriedly.

All the answer he gave was to begin to walk out into the grounds, and Sheila, nervously herself for the last, threw herself before him.

"No, Jack," she said in low, choked tones, "you shall not go!"

"What do you mean?" His face, from which he had torn away the mask, was almost savage in its anger and horrible fear. "Do you know what you are saying? Why must I not go and seek my wife? Am I not the proper person to do so? Answer me this, Sheila Fraser, why do you stop me? Do you fear what I shall see and hear?"

"Yes," she said, swiftly, "I fear—for you, Jack."

"Then be assured, Sheila, I shall not be harmed. Lead me to this summer house, that I may know the worst."

Sheila tried to look imploringly at him, but he simply repeated the command, and, turning at length she obeyed him. When they were close to the small rustic building she stopped.

"Go on alone," she said, and without another word Jack strode down the path.

With a gasp of fear, Sheila followed him. What would he do, what would he do? Cold as ice, yet burning with fever so terrible that it almost choked him, Jack passed down the path. His brain was on fire.

Audrey was there—Audrey, his pure love, his darling, his wife! On all sides she had been discussed, none had spoken kindly. What was this awful thing that had come upon them?

As he reached the door of the summer house he was trembling in every limb. His lips opened to call her name, then closed with a fierce curse. Another man was speaking it passionately, wildly.

"Audrey, my love, my love, my darling!"

With his strong right hand Jack struck back the door and stood there, in the dim light—a tall, avenging angel.

Audrey, with one hand pressed against the wall, was standing before him. At her feet knelt Beverley Rochfort, clasping the other hand, and kissing it as he poured out his vows of love. As Jack

appeared before them, Audrey gave one great cry.

"Jack! Jack! Thank heaven you have come!"

Beverley Rochfort rose to his feet with a low laugh. He was no coward, like Sheila. He rather hoped there would be some excitement now.

Jack was silent scarcely a moment; he never even glanced at the man; he looked straight at his wife.

"The carriage is waiting for you, Lady John," he said in a voice which Audrey had never heard from his lips before: "it is time for you to return to your home."

Audrey looked at her husband out of her great, blue eyes, all distraught as they were. For the moment she had forgotten his treachery at joy in his coming. Now, as with one heavy blow, it all returned to her. The end had surely come when he could speak to her like this, and how terrible was the way in which he stared at her. She had not strength to move a limb or utter a sound.

"I request that you accompany me to the carriage at once," Jack said, this time quite fiercely.

Audrey drew her domino about her. Vaguely she felt that, as the horizon of her life had looked a short hour ago, it was doubly worse now. She did not comprehend Jack's manner, but it hurt her to the quick. That he should speak to her like this, and before that odious, horrible man! She put out both her hands. Fear of Beverley drove away her jealous pangs.

"Yes, yes; take me home. I am ready to go. I entreat you to take me!"

Jack stood on one side for her to pass, and as he faced Beverley Rochfort alone for an instant, he said, very quietly:

"Either your life or mine answers for this night's work. You understand?"

"Perfectly," smiled Beverley, but he frowned the next moment.

A duel! This was not what he had anticipated. Audrey did not catch the hurried words, and, as she walked away beside her husband, she was too deeply miserable to think of anything but that a cloud had fallen on her life; that Jack's love had gone from her, and she was the most wretched girl on earth.

(To be continued.)

HISTORY OF LEAD PENCILS.

Used in a Primitive Form Back in the Middle Ages.

It is difficult to determine the exact period in which "black lead" was first utilized as an instrument for writing or drawing, as it has been confused with other mineral bodies to which it bears no relation. The ancients used lead, but the metal was formed into flat plates and the edges of these plates used to make the mark. If an ornamental design was desired the transcriber drew parallel lines and traced their illuminated designs, usually with a hard point, but also with soft lead. That lead was known to the ancients is also proved by the fact that it is mentioned in the book of Job.

During the year 1615 there was a description of the black lead pencil written by Conrad Gesner. He says that pieces of plumbago were fastened in a wooden handle and a mixture of fossil substance, sometimes covered with wood, was used for writing and drawing. About half a century later a good account of this mineral was given, and it was then used in Italy for drawing and mixed with clay for manufacturing crucibles. We are informed in Beckman's "History of Inventions" that the pencils first used in Italy for drawing were composed of a mixture of lead and tin, nothing more than powder. This pencil was called a stilo. Michael Angelo mentions this stilo, and, in fact, it seems that such pencils were long used in common over the whole continent of Europe. At this period the name plumbago or graphite was not in use, but instead of the name molybdena or molybdena, which is now applied to an entirely different mineral.

Graphite or black lead is formed in the primary rocks. In the United States it occurs in felspar and quartz, in Great Britain in greenstone rock and gneiss, and in Norway in quartz. The mine at Barrowdale, England, has supplied some of the finest black lead in the world, but the quantity varies, owing to the irregularity with which the mineral occurs.

The Jews were for a while the only manufacturers of pencils. It requires great skill to perfect the manufacture, according to the degree of hardness or softness required. Of recent years the manufacture of pencils has increased to such an extent that the price of these articles has decreased proportionately. Graphite and pure clay are combined and used in the manufacture of artificial black lead pencils and, on the other hand, the greatest perfection is attained in the making of the higher class pencils. Graphite is exposed to heat to acquire firmness and brilliancy of color. Sulphur is also used to secure a more perfect color.

Plenty of Practice. Employer—You say you want a position as second coachman. Have you had any experience in hooking up? Applicant—Oh, yes, sir; lots, sir. My wife's waists all fasten in the back, sir.—Baltimore American.

Had Doubts. Wright—Bob says he's had another story accepted. Do you think he writes good fiction? Penman—No, he doesn't write good fiction; he talks it.—Yonkers Statesman.

Easy for Him. "What brusky eyelashes Mr. Swags has!" "Um. That's the reason he gives such sweeping glances."—Detroit Free Press.

Where He Falls Down. Mifflins—Pennington seems to be quite a prolific writer. Bifflins—Yes; but unfortunately he isn't quite a prolific thinker.

JAMES H. ECKELS.

Sudden Death of Former Comptroller of Currency.

The death in Chicago of James H. Eckels, president of the Commercial National Bank of that city, and a former comptroller of the currency, removed a figure of national interest. Mr. Eckels' end came suddenly and was due to heart disease.

James Herron Eckels was born at Princeton, Ill., November 22, 1858, and most of his life had been spent in Illinois. He was graduated from the Albany (N. Y.) Law School in 1880. He practiced law at Ottawa, Ill., until appointed by President Cleveland comptroller of the currency in 1893. This act of Cleveland's early in his second term, when the great battle for free silver was almost at its height, set the gray heads in the United States Senate wagging with distrust and they held up Mr. Eckels' appointment. They declared that a stripping lawyer from the backwoods of Illinois, one who did not even know the A. B. C.'s of finance, could not administer the duties and pilot the treasury ship through the tem-



JAMES H. ECKELS.

pest then raging. In six months these same Senators who had opposed, criticized and ridiculed Eckels' nomination were praising him, for he had succeeded from the start.

Mr. Eckels was long an admirer and an ardent supporter of President Cleveland. Mr. Eckels' friends in Illinois had asked the President to name him United States District Attorney for the Northern District of that State, and that was the place he expected to get. But Mr. Cleveland saw in him qualities which he thought could be put to use in a better cause. They were strong common sense, aggressive honesty, intrepid courage and untiring industry, and he determined on the masterstroke.

Mr. Eckels made an enviable record in aiding tottering banks during the dark days of 1893. It has been said of him that he was "unstampedable, coolest and most courageous in the hour of greatest danger, and with all his powers constantly at full command."

Time and again he saved banks, and even business communities, from disaster by his timely, tactful and sensible action. When he retired from office in 1897 it was to accept, almost at once, the presidency of the Commercial National Bank, of Chicago, a place now made vacant by his early death. He became one of the foremost financial advisers of the country, rising from an obscure lawyer, little known outside of Ottawa, Ill., his home.

Some Temperature.

The Quaker's habit of calm sometimes deceives onlookers as to his real feelings. There was an occasion on which Mrs. Abigail Gray's peaceful countenance aroused resentment in the heart of her niece, one of "the world's people."

"I don't see how you could sit there, Aunt Abigail, and hear that man talk and never look as if you cared," she said, tearfully, referring to a late interview with an unprincipled shopkeeper. "There I was boiling, and not even so much as one of your cap ruffles stirred."

"If thee could have seen far enough below the cap ruffles," replied Mrs. Gray, sedately, "thee would have seen that I was boiling, also, but without steam, my child."

A Waste of Good English.

Bobby's mother was often distressed by her small son's lapses from correct speech, all the more because his reports from school were always so good.

"Bobby," she said, plaintively, one day, "why do you keep telling Major to 'set up' when you know 'sit up' is what you should say?"

"Oh, well, mother," Bobby answered, hastily, "of course I have lots of grammar, but I don't like to waste it on Major when he doesn't know the difference, being a dog."

What She Needed.

Miss Slimm—This dressmaker does not seem to have developed the stylish curves very well in this gown.

Miss Knox—No; you ought to go to Padder & Co.

Miss Slimm—Are they ladies' tailors?

Miss Knox—No; upholsterers.—Philadelphia Press.

The National Game.

"The management seems to be trying to hand out a square deal."

"Still, there is some kicking."

"That's on account of the misdeeds. They're bound to happen."—Louisville Courier-Journal.

A man is always at least as old as he professes to be.

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