



CHAPTER I.

A spoiled beauty—spoiled by a devotion and love such as fall to the lot of few women—Lady Rooden did not know the meaning of the word "care." She was only seventeen when Sir Charles Rooden died and won her; and from that time he had surrounded her with such loving care that her lot among women was quite exceptional. Fey knew such unalloyed happiness as she enjoyed. At times a fleeting regret that she had no son to succeed her husband would come over her; but even that regret was softened when she remembered how deeply he loved their little daughter.

The Roodens of Rood Abbey had been for many generations owners of that fair and fertile domain. The estate, which was situated in one of the most beautiful parts of the world, was singularly favored by nature, and not the least of its charms was the bright, flashing, riving Leis, smooth and peaceful in places, spanned here and there by rustic bridges, and widening in its course until it delved deep into the broad, deep reach in front of the Abbey itself.

Sir Charles Rooden, the ideal of an English landlord—handsome, brave, generous, and a true lover of all out-door and manly sports—was still young when he fell in love with one of the most beautiful girls of her day, Laure Milroy, the only daughter of the Earl of Milroy. In his blind idolatry he never perceived that she was vain or selfish, that she was shallow at heart; he discerned in her only the attributes of a good and noble woman, and he loved her implicitly. His wife was the center of his hopes and plans, the one object of his care and worship; and next to her in his affection came his little daughter, whom, because of her beautiful face and sweet serious eyes, in which dwelt a sweet brooding seriousness—they named Angela.

Angela had reached her twelfth year when her first great sorrow fell upon her. A sweeter, fairer maiden it would hardly have been possible to find. To those who knew how frail and uncertain human love is, there was something almost pitiful in the devotion of the child to her father. The day when it did fall, was therefore all the more terrible to her. For there came a day, bright and sunny, full of perfume and sweetness and song, when Sir Charles Rooden left home in the morning with laughing, jesting words on his lips and was carried back in the evening dead.

The evening was as fair as the morning. The wind stirred the lilacs and the long-laburnum-tressed gently in the garden below; nature seemed to be reposing in the peaceful calm that had settled over all.

"I wonder what it is, Angel?" said Lady Rooden. "A crowd seems to be moving and coming in this direction. They are carrying something. What can it be?"

"I do not see papa," said the child, whom nothing else interested; and they grew silent as the tall trees and the winding of the river hid the crowd from their view.

"I wish papa would come!" cried the child, presently; and then, after a few minutes, there was a sound of tramping footsteps, of hurried, hushed voices, and the old butler came hastily out on the terrace.

"My lady, my lady, come in quickly!" he cried. "Do not look toward the river! Come in!"

Lady Rooden turned to him in wonder. "What?" she gasped, her face growing white and rigid.

"My master was found in the river, my lady!" Jarvis replied, wringing his hands. "In the river? Found in the river, do you say? Then he is dead!"

"He is dead, my lady, and they are bringing him home!" answered the man.

With a loud cry Lady Rooden flew from the house down to the avenue, where she met the man bearing the lifeless body of her husband. When she saw his dead face she fell, with a low, anguished cry, to the ground, and was carried back home senseless.

It was not until the first shock was over that any one thought of the child. They found her lying near the window of the room, in an agony of grief which no words of comfort could abate.

The mystery surrounding Sir Charles Rooden's death was never solved. Whether he had attempted to cross the river where it was shallowest, and had been carried away by the force of the current, or whether his horse had become restive and dashed into the water, no one ever knew. "No one had seen the baronet; no one came forward to say that they had met him on that day. That it was an accident every one agreed, but how it occurred there was no living witness to tell.

How deeply the genial, generous master of Rood was mourned was shown by the assemblage of rich and poor who came to pay a last tribute of respect to a neighbor and friend.

In his will Sir Charles had not forgotten any of his faithful old servants or any of the charities he had supported. Yet to those who listened to the reading of the document there seemed to be something strange in it. It was strange that no inheritance had been settled on the daughter for whom he had always such unboundless affection; strange that no dowry had been left to her; strange that not one farthing of what must ultimately be a large fortune should reach her until her mother's death.

"What will happen if the mother marries again?" asked the Captain.

"Nothing. Her husband would have the full use of her wealth while she lived; but it would go to her daughter at the mother's death."

"And what?" he asked, looking up suddenly—"what if the daughter dies before the mother?"

"Then the whole of the property becomes hers, to do with as she wills. What cold-blooded questions you ask, Vance!"

"I like to understand," he returned. "It is rather a novel state of things, and I am quite interested."

"I wish to heaven that you had Rood Abbey and a large fortune."

"So do I," sighed Gladys.

"What a curse poverty is!" he continued. "Here are you and I—we love each other—we have not said much about it, but we love each other—and yet—"

"I know," she interrupted, raising her face, which was full of pain, to his—"I understand."

"If my career had been a little less mad," he sighs, regretfully. "I have wasted two fortunes, and I doubt much whether I shall ever have a third. We are in the same position, Gladys—you will have to marry money, and I must do the same."

"I suppose it must be so," she said, resignedly. But he noted the pain in her eyes, and the trembling of her lips.

"I know no two people in the world who would be so happy together as you and I," he added; "yet, because we neither of us have money, we must stifle our love and always live apart. I wish you had fortune, Gladys, or that people could do without money."

"So do I," said Gladys Rane, with a bitter sigh.

"Yet neither of them for a moment

dreamed of what want of money and the desire to obtain it would do for them in the future. On that bright May morning, among the hyacinths in the sunlight, no warning came to them of the shape the future was to take.

Every one seemed to be talking of Lady Rooden and her daughter that evening. Captain Vance went to his club, the Royal, and found they were the topic of conversation there. Nothing so interesting, nothing so strange, had been discussed for some time—a mother beautiful and fair as her own most beautiful child; a child in grace and loveliness the rival of her own mother. The discussion was at its height when Wynyard entered the smoking-room.

"I think all London has gone crazy about these new beauties," he remarked. "Ashton," he continued, turning to one of his most intimate friends, "you were at the Embassy ball last evening. Did you see them?"

"Yes, they were both there—Lady Rooden and her daughter."

"Which is the belle?" asked Wynyard. "I could not tell you. I have never seen two women so perfect. The old comparison of a rose and a rosebud is weak. No one would believe them to be mother and daughter; they are like younger and elder sister—the daughter so slim and graceful, the mother tall and stately. There is not such another pair in London."

"Should you think there was any prospect of the mother remarrying?" asked Wynyard.

"Yes, I should think it is almost certain; and I think I can guess who the man is who will marry her."

"Who is he?" asked the ex-Captain, anxiously.

"The one who flatters her most," laughed Mr. Ashton; "he will be the one to win her. That is her ladyship's weak side."

Neither billiards nor cards had any charm for Vance Wynyard that evening; he was unusually thoughtful and engrossed. If he sighed at times, it was because memory brought to his vividly the beautiful, sorrowful face of Gladys Rane.

(To be continued.)

BLUE LAWS IN THE ISLE OF MAN.

Imposed Severe Punishments for the Most Trivial Offenses.

The legislature of the Isle of Man is called the house of keys, and was formerly a judicial body, whose duty it was to interpret the laws—to unlock their mysteries. Anyone bold enough and ill-advised enough to slander the house of keys was liable to a fine of \$50 and the loss of both his ears. Two deemsters were appointed to execute the laws, which before 1417 were uncodified and were known as breast laws, being impartial to the deemsters' secret, and by them kept within the secrecy of their own breasts so long as they chose, or during the whole service, though they were empowered to impart and explain to the people so much of them as should at any time seem expedient.

Some of the laws as recorded after the codification are extremely quaint. Here is one which recalls to mind the narrow bound and primitive way of life of the Maenmen. Nowhere else surely would the greater crime be regarded as the less—merely because in the nature of things it could result, despite the intention of the thief, only in an enforced loan—and the lesser crime be gravely reckoned as the greater:

"If a man steal a horse or an ox it is no felony, for the offender cannot hide them; but if he steal a capon or a pig he shall be hanged."

"In the case of theft," another law declares, "if it amount to the value of sixpence halfpenny, shall be a felony to death to the offender; and under that value to be whipped or set upon a wooden horse ordered for such offenders."

A rather ingenious law, designed to check the breaking of pledges by untrustworthy servants who might have an opportunity to get improved wages, decrees that any servant hiring with two masters must give his labor to the first man he is promised to and his wages to the second; should the offense be repeated, the culprit is to be set in the stocks and whipped.

The arms of the Isle of Man, which, though it sounds like an Irish bull to say so, are legs—three legs bent at the knee, and apparently kicking outward from a common center in the midst of a shield—have provoked a number of jocular descriptions, of which the best declares that one leg spurns Ireland, one kicks at Scotland and the third kicks to England. The feeling thus typified appears certainly to exist toward the two former countries, if we are to judge by the following laws, never repealed, though, it is needless to add, never in our day enforced:

"Irish women loitering and not working are to be commanded forth of the isle with as much convenient speed as may be." Why Irish women especially is not explained; perhaps they accompanied their husbands—harvesting—and made themselves obnoxious as beggars. The isle was not until the first shock was over that any one thought of the child. They found her lying near the window of the room, in an agony of grief which no words of comfort could abate.

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FOR THE YOUNG FORKS.

A vexed question.

I went in the schoolroom, one morning; My two little girls were there, And over their atlas bending, Each with a puzzled air.

Mary glanced up as I entered, And said, with an anxious look: "Mama, perhaps you can help us; It says here, in this book,

"That we bought Louisiana From the French. Now that seems queer!"

For Nellie and I don't understand How they could send it here.

"Whoever brought the land over Must have taken so many trips; Neil says they put it in baskets; But I think it must have been ships."

—Ella Johnson Kerr in St. Nicholas.

SIX DONKEYS AND SEVEN.

In Turkey professional story-tellers go about gaily dressed in waistcoat and breeches of gaudy colors trimmed with gold and amuse the people with their stories. Often they sit in the restaurants and public squares, and as they talk they shrug their shoulders, gesticulate and make faces to impress their hearers. This is one of the fables that a famous story-teller relates:

One day a wealthy man called upon Mr. Ashton, "he will be the one to win her. That is her ladyship's weak side."

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MENTAL EPIDEMICS PAST AND PRESENT.

In looking back to the medieval ages we find them to be times in which abnormal social phenomena were displayed on a grand scale—times teeming with mobs, riots, revolts; with blind movements of vast human masses; with terrible epidemics that ravaged Europe from end to end. They were ages peculiar for the strange, striking fact that whole cities, extensive provinces, great countries, were stricken by one disease. Men went mad in packs, by the thousands. An obscure individual in some remote country place had fits of hysterics, and soon all Europe was wriggling and struggling in convulsions of hysterical insanity. The dark ages were strange, peculiar—so, at least, do they appear to us, who consider ourselves vastly superior to the poor, ignorant medieval peasant, burgher, knight, with their superstitions, religious fervor, and recent epidemic insanities. I am afraid, however, that a similar fate may overtake us. May not a future historian look back to our own times and say, "In the case of theft," another law declares, "if it amount to the value of sixpence halfpenny, shall be a felony to death to the offender; and under that value to be whipped or set upon a wooden horse ordered for such offenders."

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