

UNDER THE LILAC TREE.

CHAPTER I.

Everywhere at Gracedieu was the scent of lilacs. In no other place did they grow in such luxuriant profusion. People came to see the lilacs at Gracedieu as they go to look at the beaches at Burnham and the chestnuts at Hampton Court. They were the great attraction for many weeks, and all the country round was sweet with their odor. In well laid out grounds, in cottage gardens, in the long green lanes, at every corner of the pretty streets, in every nook where there was room for a tree to grow on the path by the river, on the road to the woods, in the meadows and orchards where they had no right to be, by the brook side, nodding over the iron railing of the old churchyard, were the beautiful tall plumed lilacs. It would be difficult to say whether they were sweeter in the evening, in the sunlight wet with dew; or blown by the wind; from the time they began to bud until the last leaf dropped from the trees, they made Gracedieu a garden of Eden, a land of delight. The children called them "The Prince of Wales' feathers." The elder folk, dated from them; they would say, "Before the lilacs were out," "When the lilacs were in bloom," or "After the lilacs had faded." The weeks they were in flower were a time of pleasure to all.

This pretty town of Gracedieu, where I lived my happy young life, is in the fairest part of Devonshire—where the land is green and fertile, although it borders on the sea—where the green lanes are like gardens, and the hedgerows full of bloom—My father, the Reverend John Chester, was Rector of Gracedieu, for more than forty years. His church, an old Norman building, was very dear to him. He did not marry until late in life, and I was his only child. I remember but little of him. His name was held in great honor by the townspeople. My dear mother, whom I lost when I was eighteen years old, was a quiet, gentle, unobtrusive woman; she had a small life annuity. My father had not been able to leave her anything; he had insured his life for a trifling sum which was invested for my benefit, and which brought me in a modest income of twenty pounds per annum.

In those days the gold of the laburnum and the buttercup was more to me than the glitter of coin. My mother and I thought but little of money. Our expenditure was quite within our income—the true secret of content. I remember no sordid cares, no "bills," no uneasiness as quarter-day came round; I remember no undue extravagance. We had many friends and acquaintances in the town. In the summer afternoons; it was a pleasant walk to our house; and though we could not afford to entertain grandly as some of our wealthy neighbors did, tea in our pretty garden with home-made cakes and ripe fruit, was pleasant enough. My mother was a lover of nature, and she taught me all she knew. I was acquainted with the name of every bird; I knew their haunts and their habits. I was familiar with the trees and the long grasses, the wild flowers; the reeds by the river; the cresses in the brook; every secret of the sweet country life was known to and loved by me. Looking back, I see a simple-hearted, happy child, whose life was a poem.

As the opening of a tragedy is almost always quiet, so my life, that was to embody a tragedy, began calmly like the opening bars of some sweet musical idyl.

From my infancy until I was seventeen I had passed a peaceful, calm, uneventful existence. My mother, when her husband died, went to live at a pretty little villa outside Gracedieu, and built just on the borders of Gracedieu woods. When I was a child I used to lie for long hours listening to the wind among the trees of the forest; and while I live no music will be so grand, or so sweet to me as that which it then made.

Our lives were well filled. I remember no vacant hours. Those which I spent in the woods and by the river were not idle to me. I was storing my heart and mind with pictures that lasted me for many years when with human eyes I could see them no longer. It was on my seventeenth birthday, and the date was the tenth of May, that a new life was opened to me.

On that morning I was one of the happiest, brightest children that ever drew breath, with no care or thought save for the birds and flowers. With a longing impatience to see the dew on the grass, I watched the sunrise; when I watched the same sun set, I had passed from childhood to womanhood. My mother's pretty little house peeped out from a mass of lilac-trees, and there was a group of the same just outside the garden gate, bordering the path that led to the wood. The townspeople had the right of using this path, but they did not often avail themselves of it.

The first thing I thought of on my birthday was the lilacs. I knew just how the trees would look, the dew lying heavy on them, and the sun shining on their bloom. I must gather plenty for the breakfast-table, for my birthday was a household fete. I went out. On the previous night

I had noticed on the top of the tallest tree a spray of lilacs that I wanted to gather. It was exactly the shape of the Prince of Wales' feathers—three nodding, beautiful, graceful plumes, surrounded by green leaves.

Once, twice, thrice, I tried to reach the branch I wanted, but failed to do so. The sun was shining in my face; the shaking of the boughs scattered the dew drops all over me. Suddenly a voice near me said:

"It is too high; you cannot reach it. Let me get it for you."

I had heard no footsteps and had seen no shadow on the grass. Turning, my eyes fell on a bright, handsome face, with eyes dark and lustrous, and a mouth, sweet and firm.

"Let me get it for you," repeated the stranger; and I stood aside while he gathered the beautiful plume I wanted. "I ought to apologize," he said; "but I was on my way to the wood. I saw your trouble, and could not resist the temptation of coming to your aid."

As he spoke, he broke off the bough. In doing so the tree shook, and the great dew-drops fell on his face and on mine.

"How careless I am!" he said. "Do forgive me, Miss Chester."

"How do you know my name?" I asked. "I do not remember having seen you before."

"I know most of the inhabitants of Gracedieu," he replied. "You do not recognize me, but my father is often at your house."

My mind quickly reviewed the few friends, who were in the habit of visiting us, and I could think of no one likely to be the father of the handsome dark young man by my side.

"I am Dr. Upton's son," he continued. "Mark Upton, at your service. My father often talks of Mrs. and Miss Chester."

"I am much obliged to you," I said. "It is my birthday, and I had set my heart on that one particular spray of lilac. How beautiful it is!"

"They are my favorite flowers," he said. "How strange I prefer them to any others," I remarked, glancing up at him.

"I wish you many happy returns of your birthday," he said smiling, "and I hope every wish of yours to-day may be gratified as easily as this has been" touching the branch of lilac as he spoke.

And so, by that one incident, my fate was sealed on the bright May morning, when Mark Upton passed our house on his way to the woods.

It was not a very great surprise to me, when, three days afterward, on returning from my favorite haunt by the river, I found Mr. Upton talking to my mother. His dark face flushed when he saw me and he rose from his chair.

"Miss Chester," he said, "I have taken the liberty of bringing you these"—and he held out a mass of beautiful flowers, chiefly white lilacs of a rare kind with very sweet perfume. "I was at Oakton Hall, this morning," he continued, "and I thought of you as I rode through the park. The lilacs are in full bloom; these white ones are the finest I have ever seen. I could not resist bringing them to you. The park is beautiful now. Not only are the lilacs out, but the laburnums are also, and the hawthorn trees are magnificent. You would enjoy seeing them."

I said something about the Gracedieu woods—I never remembered what he came nearer to me, and held out the white lilacs that I might inhale their fragrance. How can I describe the vague feeling of happiness, of newborn delight, of pleasure that was almost pain when he approached? I remember we were half afraid to look at each other; then one, stealing a glance, would meet the other's eye, and dire confusion would result. I remember that while we both examined the lilacs our hands met—and that first touch of his hand was a new revelation to me.

Presently, the figure of my gentle, silent mother, who was knitting busily at the window, disappeared, and we were alone—two young, loving, passionate hearts, alone, with the glamor of first love over us.

I had thought of nothing but the dark handsome face since I had seen it first under the dewy lilac boughs. I dreamed of it, wherever I looked. There it was, I could see it in the flowers, in the shadowy river, in the blue of the sky, in the gold of the sunlight, glance where I would, it was there,—always there.

I was a romantic girl, full of poetry and dreams. He was the first handsome young man I had seen, and fate had brought us together. When I awoke to the reality of the present, my mother was saying:

"Nellie, show Mr. Upton our trees. I think they are the finest in Gracedieu."

Presently we were standing in the glory of the golden sunshine, but I did not see it. I did not see the ripple of the foliage, the dark woods, the lilac trees, or the garden. I saw nothing but the face that was more beautiful to me than all the world beside.

There was a shady arbor under the great lilacs, and we were sitting there. Mr. Upton was telling me of his life, his position, and his future.

"I shall always thank Heaven," he said, "that I made my way to Gracedieu woods on the tenth of May."

I dared not ask why. I knew. "What small events rule our lives!" he went on. "If I had been one hour later or sooner, I should not have seen you, and then—"

He stopped. "And then?" I interrogated. "There could be no 'then,'" he said hastily. "The world would be quite different if I had never seen you. I shall

love May; I shall love the lilacs as long as I live!"

The weight of happiness seemed almost more than I could bear. It seemed to me as if the birds singing around us had guessed our secret.

It was evening when I recovered my composure. I was sitting with some work in my hand. My mother began to talk about Mark Upton, and I grew alarmed at the tumult of happiness in my heart, wondering what that same gentle mother would say if she knew that all the world was changed for me.

Mark was at the cottage again the next morning, with the excuse of a message from his father. I see him now as I saw him then, with the May sunlight all about him, a smile lighting up his dark, handsome face, standing near the lilac bushes, crying out in his cheery voice. "May I come in and see how you are this morning, Mrs. Chester?"

On that same afternoon I went for my usual stroll through the woods and down by the river. My heart and thoughts were full of him. It was hardly a surprise when I saw him crossing the little rustic bridge that spanned the river way, to join me. I was sitting in a nest of violets and forget-me-nots that grew down to the edge of the water.

As he came back to me—the song of the birds, the sound of the wind in the great trees, the odor of the lilacs, and my lover's dark handsome face bending over me, his warm strong hand clasping mine! It would have been well, I sometimes think, had I died then and there with that full sunlight of happiness upon me. For, when I realized what was passing, when I saw the music of the river, I heard every word, Mark Upton was telling me that he loved me, and asking me to be his wife who one short week before was only a child! Oh, happy time of the lilac bloom, which had brought me a lover so good and so true! I dared not look at him. I glanced at the river and the trees—anything rather than meet his dark loving eyes.

"Will you say that you are not angry, Miss Chester? 'Nellie,' your mother calls you, and it is the prettiest name in the whole world—Nellie, will you try to love me?"

I fathomed out that I had known him only one week. He cried, "What does that matter?" A week in such a case was like an age. There was no such thing as time in love.

"You know there is not, Nellie," he said. "I tell the simple truth when I say that at seven o'clock on the morning of the tenth of May I was heart-whole and fancy-free. I had never thought of love or marriage; and it is equally true that by ten o'clock I had sworn to myself that Nellie Chester should be my wife or no one else. Nellie, you do not know what you looked like when I saw you first. Your hair was purest gold as the sunlight fell full upon it, your face was fresh and fair as a flower; your sleeve had fallen back, and half your beautiful arm was bare, as you tried to reach the lilac and could not. I can only say that at that moment you made your way to my heart, and that you will never leave it again. You have become part of my life. Now let me look into your eyes. I can read my answer there."

He raised my face in his hands and looked into it as though he would read my very soul.

"You do care for me," Nellie, he cried; "the love-light is in your eyes! Say you love me. What does it matter that we have known each other only one week? Why, my darling, if you had been my dearest friend for twenty years, I could not love you more! You know me as well now as you will in fifty years' time. I do not hide one thought of my heart from you."

What could I say—I, who loved him with all my girl's heart, and to whom his love was as sunlight and dew are to the flowers? I said something as to being very young.

"My hair is not gray, Nellie," he said, laughing. "You are seventeen, I am twenty. I know 'my love is but a lassie yet,' 'tis for that I love her." I then he pledged his troth to me, taking me in his arms and kissing me, as he said:

"I love you, Nellie; and while I live I shall love no other woman; if you will be my wife I will live and die for you; if you will not, I will call no other woman my wife."

"Oh, foolish, trusting, loving heart! I did not remember that in the depths of the dark strong river lay shifting sands, that the wind never told the same story twice. To me my lover's dark eyes were true and tender as the stars. I forgot that the stars were not all fixed. I was very young, very loving, full of faith, but not very wise.

So, while the May sun shone around us, he kissed me and pledged me for his wife, and we walked back to the cottage as the "Sleeping Beauty" and the "Fairy Prince" walked from the old world to a new.

(To Be Continued.)

A TOPSY-TURVEY LAND.

The Chinese surname comes first instead of last.

The Chinese begin dinner with dessert and end with soup.

The Chinese shake their own hands instead of the hands of those they greet.

The spoken language of China is not written and the written language is not spoken.

The Chinese launch their vessels sideways and mount their horses from the off side.

The Chinese do everything backward. They exactly reverse the usual order of civilization.

Books are read backward, and what we call footnotes are inserted at the top of the page.

The Chinese dress in white at funerals and in mourning at weddings, while old women always serve as bridesmaids.

Note, first, that the Chinese compass points to the south instead of the north. The men carry on dressmaking, and the women carry burdens.

CARED FOR AND CURED.

LITTLE SICK CHILDREN.

Short Sketch of the Work Done by the Great Mother Nurse—The Hospital for Sick Children, Toronto.

From every country in the Province of Ontario children are admitted into the Hospital for Sick Children at Toronto, free if their parents cannot afford to pay.

And few of the poor little sufferers who are nursed and cared for save



rich parents, it would seem. Last year the expense of the Hospital was nearly \$30,000. And to meet this but \$1,825 was received from pay patients.

The balance must come from the more fortunate folks, who are charitable and generous.

The Hospital for Sick Children is the largest of its kind in the world—without exception. There are 200 cots. The average number of patients is 100 per day; 476 were nursed in the Hospital this year—312 little ones were cured and departed with health, strength and sturdy limbs.

In the dispensary department medicine was given to 4,133 children. Thus nearly 5,000 children were treated in one year.

A great record of good. In twenty-two years some 24,000 sick children have been nursed and cared for by the Hospital for Sick Children.

Where do the little patients come from? From all parts of the province—cities, towns, villages and townships.

How do they come? Very often parents hear of the work of the Hospital through the newspapers, in some instances friends of the little sufferers make application on behalf of parents who are poor, but independent and self-reliant.

It generally falls to the lot of the chairman of the Hospital Trust to decide when there is a question of ability to pay. One day, about a year ago,

his leg had been straightened, but had again become useless. His parents and schoolfellows looked upon him as a cripple for life.

And so he might have been. "How would you like to have your leg straightened for good?" asked the Hospital chairman, who knew of the complete cure effected at the great Toronto institution in similar cases.

"Well, mister, there is nothing I would like better," said the boy. He was assisted into the carriage, and told to direct the driver, to his father, who had a blacksmith shop near by. The boy was one of a family of seven children. Most gladly did the father give his consent to the child's removal to the Hospital for treatment.

The little deformed lad thus fortunately met on the highway near Brockville is a cripple no longer. His leg is stiff, but it is straight. He remained in the hospital for many months. But it was a joyous homecoming when the boy walked firmly and straight without the aid of stick or crutches.

This is a single case. Thousands of cases might be cited. The editor of this paper has been informed that if anyone knows of any sick child under fourteen years of age who is suffering from accident or disease, and whose parents cannot afford to pay for proper medical or surgical assistance—they are asked to communicate with the Hospital for Sick Children.

There is room for such children in the Hospital. They will be nursed, cared for, and in all probability, cured. There is a debt of \$70,000 hanging over the institution, \$20,000 of which is for debts which must be paid at once.

Even with the strictest economy it requires no less than five executive officers, 24 nurses and 20 domestics to carry on the work of the Hospital. Twenty-five more children could be taken care of with the same number of attendants.

The work of the Hospital is ever increasing. Its doors are wide open to every ailing child in the province. Such a work should have a million friends in Ontario. If each friend could spare a dollar—what a rich endowment with which to carry on the work.

But the trustees only ask for \$20,000—a sum which they are required to pay before the end of January. Everyone can help.

The need is most pressing. The appeal is the appeal of poor, weak, suffering childhood, of little, wan-faced babies and children who lie on beds of pain.

The Hospital appeals to you—the reader of this newspaper. Your dollar will bless you in the giving.

And you will give it. Every penny aids—every dollar helps—and your dollar may restore health, strength and straight limbs to some poor crippled boy or girl.

Won't you help? This is a home charity—something that should appeal to every heart. It was Charles Dickens, that great-hearted Englishman—the friend of the fatherless, the reliever of the oppressed and down-trodden, who appealed to every human heart, when he said: "The two grim nurses—poverty and sickness—who bring these children before you, preside over their births

rock their wretched cradles, and nail down their coffins."

In this enlightened Canada of ours—this bright Province of Ontario—this shall not be as long as the doors of the Hospital for Sick Children remain open.

Help remove that mortgage. Help unload that load of debt. Contributions for the delivery of the Hospital from this bondage of debt will be acknowledged by letter and also in the columns of The Evening Telegram, a copy of which will be mailed to each donor.

Money may be forwarded to Miss Maria Hutchins, treasurer, 165 Bloor St. East, Toronto, or to J. Ross Robertson, chairman of the Hospital Trust, Toronto.

LEAP YEAR ALL THE TIME.

If there are any young people who object to getting married let them keep away from Argentina. The Government alarmed at the steady decrease in population, has passed a law which in effect, taxes unmarried people. The law reads as follows:

People of marriageable age of either sex who refuse to wed without reasons which are considered valid in law shall not be permitted to marry thereafter without the permission of the Government. They shall, moreover pay an indemnity sum of not more than \$500 to the person whose offer they have refused.

Young men and women under twenty years old are exempt from this law, and can marry as they please; but from twenty to twenty-eight the law, if they are not married at twenty, takes them

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(Group of children who are being treated by the best doctors in Canada, reproduced from photograph.)

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GREENWICH OBSERVATORY.

The observatory of Greenwich was founded in 1675.