



## "Flowers of the Valley,"

OR  
**MABEL HOWARD,  
OF THE LYRIC**

### CHAPTER XVI.

**GIRL IN TEN THOUSAND.**  
As he spoke he opened the envelope and took out a sheet of paper.  
"Good Heavens, Barrington!" he exclaimed, a scarlet flush rising to his face, then leaving it pale and disturbed; "look at this!—listen!" and he read aloud:

I resign any claim I may have to the estates and property left by Godfrey Knighton, of Knighton Revels. If Lord Coverdale, to whom they now belong, considers that he owes me anything for this resignation, he can best admit his indebtedness by refraining from any attempt to learn the place of refuge of one who was known as IRIS KNIGHTON.

Mr. Barrington took the note and read it, his hand trembling, his face pale.

"As I thought!" he said. "Just what I expected! There, my lord, is the last obstacle to your succession removed, and by her own hand!" Lord Coverdale took the paper, and would have torn it, but Mr. Barrington stopped him. "Pardon me, my lord," he said, grimly; "that is a legal document, and I am a lawyer. Besides, what would be the use of destroying it? You could not effect its alteration, and I know that, my lord, I know that, a nobler, more high-spirited girl!" he stopped, and turned away his head.

Lord Coverdale went to the window; for his eyes were moist.

"What is to be done now?" he said. "One thing only," said Mr. Barrington. "This decides my course of action; my client's will is law to me! Whatever may be done afterward, whatever may be made, I am bound to acknowledge you as the Knighton Revels, and heir to the Knighton and Bever-

ton estate."

As they passed once more into the hall, Mr. Barrington beckoned to the butler. "Please understand," he said, "that the Earl of Coverdale is master here. You will obey his orders from this moment."

The butler stared, and his face flushed; the footmen and a maid-servant who were passing drew nearer; but before they could speak, Lord Coverdale, with suppressed emotion, held up his hand.

"What Mr. Barrington has told you," he said in a voice that he could scarcely keep firm, "is, I am afraid, true! I say afraid, because I know that you

it will be only for that reason. I regard myself a guardian of the estate for the person I still consider its rightful—natural owner—this poor girl!" "Not rightful," said Mr. Barrington, with stern justice.

"She must be found at once!" said Lord Coverdale.

Mr. Barrington pointed his thin forefinger to the last portion of the note. "You have no right to disregard her injunction, my lord," he said; "but I shall not give up the search, though I feel it to be hopeless."

"Impossible! A young girl, who has disappeared a few days ago only?"

"A young girl! Yes. But a girl very different from the ordinary run of young women!" said Mr. Barrington, with sorrowful pride. "Miss Knighton—for I must call her so still, my lord!"

—Miss Knighton is no ordinary young girl moved to the course she has taken by a fit of hysterical grief and excitement! I have known her since she was a child, have watched her grow into girlhood, womanhood! Most beautiful women are, I am told, fools; no one could be more removed from a fool than Iris Knighton! With the knighton pride she has inherited her father's resolution and self-reliance. She is not only an accomplished girl, with every charm a girl could possess, but—

—he paused and emphasized his words by striking his finger on the table, his wrinkled face flushed and agitated—"she is a girl of sense—of sense, my lord! She is one in ten thousand!"

Lord Coverdale listened gravely, a feeling of surprise overwhelming him. How did this description of the acute and dispassionate man of law agree with that he had received from the girl he had met!

"Forgive my warmth, my lord," said the old man, wiping his forehead; "but I feel so strong an admiration for that gentle, beautiful young creature—There, there! To business, my lord."

"The first business I transact as—as heir to Knighton, Barrington," said Lord Coverdale, gravely, "is to instruct you to draw up a deed of gift, handing over the half of the income to Miss Iris Knighton!"

Mr. Barrington steeled out his hand.

"My lord, I thank you!" he said, with simple dignity. "And now, will you come to luncheon. We can talk while we eat."

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would rather have seen Miss Knighton in her old place, as mistress here. I wish it as heartily. You may yet welcome her back; but until that time comes—if it should come—I take her place. You are at liberty to tell your fellow servants."

One or two of the footmen—young men and comparative strangers—made an attempt at a cheer, but Lord Heron held up his hand and looked round sternly, and in silence the group dispersed.

Mr. Barrington led Lord Coverdale into the dining-room and lunch was served.

"Surely, never before has a man taken possession under such painful circumstances!" said Lord Heron, pushing his plate from him.

"I can sympathize with you, I fully understand what you feel, my lord," said Mr. Barrington. "But my hope—my fervent hope—is that things will yet come right. At any rate, you have to do your duty! You are here, with words to oppose you, and—"

—he smiled rather sadly—"though the affair will be a ten days' wonder, on the eleventh the world will find something else to amuse it, and the circumstances attending your succession will be forgotten."

"But I shall not forget, Barrington," said Lord Heron, moodily regarding the handsome room, with its paneled walls and old-time furniture. "I shall know no peace until Miss Knighton has accepted what I offer."

"Would to Heaven we can persuade her!" said Mr. Barrington. There was silence for a minute or two, each dwelling on his own thoughts, then the lawyer roused himself. "I suppose you know no one in this place; none of the county people, who are now your neighbors, my lord? But, of course, you do not!"

"No," said Lord Heron. "I have heard of them, but know no one. Lord Montacute—"

Mr. Barrington sighed.

"A most excellent gentleman, my lord," he said. "This revelation and trouble of Miss Knighton has gone near to break his heart."

"I understand," said Lord Heron in a low voice. "Poor fellow! They were engaged?"

"No; by no means. Lord Montacute proposed a few days before Mr. Barrington's death, but Mr. Knighton put him off."

"And Miss Knighton?"

Mr. Barrington shook his head.

"I think not. I do not think she cared—my lord, to Lord Montacute's honor, be it spoken, that he repeated his proposal to Miss Knighton after he knew of her misfortune!"

"He is a noble fellow!" said Lord Heron, earnestly. "Thank Heaven, I have such a neighbor!"

Mr. Barrington inclined his head in solemn assent.

"If any one can find her in London, or wherever she is, he will do so!" he said; "he or Felice!"

"No time must be lost!" said Lord Heron, earnestly, "and no money spared. Please Heaven before the week is out—"

Mr. Barrington sighed.

"Will you come round the house, my lord?" he said after a minute or two. "There are one or two things—leaves, and so on—that must be seen to at once."

"In a minute or two," said Lord Heron, absently; then he looked up with a faint flush and marked hesitation. "Who is there in the immediate neighborhood, what other families?"

"There are the Gomershalls at the Grange."

"Lord Gomershall—yes, I know. He has no family, has he?"

"No," said Mr. Barrington. "And the Deveralls at the Towers."

"Have they any family?" asked Lord Heron.

"Yes; two boys," said Mr. Barrington.

Lord Heron looked still unsatisfied.

"Well?"

"Well, the only other people who live appreciably near are the Waltons—Sir Hildings Waltons; he is a widower, with one daughter. They live at Coombe Walton."

"What is she like?" demanded Lord Heron, flushing, and raising his wine-glass. "A tall girl, with dark hair and eyes—a very beautiful girl!"

"Miss Walton is pretty, yes," said Mr. Barrington, "but she is not tall by any means; and she is fair, very fair. Why did you ask; do you think you know her?"

"No, no," replied Lord Heron, hurriedly. There was silence for a moment, then he said: "There is a tall, dark, young lady, answering to my description, living somewhere here, is there not?"

Mr. Barrington pondered a moment. "Near here?" he said, thoughtfully. "Yes, near enough to be riding in the neighborhood," said Lord Heron. Mr. Barrington shook his head.

"No," he said. "I know of no one. Why, my lord?"

"Well," said Lord Heron, hesitating with all a lover's reluctance to speak of the woman of his heart. She seemed so sacred to him that he could scarcely force himself to mention her. Besides, he had almost promised not to try and discover her name, though his altered circumstances might be considered to release him from even the most distinct promise. "Well," he said at last, "I have met a young lady—twice—near here. She was tall, and very beautiful."

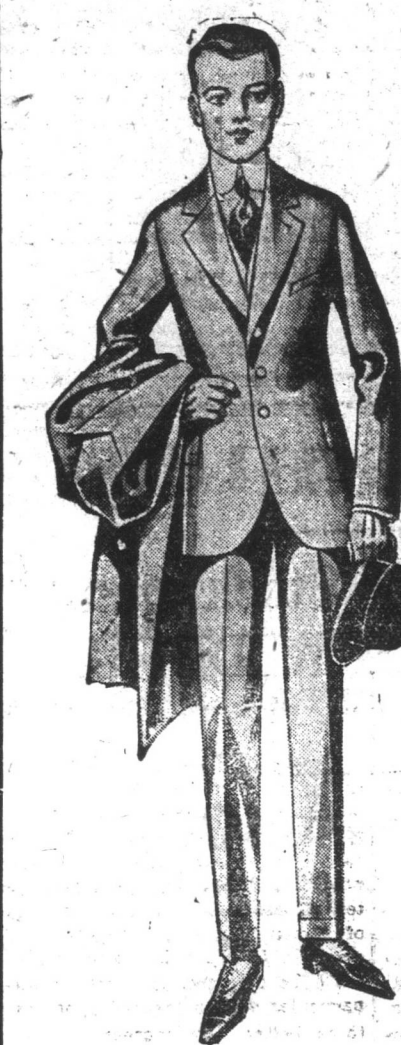
(To be continued)

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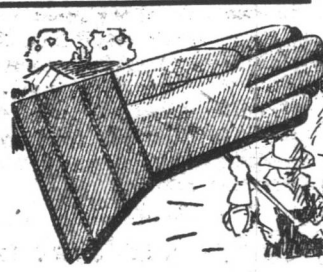
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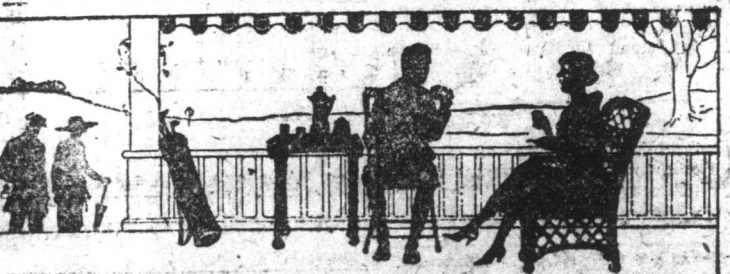
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