

# His Little Girl

By L. G. MOBERLY

## CHAPTER XVIII.

THE September day was very hot and still, and Hugh Berners, strolling homewards across one of the few fields that still defied the ravages of the suburban builder, lingered to watch the golden sky in the west, and to indulge in a delicious day-dream of all that awaited him now in the house that only a month ago had been a dreary bachelor establishment. It was only a week since he and Rosa had returned from their honeymoon, and already the metamorphosis of the house seemed to him little short of marvellous. Even his consulting-room, which had formerly been the drabbiest and dullest of rooms, had begun to wear an appearance of home, and Rosa's drawing-room seemed to her adoring husband the daintiest, loveliest place he had ever imagined.

As he lingered by the stile he liked to picture her sitting there, waiting for him: he liked to think how eagerly she would spring to her feet as he entered, how her eyes would shine, and the bright colour sweep over her face at sight of him. Not to hurry home too quickly was to dream about it all for a little while, and would enhance the joy of taking her into his arms and kissing her dear lips. The glowing western sky typified the glowing happiness in his own heart; he drank in the warm fragrance of the September afternoon with a sense of being a part of all the glory of nature. Was ever wife so sweet as his wife? so his happy thoughts ran on as at last he crossed the stile, and moved slowly over the meadow that would bring him into the road near his house; was ever man so happy as he, was his final reflection, as he opened his own garden gate, and walked up the path. As he entered the door of the house he whistled three notes that were the signal of his home-coming, but there was no answering whistle from Rosa, and he paused for an instant in the hall, waiting and listening for her voice or footstep. But it suddenly dawned upon him that the house was oddly silent, and when a servant in the kitchen regions all at once broke into a gay little song, he felt inclined to call sharply to her to be quiet. That gay little song seemed to break in aggressively upon the surrounding silence, and as he went into his consulting-room some of the overflowing joy died down within him.

"She is probably out," he said to himself, "after all, why should I imagine she should always be here to greet me when I come in from my rounds. We shall have to settle down into the practical life of humdrum married people, and because she has never been out when I came home, it isn't going to follow that she never will be out."

HE tried to whistle as he opened the letter awaiting him, but the whistling was a lamentable failure, and he felt no inclination to settle down to any writing. From the consulting-room he wandered into the drawing-room, whose daintiness seemed to lack something vital now that Rosa was not there. He wandered back to the consulting-room, thence to the dining-room, then up to the bedroom above, but all alike were, as far as he was concerned, empty. His wife was nowhere in the house, and the house in consequence seemed to be without life or interest. He wondered whether he should go and meet her, but not having the vaguest notion in which direction to go, he laughed at himself for his impatience; only to emphasize how impatient he was by calling down the kitchen stairs to enquire whether Jane knew when Mrs. Berners would be back.

"Mrs. Berners hasn't gone out, sir," the maid answered, "she was in the drawing-room at tea time, and she told me she should be in till you came back."

In till he came back? Then where in the name of fortune could she be? The garden? Fool that he was, the garden was of course the very place in which she would like to be on such an evening, and he hurried out of the consulting-room window and called—

"Rosa! Rosa!" in his deep voice, that seemed to carry far beyond the bounds of his own small estate. But only the echoes of his own voice answered him; there was no sign of his wife's white gown in the place where she usually sat, under the pergola of roses close to his window. There were still some roses in flower along the pergola, and in the beds on the lawn, and along the fence tall hollyhocks, pink and crimson and golden yellow stood like stately sentinels amongst a tangle of sweet peas and pink mallows, and gorgeous-hued nasturtiums.

"Rosa!" he called again, and then walked down the path by the hollyhocks, determined to leave no corner of his small domain unsearched. At the bottom of the garden a wicket-gate opened into a lane, which, like the meadow he had just traversed was the last remains of country left in the now fashionable suburb, and as Hugh reached the gate, he saw that it swung open on its hinges. And just outside the gate, lying close under the hedge that skirted the lane, was a still figure in white, a figure at sight of which the young doctor dropped on his knees with a sharp exclamation of horror.

HIS wife lay there unconscious, apparently lifeless, a stain of blood upon the whiteness of her gown, her face upturned to the golden sky, one of her hands thrown out as if in protest, the other, that one on which rested her wedding ring, hanging limply beside her, her eyes closed as if in death. For one paralyzing moment, Hugh thought she was dead, reason overcome by the overpowering flood of emotion that had nearly shattered his senses, and in an agony of apprehension he bent over her to examine more closely what had happened to her. Her pulse still beat faintly, a feeble, flickering pulse, he felt it as his fingers touched her wrist, and as he realized that at least his most awful dread was not fulfilled, a tremendous revulsion of feeling swept over him, and he found himself shaking like an aspen leaf. But it was not in his nature to allow his emotions to get the better of his judgment and courage, and in another moment he was the cool and skilful doctor, manipulating the prostrate form with a rapid touch, until he found what he sought, a small, clean-cut wound in the breast, evidently inflicted by some sharp instrument.

Why the blow had not killed her then and there, was the thought that instantly flashed through his brain, but there was no time to waste on speculation or surmise. Before everything else, it was necessary to stay the still flowing blood, and to move Rosa to the house with all possible expedition. With the coolness of a man trained for long years in self-control, Hugh did all that could be done on the spot, and then, summoning aid, helped to carry his still unconscious wife into their house, and lay her on the bed, where, with his own hands, he took off her dainty white gown with its ominous blood stains, and tended her with all that tenderness which is so essential a part of such a man's character. It was during the process of undressing her that he discovered what had at first puzzled him—why a blow struck as the blow must have been struck at Rosa, had not killed her instantaneously. Round her neck he found a fine gold chain, so fine as to be almost invisible, and on the chain a locket containing his own face, a locket which must have rested always against her heart. And upon the locket was a dent which could only have been impressed there by some sharp instrument, which, glancing off the surface, had inflicted upon its victim a far less deadly wound than must otherwise have been the case.

If it hadn't been for the locket she must have inevitably been killed, he thought, and as he knelt beside his still unconscious wife, and put his lips against her white face, his heart swelled with thankfulness, and he drew her head against his breast in a passion of tenderness. As his lips touched hers, she

The R. S. Williams & Sons Co., Ltd.

145 Yonge St., Toronto

Mark booklet [ ] Send me your booklet "Musical Instruments for the Home."  
desired with an X. [ ] Send me your band catalogue

Name .....

Address .....

COUPON

## What Instrument Will You Play?

The range is almost limitless and every instrument we offer is perfect in tone and construction. In no case do we sacrifice these most important considerations to offer a low priced instrument.

### "Echo" Mandolin--\$15

The famous "Echo" Mandolin is of selected, solid, Rosewood, beautifully inlaid, with very special Spruce top—the combination of woods used in the very highest priced instruments—a sweet toned instrument, not difficult to play and solid value for the money.

### "Echo" Guitars--\$20

Splendid models of similar construction to the "Echo" Mandolin. In the hands of one of moderate ability the "Echo" Guitars render delightful music. The price is low for the quality. A guitar is simple to learn, and harmonizes with almost all other instruments.

### "Artist" Flutes---\$7 and \$12

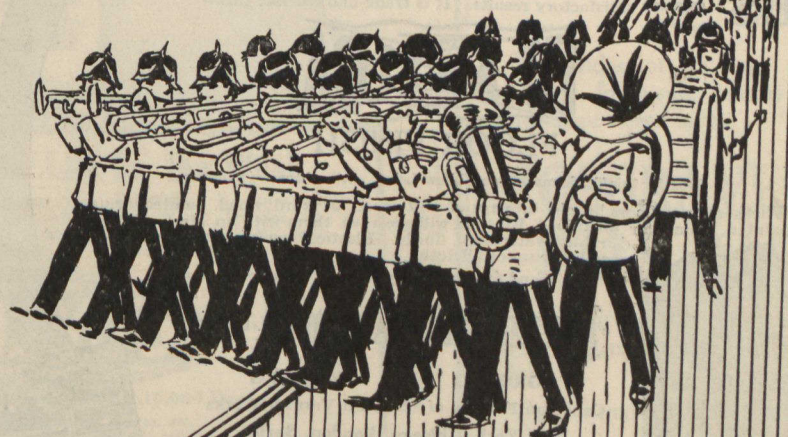
These Flutes have won an enviable reputation for faultless construction and purity of tone. A booklet describing these instruments in detail will be sent upon receipt of coupon at top of page.

## Band Instruments

We carry the finest and most complete line of band instruments in Canada. Besides our own makes—Williams Class "A" and "B" Artist, known by bandsmen to be of peerless quality—we are sole Canadian representatives for the famous Boosey & Co. (whose instruments are used exclusively by such bands as the Scots Guards, and Besses o' the Barn); Cousnon & Co.; Courtois, Noblet, Jeuffroy, and Buffet.

Send for our big, complete band catalog, using the coupon in upper right hand corner.

WINNIPEG CALGARY MONTREAL TORONTO



THE WILLIAMS & SONS CO. LIMITED.  
R.S. MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS OF QUALITY  
145 YONGE ST. TORONTO