

## IONE: A BROKEN LOVE DREAM

BY LAURA JEAN LIBBEY

Author of "A Broken Betrothal," "Parted by Fate," "Parted at the Altar," "Heiress of Cameron Hall," "Miss Middleton's Lover," Etc., Etc.

He looked about the elegantly furnished room, with its velvet carpet and lounging chairs, its costly statuettes and bric-a-brac, with an odd smile. How different this magnificent room was to the shabby little attic parlor in which she was wont to receive him. Of course she would be robed in sweeping silks and ablaze with diamonds. Young girls raised from poverty to affluence and luxury usually were apt to be.

He heard the soft rustle of silks, and rose expectantly. It was Ione. He had never seen her more simply yet more becomingly dressed. She wore a simple, clinging, pale blue cashmere dress, relieved from severe plainness by the lace frills at her dainty throat and wrists. She wore no ornament, and looking at her, he thought of the line: "Beauty unadorned is adorned the most."

"Ione!" he murmured, holding out his hands to her.

She affected not to see him. He drew back in apparent pain and surprise.

"We parted in anger, Ione," he said, "but I could not bear it any longer. I have followed you because I cannot live without you. You have had a wondrous change in surroundings and prospects, almost incredible to understand; but hearts don't change, Ione. You loved me once. You cannot have put the old love entirely from you so soon, my darling."

She looked at him, with her proud, dark eyes, with all the dignity of a woman of seven-and-twenty, instead of a girl of seventeen. It was difficult, he felt, to be sentimental with her. And yet, those same dark eyes had once brightened for him; he once had the power to bring the rose-bloom into those dimpled cheeks.

Her beautiful face was raised quite calmly to his. Her dark eyes were serene, as though utterly unconscious that he had said anything extraordinary.

"You do not speak, Ione," he cried. "Say something to give me hope."

She did not answer him, and the calm scrutiny of those lovely dark eyes made him feel extremely uncomfortable.

He came nearer to her. The sweet, subtle perfume of the rosebud she held in her hand reached him. She drew back with a haughty gesture.

"Ione, do not be unkind to me," he murmured. "Let me come nearer, where I may kneel at your feet and pray my prayer."

His face flushed, his heart warmed with the love that he really felt for her within him. There was no feigning, no pretense. It was all reality. It was not her prospective fortune, he was thinking of just then, but of Ione—peerless Ione. And in that moment, he felt that he could give his whole life to win her.

"Let me pray my prayer," he repeated. "Let me tell how deeply I love you, Ione—so deeply and so well that, if you send me from you, my life will be a burden, and I shall be the most wretched of men. Remember, Ione, I loved you before you were Colonel Whitney's heiress, always remember that."

There was no tenderness in the beautiful face turned toward him. It was all aglow with scorn, lighted with pride, flushed with contempt.

"Say no more, Mr. Lyons," she said, quickly. "We will not discuss the matter. The answer I gave you when I parted from you was final. I am amazed that you have followed me here to repeat that distasteful scene. The past is past. You must understand that. You force me to say, once and for all, I would rather die than marry you, because I have neither liking nor respect for you. You will allow me to wish you good-afternoon, Mr. Lyons."

Before he could recover from his dismay she had quitted the room.

He quitted the mansion with love and hate fighting a fierce battle in his heart. Was ever so splendid a chance lost? It drove him mad to think of it. All was due to the willful caprice of a lovely girl. He vowed to himself that he should not give up so easily; that he would vanquish

her pride; that he would make her care for him again; that the proud, dark eyes should soften and brighten for him. He gave his whole mind to the conquest.

Now that lovely Ione Lawrence was out of his reach, man-like, Frank Lyons had begun to love her with a passionate love that frightened even himself. He followed her about like a shadow, and the hope of winning her by fair means or foul was dearer to him than his very life.

"All this would have been mine," he often thought as he reviewed the colonel's vast possessions, and the hope of the obstinacy of one girl.

Curses, deep and burning, rose to his lips; yet, for his punishment, he loved her with a love that mastered him in spite of his hate; that made him long to show himself at her feet, while he could have slain her for the wrong he considered that she had done him.

"My turn will come sooner or later," he told himself, grimly. "Everything comes to those who know how to wait."

He was obliged to see her sought by others, to see her admired, her praises on every lip.

He placed himself in her way on every possible occasion; she avoided him when she could, bowing to him so coldly when they were brought face to face, that any other suitor would have given up the pursuit in despair.

The colonel had no end of proposals for the girl's hand. When he mentioned the aspirants, one after another, Ione would turn to him with a look so full of pleading that he would actually laugh aloud.

"You will have to make an election some time, my dear," he said. "Unless you intend to be an old maid, and you wouldn't like that."

"I shouldn't mind," she replied, bravely, "better that than marrying for aught save love."

"It would be a better world if all women held the same opinion," commented the colonel. "By the way, my dear, I exclaimed one day at luncheon, 'do you recollect young Arthur Rochester?'"

He did not understand the great stillness that came over her.

"Yes, uncle," she replied at length, in a stifled voice.

Did she recollect him? Was there ever an hour in the day in which she had been able to forget him?

"He is in Pittsburgh," continued the colonel, "and here under rather bad circumstances, too. It appears that the old millionaire has disinherited him, and now the young fellow is obliged to make his own way in the world. I met him last night, and he told me about it, and straightway on the spot I offered him a position in the iron works as overseer."

"And he—did he accept?" asked Ione, breathlessly.

"Yes," returned the colonel, "and takes his position to-day. The young fellow is the right man in him. Such a fellow is bound to succeed."

Ione came nearer to him, knelt on the velvet hassock at his feet, and looked up eagerly into his face.

"Did he speak to me—ask after me, uncle?" she whispered, in a low voice, her cheeks all aflame.

"No," he answered, so promptly that a new hope that had sprung up in her heart died instantly. "He must know that you are my niece," she queried, "and the wonderful story of how you took me from toil and poverty to make me your heiress?"

"I spoke of it later on," returned the colonel, "but he was too well-bred, of course, to make comments."

From that hour the listlessness of Ione. Both Miss Carris Court and the colonel noticed the heightened color in her face, and wondered much at it. They never once thought of associating it with the presence of young Arthur Rochester.

Sooner or later she should see him now, Ione told herself; and the thought brought with it the keenest delight. She would let him know, in some sweet, delicate, maidenly way, that she did not know her own heart when she sent him away; and then—ah! who knows what might happen then?

Frank Lyons had said love could not die in a day. To love once was to love forever.

Would this be so of Arthur Rochester?

What mattered their change of fortunes? She had refused him when he had been the millionaire's son and she only a working-girl. But now—if he should ask her to marry him now, though she was an heiress and he but her uncle's overseer, he would not have to plead in vain.

He knew that she was here. Would he call on her? she wondered.

A week of expectancy passed. She had heard from Arthur Rochester only through her uncle. He had sent her no word, not even a line, acquainting her with his near presence.

Has he learned to forget me so soon? she asks herself. Is it with him—

"Enough that we are parted; that there rolls a flood of headlong fate between our souls!"

she murmurs, as she, the petted heiress, the belle, for whose smiles men sue in vain, turns her dark, curly head on her sleepless pillow and sobs herself to sleep.

Another week passed. Once, when she was riding by, she had seen him on the street. How her heart leaped

and throbbed! What would their meeting be like? she wondered. A thousand things occurred to her to say to him. He gave her no opportunity. With a deferential bow, raising his hat, he passed her by. She leaned back in her victoria with something very like a sob on her lips.

"You may as well drive home," she said to the coachman. "I—I do care for riding any more to-day."

### CHAPTER XI.

From the hour when Ione had sent him from her, Arthur Rochester was a changed man. He did not drift recklessly to ruin as many another would have done. He had gone quietly away, and had tried to drown all thought, all memory in hard work. What he suffered no one knew. He had loved her so well.

He fought a brave battle with grim despair. There were times when he was victorious, and for a few hours he would cry out that his work was everything—that a man's life was work, and that love was play; but after all this was said, he would bury his face in his hands with a bitter groan, muttering that a man's life was nothing without love to brighten it and make it worth the living.

Would the time ever come, he wondered, when he should forget her—when the fair beauty of her face would fade from his memory, and cease to torture him?

He had left New York city to avoid seeing her, and it was the greatest shock of his life, when he was talking with Colonel Whitney, to learn of her presence at Beechvale Villa, and that she was the colonel's niece and prospective heiress. How strangely the wheel of fortune had revolved.

"What cruelty of fate has brought me here to suffer all the old pain over again!" he thought, bitterly.

At first it occurred to him to go away. Then he denounced himself for his want of strength and manly courage.

"I need not see her. We shall not be likely to meet," he told himself, for her social position was far above the one he found himself occupying now. It was as though they were living in two different worlds.

Once the colonel invited him to a lawn fete, to be held at the villa. Arthur declined with graceful courtesy. He remembered how shallow the social world was; that a man was measured, not by his intellect and noble qualities there, but by the amount of his gold; and he thought of the lines:

"I sometimes wonder if heaven will be a place of distinction 'twixt wealth and worth. And will they ask o'er the crystal sea How many thousands we owned on earth!"

"She is an heiress of untold wealth, and fame has laureled her woman's brow; While I am a workman, with nothing but health. And a heart full of love to offer now."

On the day he had met Ione while driving, he saw her for the first time since the hour in which she had sent him from her. Arthur Rochester had raised his hat, with a cold, courteous bow; but only Heaven knew what it cost him to pass her like that.

Ione had arranged that second lawn fete purposely that he might be invited; had even suggested his coming to the colonel, and now her pretty plan of a reconciliation had failed.

"He wants me to clearly understand he loves me no longer," she sobbed.

He thought long and earnestly over the matter. His love must have changed to indifference, and,

"It is easier to move a mountain than to change Indifference to love."

Of what use were her beauty, her grace, her wealth and talent, if she could not win him. The whole world was as nothing compared to that.

As the weeks lengthened into two long weary months, and he had not come near her, she knew her surmise was correct—he studiously avoided her.

"Oh, if I could but tell him how I have repented those hasty words that sent him from me," she would murmur.

Should she send for him and tell him so? She thought of the sad plight of Elaine, the Lily Maid of Astolat, who said:

"And now I die for want of one bold word!"

She would take a little time to think over the matter.

Even Miss Carris Court noticed how pale and thin beautiful Ione was.

To be Continued.

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