

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.

CHAPTER I.

It was on the tenth of January, and intensely cold in New York city. I am particular as to date, for it marked the bitterest tragedy that ever darkened a beautiful young girl's life.

All the night before a thick, steady storm of snowflakes had been coming down, until it seemed on this fatally eventful day that the world lay lost under a shroud of whiteness, and it was snowing still. Great icicles hung from the bare branches of the trees and from the eaves of the houses. A cold, north wind was blowing—a wind that chilled everything it touched.

On this bitter cold morning, hurrying along with the crowd that surged up Broadway, was a young girl who, despite her shabby attire, was rarely beautiful.

She was not more than seventeen, this fair maiden who was destined to meet so strange a fate, so wonderful a fate, with a face dark and pensive, framed in a wealth of nut-brown curls; dimpled cheeks, which the cutting wind had kissed into twin roses; lips like the heart of a crimson blossom; and those eyes, dark as stars, looking out from the rose-leaf face, would have started anyone with their vivid loveliness. She had the grace of a dainty princess, though Ione Lawrence was but a working girl—the daughter of a Knight of Labor.

Ione had been the pride and darling of her father's heart. Six months before our story opens he had passed away, joining the wife of his youth, who had been dead several years, leaving two daughters behind him. On his death-bed he had called Barbara, his eldest daughter, to his bedside, and drawing her face down to his own cold, clammy one, he whispered, solemnly:

"You are three-and-twenty, Barbara, and Ione is but seventeen. I leave her to your care. You must be both mother and sister to her, Barbara, she is so young. She is gay, impetuous and wilful, but you must be patient with her. She will be more beautiful than I seldom falls to the lot of women to be, Barbara, and great beauty in a young and unprotected girl brings with it either a blessing or a curse. Oh, my dear, I have such strange fears for Ione's future. I cannot tell why. I trust to Heaven this premonition of coming evil is but a sick man's morbid fancy. I could not rest in my grave if I had not your guard our treasure well, Barbara."

"I will, father," said the weeping girl. "You may safely leave Ione to me."

Barbara Lawrence had taken up the thread of life when her father had laid it down and sought work in an adjacent mill; but Ione was kept at school.

Then a sudden change came. Barbara was stricken ill.

The doctor who was summoned saw at once what he dared not tell Ione—that the end was near; she would soon be alone in this pitiless world. "Oh, my darling!" Barbara had moaned, "what shall we do now? I dare not look the future in the face. The money we have laid by will soon be run through with."

"Do not fear, dear," cried beautifully, brave Ione. "We shall not starve. I can take your place in the mill."

At first, Barbara demurred; but there was no help for it. Ione must be bread-winner now for force of necessity; but ah, how Barbara dreaded it. Her darling knew so little of the great hard work of men and women! How would it end?

On this eventful morning on which our story opens, Barbara had kissed her darling good-bye with a wistful sigh, asking, anxiously:

"Are you sure you can find the way to the mill, darling?"

Ione threw back the brown head running over with curls, and looked at her, a gay, rollicking laugh that sounded like the chiming of silver bells rippling over the cherry-red lips.

"Don't be a goose, Barbara," she cried. "Why shouldn't I find my way? One would think, to hear you talk, that I was a child of seven, instead of a young lady of seventeen."

With a kiss and a bear-like hug, Ione darted away before her sister had time to reply, and Barbara remembered afterward she had watched the girl till she was out of sight.

More than one pair of eyes turned to gaze admiringly after the slim, girlish figure, but Ione Lawrence paid no heed.

Turning hurriedly off Broadway, and crossing Canal street, she paused at length before a large brick structure which bore above the broad entrance door the sign:

ROCHESTER & LELAND.
NOTTINGHAM LACE MILLS.

"This is the place," murmured Ione, her heart at a flutter as she nervously ascended the steps that led to the office. "Oh, they will, they must, take me in Barbara's place when I tell them she has fallen ill, and that I—"

The sentence never was finished. All in an instant Ione was conscious of a swift, dizzy sensation; the earth and sky seemed to meet, and then—

"I hope you are not hurt," said a deep, husky voice. "Those uncovered steps are treacherous. I am so fortunate as to have saved you from an ugly fall."

Ione struggled out of a pair of masculine arms, and, raising her bewildered eyes, saw a tall, fair-haired gentleman standing before her. He was a gentleman friend had but a moment since alighted from a sleigh that had dashed up to the pavement. "I sincerely trust you are not hurt," he repeated, looking earnestly at the lovely young face flushing and paling in evident embarrassment, as she murmured she was "not hurt, only stunned."

"You can go into the office through the private door, if you like. These steps are actually dangerous. They are actually dangerous."

He could not account for the impulse that led him to add:

"Allow me to introduce myself, and to apologize for the condition of them."

He drew a card from his card case, and handing it to her, Ione read the name—"Arthur Rochester."

"Are you, sir, one of the owners of the mill?" asked Ione, with timid eagerness.

"The son of the senior member of the firm," he replied.

Then her eyes involuntarily traveled toward his companion; and she saw a face that left its memory on her heart while her life lasted—a dark, handsome face that usually won women's hearts at the first glance; a pair of dark, laughing eyes that met her own, and seemed to hold her spell-bound by their magic power.

Poor, beautiful Ione! She might have led a happy enough life if her path had not been crossed by this handsome young man.

Although Arthur Rochester made himself known to her, he did not offer to introduce his companion, Ione noticed. On the contrary, he hurried away, when he glanced suddenly around and saw that his friend was regarding the girl with apparent admiration.

A frown came over Arthur Rochester's fine face, and, raising his hand, he hurried his companion quickly away.

But not before the darkly splendid eyes had flashed another glance full of unbounded admiration into the lovely, girlish face; for Frank Lyons, his college chum, from Philadelphia, he hurriedly introduced her to.

"And you are?"

"Ione Lawrence," she answered, with a lovely flush covering her shy, sweet face.

"Do allow me to insist upon taking you home, Miss Lawrence," he pleaded. "You can see for yourself you will never be able to make your way home on foot; you would meet the fate of poor Gretchen; you would be found frozen stiff and cold in death in the snow drifts to-morrow morning."

Ione was a little delighted, a little bewildered and just a little frightened. If she could have foreseen the future, she would have turned from him and fled ere the first steps were taken in so bitter a tragedy were taken.

With girlish, bashful hesitancy, she allowed herself to be persuaded and placed in the sleigh.

He took up the reins, and the handsome horse fairly flew over the frozen snow drifts.

CHAPTER II.

Ione Lawrence never forgot that sleigh ride; it was destined to live in her memory for many a long year afterward.

Frank Lyons was a clever man, quick of comprehension; he had the great gift of understanding character, and of adapting himself to the peculiarities of many a man was thrown. He misused the gift terribly, even fatally; but he had it, and used it like a charm.

Although he had exchanged but a few indifferent words with Ione, he understood her perfectly.

He talked with her of the books she had read, as the sleigh dashed on over the frozen drifts; he quoted sweet, poetic lines from the poets; he cited the beautiful love story of Romeo and Juliet as the sweetest he had ever heard, and complimented her by remarking, she was strangely like the picture of sweet Juliet which hung in the Art Academy, adding that he intended to purchase the picture, that the face he admired so sincerely might be ever before him.

It was pleasant to sit there and hear such kind words; it was pleasant to read the admiration so clearly revealed in those dark eyes. It was very romantic, too, to think that he thought her so like Juliet.

Although he did not say it in words, he was too clever for that—he made Ione understand that the brightness of life had just begun for him that morning; for, like Romeo, he had seen for the first time a fair face which he should never forget.

Listening to him, Ione believed him to be the brightest, kindest, truest man upon earth.

She was very young and inexperienced, or a pair of dark eyes, a dark, curling hair, and a mustache, a voice, could not have charmed her so.

The drive home had been of scarcely twenty minutes duration, but it seemed to Ione she had lived long of work, and he found, to his dismay, that she had been already sent away.

A strange regret that he could scarcely have defined thrilled in the young man's heart. The result was, however, an office boy was hurriedly despatched to overtake the slim figure hurrying down the street, almost lost to sight by the blinding storm, and Ione was recalled, and given her sister's place in the mill.

All that day thoughts of pretty Ione filled two different masculine hearts. Arthur Rochester, who had been hastily summoned from the city by a telegram, thought of Ione as the train whirled him on his journey. His friend, Frank Lyons, had thought of nothing else.

"Confound it!" he muttered, reaching for his sealskin overcoat, and throwing it on somewhat hastily. "What is coming over me, I wonder. I have seen a pretty, girlish face, and I cannot forget it. There's but one way to cure myself of this mad fancy, and that is to see the same face again;" and he laughed a little, hard, cynical laugh. "I ought not to give one thought to the pretty little gypsy; the fates have forbidden it, that's certain."

All day long the storm had raged on, and night, dark as Hades, had set in early.

At length six o'clock sounded shrilly from the clocks and adjoining bell-towers, and a few moments later throngs of nimble-footed ladies came from the broad entrance door of the Nottingham Mills to battle with the storm and the darkness as they made their way to the elevated roads and street cars, anxious to get to their homes.

Ione could not afford the expensive luxury of riding, so she made her way alone on foot. The night was growing colder and colder; the very breath seemed to freeze on her lips, and the snow had fallen to such great depths, and beneath the street was covered with such a glaze of ice, that making one's way was almost impossible.

Suddenly she heard the sound of sleigh bells, and a few moments later a sleigh dashed up the street; and when it was abreast of Ione, to her surprise it stopped short. How was she to know that its occupant had purposely followed her from the mill?

Glancing up, she saw by the yellow gleam of the street lamp, the dark, handsome face of the stranger whom she had met that morning with Mr. Rochester.

hope, very earnestly, that he might see her again.

The next moment the slim little figure was lost to sight in the darkness.

"You are late, my darling," said Barbara, as the door opened and Ione sprang into the room, and up to the couch on which the sufferer lay.

As she took her darling in her arms she wondered what had flushed her fair young face with such a new and tender beauty.

"Has it been a hard day, dear?" she asked, as the white arms twined about her, and the dark, curly head nestled down on the pillow beside her.

"It must have been," she added, "for it was your first day as a bread-winner, facing the cold, hard world of men and women."

"It was the happiest day of my life, Barbara," she answered. "Every one was so kind to me."

Then she told how near the foreman had come to not taking her into the mill, but had changed his mind; and of the accident on the slippery steps which would have happened if Mr. Rochester had not been young near at hand.

"God bless Mr. Arthur!" returned Barbara. "He is as noble as he is good—a king among men!"

"Did you ever see his friend, Mr. Lyons?" stammered Ione, confusedly. And if Barbara had but glanced at the girl's blushing face, she would have seen a look on it that would have alarmed her at once.

"Yes," answered Barbara, hoarsely, her face darkening strangely. "I have seen him. Why?"

"Do you like him?" faltered Ione, in a low voice.

"No," returned Barbara, slowly. "Why?" persisted Ione, the color fading from her pretty, dimpled cheeks.

"I cannot tell you all my reasons, but I will say he has a false face. There is cunning in the sharp eyes, and cruelty on the thin lips."

"You are prejudiced," said Ione, drawing back coldly. "I have never heard of any sensible person disliking a man for the color of his eyes or the shape of his lips."

"Nature never makes a mistake in her handwriting," returned Barbara, gravely, "and she has written 'Beware' on every lineament of his face."

A gleam of defiance flashed into the dark eyes, and Ione turned abruptly away, with the words she was about to utter unsaid. How could she tell Barbara—all that—that she had hidden home with him from the mill, and all he had said to her?

"A false face," Ione repeated indignantly to herself, as she turned away. Barbara certainly was prejudiced against him. It was the handsomest face she had ever seen, and the remembrance of that one glance from those dark eyes, as they had parted, made her heart beat.

There was a break in the monotony of her life, and she was longing for a change. The first dawn of that sun that was to shine so brightly for a time—then destroy her.

The first secret Ione had ever kept in her heart from Barbara's watchful eyes.

If Ione had not turned silently away, this story would never have been written.

Long and earnestly Barbara thought over that conversation during the still, solemn hours of the night, as she tossed restlessly on her pillow.

"What I tell her for reason I have for hating—yes, hating Frank Lyons!" she asked herself, with a bitter, sobbing sigh. "Oh, Heaven! how can I? And yet she should be told the whole truth, no matter how great the shock may be. To-morrow I will tell her," murmured Barbara, huskily, "when she returns at night from the mill."

Ione met the invalid with a strangely flushed face the next morning. The first secret she had ever kept from Barbara lay like a heavy weight on her heart.

"I will tell her that I know him when I come home to-night," she murmured, tenderly kissing the pallid face as she bade her good-bye.

It was long after dark when Ione returned home that evening. A sudden chill seemed to oppress her as she opened the door, and the fire in the grate was out—the lamp she had left on the small stand beside the sufferer's couch was not lighted—the room was in total darkness, save for a little strip of moonlight that drifted in.

No welcome voice greeted her. Was Barbara asleep?

Noiselessly she stole up to the couch and knelt down beside it, and, leaning over, she said softly, "I have something to tell you, dear. It has been weighing on my mind all day long. You won't scold me for not telling you last night, will you, Barbara? Promise me in advance."

The thin, patient face did not turn toward her. The lips that were wont to breathe words of consolation were strangely silent now; no gentle hand was laid caressingly on the curly head, no tender voice answered that faltering appeal. Heaven help her! Barbara Lawrence's voice would answer her never again.

"Do you hear me, Barbara?" she cried, laying her face down beside the one turned from her on the pillow. What was there in that icy touch that sent such a thrill of horror through the girl's heart?

A low, startled cry, Ione gazed down into the rigid face lying so still and white within the little strip of white moonlight. The half-open, glazed eyes flashed no look of recognition up into her own.

Then a piercing shriek ran through the lonely room:

"Oh, God! Barbara is dead!"

Yes, she was dead, leaving Ione, her darling, her idol, friendless and alone, to the mercies of the bitter world.

Ione's wild cries brought in a kind-hearted neighbor, who found her in a deep swoon on the floor.

It was quite a week after Barbara was laid at rest that Ione opened her eyes to consciousness and realized with a bitter moan what had happened.

"You nearly went off in brain fever, too, my dear," said Mrs. Gregory, the kind neighbor, to whose house she had been removed.

"I wish I had!" sobbed Ione. "I have nothing to live for now!"

"It's wicked in the sight of God to think that, let alone saying it," declared Mrs. Gregory. "You have youth and strength, and no doubt, a long life before you. You are to make the best of it. You must not worry. You can stay here with me until you are able to go back to the mill again."

It was several weeks before Ione was able to take up the thread of life again; and in the face of another terrible snow-storm she set out, heavy-hearted, for the mill once more.

As she was about to pass through the weaving-room, where a score or more of pretty girls were bending over their looms, toward the cloak room, to divest herself of her wraps, she was confronted by the foreman, who tapped her insolently on the shoulder.

"Never mind hanging up your wraps, Miss Lawrence," he said, sharply. "Step up to the desk with me and we will settle your account. We do not keep young ladies here who stay out from work when it suits their fancy. You are discharged, I say."

"Oh, sir!" she began, "I—"

"No excuses, please," returned the foreman. "I decline to discuss the matter—to listen to another word. You are discharged, I say."

Fairly dazed with pain, Ione staggered from the weaving-room, with the miserable pittance that had been handed her, out into the street and the terrible snow-storm.

"What shall I do?" she groaned, pressing her hand to her throbbing temples as she raised her eyes to the stormy sky. "Not a dollar left—no money to pay for a day's board. Oh, God of the orphans and the friendless, show me which way to turn!" she moaned, blinding tears falling down her cheeks.

Only those who know what full horror is compassed in the awful word "discharged," and in the dead of winter, can pity poor Ione. Only those who have had a page of just such an experience in their own past lives can understand what this beautiful, hapless working-girl suffered, and an answering chord will thrill in their hearts for her.

All day long Ione wandered through the stormy streets, heedless of hunger and cold. At length dusk set in, soon giving place to the darkness of night.

Ione dreaded returning to Mrs. Gregory and telling her she was out of work; for that lady had impressively hinted she would be pleased to receive as much as she could spare each week, in addition to her board bill, to pay up for the time already spent beneath her roof during her illness.

"Ah! how can I return?" moaned Ione, threading her way with the busy throng that surged up Broadway.

She found herself at last upon Lexington avenue, and just as she made that discovery, a gentleman passed her directly beneath the glaring light of the gas-lamp.

Although he did not glance in her direction, and his coat overcoat was fastened close up about the chin, she recognized him at once as young Mr. Rochester, the mill owner's son. And she remembered now that he was called "the friend of the poor."

If she could but plead with him to take her back, telling him why she remained away from the mill those ten days, perhaps he would grant her request.

Acting upon the impulse, Ione sprang forward; but she was not quick enough. At that moment Arthur Rochester had run lightly up the broad marble steps of an adjacent mansion, and had admitted himself with his pass-key.

Ione stood silent and motionless before the house, her hands clasped in despair, her lovely eyes drowned in tears.

There seemed to be something going on inside the house was lighted from "garret to basement," and while she stood there, coaches commenced to arrive, and deposit their fair burdens at the canopy-covered door.

"Oh, if I could only see him but for one little moment!" thought Ione, catching her breath with a bitter sob. "In cases like this, even the most timid are driven by necessity to desperate measures."

She hurriedly ascended the steps and touched the bell.

The liveried footman gazed in undisguised amazement at the shivering, ill-clad, slim figure standing before him.

"What are you doing here? What do you want? Why didn't you go below to the servants' hall?" he asked, all in a breath.

"I wanted to see Mr. Arthur Rochester for but a few minutes," pleaded Ione, earnestly. "I saw him enter just now. I must see him."

An insolent laugh answered her. "Must! he repeated, sneeringly. "That's pretty good! You can't see him. Come, move on, my pretty."

"Who is it wants to see Arthur, Peters?" asked a curious voice from within.

Peters, the footman, drew back with a low, obsequious bow. "Only a working-girl from the mill. I should imagine, Miss Elaine—a mere nobody. I've told her it is simply impossible; she couldn't see Mr. Rochester."

"He would see me, if he only knew my errand," sobbed Ione.

The young girl whom Peters had called Elaine came swiftly forward, and then Ione saw the most magnificent being she had ever beheld. A slim, petite young girl, with dark eyes and hair, robed in a fleecy white dress. Diamonds encircled her white throat, flashed from her arms and small white hands, swung from the tiny, shell-like ears, and caught back the meshes of her jetty coil.

"Why do you wish to see Mr. Rochester so particularly?" she asked, peering eagerly down into the white, upturned face, which she saw

Soft Harness

You can make your harness as soft as a glove and as tough as wire by using EUREKA Harness Oil. You can keep it in good condition at half the cost of other oils.

EUREKA Harness Oil

Makes a poor looking harness like new. Made of pure, heavy bodied oil, especially prepared to withstand the weather.

Sold everywhere in case-all sizes.

Made by EUREKA OIL COMPANY.

at a glance was as beautiful as a poet's dream.

"I—I could hardly tell you," murmured Ione, choking back a sob.

The heart of the little heiress, who loved Arthur Rochester with a mad, passionate love, was fired with bitter jealousy at once, and she made up her mind that this lovely working-girl should never see him, if she could prevent it.

To Be Continued.

Housekeeper's Backache.

Many women lift and strain, over-work and over-tax their strength. Their back gives out. Their kidneys become affected. They have a painful or sore feeling in the small of the back that takes all the life and ambition out of them. They feel dull, depressed, lifeless.

Listen! The hard work you've been doing has thrown extra work on the kidneys. They cry out in protest through the aching back. You feel wretched all over because the kidneys are not working right and poison is circulating in your system. The kidneys must have help—better give them the benefit of the best Kidney Medicine made—Dr. Pitcher's Backache Kidney Tablets—the prescription of a kidney specialist—the result of years of study of kidney diseases.

PAIN PREVENTED SLEEP.

Mrs. N. Layton, Amherst, Ont., writes as follows: "I have used Dr. Pitcher's Backache Kidney Tablets. They are beyond question the best kidney remedy I have ever used. I had lameness and an acute pain between the shoulders. I could not sleep nights. I had more or less headache. Often I suffered from indigestion caused by acid in my system. These troubles departed after I had used Dr. Pitcher's Backache Kidney Tablets, my kidneys were strengthened and I rested better nights. I think these Tablets the most effective kidney remedy I have ever seen. I know that they surpass every other that I have tried heretofore, and I do not hesitate in recommending them."

Dr. Pitcher's Backache Kidney Tablets are 50c. a Box, at all druggists or by mail. Send Dr. J. C. Pitcher Co., Toronto, Ont.

JEWELRY BY MAIL.

If there is a post office in your neighborhood and you have a jewelry want of any kind, we can supply it almost as well as if you visited us personally.

Write for our catalogue and see how we can supply you with the best of jewelry in Canada, at wholesale prices. Besides, our system of one price in plain figures and our guarantee as to quality means so much to out-of-town buyers.

We prepay all delivery charges, and if what we send does not please you in every particular, return it, and by next mail we will cheerfully refund your money.

RYRIE BROS.,
Young and Adelaide Sts.,
TORONTO.

RECOMMENDED BY PHYSICIANS.

Pond's Extract

Over fifty years a household remedy for Burns, Sprains, Wounds, Bruises, Coughs, Colds and all accidents liable to occur in every home.

CAUTION—There is only one Pond's Extract. Be sure you get the genuine, sold only in sealed bottles in bull wrappers.

Ask for Minard's and take no other.