

THE RULES OF WHIST.

If you the modern game of whist would know,
From this great principle its precepts flow;
Treat your own hand as to your partner's joined,
And play, not one alone, but both combined.
Your first lead makes your partner understand
What is the chief component of your hand;
And hence there is necessity the strongest
That your first lead be from your suit that's longest.

In this with ace and king, lead king, then ace;
With king and queen, king also has first place;
With ace, queen, knave, lead ace, and then the queen;
With ace, four small ones, ace should first be seen;
With queen, knave, ten, you let the queen precede;
In either case you the lowest lead.

Ere you return your friend's, your own suit play;
But trumps you must return without delay.

When you return your partner's lead, take pains
To lead him back the best your hand contains,
If you receive not more than three at first;
If you had more, you may return the worst.

But if you hold the master card, you're bound
In most cases to play it second round.

When'er you want a lead, 'tis seldom wrong
To lead up to the weak, or through the strong.
If second hand, your lowest should be played;
Unless you mean "trump signal" to be made;
Or if you've king and queen, or ace and king,
Then one of these will be the proper thing.

Mind well the rules for trumps—you'll often need them
When you hold five, 'tis always right to lead them;
Or if the lead won't come in time to you,
Then signal to your partner so to do.

Watch also for your partner's trump request,
To which with less than four, play out your best.

To lead through honours turned up is bad play,
Unless you want the trump suit cleared away.

When, second hand, a doubtful risk you see,
Don't trump it, if you hold more trumps than three;
But having three or less, trump fearlessly.
When weak in trumps yourself, don't force your friend,
But always force the adverse strong trump hand.

For sequences, stern custom has decreed,
The lowest you must play, if you don't lead.

When you discard, weak suit you ought to choose,
For strong ones are too valuable to lose.

CHRYSLIS.

I.

"Nowhere to go, old man? Come down with me. It will be dull enough certainly; but nothing is so dull as Christmas by one's self in town. Will you come?"

"I think so. It's very kind of you to ask me. I never felt so thoroughly 'blue' in my life. Isn't it always so?" continued Lewis Hogarth, as he took his friend's arm and turned with him out of damp, muddy Pall Mall into the comfortable warmth of Junior Carlton. "If we have waited and hoped for anything through year after year, it seems of no value when we have it at last; and we almost wish to be back to the time when we were hoping and waiting, without the unpleasant feeling of satiety."

"Yet such an acquisition as yours is scarcely likely to lose its charms so quickly, Sir Lewis," said his companion, laughing.

George Wynne was a somewhat older, graver man than the friend he had just invited to his home; a little on the wrong side of thirty, of middle height and unpretending appearance, with one of those calm, true faces which bear an expression of strength and self-reliance, and unknowingly inspire trust. The other was tall and dark, scarcely handsome, perhaps, but with a certain nobility of countenance, and a winning manner which earned him many friends.

He gave a pretended shudder at the last two words. "How sick I am of the sound of this new title of mine! I seem to hear nothing else. My groom repeats it in such an exasperating manner that I threatened to discharge him yesterday. I tell you, Wynne, I am thoroughly tired of it! If this money had come to me five years ago, you know what a godsend it would have been, but now what does it matter? Last year I came into enough to set up a yacht and keep my hunter, without feeling myself in hourly danger of being obliged to cross the Channel and end my days as one of the *vauriens* of Boulogne. I really was contented. And now, a fortnight ago, in the midst of a delightful cruise among the Greek islands, I am called home to England to attend my uncle's funeral, arrive too late, owing to being nearly smashed in a railway accident on the way to Paris; am received by a weeping aunt and five ditto maiden cousins, meekly requesting three months time to turn out of that gloomy, ghost-haunted structure, where my ancestors glare at one from every corner, and the rats carouse behind the wainscot. To be overwhelmed with piles of accounts and musty letters, made to interview grim-looking clerics and bailiffs, all Sir Lewisings me! Lectured upon my duties as a landlord, and patted on the head by scores of horrid old villagers, who told me how I had grown, and how they remembered me in petticoats! It was really too much. Of course, I couldn't stay down there; and as all my friends have made up their parties for this festive occasion, I am left in the lurch, and the for."

"And you are coming down to enliven us," said George Wynne. "We shall be very quiet; only my brother-in-law and three children, and my sister."

"But I thought your sister—"

"You are thinking of the married one, poor Florence. You do not know my younger sister. Well, I shall expect you at the station to-mor-

row, 2.25 train. At present I have an engagement, and must run away."

The new baronet was left looking out over the miry pavement, where a few men hurried along in overcoats, and water-proofed women, exhibiting a good deal of thick boot, struggled on through the driving rain from their visit to the Christmas-decked shops.

"Cheerful season!" muttered Lewis, for to him the festival was little else than a name. Early left an orphan, he had only been as a guest, an outsider in its social gatherings and happy reminiscences; so it all seemed very wearisome and dull. And as he looked back over his checkered life, he wondered what would be the end. He thought of the bright days of his boyhood, the sad struggles with poverty which were his when he grew to man's estate; the careless, useless life when he had partially surmounted them, rendering of no avail the talents God had given him, because the love which had lighted him onward was quenched by the chill hand of death; of the pure desire and purpose that love had given to his life, and which for years after its loss had made him wayward and careless. And now that his mind had regained its balance, now that he was once more ready for the conflict, the rusted talents needed no brightening, the new-found energy was useless for a life of ease and pleasure lay before him. What he wanted he could stretch out his hand and take. So it was that ten days before Christmas he accepted his friend's invitation to accompany him to the little fishing village down on the south coast.

The next day in the misty evening the two drove up to the lodge gates of George Wynne's home. It had originally been a farm house but enlarged from time to time, and with the ancient lichen walls still standing and the square tower some ancestor of ambitious mind had set up on one wing, the structure had gained such an imposing appearance that it was now called the castle. At the gate the old lodge-keeper came out to welcome them. Wrinkled, toothless, her scant grey air blown about by the rough seawind, she was an unpleasant picture, and reminded the baronet so forcibly of the persecutions of his own tenants that he turned to the other window of the carriage. He started as he did so at the utter contrast of what he saw. In the dark setting of the window-frame, with the shifting light of the carriage-lamp dancing about her, stood another woman, with a face such as Lewis had never seen before; such a face as a painter might have striven in the old days to give to the Magdeline of his imagination, of which the holiness—almost divine—of expression was pervaded by a patient sadness from some deep, past grief, the shadow of which still remained; a strangely beautiful picture in the wavering light. Transfixed with astonishment, Lewis sat staring at the apparition, while an exquisite smile deepened over the fair face, chasing the sadness.

"George!" she cried, dispelling his half-formed idea that the vision was only a creation of his brain.

George Wynne turned. "Ivy!" he exclaimed, "you here!"

She stretched a little white hand through the open window and clasped her brother's.

"I am so glad to see you," she said, "and you," she added to Lewis; "though George of course forgets to tell me the names of any friends whom he invites:—I shall be home in time for dinner, George. I came to see old Mrs. Brown's little grand-child." She drew the crimson shawl closer about her head, and disappeared into the darkness, followed by the old woman's muttered blessings.

"She looks well, dame," said George quickly.

"Ay, sir. 'God's angel,' the little one calls her. We could not have well spared her."

They drove on. "Wynne, who is she?" asked Lewis, breathlessly.

"My sister," she answered. "I have been anxious about her. She was very ill last summer. Poor Ivy!"

"What a lovely face!" Lewis continued. "I never saw any one so beautiful!"

"Yes," George answered, abruptly. "How cold it is!" He drew up both windows and was silent till they reached the house.

Arrived at the castle, Lewis Hogarth dressed in his low old-fashioned room with a conflicting medley of sensations. It was years since he had last been there, but his thoughts were not busy with any phantom of the past; they were now filled with the unexpected beauty of his friend's sister, to whom, when he first heard of her existence, he had not given a second thought.

He found his way downstairs a little before dinner-time into the long drawing-room, with dark oak rafters and modern furniture, gay with all the traces of woman's handiwork and presence; and before the door leading to the conservatory, half hidden by the heavy curtains, stood his hostess, Ivy Wynne.

He came in quietly and she, absorbed by a book in her hand did not notice his entrance. For a moment he watched her silently. The face, which he had but half seen in the misty twilight, was far more lovely, now that the form of the head was visible, with its wealth of golden waves. Presently she looked up, "I beg your pardon," she said; "I did not hear you come in." She closed her book, stepped from the shadow of the curtains, and came toward him.

But as the girl advanced a great horrified surprise came over the baronet. A mist seemed to come before his eyes and hide the face he had but one moment ago deemed so fair. In its stead came a crooked misshapen figure, limping with ungraceful, halting motion. Was this the

woman—this the woman who for two hours had filled his thoughts!

"George has told me your name," she said gently, taking no heed of the behaviour of her guest. "I hope he has also told you who I am!"

"Yes, yes," he stammered; "It is—I have—I mean it is a great pleasure to me to make your acquaintance."

She pointed to a chair and moved away to her own, a kind of lounge beside the fire. Then he realized the truth. This woman with the glorious eyes and perfect face, with that almost divine holiness of expression was—a cripple.

CHAPTER II.

Christmas morning, bright and clear, with the sun shining on the snow-laden branches of the great laurels, and washing the silver frost-work from the window-panes. The yule-log burning in the little morning-room, with its holly wreaths and vases of hot-house flowers lifting their delicate petals in surprise at the keen blast which stirred them. One window was open, and through the sere Virginian creeper stems which clustered round it, three little children were sprinkling crumbs on the snow-carpet, printed by the robins' tiny feet as they hopped to and fro gathering their Christmas bounty. They were pretty children, golden-haired, grey-eyed, like their dead mother. Lazily watching them, Lewis Hogarth stood at the other window, drumming the panes, looking out now and then vaguely at the white distance, so peaceful and still, save when at intervals was heard the low sough of the sea which stretched away to the right hand, and the first tones of the church bell which came across the fields.

Sometimes in the course of our lives there comes a season—an oasis in the desert, as it were—of rest, when the past grows dim and distant, and future there seems none; when in the present we are so content that all the rest may go so long as we can drift on aimlessly in the same sweet calm. In one of such pauses Sir Lewis Hogarth had been spending the past ten days. It seemed as if some spell were cast upon him, as though some fascination, till then unknown, fettered his senses. Only on this Christmas morning he had awakened to a knowledge of its cause. Why or how he could not tell, but he knew that he loved Ivy Wynne, with a love strong and tender, such a devotion as the Catholics of old time gave to their patron saints; such a love as he had deemed over for him years ago. He had forgotten all besides, utterly contented in that lonely ancient country-house, made brighter by the face of its mistress. Those old grey walls, so marred and weather-worn, the thick rough growth of the climbing leaves that bore her name, the sweet pure face—all these things passed through his mind as he stood there, thinking, thinking; for he knew that ere long he would be called upon to make a choice which, in a measure, must have an influence over his whole life. On that first evening, in the shock of his discovery of the fearful blemish fate had cast upon the woman he since had learned to love, he sought to avoid her. It seemed so terrible—that lovely face and crooked, feeble form, that angel smile and those ungainly movements; till, when he was next morning for the second time alone with her, the scales fell from his eyes, and he saw her as she was; he realized the beauty of the character her brother had been describing to him; he understood the veneration in which she was held by those around her, and then he found himself talking to her as though their friendship had lasted years. And soon she had heard more of his life and thoughts and hopes than any one else in the world. To her he had unlocked the secrets of the hidden past, and noted the tears gather in her eyes as he told of his dead love. For the past she pitied him; for the future, she spoke to him as no else had done, of his duties to the old home, which he affected to depreciate. He had never in the course of his wanderings seen another woman like her; he forgot the bent figure and ungainly walk, as the light changed and softened in those wonderful eyes. And now the glamour had been thrown over him, and he knew he loved.

During those few days much of the sadness had gone from her face—perhaps for the joyous season. As the bells were still pealing she appeared dressed for the Christmas morning service. "Children," she said, "are you coming with me to church, or will you stay with the robins?"

"Aunt Ivy!" cried the youngest, a little one of four years old, running up and clinging to her with the love and confidence of all children toward her—"Aunt Ivy! where do the robins go to church?"

A great tenderness came into her eyes, a yearning look of motherliness towards the motherless child as she led her back to the window. "Up there, May, in the great holly tree. Don't you see the berries? The fairies have decked them with white feathers in the night."

"And they have church there, and God listens to them?"

Ivy smiled. "No doubt," she said.

"And Alfred says the robins don't go to heaven. Is it true, auntie?" continued the little one, pleading for her favourite.

"I don't know, dear. It is time to go to church. Run up to nurse."

"But, auntie, my little canary was all stiff, and wouldn't eat, and nurse said it was dead; and Alfred shut it up in a night-light box and put it in a hole. It had broken its leg, and

could only hop on one, and I hope it will be well in heaven!"

"So do I, darling," murmured Ivy, as the children sped away. She went to the window and rested her head against the panes for a moment, watching the birds, which had ended their morning meal, and had flown back to the great holly tree, glowing red through its burden of snow. Lewis went to her and as she lifted her face, her eyes were shining with tears. "Children say strange things—don't they?" she said, smiling.

"Yes," was all he answered; but he longed to take her in his arms and bless her and tell her all she was to him. Perhaps something in his voice did so, for she turned away and left him.

In the afternoon Lewis had strolled out with the other men down to the fishers' cottages upon the cliff; but they were soon involved in a discussion on farming implements, which, in his state of mind, was not congenial; so he wandered back alone through the winding village street, where the children's merry voices proclaimed it Christmas time; all happy; and in his heart was a strange unrest, a doubting of the future. The door of the old grey church was open; some sudden impulse made him enter, and go up the holly-decked aisle and sit down in the old square pew where he had sat that morning at Ivy's side. There was a trembling swell of music upon the silence, solemn chords upon the organ, the deep heart-soothing melody of Mendelssohn's grand angels' song, "Rest in the Lord." The organ throbbed and quivered, rolling its volume of sound among the wreathed pillars, then ceased suddenly, dying away into silence.

"I did not know I had a listener," said a soft voice close to him.

"You?" he said, starting up. "Was it you playing?"

"Yes. Why not?"

"Only, because I never heard anything like it," he replied. "How and where did you learn?"

"Here," Ivy replied. "I had a few lessons, and taught myself the rest. It is my greatest happiness, I think," she went on softly; for she too, had grown to trust him and talk—as she did so rarely—of herself. "Whenever I am vexed or impatient, I come and play here."

They were walking slowly homeward now, over the powdery snow. "Are you ever impatient?" he said. It appeared to him impossible that earthly passions should have place in that nature, which seemed so near to heaven.

"Very often," she answered, smiling, "more often than I like to say. You a man, would not understand what absurd little things trouble and fret me."

"But to-day?"

"You share the sin of curiosity, I see," she answered. "If you wish I will tell you. I shall be glad, for it is a subject upon which I cannot speak at home. It is the future that troubles me," she went on quietly. "I see a change approaching in the distance, coming nearer every day, and I know that my home will soon be my home no longer."

"But your brother—"

"You forget," she interrupted. "Sisters cannot always be first; it would not be right they should; but—he has been all the world to me."

"Is George going to be married, then?" Lewis asked.

"Some time, I suppose."

"But surely he would never wish you to leave him?"

"Oh no; but—women are so different, you see. I suppose a dozen men could live together in that old house without a disagreement, yet two women could not. I have been first so long in the house—and it would never do."

"But where shall you live then?"

"Oh, here," she answered, "I could not leave the dear old village."

"But you will not be happy?"

"Yes," she answered, "I shall grow used to it; and with use will come content."

The steadfast smile in the grey eyes as she raised them, shining through a gathering mist of tears, haunted Lewis Hogarth for many a year after, when that Christmas day had passed forgotten among the crowd of others which followed it, when by none but him were remembered all its pleasure and its pain.

CHAPTER III.

It was evening; the candles on the Christmas tree had dwindled down to little lumps of wax; a scent of frizzled fir twigs filled the room; a litter of sweets and coloured paper covered the floor; and the children, their arms filled with new possessions, clustered round Ivy as she sat in her low chair telling them the good-night story—and to-night it was the old story of Christmas and the sweet tones of her voice repeated, with many a quaint child-like conceit and comment, told with unconscious heedlessness of any stranger's presence, though Sir Lewis had drawn near to listen to the familiar words.

When at last the children were dismissed, Ivy leaned back silently, her eyes gazing into the glowing fire-pictures; and he sat silent, too, watching her. The sadness had come back to her fair face; not from the remembrance of that burden laid upon her for nigh 20 years, and borne so patiently, that it might not darken the lives of those around; nor for the approaching future of which she had spoken; nor from the thought of those who had once made the Christmas bright in the old home, whose voices