

# RHODA'S SECRET

By SYLVIA CHESTER

## CHAPTER III.

At Mr. Dering's request, Mere Amelle had sent two lay sisters with Rhoda as far as Calais. At Calais she was met by her uncle. As the train drew up at the platform she was looking out, expecting to see some tall dark man like her father. It was a great surprise when a somewhat short, burly, cheery little gentleman bustled up to her and held out his hands.

"I should have known you anywhere, my dear," he said warmly. "You are a thorough Dering. We have ever so many good likenesses of you at home in our picture gallery."

They had only just time to catch the boat, and Mr. Dering hurried his niece away, only giving her a few moments for a hasty farewell to her two companions.

"Very kind, good women they looked too," he said, referring to them when he and Rhoda were safe on the boat. "And they must be so fond of you, Rhoda. I'll bound you shed a good many tears last night. How many years have you been there?"

"Ever since my mother died," Rhoda answered steadily.

"I wish you had come to us before, but there were circumstances which I do not care to mention—". He looked at the girl uneasily. "Your father and I are not friends, Rhoda. You must not talk about him at Dering."

"I understand," she replied, and turned to hide the quiver of her lips. Her uncle patted her shoulder gently.

"I wouldn't say it to you if you knew him better, my dear. But he has not been a good man. Now you are coming home, my dear, and you will have a father and mother and a dear little sister, Heaven bless her!"

Rhoda's heart was swelling with wounded feelings, but she kept her voice steady as she asked:

"How old is your daughter?"

"Just eighteen. Three years younger than you are! But you look older than you are, Rhoda. That is because you are dark!"

"And she is fair?"

"Blue eyes and light brown hair—a regular English beauty. You will see her this evening. She is prepared to love you dearly, and I want you to love her very much, Rhoda—to love us all. You are going home, remember. It will be as much your home as it is Molly's. You are my daughter now. You understand that, don't you, my dear?"

"Thank you," the girl said faintly. The warm tones the kindly looks only served to increase the feeling of misery at her heart. As she stood there watching the coast of France disappear in the cloudy distance, it was with difficulty that she prevented herself from telling her uncle all the truth. But her father's words were in her ears—"If they knew the truth, the doors of Dering will be shut to you for ever." And these words kept her silent.

It was quite dark when they reached Dering. The carriage was waiting for them at the station, and they drove quickly through long avenues of stately elms and limes that led to the house. Rhoda's uncle half lifted her out and led her up the steps.

"Welcome home, my dear!" he said, kissing her, as they reached the door. Then he led her in.

Rhoda had one glance at the great hall, with its glorious arched roof and paneled walls, and then two loving arms were clasped close round her, and Molly's sweet voice repeated her father's "Welcome home!"

Mrs. Dering waited at the drawing room to greet Rhoda.

"We are very glad to see you, Rhoda," she said in her kind firm tones.

The calmness of this greeting restored Rhoda's self-possession, which had nearly given away. She answered questions about the journey with perfect calmness, conscious that Mrs. Dering's eyes were surveying her with critical surprise.

Mrs. Dering turned to her husband when Molly had taken Rhoda away to her room.

"I had no idea that Rhoda would be like this," she said. "I expected a girl, a shy young girl."

"She is a perfect Dering!" returned Mr. Dering heartily. "She is exactly like that beautiful portrait of Prudence Dering in the hall."

"I do not see much likeness. Rhoda's eyes are gray."

"How quick you are to see that, Agnes!" said Mr. Dering admiringly. "I thought they were dark at first. She is beautiful and exactly like my poor brother Arthur."

"Do not mention his name!" Mrs. Dering returned sharply. "I hope we may never regret having Rhoda here."

"My dear Agnes, don't say such things! She is such a sweet girl. It is easy to see that she has never been out of a convent in her life."

those nuns."

Mrs. Dering's brow relaxed, and she smiled.

"Well, George, I am going to be good to the girl. And it will be just what Molly wants, a companion to amuse her. If she and Rhoda can get on, I shall be quite content."

Rhoda's rooms were next to Molly's, in the east corridor. There was a door leading from one into the other. They were furnished very simply and prettily, and in both rooms fires were blazing brightly. Before the sitting room fire a little table was drawn up, with an easy chair close by. Tea was on the table, in the middle of which stood a large bowl of roses.

"This is my idea," said Molly, as the two girls entered. "I mean you to have tea up here, and not go down again till dinner time."

"What lovely roses!" said Rhoda, bending to look at them.

"Adrian brought me those for you. I asked him to bring them down from London yesterday. They have so many flowers in France, haven't they?"

"Not many as beautiful as these at this time of the year. You are going to spoil me, Molly."

"So Adrian said. He read me a little lecture about it. He seemed to think that, if we made a great deal of you to begin with, we should neglect you afterwards. But you don't think I am like that, do you, Rhoda? We are to be like sisters, father said." And Molly put her arms round Rhoda, and looked up at her with such sweet, loving blue eyes that Rhoda loved her from that moment.

"Molly, you dear little Molly!" she said returning her embrace. Then she suddenly loosed her arms. "I will have some tea," she said, sitting down in the pretty low chair by the fire and taking off her hat. "Pour it out for me, Molly; and tell me who Adrian is."

"Adrian is—do you take sugar?—Adrian is the heir of Dering. He is the handsomest, wisest, best person in the world! And Jack and I do not like him at all."

"Jack? May I know who Jack is?"

Molly looked intently at the pattern of the cup she was holding, and a tender little smile played round her lips.

"Jack and I grew up together," she said. "His father is the rector of the parish and father's oldest friend. Wait a moment, Rhoda. I want to show you my Bill."

Molly jumped up and ran out of the room. A moment later she was back with her black puppy in her arms.

"Look at the darling! Pat his dear head, Rhoda! Had you any dogs at the convent?"

"No, dear."

"Father shall give you one tomorrow. Jack gave me Bill."

She hugged the puppy in a close embrace and sat down upon the hearth rug at Rhoda's feet.

"Jack and I are going to marry each other some day," she said gravely.

Rhoda softly smoothed the girl's brown hair, but did not speak.

"Not for a long, long time. He has to get his degree; he was plucked, dear boy, last term. But I never never, never could marry anybody but Jack!"

"You are too young to marry any one, little Molly," said her cousin, with a very gentle look in her gray eyes.

Molly hugged the puppy still closer.

"Jack isn't coming back for three months, and we are not to write to each other. We have always written to each other every week, but mother won't let me write to him now. Mother is very fond of Jack, you know, but she wants me to marry Adrian."

The girl's frankness touched Rhoda; but there was bitterness in her thoughts as she listened. How different Molly's life had been from her own—Molly so guarded, so sheltered by love! Her own only protection had been a father who had been unable to shield her from insult and humiliation.

Molly went on with her confidences.

"I had a little talk with Adrian about it yesterday," she said. "He was very kind; I never liked him so much before. He thinks it our duty to marry, but he said it was natural that I should prefer Jack."

"And does your mother know?"

"Adrian thinks I ought not to decide yet; I am too young to know my own mind, so he says. But I do know it, don't I, my Bill?" She kissed the puppy and put it down upon the rug. "Come, Rhoda, and let me help you to change your dress! I feel ashamed of talking about myself so much; but I wanted you to know all about me. Now you must tell me about yourself."

"There is nothing to tell," said Rhoda, with a faint smile. "Suppose you run away now, Molly, and leave me to myself. Come back when it is time for me to go down."

back with intense surprise and cry out. "This cannot be my aunt; this is a young lady of twenty-five!" Say something like that, and you will be Aunt Millicent's forever.

"Does she look so young?"

"She is a haggard old lady," returned Molly, with some asperity. "I have no patience with her! But she was a beauty in her youth, and she thinks she is a beauty still. But I want her to like you, Rhoda; I want her to leave you all her money. She is immensely rich—her godfather left her a great fortune—and she is constantly making new wills. She left it all to me once, but I offended her beyond recall when I teased her about her complexion; it was too bad of me! Try to look as if we were all real, Rhoda—hair and teeth and complexion and all! It will be difficult, but I should like you to be Aunt Millicent's heiress."

"Molly, you must please go away," Rhoda said, ignoring all the last speech; "I shall never dress while you are here."

"Put on a pretty dress," was Molly's answer, as she took up her puppy, "and don't forget what I told you about Aunt Millicent. There—you will say I am incorrigible! But Jack and I planned it all; we intend you to marry Adrian and have Aunt Millicent's money!"

"How very kind of you and Jack to plan my future!" said Rhoda, with a strange laugh.

Molly did not understand the look of bitterness on her cousin's face. She turned back and held up her face to be kissed.

"You are not vexed with me, Rhoda?" she said. "I am such a chatter-box, but I would not vex you for the world!"

"My dear, you did not vex me; you are a dear little girl!"

"You look so sad," said Molly, with a tender look in her blue eyes. "Were you very sorry to leave the convent, Rhoda?"

"Very sorry."

"You had been there so many years, it must have been like home to you. But this is to be your home now, dear Rhoda!"

Rhoda's eyes were full of hot tears as she bent and kissed Molly gently.

"My dear little cousin, you are very good to me!" she said.

Molly's answer was an energetic hug and a long warm kiss. Then she caught up her puppy and ran away.

Rhoda had changed her dress for a black silk and was sitting by the fire, when there was a tap at the door and Mrs. Dering entered.

"Are you ready, Rhoda? Are you sure you would rather come down to dinner?"

"I am quite rested, thank you!" said Rhoda briefly.

Mrs. Dering went and stood opposite to her on the hearth rug, playing absently with her fan, while she looked steadily at Rhoda. It was not exactly an unkindly glance, but it was cool and critical. Rhoda's cheeks flushed. She rose and pushed forward a chair.

"Will you not sit down, aunt?" she said.

"No, thank you, my dear. You are tall, Rhoda—as tall as I am!"

"Yes," said Rhoda, briefly.

"You remember your mother, of course?"

A strange passionate look came over the girl's face, her eyes drooped and her lips quivered.

"I was a child when she died," she said; "but I remember her well."

"I hoped you would have been like her."

"I am like my father," said Rhoda. Mrs. Dering frowned.

"We must understand each other, Rhoda. You must forget, within these walls, that you are your father's child; that is the condition on which I have consented to have you here. Never mention his name again!"

Rhoda was silent. Mrs. Dering went on.

"I do not wish to speak of him to you; I wish to forget that he is your father. I shall remember only that you are my husband's niece. I wish to be very kind to you, Rhoda."

"Thank you!" said the girl with pale set lips.

"If you had lived with your father even for a few months after your mother died, we could not have had you here. I want you for a companion to my Molly." The mother's voice grew tender as she uttered the name. She went on without looking at Rhoda. "I hope that Molly has a great future before her. Her Aunt Millicent intends to make her her heiress, and we expect her to marry our heir. He has a career before him in Parliament; he is even now a rising statesman and will be a peer some day, and one of the great men of the land. We are proud of him."

you play duets with Molly."

Mrs. Dering went to the door and Rhoda accompanied her. There was a cold determined look on her face as she followed her stately aunt down the wide stairs; it was a strange sad look for that beautiful face.

## CHAPTER IV.

Rhoda did not see her Aunt Millicent until the next morning. Her aunt sent down to say that her head was aching, and that she could not see Rhoda that evening.

"I gave her a fancy picture of you, Rhoda, yesterday," said Molly, when the message came. "You were to be short and pale and very frightened looking. Aunt Millicent is prepared to find you very dull and tiresome."

"Rhoda will not see much of her aunt," said Mrs. Dering, who was sitting knitting by the fire. "She will have plenty of occupation with your French and music, and I shall want her help in many ways."

"Don't be sorry, Rhoda," laughed Molly; "I am a nicer companion than Aunt Millicent."

When Rhoda accompanied Stanton, who had been sent to fetch her, to Aunt Millicent's room, Miss Dering was dressed and sitting by the fire.

"Sit down here, Rhoda, and let me look at you!" she said, after kissing her.

Rhoda sat down opposite to her aunt and submitted herself to the close scrutiny of Miss Dering's keen dark eyes.

"Do you know that you are very beautiful?" said Miss Dering after a moment or two.

"I have never thought about it at all," answered Rhoda indifferently.

"I was like you once," said Miss Dering. "You are like the ghost of my dead youth, Rhoda. Look at me now!"

Her aunt's words were so utterly different from what Molly's description had led her to expect that Rhoda could not speak.

"A painted, hideous, haggard old woman!" Miss Dering went on. "Look at me!" She got up and pushed back the curtain, letting the cold clear light fall upon her haggard face. "You do not speak, Rhoda. You have heard that I am vain—a foolish old woman. I know how they talk of me downstairs!"

Rhoda rose and drew forward the curtain again with a firm hand.

"Aunt Millicent, I am not going to answer you while you talk like this. Sit down again by the fire."

Miss Dering looked at her niece with those haggard dark eyes that were so like her father's.

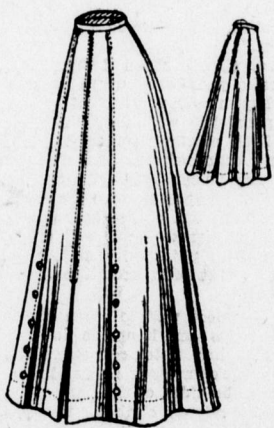
"You are as I was," she said. "Come here, Rhoda."

She drew the girl quickly to the other side of the room. A curtain hung there, and she drew it back, showing a full length portrait of a girl in a riding habit. Rhoda could not but see that this radiant beautiful girl bore an extraordinary likeness to herself.

"I was like that once," said her aunt, with a miserable laugh. "I was loved and courted. I was Miss Dering of Dering, with a father and brothers who worshipped me and a lover who would have died for me. But they are all gone—all gone except George, and he thinks only of his wife."

(To Be Continued.)

## LADIES' SEVEN-GORED SKIRT.



Pattern No. 3247.—Very suggestive of the polonaise is the handsome design here presented. Fitted closely all around at the upper part, the gores flare slightly toward the foot, the inverted box plait at the center front and back contributing to this effect. The closing is made at the back.

The pattern is in 6 sizes, 22 to 32 inches waist measure. For 26 waist the skirt requires 6 1/4 yards of material with nap 36 inches wide, without nap 4 3/4 yards 36 inches wide. Width of lower edge about 3 3/4 yards.

HOW TO ORDER PATTERNS. For each pattern desired, send 10c (in stamps only) to this paper. Give No. of pattern and size wanted.

An Explorer's Rich Booty. Thirty thousand separate volumes, manuscripts and documents, dating back 1,000 years or more, constitute the rich booty which M. Paul Pelliot, an enterprising young French explorer, has brought back from Northwestern China and Chinese Turkestan, after two years and a half of travel. M. Pelliot is only thirty years of age, and distinguished himself before on a memorable occasion during the Boxer rising at Peking, for which he was decorated with the Legion of Honor at the age of twenty-two.—Paris Letter to London Telegraph.

## JOINS UNION TO WED

Miners Hold-Up Ceremony Until the

Miners Hold-Up Ceremony Until the Bridegroom Obeys Them. Charles Holigan, while leading his bride, Mary Isvet, to the altar, was held up by a number of striking miners at Bradenville, Pa., on Tuesday and was forced to join their union before they would permit the wedding to proceed. The strikers followed the couple into the church and there advised the bridegroom to accede to their demands. Upon his refusal they kidnapped him and took him to their headquarters at McChesneytown.

Later Holigan returned to his bride and the ceremony was performed. Holigan says he joined the union against his will.

## Lock Prosperous.

Even though you may not be prosperous, adopt as far as possible the appearance of prosperity. It is sound capital and will bring good interest in the long run. Shabby looking people, you may have noticed, always appear apologetic and can easily be turned down when they are most in need of a helping hand. Do not confuse apparent prosperity with extravagance. Small but telling home economies can be practiced in order to hide from the public the fact that the wolf is at the door. Keep a brave front. Dame Fortune likes to throw her magic cloak about the shoulders of the man or woman who looks capable of making the best of it.

Will Open South African Parliament. It is officially announced that the Duke of Connaught will go to Cape Town to open in November the first session of the parliament of the Union of South Africa.

## THE JOYS WE MISS.

How small a portion of our life it is that we really enjoy! In youth we are looking forward to things that are to come; in old age we are looking backward to things that are gone past; in manhood, although we appear indeed to be more occupied in things that are present, yet even that is too often absorbed in vague determinations to be vastly happy on some future day when we have time.—Colton.

## French Rout Arabs.

The governor of French West Africa reports a fight between the French troops and Arabs at Nyidimi on May 21, during which the Arabs lost 129 killed and the French nine killed and twenty wounded.

## Will Open South African Parliament.

It is officially announced that the Duke of Connaught will go to Cape Town to open in November the first session of the parliament of the Union of South Africa.

## Infant Dies of Lockjaw.

Katherine Kevopka, three weeks old, died of lockjaw at South Bethlehem, Pa. She is the youngest person in local medical annals to succumb to tetanus.

**WANTED—A RIDER AGENT** IN EACH TOWN and district to ride and exhibit a sample latest model "Ranger" bicycle furnished by us. Our agents everywhere are making money fast. Write for full particulars and special offer at once. **NO MONEY REQUIRED** until you receive and approve of your bicycle. We ship to anyone, anywhere in the U. S. without a cent deposit in advance. Prepay freight, and allow **TEN DAYS' FREE TRIAL** during which time you may ride the bicycle and put it to any test you wish. If you are then not perfectly satisfied or do not wish to keep the bicycle ship it back to us at our expense and you will not be out one cent. **FACTORY PRICES** We furnish the highest grade bicycles it is possible to make to \$25 middlemen's profits by buying direct of us and have the manufacturer's guarantee behind your bicycle. **DO NOT BUY** a bicycle or a pair of tires from anyone at any price until you receive our catalogue and learn our unheard of factory prices and receive our offers to riders everywhere. **YOU WILL BE ASTONISHED** when you receive our beautiful catalogue and study our superb models at the wonderful factory prices. **BI-CYCLE DEALERS**, you can sell our bicycles under your own name plate at double our prices. Orders filled the day received. **SECOND HAND BICYCLES**. We do not regularly handle second hand bicycles, but usually have a number on hand taken in trade by our Chicago retail stores. These we clear out promptly at prices ranging from \$3 to \$10. Descriptive bargain lists mailed free. **COASTER-BRAKES**, equipment of all kinds at half the usual retail prices.

**\$8.50 HEDGETHORN PUNCTURE-PROOF \$4.80**  
**SELF-HEALING TIRES A SAMPLE PAIR TO INTRODUCE, ONLY \$4**

The regular retail price of these tires is \$8.50 per pair, but to introduce we will sell you a sample pair for \$4.80 (cash with order \$4.50). **NO MORE TROUBLE FROM PUNCTURES** NAILS, Tacks or Glass will not let the air out. Sixty thousand pairs sold last year. Over two hundred thousand pairs now in use.

**DESCRIPTION:** Made in all sizes. It is lively and easy riding, very durable and lined inside with a special quality of rubber, which never becomes porous and which closes up small punctures without allowing the air to escape. We have hundreds of letters from satisfied customers stating that their tires have been pumped up once or twice in a whole season. They weigh no more than an ordinary tire, the puncture resisting qualities being given by several layers of thin, specially prepared fabric on the tread. The regular price of these tires is \$8.50 per pair, but for advertising purposes we are making a special factory price to the rider of only \$4.80 per pair. All orders shipped same day letter is received. You do not pay a cent until you have examined and found them strictly as represented. We will allow a cash discount of 5 per cent (thereby making the price \$4.55 per pair) if you send **FULL CASH WITH ORDER** and enclose this advertisement. You run no risk in sending us an order as the tires may be returned at OUR expense if for any reason they are not satisfactory on examination. We are perfectly reliable and money sent to us is as safe as in a bank. If you order a pair of these tires, you will find that they will ride easier, run faster, wear better, last longer and look finer than any tire you have ever used or seen at any price. We know that you will be so well pleased that when you want a bicycle you will give us your order. We want you to send us a trial order at once, hence this remarkable tire offer.

**IF YOU NEED TIRES** Hedgethorn Puncture-Proof tires on approval and trial at the special introductory price quoted above; or write for our big Tire and Sundry Catalogue which describes and quotes all makes and kinds of tires at about half the usual prices. **DO NOT THINK OF BUYING** a bicycle unless you are making. It only costs a postal to learn everything. Write it NOW.

**J. L. MEAD CYCLE COMPANY, CHICAGO, ILL.**

Notice the thick rubber tread "A" and puncture strips "B" and "C," also rim strip "D" to prevent rim cutting. This tire will outlast any other make—SOFT, ELASTIC and EASY RIDING.

Notice the thick rubber tread "A" and puncture strips "B" and "C," also rim strip "D" to prevent rim cutting. This tire will outlast any other make—SOFT, ELASTIC and EASY RIDING.

Notice the thick rubber tread "A" and puncture strips "B" and "C," also rim strip "D" to prevent rim cutting. This tire will outlast any other make—SOFT, ELASTIC and EASY RIDING.

Notice the thick rubber tread "A" and puncture strips "B" and "C," also rim strip "D" to prevent rim cutting. This tire will outlast any other make—SOFT, ELASTIC and EASY RIDING.

Notice the thick rubber tread "A" and puncture strips "B" and "C," also rim strip "D" to prevent rim cutting. This tire will outlast any other make—SOFT, ELASTIC and EASY RIDING.

Notice the thick rubber tread "A" and puncture strips "B" and "C," also rim strip "D" to prevent rim cutting. This tire will outlast any other make—SOFT, ELASTIC and EASY RIDING.

Notice the thick rubber tread "A" and puncture strips "B" and "C," also rim strip "D" to prevent rim cutting. This tire will outlast any other make—SOFT, ELASTIC and EASY RIDING.

Notice the thick rubber tread "A" and puncture strips "B" and "C," also rim strip "D" to prevent rim cutting. This tire will outlast any other make—SOFT, ELASTIC and EASY RIDING.

Notice the thick rubber tread "A" and puncture strips "B" and "C," also rim strip "D" to prevent rim cutting. This tire will outlast any other make—SOFT, ELASTIC and EASY RIDING.

Notice the thick rubber tread "A" and puncture strips "B" and "C," also rim strip "D" to prevent rim cutting. This tire will outlast any other make—SOFT, ELASTIC and EASY RIDING.

Notice the thick rubber tread "A" and puncture strips "B" and "C," also rim strip "D" to prevent rim cutting. This tire will outlast any other make—SOFT, ELASTIC and EASY RIDING.

Notice the thick rubber tread "A" and puncture strips "B" and "C," also rim strip "D" to prevent rim cutting. This tire will outlast any other make—SOFT, ELASTIC and EASY RIDING.

Notice the thick rubber tread "A" and puncture strips "B" and "C," also rim strip "D" to prevent rim cutting. This tire will outlast any other make—SOFT, ELASTIC and EASY RIDING.

Notice the thick rubber tread "A" and puncture strips "B" and "C," also rim strip "D" to prevent rim cutting. This tire will outlast any other make—SOFT, ELASTIC and EASY RIDING.

Notice the thick rubber tread "A" and puncture strips "B" and "C," also rim strip "D" to prevent rim cutting. This tire will outlast any other make—SOFT, ELASTIC and EASY RIDING.

Notice the thick rubber tread "A" and puncture strips "B" and "C," also rim strip "D" to prevent rim cutting. This tire will outlast any other make—SOFT, ELASTIC and EASY RIDING.

Notice the thick rubber tread "A" and puncture strips "B" and "C," also rim strip "D" to prevent rim cutting. This tire will outlast any other make—SOFT, ELASTIC and EASY RIDING.

Notice the thick rubber tread "A" and puncture strips "B" and "C," also rim strip "D" to prevent rim cutting. This tire will outlast any other make—SOFT, ELASTIC and EASY RIDING.

Notice the thick rubber tread "A" and puncture strips "B" and "C," also rim strip "D" to prevent rim cutting. This tire will outlast any other make—SOFT, ELASTIC and EASY RIDING.

Notice the thick rubber tread "A" and puncture strips "B" and "C," also rim strip "D" to prevent rim cutting. This tire will outlast any other make—SOFT, ELASTIC and EASY RIDING.

Notice the thick rubber tread "A" and puncture strips "B" and "C," also rim strip "D" to prevent rim cutting. This tire will outlast any other make—SOFT, ELASTIC and EASY RIDING.

Notice the thick rubber tread "A" and puncture strips "B" and "C," also rim strip "D" to prevent rim cutting. This tire will outlast any other make—SOFT, ELASTIC and EASY RIDING.

Notice the thick rubber tread "A" and puncture strips "B" and "C," also rim strip "D" to prevent rim cutting. This tire will outlast any other make—SOFT, ELASTIC and EASY RIDING.