

# CHRISTMAS ROSES.

By  
**Ellice Beere**



spiritually. He was a handsome man, far handsomer than I, who had none of the family looks to boast of; it was always a mystery where I got my dark skin, irregular features, and broad shoulders from.

We were unlike in other ways, for I was wild and wayward, while Edward had fixed principles, and lived up to them. And yet, in spite of his virtues, which no one recognized, and, if the truth must be told, envied, more than I did, there was a rigidity in his ideas, a want of ardor in his affections, at which I chafed.

Edward loved Rose, but his imagination could go no farther. He would talk calmly of her beauty, her excellence, and with the same calmness, criticize her perfection until I would leave him in exasperation lest I should betray myself. At such times I had a wild desire to speak to her of my

own love; and yet, when the opportunity came, I would hesitate. Edward was her favorite; years ago they had met, when she was a little schoolgirl and he a grave youth at college, and with the remembrance of those days upon them both, he called her Rose, and she called him Edward. She had a confidence in him which I felt miserably she withheld from me. And yet with her I would always try to curb myself, to speak on matters with which I was miserably unacquainted, and to keep silence on the distorted views I held of men and things.

Did she care for me at all? There had been a time of sweet intimacy, all too short, between us, when she had lifted her eyes to mine with glances that bewildered me, when she had looked upon me with dazzling smiles, moments when my pulse had beat high and I had dared to hope. But that I believed to be before she had come to hear of my wild, reckless life. Her manner had slowly changed. True, I had myself altered. Doubt had entered into my soul, and I was brusque and curt, and I am sure sometimes she must have felt strangely puzzled. She could not know that it was thus I strove to mask my real feelings, for I was miserable always, but never more so than when I saw her together with Edward.

One of these days stands out in my memory. It was a warm afternoon in June, and Miss Dumaresque had come over to see my mother and her for her patronage for a charity in a Christmas rose. Her birthday is in December. I added more fair in my eyes, and apparently in Edward's, for he was in attendance on her with an admiration that he seldom showed. They were walking the garden paths together when I described them, she in her white robe, with a cluster of roses in her silver waist belt, and Edward, in his light summer suit, with a straw hat tilted far forward over his eyes. I had just returned from a hard ride. Miss Dumaresque's visit was unexpected, and, hot and dusty as I was, I felt soiled and travel stained beside her. Edward recognized, with a sense of irritation, had a happy knack of fitting the occasion. He was cutting roses for her with a reckless disregard for buds, and I drew near, filled with righteous indignation. After all, the roses were mine, so I imagined I might be permitted to take an interest in their welfare. Ordinarily I would have grudged Edward nothing, even to the half of my inheritance, and I was already beginning to be ashamed of the petty feeling that prompted me, when he added insult to injury by saying in his grave tones, "Miss Dumaresque is a June rose herself, isn't you think, Ted?"

It was one of his rare compliments, and Miss Dumaresque smiled, well pleased. I felt unreasonably irritated. It was a pretty speech, and I should have liked to have made it myself, and then I should have had the smile, too.

"No sense, Edward," I said, quickly. "Miss Dumaresque is a Christmas rose. Her birthday is in December." "Now, I am sure this was as pretty a speech as Edward's, and I waited for a like reward; but, just to show how unreasonable women are, she bestowed a look of displeasure upon me and directed her conversation to Edward."

After that I left him to do the honors, and retired, sulking enough into the background. It was not long before I had come to the conclusion that Miss Dumaresque was a heartless flirt, but I did not think that Edward would have had the effrontery to carry on his love-making under my eyes. And yet, if eyes and ears deceived me not, he was now begging for the roses she wore in her belt. I heard Edward say, hurriedly, "I must go," and there followed sentences that I did not catch. I sauntered up and down; he could not wait long, I knew, and then my turn would come. Suddenly I heard my name.

"Ted!" My cousin stood at my elbow. "Will you drive Miss Dumaresque home? I wish I could, but Aunt Dora is waiting, and we are due at the Grange. You don't mind, old man?" He took my consent for granted and hurried off. The next moment I stood by Rose Dumaresque's side and looked timidly into her eyes. Yes, timidly! I, who was more wont to affront women with my bold gaze!

Miss Dumaresque looked down and began to play with



her flowers. Her attitude and movement saddened me far more than any words.

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"My cousin has given you into my charge," I said, in a low voice.

Her eyes fell, and my glance followed her. They rested on the flowers still in her belt.

"So Edward did not succeed in getting your roses?" I asked, with a change of tone, her just indignation.

She colored. "You will think me foolish, I dare say, but somehow I never care to give away flowers that I have worn—unless it is to some one for whom I care a great deal. I don't know why, I am sure."

My heart leapt at her words; clearly she was not in love with Edward. That was my first thought, and then my jealous, suspicious nature put another complexion on her words—perhaps she was wilfully misleading me. Well, I would test her feelings and arrive at the truth.

"That is too bad," I said. "I thought you had such a great regard for your cousin Edward."

"Indeed I have!" she said, earnestly. "I think there is no one I have a greater regard for, or a greater admiration."

I made no response, and relapsed into gloomy silence.

Presently she continued, clasping her hands and speaking with some excitement, "Edward has deep feelings, but he is so narrow!"

I was taken by surprise, and responded with some heat: "Edward is true as steel!"

"Yes," she said softly; "he has all the virtues."

Her words aroused the demon within me, and a tumult of jealousy and thwarted hope.

"Tell me," I cried wildly, "is he anything to you? Do you care for him?"

"I thought if she had acknowledged her love I would have begged her pardon and gone. I ought not to have asked her, and never shall I forget the look she turned upon me. Instances of her gentle dignity I had seen, of her scorn; too soon a woman in my life; not violently so, but with concentrated rage. Despite the estimate I had formed of her character, I had hardly thought her capable of so much force and passion."

After such a scene there was little doubt left in my mind that she loved him. I retorted with bitter, stinging words, when I should have been before her just indignation. I left her with every pulse beating high for love of her, and the knowledge forcing itself on me that I had offended her beyond forgiveness. I had ruined my own chances, if I ever had any, and lost her even before I had begun to woo her. Nothing remained to me now but such forgetfulness as might be in absence.

Six months later—I had not been home at all during the time—I received a letter addressed in Rose Dumaresque's handwriting. What news might it contain? The formal announcement of her engagement to Edward? For that was

news that I almost daily expected to hear. No; that blow was evidently in store for me, for no such death warrant to wild hopes that I still cherished dropped as I opened the envelope. Merely a card of invitation to her birthday gathering on Christmas eve.

I arrived unconsciously early, and met her in the hall with her arms overflowing with Christmas roses. She was in a hurry, and breathless, and our greeting was wholly unpremeditated.

"Roses again!" I said significantly, as I kept her hand in mine, and added earnestly, "I wish you roses, roses all the way!"

"My namesake flower," she said, smiling. "Hobbs has just sent them up to the house in my honor."

As she withdrew her hand hastily, and escaped from me as Edward crossed the hall. Early as I had come, he was evidently before me. I had not seen him until then, and I lingered, talking to him. He looked worn and anxious, I thought, but the people were coming fast now, and I escaped when I could and wandered into a tiny room, which, from its general appearance of picturesque disorder, was evidently not intended to be thrown open to the dancers. It was filled with boxes of Christmas roses, the roses she had held in her arms a few hours ago. She had evidently arranged them in haste and been called away, for some lay scattered on the

table, and I even raised one from the floor with the intention of placing it in one of the vases. But the bowl I drew towards me held no water, and I examined others with the same result. Well, it was a pity! Miss Dumaresque's flowers would fade, and I had half a mind to get some water myself, but I lingered about the room, loath to go, for I suspected it was her own particular sanctum, and everything in the room interested me. There was her work basket in a corner, and a tiny Persian kitten on the white hearth rug was playing with a bit of paper; no, a letter, I recovered it, and was about to put it in a place of safety when my own name caught my eye. It was my cousin's name, too, but I did not think of that until I had turned the letter over and seen Rose Dumaresque's signature at the end. I began to read, and in a moment knew the letter was not for me, but I read on deliberately until I came to the end, and learnt that Miss Dumaresque had refused my cousin Edward for the second, perhaps third, time. I had barely made myself acquainted with this fact before I made another discovery—the letter was six weeks old, and gave me no possible clue as to what had happened in the meantime.

The letter was still in my hand, and I was deeply occupied with the reflections it had given rise to, when Edward hastily entered the room. His face showed signs of agitation, which increased in sight of me.

"I have lost something," he said, beginning a hurried search. "You had better have your search anywhere?" I dropped one—in here, I think. Yes, that's it!" he added eagerly, stretching out his hand to me.

Edward judged others by himself. He never doubted but that I had that moment raised the letter from the ground. I am sure no suspicion crossed his mind, for he took it from me with a word of thanks, and was about to hurry off when I stopped him. Good or ill, I had never yet done an action which I would not stand by.

"I have read your letter," I said slowly without a shade of regret in my voice.

He heard my words, but I do not think the meaning of them dawned on him.

"I have read your letter," I repeated.

He turned then, and faced me.

"You read my letter—this letter? You must be mad!" I suppose the expression of my face convinced him, for he took a step towards me, and a look came into his eyes that I shall have qualified before had I not felt that it was mirrored in my own. I had never met the Torrington look before, and as he glared back at me I understood for the first time why I had been but rarely crossed in my life.

We were still standing thus when midnight chimed. The tension of our muscles relaxed no whit as we listened to the distant strokes and unconsciously counted them. Twelve! Almost simultaneously the volleys of our singing rang out: "Peace on earth, good will towards men."

Edward looked wildly round and a change came over his face. "Sooner or later," he muttered, "he was bound to know." He passed his hand over his forehead and extended it to me.

Edward could afford to be magnanimous, I thought, but the blood rushed to my face and I hesitated.

"Ted," he said, "never mind about the letter. Shake hands!"

I complied, for when he spoke like that my unjust resentment vanished.

"She has just refused me for the third time," Edward went on hurriedly. "Nothing matters now. I did not know you loved her; there was never any chance for me!" He pressed my hand convulsively. "Good-by! I loved her, too—more than you think!"

In another moment he had gone, and I stood alone, at one victor and vanquished, my arms folded and my head sunk on my breast in a gloomy reverie.

Suddenly Miss Dumaresque entered.

"O, my Christmas roses!" she exclaimed in a tone of dismay. "They are faded already!"

"Some one forgot to water her flowers," I said, looking up, with the cloud barely lifted from my face.

She started, and I saw she had not observed me hitherto.

"Yes, what a pity! Especially," she added mischievously, "as I had meant to give you one to exercise the evil spirit!"

She referred to a popular superstition in our part of the country which claimed that the wearing of a fresh flower held off the evil spirit.

"I rallied at her words."

"It would be too unkind," I said, "to make me the double victim of your negligence."

She blushed and looked shyly at me.

"Well, you may have this!"

She took a flower from the bosom of her dress, and my brain reeled as I recalled her words spoken in the summer, and wondered if she, too, remembered them. Was it possible that she cared for me? I looked at her sadly.

"Your lily will be faded by the morning," I said, "and my good angel will have vanished. Besides, it is just a Christmas rose, and it will fade as fast as any other."

"They are too faded!" she protested—"until they revive—"

"A Christmas rose!" I pleaded passionately; "one that I can wear all my life!"

She reached out her hand trembling to the bowl and I drew it into mine, and kissed it from my face.

"Will you give me yourself?" I whispered.

She did not reply, but her silence was a sweeter consent than any words, and I gathered her into my arms, kissing her and crying, "Rose! My Christmas Rose!"

**I**T is bad enough to be in love—it is worse to have a rival when one is cured with a jealous temperament, passionate in love, and equally passionate in hate. My cousin and I both loved Rose Dumaresque. He had loved her before I did, but then he had met her first. He had known her for two long weeks before my eyes had rested on her and this madness had taken possession of me. And yet I can hardly call it madness, for I know that I would have laid down my life for her in cold blood, that I would have bridged a chasm for her that she might cross in safety over my body, and next moment have dropped gladly into the gulf. I believed that she might make of me what she would, even brittle and cowardly, my hitherto unguessed passions, and raise me to her own lofty standard, but I knew, too, there was nothing I would not stoop to for her sake, no crime that I would not dare to win her.

I looked at my cousin, and wondered if he loved her as I did.

No; Edward Torrington—we both bore the same name, though I had been rechristened Ted, while his baptismal name had stuck to him—was not the man to count all his fair in love and war. There was a nobility in his character as well as appearance which forbade such sophistry, and sometimes I used to think moodily he was more fit to mate with her than I.

Edward was tall, and spare of build, like all our family, except myself, with a heavy, red-brown mustache, and eyes of that deep violet blue which is said to betoken great

## The Solving of the Mysterious Railroad Murder. . . By Grant Jones.

**I**T is not often that a railway company runs special trains for the accommodation of persons wishing to attend a murder trial. The London, Chatham and Dover railway company did so upon the occasion of the trial of Percy Lefroy Mapleton, at Maidstone, on Nov. 4, 1881. "In consequence of the great public interest in the case," I traveled down in one of these trains, with Montagu Williams and other barristers engaged in the trial. The train was besieged by a crowd of the general public. As a celebrated and cynical legal gentleman remarked, "we might have been going to a race meeting."

I doubt whether, among all the assassins I have seen in the dock, I have met one who was more dangerous than Lefroy—as he chose to call himself. He was a tall, weedy-looking young fellow of about 25, thin, with sunken cheeks, dark, short hair, and a peculiarly pallid complexion. He was neatly dressed in a dark suit, with a turn down collar, and a little knotted dark blue tie. His bearing was of the exaggerated theatrical type.

As he appeared in the dock, and walked forward to its front, every gesture seemed artificial, and his eyes glanced round as if he were surveying his audience, and expecting their approbation.

He was charged with the murder of Isaac Frederick Gold on Monday, June 27, in a Brighton express on the London Brighton and South Coast railway, between Three Bridges and Balcombe. The case was one which presented many extraordinary features. Montagu Williams had been specially retained to defend the prisoner. The attorney general himself went down to Maidstone to lead the prosecution. Lord Chief Justice Coleridge, it is said, in arranging the circuits of the judges, took some care that he should himself preside at the Lefroy trial. The court was crowded to suffocation.

For some weeks indeed the whole nation had been excited over the misdeed, now safely caged in that dock in the Maidstone Criminal court. As people unfolded their newspapers on the morning of June 25 their eyes had fallen upon startling words in the heaviest type calling their attention to one of the most cruel and dastardly crimes ever perpetrated. And the perpetrator had disappeared.

Isaac Gold was an aged London gentleman, who had retired from business, and who had gone to live in the suburbs of Brighton. On the morning of June 27 he left home and came to London to collect some money owing to him, and he caught the 2 o'clock express to Brighton from London Bridge on his return journey. He was well known to the station officials, and was seen by them comfortably seated in a first class smoking carriage reading a newspaper as the train started out of the station. He was doomed never to reach the end of that journey alive.

As he sat snugly ensconced in his corner, lazily glancing at his paper, and nearly asleep, overcome by the intense heat of the day, a tall, thin young man in a dark frock coat, with dark hair and small side whiskers, and with a low felt hat worn rather on the back of his head, walked slowly up and down the platform, languidly looking into the carriages, as if in search of a comfortable seat. At last he opened the door of the carriage in which Mr. Gold sat, and entering took his place in it.

At twenty-three minutes past 2 o'clock the express was swinging through Crowden. A few minutes later, with a shrill shriek of its whistle, it plunged into the mile long

Mertham tunnel. As the engine uttered that shriek a passenger named Gibson, in a second class compartment of the train, heard five quick, sharp explosions. "Fog signals," he remarked to a companion.

Eight minutes later the express was speeding past the village of Horley. Two or three hundred yards from the line a small cottage, and in the window of one of these a woman was sitting busily sewing. As the train whirled by she raised her eyes from her work to gaze at it. "Look, Rhoda!" she exclaimed to her daughter, who was in the room with her. "Look at those men in that carriage! They are fighting, or having a game."

Following her pointing finger with her eyes, Rhoda Brown distinctly saw those men for an instant. They were wrestling, she thought. She could see them "waving their arms."

About one mile from Brighton the express drew up at Preston Park for the collecting of tickets. When the ticket collector came and threw open the door of one of the first class carriages he saw a passenger, pale and exhausted, his features and dress smeared with blood. He had no hat, his clothes

were torn, and his tie and collar had apparently been wrenching forcibly from his neck.

"I have been murderously attacked and fired at," he said. "Is there a doctor near? I am faint. Can you get me some water?"

Some water was brought, while the station officials consulted as to what was best to be done, and, as there was no doctor handy, it was suggested that the stranger had better go on to Brighton—only a minute's journey—and two of the officials were put in the carriage with him.

Before the train started the stranger got out for a moment's air upon the platform. As he walked up and down the platform one of the porters noticed a piece of gold chain hanging out of his shoe, and, stooping down, he seized it and dragged out a gold watch.

"That is mine," said the stranger. "I put it there for safety." And the porter handed the watch to him.

In a few minutes the three were at Brighton, and, proceeding to the stationmaster's room, the passenger told his story. He said, Alfred Lefroy, and he lived at an address in Wallington. He had entered the train at London Bridge, taking his place in a first class carriage with two other passengers, one of whom was an aged man of medium height, with slight gray whiskers, and dressed in dark clothes. The other was a fresh complexioned individual of about 40, with dark whiskers, no mustache, and dressed in a dark gray suit. Neither of these persons spoke to him as he entered the train, and as they arrived at the tunnel, after leaving Crowden, he saw a flash and heard a report of firearms. Springing up from his seat, he was felled by a terrible blow on the head, which rendered him unconscious until he came to Preston Park.

"I have been robbed and nearly murdered," he protested. "You must do your best to catch these two men."

He could give no further particulars and could not guess what had become of his assailants, and the police, having been summoned, accompanied him to the hospital, where his injuries were seen to. They were superficial, and there was nothing to account for that prolonged insensibility in the carriage. While the doctor was attending to him the detectives searched his clothes. They found a few shillings in his pockets, some postage tickets, and several Hanoverian sovereigns—diamonds, often used by tricksters for the purpose of impressing unsuspecting people with an idea of wealth. Lefroy

protested that he knew nothing of these. His assailant must have put them in his pocket.

An examination of the railway carriage revealed signs of a terrible outrage having been attempted or perpetrated in it. There were the marks of revolver shots on the woodwork. The marks of the police called in the first place to investigate the mystery of the murder, were not far from the scene. Lefroy's injuries having been seen to, one of the officers went with Lefroy back by train to the address he had given at Wallington. As the train they were in stopped at a station on the way from Brighton, the stationmaster came to the carriage and informed the officer that the searchers had discovered the dead body of an old gentleman—a Mr. Gold—on the table near Balcombe. Having seen Lefroy into his lodgings at Wallington, the detective left him.

"If you should want me for anything tomorrow," said Lefroy calmly as he bade the officer good day, "you will find me here or at my club in the Strand."

A short time later the officer was again at the house. He had received a message warning him to detain Lefroy, as it was evident that a murder had been committed. But Lefroy, he was told, had left the house almost immediately after his arrival, and none knew where he had gone. He had fled!

All the witnesses declared that Lefroy, during his questioning by the railway officials and police, showed remarkable coolness and readiness in explanation. It must have been a fearful nervous effort. But he succeeded in allaying all suspicion and excited the pity as they looked at him with those terrible stabs upon him. Judging by them, he must have lost a large quantity of blood. As a matter of fact, the blood was that of his victim, Mr. Gold.

The railway company and the government at once offered a reward of £100 for information leading to the murderer's capture, and placards were issued bearing the descriptions of Lefroy, his portrait, and specimens of his handwriting. A likeness of him which appeared in a daily led to his capture.

Lefroy had taken refuge in lodgings in a little house in Smith street, Stepney. He informed his landlady that his name was Clarke, and that he was an invalid engraver from Liverpool. His conduct was mysterious and excited his landlady's suspicion. He staid in all day and kept the blind of his room—his window looked out into the street—drawn close down as if fearful of any one looking in. His landlady had seen the picture in the paper. She consulted the police respecting "the strange young man."

The detective—Swanston and Jarvis—who visited Smith street to interview the mysterious lodger, recognized him and pointed on him at once.

"I am sick of it and should have given myself up in a day or two. I am sorry I ran away. I put such a wrong complexion on things; but I could not bear the exposure."

The jury quickly returned a verdict of guilty, and, pale and trembling, Lefroy listened, apparently all unnerved, to the sentence of death. When the lord chief justice finished, however, he had recovered some amount of self-possession.

"Gentlemen," he said, striking a theatrical attitude and in impressive tones, as he lifted one hand to heaven, "the day will come when you will know that you have murdered me!"

He was hanged three weeks later—after having tried to delay his fate by making an absurdly impudent confession of another murder, of which he did not know even the leading details.

"I am Puffer Wind," said the man, "and I have been sent to fetch you into our kingdom. O, here comes Dame Rain!"

"Where am I?" she said, and, looking up, she saw beside her a big man, with a bald head and great, puffy cheeks, that he kept blowing out to a tremendous size.

"Who are you, please?" said the baby, timidly.

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other, but they had not traveled far before the air became cold.

"Ah, Snowflake is not far off," said Dame Rain, whose tears suddenly began to freeze.

As she said these words they were nearly blinded by a cloud of snowflakes, and out of the midst of them came a pretty, dancing little white creature.

"Here, Snowflake, stop your pranks!" cried Puffer Wind.

"See, we have brought the Star baby."

"O," said Snowflake, stopping and looking down at her, "what a pretty darling!"

And then there came a terribly loud noise, that shook the very cloud they stood on. The baby clung to Dame Rain's hand and looked frightened.

"Don't mind him," said Puffer Wind. "That's only Sire Thunder; he's always making a noise. Here he comes."

As he spoke a fierce-looking man came rolling up. He was dressed all in black and looked terrifying.

"A little less noise, please!" said Puffer Wind.

"Now," he added, "let's all get away before Murky Fog can see us."

And, so saying, he lifted up the baby and sprang up with her through the clouds at an alarming rate, the others following closely.

Suddenly they came to such a lovely rose colored cloud that the baby looked about her with big, round eyes of wonder.

"Here we are!" said Puffer Wind, putting her down. "We are near King Sunshine. Don't you feel the heat?"

"It's lovely here!" said the baby.

At that moment they came upon a wonderful gold throne, upon which was seated such a beautiful king and queen that the baby threw out her arms and cried with rapture.

King Sunshine was dressed all in glittering gold, from the top of his beautiful crown to his dainty gold slippers, and beside him sat Queen Moon, clad in the purest of silver.

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