

**THE FLOWER OF
YOUTH: A
ROMANCE**

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The flower of youth: a romance by Roy Rolfe Gilson

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ROY ROLFE GILSON

**THE FLOWER OF
YOUTH: A
ROMANCE**

THE
FLOWER OF YOUTH

A ROMANCE

BY

ROY ROLFE GILSON

AUTHOR OF "IN THE MORNING GLOW"
"WHEN LOVE IS YOUNG" ETC.



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TO
MY FATHER

PART I

THE TWO SHADOWS

THE FLOWER OF YOUTH

I



UNCLE JERRY," said that school-girl, Barbara, shutting my *Pickwick* in my hands, robbing my mouth of its very pipe, and seating herself upon my knee, "did you ever have any adventures?"

"Well—" said I.

"You know what I mean," my niece went on, her eyes widening, her voice sinking to an undertone—"I mean exciting things, where the plot thickens—fights, or love-affairs, or h-hair-breadth escapes!"

"Well," said I, gathering my strewn wits, seeking some story in that eager face,

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and finding none but the mildest of memories, "no, my dear."

"Oh, didn't you, Uncle Jerry?"

"N-no," I repeated, dropping my eyes, hers were so half-reproachful. "Why, yes," I said, brightening, "I did have a fight once, now that I come to think of it. Butch Duffy was the rearingest, tearingest boy in school, and one day—"

"Oh, I didn't mean that kind," said Barbara. "I meant a man-fight."

"I'm sorry," I replied, "but I never had a man-fight."

"Weren't there any wars to go to, Uncle Jerry?"

"None to speak of—that is, none around where I lived."

"But you and Aunt Kate—"

"Well, I shouldn't call them wars, my dear."

For a moment then my niece looked puzzled, she is such a sober bit of thing.

"You didn't let me finish, Uncle Jerry. I was going to say: you and Aunt Kate;