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BY CELIA'S ARBOUR.

A NOVEL.

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CHAPTER XLV.

In the street Leonard released his hold of Herr Ranner's arm. "You are free," he said. "Go your own way."

The spy laughed. "Of course I knew there was no danger. The danger begins now. Come with me to my lodgings. I have something to say to you."

Leonard followed him. In his own place the man opened a bottle of hock, and after offering a glass to Leonard, who refused, drank glass after glass without stopping. "Nothing," he said, "steadies the nerves like hock. So you will not drink with a member of the Russian Secret Service? No. You will not sit down in his room? No. You will not take his hand? You think it a disgrace to belong to that service? Good. That is not a disgrace, but it is disgraceful to be found out, and I do not disguise from you that it will not do me good at headquarters to have been discovered. After all, they will remember that I have had a good long run."

"Our friend in the blue blouse"—he sat down and crossed his legs—"was quite right, though he put things roughly. The Poles cannot see the other side of the question. That is why I wanted to explain to you one or two little things."

He paused, as if trying for words.

"I cannot hope," he said, "to make you understand that the execution of orders in the Police is no more disgraceful than in the Army. I did arrest Roman Pulaski. I tracked him down, and caught him upon the frontier. That was my duty. I did escort him part way to Siberia, whether he walked on foot. That was my duty. The sentence was the Czar's. I was his servant. Do you blame me? No; you cannot. As regards the other change about the children, that is also partly true. I was not in charge of the carts, but I rode part of the way with them. I am in no mood for lying or for defending myself with you, but I ask you to let young Pulaski know that this is the first I have heard about his connection with that day. I did not know, when I first made his acquaintance, that he was one of the victims of that—that excess of zeal on the part of our Cossack friends. I knew nothing about his mother. You may believe me or not when I tell you that when I made his acquaintance—when I found him to be a poet and a dreamer—I resolved to prevent him if possible from being led to death by a madman. Do you blame me for that?"

"Yes," Leonard replied. "I blame you for ever speaking to him or knowing him. I blame you—because you are a spy."

"A servant in the Secret Service Department. Yes, and in that capacity I have been of use to my country."

"I dare say you have," said Leonard. "I do not care to hear about that. I have only one more thing to say. Did you happen when you came away, to catch the expression in old Wassilewski's eyes?"

"I did. I watched all the eyes. Shall I tell you what they said as plainly as eyes can speak? That boy looked at me with a sort of wonder, as if it was not possible; the Professor with curiosity; the Count with disappointment, but no surprise. I know the Count, he is a clever man, and, if he does not get shot in Poland, will rise in Paris. The old Captain would have liked to hang me up at the yard-arm, and the other two, Wassilewski and our Parisian, looked murder."

"I come with you to warn you."

"Thank you very much; I need no warning."

"What are you going to do?"

"Murder and revenge," he repeated. "That sounds ugly. But I have seen the look of murder in a good many eyes before now. The look does not kill. I shall do nothing."

"You will remain here?"

"Yes, here—in this town—in this house. They may come up here to murder me. I have pistols. I sleep with the door locked. I shall not be frightened away by any pair of Polish patriots."

"That will not do at all," said Leonard. "You must go away."

"Must I? And why?"

He explained that there were other reasons besides the fear of those two. These Poles would spread it abroad that he was a Russian spy; the town was full of sailors only a year or two from the Crimean War, and that an English mob was generally rough.

Lastly, Leonard assured him that so far as lay in his power he should take care that he should enter no respectable person's house, that his profession should be told everybody, and that a highly coloured description of the deputation scene should be forwarded to the local and the London papers.

Then Herr Ranner gave way.

"You are a pertinacious man," he said, "and you want to see me go. Well. I will go to-day. Will that satisfy you?"

"I want, for the sake of poor old Wassilewski, to avoid a scandal. See,"—Leonard pointed to the window—"the little man in the blouse is watching you in the street."

This was indeed the case. He was marching backwards and forwards, gesticulating and incessantly casting an eye at the door of the enemy's house.

"Go in the daytime," said Leonard. "There is a train to London at five—go by that."

"Perhaps," said the spy. "Perhaps by a later train. But I shall go to-day. That I promise you for Wassilewski's sake."

"All this," he went on, after more hock, "all this, I confess, is horribly annoying to me. I had formed a pleasant plan for the future which has been entirely disarranged. At sixty-two one does not like to have one's plans upset. I pictured to myself ten years of ease and retirement from active work, giving my advice and experience to the Department, going on those special missions reserved for the higher officers of the service, decorated, pensioned, and living at St. Petersburg with a young and beautiful wife. I confess I am disappointed. Now, I dare say, I shall never marry at all. After all, he who expects nothing from life gets the most. I am content."

"I came away after that," said Leonard. "What a man it is! He has no shame, he glories in his trade. I hope he will go, as he promised but I am not easy about it. I should like to watch old Wassilewski, or look him up. And it seems too much to think that he will go away in broad daylight like a man who isn't a spy. Most likely he will steal away in the dark by crosscut and luns, and on tip-toe, after the manner of a stage-spy."

CHAPTER XLVI.

So all seemed settled, and there was nothing at all left but to rejoice and be glad together. All is well that ends well. Leonard and Celia were to be married, the Captain and I were to go on together as of old; there was to be no more threatening of insurrection, life would resume the same calm which is so dull to look back upon, and yet so happy while it lasts. We celebrated the event of Celia's engagement immediately by a family gathering that evening at Mr. Tyrrell's. It was also an entertainment in commemoration of the reconciliation of Aunt Jane with her niece, and, if on that account alone, the best tea things were produced, and there was a lavish expenditure in the matter of muffins and teacakes.

Nothing shows the march of civilization more than the decay in the consumption of muffins and teacakes. Nobody has tea at all now, except at five o'clock, because those who remember what a tea party used to be cannot call handing tea round in trays having tea. Nobody sits down to a table now covered with cake in various forms, but it was in those days the commonest form of entertainment. I suppose everybody of the middle classes looked upon a tea-party as the chief instrument of social intercourse, and Mrs. Tyrrell was by no means singular in attaching a symbolic importance to her best tea-service.

Nothing could have been finer than the manner of Aunt Jane. She kept Celia beside her. She offered no objection whatever when her husband, presuming on the unusually fine weather, ventured to ask for more sugar. She made no allusion to any Christian privileges, either by way of example or admonition, and having found out that Miss Rutherford's father had been a distinguished writer and preacher of the same school as herself that is, of the severest Calvinistic type, she received her with marked cordiality. Calvinism in that gentle lady, however, was so tempered with native kindness that it lost all its terrors.

As for Mr. Tyrrell, the removal of the weight upon him almost restored him to his youth. He made jokes, he laughed; he was attentive to his wife, he was not only happy again, but he had recovered his old confidence and importance.

In the evening we played, Celia and I, then we sang duets, then Celia sang by herself, but only one song, because everybody wanted a little confidential talk with her in turn.

First it was Aunt Jane.

"Well, my dear," she said, with an inclination of the head in the direction of Leonard, "as you have made your choice, I suppose there is nothing more to say."

"But, dear Aunt"—well brought up young people in those days did not venture on such a respectful endearment as "Auntie"—I should like to have seen any one address Mrs. Pontifex as "Auntie"—"you have no objection to Leonard, have you?"

"No—no," she replied, critically. "He is, I am told, though not yet a Professed Believer, not without hope. A husband, my dear, is what a wife makes him. You would hardly believe, perhaps, the trouble which my husband, John Pontifex, has given me by the violence of his natural inclinations. All men, in the matter of eating and drinking, require strong and constant discipline. That you will have to administer with constant searchings into your own conscience. Mere worldliness I need hardly warn you against. You must not encourage your husband's tendency to over-estimate the value of earthly distinctions, though I am glad

to learn from his aunt that he comes of a County Family. We who have been blessed, by Providence, with County connections would be blind to our privileges did we not remember that fact. You will never forget your own maternal connections. I refer rather to military distinction. And, above all, my dear, guard against inordinate affection. I need hardly warn you that before marriage any demonstration of—of—of what I suppose you call Love, is highly improper. No girl who values herself, or calls herself a Christian gentlewoman, would allow her lover to kiss her on the lips. My first husband, it is true, once surprised me by kissing what he called my marble brow. I never allowed John Pontifex more than the tip of my fingers. After marriage you will find they are not so anxious for kissing. Remember that, my dear."

"He is what the world calls handsome, I fear,"—as if it were a blot upon his moral character—"and he has been successful so far." Here she sighed, as if that was another moral blot. "But he is young. I could have wished you to remain, as I did, single to the age of thirty, or even forty; you then might have chosen a man some years your junior, and enjoyed the privileges which age and maturity add to marriage. This has been the case with John Pontifex."

Then it was the Captain. "Come to me, Cis, my pretty," the old man called her to sit beside him. "Come and tell me all about it. And so you have accepted my boy Leonard, have you? Happy man! I believe I am jealous of him. You must not forget the old house by the mill-dam."

"No," said Cis. "I shall not forget the old house, or its owner."

"When is Leonard going to take you away? Don't let him hurry you, Celia. We shall be dull when you are gone."

They protested to each other like a pair of lovers, the old Captain and the girl. I believe she loved the old man as well as any one, after Leonard.

She looked shyly happy, and was as radiant as a moss rose half blown with the sunshine on it. Her eyes kept lifting to Leonard as if she could not bear that he should be out of her sight for a moment, and they were full of a new, strange, and wonderful light. A change had fallen upon her all in a day. A man loved her, and she could give him love for love. It was no mushroom passion, the growth of a ballroom, brought into being by a pair of bright eyes, an intoxicating waltz, the whirl of white arms, and the glamour of music; it was a life-long affection, suddenly ripened into love by the touch and words of Leonard the magician. I have watched other maidens since then, and have seen that look in some of their eyes, but not in all. "She loves him, loves him not," I say, according to the light of her eyes.

"And not a word for me, Cis, for my own private ear?"

"What shall I say, Laddy?"

"Are you perfectly content and happy, my dear?"

"Yes, Laddy, quite, quite happy. There is nothing that Heaven can give me more. I am more happy than I can say. And you? There is no more danger about this Polish business?"

"Happily, none. I am free. My poor old Wassilewski exaggerated the certainty of his insurrection. He saw what he wished to see. The Poles are not ready yet, and so far as I am concerned, they would not have me if I wanted to go. Of that I am certain."

"I am glad. I could not bear to think of you breathing revenge and bloodshed. You will stay at home and make the world happier with music, Laddy. You must be a great composer."

And then Mr. Pontifex claimed her.

"I have," he began, "to offer my—ahem!—my congratulations on so auspicious an event as your—in fact—your engagement. Marriage is an honourable condition, although not, as the Papists ignorantly make it, one of the Sacraments of the Church. We have known the young man, your—your—in fact, your betrothed—for many years, and we rejoice to find that he has not only distinguished himself as greatly in—ahem!—in action—as others,"—meaning himself—"sometimes distinguish themselves at Oxford in examination, but he has also been enabled under Providence to recover what some would consider an indispensable condition of acceptance with a family of respectability—I mean respectable connections of his own."

Celia laughed.

"At all events, we liked Leonard before he had found Miss Rutherford."

"That is most true. You will, however, Celia, be rejoiced to learn that Miss Rutherford herself belongs to a County family, and that Leonard, both on his father's side and his mother's, is of an excellent stock."

"I am glad if Leonard is glad."

"Your Aunt—in fact, Mrs. Pontifex—thinks that steps should be taken to put Leonard in communication with his father's family, a subject on which she proposes to speak at another occasion. For the present, Celia, my dear, she will probably do no more than invite you to dinner. Mrs. Pontifex has resolved, I may say, upon having a dinner. I do not myself, I confess, greatly admire our own, or rather her style—ahem!—of entertainment. I have, on one or two such occasions, arisen from the meal with an unsatisfied appetite. But we think too much on carnal things."

And all the time Leonard was talking with his newly-found Aunt. It seems a prosaic ending for one who never had a father. Leonard being a foundling, or next door to it, he attained

to three and twenty without knowing where he came from, and he then, having just occasion to thank Heaven that his father was no more, found—an Aunt. No lordly lineage, no rich and childless father brooding over the irretrievable past, no accession to wealth and fortune, only a widow Aunt, with a small income, only a confirmation of the fact stated by the poor dying mother that he was a gentleman by birth. Yet the confirmation pleased Leonard as much as if he had been proved an earl by birth, and was declared the missing heir to boundless acres and a genealogy going beyond Noah.

It was a quiet evening, with no general conversation, but always these sub-divisions and sections of two and three. It was not late when we separated, and Leonard, leaving Miss Rutherford to the care of Cis, came with the Captain and myself.

The Captain had his pipe and glass of grog, and went upstairs, to turn in. We, left alone, sat silent, looking into space, at the open window, wrapped in our thoughts.

Surely, I considered, Leonard is the spoiled child, whom nothing can spoil, of Fortune. He has fought his way through the briars and brambles of poverty and obscurity, the friendly hand of Fate warding off bullets, bayonets, and the breath of disease. He had come back to us, bearing the Queen's Commission, a successful hero, where so many equally heroic, only less successful, had fallen by the way, and now he died on the plains of India or in the Cemeteries of Scutari and the Crimea—he had the gift of Good Luck—*la main heureuse*. Whatever he tries to do, he does well. To be sure he does it with all his might. What we call Luck, a small and degraded word, the ancients called Fate, because to them success and failure meant much more than they mean now. To lose your high estate; to be a slave who once was Queen of Troy with gallant sons foremost in the fight—that was Fate. To return in triumph, leading the captive kings at the chariot-wheel—or to be one of the captive kings, shorn of all your former magnificence—Louis Quatorze with the wig off—that was Fate. To sit in obscurity, to go on living upon a small income, to be unknown when you know yourself as good a man as he whose name is in every paper, whose voice is heard at every gateway, when the Lord Mayor delighteth to honour—that is Luck. It seems at first to be a thing quite independent of personal virtues, except that you ought not to be conspicuously vicious; Luck was with Leonard. And yet he was conspicuously, like all successful men, one who deserved his Luck.

"What are you thinking of, Laddy?"

"I am thinking that of all men on earth, you are at this moment the happiest."

"I think I am, indeed," he said, softly. "I have Celia; I have my Commission and my medals; and now I am no longer a waif and stray in the world, come from nobody knows where, but I have my place with the rest, and can talk of my forefathers like any Howard."

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CHAPTER XLVII.

It was past eleven o'clock, but the day had been exciting, and we could not think of sleep. It was a hot night, too, with little wind, but a full bright moon shining in the placid waters of the Mill-dam. The town was very quiet; in the kitchen, a cricket chirped loudly; in the neighbouring garden was baying a foolish dog, driven nervous by the moonlight which, as everybody knows, makes wandering spectres, if there are any about, visible to dogs. Frightened at length by the sound of his own voice, perhaps awed by a more than commonly dreaded ghost, he left off barking, and retreated to his kennel. Then we were quite quiet, and sat face to face, in silence.

My nerves that night were strung to the point at which whatever happens brings relief. I felt as if something was going to happen.

So did Leonard.

"Come," he said, "we must either talk or go off to bed. I feel as if something oppressive was in the air. Is it thunder? No; it is a clear and beautiful night. Let us go into the garden."

We went to the end of the garden, and stood on the stone coping, looking over the broad sheet of water.

"You are content, Laddy, with the turn things took this afternoon?"

"Yes," I said, "content, and yet humiliated. Why did I ever learn the story of my people?"

"Poland has no claim upon you," said Leonard.

"Your education—your disposition—everything makes you a man of peace. Stay at home and make the name of Pulaski glorious in art."

"Who is that, Leonard? Listen."

An uneven step in the quiet street. That was nothing, but the step seemed familiar. And it stopped at our door. And then there was rapping, a low rapping, as if the late caller wanted to come in confidentially.

There was a light burning in the hall, and Leonard snatching it up, opened the door.

It was Wassilewski. And then I knew, without being told, that some dreadful thing had happened.

"Let me come in," he said. "I have a thing to say. Are you two alone?"

"Alone," echoed Leonard. "Come in."

"The soldier," murmured the old Pole.

"Good; he will understand."

As he stood in the light of the candles, I was conscious of a curious change that had fallen upon him. His eyes had lost their wild and hungry brilliancy; they were soft and gentle;