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BY CELIA'S ARBOUR.

A NOVEL.

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"THE GOLDEN BUTTERFLY," &c.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE WORLD AND THE WORD.

"Come to us Cis, for a day or two," I said. "It will be a little change if it only keeps you out of the way of your persecutor."

It was a custom of old standing for Celia to spend a day or two with the Captain—it did us good in brightening up the dingy old house. When Celia was coming we put flowers on the mantleself, the Captain went round rigging up the curtains with bright ribbons, and he called it hoisting the bunting. The usual severity of our daily fare was departed from, and the Captain brought out, with his oldest flask, his oldest stories.

"He follows me about," she replied. "I can go nowhere without meeting him. If I go into a shop he is at the door when I come out—it is as if I was already his property."

"But he says nothing—he shows no impatience."

"On Sunday evening I spoke to him. I asked him to give up his pursuit. I appealed to his honour—to his pity."

"He has no pity, Cis."

"To his very love for me, if he really loves me. I told him that it was impossible for me to give my consent. I burst into tears—what a shame to cry before him!—and he only laughed and called me his little April girl. 'Laugh, my little April girl, it rejoices me to see the cloud followed by the sunshine.' Then he asked me to tell him what I wanted him to do and he would do it. 'To tell my father that you have given up your project—to go away and leave me.' He said that he would do anything but give up the project; that his hope was more firmly grounded than ever, and that time would overcome my last objections to making him happy. What kind of love can that be which looks to a way of making oneself happy?"

That had been my kind of love not very long before.

"I cannot speak to my father, but I see that he is changed. Not in his kindness to me, not that—but he is irritable: he drinks more wine than he should, and he is all the evening in his office now—and sometimes I see his eyes following me—poor Papa!"

"What is the meaning of it, Laddy? People do not usually promise their daughters to old men when they are eight years of age. Yet this is what he said Papa did. Why did he do it? Do you think he lent Papa money? You know we were not always so well off as we are now."

"I dare say money has something to do with it," I replied. "It seems to me that money has to do with everything that is disagreeable."

"It has," he said. "Why cannot people do without money altogether? But, if that is all, Aunt Jane and my Uncle Pontifex have plenty of money, and they would help me, I am sure."

"We cannot go to them for help yet. Patience, Cis—patience for a fortnight; we will tell Leonard when he comes home, and perhaps the Captain too."

"Patience," she echoed. "One tries to be patient, but it is hard. It is not only that I could never love Herr Räumer, Laddy, but the very thought of passing my life with him makes me shake and tremble. I am afraid of him, his manner is smooth, but his voice is not, and his eyes are too bright and keen. I have seen him when he did not think it necessary to keep up that appearance of gentleness. I know that he despises women, because I once heard him make a cruel little sneer about us. And he pretends—he pretends to be religious, to please Mamma. What sort of life should I have with him? What an end, then, would there be to our talks and hopes?"

I murmured something weak about the higher life being possible under all conditions, but I did not believe it. Life with Herr Räumer—the man who believed religion to be the invention of the priests—that this life was the beginning and the end; that there was nothing to be looked for from man and womankind but from love of self—no honour, no virtue. What could the future of a girl exposed to the daily and homely influences of such a man be like?

Love of self? Would it be, then, for love of self that Celia would accept him?

I suppose for strong natures life might be made to yield the fruits of the most sublime Christianity anywhere, even in a convict hulk; but most of us require more fitting conditions. It is happy to think that no man is tried beyond his strength to bear, although in these latter days we have gone back to the old plan of making new hindrances to the maintenance of the higher spiritual levels, and calling them helps. There are plenty of daily crosses in our way which call for all of our strength, without adding the new and barbaric inconveniences of hunger and small privations. Fasting, as a Ritualist the other day confessed to me, only makes people cross. I should have pitied any girl, even the most commonplace of good English girls, whom Fate might single out to marry this cynical pessimist; how much more when the girl was one whose standard was so high and

heart so pure? Should the clear current of a mountain stream be mingled with the turbid water of a river in which no fish can live, foul from contact with many a factory by which it has wound its way, and from which it has brought nothing but the refuse and the scum? Are there not some men—I am sure Herr Räumer was one—who as they journey through the world gather up all its wickedness out of which they construct their own philosophy of existence? And this philosophy it was which he proposed to teach Celia.

"I shall instruct that sweet and unformed mind," he said to me one evening in his lordly way, as if all was quite certain to come off that he proposed, "in the realities of the world. She is at present like a garden full of pretty delicate flowers—your planting, my young friend; they shall all be pulled up, and we shall love instead—well—those flowers which go to make a woman of the world."

"I do not want to see Celia made into a woman of the world."

"You will not be her husband, Ladislav Pulaski. You only love her like a brother, you know. Ha! ha! And that is very lucky for me. And you do not know what a woman of the world is."

"Tell me what she is."

"I shall not go on living here. I shall live in London, Paris, Vienna, somewhere. My wife shall be a woman who shall know from my teaching how to deal with men and how to find out women. As for the men, she shall play with them like a cat with a mouse. She shall coax their little secrets out of them, especially if they are diplomats; she shall make them tell what she pleases."

"Why should they tell her what she pleases? What secrets would Celia wish to hear?"

"Jeune premier—Cherubin—you know nothing. They will be political secrets, and my wife will learn them for me. It is only France and Russia which really understand the noble game of feminine intrigue. I shall take my bride away, train her carefully, and with her take my proper place."

Always in the Grand Style: always this talk about diplomacy, secret service, and intrigue, and sometimes betraying, or perhaps ostentatiously showing, a curiously intimate acquaintance with Courts and Sovereigns. What, I wondered, was the previous history of this strange man?

"Celia has everything to learn, and a good deal to unlearn," he went on thoughtfully. "I do not blame you in any particular, Ladislav. You have done your best. But she has to forget the old-fashioned provincial—or insular—axioms."

"God forbid."

He laughed. "You forget that you are not an Englishman, but a Slav. They are very pretty—these insular notions—that people marry for love—that people must always answer truthfully whatever comes of it—that if you want to get a thing you only have to march straightforward—that you must let your friends know all you intend to do—that men care for anything but themselves—that—He stopped for want of breath."

"Pray go on," I said; "let us have the whole string of virtues dismissed as insular."

"Marriage for love! Was there ever greater nonsense? The best union of the world that history speaks of was that of the Sabine maidens carried off by the Romans—carried off by perfect strangers. Picture to yourself the feelings of a proper English lady under such circumstances. Celia will certainly never love me but in time—in a short time—you shall see. When a girl sees that a man is in earnest, that if she appeals to his pity he laughs; if to his mercy, he laughs; if to such trifles as disparity of religion or of age, he laughs—why, you see that woman ends by giving in. Besides it is a compliment to her. I know that I have not your influence or good wishes. I did not expect them, and can do without them. You are as *romanesque* as your pupil—*ça va sans dire*. But I have her father's. She looks very pretty—very sweet indeed—when she gives me one of those upward looks of hers which mean entreaty. What will she be when I have trained her to use those 'eyes for political purposes'?"

It reminded me of a boy with a mouse in a trap. You know how pretty the creature is, its eyes bright with terror and despair, looking at you through the bars which she has been frantically gnawing all the night. Shame and pity to kill the pretty thing. One might tame her. So Herr Räumer, like the schoolboy, admired his prisoner. She was caught in his cage: at least he thought so: she amused him: she pleased his fancy: he would keep her for himself, caged and tamed.

So Celia came to us.

"I am in trouble," she said to the Captain, "and I came here. Laddy knows what sort of trouble it is, but we ought not to speak of it just yet. Say something, dear Captain, to help us."

The Captain in his simple way took her in his arms and kissed her.

"What trouble can you have that your friends cannot get you out of? I won't ask. There are troubles enough of all sorts. All of them come from somebody disobeying orders. Have you followed instructions, my dear?"

"I have tried, Captain."

"Then there will be no great harm done, be sure. 'Like a tree planted by the rivers of water, his leaf shall not wither.' Now I tell you what we will do. We will blow some of the trouble away by a sail up the harbour. First let us have tea."

"I remember," the Captain said, when he had finished his tea; "I remember in the action of Navarino, which you may have heard of, my pretty—Laddy, what are you sniggering at? Of course Celia has heard of Navarino. Very well, then, you shall not hear that story, though it might be brought to bear upon the present trouble. The best of sea actions is the use they can be put to in all sorts of private affairs. That is not generally known, Celia, my dear: and it makes an action the more interesting to read. Nelson's example always applies. Lay your guns low—nail your colours to the mast—pipe all hands for action: and then—alongside the enemy, however big she is. As to the rest, that's not your concern—and it's in good hands."

"I wish I knew what my duty was," said Celia.

"I wish you did, my dear. And you will know, turning it over in your own mind. I thank God my life has been a simple one. I never saw any doubt about the line of duty. My orders have always been plain. My children," he added, solemnly, "we all start in life with sealed orders. Some men, when they open them, find them difficult to understand. Now the way to understand them—they are all here"—he laid his hand upon a certain book on the small table beside him—"is to remember, first of all, that duty has got to be done, and that we are not always out on a holiday cruise in pleasant waters."

"I know," said Celia, "I know, Captain"—the tears standing in her eyes.

"They talk about church-going and sermons," the Captain went on, "Well—it's part of the discipline. Must have order; church belongs to it—and I'm a plain man, not asked for an opinion. But Cis, my dear, and Laddy, there's one thing borne in upon me every day stronger. It is that we've always got a model before us. As Christ lived, we must live; those who lived most like Him, talk the least, because they think the more. I read once, in a book, of a statue of Christ. Now whoever went to see that statue, no matter how tall he was, found it just a little taller than himself. It was a parable, Celia, I suppose. And it means that the nearer you get to Christ, the more you find that you cannot reach Him. Be good, my children. And now, Celia, if you will put on your hat, we will start. It's a fine evening, with a fair breeze, and we need not be back before nine. No more talk about troubles till tomorrow."

CHAPTER XXII.

A NIGHT UP THE HARBOUR.

The sun was still high, but fast sloping westwards; there was a strong breeze blowing up the harbour from the south-west, the tide was full, the water was bright, its wavelets touched by the sunshine, each one sparkling like a diamond with fifty facets, the old ships, bathed in the soft evening light, looked as if they were resting from a long day's work, the hammers in the Dockyard were quiet, and though the beach was crowded, it was with an idle throng who congregated together to talk of ships, and they naturally tended in the direction of the beach because the ships were in sight as illustrations. We kept our oars and mast with the running gear in safety in one of the houses on the Hard behind a shop. It was a strange and picturesque shop, where everything was sold that was useless and interesting—a museum of a shop; in the window were Malay creases taken in some deadly encounter with pirates in the narrow seas; clubs richly carved and ornamented for some South Sea Island chief; beads worked in every kind of fashion; feathers, bits of costume, everything that a sailor picks up abroad, brings home in his chest, and sells for nothing to such an omnivorous dealer as the owner of this shop. He, indeed, was as strange as his shop. He had at one time been a purser's clerk, and in that capacity had once as strange an adventure as I ever heard. He told it to me one evening when, by the light of a single candle, I was curiously looking at some things in his back parlour. Some day, perhaps, I will tell that story. Not now. Some day, too, perhaps, I will write down what I can recollect of the stories he told me connected with his collection. There is no reason now for suppressing them any longer: he is dead, and all those whose mouthpiece he was are dead too. I think that in every man over forty there lies, mostly only known to himself, a strange and wondrous tale. Could he tell it as it really happened, it would be the story of how events perfectly commonplace in the eyes of other people acted upon him like strokes of Fate, crushing the higher hope that was in him, and condemning him to penal servitude for life, to remain upon the lower levels. Because it is mostly true that many run, but to one only is given the prize. Am I—are you—the only one whom fortune has mocked? *Nos numerus sumus*, the name of the Unfortunate is Legion; no one has the exclusive right to complain. To fifty

Fate holds out the golden apples of success, and one only gets them.

We took our sculls and sails from the shop, and rigged our craft. She was built something on the lines of a wherry, for seaworthiness, a strong, serviceable boat, not too heavy for a pair of sculls, and not too light to sail under good press of canvass. Everybody knew us on the beach—the boatmen, the old sailors, and the sailors' wives who were out with the children because the weather was so fine. All had a word to say to the Captain, touching their forelocks by way of preface. One carried our oars, another launched the boat, another sent a boy for a couple of rough sea rugs, because the wind was high, and the young lady might get wet, and in the midst of the general excitement we jumped in and pushed off.

Celia sat in the stern, one of the rugs serving as a cushion, and held the rudder strings. The Captain sat opposite her, and I took the sculls to row her clear of the beach, until we could hoist our sail.

"This is what I like," said the Captain, dragging a little more of the waterproof over Celia's feet in his careful way. "A bright day, a breeze aft, but not dead aft—Laddy, we shall have some trouble getting back—a tight little boat, and a pretty girl like little Cis in command. Aha! Catch an old salt insensible to lovely women."

Blow high, blow low, let tempests tear
The mainmast by the board:
My heart with thoughts of thee, my dear,
And love well stored.

Celia laughed. Her spirits rose as each dip of the sculls lengthened our distance from the shore, and made her certain of escaping, at least for one evening, from her persecutor. She wore some pretty sort of brown holland stuff made into a jacket, and braided with a zig-zag Vandyeke pattern in red. I do not know how I remember that pattern of the braid, but it seems as if I remember every detail of that evening—her bright and animated face flushed with the pleasure and excitement of the little voyage, rosy in the evening sunshine, the merry eyes with which she turned to meet the Captain's little compliment, the halo of youth and grace which lay about her, the very contour of her figure as she leaned aside, holding both the rudder strings on one side. I remember the little picture just as if it was yesterday.

Outside the ruck of boats which came and went between the opposite shores of the port, we were in free and open water, and could ship the sculls and hoist our sail for a run up harbour.

The sail up, I came aft, and sat down in the bottom of the ship, while the Captain held the rope and Celia the strings. And for a space none of us talked.

Our course carried us past the Docks and the shore-line buildings of the Dockyard. There were the white wharves, the cranes, the derricks, and all sorts of capstans, chains, and other gear for lifting and hoisting; the steam tugs were lying alongside; all as deserted and as quiet as if the yard belonged to some old civilization. Bright as the evening was, the effect was rather ghostly, as we glided, silent save for the rippling at the bows, along the silent bank. Presently, we came to the building sheds. Some of them were open and empty; some were closed; within each of the closed sheds lay, we knew, the skeleton, the half-finished frame, of a mighty man-o'-war—some of them but just begun; some ready to be launched; some, the deserted and neglected offspring of some bygone First Lord's experimental ignorance, lying as they had lain for thirty years, waiting for the order to be finished off and launched.

"Think of the twilight solitude in these great empty sheds, Cis," I whispered. "Think of the ghosts of wrecked ships haunting the places where they were built when the moonlight streams in the windows. Fancy seeing the transparent outline of some old three-decker, say the great *Victory*, as she went down with a thousand men aboard, lying upon the timber-shores—"

"With the ghosts of the old shipbuilders," said Celia, "walking about with their hands behind them, criticising the new-fashioned models."

"More likely to be swearing at 'steam,'" said the Captain. "The new-fashioned models! Where are they now, the ships which were on the slips twenty years ago? The *Duke of Marlborough*, the *Prince of Wales*, the *Royal Frederick*, the *Royal Sovereign*—Where is last year's snow? They are harbour ships, ships cut down and altered into ironclads, and of a date gone out of fashion."

There were many more ships in the harbour than then now; we had not yet learned to put all our trust in iron, and where we have one serviceable fighting vessel now we had twenty then. No hulk in the good old days that could float and could steer but could fight; there were no torpedoes, no rams, no iron vessels, no venomous little monitors. To lay yourself alongside an enemy and give broadside for broadside till one tired of it, was the good old fashion of a naval battle. What is it now?

Again, twenty years ago, they did not break up and destroy every vessel that seemed to be past service. She was towed up harbour and left there moored in her place, to furnish at least house accommodation for a warrant officer, if she could be of no other use. There were hundreds of ships there lying idle, their work over; some of them were coal hulks, some convict hulks, some receiving hulks; most were old pensioners who did no work any more, floating at high tide, and at low lying in the soft cushion of the har-