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## BY CELIA'S ARBOUR.

A NOVEL.

BY WALTER BESANT AND JAMES RICE, AUTHORS OF "READY-MONEY MORTIBOY,"  
"THE GOLDEN BUTTERFLY," &c.

He had quite put off the bland politeness of his manner with Celia, and stood before us angry, flushed, and revengeful. It was pretty clear that he would get what revenge he could, and I began to hope that, after all, Tyrrell had possessed himself of those papers.

"Come, Tyrrell," he said, "you know what will follow. Think of your own interests. I have never yet been beaten, and I never will. Those who stand in my path are trampled on without mercy."

"No," said the Worshipful the Mayor, "I will not be under any man's power. Do what you like, say what you like; and as you please. I would rather see Celia dead than married to you."

"Then you declare war?" he took a little key—ah! how well I remembered that instrument of Temptation—from his waistcoat pocket. "You declare war? This is refreshing. Some people say that nothing will ever induce an Englishman to declare war again. And here we have an example to the contrary. But I must crush you, my friend. I really must crush you."

"Gad!" cried the Captain. "Can't you open fire without so much parley? We are waiting for your shot."

"Tyrrell." Herr Räumler turned upon him once more. "I am almost sorry for you, and I have never been sorry for any one yet. Such a pity! The Worshipful the Mayor! The rich and prosperous lawyer! The close relative of the great Pontifex family! With so large a balance at the Bank, and so many shares, and such an excellent business! And all to come to such a sudden and disagreeable end. It does seem a pity."

"Pluck up, Tyrrell, this is all bounce." I wondered if it was. At that moment Mr. Tyrrell quietly went to the safe.

"I will not trouble you to open the safe. It is already open."

Herr Räumler sat down and looked at him.

"This is a stroke of genius," he said. "I did not think you had it in you. Were you, too, Captain, an accomplice? He finds my safe open, or he gets a key, or in some way gets it open; he takes the compromising papers, and then, you see, in full family gathering he defies me. It is an excellent situation, well led up to, well contrived, and executed admirably. Tyrrell, you are a dramatist lost to your country."

He did not appear the least disconcerted; he took it as quite natural that he should be defeated by deceit, craft, and cunning; they were weapons which he held to be universal and legitimate; he had, as he might cynically say, used them himself all his life. Now, in an unexpected manner, he was actually met and defeated by his own methods.

"This is really refreshing. Who is the best man in all the town, Ladislas Pulaski? Is it George Tyrrell? Why, he is better than the best, because he is the cleverest."

"Perhaps not," said Mr. Tyrrell, as he took a bundle of papers tied in red tape out of the safe. "I found this open last night. I suppose you left it open. There are all your papers—untouched."

The German snatched them from his hands, and began to turn them over.

"All? All?" He untied the tape, and opened paper after paper. "All? Impossible." He looked carefully through the whole bundle. As he got to the end his face changed, and he looked bewildered. "They are all here," he said, looking at us with a sort of dismay. "What is the meaning of this?"

He sat down with the papers in his hands, as if he was facing a great and astonishing problem.

"You are a theologian, Mr. Pontifex, and have presumably studied some of the leading cases in what they call sin. Did you ever read of such a case as this?"

"When I was a young man at Oxford (where—ahem—I greatly distinguished myself), I certainly did—ahem—study a science called Logic, which my reckless companions—"

"A man," interrupted Herr Räumler, and addressing his remarks to me, "a man gets possession of a bundle of papers which contain facts the suppression of which is all-important. He may destroy them without fear; no one knows about them except a single person who has no other proof; he deliberately adopts a line of conduct towards that person, who is a hard man with no sentimentality about him, and who has never once forgiven anybody any single wrong, however small, which that person is bound to resent. And while he does this he hands back to that hard and revengeful person the very papers which alone give him the power of revenge. This is the most extraordinary line of action I have ever seen pursued, or ever read of. What am I to think of it? Is it part of a deeper plot?"

"Rubbish," said the Captain. "Can't a man avoid a dishonourable thing without having a plot? Do you suppose we are all schemers and conspirators?"

"The English are, indeed, a wonderful race," said Herr Räumler.

"Can you not believe in a common act of

honesty? Man—man!" said the Captain, "what sort of life has yours been?"

"I have seen a good deal of the world," Herr Räumler went on, meditatively. "I was in Vienna and in Paris in 1848. You got a considerable amount of treachery there. But I never before saw a case of a man who had ruin—yes—ruin staring him in the face—who was too honest to prevent it. Too honest."

He sat down and resumed his blue spectacles, and then took his hat, still holding the papers in his hands.

At last, he said, with an effort,

"I honour the first piece of genuine honesty that I have ever, in the whole course of my life, actually witnessed. 'All men,' I said, at my leisure, 'are liars.' George Tyrrell, I give you back these papers. Take them and use them as you please. Best burn them. I give you the key of my safe; you can paint my name out to-morrow, if you please. Gentlemen, you will all three, I am sure, wish to keep this secret of our friend's life, as far as you know it, locked up and forgotten. Mr. Pontifex, you will say nothing about it—to the she-dragon."

"I promised not to shake him, Johnny," Mr. Pontifex said, as if that engagement was sacred, and the only thing which prevented him from committing an act of violence.

"Allois," said the philosopher, gaily, "let us be friends. Tyrrell, shake hands. I am going to leave this town, where I have spent ten years of my life, and shall return to-morrow or next day to—to the Continent. I shall see you again, Ladislas. Perhaps this afternoon."

He stopped at the door.

"Tell Celia," he said, "that she is free, and that I shall always regret that I could not take her away with me."

He laughed, and went away.

Then we all looked at each other as if we had been in a dream. There was actually a weak spot in the whole armour of cynicism with which Herr Räumler had clad himself, and we had found it.

Celia rescued. Andromeda free: the loathly dragon driven away; Andromeda's papa delivered from personal and private terror on his own account; and by the strangest chance, the whole brought about, though not continued, by me. I, who borrowed the key; I, who did a mean and treacherous thing, which gave the opportunity of an honourable and fearless action. After all, as Herr Räumler once said, the world would be but a dull place without its wickedness. I was as if Perseus, instead of flying through the air with winged feet and a sword swift to slay, conscious that the eyes of the Olympians were upon him, had crouched behind the rock when the Egean wave lapped the white feet of the damsel, and from that safe retreat astonished the monster with a Whitehead torpedo. Nothing at all to be proud of. And yet no dragon assailed with a torpedo could be more astonished than our foreign friend at the exhibition of an undoubted act of pluck and honesty. No doubt the admonitions of the Captain spurred on the hero, out of which I came, myself, as I felt, rather badly.

Let me say, once for all, that I do not know what the papers contained. Whether my old friend had committed a crime—whether it was forgery or burglary or anything else of which his conscience might have reproached him, and the opinion of the world looked askance upon, I do not know. Nothing more was ever said on the subject. The four actors in that little drama, including John Pontifex, maintained total silence. Even the safe disappeared. And neither then, nor at any subsequent period, was the leading lawyer of the town, its Mayor, its most eminent Freemason, subjected to the slightest suspicion, attack, or misrepresentation.

I asked to see Celia, but she had gone to her own room. I wrote a short note to her, sent it up, and went into the drawing-room, where Mrs. Pontifex and Mrs. Tyrrell, newly reconciled, were sitting in great state and friendliness. Cake and wine were on the table, not that the ladies wished to sustain nature, but that their production, like the pomegranate in the mysteries of Ceres, was a symbolical act. It meant reconciliation, and Mrs. Pontifex, who liked that the family should agree in the way she thought fit, contemplated the glass of sherry before her with an eye of peculiar satisfaction. I briefly narrated what had passed, glossing over the part that related to the papers, and dwelling chiefly on Herr Räumler's disinterested and generous conduct.

"And what were the threats?" asked Mrs. Pontifex.

"There hardly appeared to be any threats," I replied. "Herr Räumler made some allusion to papers in the safe, but as he left papers and all with Mr. Tyrrell, I presume they were unimportant, and referred to private transactions."

"I must say, Clara," said Mrs. Pontifex, "that George's behaviour was very good throughout. I am much pleased. In a moment of weakness, no doubt, he listened to the proposals of this foreigner, who is, I admit, a clever and plausible person. Both George and Celia said quite the right thing in the right way, and I am

greatly pleased. You say the man is gone, Ladislas?"

"Yes; he is going to leave the town, and return to the Continent."

"So much the better. He and his church on Sunday mornings, where he hoped to catch Celia! Fudge! I can forgive most things, Clara,"—she did not look as if there was much that she would forgive, but I am giving her own words—"hypocrisy I cannot forgive. I watched him once actually pretending to listen to one of John Pontifex's best sermons—that on Capernaum, which has, you remember, an application to the present condition of thoughtless mirth which has possessed our young people."

It was pleasant to feel that peace was restored between the two houses of Pontifex and Tyrrell. More pleasant still to feel that a great danger had been averted.

Let me hasten the story of the day big with fate. I imagine, if you please, the new-born pride of Leonard as he introduced Celia to "My aunt, Miss Rutherford." Imagine the satisfaction and joy of that excellent lady on being quite certain that Moses—Moses with the spotty face and the passion for beer—was exchanged for this gallant and chivalrous young fellow—"he has got his father's graces," she whispered to me, "and his mother's sweetness."—Pass over the little tender scene where Miss Rutherford thanked the Captain solemnly for his care and bounty to "her boy"—we cannot describe everything; there are some things which are better left unrecorded. It was a time of great joy. We had an early dinner at home—the Captain, as usual on great occasions, produced champagne. There were Celia and Miss Rutherford, both shy and a little frightened of each other, but hopeful that each would turn out as delightful as she looked. There was Leonard, of course, and the Captain, and myself. And be sure that Mrs. Jeram had not been forgotten, before dinner—else why those fearful eyes with which Miss Rutherford left our old housekeeper, and which spoke of talk over the poor creature who staggered three-and-twenty years before into Mrs. Jeram's arms, to die after giving birth to a man child? There was nothing noisy and mirthful in our party—nothing to illustrate Aunt Jane's "present condition of thoughtless mirth among the young people." And but for the disquiet of the morning deputation, I should have been perfectly happy—as happy as Leonard and Celia. And Leonard's face was like the sun in June for beaminess and warmth.

We fell to talking over old times. The Captain discoursed on the boys and their admirable qualities; Leonard told stories of Mrs. Jeram's *menage* and the fights he used to have with Moses; Miss Rutherford listened with delight. She was in a new atmosphere—this retired and secluded lady who knew nothing of the world—the atmosphere of the fighting world; the old Captain who had fought; the young officer who had fought; I even belonged to a fighting stock. And it was half-past two when Celia took the elder lady away to introduce her to her mother—and we began to clear the decks for our deputation.

"You will let me be present," said the Captain. "I have something to say to them. Rebellion, indeed! What sort of a rebellion is that: got up by half-a-dozen exiles in foreign lands? No, my boy, I don't deny the right of the Poles to rebel—but you shall not throw away your life till the whole nation rises. Then, if you like, you may go."

## CHAPTER XLIV.

Five minutes for rest and reflection. What would this deputation of Poles say to me, and what was I to say to them? How to receive them? Was I to feign an ardour I did not possess; to put on the zeal of passionate Wassielewski, and clamour for the revenge which my English training made me hold to be impotent and barbaric; to throw in my lot with a knot of hopeless enthusiasts, and for the gratitude and respect I bore to one man to throw away my life in a mad enterprise?

Or—the other line—was I to stand before them and say, like another Edgar Atheling—"I have no thought or care about the Fatherland; I am a Pole in name only; I will not fight myself, nor lend my name, nor join your ranks! Go your own way. Let the dead past be buried, and for the future the cause of Polish freedom shall have no aid from me." Or—lastly—could I say, "I am an Englishman, and not a Pole; I have an Englishman's sympathy with an oppressed people; but I see no sense in obscure risings, and I hate conspiracies?"

And yet that was the truth. Wassielewski, a son of the soil, preserved all the prejudices and most of the ignorance of his country. His ideas of revenge were barbaric, but he did not know that; to shoot down Russians because twenty years before Russians had been made to commit unheard-of atrocities—as if we should suddenly resolve on murdering Hindoos in memory of Cawnpore—was in his mind a great, a noble, a patriotic act—more—an act which was pleasing in the eyes of his dead mistress, my mother, the Lady Claudia.

It is true that there were moments when the old conspirator's projects and plots had appeared to me admirable and worthy of emulation; when the thought of my father's cruel march through winter snows and summer heats on his weary way to be slowly done to death among the commonest and vilest criminals

maddened me; or when I look at the wooden cross he carved in the gloom of the Siberian mine for me, his little child, whom he was never to see again; or when I pictured him as he had been seen a year or two before he died, white-haired at thirty, aged and bent; or when I remembered—the anguish of that memory has never left me—the convey of carts filled with children dragged from their mothers, the despairing women who ran behind crying, shrieking, for their little ones—my own poor mother among them. Then, indeed, as now, I should be less than human did not the blood boil in my veins; did not the pulses quicken within me, did not the passionate desire for some kind of wild justice swell up in my heart. Revenge is unsatisfiable—had one killed with the vigour of a Nero, the spilling of blood could never quench the righteous wrath, or deaden the pangs of sorrow and pain which would rise again in thinking of that great suffering, that most terrible crime. My mother, without doubt, has long since, in the land where tears are wiped away, forgiven. I cannot forgive, for her sake. Perhaps I understand how sins against oneself may be forgiven, but not sins against those we love. Lastly, against this conflict of opposing forces I had to place the calm good sense of the man whom most I had to consider—the Captain; the entreaties of the girl whom most I had to love; the firm decision of Leonard, that, happen what might, I should not be dragged into the plot.

I hope I have not tried to depict myself in any false colours. I was not a hero; in calm moments I saw the madness of the projected insurrection. I knew that such revenge as the old conspirator proposed was wild and useless; and yet, in his presence, by the enthusiasm of his ardour I was carried away, so to speak, out of myself, and was ready to dare and to do. But since Leonard's arrival this infection of enthusiasm had been checked. By his help I saw things in their true light.

"You, Laddy?" said Leonard, laughing. "You to go out a rebelling, with your face and your eyes! Go tell the Russians who and what you are; announce your intention of raising the standard of insurrection; they will laugh at you; they will take you in and make much of you, give you a piano, and refuse to let you come home again because you play so well. We are no longer in the days of the terrible Nicholas. Alexander has begun a new era for Russia, which Wassielewski and his friends cannot understand."

"I am too obscure," I said, bitterly, "even to do any mischief."

"Any man," said the Captain, "can do mischief. I was aboard a frigate once that was set on fire by a powder-monkey. If you want to do mischief, Laddy, in Poland or anywhere else, you can do it."

I have mentioned once before little Dr. Roy, the neatest and most dapper of tiny men. He, too, must needs join in the general cry.

"I hear," he said, one day meeting me in the street, "I hear a whisper that the Poles are stirring, and they want to make use of you and your name."

I made no answer.

"Don't," he said impressively. "Believe a man that once risked his neck in rebellion, that it is a most miserable line to take up. It was in Canada—I dare say you have heard something about it. We had grievances; we made a clamour about them; the Government would not give in; so we rose, and we did a little fighting. It wasn't very much, but it brought out pretty clearly all the miseries of the revolt. We were put down. Everything that we rebelled to gain was granted by the British Government; everything, properly represented, would have been granted without rebellion. We had our revolt, our fighting, our loss of life; our destruction of property; our jealousies and personal squabbles; our treacheries and our treasons; our trials and our escapes—just all for nothing. No one got any good out of it at all, not even the half-dozen who went across to the States to gas about their bravery. Even the grandeur of being a rebel—" I thought of Herr Räumler's remarks on the rebel's enjoyment of being shot—"does not compensate for the trouble. And then to find out that you have no real grievances, after all. My own reward for the Canada rising was that I lost a capital practice in a delightful Canadian town; that I was very nearly caught; that if they had caught me I should have been hanged; and that I am here on sufferance, because—which I am not afraid of—they might arrest and hang me to-morrow on the old account. For heaven's sake, Pulaski, keep out of rebellions. They won't give you back your father's lands."

All in the same tale; Herr Räumler's sneers and contempt were on the same side as Celia's prayers. Little Dr. Roy with his experiences was on the same side as the Captain. And, against all these, I had to consider especially poor old Wassielewski. The old man, crazed with inextinguishable rage, looked on me as an instrument, ready to his hand, given him by Providence. For my part, I had to regard him as my saviour, the protector of my infancy, the faithful friend of my father, the devoted servant of my mother. Could I inflict upon him the cruel pain, the bitter humiliation, of seeing a Pulaski refuse to fight for Poland? Every Pole, he used to say, owed his life absolutely to his country. When he cannot fight to defend his rights, he ought to die in order that his people may not forget them.

I venture on a suggestion to rulers and despots. There are two or three ways of treating