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BY CELIA'S ARBOUR.

A NOVEL.

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"THE GOLDEN BUTTERFLY," &c.

CHAPTER X. WAR.

Besides the long lines of soldiers embarking every week in the huge transports, there was the preparation and the despatch of the great and splendid Black Sea and Baltic Fleets.

It is something to have lived in a time when such ships were to be seen. It is a memory which binds one to the past to think of that day, in March, 1854, when the Baltic Fleet set sail amid the prayers of the nation. Never was so gallant a fleet sent forth from any shore, never were shores more crowded with those who came to criticise and stayed to cheer. We had already—Cis and I among the number—cheered old Charley Napier when he walked down the pier to embark on his ship, pounding the timbers with his sturdy little legs as if they had been so many Russians. To-day he was on board the *Duke of Wellington*, the biggest ship in the world, a great floating fortress mounting one hundred and thirty-one guns, built to sail when wind was fair, with a crew of a thousand men, and an admiral who meant fighting. No one who ever saw that day will forget the departure of the fleet. It was a fresh and breezy day in March, the sun came out in occasional gleams, or shot long arrows of light athwart the clouds. The sea was dark with multitudes of boats, yachts, steamers, and craft of all kinds; the shore was black with the thousands who sat there watching for the signal to be given. And riding at anchor lay the ships on whom the fortunes of England depended. There was the *St. Jean d'Acre* of one hundred guns, the *Royal George* of one hundred and twenty—she floated over the place where lay the bones of her namesake, the flagship of Admiral Kempenfeldt, when he went down with "twice four hundred men," and almost as many women; the *Princess Royal* of ninety-one guns; the *Impérieuse* and the *Arrogant*—I was launched on board the *Arrogant*, and remembered her well—there were, all told, in that Baltic Fleet, though all were not gathered together, between fifty and sixty ships. Presently we saw the Queen's steamer, the *Fairy*—the pretty little yacht, with her three sloping masts—threading her graceful way swiftly in and out of the ships, and the jack tars manned the yardarm, and cheered till the shore took it up with echoes and the counter-cheering of the spectators. When the old men with Nehemiah saw the diminished glories of the Second Temple they lifted up their voices and wept. When the old men on our shore saw the magnified glories of the Victorian fleet, they lifted up their voices and wept, thinking of the days that were no more, the breezy battles with a foe who dared to fight, the long chase of a flying enemy, the cutting out, the harvest of a score of prizes. This time, with better ships, better crews, we were going on a fool's quest, because all the good we did was to keep the Russians within their port. Well, our trade was safe. That was a great thing. The ships would go up and down the broad ocean without fear of the Russians, because these were all skulking behind Cronstadt towers. I am not a Muscovite, but a Pole, yet I was ashamed for the Russian sailors, who were not allowed to strike a blow for their country, while the soldiers were dying in thousands, dogged, silent, long-suffering, in obedience to the Czar, whom they ignorantly worship.

They sailed, the Queen leading the way. Out flew the white canvas, fluttering for a moment in the windy sunshine, and then, with set purpose, belling full before the breeze, and marshalling each brave ship to her place in the grand procession.

The *Arrogant* passed out of sight, and we all went home. The Captain was moved to the extent of a double ration that night; also, he sang a song. And at prayers, he invented a new petition of his own for the honour and safety of the Fleet. There were occasions, he said, when if a man did not feel religious he didn't deserve to be kept on the ship's books any longer. And he told us—Cis was staying with us that day—for a thousandth time the story of Navarino.

When the fleets were gone, and the soldiers nearly all sent off, we began to look for news. For a long time there came little. Charley Napier told his men to sharpen their outlasses; that was just what the old fellow would do, because if he got a chance of fighting, he meant fighting. But he did not get that chance. Within the fortress of Cronstadt, in ignoble safety, lay the Russian fleet, afraid to come out. There was a little bombardment of Sweaborg, Helsingfors, and Bomarsund; we made as much as we could of it at the time, but it was not like the fighting which we old men remembered. And only a few prizes, here and there. One was brought in, I remember, by the *Argus*, at sight of which we all turned out to cheer. The Captain sorrowfully said that in the good old days when he entered the Navy, about the year 1805, he might have been in command of a dozen such prizes every year.

That summer of 1854 was a long and dreary time. We were waiting for something to be done, and nothing was done. Good Heavens! Were our generals stupid, or incapable, or were

they dreaming away the time? Who does not remember the cholera at Varna, after the long and unnecessary delay, the sickness of the troops before a blow had been struck, and at last the embarkation for the Crimea? So great and terrible was the spectre of Russian greatness that even the three great Powers of France, Turkey, and England hesitated before attacking this monstrous Frankenstein in his den. They went at last, greatly daring, and their reward was—Alma.

And then followed the splendid months of barren victory—Inkermann, the soldier's battle, the foolish braggadocio of the Light Cavalry charge, followed by the cruel winter and the unmerited sufferings of the troops, for which a dozen commissariat officers ought to have been shot.

About this time I saw my compatriots, the Russians, for the first time. Some prisoners were brought to us; they wore flat caps and long coats, they had good-natured faces, not at all foolish; they had wide noses, like Tartars, and they made themselves quite happy and comfortable with us, carving all sorts of toys, and showing a power of laughter and humour quite incompatible with the devilry which we had learned to attach to the Muscovite character. They were only devils, I suppose, by order of the Czar, and in the ranks. Outside the ranks as peaceable, docile, and quiet a set of fellows as ever wanted to grow an honest crop in peace.

But how we received the news in those days! With cheers, with illuminations, with feasting, with receptions of captains, generals, and admirals. Still the exodus of our *juventus* went on. The *juvenes* were younger, smaller, and more rustic in appearance. They all, however, had the same gallant bearing, these brave country lads, fresh from the plough and the stable, redolent of Mother Earth. A few weeks before, and they were leaning against posts in the village street, feeding pigs, driving calves, striding with a side-ward lurch after cows, sitting almost mute on a bench in the village alehouse. Now they were well set up, drilled, inspired with warlike ardour, filled with new ideas of duty, responsibility, and a career, ready to do—and to die. Let us confess that the readiness to die was qualified by that belief which every soldier has, that he, if no one else, will be the one person to escape. If it were not for that saving clause I fear that even in the times of greatest danger to the country service in the ranks would not be popular. Men did not volunteer for those charming fights in the arena before Nero, when all had to die on the ground. Quite the contrary; they disliked that kind of fight, and I have often thought how greatly the vivacity and ardour of the combat would have been increased if the combatants had been told beforehand that one—say the bravest—would have his life spared, with a pension of a shilling a day ever afterwards. *Vos morturi salutate* might have been said by those fresh-cheeked young English lads on their way to club muskets at Inkermann, and to fall in the storming of the Redan.

And after a while they began to send the wounded home.

To receive them, a hospital was built in one of the meadows under the Ramparts, and a portion of the wall was raised off for the convalescents to walk upon. This made Celia's Arbour still more quiet and secluded.

In 1856, the sick and wounded were brought home by every ship that arrived from the East, and week by week, sometimes daily, might be seen filing up the long and narrow street a long and dismal procession. It consisted of sailors carrying stretchers, four to every stretcher. There was no band now, nor would be any more for most of the poor men upon the stretchers, till the drums and fifes marched before the coffin and played the "Dead March." The townsfolk who had turned out to wave their handkerchiefs when the soldiers went away came out now to greet them back. But what a greeting! and what a return! Some, sitting half upright, waved feeble hands in response to those who lined the way and cheered their return. Their faces were pale and worn with suffering; sometimes a sheet covered the lower limbs, which were mutilated and crushed; some, a little stronger than their comrades, sat up, laughed, and nodded. Some, worn out by the rolling of the ship, the pain of their wounds, and the long sufferings of the campaign, lay back with closed eyes, patient and sad to see, and made no sign. And here and there one was borne along ghastly, the pallor of death upon his cheeks, life done for him; not even vitality enough left to think about the future world; his eyes half open, with a fixed glare which observed nothing. This, with the row of tombs in the Crimea and at Scutari, was the end of all that pride and pomp of war. What was it Tennyson said—

The long, long canker of Peace is over and done.

We were to wake to nobler aims, leave the sordid and base, give up cheating and strike home, were it with the cheating yard measure.

Well. The war came, ran its course, and ended. What nobler ends followed? How much was abolished of the old cheating, the sordid

aims, and the general baseness of a world at peace? How much less wicked and selfish were we, when all the fighting was finished, and the soldiers came back to us?

And after all, we return to Celia's question, "What had they done to each other, the Russians and the English that they should stand face to face and fight?"

"Take me away, Laddy," Celia said one day, after seeing one of the gloomy processions of the wounded partly file past. "Take me away. I cannot bear to see any more. Oh! the poor soldiers—the poor soldiers—What punishment can be great enough for the men who have brought all this misery upon the earth?"

What, indeed? But Nicholas was dead. General Fœvrier killed him. Perhaps, after all, he was not the guiltiest. But he gave the word. It is to be hoped, for their own sakes, that autocrats do not know what war means, else surely the word never would be given, even to save the throne, and every nation would manage its own affairs in quietness.

And yet England had to fight. It seems most true that the war could not be avoided. All that blood, all that suffering, the moans of so many thousands of wounded, the tears of so many thousands of women and children, the awakening of so many evil passions, the letting loose of so many devils, must fall upon the head of Russia. First to excite revolt among the Christian subjects of the Turk; then to make difficulties for the Turks in putting down the miserable victims of the Russian plot; then to call on Europe to mark how Turkey treated her subjects; then to proclaim herself the protector of Christians; this was Russia's game in 1828, in 1853, and, lastly, in 1876. And the glory of the poor soldiers! They died for their country, and have such glory as belongs to one of a nameless fifty thousand fallen on the field.

The fight was just and the victory righteous. We pay the penalty now of not having carried the war to its legitimate end. We should have restored Poland, driven Russia back to the Caucasus and the Caspian, given Finland again to Sweden, and taken away her southern ports. All this we could have done; it was possible to England and France, twenty years ago. Will the chance ever come again?

Through the whole of the war there was no man in the town who took a keener interest in it, who was oftener in the streets, who hung more about the harbour, or talked more with soldiers and sailors, than Herr Raumer.

The war, in my case, did good to our own people at the Dockyard town. There had never been such times since the old long war, when a man who had a shop near the Hard had but to open it and stand all day taking the sailors' money as fast as they poured it out over the counter. Every ship that came home brought her sailors to be paid off, the money to be all spent in the town; every ship that sailed for the East carried away stores for the soldiers, chiefly bought in the town. Those who were in the way of all this money-making made fortunes out of it, and retired to suburban villas, with gardens, for the rest of their lives. I do not think that the green coffee berries, the putrid preserved meat, the mouldy compressed hay, or the biscuits that walked about animated by a multitudinous hive of lively creatures, were supplied by any of our people. We were too patriotic; we had friends on board the ships if not in the regiments—could we send them out rotten provisions or brown paper boots? Then there was the revelry. Out of all the millions spent in the Crimean War, think how many went in the drink-shops and the dancing dens. The fiddle of old Wassielewski, I know, was in constant request; and often and often I heard the well-known sound—I knew his style, which was distinct from that of any other of the sailors' musicians—from behind the red curtains of a sailors' public-house, behind which Jack and Jill were dancing, drinking, and singing. The China War, by the way, was long since played out, and the picture had given way to another in which Russians were playing an ignominious but dramatic part. A side picture represented French sailors and soldiers, very tight of waist, moustachioed, and black of hair, fraternising merrily with our own men, with drink, hand-shaking, and song, they were celebrating the *entente cordiale*. Listen! It is the sailors' hornpipe; within is one who, grave of face and agile of foot, treads that mazy measure alone, while around are grouped the crowd of sympathetic rivals, who drink, applaud, and presently emulate. The dancing is facing old Wassielewski, who sits with outstretched left leg, his deep-set eyes fixed on the opposite wall, his thoughts far away in the dreadful past or the revengeful future, while the fingers, obedient to his will, play the tune that he orders, but does not listen to. It is, I know, because I do not look in, but feel all this, a low room, and it is redolent of a thousand compound smells, ancient, fish-like, capable of knocking a stranger down and stunning him with a single blow. The windows have never been open for twenty or thirty years; of course, once in a way, a pane was broken, and there were occasions when some young mariner, ashore after three years' cruise, was fain, out of the plethora of his joy, to find relief in smashing them all. But the smell of that room was venerable by age, and respectable by association, though more awful than it is permitted to me to describe. Jack and Jill did not mind it. There was rum in it, plenty of beer, a very large quantity of tobacco, onions, beefsteaks, mutton chops, boiled pork and cabbage, pea soup, more tobacco, more rum, more beer. That smell, my friends, is gone; the public-house is gone,

Jill is almost gone, Jack is an earnest Methodist by religion, and he spends his time ashore at the Sailors' Home.

And there then was the Dockyard with all its extra hands, and the work going on day and night, so that the solemn silence of the darkness was unknown. Victory Row must have lost one of its chief charms. For the whole twenty-four hours, there was the incessant tap-tap of the caulkers, the heavy thud of the steam-hammer, the melodious banging of the rivets, followed by countless echoes from the many-cornered yard, and r-r-r-r of the machinery. No rest at all, except on Sunday. That emergency must be great indeed when the British Government would ask its workmen to give up their Sabbath rest.

As for the sailors, there seemed no diminution in their numbers, or in the number of the ships which crowded the harbour, and was perpetually coming and going with their thunder of salutes. Jack only had two stages: he was either just paid off, and therefore ostentatiously happy with his friends around him, his fiddlers, and his public-house, or he was just embarking again on a newly-commissioned ship, going off for another cruise with empty pockets, coppers terribly hot, and perhaps, if he was Jack in his youth, with the faint and dimly-seen ghost of a possible repentance somewhere lurking about his brain, a spectral umbrapointing heavenward which faded as the shore receded, and vanished about six bells in the morning.

For soldiers, we fell back upon the militia. We have never yet grasped the truth that England may have to defend what she has got; that she is not only the admiration, but also the envy, of all other nations; that Russia would like Constantinople and India; Germany, Austria—good heavens, think of the shame and ignominy of letting an un-English speaking country have Austria; the States, Canada; France, Egypt and Syria; Italy, Cyprus; Greece, Crete, and so on. When these facts have become convictions, when we fairly understand how great is our position in the world; what a tremendous stake we have in it; how much of unselfish humanity depends on the maintenance of English hegemony; then will England arm every man between fifteen and fifty, and make all from twenty to thirty liable to foreign service. Patriotism sleeps, but it may be awakened. If it continues to sleep, farewell to England's greatness. A century of ignoble wealth, a generation or two of commerce diverted, trade ruined, industries forgotten, and the brave old country would become worse than Holland, because the English are more sensitive than the Dutch, and the memories of old glory, combined with present degradation, would madden the people and drive them to—the usual British remedy, drink.

In 1855 we—I do not speak as a Pole—were rather better off in the matter of regiments and recruits than we should be in 1877, were the occasion to arise. In all these years we have learned nothing, taken to heart nothing, done nothing, prepared for nothing. We have no large army, we have no better organization, we have no more intelligent system, we have not made our officers more responsible. Twenty years ago we threw away twenty thousand men—with a light heart sent out twenty thousand men to die because we had no system of control, transport, and commissariat. All these poor lads died of preventable disease. What have we done since to make that impossible again? Nothing. Talk. At the very Autumn Manœuvres, when we have weeks to prepare and a paltry ten thousand men to provide for, we break down. Continental nations see it, and laugh at us. What have we done to make our children learn that they must fight *pro patria*, if occasion arise? Nothing. Board Schools teach the Kings of Israel; the very atmosphere of the country teaches desire of success and the good things which success brings with it; no school teaches, as the Germans teach, that every man is owed to his country. That may come; if it does not come soon, farewell to England's greatness. Again; that the Empire was created and grew great, not by truckling to the pretensions of modern diplomats, but by saying, "Thus far, and no farther." Do this wrong or that, and you will have to fight England. That the most glorious country that the world has ever seen, the finest, the richest, the most splendid, the most religious, the least priest-ridden and king-ridden, was made what it is by its children being willing and able to fight—all these things were not taught in 1855, and are not yet taught in 1877. Good heavens! I am a Pole, and yet more than half an Englishman; how noble are his annals; how profound a gap would be made in the world by the collapse of England; and how little English people seem to understand their greatness. I have been waiting for twenty years to see the fruits of the Crimean War—and, behold, they are dust and ashes in the mouth.

Revenons à nos moutons. Our garrison, then, consisted of a couple of militia regiments. They came to us, raw country lads, like the recruits whom we sent to the East, but, being without the presence of the veterans to control and influence them, they took longer to improve. And yet it is wonderful to notice how an English lad takes to his drill and tackles his gun from the very first, with an intelligence that is almost instinct. He is, to be sure, almost too fond of fighting. There is no other country besides England, except France, where the recruits can be taught to march, to skirmish, and the rest of it, without the aid of Sergeant Stick, so largely employed in the Russian, German, and Austrian services. These young fellows came up to barracks, with their country lurch upon them, their good-natured country grin, and their insatiable