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BY CELIA'S ARBOUR.

A NOVEL.

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"THE GOLDEN BUTTERFLY," &c.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE PONTIFEX COLLECTION.

In the days that followed things went on externally as if nothing had happened. Celia's suitor walked with her in the town, was seen with her in public places, appeared in church morning and evening—the second function must have exercised his soul heavily—and said no word. Mr. Tyrrell, deceived by this appearance of peace, resumed his wonted aspect, and was self-reliant, and sometimes as blustering as ever. Celia alone seemed to remember the subject. For some days she tried to read and talk as usual, but her cheek was paler, and her manner *distracte*. Yet I could say nothing. The wound was too fresh, the anxiety was still there, it was one of those blows which, though their worst effects may be averted, leave scars behind which cannot be eradicated. The scar in Celia's soul was that for the first time in her life a suspicion had been forced upon her that her father was not—had not been—Let us not put it into words.

To speak of such a suspicion would have been an agony too bitter for her, and even too bitter for me. Yet I knew, by the manner of the man, by the words of the German, that he was, in some way, for some conduct unknown, of which he was now ashamed, under this man's power. I could not tell Celia what I knew. How was she to tell me the dreadful suspicion that rose like a spectre in the night unbidden, awful? We were only more silent, we sat together without speaking; sometimes I caught her eye resting for a moment on her father with a pained wonder, sometimes she would break off the music, and say with a sigh that she could play no more.

One afternoon, three or four days after the first opening of the business, I found her in the library, a small room on the first floor dignified by that title, where Mr. Tyrrell kept the few books of general literature he owned, and Celia kept all hers. She had gathered on the table all the books which we were so fond of reading together—chiefly the poets—and was taking them up one after the other, turning over their pages with loving, regretful looks.

She greeted me with her sweet smile. "I am thinking, Laddy, what to do with these books if—I have to say what Papa wants me to say."

"Do with them, Cis?"

"Yes," she replied, "it would be foolish to keep things which are not very ornamental and would no longer be useful."

"Our poor poets are a good deal knocked about," I said, taking up the volumes in hope of diverting her thoughts; "I always told you that Keats wasn't made for laying in the grass," and indeed that poor bard showed signs of many dews upon his scarlet cloth bound back.

"He is best for reading on the grass, Laddy. Think of the many hours of joy we have had with Hyperion under the elms. And now, I suppose, we shall never have any more. Life is very short, for some of us."

"But—Cis—why no more hours of pleasure and poetry?"

"I do not know when that man may desire an answer. And I know that if he claims it at once—to-morrow—next day—what answer I am to give. I watch my father, Laddy, and I read the answer in his face. Whatever happens, I must do what is best for him."

"Put off the answer, Cis, till Leonard comes home."

"If we can," she sighed—if we can. Promise me one thing, Laddy—promise me faithfully. If I have—if I must consent—never let Leonard know the reason: never let any one know; let all the world think that I have accepted—him—because I loved him. As if any woman could ever love him!"

Then he had not deceived her with his smooth and plausible manner.

"I promise you so much at least," I said. "No one shall know, poor Cis, the reason. It shall be a secret between us. But you have not said 'Yes' to him yet."

"I may very soon have to say it, Laddy. I shall give you all this poetry. We have read it together so much that I should always think of you if I ever try and read it alone. And it would make me too wretched. I shall have nothing more to do with the noble thoughts and Divine longings of these great men: they will all be dead in my bosom; I shall try to forget that they ever existed. Herr Räumer—my husband," she shuddered—"would not understand them. I shall learn to disbelieve everything; I shall find a base motive in every action. I shall cease to hope: I shall lose my faith and my charity."

"Celia—my poor Celia—do not talk like that."

"Here is Keats." She opened him at random, turned over the leaves, and read aloud—

Ah! would 'twere so with many
A gentle girl and boy!
But were there ever any
Wretched not at passéd joy!

"Passéd joy. We shall not be able to go out together, you and I, Laddy, any more, nor to

read under the elms, nor to look out over the ramparts up the Harbour at high tide, and you will leave off giving me music lessons—and when Leonard comes home he will not be my Leonard any more. Only let him never know, dear Laddy."

"He shall never know, Cis. But the word is not spoken yet, and I think it never will be."

She shook her head.

"There is our Wordsworth. Of course he must be given up too. When the whole life is of the earth, earthly, what room could there be there for Wordsworth! Why," she looked among the sonnets, "this must have been written especially for us. Listen—

O Friend! I know not which way I must look
For comfort, being, as I am, oppress'd
To think that now our life is only dress'd
For show

The homely beauty of the good old cause
Is gone: our peace, our fearful innocence
And pure religion breathing household laws.

Fancy the household laws of Herr Räumer," she added, bitterly.

She was in sad and despairing mood that morning.

I took the book from her hand—what great things there are in Wordsworth, and what rubbish!—and found another passage.

Those first affections
Those shadowy recollections,
Which be they what they may
Are yet the fountain light of all our day
Are yet the masterlight of all our seeing,
Uphold us—cherish—have power to make
Our noisy years seem moments in the being
Of the eternal silence: truths that wake
To perish never:

Which neither listlessness nor mad endeavour,
Nor man nor boy,
Nor that is at enmity with joy,
Can utterly abolish or destroy!

"Do you think, you silly Celia, if things came to the very worst—if you were—let me say it out for once—if you were tied for life to this man, with whom you have no sympathy, that you would forget the beautiful things which you have read and dreamed? They can never be forgotten. Why, they lie all about your heart, the great thoughts of God and Heaven, what this beautiful earth might be and what you yourself would wish to be; they are your guardian angels, who stand like Ithuriel to ward off evil dreams and basenesses. They cannot be driven away because you have placed them there, sentinels of your life. If—if he—were ten times as cold, ten times as unworthy of you as he seems, he could not touch your inner life. He could only make your outer life unhappy. And then, Celia, I think—I think—I think that Leonard would kill him."

"If Leonard will care any more about me," she murmured through her tears. "But he will not. I shall be degraded in his eyes. He will come home with happier recollections of brighter scenes and women far better and more beautiful than I can be, even in his memory."

"Celia," I cried hotly, "that is unkind of you. You cannot mean it. Leonard can never forget you. There will be no scenes so happy in his recollection as the scenes of his boyhood; no one whom he will more long to see than little Celia—little no longer now, and—oh! Cis—Cis, how beautiful you are!"

"Laddy, you are the best brother in all the world. But do not flatter me. You know I like to think myself pretty. I am so vain."

"I am not flattering you, my dear. Of course, I think you are the most beautiful girl in all the world. Ah! if I could only draw you and put all your soul into your eyes as a great painter would. If I were Raphael I would make you St. Catharine—no, St. Cecilia—sitting at the organ, looking up as you do sometimes when we read together, or when I play Beethoven, and your soul opens like a flower."

"Laddy—Laddy."

"I would make your lips trembling, and your head a little bent back, so as to show the sweet outlines, and make all the world fall in love with you. . . . Don't cry, my own dear sister. See, Leonard will be home again soon triumphant, bringing joy to all of us. Our brave Leonard—and all will be well. I know all will go well. And this monstrous thing shall not be done."

She put her arms around my neck, and laid her cheek against mine. "Thank God," she said simply, "for my brother."

By this time I had mastered my vain and selfish passion. Celia was my sister, and could never be anything else. As if in the time when companionship is as necessary as light and air, it was not a great thing to have such a companion as Celia! In youth we cling to one another, and find encouragement in confession and confidence. David was young when he loved Jonathan. It is when we grow older that we shrink into ourselves and forget the sweet old friendships.

This little talk finished, Celia became more cheerful, and we presently stole out at the garden gate for fear of being intercepted by the suitor, who was as ubiquitous as a Prussian Uhlan, and went for a ramble along the beach, where a light breeze was crisping the water into

tiny ruffles of wavelets, and driving about the white-sailed yachts like butterflies. The fresh sea air brightened her cheek, and gave elasticity to her limbs. She forgot her anxieties, laughed, sang little snatches, and was as merry as a child again.

"Let us go and call at Aunt Jane's," she cried, when we left the beach, and were striking across the furze-covered common.

To call upon Mrs. Pontifex was never an inspiring thing to do. She had a way of picking out texts to suit your case and hurling them at your head, which sent you away far more despondent about the future than her husband's sermons. There is always this difference between a woman of Aunt Jane's persuasion and a man of the same school; that the woman really believes it all, and the man has by birth, by accident, by mental twist, for reasons of self interest, talked himself into a creed which he does not hold at heart, so far as he has power of self-examination. Mr. Pontifex had lost that power, I believe.

They lived in a villa over-looking the common. Mrs. Pontifex liked the situation principally because it enabled her to watch the "Sabbath breakers," viz.: the people who walked on Sunday afternoon, and the unthinking sinners, who strolled arm in arm upon the breezy common on summer evenings. The villa had formerly possessed a certain beauty of its own, being covered over with creepers, but Mrs. Pontifex removed them all, and it now stood in naked ugliness, square and flat-roofed. There was a garden in front, of rigid and austere appearance, planted with the less showy shrubs, and never allowed to put on the holiday garb of summer flowers. Within, the house was like a place of tombs, so cold, so full of monumental mahogany, so bristling with chairs of little ease.

To our great joy, Mrs. Pontifex was out. Her husband, the servant said, with a little hesitation, was at home.

"Then we will go in," said Celia. "Where is he, Anne?"

"Well, Miss," she said, in apology, "at present master's in the front kitchen."

In fact, there we found the unhappy Mr. Pontifex. He was standing at the table, with a most gloomy expression on his severe features. Before him stood a half-cut, cold boiled leg of mutton. He had a knife in one hand and a piece of bread in another.

"This is all," he said, sorrowfully, "that I shall get to-day. Mrs. Pontifex said that there was to be no dinner. She has gone to a Dorcas meeting—No, thank you, Anne, I cannot eat any more—ahem—any more boiled mutton. The human palate—alas! that we poor mortals should think of such things—does not accept boiled mutton with pleasure. But what is man that he should turn away from his food? A single glass of beer, if you please, Anne."

"Do have another slice of mutton, sir," said the servant, in sympathising tones.

"No, Anne,"—there was an infinite sadness in his voice. "No, I thank you."

"There's some cold roly-poly in the cupboard, sir. Try a bit of that."

She brought it out. It was a piece of the inner portion, that which contains most jam.

Mr. Pontifex shook his head in deep despondency.

"That is not for me, Anne," he said, "I always have to eat the ends."

"Then why do you stand it?" I said. "You are a man, and ought to be master in your own house."

"You think so, Johnny?" he replied. "You are young. You are not, again, like St. Peter—ahem—a married man. Let us go upstairs."

He led us into his study, which was a large room, decorated with an immense quantity of pictures. The house, indeed, was full of pictures, newly arrived, the collection of a brother, lately deceased, of the Rev. John Pontifex. I was not learned in paintings, but I am pretty sure that the collection on the walls were copies as flagrant as anything ever put up at Christy's. But Mr. Pontifex thought differently.

"You have not yet seen my picture gallery, Johnny," he said. "The collection was once the property of my brother, the Rev. Joseph Pontifex, now—alas!—in the bosom of Abraham. He was formerly my coadjutor when I was in sole charge at Dillmington. It was commonly said by the Puseyites at the time that there was a Thief in the Pulpit and a Liar in the Reading Desk. So great—ahem!—was our pulpit power that it drew forth these Fearful denunciations. I rejoice to say that I was the—ahem!—the—Liar."

It was hard to see where the rejoicing ought properly to come in. But no doubt he knew.

"They are beautiful pictures, some of them," said Celia, kindly.

Mr. Pontifex took a walking-stick, and began to go round like a long-necked, very solemn showman at a circus.

"These are 'Nymphs about—ahem—to Bathe.' A masterpiece by Caracci. The laughter of those young persons has probably long since been turned into mourning."

"The Death of Saint Chrysostom," supposed to be by Leonardo Da Vinci. The Puseyites go to Chrysostom as to a father. Well; they may go to the muddy streams, if they please. I go to the pure—the pure fountain, Johnny."

"Pope Leo the Tenth," by one Dosso Dossi, of whom, I confess, I had never heard. I suppose that there are more Popes than any other class of persons now in misery."

He shook his head, as he said this, with a smile of peculiar satisfaction, and went on to the next picture.

"A soldier, by Wouvermans; on a white

horse. Probably the original of this portrait was in his day an extremely profligate person. But he has long since gone to his long—no doubt his very long—account."

"That is 'The Daughter of Herodias Dancing.' I have always considered dancing a most immoral pastime, and in the days of my youth found it so, I regret to say."

"The Mission of Xavier." He was, alas! a Papist, and is now, I believe, what they are pleased to call a saint. In other respects, he was, perhaps, a good man, as goodness shows to the world. That is, a poor gilded exterior, hiding corruption. How different from our good Bishop Heber, the author of that sweet missive—i—o—na—ry poem which we all know by heart, and can never forget."

From Greenland's icy mountains—
From Greenland's icy mountains—
From Greenland's—ahem!—icy—

—but my memory fails me. That is, perhaps, the result of an imperfect meal."

"Sit down, my dear uncle," said Celia. "You must be fatigued. What was Aunt Jane thinking of to have no dinner?"

"Your great-aunt, Celia," said Mr. Pontifex, with a very long sigh, "is a woman of—ve—ry—remarkable Christian graces and virtues. She excels in what I may call the—the—ahem—the very rare art of compelling others to go along with her. To-day we fast, and to-morrow we may be called upon to subdue the natural man in some other, perhaps—at least I hope—in a less trying method."

We both laughed, but Mr. Pontifex shook his head. "Let me point out one or two more pictures of my collection," he said. "There are nearly one thousand altogether, collected by my brother Joseph, who resided in Rome, the very heart of the Papacy—you never knew Joseph, Celia—during the last ten years of his life. That landscape, the trees of which, I confess, appear to me unlike any trees with which I am personally acquainted—is by Salvatore Rosa; that Madonna and Child—whom the Papists ignorantly worship,—is by Sasso Ferrato; that group"—(it was a sprawling mass of intertwined limbs)—"is by Michael Angelo, the celebrated master; the waterfall which you are admiring, Celia, is a Ruysdael, and supposed to be priceless; the pig—alas! that men should waste their talents in delineating such animals—is by Teniers; the cow by Berghem; that—ahem!—that infamous female"—(it was a wood nymph, and a bad copy)—"is a Rubens. The Latin *rubro* or *rubescio* is—unless my memory again fails me—to blush. Rightly is that painter so named. No doubt he has long since—but I refrain."

"Do you think, Celia," I asked on the way home, "that Mr. Pontifex dwells with pleasure in the imagination of the things which are always on his lips?"

CHAPTER XX.

THE RIGHT OF REVOLT.

The Polish Barrack in 1858 had ceased to exist. There were, in fact, very few Poles left in the town to occupy it. A good many were dead. Some went away in 1854 to join the Turks. Some, grown tired of the quasi-garrison life, left it, and entered into civil occupations in the town. Some, but very few, drifted back to Poland and made their peace with the authorities. Some emigrated. Of all the bearded men I knew as a boy scarcely twenty were left, and these were scattered about the town, still in the "enjoyment" of the tenpence a day granted them by the British Government. I seldom met any of them except Wassielewski, who never wearied of his paternal care. The old man still pursued his calling—that of a fiddler to the sailors. The times, however, were changed. Navy agents were things of the past—a subject of vainglory among the Tribes. Sailors' Homes were established; the old curls had given way to another and a manlier fashion of short hair. The British sailor was in course of transformation. He no longer made it a rule to spend all his money as he received it; he was sometimes a teetotaler; he was sometimes religious, with views of his own about election; he sometimes read; and, though he generally drank when drunk was in the way, he was not often picked up blind drunk in the gutter. The Captain said he supposed men could fight as well if they were always sober as if they were sometimes drunk; and that, always provided there were no sea-lawyers aboard, he saw no reason why a British crew should not be all good-character men, though in his day good character often went with malingering. The trade of fiddling, however, was still remunerative, and Wassielewski—Fiddler Ben, as the sailors called him—the steadiest and liveliest fiddler of all, had a large *clientèle*.

At this juncture the staunch old rebel, as I have explained, was in spirits, because he had wind of a new movement. The Poles were to make another effort—he was really five years too early, because the rebellion did not begin till 1863, but that was not his fault; it would be once more the duty of every patriot to rally round the insurrection and strike another blow for Fatherland. Not that he looked for success. No one knew better than this hero of a hundred village fights that the game was hopeless. His policy was one of simple devotion. In every generation an insurrection—perhaps half-a-dozen—was to be got up. Every Pole who was killed fertilised the soil with new memories of cruelty and blood. It was the duty, therefore, of every Pole to get killed if necessary. No Red Irreconcilable ever preached a policy so sanguine