

# Beautiful Cynthia; Victory After Many Defeats.

CHAPTER XX.  
"THE COCKNEY'S PARADISE."  
As a rule, when the Countess of Westlake travelled on the Continent she was accompanied by a courier, who directed and managed the journey and all its troublesome details; but on this occasion she had started so suddenly that there had been no time to engage a courier, and she had perforce to content herself with her own maid and Parsons.

They reached Lucerne at last and went to the principal hotel. The weather happened to be fine, and the Griffin was condescending enough to take a fancy to the place; it seemed to her just the kind of one, quiet, beautiful, and yet not dull, which would suit a young girl moping over an unfortunate love affair.


After all, Cynthia was a healthy young person, and her spirit, now trailing in the dust of disappointed love, would soon pick itself up, and by the time Lord Northam appeared on the scene would be as bright and charming as ever.

But her ladyship did not like the hotel, though it would have been difficult for any reasonable person to have complained of that beautifully situated and admirably managed establishment, at which she received the marked attention and awed respect which she considered due to a personage of her exalted rank.

"I rather like this place, Cynthia," she said, as, on the third morning, she hobbled along the balcony to where Cynthia was leaning, gazing at the brilliantly blue lake below them. She started slightly and turned her face, which was pale and looked curiously nipped, as if she had suddenly grown thinner, and her dark-gray eyes wore an absent and absolutely indifferent expression. "It's pretty, and I should think it was healthy," continued the Griffin condescendingly, as if one of the most glorious views in Europe were being offered her "on approval." "I'm sick of London, and we may as well stay here for a time. I hate travelling, and I detest rushing about from one place to another, like a shop

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girl on a cheap holiday. Yes, we'll remain here. I suppose you have no objection?"

"None whatever," said Cynthia dully. It mattered nothing to her where she went.  
"That's all right, then," remarked her ladyship, in a matter-of-fact way. "But I can't stand this hotel. Too much noise. And the whole place smells of tobacco, bad tobacco. I'm old-fashioned, I dare say, and I'm devoutly thankful that I am; but I can't stand living in herds and flocks, especially such herds and flocks as these," she added, nodding her old head contemptuously at some respectable people in the garden below. "I noticed some quite nice houses—chalets, as they call them, I suppose—on our drive yesterday; some were to let furnished, and I shall take one and send for some of the servants. We may as well be comfortable while we are here."

When the Griffin wanted anything she wanted it at once, and generally got it. For money is a magic wand and in less than a week they were settled in the largest and best-appointed of the chalets, which was sufficiently removed from the haunts of objectionable tourists, and where, surrounded by her servants, her ladyship found it possible to live in her accustomed way. Cynthia had a charming room with a large window opening onto the balcony, which ran along the front of the house, and afforded a view of the lake and Pilatus frowning above it. Next to Cynthia's rooms was a smaller one fitted up as a sitting room; it was furnished with a writing desk, of the roll-top kind, at which Lady Westlake wrote her letters, and in which she kept the dispatch box which always accompanied her wherever she went.

Beyond this small room were her ladyship's bed and dressing rooms; on the other side of Cynthia's, round the corner, so to speak, was Parsons', with a door between the two rooms, so that Parsons could come to her young mistress whenever Cynthia wanted her.  
Through that door Parsons often heard her mistress pacing up and down in the still watches of the night, causing the devoted maid much grief, for Parsons was one of those girls who suffer, and rejoice, with those they love, and she loved Cynthia very devotedly.

The days passed uneventfully; Cynthia spent most of her time in her room or on the balcony; she accompanied her aunt in her daily drives and appeared at every meal, and she did not flaunt the willow, but the salubrity of Lucerne, on which the Griffin had descended with reason, did not appear to effect any improvement on Cynthia's health or spirits. She was not lugubrious, she did not sigh frequently, and she certainly did not weep; but she was curiously still and quiet.

To tell the truth, she was in a kind of coma; not even yet had she fully realized her great loss.  
Sometimes she went out for a walk by herself, wandered by the side of the lake or explored the quaint, old-world town; but she moved like a person engrossed, absorbed in some dominant emotion, and it is to be feared that Lucerne spread its varied beauties before her in vain.

One morning she was starting on one of these walks, and, as usual, went in search of Lady Westlake; she found the Griffin in the sitting room; she was seated at the desk with the dispatch box open at her elbow and something that looked like a legal document before her.

She held a copy of the Times in her hand, and was reading it, and, as Cynthia entered, the Griffin made a curious movement as if to conceal both the document on the desk and the newspaper.

The latter contained an account of Anson Frayne's death, and a hint,



more than a hint, of the lamentable state of his affairs.  
She looked up as Cynthia entered and stood in the doorway, and a flush struggled to show itself through the layers of paint and powder, as she crushed the newspaper in her hand and thrust it into an empty pigeon-hole of the desk.  
"I'm going for a walk, Aunt Gwen," said Cynthia, in the almost expressionless monotone which had now become habitual to her.

"Very well, my dear," said the Griffin. "If you are going into the town you might get me some ribbon or my hat." Since her arrival at Lucerne her ladyship had worn a huge hat of the mushroom description, which had excited the amazement of the inhabitants. "I'll give you the pattern."  
She rose and took a step or two, but came back and locked up the document in her dispatch box, and, taking up the Times, carried it away with her.

With the pattern in her glove, Cynthia went down to the town. She spoke French fluently, was able to get the ribbon, and then strolled along the walk which runs beside the Reuss, the river which runs out of the lake, and dully wondering why her former should always be green whatever the color of the latter may be, when she saw a young man approaching her.

"There was something familiar about its figure which struck her, and, as she came nearer, she saw that it was Percy Standish.

It could not be said that she was glad to see him, for there was no one on earth, excepting her father, whose presence could bring gladness to her; but she remembered Percy's kindness to her and Darrel, how he had endeavored to help them, and she moved toward him with a shadow of a smile.

Percy approached her with a responsive smile and an expression of surprise.

"Why, Cynthia!" he exclaimed, in well-modulated accents. "This is a surprise! I knew you were in Switzerland with Aunt Gwen, but I had no idea you were here! I hope you are well?" he added, rather gravely and with a touch of anxiety, for the color had faded from Cynthia's face by this time, and it looked worn and drawn.

"I am quite well, Percy," she said. "What brings you here?"

"The bestliest train I have ever travelled by," he replied, with a semi-humorous smile. "I had a month's holiday—I've been in for the Bar, you know—and I thought I would like to do Switzerland. So, you behold me. How is Aunt Gwen? Are you staying here?"

"We have taken a chalet on the hill," said Cynthia. "Did you not know that?"

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"How should I?" he responded innocently.  
"You must come up at once," said Cynthia. "Aunt Gwen will be glad to see you."  
"I will go into the hotel," said Percy hesitatingly.

"Oh, but you must not," said Cynthia. "We have a spare room, too, at the chalet. I am sure there will be room for you."  
They went to the chalet. The Griffin was seated on a bench on the lawn, and she opened her black, keen eyes as she saw Cynthia's companion.

"Oh, it's you, Percy, is it?" she said, not ungraciously, for Percy, whom she read as easily as she would a book, amused her—for a time. "I thought you wouldn't be long before you found us out. Well, you may as well stay, as you are here," she remarked, as Percy explained how he had come to Lucerne by chance. "You can keep Cynthia company and amuse her. We are living here almost innocently. What is the news from London?"

Percy retailed the latest news of the class to which they belonged, which, all important to itself, was really of little consequence to the world at large.

"And how is Lord Northam?" inquired the Griffin. "Have you seen him lately?"

"I met him at a dinner party two nights before I started," replied Percy. "He is quite well; just as usual. Lady Alicia was with him, and was most charming. Lord Northam is very busy. They are making some alterations at the camp. And he sticks to Aldershot."

The Griffin grunted. "Ridiculous!" she said.

"What on earth is Lord Northam doing in a marching regiment? I should think he would find it much more amusing to—travel and see things. If anything happened to his father he would have to leave the army. And the duke is an old man. Yes, you can stay here—if Cynthia can put up with you," she added gruffly.

Percy murmured his thanks, and became a guest at the chalet. He was a charming guest; it seemed as if he knew by instinct when to present and when to efface himself. He accompanied the Griffin on her drives; he sometimes went with Cynthia on her walks; not always, for frequently Cynthia liked to be alone.

There were times when she longed for solitude, to be free to think of Darrel, to dwell upon her misery which no time, no change of scene, could alleviate. Percy seemed to understand, and he never intruded upon her.

(To be continued.)

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