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BY CELIA'S ARBOUR.

A NOVEL.

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"THE GOLDEN BUTTERFLY," &c.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE QUEEN'S BASTION.

Two boys and a girl, standing together in the north-west corner of the Queen's Bastion on the old town wall.

Leonard, the elder boy, leans on an old-fashioned 32-pounder which points through an embrasure, narrow at the mouth and wide at the end, straight up the harbour.

Should any enemy attempt to cross the lagoon of mud which forms the upper harbour at low tide, that enemy would, as Leonard often explain, be "raked by the gun." Leonard is a lad between seventeen and eighteen, tall, and well-grown. As yet his figure is too slight, but that will fill out; his shoulders are broad enough for the strength a year or two more will give him; he has short brown hair of quite a common colour, but lustrous, and with a natural curl in it; his eyes are hazel, and they are steadfast; when he fought battles at school those eyes looked like winning; his chin is strong and square; his lips are firm. Only to look upon him as he passed you would say that you had seen a strong man in his youth. People turned their heads after he had gone by to have another look at such a handsome boy.

He leans his back now against the gun, his hands resting lightly upon the carriage, on either side as if to be ready for immediate action; his straw hat lies on the grass beside him. And he is looking in the face of the girl.

She is a mere child of thirteen or fourteen, standing before him and gazing into his face with sad and solemn eyes. She, too, is bare-headed, carrying her summer hat by the ribbons. I suppose no girl of fourteen, when girls are bony, angular, and big-footed, can properly be described as beautiful, but Celia was always beautiful to me. Her face remains the same to me through the changes of many years; always lovely, always sweet and winsome. Her eyes were light blue and yet not shallow; she had a pair of mischievous little lips which were generally but not to-night, laughing; her hair hung over her shoulders in the long and unfettered tresses which so well become young maidens; and in her cheek was the prettiest little dimple ever seen. But now she looked sad, and tears were gathered in her eyes.

As for me, I was lying on the parapet of the wall, looking at the other two. Perhaps it will save trouble if I state at once who I was, and what to look upon. In the year 1853, I was sixteen years of age, about two years older than Celia, nearly two years younger than Leonard. I believe I had already arrived at my present tall stature, which is exactly five feet one inch. I am a hunchback. An accident in infancy rounded my shoulders and arched my back, giving me a projection which causes my coats to hang loosely where other men's fit tight, forcing my neck forward so that my head bends back where other people's heads are held straight upon their necks. It was an unfortunate accident, because I should, but for it, have grown into a strong man; my limbs are stout and my arms are muscular. It cost me nothing as a boy to climb up ropes and posts, to clamber hand over hand along a rail, to get up into trees, to do anything where I could get hold for a single hand, or for a single foot. I was not, through my unlucky back, the distortion of my neck, and the length of my arms, comely to look upon. All the years of my childhood and some a good deal later were spent in the miserable effort to bring home to myself the plain fact that I was *disgraced*. The comeliness of youth and manhood could be no more mine than my father's broad lands. For besides being a hunchback, I was an exile, a Pole, the son of a Polish rebel, and therefore penniless. My name is Ladislav Pulaski.

We were standing, as I said, in the north-west corner of the Queen's Bastion, the spot where the grass was longest and greenest, the wild convolvulus most abundant, and where the noblest of the great elms which stood upon the ramparts—"to catch the enemy's shells" said Leonard—threw out a gracious arm laden with leafy foliage to give a shade. We called the place Celia's Arbour.

If you looked out over the parapet, you saw before you the whole of the most magnificent harbour in the world, and if you looked through the embrasure of the wall you had a splendid framed picture—water for foreground, old ruined castle in middle distance, blue hill beyond and above blue sky.

We were all three silent, because it was Leonard's last evening with us. He was going away, our companion and brother, and we were there to bid him God speed.

It was after eight; suddenly the sun, which a moment before was a great disc of burnished gold, sank below the thin line of land between sky and sea. Then the evening gun from the Duke of York's Bastion proclaimed the death of another day with a loud report which made the branches in the trees above us to shake and tremble. And from the barracks in the town; from the Harbour Admiral's flagship; from the Port Admiral's flagship; from the flagship of the Admiral in command of the Mediterranean

Fleet, then in harbour; from the tower of the old church, there came such a firing of muskets, such a beating of drums, playing of fifes, ringing of bells, and sounding of trumpets, that you would have thought the sun was setting once for all, and receiving his farewell salute from a world he was leaving for ever to roll about in darkness.

The evening gun and the *tintamarre* that followed roused us all three, and we involuntarily turned to look across the parapet. Beyond that was the moat, and beyond the moat was a ravelin, and beyond the ravelin the sea-wall. Beyond the wall a smooth and placid lake, for it was high tide, four miles long and a couple of miles wide, in which the splendour of the west was reflected so that it looked like a furnace of molten metal. At low tide it would have been a great flat level of black mud, unlovely even with an evening sky upon it, intersected with creeks and streams which, I suppose, were kept full of water by the drainage of the mud banks. At the end of the harbour stood the old ruined castle, on the very margin and verge of the water. The walls were reflected in the calm bosom of the lagoon; the water-gate opened out upon the wavelets of the lapping tide; behind rose the great donjon, square, grey, and massive; in the tourney yard stood the old church, and we needed no telling to make us think of the walls behind, four feet broad, rugged and worn by the tooth of Time, thickly blossoming with gilli-flowers, clutched and held on all sides by the tight embrace of the ivy. There had been rain in the afternoon, so that the air was clear and transparent, and you could see every stone in the grand old keep every dentation of the wall. Behind the castle lay the low curved line of a long hill, green and grassy which made a background to the harbour and the old fortress. It stretched for six miles, this hill, and might have been monotonous but for the chalk quarries which studded its side with frequent intervals of white. Farther on, to the west, there lay a village, buried in a great clump of trees, so that you could see nothing but the tower of a church and the occasional smoke of a chimney. The village was so far off that it seemed like some outlying fort, an advance work of civilisation, an outpost such as those which the Roman conquerors have left in the Desert. When your eye left the village among the trees and travelled southwards, you could see very little of land on the other side by reason of the ships which intervened,—ships of every age, of every class, of every colour, of every build. Frigates, three-deckers, brigs, schooners, cutters, launches, gunboats, paddle-wheel steamers, screw steamers, hulks so old as to be almost shapeless,—they were lying ranged in line, or they were moored separately; some in the full flood of the waning sunset, some in shadow, one behind the other, making deep blacknesses in the golden water. There was not much life, at this late hour, in the harbour. Here and there a boat pulled by two or three lads from the town; here and there a great ship's gig, moving heavily through the water, pulled by a crew of sailors, rowing with their slow and measured stroke, and the little midship sitting in the stern; or perhaps a wherry coming down from Fareham Creek. But mostly the harbour was silent, the bustle even at the lower end having ceased with the sunset.

"What do you see up the harbour, Leonard?" asked the girl, for all of us were gazing silently at the glorious sight.

"I am looking for my future, Cis, and I cannot make it out."

"Tell us what you think, Leonard."

"Five minutes ago it looked splendid. But the glory is going off the water. See, Cis, the Castle has disappeared—there is nothing to be made out there, but a low black mass of shade; and the ships are so many black logs lying on grey water that in ten minutes will be black too. Nothing but blackness. Is that my future?"

"I can read you a better fortune out of the sunset than that," I interposed.

"Do, Laddy," said Celia. "Don't let poor Leonard go away with a bad omen."

"If you look above you, Leonard," I went on, "you will see that all the splendours of the earth have gone up into the heavens. Look at the brightness there. Was there ever a more glorious sunset? There is a streak of colour for you—the one above the belt of salmon—blue, with just a suspicion on the far edge of green. Leonard, if you believed in visions, and wished for the best possible, you could have nothing better than that before you. If your dreams were to get money and rubbish like that—it will be remembered that I who enunciated this sentiment, and Celia who clapped her hands, and Leonard who nodded gravely, were all three very young—" such rubbish, it would lead you to disappointment, just as the golden water is turning black. But up above the colours are brighter; and they are lasting. They never fade."

"They are fading now, Laddy."

"Nonsense. Sunsets never fade. They are for ever moving westwards round the world. Don't you know that there is always sunset going on somewhere? Gold in evening clouds

for us to see, and a golden sunrise for some others. So, Leonard, when your dreams of the future were finished you looked up, and you saw the sky brighter than the harbour. That means that the future will be brighter than anything you ever dreamed."

Leonard laughed. "You agree with Laddy, Cis? Of course you do. As if you two ever disagreed yet."

"I must go home, Leonard; it is nearly nine. And, oh, you are going away to-night, and when—when shall we see you again?"

"I am going away to-night, Cis. I have said good-bye to the Captain, God bless him, and I am going to London by the ten o'clock train to seek my fortune."

"But you will write to us, Leonard, won't you? You will tell us what you are doing, and where you are, and all about yourself?"

He shook his head.

"No, Cis, not even that. Listen. I have talked it all over with the Captain. I am going to make my fortune—somehow. I don't know how, nor does he, the dear old man. But I am going to try. Perhaps I shall fail, perhaps I shall succeed. I must succeed." His face grew stern and a little hard. "Because everything depends upon it, whether I shall be a gentleman, or what a gutter child ought to expect."

"Don't, Leonard."

"Forgive me, Laddy, but everybody knows that you are a gentleman by birth and descent, and very few know that I am too. Give me five years. In five years' time, if I live, and unless it is absolutely impossible for me to get home, I promise to meet you both again. It will be June the 21st, in the year 1858. We will meet at this time—sunset—and on this same spot, by Celia's Arbour."

"In five years. It is half a lifetime. What will have happened to us all in five years? But not a single letter? Oh! Leonard, promise to write one letter, only one, during all the years, to say that you are well. Not leave us all the time without a single word."

He shook his head.

"Not one, Cis, my child. I am not going to write you a single letter. One thing only I have promised the Captain. If I am in danger, sickness, or any trouble, I am to write to him. But if you get no news of me set it down to good news."

"Then, if you will not write there is nothing to look forward to but the end of the five years. Laddy, don't you feel as if you were a convict beginning a five years' sentence? I do, and perhaps you will forget all about us, Leonard, when you are away over there, in the great world."

"Forget you, Cissy?" He shook her hands, and drew the girl to himself. "Forget you? Why, there is nothing else in all the world for me to remember except you, and Laddy, and the Captain. If I could forget the seventeen years of my life, the town, and the port, the ships, and the sailors, the old walls, and the bastions—then, perhaps I could forget little Cissy. Other men belong to families. I have none. Other men have brothers and sisters. I have none. Laddy is my brother, and you are my sister. Never think, Cis, that I can forget you for one moment."

"No, Leonard. We will try to feel always that you are thinking about us. The Captain says nothing is better for people than always to remember what others would like them to say, and think, and do. Stay, Leonard." She had made a little bouquet of daisies, and the sweet wild convolvulus which spread itself over all the slopes of the walls. Out of this she picked two or three blossoms, tied them up with a tendril, and laid them in a paper. "That is my French exercise for to-morrow. Never mind. There, Leonard, carry that away with you to remember me by."

"I will take it, Cis, but I want nothing to remember you by."

"And now, Leonard, make your promise over again. Say after me, 'In five years' time—'"

"In five years' time—"

"In rags or in velvet"—be very particular about that, Leonard, you are neither to be too proud to come or too ashamed, in rags or in velvet."

"In rags or in velvet."

"In poverty or in riches."

"In poverty or in riches."

"In honour or—no, there can be no dishonour,—in honour or before the honour has been reached, I will return."

"I will return," echoed Leonard.

"And we will meet you here, Laddy and I." He held her hands while she dictated the words of this solemn promise, looking up at him with earnest and pleading face.

Then the church clock struck nine, and from the Port Admiral's flagship boomed a solitary gun, which rolled in short, sharp echoes along the walls, and then slowly thundered up the shores of the harbour. Then there was a pause. And then the bells began their customary evening hymn. They struck the notes slowly, and as if with effort. But the hymn-tune was soft and sad, and a carillon is always sweet. That finished, there came the curfew bell, which has been rung every night in the old town since the time of the great Norman king. The day was quite done now, and the twilight of the summer night was upon us. Gleams of grey lay in the west reflected in the untroubled sheet of the harbour, the cloudless sky looked almost as blue as in the day, and the stars were faint and pale. Venus alone shone brightly; the trees, in the warm, calm night, looked as if they were sleeping, all but one—a great elm which stood at the

end of the wall, where it joined the dockyard. It was shaped in the black profile of the evening something like the face of a man, so that it stood like a giant sentry looking every night across the harbour.

"I must go," said Celia. "Good-bye, Leonard. Good-bye, dear Leonard. Forgive me if I have teased you. We shall look forward—Oh! how eagerly we shall look forward to the end of the five years. Good-bye."

He took her in his arms, and kissed her again and again. She cried and sobbed. Then he let her go, and without a word she fled from us both, flying down the grassy slope across the green. In the twilight we could catch the glimmer of her white dress as she ran home, until she reached her father's garden gate, and was lost.

"Walk with me to the station, Laddy," said Leonard.

We walked away from the quiet walls where there was no one but ourselves, out from the shadow of the big elms, and the breath of dewy grass, and the peacefulness of the broad waters, down into the busy streets. Our way lay through the narrowest and the noisiest. Shops were open, especially places which sold things to eat and to drink. Hundreds of men—chiefly young men—were loafing about, pipes in their mouths, among the women, who were buying in a street market, consisting almost entirely of costers' carts and barrows, and where the principal articles exposed for sale appeared to be hot cooked things of pungent and appetising odour, served and dressed with fried onions. Every night, all the year round, that market went on; every night that incense of fried onions arose to the much-enduring skies, every night the crowd jostled, pushed, and enjoyed their jokes around these barrows, lit by candles stuck in bottles, protected by oiled paper.

"Look at them," said Leonard, indicating a little knot of young fellows laughing together at each other's *gros mots*. "Look at them. If it had not been for the Captain I might have been like them."

"So might I, for that matter."

"What a life? No ambition! No hope to get beyond the pipe and beer! If I fail it will be better than never to have tried. Laddy, I mean to make a spoon or spoil a horn, as the Scotch say."

"How, Leonard?"

"I do not know quite. Somehow, Laddy. Here we are at the station. You will be good to the old man, won't you? Of course you will, Laddy, a great deal better than I could ever be, because you are so much more considerate. Keep up his spirits, make him spin yarns. And you will look sharp after the little girl, Laddy. She is your great charge. I give her into your keeping. Why, when I come back she will be nineteen, and I shall be four-and-twenty. Think of that. Laddy, before I go I am going to tell you a great secret. Keep it entirely to yourself. Let no one know a word of it, not even the Captain."

"Not even Cis?"

"Why, that would spoil all. Listen. If I come back in five years' time, a gentleman, a real gentleman by position as I am by birth, I mean to—to ask little Celia to marry me."

I laughed.

"How do you know you will care for her then?"

"I know that very well," he replied. "I shall never care in the same way for any other girl. That is quite certain. But, oh! what a slender chance it is! I am to make myself a gentleman in five years. Celia has got to get through these five years without falling in love with anybody else. Of course all the fellows in the place will be after her. And I have got to please her when I do come back. Wish me luck, Laddy, and good-bye, and God bless you all three."

He squeezed my hand, and rushed into a carriage as the engine whistled, the bell rang, and the train moved away. Then I realized that Leonard was really gone, and that we should not see him again for five long years.

CHAPTER II.

THE CAPTAIN.

I walked home sadly enough, thinking how dull life for the next five years was going to be. It was half-past ten when I arrived, but the Captain was sitting up beyond his usual hour, waiting to hear the last news of Leonard. He was at the open window overlooking his garden; before him stood his glass of grog, empty, and his evening pipe was finished.

"You saw him off, Laddy?" he asked with a little eagerness, as if Leonard might possibly be lurking in the hall. "You are quite sure he got safely into the train"—five-and-twenty years ago people were not so familiar with railway-trains, and they were generally regarded even by old sailors as things uncertain about going off, as well as untrustworthy when you were in them. "Poor lad! At Winchester by this time, very nearly. Thirty miles from salt water."

The Captain at this time was about sixty years of age. He was a man of short and sturdy build, with a broad and rosy face like an apple, and perfectly white hair. His whiskers, equally white, were cut to the old-fashioned regulation "mutton-chop," very much like what has now come into fashion again. They advanced into the middle of the cheek, and were then squared off in a line which met the large stiff collar below at an angle of forty-five. Round the collar the Captain wore a white cravat, which put on many folds as the weather grew cold. He never appeared except in some sort of uniform, and