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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.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

## AN APPEAL TO COMMON SENSE.

"We will appeal" to the man's common sense first. The thing is absurd and preposterous."

He did make that appeal to Wassielewski, and as it was a complete failure, I suppose the old conspirator had no common sense.

He called in the morning at his lodgings, that one room which I have described, where the old man told me my own story in all its hideous details, sparing nothing. The Pole was sitting at the table, the map of Poland in his hand, preparing for the campaign. Long lists and estimates lay beside him, with which he was estimating the progress and duration of the struggle. The longer the revolt, the more lives sacrificed, the greater the exasperation and cruelties of the Muscov, the better for Poland. Tears of women, he used to say in his grim way, and blood of men together fructify the soil, so that it produces heroes.

At sight of a stranger he sprang to his feet, and clutched his papers.

"You do not remember me," said Leonard. "I do not," replied the old man, gazing keenly and suspiciously into his face. Spies and police assume so many forms that they might even be looked for beneath the guise of a young Englishman. "Who are you, and what do you want with me?"

"My name is Leonard Copleston. I am the old friend of Ladislav Pulaski. One of his only friends."

"He has many," said Wassielewski. "Friends in his own country."

"Friends who will make him the tool of their own purposes and lead him, if they got their own will, to death. I am one of the friends who want him to live."

Wassielewski made no reply for a moment. Then he seemed to recollect.

"I know you now," he said. "You went away to seek your fortune. You used to come to our barrack and learn things. The Poles were good to you, then."

"Some of your people taught me French and Russian, riding, fencing, all sorts of useful things. I am grateful to them."

"And your fortune—it is found?"

"Yes; I am an officer in the army; I have been in the Crimea."

The old man's face brightened.

"Aha! you fought the Muscovite. We were watching, hoping to fight him too, but our chance never came. Why—why did you not make a demonstration in Poland?"

"We did what we could, and we got the best of it."

The Pole sighed. Then he resumed his suspicious look.

"Why do you come to see me? Can I fiddle for you? I can march before troops of your men playing a hornpipe. What else can I do for you? Ah! I see—I see," his face assumed a look of cunning. "You are a friend of Ladislav Pulaski, and you come here to persuade me not to take him. That is too late. He has pledged himself, and he must keep his word. Say what you have to say and leave me. I have much to think of."

"What I have to say is short. It is absurd to drag in to the meshes of your conspiracy a man like Ladislav, the most peaceful, the most unpractical, the most dreamy of men. Even now, when you half-maddened him with some horrible story of death and torture, his sympathies are only half with you. He cannot speak Polish; he is a quiet English musician as unfit for a campaign as any girl. Why do you seek to take away his life? What earthly good can his death do to Poland?"

"He is a Pulaski. That is why he must come with us. His father, Roman Pulaski, dragged out ten years of misery in a Siberian mine. Ladislav must strike a blow to revenge him."

"Revenge! revenge!" Leonard cried impatiently. "Yes, young gentleman," Wassielewski rose to his full height, looking something like an eagle. "Revenge! That is the word. For every cruel and treacherous murder there shall be revenge full and substantial. Did Ladislav tell you the story of his father?"

"No, not yet."

"That is not well. His mother, too, was murdered when the Russian stole her boy, and she ran after the carts through the winter snow, bareheaded, crying and imploring for her child till she could run no longer, and so fell down and died. Did Ladislav tell you of his mother?"

"No."

"It is not well. Ladislav should tell everybody these things. He should repeat them to himself twice a day; he should never let them go out of his brain."

"Why did you disturb the current of his peaceful life with the story?"

"To fire his blood; to quicken his sluggish pulse. The boy is a dreamer. I would spur him into action."

"You cannot do that. But you might spur him into madness. What is the use of filling his

thoughts with revenge which can only be dreamed of?"

"Only be dreamed of?" Wassielewski cried, almost with a shriek. "Why, man, I have dreamed of revenge for twenty years and more. Only be dreamed of? Why, we shall put the revenge into action at once. Do you hear? at once—next week. We start next week—we—but you are an Englishman," he stopped short, "and you would not betray me."

"I betray no one. But Ladislav shall not go with you."

"I say he shall," Wassielewski replied calmly. "I have persuaded him. He is expected. Revenge! Yes; a long scourge from generation to generation."

"An unworthy thing to seek. I thought you Poles were patriots."

"It is because we are patriots that we seek revenge. How easy it is for you English, who have no wrongs to remember, to talk with contempt of revenge. What do you know of backs scarred and seamed with Russian sticks? What murdered sons have you for the women to lament? What broken promises, ruined homes, outraged hearths, secret wrongs, and brutal imprisonments? Go, sir; leave me alone with my plans; and talk to no Pole about living in peace."

"He is deformed."

"So much the better. All the Pulaskis for centuries have been tall and straight. Who crippled the boy? The Russians. Let the people see his round back and hear his story."

"He is weak; he cannot march; he cannot even carry a gun."

"Yes; he is strong enough to carry a rifle, and use it, too."

"He is a dreamer. Let him dream away his life in peace."

"He may dream, if he likes—in the next world," said the conspirator, grimly. "Poland claims all her sons—dreamers, and poets, and all. This is a *levée en masse*, a universal conscription, which knows of no exceptions. He must join the rest, and march to meet his fate. Shall a son of Roman Pulaski stay in inglorious exile while the Poles are rising again?"

Leonard made a gesture of impatience.

"It is madness. Man, it is murder."

Wassielewski sighed and sat down—he had been walking up and down the room. Resting one hand upon his papers, he looked up sorrowfully at Leonard speaking in low tones of conviction and with softened eyes.

"It is what I have said to myself a thousand times. Ladislav is not a soldier, let him live. I say it still, in the day time. But at night, when I am quite alone in the moonlight, I sometimes see the form of his mother, the Lady Claudia. She is in white, and she points to Poland. Her face is not sad but joyous. Perhaps that is because she is going to have her son again, in Heaven—after the Russians have killed him. I asked her, once, because I wished to save the boy, if he should go. She smiled and pointed her finger still. After that, I knew. She wants to have him with her."

"That was a dream of the night, Wassielewski."

"No—no," he shook his head and laughed. "I am not to be persuaded that it was a dream. Why, I should be mad indeed if I were to take the injunctions of my dear and long lost mistress to be a dream."

"People are sometimes deceived," said Leonard, "by the very force of their thoughts—by illusions of the brain—by fancies—"

"It seems a cruel thing," Wassielewski went on, unheeding, "but it cannot be cruel, if his mother orders it. The boy must come with me: he must join the villagers: he must learn their language—if he has time: march with them: eat with them: and carry his life in his hand until Death comes for him. It will be bad for him at first, but he will grow stronger, and then he will feel the battle fever, so that when I am killed he will be better able to protect himself. And perhaps he will escape—a good many Poles have escaped. Then you will have him back again. But I do not think he will, because in the night I see visions of battles between the Russians and the Poles, and I never see him among them, even in myself."

"Poor Wassielewski," said Leonard, touched with his fanatic simplicity.

"He is a good lad," the old man went on. "I loved him first for his mother's sake, but learned to love him for his own. He has a tender soul, like a woman's, and a face like a girl's. We shall have to accustom him to scenes that he knows nothing of. We do not make war in Poland with kid gloves. We kill and are killed: we shoot and are shot: we use every weapon that we can find and call it lawful. We slaughter every Muscov who falls into our hands, and we expect to be slaughtered ourselves. It is war to the knife between us, and the Poles are always on the losing side."

"Then why make these mad attempts at insurrection?"

"Because the time has come round again. Once in every generation, sometimes twice, that time comes round. Now it is upon us, and

we are ready to move. You wish to save your friend. It is too late; his name is here, upon the roll of those who dare to die."

"Why," said Leonard, "you are a worse dreamer than poor Ladislav. On whose head will the guilt of all this bloodshed lie, except on yours and the madmen among whom you work?"

Wassielewski shook his head.

"The crime be on the head of the Czar. Rebellion is my life. I think of it all day, and dream of it all night. By long thinking you come to learn the wishes of the dead. They whisper to me, these voices of the silent night, 'What we died for you must die for, what we suffered for you must suffer for; the soil of Poland is rank with the blood of martyrs. Do you, too, with the rest, take the musket, and go to lie in that sacred earth.' They have chosen me, the noble dead; they have elected me to join in their fellowship. Leonard shall sit beside me, with them. I have spoken."

He finished, and pointed to the door. There was nothing more to be said, and Leonard came away, disheartened.

"It is no use, Ladislav," he said. "The man is mad with long brooding over his wrongs. I have never been much in the conspiracy and rebellion line, but now I understand what a conspirator is like in private life, and I don't like him. When I read henceforth of Guy Fawkes, Damians, Cassius, Brutus, and other gentlemen of their way of thinking, I shall always remember old Wassielewski, with his deep-set eyes, his overhanging eyebrows, that far-off look of his, and the calm way in which he contemplates being killed. Even Havelock and his saints never marched to death with greater composure. And killed he certainly will be with all the madmen who go with him."

"I must go with him, Leonard. I have promised. I am pledged."

"We shall see," he replied.

The vague words brought a little hope to my soul. The thirst for revenge, alien to my nature, was gone now, despite the burning wrongs, the shameful and horrible history which the old man had told me. I looked forward with unutterable disgust to a campaign among Polish rebels. I was indeed an unworthy son of Poland.

## CHAPTER XXXV.

## A DIPLOMATIST.

It was not with any view of appealing to Herr Räumer's generosity that Leonard called upon him. Quite the contrary. He went to see what manner of man this alien would appear to him seen in the light of extended experience. And he avoided all reference to Celia. It was in the forenoon that he went. The German was sitting at his piano playing snatches of sentimental ditties and students' songs with a pipe in his lips, which he occasionally put down to warble something in French or German about Mariette remembering Lindor, and all the rest of it, or "How Love survives Absence," "How Hard it is for Friends to Part." His love for music never carried him beyond the ballad stage, and all the things he played were reminiscences of some time spent among students or young officers at Heidelberg, Vienna, or Paris.

He got up—big, massive, imposing—and greeted his visitor cordially.

"Who comes to see me, drinks with me," he said, hospitably, "always excepting Ladislav Pulaski, who drinks with no one. Sit down, Captain Copleston. I am glad to see you so early. That shows that you are going to talk. So—a cigar—*Liebfraumlisch*—and good—so. When Fortune means most kindly to a man, she makes him a soldier. I congratulate you."

"Have you served yourself?"

"I have—in the Austrian cavalry. I had an accident, and could ride no more. That is why I abandoned my career."

"Ah!" said Leonard, thoughtfully, "I knew you had been a soldier. One never quite loses the reminiscences of drill."

They went on talking in idle fashion.

"And you still keep up the same interest in the Poles, Herr Räumer?"

"Poles?" He started. "What interest?"

"When last I saw you, I was learning French at the Polish Barrack, and you used to ask me about them—you remember."

"Ah!—Yes—So—Yes. I remember perfectly. The poor Poles. But they are all gone now, except one or two, and I had forgotten them."

"Wassielewski remains. You know him?"

"By name. Ladislav talks about him." This was not true. "He is the irreconcilable Pole—the ideal Pole. A harmless enthusiast."

"Enthusiast, perhaps. Harmless, no."

"There are plenty like him about the world," said the German, quietly. "They seldom do mischief. They are in London, Paris, New York, and Stamboul. They are even in Moscow. Let them conspire."

"No mischief!" Leonard echoed. "The Russians prevent that by their secret service, I suppose." He looked at his friend steadily. "We know by Crimean experience how well that is conducted. Why—they had a Russian spy, disguised as a German, all through the war, in our own London War Office. But that you have heard, of course."

Herr Räumer laughed.

"It was very neatly done. Any other but the English would have foreseen a Russian war, and taken care that some of their officers learned Russian."

"At all events, we get on, somehow."

"Yes; because you have a good geographical position; because you have money; and because you have the most wonderful luck. Wait till Russia gets Stamboul."

"When will that be?"

"And commands the Valley of the Euphrates. It is very clever of you to make of Moldavia and Wallachia an independent State; but who is to guard it? Suppose a time were to come when Austria—she is always Austria the Unready—was fettered with diplomatic chains, when France either would not or could not interfere in the Eastern Question, what is to prevent Russia from marching across the frontier of your Roumania? Treaties? Why, the whole history of the world is the history of broken treaties. Sooner or later she will try for Asia, from the Levant to Peking. Of course that will include Afghanistan. Then she will try for India, and win it by force of numbers. Where will your greatness be then?"

"We have fought her before, and we will fight her again."

"Oh, yes; you can fight, you English. Perhaps you can fight better than any other people. That is to say, you can do with a hundred soldiers what Russia wants a hundred and twenty to accomplish. But you have only that hundred, and Russia has behind her hundred and twenty more. You are commercially great because London has taken the place which the Constantinople of the future will hold, the commercial centre of the world. You have a great fleet. You will lose your great empire because you will not have a great army. England will grow less formidable as armies grow greater. If you wish to preserve the power of England make every Englishman a soldier."

"That will never be," said Leonard.

"Then the days of England's supremacy are done."

He knocked out the ashes of his pipe, refilled it slowly, and lit up again.

"It is by her secret service which you despise that Russia defends herself, and steadily advances. She throws out her secret agents to watch, report, and, if necessary, make mischief. They are the irregular cavalry of politics. Sometimes they are called merchants or scientific explorers, sometimes they are disguised as missionaries, sometimes they are the ministers and rulers of the country corrupted by Russian gold or flattered with Russian skill. Russia makes no move till she has felt her way. Persia will be hers when the last relic of British influence has been brought out or wheeled out, and when Russian counsels have been able, unmolested, to bring the country into a fit condition for Russian occupation."

"I suppose that Russian influences are already at work in England itself?"

"Not yet," said Herr Räumer, laughing. "The conquest of England would cost too much. But Russian influences are already at work against British interests, wherever they can be met and injured. You have no enemy in the world except Russia. Not France, which changes her policy as she changes her Government, once in every generation. Not America, which is a peaceful country, and more afraid of war than England. The enemy of England, the persistent and ever watchful enemy of England, is Russia, because it is England alone, at present, that can keep Russia from Constantinople."

"Well; you have forewarned us, at all events."

"Forewarned is nothing. You may forewarn a consumptive man that he will suffer in the lungs. That will not prevent the disease. You will go on in England, as you always do, learning nothing, preparing for nothing, acting always as if you had to do with men who tell the truth. Could any country be more stupid?"

"Why," asked Leonard, "should not nations be as honest as men?"

"So they are," he replied, "only you Englishmen will persist in supposing that men are not liars. An English gentleman, I will admit, always speaks the truth. At least he has been taught to do so, and it comes natural to him. But a common Englishman does not. The man who sells things to you lies habitually, in order to make his profit—lies like a Syrian—goes to church on Sundays, and thinks he is a Christian. An American, I suppose, is pretty nearly the same thing as an Englishman, unless he happens to be an Irish Catholic. I believe that Dutchmen, Danes, Swedes, and Norwegians—small nations without ambition—have a singular preference for the truth. But all other nations lie. I am a German, and I state that unblushingly. Those get on best who lie hardest."

"Suppose that one here and there were to speak the truth?"

"It would do him no good, because he would not be believed, unless he were an Englishman. Diplomacy is a game in which no one believes any one else. The truth lies behind the words—somewhere. It is our business—I mean the business of diplomats—to find it out. First, you have the actual assurance of the Czar, we will say, conveyed by his ambassador. Of course no one, except, perhaps, an English newspaper, pretends for a moment to believe a pacific assurance. You receive it, and you try to find out what Russia is actually doing, which is a great deal more important. If you find that out, and are able to watch the movements of other Powers, you have a chance of understanding the truth."

"Everything stated openly is stated with intentions to deceive. This is the first rule in diplomacy. All friendly assurances must be received with suspicion. That is the second rule. The statement of disinterested action which is always made is, of course, received with derision. No nation is disinterested, except, sometimes, England. There has not been a disinterested