

Second Cousin Sarah

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"ANNE JUDGE, SPINSTER," "LITTLE RATE AIRBY,"
ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XXII.

It is time that we follow the fortunes of Second-cousin Sarah, whom we left with her shabby sister-in-law in the grounds of Sedge Hill. Taken off her guard by Mrs. Thomas Eastbell's sudden appearance, disturbed by the events of the night, and ever conscious of the danger which the presence of the two intruders in her aunt's house forshadowed, she followed the woman in good faith some distance along the garden paths and in the direction of the high road.

"We will go no further," she said; "tell me what I have to fear from your husband and Peterson, and I will reward you handsomely."

"Listen then, as well as you can. I ain't going to speak loud for anybody."

"I am listening."

Sarah Eastbell inclined her head more closely to the woman, who began whispering about her husband in a rambling fashion that was difficult to follow, until she went suddenly back three steps, to Sarah's surprise, and stood gazing at her, or at something near her.

"What is it?" exclaimed Sarah; "what?"

There was no opportunity to say more, to scream, or to struggle. Two strong arms closed round her, and a cloth, wet and sticky with drugs, was pressed to her mouth and nostrils by a merciless hand, that seemed to snatch her at once from active life to oblivion.

When she came back to consciousness it was to a life apart from Sedge Hill, and those who loved her there. She was lying on a bed, with Sophy Eastbell doing by the side of a scantily furnished bed. There was a narrow window in the side of the room, with some boards nailed across it to keep the light of one splintered candle from betraying itself to the night.

Suddenly Sophy woke up, and gave a nervous jump in her chair at finding her sister-in-law crunched upon the bed, with her great dark eyes glaring at her.

"Where have you brought me? Why am I in this dreadful place?" Sarah asked in an eager voice.

"You're come round, have you?" said Sophy. "Well, I am glad of that. Bless if I didn't think they'd overdone it with their klor-wat's-its-name, and sent you bang off afore they meant it."

Sarah Eastbell was sitting at the edge of the bed now, regarding her jailer with eager attention. She was scarcely back from dreamland yet.

"Why have I been brought here?" she asked less patiently.

"You'll know in good time, gal. There's no 'casion for a hurry, or a flurry. Take it cool. You're safe enuf."

Sarah Eastbell was standing at the door of the room when she had recovered herself. It was locked, as she had suspected.

"It's no use your thinking of getting out, Sally," said Tom; "don't build on that, as that harm will happen to you. That's certain."

"Do you think I am the weak girl whom you remember last?" said Sarah, walking from the door to the woman's side, and clutching her tightly by the waist, "or that I am to be frightened by this trick of yours, and of the wretches who have assisted you? Do you know in what peril you have put yourself?"

"Oh, yes, we all know. It's all been thought on," said the woman ironically. "We're of the don't care sort, and have chanced it. You can't say it wasn't well done, Sally."

"Give me the key of the door, or you will find me the stronger woman of the two," cried Sarah.

"Don't hetch hold of my wrist like that," cried her sister-in-law, "or you'll be sorry if I go away, or if any one downstair comes up instead of me, because you are too violent for my company. You can't behave like a lady, for all your fine flash silk. I have only to shriek out, and there are three men below who don't stand nonsense such as yours."

Sarah Eastbell released her hold. Yes, she was in danger, and must be cautious. They who brought her to this den had risked a great deal in entrapping her, and would risk more rather than allow her to escape. She must be prudent and on her guard, not defiant and aggressive.

"I ain't got no key, if you must know," said Sophy, as she returned to her chair and set down; "this is my room, and we're both locked in together. I'm to take charge of you, that's all, my gal, and think yourself lucky it's me."

"What place is it?" Sarah asked again.

"A place of business," was the enigmatical answer.

"Cousers—the old gang from Potter's Court—the Petersons," cried Sarah.

Mrs. Eastbell did not answer. She warmed her thin hands at the fire, and a convenient cough prevented all possibility of reply. She was a prudent woman, and not likely to commit herself and her friends by responding to leading questions of this character.

The spiriting away of a young lady from home without her consent, and without leaving a clue wherewith to trace her, is no light feat in the nineteenth century, and Mrs. Thomas Eastbell had shown a natural pride in the neatness of the achievement. True, the house was five or six miles from a quiet city, and was desolate enough at all times, the hour was late, the circumstances were opportune, and how to profit by the riches of old Mrs. Eastbell and her granddaughter had been the study of six months, but still Mrs. Thomas Eastbell had something to take credit for. It was a bold stroke carried out by desperate men, and it had succeeded where a more timid line of policy would have assuredly failed.

It was the boldest bit of business that the Peterson gang had ever been engaged in, and the Petersons had been engaged, under various aliases, in innumerable shady transactions. They had come to "fresh fields and pastures new" by adopting the fair county of Worcester as a sphere for their operations; they had rented a tumble-down old edifice in a wild part of the county, and put on the door the name of Jackson, button maker; they had even made a few acquaintances in distant villages, and bore a respectable name among honest, unassuming folk who believed in them and their buttons. No one visited them certainly—it was an out-of-the-way place, to which nobody was invited, and where only button making was the order of the day.

No one confounded the name of Jackson with Peterson—and it was possibly good policy in the Captain adopting his own name when he went with Thomas Eastbell to Sedge Hill. It kept matters clear and distinct, though he had not bargained for Sarah Eastbell's good memory, or imagined that he was known to her by sight.

It was he who unlocked the door of Sarah's extemporized cell at seven in the morning, and stood before her, the avowed agent of her captivity.

"I have come to apologize for my friends' rough treatment of last night," he said, reclining languidly against the

the great scheme of his life. The sky was overcast, and he looked up at it and prophesied to himself that it would rain before the morning. He walked round to the opposite side of the house and gazed moodily at the water flowing twenty paces from him, and at a boat lying on the long grass above the river bank. One glance at the darkened window in the top-most story where his fortune lay, he thought, and then he returned to the house meditating on the difficulties in his way, and of his genius to surmount them. He went to the house, and upstairs to the first floor room, wherein we have seen him gaze with interest at an early hour of the morning.

"Bess," he said in a sharp voice, and at the summons a small thin-faced child, in a hat and cloak, appeared at the door.

"You have come back then, father?"

"Yes."

Edward Peterson went downstairs, followed by the little girl. At the front door he said:

"You were wise to keep to your room to-day, little woman, for they have been very cross, and Mrs. Eastbell has been worse than ever. You must find your way to Worcester to-night, all by your self. Two miles from here is a railway station—you know it, where the red and green lights shine out like big eyes after dark. You have run about here a good deal, and know your way well, and you can find the station. Now, take care of that money."

He placed some money in her hands, and she wrapped it up in a corner of a dirty white handkerchief, and tucked it down the bosom of her dress, wrapping her cloak round her afterward with all the carelessness and confidence of a woman.

"At the railway station ask for a third-class ticket for Worcester. When the train comes up to the platform, get in. When they call out 'Worcester, get out.' At Worcester a lady, very pretty, and with hands full of toys, will be waiting for you at the postoffice. Ask the way to the postoffice like a woman as you are, and when you see the lady under the clock, say, 'Pa keeps his word—I'm Bessie.'"

"All right," said the child again, with a rare amount of confidence in her own comprehension of the details, which, however, he asked her to repeat, listening attentively to the recital.

She needed no second bidding to be off—it had not been so happy a home that she should grieve for it or him, and there had been a promise of a glorious change for her, and a bright child-world. She ran off quickly toward the narrow lane, already full of shadow that murky afternoon.

(To be continued.)

CHAPTER XXIII.

Captain Peterson, merchant service, received the ultimatum of Miss Sarah Eastbell with his customary sang froid. He was a man whom it took a great deal to disturb, or who conceived his annoyance by an admirable semblance of imperturbability.

"After that, I need not trespass further on your time," he said, "I will communicate with Thomas at once."

He unlocked the door and went to the landing place beyond, closing and locking the door behind him. Finally he went down the rickety stairs, which were crumbling to pieces with the house, halted at the bottom of the next flight, and listened at the right-hand door, as though there were another prisoner close at hand. The door was not locked, and he opened it softly, and put his head into the room beyond, withdrawing it in silence, as if contented with what had met his gaze; and proceeding down another flight of stairs, to a room on the ground floor, where three tall men, in shirt sleeves, were covering before a fire. If these men were Petersons, Captain Edward had taken the good looks of the family to himself.

"You'd better your parts well, boys," he said in a quick, sharp voice, "but there may be more to do."

"How's that?" inquired a scoundrel number one; "we've done enough now to get ourselves lagged for ten years."

"It's not easy," said Peterson, "but it must be gone on with at any risk. Failure means Worcester jail, success means ten thousand pounds between us all."

He had mentioned fifteen thousand pounds upstairs, but he and Thomas Eastbell were keeping an extra thousand to themselves. Edward Peterson did not tell his brothers everything when money was in question.

"What more is to be done?" asked the first scoundrel, who was the worst-tempered and most disputatious member of the gang.

"You will know when it's necessary," was the short answer; "at present the young lady is refractory."

"Will the girl sign the check before the day is out? That's the question," asked number one, "for we can't go on like this."

"I have said that it's her money or her life, and I mean it! She will be back to-night at Sedge Hill, or she will never return again. Mark that. Do you think any woman would prefer to be found in the Severn, to paying away money that she can afford to part with?"

"We don't want to hear anything about the Severn," said the first scoundrel; "you know what's safe better than we do, but we'll have no hand in it. Dennis and I and Mike have talked it over, and won't go further than we've done already—there."

"You fools, have I asked you?" shouted Peterson, springing to his feet; "you've done the work I've set you to do, and I will pay you for it and be rid of you. The money's safe, and I'll keep my word—as I always do, and always will. I don't want your help—you are in the way, and must go."

"Go!" echoed the men.

"This house will be unsafe after to-night, and we must vanish before it's spotted. I will be in London to-morrow evening, at the old place, with your money."

One by one these men drifted away from home, without a thought of Sarah Eastbell's safety, and with an immense amount of consideration for their own. It was not murder that troubled their mind so acutely as complicity with it, detection, and sentence. If Ned would take all the risk, he might murder half Worcester for what they cared; but it was out of their line, and they would prefer to return to London as quickly as possible, and wait for the money that had been promised them, or the bad news they half expected instead. It was two o'clock in the afternoon before the last of the three men passed out of the house, and went away down the narrow lane which led from the high road.

Captain Peterson stood at the front door. He was in excellent spirits, and he waved his hand to the dispartitions of the street, and he waved his hand to the friendly salutation at parting.

"They're gone," he muttered, "and they're better gone, whichever way this affair is likely to turn out."

He lingered at the door meditating on

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Administrator's Notice.

Notice is hereby given that the undersigned has been duly appointed administrator with the will annexed of the estate of Henry Puvogel, deceased, by the County Court of the State of Oregon, for Washington County. All persons having claims against said estate will present the same to me at the law office of W. D. Hare, Hillsboro, Oregon, within six months from the date hereof.

JOHN H. WILKINS,
Administrator with the will annexed of Henry Puvogel, deceased.
Dated this March 23, 1904.
W. D. Hare, attorney for administrator.

Executrix's Notice.

Notice is hereby given that the undersigned has been by the County Court of the State of Oregon for the County of Washington County appointed executrix of the last will and testament of A. O. Brown, deceased, and that she has duly qualified as such. Now therefore, all persons having claims against the estate of A. O. Brown, deceased, are hereby notified and requested to present the same, with proper vouchers attached, to me at the law office of Hon. W. D. Hare, in Hillsboro, Oregon, within six months from date hereof.

ASENATH CAREY BROWN,
Executrix of the last will and testament of A. O. Brown, deceased.
W. D. Hare, Attorney for the Executrix.

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Hillsboro, Oregon

NOTICE OF EXECUTRIX' SALE OF REAL ESTATE.

Notice is hereby given that by virtue of an order of sale made and entered herein on the 11th day of April, 1904, in the estate of William Reeves, deceased, authorizing the undersigned to sell, at private sale to the highest bidder, for cash, in hand, or for part cash and the remainder to be secured by first mortgage upon the real estate to be sold, all of the following Now, therefore, I will, on and after the 16th day of May, 1904, offer at private sale, to the highest bidder, all of the following real estate, situated in Washington County, Oregon, to-wit:

Commencing at the northwest corner of lot 4, in section 3, T. 18, R. 3, W. 4, Williams Meridian, thence south 09.25 chains to the northwest corner of land donated by William Reeves and wife to Charles Rockbraugh, as recorded in Book "17" pages 124-5 of records of deeds for Washington County, Oregon; thence south 89 deg. 42' east 15.39 chains; thence north 82.5 deg. east 12 chains; thence north 20.5 deg. east 20 chains; thence east to the center of Tualatin River; thence up the same to the south line of J. W. Linenbach's claim; thence west to the place of beginning the above description intending to convey all the land owned by William Reeves at the time of his death, in sections 3 and 19, township and range aforesaid, and containing 229 acres, more or less.

Terms of sale—Cash in hand, or part cash, the remaining sum to be secured by first mortgage on the real estate so sold. Inquiries to be made of directed to John M. Wall at his office in Hillsboro, Ore.

SARAH E. REEVES,
Executrix of the last will and testament of William Reeves, deceased.
John M. Wall, Attorney for Executrix.

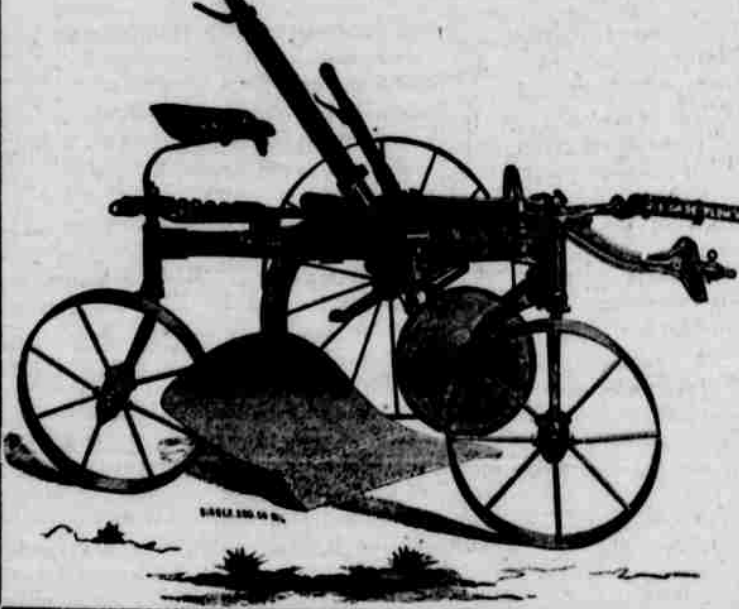
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