

Second Cousin Sarah

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"ANNE JUDGE, SPINSTER," "LITTLE KATE KIRBY,"
ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XXIII.—(Continued.)

It was dark when he returned to the house, and he closed the shutters and barred the door very carefully before he sat down by the fire to reflect upon his next step. He had been reflecting on that all day, without seeing his way too clearly to the results on which he had set his heart—a large sum of money, and a new life abroad to enjoy it in.

He would not go upstairs yet awhile—another hour would be of advantage to him, and he must wait. The bank at Worcester was shut, and there would be no getting money till to-morrow morning—before that time came she would sign the check, and remain a prisoner in Jackson's button factory until time had been allowed for him to cash it. That was the end of the brilliant scheme which he had planned out like an artist.

Suddenly there was a violent knocking at the door, and Peterson sprang up, with his hand shaking on the back of the chair. He reached his hand toward the candle and extinguished the flame, as his first resource against an unseen enemy. Then he crept on tiptoe toward the door.

"Who's there?"

"Let me in."

"Tom Eastbell!" ejaculated Peterson. He opened the door, and dragged the applicant for admittance into the house by the collar of his coat—a man drenched to the skin by heavy rain.

"You muddler!" shouted Peterson; "why couldn't you stop at Sedge Hill? How dare you come intermeddling? Didn't you leave it all to me?"

"Here—let go my throat—let a fellow speak. What are you doing in the dark? Where are they all? Is Sarah here? Has she signed the check?"

Peterson released his hold and locked the front door again. Tom followed him into the room, and sat down shivering by the fire. His companion and adviser relighted the candle, and held it to his face.

"Why did you come?"

"For safety. Oh, Ned, I shall be hanged!" Tom cried. "The old woman is dead, and everybody thinks I have done it. Here's a blessed go for an innocent man! I never touched her, upon my soul; she died right off, bang, in the picture gallery, and it was nothing to do with me. I wouldn't have thought of such a thing."

"Dead? The old woman dead?" said Peterson, surprised again at this avowal. "Oh!—ugh!—yes," he said, shuddering more strongly. "Her eyes opened suddenly; Ned, and she was off. I shall never forget it. And then the beast of a woman, Hartley, came in when I screamed, and said that I had murdered her. I was talking her over to make a will, when she died—that's all. Oh! let's go to London."

"Tom," said Peterson with excitement, "you must go back. You must not leave everything to that Culwick. The old woman has died naturally—the doctor will prove that—and you have nothing to fear."

"Oh! haven't I? That's all you know about it."

"You accused idiot! don't you see that you are rich?—that Sarah Eastbell was only between you and a colossal fortune?—and Sarah Eastbell is dead, too."

"Sarah dead, too!" screamed Tom Eastbell in his new excitement; "oh, don't say that. It can't be."

"Hush! Keep it quiet; it is an eternal secret between you and me; but she sprang out of the boat suddenly last night, they tell me, and was drowned. In a day or two they will find her in the Severn, and you will be heir-at-law."

"They'll say I killed the couple of them."

"Sarah ran away from home—everybody knows that—and came to harm by accident. There is nothing more natural."

"Poor Sally! She was a good sort," said Tom; "and she—she's dead, too. Thank goodness it was quite an accident—for nobody meant to kill her."

"Get back in haste—at any cost. Say you were distracted, and did not know what you were doing—that you have been in search of Culwick—or a doctor. Get back."

"Suppose they take me up for killing my grandmother; that's what I'm afraid of."

"Get back; you are safe. Get back, fool, to all that wealth."

Edward Peterson's excitement was greater than Thomas Eastbell's now. He thrust him from the house; he locked the door after him; he tottered back to the room.

Tom Eastbell would be rich—immensely rich—if his sister Sarah were removed from all the troubles of this world! Tom Eastbell in his power—at his mercy for many past offenses—a weak fool whom he could rule implicitly, and get money quickly by.

Then, with the light in his hand, he proceeded with wonderful steadiness of step up the stairs. A strange specimen of a villain this—for he went into his daughter's room first, and said, "Poor Bess—you have gone for good then," and walked out again, and up the remaining flight, with a very sorrowful countenance. He drew the key from his pocket, unlocked the door, strode in, and then stopped suddenly—a man struck, as it were, into stone by his amazement.

The room was empty!

CHAPTER XXIV.

Reuben Culwick did not reach Sedge Hill till a late hour, when the blinds were down before every window of the great house. He did not dream of death at home while he had been abroad in pursuit of the living, and, in the deep thought born of his baffled search, he strode up the broad garden path without being struck by the blank aspect of the mansion.

"How did it occur? Tell me everything," he asked, as he went into the picture gallery, and Hartley followed him. The story was related, and he listened patiently. He heard of his aunt's death, and of Thomas Eastbell's flight—of the suspicion which attached to Thomas Eastbell until the doctor's arrival, and that gentleman's belief in the natural termination to the life and cares of the old lady—of the inquest which must follow her decease.

He walked up and down the great picture gallery in his old restless fashion, planning for the morrow. Suddenly he quitted the gallery, and went upstairs to

Aunt Eastbell's room, at the door of which Hartley sat, as if the poor old woman needed protection still.

"Why are you waiting here now?" he asked the servant.

"If you please, sir, Mr. Thomas Eastbell has come back again. He has been looking for you, and for the doctor, he says—and I thought that I would sit here as usual."

"Where is the man?"

"In his own room, changing his clothes, which are wet."

"We will not disturb him. Have you my aunt's keys?"

There was a little lamp upon the bracket, and he passed into his aunt's bedroom, Hartley remaining at her post. It was a solemn moment in his life, which he remembers well. It was his last duty to the dead woman, and to the wishes of yesterday, before the tragedy of life fell on them like a pall.

He opened the iron box in which the will had been deposited, and where a glance assured him that it lay undisturbed, and then he closed and locked the box again, while the thought came to him that it might never be of use to Second-cousin Sarah.

"What that man come back because he thinks so, too?" he muttered; "is it possible that this should be the end of my father's money—of yours, poor worn-out heart, that never was made happy by its acquisition? If I have done you wrong, old soul, I pray forgiveness now," he murmured.

"Amen," said a deep voice at his side, and he turned at the solemn response, for which he was unprepared. A thin woman, clad in shabby black, stood in the doorway looking at him.

"Lucy Jennings!" he exclaimed.

"You telegraphed to me this morning," she said, advancing; "you asked me many questions, and I have come to answer them in person."

"It was kind of you, Lucy," he said, holding out his hand to her, "for I am in great trouble."

"They went out of the room together. Reuben Culwick locked the door, and gave the key to Hartley, after which Lucy and he descended to the hall, Lucy calm and grave.

"What do you know of the Petersons?" asked Reuben eagerly; "have you a clew to their address?"

"I think I have."

"How did you find it?"

"Among my circle of penitents and of poor mortals struggling out of crime there are many links of life to the dark world. Found friends to help me at once. Patience. If Sarah Eastbell has been lured away by these Petersons, the clew to their haunt has been already pointed out."

"Heaven bless you, Lucy!"

"Probably I bring a blessing to you—it is in there."

She pointed to the door of the drawing room, and he said eagerly as he strode toward it:

"Sarah!"

"Not she. It is something you lost before your second-cousin, and took as much to heart in losing. It is something that changed you—and from which dated your hardness, and your suspicions of me—first of all. It may be your own flesh and blood, for what I know."

He left Lucy Jennings and went with quick steps into the drawing room, where on the sofa lay a child asleep, a poorly clad little girl of five years old, with her hat lying by her side, and a tangled mass of fair, wavy curls thrust back from her face.

"Tot!" he cried in his astonishment.

"I met her in the streets of Worcester, near the postoffice," said Lucy. "It was raining hard, and she was crying because a lady had not come to fetch her. Her father had sent her to Worcester, she said."

"Will she remember me?"

"It is unlikely—it is impossible."

"She was very young when she went away, poor Tot," said Reuben, sadly regarding her. "Yes, I suppose it is impossible."

"She came with me in all confidence. I told her that I would take her to her friends, and she believed me."

"You are very kind, Lucy," said Reuben. "How is it that you do me these good services, and yet dislike me so much?"

"I dislike the pride and anger in you," answered Lucy, "and they have turned me against you. I have had my great work to think of lately—not of the petty differences of eighteen months ago. See, the child is waking."

Reuben turned to the little girl, who had struggled into a sitting posture on the sofa, and was looking at them, all eyes—all blue eyes, too—as Tot had looked at him in Hope street, years ago.

"Tot," he said, advancing to her, "Tot, old lady—don't you know me?"

His manner was too impetuous, and his quick strides toward her were so symbolic of punishment for some offense which she in her ignorance had committed, that the child sprang up and ran to Lucy Jennings, burying her face in the skirts of her protector.

"The child is frightened of you," said Lucy, calmly; "let her be a while."

"Why, Tot, it's Uncle Roo," he cried, "old Uncle Roo—you know!"

The child still clung to Lucy's skirts, and would have none of his affection. He gave up, and walked away to the window.

"You see how this kind of love lasts," said Lucy bitterly, "and yet you value it so highly."

"Because it set a high value upon me," he answered quickly.

"It is dead."

"It will live again—it will come back."

"And if not," Lucy answered, "there is your second-cousin to console you."

The opening of the door cut short the clash of arms, and Thomas Eastbell advanced into the room with a forced and swaggering air. Tot's hand still to the skirts of Lucy Jennings, with her face hidden in the folds.

"Oh! you're back," he said to Reuben; "of course you know what has happened since you've been away? I've been looking for you everywhere—I've been running after the doctors—if we had a plague in the house, I think people would stop in it more than they do," said Tom Eastbell. "Who's this?"

"My name is Jennings," said Lucy.

"Oh! you're Jennings. I have heard of you, but I don't know that we have ever met before. May I ask what you want, marm, now you are here?" asked Thomas. "You'll excuse me, but since my grandmother's death and Sally's disappearance—and until Sally returns—I consider I am the head of this establishment."

"I am compelled to answer your question if this is a true statement," said Lucy.

"Yes, I should think you were. True indeed—that's a good one! Why, you don't know that my poor grandmother killed herself thinking about me," he said.

"She was worried—she wanted to leave me all her money—and she died of disappointment because she hadn't time to finish her new will."

He addressed Lucy Jennings, but he was watching the effect of this announcement upon Reuben Culwick from the corner of his eyes.

"It is heaven's mercy that your grandmother died then," replied Lucy to him. "I have been making inquiries concerning you to-day, and I have heard of nothing to your advantage. You and one Edward Peterson were in this house, from which your sister has disappeared," said Lucy. "Among my congregation there were two or three who remembered the Petersons, and thought they they could be traced. We are searching for them now under the name of Jackson."

Thomas Eastbell put one hand to his shirt collar; his throat had begun to swell suddenly, and he felt uncomfortable.

"Oh," he said, "if that's it you're on a wrong."

Tots had looked round at the sound of his voice some moments since, but he had not noticed her till then, and then his voice utterly deserted him, and his eyes protruded in amazement. He did not ask any further questions of Miss Jennings. The child belonged to Edward Peterson. He and his wife had the charge of her once, and grown tired of her, and lost her in a Camberwell back street, where Reuben had found her; and Edward Peterson had discovered her a year or so afterward, and taken her from the Jenningses; but he could not stop to explain that now. A few days ago that child was at Jackson's button factory, and she must have come to Sedge Hill with the news. He was caught in a trap again. He knew it had not been safe to return, but that fool Peterson had persuaded him. They knew all, and were getting him into a line by degrees; everything might have been discovered, for what he knew to the contrary. He must "cut it," at any risk.

He went into the passage and closed the door behind him. He took down a hat from the tree in the hall and put it on. It was Reuben's hat, and went over his eyes, and was altogether a bad fit; but the sooner he was off the better, and where he had put his own hat he could not recollect in the present confusion of his faculties.

He went on tiptoe to the front door, and drew back the heavy bolts and the big lock. He opened the door and let in the wind and rain—and Sarah Eastbell!

Yes, it was his sister, with a shawl over her hair, and her face, white and wild, peering from it. She had come back—she knew all—she was done for!

"Tom, you villain!" she shrieked forth, at first sight of him.

Thomas Eastbell went down on his knees at the same moment as Reuben came from the drawing room.

"Oh, Reuben! take care of me," Sarah murmured, as she went fearlessly to the friendly shelter of his arms; "I have no one else."

"She could never take care of herself," muttered the inflexible Lucy, as she followed Reuben Culwick into the hall.

It was as Mary Holland had said, and Sarah Eastbell was back in her own house.

(To be continued.)

Man Is a Natural Bluffer.

A man in a big department store was buying his wife a sealskin saccque.

First she tried on a \$250 one. The man smoothed it across the back and said:

"Well, I never examined one of these things before close up; and this looks all right to me."

Next his wife tried on a 300 saccque. He smoothed it across the shoulders and said:

"I can't tell the difference between 'em. Can't see a particle of difference between 'em."

"Oh, my, yes! A closer pile," said the saleswoman.

"No difference, to my mind," insisted the man.

He bought the \$250 coat, and after he was gone the saleswoman said:

"Nine coats out of ten are bought as that one was. Nearly every man insists on doing the purchasing himself, and always he says, when he has reached his limit as regards price, 'Can't see any difference between this coat and that dearer one there.' If I had shown a \$1,000 saccque to our friend he'd have insisted that it looked the same as the \$250 one to him. Men are such bluffers. They bluff even themselves. It would be a satisfaction, though, just to hear one man say that he perceived the superiority of the more expensive coat, but didn't care to go so high in price."—Philadelphia Record.

His Explanation.

Why are people who buy gold bricks invariably farmers?" asked the man who assumes superiority.

"I dunno," answered Mr. Cornstossel, "unless it's because farmers are the only folks nowadays who have money enough to make it worth while for sharpers to bother with 'em."—Washington Star.

Almost Right.

"What do you know about this case?" asked the lawyer.

"Nothing," replied the witness. "I'm the expert."

Subsequently his testimony proved conclusively that he knew less than nothing.—Chicago Tribune.

A Suspense.

She—You didn't stay long in London. He—No, I couldn't stand it. Over there everybody knew me for an American right away. Here, in New York, no one ever suspects it.—Smart Set.

Milton sold his copyright of Paradise Lost for \$72, in three payments, and finished his life in obscurity.

OLD FAVORITES

The Mistletoe Bough.
The mistletoe hung in the castle hall,
The holly branch shone on the old oak wall.

And the baron's retainers were blithe and gay,
And keeping their Christmas holiday.

The baron beheld with a father's pride
His beautiful child, young Lovell's bride;
While she with her bright eyes seemed to be
The star of this goodly company.

"I'm weary of dancing now," she cried;
"Here tarry a moment—I'll hide, I'll hide!"

And, Lovell, be sure thou'rt first to trace
The clew to my secret lurking place."

Away she ran—and her friends began
Each tower to search, and each nook to scan;
And young Lovell cried, "O, where dost thou hide?"

I'm lonesome without thee, my own dear bride."

They sought her that night, and they sought her next day,
And they sought her in vain when a week passed away;

In the highest, the lowest, the loneliest spot,
Young Lovell sought wildly—but found her not.

And years flew by, and their grief at last
Was told as a sorrowful tale long past;
And when as Lovell appeared, the children cried:

"See! the old man weeps for his fairy bride."

At length an oak chest, that had long lain hid,
Was found in the castle—they raised the lid,
And a skeleton form lay mouldering there.

In the bridal wreath of that lady fair!
O, sad was her fate!—in sportive jest
She hid from her lord in the old oak chest.

It closed with a spring!—and, dreadful doom,
The bride lay clasped in her living tomb!

—Thomas Haynes Bayly.

"Only Waiting."

Only waiting till the shadows
Are a little longer grown,
Only waiting till the glimmer
Of the day's last beam is flown;

Till the night of earth is faded
From the heart, once full of day;
Till the stars of heaven are breaking
Through the twilight soft and gray.

Only waiting till the reapers
Have the last sheaf gathered home,
For the summer time has faded,
And the autumn winds have come.

Quickly, resolute, gather quickly
The last ripe hours of my heart,
For the bloom of life is withered,
And I hasten to depart.

Only waiting till the angels
Open wide the mystic gate,
At whose feet I long have lingered,
Weary, poor and desolate.

Even now, I hear the footsteps,
And their voices far away;
If they call me, I am waiting,
Only waiting to obey.

Only waiting till the shadows
Are a little longer grown,
Only waiting till the glimmer
Of the day's last beam is flown.

Then from out the gathered darkness,
Holy, deathless stars shall rise,
By whose light my soul shall gladly
Tread its pathway to the skies.

—Frances Laughton Mace.

THE PENALTY OF WEALTH.

Millionaires Whose Lives Are Made Miserable by Cranks and Promoters.

Three men in the Wall street district, New York, receive requests in the course of a year to back schemes the financing of which would break the Bank of England or bankrupt the Government of the United States. They are John W. Gates, J. Pierpont Morgan and Edwin Hawley. These proposals run through the whole gamut of human ingenuity, from a new method of scratching matches to the promotion of a South American revolution or the prevention of earthquakes and other seismic disturbances. They pour in by letter and persons from all quarters of the globe.

These things are the penalty of spectacular wealth. They are some of the troubles that beset the man who makes his millions with a blare of trumpets and under the glare of limelights.

Mr. Gates has been hounded so by importunate persons that he hardly dares set foot in the street. He was imported in restaurant after restaurant, until in self-protection he had a dining-room fitted up in his office and there he now takes his luncheon. Mr. Morgan has been forced to adopt the same method.

One of the things that bothers Mr. Morgan most, although it costs him no money, is the camera with a fiend behind it. If there is one thing he hates more than all others it is being photographed, and he has become an adept in springing from the door of his office building into a coupe and banging the door behind him. It was he who was the recipient of the proposal that he finance a scheme for making earthquakes impossible. Just after the eruption of Mount Pelee a Frenchman wrote him, most earnestly asking his help and assuring him there were millions of dollars in the plan. Scarcely a day passes but some man writes to him of the unearthing of a priceless painting, disguised by time, but bearing beyond all doubt traces of the work of some dead master. Another class of men whose palms itchy for some of the Morgan money are the book agents, not only the inoffensive ones who have editions de luxe to

sell, but the ones who are preparing volumes of biographies of the moneyed men of the country in which the person approached may have his history written up at so many thousand dollars a page. There is also the bibliomaniac, who fastens himself upon Mr. Morgan to dispose of some ancient tome, colored in red by a monk and in yellow by Father Time.

Mr. Gates has had opportunities to place himself in the class with Santos-Dumont as a navigator of the air and to become a second Castro in the formation of a new South American republic. Three men with theories of airships who needed only money to make them fly have offered Mr. Gates a handsome share in ventures if he would produce the capital for construction.

Mr. Hawley, who was a protégé of Collis P. Huntington, has been besieged more by Western promoters because he came from the Pacific coast. Offers of interests in mines in the Western States and in South America, Mexico and Europe have been cast at him as if the whole world were a Klondike and he the first miner on the ground.

THE CITY BOY.

Why He Is Generally Left in the Rear by the Country Boy.

That the country is the better place to raise boys is the teaching of all experience. Go over the list of the men who have done things in your city. A large majority of them are country bred. Why?

The boy wherever you find him needs wide spaces for the development of the vital forces that are in him. He instinctively covets elbow room. The boyish swash is a wide one. He is necessarily noisy. He bubbles over for the same reason a tea kettle does. He is full of spontaneity and runs over. In the city he is cribbed, cabined and confined. He has little chance to let himself out. What wonder the roundly developed country lad beats him to the goal.

Poor city lad. Here is the picture Secretary Shaw gives of him, in a recent address: "The boy is the most valuable product of society, but in the city he is not fairly treated. He lacks a chance for the free play of his nature. His parents seldom give him a gymnasium or a shop or even a room of his own. They are afraid he will spoil the furniture. It is too expensive to let him do as he pleases. So they give him money and let him go to the streets which are often an open gate to hell. The picture is true.

Poor city lad. There are no wide echoing fields or shady woods where he may wander at his will, giving full play and proper vent to the life forces that run riot in his veins. To him there is no call of the wild. For him there is no company and touch of Nature which the country boy knows and feels.

At home they say of the city boy that he is rude and awkward and destructive. What wonder! The only wonder is he doesn't explode. He is all boy. That's why he is worth raising! Expressions of energy in the boy spell force. He has in him the making of a man. Why scold him and spoil his temper for being what he is? Why spoil him by trying to make him what he is not?

An unspoiled boy—city or country—is about the finest thing on two legs. He is affectionate—under his vest. He is sympathetic if you know how to reach his sympathies. He is honest. And frank. And above all, he stands for fair play. Later on, as a man, he may lose many of these virtues, but as a boy he is admirable.

Give the city boy his chance. Let him go to the country at every opportunity. Let him build a shop in the back yard or in the cellar if he chooses. Give him a room of his own. Of course the room will be topsy turvey betimes. Of course, he is not a young gentleman. He is a boy, God bless him. Let him bring his comrades home with him. Let them together romp and raise Cain. Give the city boy a vent. The country-raised boy has beaten the city-raised boy because he has had a better chance.—Des Moines News.

Making a Good Citizen.

A 13-year-old Italian boy lately prepared an essay on the duties of citizenship, for a club in New York. Among the rules which he laid down are the following:

"If I want to be a good citizen I must be true to my country, true to my state and true to my city. If I do not vote I will not be doing my duty. I must have my own judgment to vote for the man I think is best qualified for the office for which he has been nominated. If I don't I won't be doing my duty. I must not let anybody bribe me to vote for a man I think not fitted for an office. It will also be my duty to be industrious and self-supporting, so as not to be a burden and a nuisance to the public. I must pay taxes, so that the government can be maintained and the officers of the government paid, because the government is for my good. When it is necessary I must help to maintain order and always be ready for public service, and in case of war serve my country. I should know the history of my country and be an intelligent reader and close observer of current events."

Russia's Purchases.

Russia bought from the United States in 1903 nearly \$20,000,000 worth of goods, which is double the average for previous years, and sold the United States nearly \$11,000,000 worth, which is an increase of 50 per cent over previous years.

We give a man credit for being level-headed if he isn't above our level.

Ayer's