

Second Cousin Sarah

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

CHAPTER XI.

Sarah Eastbell did not go to Worcester the next day—did not remember her promise to accompany her cousin Reuben—did not know even the man with the big beard who leaned over the bedside and called her by her name.

The crisis had come, and Sarah Eastbell had a battle to fight with brain fever, or with a strange delirium which was akin to it. When she came back to herself, she lay as powerless as Grandmother Eastbell at St. Oswald's, of whom she first thought, along with the floating fancy that she was in one of the wings of the almshouses, and that the old woman was not far away. A fortnight had passed then, and the face of the nurse had almost died out of her memory.

"How—is—grandmother?" she asked with difficulty, and pausing at each word.

"She is well."

"Will — you — tell — her — that — I'm — better, please?"

"Yes."

Sarah Eastbell remained satisfied with the promise, and was silent for awhile. She slept a great deal that day and the next, and ate but little, and it was doubtful whether the complete prostration which followed would not terminate the old life of Second-cousin Sarah.

The woman who attended upon her, and who she began to recollect was the firework-maker's sister, was kinder than she had ever been, and watched her with great gravity of interest as she hovered on the border-land of life and death.

Lucy talked to her also with a strange earnestness of those divine truths which are not to be dwelt upon in the pages of a story book, and Sarah Eastbell listened with reverence.

Reuben Culwick advanced on tiptoe into the room, and walked to the bedside of his cousin, whose face brightened at the sight of him. She was very weak, and could not reach her hand toward him, but there was a faint smile of welcome on her wan face.

"Well, Sarah—better, I hope?" he said, in the cheeriest voice he could assume. "Oh, yes, you are," said Reuben, confidently; "you have got your wits back. I was at Worcester yesterday afternoon."

"And saw grandmother?"

"I told her that you were staying at Hope Lodge with me and the Jenningses, for change of air; that you had not been very well, but that I should bring you down to Worcester shortly. I haven't quite done with my news yet. Sarah, do you remember that bad sovereign Tom asked you to change at the grocer's for him?"

"Ah, yes!"

"Well, I have been to the grocer's; I have stated the matter with lucidity and eloquence; I have appealed to the grocer's feelings; I have made him shed tears over his own sugar; and he says that rather than prosecute, after my gentlemanly explanation, he'll see the authorities beaten."

"I am very grateful for the trouble that you have taken," said Sarah, "and I feel very happy now."

"Then I'll leave you with those sensations to get strong upon."

He went down stairs, where was John Jennings up to his eyes in powder, and colored fire, and "lengths," the picture of a busy man.

"Where's Tots?" he asked.

"She doesn't go into the back room for fear of disturbing your cousin. But she plays in your apartments, and Lucy looks in and makes sure that she is not up to mischief."

"She is not in my room," said Reuben. "Perhaps she is in mine."

"Go and see," said Reuben, peremptorily.

He took a turn round the back garden, then walked to the front of the house, and stood looking up and down the street with grave earnestness. Presently John and his sister came out together, white and scared, and joined him on the pavement.

"She's gone! You have lost her!" he exclaimed.

"It's—it's very strange," said John; "but we can't find her anywhere."

Reuben did not wait to hear any more, but ran at his utmost speed to the end of the street, in the hope of overtaking the little feet that he thought might have strayed in the direction of the market gardens where he had been accustomed to take her. But there was no sign of his adopted girl, and he may say at once that Reuben never saw her in Hope street again. As suddenly as she had crossed his life, bettering and brightening it as by a strange influence for good, so suddenly did she pass away, leaving not a trace behind by which to follow her.

When he came back to Hope Lodge, baffled and heart-sick, when to all the inquiries which he made there was only one answer returned, that no one had seen poor Tots, the stern consciousness came to him that he had lost her—that the little daughter, friend, companion, would never again be as sunshine to his home.

In three weeks' time Reuben Culwick had learned to despair. He did not know how much he had loved the child till the house was destitute of her presence, and the little chair stood empty in the corner, and he could only look at it through his tears. Sometimes he wished that she had died, and that he had seen her buried, rather than have lost her thus, and he left to wonder where she was, and in whose hands. He became a grave man, who did not care for intrusion on his thoughts, and who resented it with bitterness.

Three weeks had passed, we repeat, and they were like three years to Reuben Culwick. His second-cousin was getting well then, although coming back to strength by slow degrees, and he was glad of that, if he showed but little sign of rejoicing in those dull days. The three weeks had turned, and the fourth week had commenced with work on the 'Trumpet' that there was no setting aside—which was all the better for Reuben at that time, and took him out of himself—when Sarah Eastbell found strength to walk downstairs, supported by Miss Jennings on one side and by Reuben on the other.

The next day Sarah was well enough to

be of use a little, and she volunteered her services to John Jennings, who was still at work for the Saxo-Gotha. Sarah found that she could manage "the lengths" better than John Jennings, and the long pipe-like strips which were filled with a thin vein of gunpowder, and were afterward twisted into a variety of shapes, grew under her hands rapidly. John Jennings was struck with this rapidity, and pondered over it.

"You are handy, Sarah," John said, dreamily regarding her; "it is astonishing how quickly you have taken to the business."

"If I am of assistance, I am glad."

"What a comfort you would be to a man a week or two before November, when he doesn't know which way to turn."

"Oh!" said Sarah, "I shall be a long way from here before November."

"You are not obliged to go away without you like," he said.

"Oh, yes, I am."

"You are very handy," he said again, "and I'm not so old as you would fancy by a good many years, and you are quite a young woman. When you are well and strong, we might make a match of it, Sarah. Why not?"

"Good gracious!" said Sarah Eastbell. It was her first offer, and she took it with a fair amount of philosophy, despite her weakness. She was more astonished than confused, although there was a flickering of color for an instant on her cheeks.

"I don't want you to hurry over it," he continued, confidentially, "or to tell Lucy anything about it yet, or even to drop a hint to your cousin Reuben."

"But I have quite made up my mind never to marry, thank you."

"I haven't jumped at this in a hurry. Ever since you have been here, I have been thinking how forlorn you'll be when the old lady dies at Worcester—how lonely I shall be when Lucy marries and goes away."

"Is she likely to marry soon?"

"I sometimes fancy that your cousin Reuben and she understand each other."

"That must be wrong," said Sarah, decisively; "I don't think she likes Reuben much."

"You are a bad judge, Sarah. You didn't think I liked you much."

"Oh, you are not coming around again to that foolish subject!" cried Sarah. "Shop!"

"A customer!" cried John Jennings, very much astonished. "Bless my soul, so there is!"

John Jennings peered over the little wire blind that screened the back parlor from vulgar gaze, and when he had regarded the customer sufficiently he went into the shop, and faced him behind the grimy counter.

"What can I have the pleasure of showing you, sir?" he said, politely.

"Do you know any one in the street of the name of Culwick?"

"He lives here, sir."

"Then why didn't you tell me so, instead of blinking your eyelids at me?" shouted the man, so fiercely that John Jennings backed against a gross of rock-et-sticks, and brought them rattling to the floor.

"Do you know who I am?" the newcomer said pompously; "have you any idea whom you are addressing? I am Reuben Culwick's father."

"Oh, sir," said John; "will you please do us the honor of stepping in?"

He opened the door, and Simon Culwick of Sedgely Hill followed him into the parlor, where his grandniece whom he had never seen was still working busily at the "lengths."

"I'll send my sister down to you, sir, at once. You'll find that she can talk to you better than I can," said John.

Sarah Eastbell, ignorant of the visitor's name and position, glanced furtively at her great-uncle when she was sure that he was not looking at her, and thought what an overgrown and ugly man he was. Suddenly his deep voice bayed forth at her and startled her.

"What do you want for it?" he said, and she looked at him now, and discovered that he was staring at the picture above the looking glass.

"For that, sir?" she answered; "I don't think that it's for sale."

"What's the good of it up there?"

"I don't know, sir."

er is well known. He is not a gentleman like the son is—not a bit of a gentleman—but a proud, hard man, without a morsel of love for his own boy."

"You must have had all this stuff from Reuben. He talks against his father all day here, I see."

"He never mentions his name. Once when I spoke of his father he was very angry with me."

"And who are you?" he rejoined.

"A poor girl whom he tried to rescue from the streets—his second-cousin—very much below him in the world, who was first afraid of him and doubtful of him, but who has learned to love him very much for all his kindness. If I am ever saved," she cried enthusiastically—"and Lucy thinks I shall be—it will be Cousin Reuben who led me to the light, when there was nothing but darkness about my awful life. He wanted time to turn round!" she cried scornfully, "why, he's above all help from mortal man, sir."

"He saved you, and you are his second-cousin. 'What's your name?' he said sharply."

"Sarah Eastbell."

"The girl who tried to pass bad money down in Worcester?"

"Ah—yes! That's true, sir, most of it."

"But not all of it," said the thin hard voice of Lucy Jennings, who had come downstairs noiselessly. "There was no guilty knowledge. The money was given her to pass by a scoundrel."

"It is the usual story—every one trumps up that excuse."

"Her story will be believed; it has been already believed," said Lucy.

"I don't care whether it is or not. It is no business of mine," replied Simon Culwick.

His head began to move again amid the creases of his thick black stock in its old mechanical fashion, and the eyes were upturned to the picture once more.

"Do you want to sell that thing?" he said to Lucy. "That old painting over the looking glass?"

"Is it worth anything?" asked Lucy curiously.

"A couple of pounds, perhaps, if it were touched up. I would not mind giving a couple of pounds for it, as a speculation."

"It's worth considering," said Lucy.

The love of the man for pictures seemed to affect his mind; he woke up to so much interest and anxiety concerning John Jennings' one specimen. He had met with a surprise here, and it had taken the thoughts of his son out of his head, till Lucy recalled him to himself.

"If you will go upstairs to your son's room and wait for him, I will bring the picture to you."

Mr. Culwick rose at once and toiled with difficulty up the stairs, like a man anxious to be rid of objectionable company. He went into his son's room, where the appointments surprised him by contrast with the room which he had quitted; where there was evidence of comfort, if not of luxury, and where there were many shelves of books. He walked to the table and looked down at the letters and papers; he walked to the window and looked out into Hope street; he walked to the mantelpiece and peered in a short-sighted way at a photograph, from which he suddenly bobbed his head back as though he had been stung. It was the portrait of his wife, reverently enshrined in a gold frame. There was a huge armchair in the room, into which he cautiously lowered himself, and set his hat by his side; but he rose with the alacrity of youth again as Lucy came in with the picture in her hand.

"I hope it will amuse you till your son returns," said Lucy, "and I give him the good news that you are waiting for him. It will be good news, surely, for you have come to this house in a contrite spirit, to forgive him, and to ask forgiveness in return for your own hardness of heart—to forget the past, and be friends."

"Pooh! Nothing of the sort."

(To be continued.)

High Time She Came Home.

The old saying that "praise to the face is open disgrace" is still firmly believed by some people. A young woman who was brought up by her New England grandmother, a notable house-keeper and example of thrift, says that the adage was a household guide in her family.

One day her grandmother went off to pay a visit, and the ambitious girl of sixteen scrubbed and polished, swept and dusted until it seemed as if there were nothing left to do. Her heart beat high with the hope of a word of commendation as she sat in the kitchen doorway, waiting for her grandmother's return.

When the old lady arrived she looked about her with keen eyes, but there seemed no chance for criticism, until, stooping down under the kitchen table, which stood near the open door, she saw that the south wind had wafted in a bit of dust from the hen-yard.

With eyes that would twinkle in spite of herself, she pointed an accusing finger at this evidence of carelessness, and said soberly:

"Janet, my dear, I see there's a feather in the kitchen. It's high time I came home!"

Imme.

Towne—It's a shame the way these big corporations put the screws on the people.

Browne—Never mind—they'll have a hot time in the next world.

Towne—If I could believe that there'd be some consolation in that thought, but corporations, you know, have no souls.—Philadelphia Press.

Sacrifice Sale.

The handsome young man halted at the beauty tent in the church fair.

HOMESICK.

It stands afar midst happy, sunlit fields
A little farm house, brown and old,
With ancient, ivy-covered, buttressed
walls,
And straw-thatched roof of gold;
And I a wanderer from the dusty town,
Grown weary of its heavy ways,
Wistful, from off the hot white road, look
down
And long for the old days.

For there the nights were blessed with
quiet sleep,
The days were filled with happy cares,
And there the skies seemed ever blue,
and there
Was time for peace and prayers;
While youth and laughter, joy and hope,
and love
Sang in my heart a happy song.
Ah me! a song that's hushed for ever-
more,
The crowded streets among.

And now I stand and gaze, with heavy
heart,
Across dear fields in longing sore,
To where another woman, happier far,
Looks from the low, half-door,
Oh, little farm house, old, and brown,
and sweet,
I wake when all the world's at rest
And think of you, and long for the old
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And the untroubled breast!
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EMPEROR OF JAPAN.



Emperor Mutsuhito, of Japan, bears the ancient title of mikado, meaning "the honorable gate," but in all diplomatic documents he is addressed as Kotel. He was born at Kyoto, Nov. 3, 1852, and ascended the throne of the 13th of February, 1897, upon the death of his father, Komei Tenno. The mikado was married Feb. 9, 1889, to Princess Haruko, and five children, son and four daughters, have blessed the union. In 1871 the feudal system was abolished in Japan, but the system of government remained an absolute monarchy until 1889, upon the 11th of February of which year a constitution was promulgated. The emperor now combines in himself the right of sovereignty, and exercises executive powers, with the advice and assistance of cabinet ministers and a privy council, whom he appoints. During the emperor's wise and beneficent reign Japan has forged to the front as one of the important nations of the world to-day.

fluttering about us like a pink snow-storm.

"Roses," said I, looking at the empty stalks insignificantly, "are so apt to fade and wither."

"And potatoes," replied Polly, "get hard and old and knotty and develop 'eyes'."

"That's so," said I, "and it isn't well for a woman to have too many eyes."

"Besides," said Polly, gathering up the fallen leaves and putting them and the stalks in a little pile, "a rose has a heart."

"So has a potato," I remarked.

"But you have to dig through so much exterior to find it," declared Polly. "And the average man is too lazy to dig. He wants the good things in life's repast set out on his plate, not hidden under it."

"And yet," said I, "discovering the heart in a woman who doesn't wear hers on the surface, and who seems cold and unfathomable, is like discovering a birthday gift under your plate in the morning. The surprise is very sweet."

"Perhaps," said Polly, meditatively, holding a rose against her cheek, so that you couldn't tell which was which, "but how many men are going to hunt for the surprise? Nine times out of ten the poor little potato's virtues remain hidden to the end of her days, when she is left on the matrimonial kitchen shelf along with the onions and the cabbages. A woman," and Polly put the last rose in the epergne and stood off to admire the effect, "like a rose, is meant to be ornamental. If she can't be useful, too, so much the better, but it isn't absolutely necessary. There are so many potatoes in the world—twenty to every rose. Why, look at the woman's clubs; they are full of potatoes, nice, solid, substantial, useful ladies, who make the world good and intellectual and stupid and uninteresting. Look at the reform organizations and the woman's rights