

Second Cousin Sarah

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

CHAPTER I.

It was wintry weather down in Worcester, though the May of the year in which our story opens was already two weeks old. It was a late spring, the country people said, meaning that the hail, and sleet, and rain, and bitter east winds were still in the ascendant, and that there was not a glimpse of sunshine from week's end to week's end. Times were hard and business was bad, and people already croaked about the danger to the harvest. It was a world that shivered by the fire still, and waited for a change. Weather-wise folks looked up at the leaden sky every day, shook their heads and said "more wet"; and the wet came down as though they had asked for it, and washed out the energy from three-fourths of the human-kind in Worcester.

It had been raining all day in the loyal city, just as it had rained the day before, and the day preceding that. It was raining at ten o'clock in the evening in as vigorous and lively a fashion as though it had just commenced, and the wind had turned out with extra strength to add to the dark night's discomfort. Worcester had lost heart and given up and gone to bed, and at the railway station, where, by the tables, one could ascertain that a train was behind time by three minutes, there was a faint semblance of life, more depressing than the elements. There was one fly, with its driver asleep in the interior of its vehicle, and its drabby horse coughing like a man. There was a wet old gentleman, glittering like a beetle in his waterproof as he walked up and down, under the dim gas lamps of the station. There was a railway porter's head peering occasionally from a half-open door, and declining to allow its body to come forward until the glaring eyes of the engine were seen advancing through the mists of the night; and there was a short, thin, haggard scrap of a youth, in tattered corduroys and a red comforter, curled up on a porter's truck, and sleeping placidly.

The train that was overdue was not calculated to rouse the officials into energy. It came from a dull, dead branch line, and was going on to Gloucester; it was not likely to land many travelers or take up many at that hour of the night. When it arrived at last, it came into the station noiselessly and in a spiritless condition, as though the steam were low and the engine-driver had just buried his wife, and only one bespotted window was slowly lowered in a third-class carriage, as the train glided to the platform.

From this window an ungloved hand and arm protruded and unlatched the door, and then a stalwart man of four or five and twenty years of age, a bright-faced, brown-bearded man, stepped out, dragged forth a portmanteau and a hat box, stood aside to allow of the brisk entrance of the man in the shiny waterproof, and looked around him in that half-sharp, half-vague manner common to individuals who find themselves in places that are new to them, or have changed much since their last farewell. The guard banged the door to, the engine gave a melancholy wail, and toiled on with its burden; the youth in corduroys sat up on the barrow and stared at the portmanteau and hat box rather than at their owner; the fly-driver, who had roused himself, called out "Carriage, sir?" and not receiving a response, cut the coughing horse viciously under the chin with his whip and drove off at full speed.

The traveler, after a hasty glance at the sky, called out in a sharp, clear voice to the porter:

"I expected a carriage for me to-night."

"What sort of a carriage?"

"A private carriage from Mr. Culwick's, of Sedge Hill. Do you know Mr. Culwick by sight, or his coachman?"

"There has been nothing here but cabs all day—and there's nothing likely to come now, I reckon."

"Do you want anybody to carry your luggage, sir?" asked a weak voice, and the lad who had been dozing away time on the barrow obtruded in an edgewise manner into the conversation. The traveler glanced at him and said:

"It is too heavy for you, my man."

"No, it isn't," said the youth with alacrity. "I'm very strong; I have been waiting for a job all night, sir—if you don't mind, sir—for I'm very strong, I am, indeed!"

The eagerness of the request, the reiteration of his powers, the contrast which his words presented to his white cheeks, and eager, dark eyes, attracted anew the attention of the gentleman for whom no carriage had arrived, before the railway porter turned upon the applicant.

"You get out of this, young shaver; you've been here a sight too long already," cried the porter, "and I've had my hi on you these two hours. It's no use your hanging about as if—"

The boy covered for an instant, and then turned quickly on the man.

"And I'm very strong, sir," he urged again; "may I try? I'll carry it easily; see now!"

The portmanteau was raised and flung upon his shoulder, the other hand caught up the leather hat box, and the white face looked round the burden inquiringly.

"Where to, sir?"

"To Muddleton's Hotel."

The youth strode into the wind and rain, and then the traveler, after giving a tug to his cap, put his hands in the pockets of his coat and followed his guide across and out of the station yard. The youth turned a corner with the luggage, and the proprietor found him leaning against the brick wall of a house when he had turned after him.

"Which way, sir?" he inquired.

"Which way?" echoed the stranger;

"why, straight along there. Don't you know the way?"

"Con't say that I know much about hotels—I haven't been at this kind of work a great while, sir."

"How long?" inquired the traveler, somewhat curiously.

"Three hours and a half."

"Come, that's perseverance, if we take the weather into consideration. You are the lad to make your way in the world, in good time. Three hours and a half. What have you been doing before this?"

"Nothing particular."

The lad trudged on. He wavered more in his gait, and splashed the legs of his companion with superfluous mud and water; and the man walked by his side, studying the roadway and unobservant of the failing efforts of the weak boy whom he had entrusted with a heavy task.

"Who are you, boy?" he said, without looking up. "What have you come to this sleepy city for?"

"I—don't know," was the reply, and a more sullen reply it was than usual, despite its jerkiness.

"Have you run away from home? Is that it?"

The man looked at the lad at this query—looked with a grave earnestness that betokened a keener interest in him than he had hitherto shown.

"If that's it, we are in the same boat, boy," said he. "I ran away from home ever so long ago."

"Because—" said the lad, curious in his turn, and even stopping short for an instant for the answer.

"Because there was no place like home!—no place so comfortably and hard-cornered—and so I put on my hat and walked out. And yet, after all—" he paused and made a clutch at his portmanteau, that he suddenly thought was in peril of slipping from the lad's shoulder—"Here, hold hard, youngster; what's the matter?"

"It's all right, let me be; I can carry it. I said I could," cried the boy, with excitement, and marching himself and luggage away from the touch of the elder man. This sudden effort seemed too much for the overtaxed strength of the porter; he reeled away toward the footpath, and went on with weak and tottering legs for a few moments, when he suddenly collapsed.

"You are ill—you are hurt," said the man.

"No; let me be, I shall get up in a minute. I'm a little bit giddy—the street turned round all of a sudden—but I will go on with the luggage presently."

"Oh, no, you won't," said the man, dryly; "you should have never attempted it. I was a brute not to see—the boy's going to faint."

He put his arms round him and lifted him into the doorway as he might have lifted an infant, and looked again at the white, wan face under the old Scotch cap.

"Poor little beggar!" he muttered; "why did I load him like this, and loaf along by his side. Here, what's your name? Can't you open your eyes, just for a moment, till I—"

Here his anxiety took the form of action, for, still holding the boy's head on his shoulder, he kicked with energy at the door against which he was leaning, and awoke the whole house.

A snuffy old woman, in an old black cap weighed down by grimy artificial flowers, was the first to wrench open the door; she had been sleeping by the fire, sitting up for a late husband, and she appeared with a bound on the doorstep, and nearly fell over the strange couple in her haste.

"Water—a glass of water, please," cried the traveler. "This child has fainted."

"What—who—water—whose child is it?" she called forth. Then she realized the urgency of the case and ran back into the room, returning very quickly with a light in one hand and a glass of water in the other, at the same time as heads peered down the narrow staircase, and some one opened a window above and asked twenty questions in stentorian tones, without getting an answer to one of them.

"You can come into the house, if he ain't going to die, mind you," said the woman. "Has he been run over?"

"No—crushed, that's all. Give me the water. Take off his cap and then let him be. He will get the air that way."

The Scotch cap was twitched off, and the woman and the man who was supporting the lad leaned forward and stared with amazement at two small side-combs which were in the head, and which had been used for fixing and drawing up beneath the Scotch cap a profusion of raven hair.

"Mussy on us, it's a gal!" cried the old woman. "Why, what's her game?"

"Ay, what's her game?" said the man very thoughtfully, as he echoed back the slang question of his interlocutor.

The girl heaved a deep sigh, and put thin hands to her head, as if she missed her cap already.

"She's been shamming," said the old woman, who had grown strangely uncharitable within the last few moments. "She will do if we can get her home," said the traveler. "Are you better?—how do you feel now?" he asked kindly.

"I'm all right," was the slow answer; "I—I—think so. What has been—the—"

Then she stood up slowly, with her hands pressed to her temples; glared from the traveler to the woman with the light, gave a faint little scream of surprise, snatched suddenly at the cap dangling from the fingers of the woman, and with one wild spring forward, passed from them into the rain and wind, and vanished away in the darkness.

The traveler made one or two strides

after her, and then stopped.

"Why should I follow her, and annoy her further?" he said, as he paused.

He remembered that he had given his strange porter no remuneration for services thus abruptly terminated, and started off again; but it was too late, and another memory coming to him that he was leaving his luggage in the street, he went back for it, and discovered that it was being taken into the house by the Samaritans, with a certain amount of undue haste.

"Thank you," he said, politely. He shouldered his portmanteau, picked up his damaged hat case and marched off to Muddleton's Hotel, where the waiter received him urbanely, but was puzzled at the quantity of mud which he brought in along with his luggage.

CHAPTER II.

Sitting in the coffee room of Muddleton's Hotel, his slippered feet planted on the old-fashioned brass fender, the man who had come to Worcester thought out the incidents of the day, and sketched forth a map of progress for the morrow. Warm and dry, and at his ease, the wan face of the masquerader of an hour ago came before him more often than he had bargained for, the girl being apart from his life, and only a stray incident by the wayside of a career that had been eventful and varied.

He was a man of the world, and had seen strange sights and met with strange chances and mischances, and yet he had not been at any time more perplexed than on this night of coming back home. There was a stern story, he was sure, of much privation marking the life of that weak woman who had struggled into a man's dress, and hung about Worcester railway station for man's work and man's wages; and he had experienced privation himself, and lived it down in some degree, not losing sympathy with it, or growing callous to it. Perhaps it was on his conscience that the girl had toiled hard for a sixpence, and he had not rewarded her for her labor. He rang the bell and the waiter entered.

"Is anybody to ask for me?"

"Yes, sir—what name, sir?"

"Reuben Culwick," he replied; "but he—she will not know my name. The party who helped me with my portmanteau from the station, I mean, and who left me in a hurry. She—he is aware that I am staying here for the night; therefore, be good enough to ask him—her—the lad, I mean, or whoever comes," he added with a dash, "into the room to-night or to-morrow morning. Do you understand?" he inquired, as the waiter listened open-mouthed to these rambling instructions.

"Yes, sir—perfectly. Anybody who comes, man or woman. Yes, sir," he said with great briskness.

"Stop one moment," said Mr. Culwick, as the man flitted toward the door; "I shall want a trap to take me to Sedge Hill, and bring me back to Worcester, at ten in the morning," and the waiter having withdrawn, he set himself to his coal-fire studies once more. The instructions which he had given had sufficed to turn the current of his ideas, and the adventure of the night passed away from his mind with the deeper thoughts that followed it.

"And return," he said, and laughed to himself more than once—and odd laughs they were, of various degrees of hilarity, from the hearty and unaffected to the laugh with the inner ring in it, the undercurrent, as it were, of something which was scarcely irony, and which might have been interpreted into a lurking sorrow or regret by any one who had known his history.

"Yes, Reuben," he said when, at a later hour, he was going upstairs to his room, "to return; positively the last appearance of Reuben Culwick at Sedge Hill. Will there be much of a crowd to see the gentleman under those interesting circumstances?"

He had made up his mind to solve the riddle quickly for himself, and at ten in the morning he was standing in front of Mr. Muddleton's Hotel drawing on a pair of gloves and critically inspecting the animal which the proprietor had harnessed to the dog cart. Reuben Culwick looked up and down the street, and thought of his little adventure in Worcester last night. The waiter, not too busy, was standing at the door, interested in the temporary departure of the customer, and Reuben turned to him.

"Has any one called this morning for me?"

"No, sir."

"If any one should call about helping me with the portmanteau last night, give him—half a crown. And ask her to call again," added Reuben Culwick, as he sprang into the trap and drove off.

"Give him a half a crown and ask her to call again," said the waiter, looking after him. "He doesn't know what he's saying. The old man at Sedge Hill will never make him out. A regular Culwick he is, and no mistake about it."

(To be continued.)

In the Dining Car.

With a complacent smile she dragged her small son into a seat in the dining car and made a ferocious grab for the engraved bill of fare. Her clothes and her manner suggested rural districts, but the arrogant gaze that she leveled at the inoffensive bill of fare was intended to denote high breeding. Then the black waiter bent obsequiously over her shoulder.

"Bring us two helpings of chicken," she ordered.

The black man took up the bill of fare, and, with furrowed brow, read over each word.

"Sorry, ma'am," he replied at last, "but we ain't got chicken that way. We has 'em fried and roasted, and I guess the cook might broil 'em, and—"

"No, no. No!" cried the woman. "I mean plates of chicken—prepared any way you have it."

"Oh!" bowed the waiter, "you mean portions."—New York Press.



Mrs. Tupman, a prominent lady of Richmond, Va., a great sufferer with woman's troubles, tells of her cure by Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound.

"DEAR MRS. PINKHAM:—For some years I suffered with backache, severe bearing-down pains, leucorrhoea, and falling of the womb. I tried many remedies, but nothing gave any positive relief."

"I commenced taking Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound in June, 1901. When I had taken the first half bottle, I felt a vast improvement, and have now taken ten bottles with the result that I feel like a new woman. When I commenced taking the Vegetable Compound I felt all worn out and was fast approaching complete nervous collapse. I weighed only 98 pounds. Now I weigh 104 pounds and am improving every day. I gladly testify to the benefits received."—Mrs. R. C. TUPMAN, 423 West 30th St., Richmond, Va.

When a medicine has been successful in more than a million cases, is it justice to yourself to say, without trying it, "I do not believe it would help me"?

Surely you cannot wish to remain weak and sick and discouraged, exhausted with each day's work. You have some derangement of the feminine organism, and Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound will help you just as surely as it has others.

Mrs. W. H. Pelham, Jr., 108 E. Baker St., Richmond, Va., says:

"DEAR MRS. PINKHAM:—I must say that I do not believe there is any female medicine to compare with Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, and I return to you my heartfelt thanks for what your medicine has done for me. Before taking the Vegetable Compound I was so badly off that I thought I could not live much longer. The little work I had to do was a burden to me. I suffered with irregular menstruation and leucorrhoea, which caused an irritation of the parts. I looked like one who had consumption, but I do not look like that now, and I owe it all to your wonderful medicine."

"I took only six bottles, but it has made me feel like a new person. I thank God that there is such a female helper as you."

Be it, therefore, believed by all women who are ill that Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound is the medicine they should take. It has stood the test of time, and it has hundreds of thousands of cures to its credit. Women should consider it unwise to use any other medicine.

Mrs. Pinkham, whose address is Lynn, Mass., will answer cheerfully and without cost all letters addressed to her by sick women. Perhaps she has just the knowledge that will help your case—try her to-day—it costs nothing.

\$5000 FORFEIT if we cannot forthwith produce the original letters and signatures of above testimonials, which will prove their absolute genuineness. Lydia E. Pinkham Medicine Co., Lynn, Mass.

Assyrian Records.

Layard in his "History of Nineveh" mentions that the national records of the Assyrian empire were written on bricks in characters so minute as to be scarcely legible without the aid of a microscope and that, in fact, a variety of this instrument was found among the excavations.

Mrs. A.—Your husband smoking again! Why, I thought you insisted that he should give it up. Mrs. Z.—I did, dear, but then I found such a pretty smoking-jacket at a bargain sale.—Chicago Daily News.

Taking Things.

"I always take things as they come," said the pickpocket as he dexterously relieved the man ahead of him of a watch and purse.

"And I take men as I find them," added the policeman, clutching him gently but firmly by the arm.

Bay of Apia Fish.

In the bay of Apia, in Samoa, a surveying party has discovered 453 distinct specimens of fish.

Perrin's Pile Specific

The INTERNAL REMEDY
No Case Exists it Will Not Cure

Wood Saws, Drag Saws run by steam or gasoline engines, also the latest in saw mill machinery, stump pullers, well drilling machinery, etc., etc.

Write for your needs.
REIERSON MACHINERY CO.
Foot of Morrison Street
Portland Oregon

FERRY'S

Seeds

Cost more—yield more—
save all experimenting—
save disappointments—
years the Standard Seeds.
Sold by all dealers. 1904
Seed Annual postpaid free,
to all applicants.
D. M. FERRY & CO.,
Detroit, Mich.

PISO'S CURE FOR

COUGHS WHERE ALL ELSE FAILS.
Best Cough Syrup. Tastes Good. Use
in time. Sold by druggists.

CONSUMPTION

Coughing

"I was given up to die with quick consumption. I then began to use Ayer's Cherry Pectoral. I improved at once, and am now in perfect health."—Chas. E. Hartman, Gibbstown, N. Y.

It's too risky, playing with your cough.

The first thing you know it will be down deep in your lungs and the play will be over. Begin early with Ayer's Cherry Pectoral and stop the cough.

Three sizes: 25c., 50c., \$1. All druggists.

Consult your doctor. If he says take it, then do as he says. If he tells you not to take it, then don't take it. He knows. Leave it with him. We are willing.
J. C. AYER CO., Lowell, Mass.