

Second Cousin Sarah

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

CHAPTER XXVIII.

It was the old position—and yet with a grave difference. It was the old line of argument cropping up afresh in Sarah Eastbell's mind, with no Reuben Culwick at hand to laugh down her logic—with Reuben Culwick's power to laugh it down, perhaps, wonderfully diminished. John had told of Reuben going to find Mary Holland at Worcester. Lucy had predicted evil would come of it, and Sarah was wretched.

She must give him up—she must not remain that weight upon his life, that clog upon his industry, which she had always thought she was, when her love was not bewildering her too much. Reuben loved her, she hoped still—she did not put faith in those strange suspicions of Lucy Jennings—but Lucy was right in one thing; that she, Sarah Eastbell, could not add to the happiness of Reuben Culwick's life. She could only add to the expenses!—she could only keep him poor. If she stood apart now, perhaps he would marry Mary Holland, and be master of his father's house again, just as he father had wished from the first. She had no right to bind him to his long engagement, to shake his energies, to keep him from "bettering" himself—now that she felt herself as poor—morally, if not legally as poor—as when he came in search of her to Potter's Court. It was a very quiet morning at one of those strange Sunday services; those who came to pray were not disturbed by those who came to scoff; but the evening was boisterous and stormy, and made up for it.

Lucy Jennings read the signs of it in the noisy crowd about the door, and compressed her lips and held her breath at the strong language which echoed from the street as she and Sarah approached, under the escort of two policemen, who were waiting for them.

"You are trembling—you are afraid," said Lucy Jennings to her companion; "will you turn back now?"

"Why?"

"There will be but little religion there to-night," said Lucy, "and you are not a strong woman."

"I was not thinking of the crowd—or of the service," answered Sarah.

"Of what then?" was the sharp inquiry.

"Of all I shall say to Reuben presently. It's very wrong, I know, Lucy, but you must not blame me for thinking of him so much. I can't help it," she said plaintively.

They passed under the arch, where the service commenced, and was interrupted—where the old uproar went on, and the police were tolerably busy for an hour and a half. The service came to an end; the stormy elements subsided; men, women and children went their various ways, and Lucy Jennings and Sarah Eastbell came out together, and confronted Reuben Culwick, who was waiting for them.

"You have come back then!" cried Sarah in her first delight at seeing him, in her new forgetfulness of all that she had resolved upon.

"Yes—it was no use stopping longer in Worcester, Sarah. Well, Lucy?"

"Well," answered Lucy in her old short tones.

"I congratulate you on your sermon, but I wish the surroundings had been more orthodox, and the congregation less quarrelsome; for some of these days—"

Lucy was gone. She had suddenly "doubled," and disappeared down one of the dark turnings, and Sarah and Reuben were left looking at each other.

Sarah Eastbell took his arm and sighed. This might be for the last time that they would ever walk together thus, who could tell? She had made up her mind now, and the sooner the truth was told him the better. He gave her the opportunity to speak at once, and her impulsiveness leaped toward it, indiscreetly, desperately.

"I saw Miss Holland this morning—I gave her the will—and you are as poor as old Job, girl!" he said.

"Yes, Reuben; I have been waiting for this poverty to tell you that you must not share it with me."

"Indeed!" was his quiet answer.

"That you and I are not fit for each other. Oh, Reuben," she cried, "I am quite certain of it now!"

"Because Lucy Jennings—charming Lucy!—has been at her old work, reckoning after her old style, fashioning out human lives after her own purposeless way, choosing for others a path ahead that no human being out of Bedlam could follow, doing everything for the best and for one's good, but scattering dust and ashes right and left like a violent Vesuvius. Come, is not Lucy Jennings at the bottom of the resolution?"

"I have been thinking of this for weeks. I have been seeing the necessity for it."

"Ay, through Lucy's spectacles."

"You would lose money by coming to me," said Sarah mournfully.

"Nonsense! I have begun to save money again."

"Ah, Reuben, let us understand each other at last; don't ask me to say anything, do anything, but end this unnatural position between us. I am unhappy."

"Because of this engagement?"

"Yes."

"You are afraid of poverty with me?"

"I am afraid of making you poorer than you are—of keeping you poorer all your life," said Sarah.

"If this is to be our last meeting, or our last parting, Sarah," he said quickly, "let it be marred by no harsh reminiscence. We are going to say good-by. We have discovered that housekeeping expenses will shipwreck us; that I shall

grow in time a big brute, to whom no second-cousin's devotion will bring comfort. But we need not quarrel over the discovery. We can part friends?"

"Yes," answered Sarah, "the best of friends."

There was something in his manner that she hardly fathomed. She had been more prepared for an angry outburst than for this easy-going style of acquiescence.

"It is hardly justice," he continued, "for you, who would have married a poor man, will not let me marry a poor woman in my turn. You want all the self-sacrifice on one side, Sarah; and even my good luck with my pen is turned into a weapon against me. But," he added, "we will not quarrel. Never an angry word between these two blundering relatives, who do not know their own minds. We will spare each other between this and the York road. We will wait till Miss Holland gives us her opinion on the matter."

"Miss Holland!" cried Sarah Eastbell. "What do you mean?"

"Miss Holland is in the York Road apartments. She came from Worcester with me this afternoon."

"With you! You went to escort her then?"

"No. I went to see her, to tell her the news of her prosperity, and to offer her my congratulations, after which I said good morning."

"Well?" said Sarah, almost sharply now.

"Well, an hour or two afterward she turned up at the railway station, and in common politeness I could but offer her my escort back to town. She was very anxious to see you, she said."

"Ah! she said so," answered his second-cousin. There was no further argument after the introduction of Mary Holland's name into the conversation. The harmony of their last evening together was effectually settled after that. Better to have ended all in a storm of words and tears than in the grace and unnatural silence which followed. Sarah had no idea that she was a jealous woman until then, for Lucy had not made her jealous last night—only roused in her a feeling of intense indignation at the suspicions which she had sown broadcast. But for Reuben Culwick to speak of Mary Holland in this off-hand way was a very different matter; and her heart sank like a stone and refused to stir any more with hope or pleasure, or even surprise.

When they were in the York road Reuben said:

"She is not in good spirits, but I hope Tots has been a companion for her while we have been away."

"Is the child with her?"

"To be sure," said Reuben; "is not Tots—but there, Mary will explain for herself."

"Mary!" echoed Sarah Eastbell.

They went upstairs into the front room on the first floor, where sat by the fire-side the young woman whom we have known by the name of Mary Holland. Tots was in her lap, with her child's arms round her neck, and her little head soothed upon a mother's bosom for the first time in her childish recollections.

"It is her child then?" said Sarah in a low whisper.

"Yes, to be sure," answered Reuben carelessly.

"I am in a dream," murmured Sarah. "But you are very close to the waking," added her cousin Reuben.

CHAPTER XXIX.

There was another inmate of the room which Reuben and his cousin had entered. Lucy Jennings was standing on the hearth rug with her hands clasped together, and her grave white face turned toward mother and child. She had reached home before them, having a better knowledge of the shortest cut to York Road than Reuben had.

Mary looked round as the cousins came in together, and a sad smile flickered on a face grown careworn with anxiety. She did not raise her head from that of her child as Reuben and Sarah advanced, and Reuben said:

"Mrs. Peterson, I have brought an old friend to shake hands with you—to express her regrets for all that past distrust which she has had, as well as I."

Sarah has only heard the first two words.

"Mrs. Peterson!" she exclaimed.

"Then you—you—"

"I was Edward Peterson's wife," she added wearily and sadly—"yes."

"But not in the plot against you, Sarah," said Reuben; "fighting for you in the first instance—writing to me to come to the rescue—kept forever in doubt concerning you—held down at last to silence by the awful threat of her child's death—believing in your safety, through it all, and striving once more for you and against her husband when she feared his treachery had deceived her."

"And he was true to his word," Mary added with a sigh, "for the first time in his life. It is a long story; spare me for a few days the history of a school girl's secret marriage, a bitter repentance, a husband's desertion, a long up-hill fight to forget a past that had become terrible and full of humiliation. I did not know then that Bessie lived, and was one link of love that held me to my old life. I have come to London for a few words of explanation, Sarah; they are made at a sad time," Mary said, "but I could not rest, after Reuben's visit to me—not even for an hour after my husband's death."

"Edward Peterson is dead!" exclaimed Sarah Eastbell.

She was surprised—she hardly knew why, but she was sorry for his death. He

had plotted against her—he would have killed her rather than let her escape without a ransom—but she did not begrudge him his life. And it left Mary a young and pretty widow, too—but what had that to do with it?"

"He died within an hour of your cousin's visit this morning," said Mary.

"And you are here," replied Sarah wonderingly.

"Ah! you cannot understand that," said Mary, "you who will love your husband all your life. But my love was crushed out quickly, and only my duty took me to his bedside—my regret for the last mistake which brought about his death, and his last act of vengeance."

"His last act of vengeance!" repeated Sarah.

"Half an hour after Mr. Culwick had left me, my husband changed suddenly; he wholly realized, and for the first time, that there was no hope for him in this world, and—what did he do?" she added with a shudder.

"He should have asked pardon of you for blighting your life," said Sarah.

"He should have sought pardon of his God," added Lucy Jennings.

"He tore the last will of Sumon Culwick into a hundred pieces, lest I should claim my right to riches by it," answered Mary; "he cursed me, and left me poor."

"But—"

"But I have all the fragments," added Mary, opening a purse heaped to the clasp with small pieces of paper; "see—there they are."

Sarah glanced at them, but did not speak.

"It would be a specimen of patchwork that the law would hardly acknowledge," said the widow, "but you will not dispute the will, Sarah, if I, by patient study and great care, render this testament complete again?"

"No," answered Sarah Eastbell.

"In my husband's lifetime I dared not make him rich; and now, in memory of much kindness, of old trust—of new confidence, may I say?—I have the courage to remain poor."

She held the open purse over the fire, and the fragments fell from it into the red coals. Reuben and Sarah started forward to arrest her hand, but it was too late.

"You should not have done this, Mary," cried Reuben.

"It was not a just will," answered the widow; "I told your father so when he placed it in my hands, although I did not tell him that never in all my life should I avail myself of his munificence."

"He had wronged your father in some manner which we cannot even guess at—but which he owned himself. You told me that," said Reuben.

"He was strange that day. It might have been the ravine of a madman."

"As that," said Lucy, pointing to the fire, "was the act of a madwoman."

"I think not," answered Mary confidently; "it is an act of justice to the man entitled to his father's money, and who will marry this brave young lady in possession."

"She has given me up," said Reuben dryly; but Mary turned from one to another and read no doubt or distress on either face. Here were two lives in the sunshine at last.

"I believe it was always Simon Culwick's wish that Reuben should have this money," continued Mary; "he did not know of my marriage, and I dared not tell him for my home's sake, and so we went on from one complication to another. There were only two wills; the first left all to his sister, the second to me—and the second I could not, and did not care to prove. The answer to the riddle came round in the way I thought it might do, if I were watchful and reserved—for I knew in what high estimation Sarah Eastbell held her cousin, and how she had made up her mind to give an obstinate man his rights. She and I together planned more ways than one—she very artless, I very artful perhaps—but the best and simplest and happiest way has come without our plotting."

"But you?" said Sarah and Reuben almost together.

"You two are not likely to forget me, or my little daughter here—to shut me from your friendship—to help me in the world, should I want help."

"Help!" echoed Reuben; "why, it is all yours."

"You can't prove that," said Mary emphatically, "and I would prefer to be dependent on your bounty. I will not be too proud to ask for a pension, when my little girl grows up and tires of her mother."

"The future, for you and Tots, you will leave to Sarah and me," said Reuben; "you will trust in those whom you have trusted so much already."

"As they will trust in me now," said the unselfish woman, holding out her hands to them.

It is a fair picture on which the curtain is rung down—on perfect confidence, and true affection and prosperity—on life opening out before these three with no shadows on the scenes beyond. Reuben and Sarah will live happily forever afterward—as young couples always should in books—and Mary and her daughter will be their faithful friends and loving companions to the end of life.

In the red glow of the sunset of our story, stands poor Lucy Jennings—grave and stony as the Libyan sphinx—commenting but little upon the happiness about her, and yet feeling that it reaches to her heart, and makes her more like other women.

Reuben's brother-in-law, one Thomas Eastbell, will not visit Worcestershire again, and Reuben's wife will not learn for years of his disappearance in the Australian bush—where we can afford to let the last of our villains hide himself.

In the bright early morning, gazing from the window of her room at the fair landscape beyond, with the silvery laughter of little children ringing upward from the lawn, and with her husband's arm linked within her own, Second-cousin Sarah will talk no longer of Sedge Hill being an unlucky house.

(The end.)

Science AND INVENTION

The liquefaction of gelatin in old canned meats has been found by Dr. Grixiotti to be due to bacteria. As animals were poisoned both by injection and feeding, he concludes that canned meats that splash on being shaken are dangerous unless boiled before use.

The Harvard Observatory announces the discovery, by Professor Wendell, that the asteroid Iris, which was first seen in 1847, exhibits a variation of light resembling that of the new asteroid Eros, which was discovered in 1898. Its periodic change in the light of Iris takes place in about six hours, and amounts to two or three-tenths of a magnitude, which is much less than the amount of change exhibited by Eros.

A new method of producing artificial respiration is claimed by Professor Shafer, of Edinburgh, to be much more effective in cases of drowning and asphyxiation than any other. Placing the subject in a prone position, the operator applies pressure with his hands to the lower ribs, and repeats this about thirteen times a minute by swinging himself backward and forward. The common moving the subject's arms is condemned as of little value.

This descriptive phrase is suggested by the grotesque appearance of an animal recently added to the collection of the New York Zoological Park, the blue gnu. It has been said to have the tail and hind quarters of a horse, the legs of a deer, the neck and horns of a buffalo, and a nondescript head which gives it a most fantastic look. The oddity of its appearance is increased by the extraordinary postures it assumes when disturbed. It comes from South Africa.

The old question of the origin of the extreme saltness of the Dead Sea has received a new answer. William Ackroyd, after showing that the soil and rocks can have furnished but a fraction of the quantity of salt that has collected in the Dead Sea basin, proceeds to argue that the most important source of supply of this salt is atmospheric transportation by winds from the Mediterranean. This view he thinks is confirmed by the fact that the ratio of chlorine to bromine in the Dead Sea is the same as in the Mediterranean.

The perspectartigraph is an ingenious instrument with which Otto Eichengerger, of Geneva, makes it easy for the amateur artist to give accurate perspective to landscapes or drawings of any objects. A folding box opens to form a table, and near the top of its extensible sides a telescope is so mounted that as it is moved about in following the details of any view a pencil is made to draw a corresponding line on a sheet of paper beneath. Crossed hairs in the telescope give precision, while the pencil is kept upon the paper by sliding up and down in a suitable holder. Beautiful drawings are made with little or no practice, and specimen work exhibited includes a panorama of the Alps and a view of Geneva.

It is reported from Canadian sources that the government of the Province of Ontario is considering the advisability of withdrawing from sale or lease the as yet unsold nickel lands within its territory, and reserving them for the use of the British imperial government in the manufacture of armor plate and guns. The Ontario nickel deposits, and those of the Island of New Caledonia, a French penal colony in the South Pacific Ocean, are at present the world's most prolific sources of nickel. The metal is not widely distributed. But in Austria a process has been discovered for the manufacture of bronze, which is said to be equal to nickel-steel for making great guns, and the Austrian government has decided to continue the use of bronze instead of nickel-steel for that purpose.

STORY OF STRANGE BATTLE.

Runaway Slaves Resist Attempt to Capture Them by Soldiers.

On Aug. 24, 1816, occurred a unique and but little known battle, in which within the Spanish boundary, United States forces, with Indian allies, after the conclusion of our war with Great Britain, which we call the war of 1812, fought against negroes using British ammunition and having, like us, Indian allies, says the Chattanooga Times.

Colonel Nichols, a British commander, had built on the east bank of the Apalachicola River (where Fort Gadsden afterward stood) a fort for a refuge for runaway negroes, that they, with Indians, might attack the frontier settlers. It was garrisoned with British and became an Indian rendezvous and fugitive negro slaves settled for some fifty miles along the river, defying the governments of Spain and of our country, but it does not appear that they ever attacked the frontier.

After the war of 1812 closed the British withdrew their garrison, but left the fort in possession of the negroes. These had Indian allies, and a

negro, Garcia, was their leader. The Chattahoochee and Flint form the Apalachicola at the Florida and Georgia boundary, and the fort commanded the Apalachicola and Flint and was a refuge for runaway slaves and a menace to the border settlers. It was on a high bluff projecting into the river, a deep swamp in the rear, and a creek above and below. A parapet fifteen feet high and eighteen feet thick and nine pieces of artillery supplemented the natural advantages. There was plenty of ammunition in the two magazines and the British had left 3,000 stands of arms. But the result showed how feeble are such defenses in the hands of men who do not know how to use them.

Who were the aggressors may never be positively known. We have only our own side of the story. Colonel Clinch, United States army, at Camp Crawford, above, on the Chattahoochee, was expecting provisions, stores and artillery from Apalachicola Bay, and had instructions to reduce the fort in case it opposed their passage. He started down stream in boats with 116 men, in two companies, under Major Muhlenburg and Captain Taylor, encountering on the way a slave-hunting party of Creek Indians under Major McIntosh, on their way to capture the negroes for their owners. These were joined by another party, and the Indians agreed to co-operate with Clinch. Information was received that Garcia and a Choctaw chief had been down the bay and claimed to have killed some Americans and captured a boat. Clinch's force landed near the fort, the Indians were placed to prevent communication and an irregular fire kept up, to which the besieged replied ineffectively with artillery. It is said that some days before some Indian chiefs had demanded the fort's surrender, and that the commander said he had been put in command by the British and intended to sink any American vessels trying to pass, and would blow up the fort when unable to hold it, after which he had hoisted the red flag with the British jack above. This story may have been invented or enlarged, for Americans under the circumstances would be disappointed at lacking an excuse for attack, and McIntosh was on a slave hunt.

The vessels below came up within four miles, a place was chosen for a battery opposite the fort, the forces of Muhlenburg and Taylor were also placed on the west bank, McIntosh and the Indians with some Americans invested the rear and on the morning of the 24th two gunboats took position in front of the battery and fire was opened on them from a thirty-two pounder in the fort, the reply to which was so successful that speedily a hot shot exploded one of the fort's magazines, after which the defense was impracticable. The garrison of about 100 effectives included about twenty-five Choctaws. Of the women and children, over 200 in number, not more than fifty escaped the explosion. The besiegers suffered no loss. The affair reads like a fight in the Philippines.

A council of Indians condemned Garcia and the Choctaw chief to death for the previous murder of the Americans. The Spanish negro fugitives were delivered to the Spanish agent, the American to Colonel Clinch for their owners. A Seminole party coming down the river to help the fort heard of its fall and went home.

"Don't Forget."

Many years ago, writes Thomas Bailey Aldrich in "Pongapog Papers," a novel Boston publisher used to keep a large memorandum book on a table in his private office. The volume always lay open, and was in no manner a private affair, being the receptacle of nothing more important than hastily scrawled reminders to attend to this thing or that.

It chanced one day that a very young, unfledged author, passing through the city, looked in upon the publisher, who was also the editor of a famous magazine. The unfledged had a copy of verses secreted about his person. The publisher was absent, and young Milton sat down and waited.

Presently his eye fell upon the memorandum book, lying there spread out like a morning newspaper, and almost in spite of himself he read, "Don't forget to see the binder," "Don't forget to mail E. his contract," "Don't forget H.'s proofs," and so forth.

An inspiration seized upon the youth. He took a pencil, and at the tail of this long list of "don't forgets" he wrote, "Don't forget to accept A.'s poem."

He left his manuscript on the table and disappeared. That afternoon, when the publisher glanced over his memoranda, he was not a little astonished at the last item; but his sense of humor was so strong that he did accept the poem—it required a strong sense of humor to do that—and sent the lau a check for it, although the verses remain to this day unprinted.

Can Claim Damage.

In Mexico the family of a dead duelist can claim support from the person who shot him.

The masculine idea of an intellectual woman is the one who is as thin as a match and wears glasses.