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Second Cousin Sarah

BY THE AUTHOR OF "ANN JUDGE SPINSTER," "LITTLE RATE KIBBY," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XIV.

Two years after the events recorded in our last chapter, there was a Sunday service of a peculiar character held under a railway arch, in one of the darkest streets of a dark neighborhood lying between the Lower Marsh and the York road, Lambeth. The place of worship, the worshippers, and the one who presided and prayed, were all strange together, and there was much for skin-deep piety to protest against, and for irreverence to scoff and jeer at. It was only the downright earnestness of these fugitive atoms scraped together here, that put forth its claims to the respect of those who had time to think of the odd forms in which religion may assert itself. Amongst the myriads who turn their backs on church or chapel orthodox, there are still a few who chafe to seek God in some fashion.

Of the tenets of this community it is not our purpose or right to inquire too closely in these pages. The preaching was simple, the earnestness was manifest, the one text seemed forgiveness to sinners, and the one appeal was for their repentance before the hour was too late. That which was most remarkable in the service was the fact of its being conducted by a woman—a tall, hollow-eyed female—with a touch of fanaticism in her extravagant gestures and her high-pitched voice, and in the sermon which she preached to a ragged and unkempt crowd of women and children, three-fourths of whom were full of a grave, deep interest, and the remaining fraction very noisy, and watching its opportunity to turn a portion of the discourse into ridicule.

These discontents were huddled together near the door, a grinning, coughing and grinning mob, whilst over their heads peered occasionally a policeman's helmet, a sign of peace and order, that was followed by much horse play and ironical comment on the proceedings, as it disappeared.

It had been a noisy night at Jennings' railway arch, where we resume our story; the preacher had been more than usually powerful and the opposition more than commonly opposed to her; but the service had reached its conclusion. From the background of the congregation there stepped suddenly a tall, well-dressed young woman with her veil down, and room was made for her into the inner circle of rags and tatters by which Lucy Jennings was surrounded.

"May I speak to you for a few moments in private?" asked the stranger in a low voice.

There was a low breath of astonishment, as Lucy Jennings surveyed her heroine. Sarah Eastbell had certainly changed in two years—for the better, too, being a tall, healthy, handsome young woman now; but she had not altered out of all knowledge of her friends and acquaintances. There was the same steady outlook from the dark eyes; there was something of the same sadness, or depth of thought, expressed upon her face, though the pallor had passed away, and there was faint rose tinges on the cheeks, which Lucy had seen last week with a fever from which she had helped to save her.

"I know you by your voice," said Miss Jennings, stolidly, "and I have a memory that does not fall me. I am above taking offense with any living soul, or attributing to any human being motives for actions which she has not been explaining," said Lucy Jennings; "but coming on the Lord's Day—I will not under any circumstances—devote myself to anything but his service."

She crossed her thin hands upon the bosom of her dress, and looked up at the stained roof of the railway arch, over which a low rumbling train was rambling at the moment.

"I will call on you to-morrow, if you will give me your address," said Sarah Eastbell.

Lucy Jennings hesitated before she answered, as though an insuperable objection to renew their acquaintance asserted itself too strongly to be resisted; then she said:

"I shall be in Hope street to-morrow at eleven. I will wait for you there."

Lucy Jennings moved her head slightly, and Sarah Eastbell left her surrounded by her converts.

As Sarah went out of the place one of the unconverted picked her pocket of a cambric handkerchief, and was disappointed at not finding her purse, which she had left at home.

Sarah Eastbell was disturbed greatly by this meeting with Lucy Jennings. Her reception had not been what she had anticipated; there had been a coldness, almost a repulse, in lieu of that welcome which she had expected at her hands. Still the young lady from Sedge Hill, Worcester, was of a nature not to be easily daunted, and she had come to London in hot haste, and only attended by her maid, on a mission of importance.

The next day at eleven she was in Hope street, where she had been the day before making inquiries, and finding out the new vocation of Miss Jennings after a great deal of trouble and perseverance. Hope street had changed more than herself in the two years since she had quitted the place. The Save-Gotha Gardens were no more, and two rows of small brick houses formed a street on their site. There were railway arches crossing the road, and in place of the house of Jennings, Fireworks maker to the Court, were a black heap of ruins, shored up by beams, and fenced around by a boarding.

At eleven to the minute, Lucy Jennings, in the rustiest of black, and with large cotton gloves three sizes too large for her, came along the street, striding like a man. It was with the same inflexible cast of countenance which daunted Sarah Eastbell last night that she advanced, and the outstretched hand of the younger woman was taken almost with reluctance, and afterwards dropped coldly.

"I hope you will not detain me very long," said Sarah Eastbell, "as I have a great many calls to make this morning. We will walk Myatt's Fields way; and now to save time—for time is valuable to me—what is your first question?"

please. I ask it as a favor from an old friend."

"He lives in Drury Lane—No. 700—at the Ironmonger's."

An empty cab passed at this moment, and Sarah Eastbell seized her parcel. The vehicle stopped, and Sarah and John Jennings, the latter with evident reluctance, got into it.

"Now, what has happened?" said Sarah, after the cabman had been told his destination and had driven on; "it is a long story, but pray get it over before we reach Reuben's house."

"It's a short story," said John, "and soon told. After you left Hope street I took a cab, and let me in for a lot of money; we were all in trouble and in a wuddle, and the brokers were in, when Reuben thought of the picture which his father wanted to buy."

"Ah! I remember," cried Sarah.

"He got an artist friend to see it, and he said that it was worth two hundred pounds as it was, and would be worth a bundle and the brokers were in, when Reuben thought of the picture which his father wanted to buy."

"I am sorry to hear this. Why does he know the picture?"

"When I tried hard to be—and failed—when misfortune came—and it came heavily to him, and in more shapes than one—he gave up, as you say."

"I'll not believe it," cried Sarah Eastbell indignantly; "he was never a coward, there was nothing in his nature to make him one. He was the bravest and best of men."

"In the idea of what is best and bravest, possibly," replied Miss Jennings, "but that man is a coward who turns his face from heaven because trouble has come to him—who grows rebellious, discontented, angry—who will not accept trial as his due—who goes from bad to worse in sheer defiance who believes in himself, and his own miserable errors."

"But you must not think, Lucy, because he will not listen to your doctrine, that he is altered for the worse. If he never was a religious man—I don't know, I can't say whether he was or not—still he was always kind and true. Tell me where he is, and I will go and see him."

"Why should I explain to you?" said Lucy, "I belong to the old set from which I am apart. I am utterly alone."

"Your brother John—he—"

"He is afraid of me—the poor wretch ran away from me long ago."

"I wish to be of service to you, and to Reuben, and to your brother John—the three associated with my happy days in Hope!"

"Happy days!" said Lucy mockingly; "and you look back at them cheerfully, of course, from the grand house which belongs, by right, to Reuben Culwick."

"Which I wish that I could give him."

"Is that true?"

"Yes," answered Sarah, returning the steady gaze into her eyes, "as I hope to live."

"There's a deal of gratitude left still, Sarah Eastbell—riches have not spoiled you yet, as they may presently. I wish, now," she added, "that you came to my Sunday services."

She strode away from Sarah Eastbell, leaving her motionless for a while, till Sarah recollected that the meeting had been all in vain, and ran after her.

"You—you have not told me where Reuben Culwick lives," Sarah gasped forth as she came up with her.

"And I never will! You can do no good—you are a foolish child who will only make him worse," she said, turning away again.

"It is you, then, that would keep him poor. It is you who hate him, Lucy Jennings!" Sarah, indignant at last, hurried on without paying heed to Sarah Eastbell's reproaches. She was very white, but very firm. The interview had terribly disturbed her; the old world, even yet, was not to be regarded with the stolidism of a pure soul apart from it; but no good could arise from this weak young woman's meeting with Reuben Culwick, she was sure.

"Better as it is," she muttered; "he said that he would never see her in his poverty."

It was at this juncture that a white-faced man, perfectly destitute of eyes, then, weak, babbly John Jennings burst out crying, and put his right coat sleeve before his eyes.

A little gloved hand touched his arm and lowered it.

"Isn't this rather childish, John?" said Sarah, in a kind reproach.

EVENTS OF THE DAY

GALE DRIVES FIRE. Prairie Fire Sweeps Over Oklahoma With Great Damage.

Lawton, Okla., March 5.—Driven by a terrific gale from the north, which at times reached the velocity of 90 miles an hour, a prairie fire swept over thousands of acres of Kiowa and Comanche counties last night, destroying hundreds of farm buildings and much live stock, made 1000 persons homeless, caused the death of several persons, threatened a number of towns and swept away scores of buildings in the outskirts of towns.

The losses from wind and fire reported to date follow: Hobart, \$4000; Vinson, \$3000; Lawton, \$10,000; small country towns, aggregate, \$50,000; farm property, \$100,000.

The country was very dry, no rain having fallen for months. Grass and stubble fires set by farmers, as is customary at this season of the year, were soon driven beyond control by the gale, which rose suddenly.

All estimates of the loss exceed \$200,000. At Hobart, the county seat of Kiowa county, the fire destroyed numerous outlying buildings. The 75,000 acres of Government military and timber and Indian reserve near Hobart were swept with loss of buildings and cattle.

In the Homestead district near Lawton, occurred the loss of life. Late at night the fire began moving southward toward the city. At 12 o'clock, midnight, 5000 people of this city were up in battle with the flames. The advance line of the fire was fully two miles in length and moved in a semicircular form.

Two thousand men turned their efforts to checking the grass borders of the reservation at the city limits. Water from every source, carried in every conceivable way, was distributed along the line and carried all around the city limits. This served the purpose of checking the advance lines of the fire, but was of little avail in hindering the continued rolling of the firebrands into the streets of the city. In more than a hundred places flames arose from dwellings, barns and out-houses, but wherever a blaze grew men were present to quench it with water. As a result of the cool judgment of the fighters, the city's loss was only \$10,000.

Stories are coming in tonight of how families laid out on the barren prairie through the freezing night after the storm had passed with only the thin clothes on their backs as reminders of once prosperous homes. Hundreds of people are destitute and are suffering intensely in the cold with the excruciating pains caused by their burns. Clothes, medicine and physicians are being sent out from all the cities and towns of the district to relieve the suffering.

The Great Northern and Northern Pacific railways have agreed to offer homeseekers excursion rates during March and April. The rate to the West and return will be one fare, plus \$2.00.

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Senator Hale thinks the navy is asking for too many new ships. General Kouropatkin will make Mukden his headquarters.

Chief of engineers recommends against the extension of the Grays Harbor jetty.

A high Russian official says the abandonment of Port Arthur would be disastrous to Russia.

Ex-President Cleveland denies that he ever had a Negro as his guest at luncheon, as reported.

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Japanese staff leaves for Corea, and troops are expected to advance at once.

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Ambassador Cassini blames the sensational press of America for feeling against this country in Russia.

The house committee has favorably reported a resolution for Cortelyou to inquire into the workings of the beef trust.

Representative Williamson made a half hour speech in the house in the interest of a liberal appropriation for the 1905 fair.

ENTRANCE CLOSED

PORT ARTHUR IS NOW BLOCKED TO BIO VESSELS.

BattleShip is in the Way—Only Small Cruisers Can Go Out—Japan Foresees Possibility of Coal Being Field Contraband of War and Has Immense Supply on Hand.

London, March 7.—Little change in the Far Eastern situation is reported this morning. It is apparent that the Japanese are busily engaged in transporting their forces into Corea, and this work is facilitated by the enforced inactivity of the navy.

According to the Sebastopol correspondent of the Daily Graphic, Admiral Skrydloff has learned privately from Port Arthur that the Russian battleship Retzky lies in such a position as to block effectually the exit of battleships from the harbor, the passage being practically only the cruisers. The correspondent adds that Russia's new battleships, now building on the Baltic will not be ready for active commission before the end of August.

The Japanese officer who has charge of Japan's financial and commercial interests in England declares that the government foresaw the possibility of coal being declared contraband of war, and that it had been collecting large stores of Welsh steam coal for years, so that today it is amply sufficient for the navy for years to come.

According to a Tokio correspondent of the Standard, the Mikado has sent a personal message to the Emperor of Corea assuring him that the war was declared solely with the view to securing permanent peace, and expressing the sincere wish that the recently concluded Japanese Corean protocol would increase the intimacy of the two countries.

On the strength of a statement made by a missionary, the Shanghai correspondent of the Daily Chronicle sends in a doubtful report that 23 Japanese sailors have landed at Tengehau, west of Chefoo, saying their vessel had sunk as the result of an engagement with Russian warships, which also went down. No Russian were saved, but 200 Japanese were rescued by Chinese junks. This action is reported to have occurred between Port Arthur and Miao in Laotieshan channel.

GO TO PANAMA. Canal Commissioner Called to Washington for Conference.

Washington, March 7.—Admiral Walker, chairman of the isthmus canal commission, had a conference today with the President relating to canal affairs. At the conclusion of the conference Admiral Walker said he had advised the commission by telegraph to come to Washington at their earliest convenience. He said he expected the commission would call for the isthmus on March 22. If, however, all the members could not arrange their affairs so as to leave at that time the commission would leave a week later.

It is said the President adopted an unusual procedure in specifically naming in the list of nominations Admiral Walker as chairman of the commission, as it is usual to leave the selection of chairman to the commission. But there were slight signs of friction, it is said, which impelled the President to prevent any contest in the commission by naming the chairman himself.

Rear-Admiral Rixey, Surgeon-General of the Navy, is going to Panama to make an inspection of the sanitary conditions on the isthmus. No date has been set for his departure, but he will have a conference with Rear-Admiral Walker as he will draft a report on the details of his trip.

The health of marines and of the officers and men on the ships on duty in isthmian waters comes under the charge of Rear-Admiral Rixey, and he will make a careful investigation of the sites selected for camps, and on his return probably will draft a report he may see fit regarding proper quarters for the men and the making of whatever sanitary safeguards he thinks necessary.

There are on the isthmus six surgeons of the navy already. One of them who has just returned reports that the health of the men is excellent.

Anxiety for Von Walderees. Hanover, Prussia, March 7.—The condition of Field Marshal Count Von Walderees is causing anxiety among his friends. He has been ill for some days, and is losing strength. There was no improvement late tonight, according to dispatches from Hanover, in the condition of Count von Walderees. Professor Orth of Berlin, and Professor Eppinger of Göttingen, have diagnosed the disease as intestinal inflammation. The Count is very weak and the worst is feared. Emperor William has ordered that full reports of the Field Marshal's condition be wired him frequently.

Naval Station a Live Issue. Washington, March 7.—Almost the entire time of the senate today was given to consideration of the question of a site for a naval training station on the Great Lakes. The controversy arose over the appointment of a new commission to select a site. The committee amendment was so amended as to make it apply to all the Great Lakes and not alone to Lake Michigan, but Quaries' amendment calling for a new commission to select a site was not acted on.

Great Earthquake in Peru. Lima, Peru, March 7.—A tremendous earthquake, which did much damage, occurred here at 5:30 this morning. Nothing comparable with it has been experienced during the last 30 years.

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