

NO DEFENSE

GILBERT PARKER



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"THE SEATS OF THE MIGHTY"
"THE RIGHT OF WAY"

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"GO ON—TELL ALL!"

Young Dyck Calhoun, gifted English gentleman of the time of the French and American revolutions, meets Sheila Lynn, seventeen-year-old girl visiting in the neighborhood. They are mutually attracted. Sheila never knew her father, Errie Boyne, her mother having divorced him. In Dublin Leonard Mallow and Dyck fight with swords and Dyck is victorious. Errie Boyne, secretly in French employ, gets Dyck drunk and tries to persuade him to join in revolt against England. They quarrel. While Dyck is overcome with drunken wine, Boyne's second wife enters the room and stabs her faithless husband to the heart. Dyck is arrested on a charge of murder. He does not know if he killed Boyne or not. Sheila begs her mother to go to Dublin with her to help Dyck. Mrs. Lynn opposes the idea. A letter from Mrs. Lynn's wealthy brother in America decides them to go and live with him. Dyck refuses to enter any plea except "No Defense." He might have escaped by revealing Boyne's treachery but refuses on Sheila's account. He is sent to prison for eight years. Sheila writes Dyck, assuring him of her belief in his innocence. Released after serving four years, Dyck finds himself destitute, his father dead. In London Dyck receives a letter from Sheila inviting him to come to America and sending money for the voyage. He feels he cannot honor go to her. Dyck joins the British navy as an enlisted man. Bad conditions in the fleet result in mutiny. Dyck, joining the mutineers, is chosen by them to command the ship, the *Ariadne*. Dissatisfied with the conduct of the other ships' crews, Dyck breaks with them and sails the *Ariadne* to the West Indies. He arrives in time to turn the tide of victory in a battle between the French and English fleets. Calhoun is arrested for his part in the mutiny but thanked by the admiral for his work in the battle. The British government gives Dyck the freedom of the island of Jamaica, of which his old enemy, Lord Mallow, is governor. With a companion, Dyck secures treasure worth £40,000 from a sunken Spanish ship, and becomes a wealthy and respected planter. Sheila comes to Jamaica. Dyck and Sheila's mother decide that the girl must be told all the truth about her father's death.

(CHAPTER XV—Continued.)

Ever since the day when she had seen Dyck Calhoun at Spanish Town she had been disturbed in mind. Dyck had shown a reserve which she felt was not wholly due to his having been imprisoned for manslaughter. In one way he looked little older. His physique was as good or better than when the first saw him on the hills of Playmore. He was athletic, strenuous, elastic. Yet there was about it the abandonment of despair—at least of recklessness. That he had not sought to influence her to his own advantage. She was so surrounded in America by men who knew her wealth and prized her beauty, she was so much a figure in Virginia, that any reserve with regard to herself was noticeable. She was enough feminine to have pleasure in the fact that she was thought desirable by men; yet it played an insignificant part in her life. It did not give her conceit. It was only like a frill on the skirts of life. It did not play any part in her character. Certainly Dyck Calhoun had not flattered her.

That one to whom she had written, as she had done, should remove himself from the place of the deserving friend, one whom she had not deserted while he was in jail as a criminal—that he should tell her so, gave every nerve a thrill of protest. At the lodgings in Spanish Town, after Dyck Calhoun had left, her mother had briefly said that she had told Dyck he could not expect the conditions of the Playmore friendship should be renewed; that, in effect, she had warned him off. To this Sheila had said that the killing of a man whose life was in case might be punishable. In any case, that thing was in another land, under abnormal conditions; and, with utter lack of logic, she saw no reason why she should be socially punished in Jamaica for what he had been legally punished for in Ireland. As for the mutiny, he had done what any honest man of spirit would do; also, he had by great bravery and skill brought victory to the king's fleet in West Indian waters.

Then it was she told her mother how she had always disobeyed her commands where Dyck was concerned; that she had written to him while he was in jail; that she had come to Jamaica more to see him than to reform him; that she had the old Celtic spirit of brotherhood, and she would not be driven from it. In a sudden burst of anger her mother had charged her with deceit; but the girl said she had followed her conscience, and she dismissed it all with a ges-

ture as emphatic as her mother's anger.

That night they had dined with Lord Mallow, and she saw that his attentions had behind them the deep purpose of marriage. Lord Mallow had ability and knew how to use it; and he was never so brilliant as on this afternoon, for they dined while it was still daylight and hardy evening.

"I saw a man's head on a pole on my way back to King's house. You have to use firm methods here," Sheila said. "It is not all a rose garden. You have to use force."

Lord Mallow smiled grimly. "C'est la force morale toujours."

"Ah, I should not have thought it was moral force always," was the ironical reply.

"We have criminals here," declared the governor with aplomb, "and they need some handling. I assure you. We have in this island one of the worst criminals in the British empire."

"Ah, I thought he was in the United States!" answered the girl, sedately.

"You mean General George Washington," remarked the governor. "No, it is one who was a friend and fellow-countryman of yours before he took to killing unarmed men."

"You refer to Mr. Dyck Calhoun, I doubt not, sir? Well, he is still a friend of mine, and I saw him today—this afternoon, before I came here. I understood that the crown had pardoned his mutiny."

The governor was annoyed. "The crime is there just the same," he replied. "He mutinied, and he stole a king's ship, and took command of it, and brought it out here."

"And saved you and your island, I understand."

"Ah, he said that, did he?"

"He said nothing at all to me about it. I have been reading the Jamaica Cornwall Chronicle the last three years."

"He is ever a source of anxiety to me," declared the governor.

"I knew he was once in Phoenix park years ago," was the demure yet sharp reply, "but I thought he was a good citizen here—a good and well-to-do citizen."

Lord Mallow flushed slightly. "Phoenix park—ah, he was a capable fellow

with the sword! I said so always, and I'd back him now against a champion; but many a bad man has been a good swordsman."

"So, that's what good swordsmanship does, is it? I wondered what it was that did it. I hear you fight him still—but with a bludgeon, and he dodges it."

"I do not understand," declared Lord Mallow tartly.

"Ah, wasn't there some difference over his going for the treasure to Haiti? Some one told me, I think, that you were not in favor of his getting his ticket-of-leave, or whatever it is called, and that the provost marshal gave it to him, as he had the right to do."

"You have wide sources of information in this case. I wonder—"

"No, your honor need not wonder. I was told that by a gentleman on the steamer coming here. He was a native of this island, I think—or perhaps it was the captain, or the mate, or the boatswain. I can't recall. Or maybe it came to me from my manager, Darius Boland, who hears things wherever he is, one doesn't know how; but he hears them. He is to me what your aide-de-camp is to you," she nodded toward a young man nearby at the table. "You shall see my Darius Boland—indeed you have seen him. He was there today when you gave me the distinction of your presence."

"That dry, lean, cartridge of a fellow, that pair of pinners with a face!" "And a tongue, your honor. If you did not hear it, yet you will hear it. He is to be my manager here. So he will be under your control—if I permit him."

"If you permit him, mistress?" "If I permit him, yes. You are a power, but you are not stronger than the laws and rules you make. For instance, there was the case of Mr. Dyck Calhoun. When he came, you were for tying him up in one little corner of the island—the hottest part, I know, near to King's-stone, where it averages ninety degrees in the shade at any time of the year. But the king you represent had not restricted his liberties so, and you being the king, that is, yourself, were forced to abide by your own regulations. So it may be the same with Darius Boland. He may want something, and you, high up, looking down, will say, 'What devilry is here!' and decline. He will turn to your chief justice or provost marshal general, or a deputy of the provost marshal, and they will say that Darius Boland shall have what he wants, because it is the will of the will you represent."

Almost the last words the governor used to her were these: "Those only live at peace here who are at peace with me," and her reply had been: "But Mr. Dyck Calhoun lives at peace, does he not, your honor?"

To that he had replied: "No man is at peace while he has yet desires to satisfy." He paused a minute and then added: "That Errie Boyne killed by Dyck Calhoun—did you ever see him that you remember?"

"Not that I remember," she replied quickly. "I never lived in Dublin."

"That may be. But did you ever know his history?" She shook her head in negation. His eyes searched her face carefully, and he was astonished when he saw no sign of confusion there. "Good God, she doesn't know. She's never been told!" he said to himself. "This is too startling. I'll speak to the mother."

A little later he turned from the mother with astonishment. "It's madness," he remarked to himself. "She will find it out. Some one will tell her. . . . By heaven, I'll tell her first," he hastily said. "When she knows the truth, Calhoun will have no chance on earth. Yes, I'll tell her myself. But I'll tell no one else."

He added; for he felt that Sheila, once she knew the truth, would resent his having told abroad the true story of the Errie Boyne affair.

So Sheila and her mother had gone to their lodgings with depression, but each with a clear purpose in her mind. Mrs. Lynn was determined to tell her daughter what she ought to have known long before; and Sheila was firm to make the one man who had ever interested her understand that he was losing much that was worth while keeping.

Then had followed the journey to Salem. Yet all the while for Sheila one dark thought kept hovering over everything. Why should life be so complicated? Why should this one man who seemed capable and had the temperament of the Irish hills and vales be the victim of punishment and shame—why should he shame her?

Suddenly, without her mother's knowledge, she sent Darius Boland through the hills in the early morning to Enniskillen, Dyck Calhoun's place, with a letter which said only this: "Is it not time that you came to wish us well in our new home? We shall expect you tomorrow."

When Dyck read this note he thought it was written by Sheila, but inspired by the mother; and he lost no time in making his way down across the country to Salem, which he reached a few hours after sunrise. At the doorway of the house he met Mrs. Lynn.

"Have you told her?" he asked in anxiety.

Astonished at his presence, she could make no reply for a moment. "I have told her nothing," she answered. "I meant to do so this morning. I meant to do it—I must."

"She sent me a letter asking if it was not time I came to wish you well in your house, and you and she would expect me today."

"I knew naught of her writing you," was the reply—"naught at all. But now that you are here, will you not tell her all?"

Dyck smiled grimly. "Where is she?" he asked. "I will tell her."

The mother pointed down the garden. "Yonder by the clump of palms I saw her a moment ago. If you go that way you will find her."

In another moment Dyck Calhoun was on his way to the clump of palms, and before he reached it the girl came out into the path. When she saw him, she gave a slight start, then stood still, and he came to her.

"I have your letter," he said, "and I came to say what I ought to say about your living here; you will bring blessings to the place."

She looked at him steadfastly. "Shall we talk here," she said, "or inside the house? There is a little shelter here in the trees—pointing to the right—a shelter built by the late manager. It has the covering of a hut, but it is open at two sides. Will you come?"

As she went on ahead he could not fail to notice how slim and trim she was, how perfectly her figure seemed to fit her gown—as though she had been poured into it; and yet the folds of her skirt waved and floated like silky clouds around her! Under cover of the shelter she turned and smiled at him.

"You have seen my mother?" "I have just come from her," he answered. "She bade me tell you what ought to have been told long ago, and you were not, for there seemed no

reason that you should. The sorrows that had come to your mother belonged to days when you were scarce out of the cradle. But you did not know. You were not aware that your mother had divorced your father for crime against marital fidelity and great cruelty. You did not know even who that father was. Well, I must tell you. Your father was a handsome man, a friend of mine until I knew the truth about him, and then he died—I killed him, so the court said."

Her face became ghastly pale. After a moment of anguished bewilderment, she said: "You mean that Errie Boyne was my father?"

"Yes, I mean that. They say I killed him. They say he was found with no sword drawn, but that my

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happiness, came to Dyck's face. "That is like you, Sheila, but it does not cure the trouble. You and I are as far apart as noon and midnight. The law has said the only thing that can be said upon it."

She sank down again upon the wooden bench. "Oh, how mad you were, not to tell the whole truth long ago! You would not have been condemned, and then—"

She paused, overcome, and his self-control almost deserted him. With strong feeling he burst out: "And then we might have come together? No, your mother—your friends, myself could not have let that be. See, Sheila, I will tell you the whole truth now—aye, the whole absolute truth. I have loved you since the first day I saw you on the hills. Not a day has passed since then, when you were not more to me than any other woman in all the world."

A new light came into her face, the shadows left her eyes and the pallor fled from her lips. "You loved me?" she said in a voice grown soft—husky still, but soft as the light in a summer heaven. "You loved me—and have always loved me since we first met?"

"I have always loved you, Sheila, and shall do so while I have breath and life. I have always given you the best that is in me, tried to do what was good for us both, since my misfortune—crime, Lord Mallow calls it, as does the world. Never a sunrise that does not find you in the forefront of all the lighted world; never a flower—it brings thoughts of you; never a crime that does not deepen its shame because you are in the world. In prison, when I used to mop my floor and clean down the walls; when I swept the dust from the corners; when I folded up my convict-clothes; when I ate the prison food and sang the prison-hymns; when I placed myself beside the bench in the workshop to make things that would bring cash to my fellow-prisoners in their need; when I saw a minister of religion or heard the Litany; when I counted up the days, first that I had spent in jail and then the days I had still to spend in jail; when I read the books from the prison library of the land where you had gone, and of the struggle there; when I saw you, in my mind's eye, in the cotton fields or on the veranda of your house in Virginia; I had but one thought, and that was the look in your face at Playmore and Limerick, the sound of your voice as you came singing up the hill just before I first met you, the joyous beauty of your body."

"And at sea?" she whispered with a gesture at once beautiful and pathetic, for it had the motion of helplessness and hopelessness.

"At sea," he answered, "with his eyes full of intense feeling—"at sea, I was free at last, doomed as I thought, anguished in spirit, and yet with a wild hope that out of it would come deliverance. I expected to lose my life, and I lived each day as though it would be my last. I was chief rogue in a shipful of rogues, chief sinner in a hell of sinners, and yet I had no remorse and no regret. I had done all with an honest purpose, with the good of the sailors in my mind; and so I lived in daily touch with death, honor and dishonor. Yet I never saw a sailor in the shrouds, or heard the night watch call 'All's well!' in the midst of the night and mutiny, that I did not long for a word from you that would take away the sting of death. Those days at sea for ten long weeks were never free from anxiety, not anxiety for myself, only for the men who had put me where I was, had given me captain's rank, had—"

Suddenly he stopped, and took from his pocket the letter he was writing on the very day she landed in Jamaica. He opened it and studied it for a moment with a dark look in his face.

"This I wrote even as you were landing in Jamaica, and I knew naught of your coming. It was an outbreak of my soul. It was the truth written to you and for you, and yet with the feeling that you would never see it. I was still writing it when Michael Clones came up the drive to tell me you and your mother were here. Here it is with all the truth and terror in it—aye, there was terror, for it gave the soul of my life to one I never thought to see again; and, if seeing, should be compelled to do what I have done—tell her the whole truth at once and so have it over."

"But do not think that in telling it now I repent of my secrecy. I repent of nothing; I would not alter anything. What was to be, and what is has its place in the book of destiny. No, I repent nothing, yet here now I give you this to read while still my story of the days of which you know is in your ears. Here it is. It will tell the whole story; for when you have read it and do understand, then we part to meet no more as friends. You will go back to Virginia, and I will stay here. You will not regret coming here; but you will desire our friendship to cease; and what has been to be no more, while the tincture of life is in your veins, Sheila, read this thing, for it is the rest of the story until now."

He handed her the papers, and she took them with an inclination of the head which said: "Give it to me. I will read it now while my eyes can still bear to read it. I have laid on my heart the nettle of shame, and while it is still burning there I will read all that you have to teach me."

"I will go out in the garden while you read it," he said. "In a half-hour I will come back, and then we can say good-by," he added, with pain in his voice, but firmly.

"No, do not go," she urged. "Sit here, on the bench—at the end of it here,"

she said, motioning with her head.

He shook his head in negation. "No, I will go and say to your mother that I have told you, and ease her mind, for I know she herself meant to tell you."

As he went he looked at her face closely. It was so young, so pathetic, so pale, yet so strangely beautiful, and her forehead was serene. That was one of her characteristics. In all her life, her forehead remained untroubled and unlined. Only at her mouth and in her eyes did misery or sorrow show. He looked into her eyes now, and he was pleased with what he saw; for they had in them the glow of understanding and the note of will which said: "You and I are parted, but I believe in you, and I will not show I am a weak woman by futile horror. We shall meet no more, but I shall remember you."

As he turned away, it was with the sharp conviction that he had dealt a blow from which the girl would recover, but would never be the same again. She was rich "beyond the dreams of avarice," but that would not console her, had what resources within herself, had what would keep her steady. Her lips opened as though she would say something, but nothing came from them. She only shook her head sadly, as if to say: "You understand. Go, and when you come—at least in peace."

Out in the garden he found her mother. After the first agitated greeting—agitated on her part—he said: "The story has been told, and she is now reading."

He told her the story of the manuscript, and added that Sheila had carried herself with courage.

Presently the woman said to him: "She never believed you killed Errie Boyne. Well, it may not help the situation, but I say, too, that I do not believe you did. I cannot understand why you did not deny having killed him."

"I could not deny. In any case, the law punished me for it, and the book is closed forever."

"Have you never thought that some one—"

"Yes, I have thought, but who is there? The crowd at the Dublin hotel where the thing was done were secret, and they would lie the apron off a bishop. No, there is no light, and, to tell the truth, I care not now."

"But if you are not guilty—it is not too late; there is my girl! If the real criminal should appear—can you not see?"

The poor woman, distressfully pale, her hair still abundant, her eyes still bright, her pulses aglow, as they had ever been, made a gesture of appeal with hands that were worn and thin. She had charm still, in a way as great as her daughter's.

"I can see; but, Mrs. Lynn, I have no hope. I saw a man whom some men fear—"

"Lord Mallow," she interjected.

"He does not fear me. Why do you say that?"

"I speak with a woman's intuition. I don't know what he fears, but he does fear you. You are a son of history; you had a duel with him, and beat him; you have always beaten him, even here where he has been supreme as governor—from first to last, you have beaten him."

"I hope I shall be even with him at the last—at the very last," was Dyck Calhoun's reply. "We were made to be foes. We were from the first. I felt it when I saw him at Playmore. Nothing has changed since then. He will try to destroy me here, but I will see it through. The man is a fool. I could help him here, but he will have none of it, and he is running great risks. He has been warned that the Maroons are restive, that the black slaves will rise if the Maroons have any initial success, and he will listen to no advice. And up there—he turned and pointed—"up there in Tre-lawney the Maroons are plotting and planning, and any day an explosion may occur. If it occurs no one will be safe, especially if the blacks rise too—I mean the black slaves. There will be no safety then for any one."

"For us as well as all others, and you are nearer to Tre-lawney than most others. You are in their path. So be wise, Mrs. Lynn, and get back to Virginia as soon as may be. It is a better place than this."

"My daughter is mistress here," was the sorrowful reply. "She will have her own way."

"I will tell her what I fear, and she may change her mind."

"But the governor may want her to stay," answered Mrs. Lynn none too sagely, but with that in her mind which seemed to justify her.

"Lord Mallow—oh, if you think there is an influence in him to keep her, that is another question," said Dyck with a grim smile. "But, nevertheless, I think you should leave here and go back to Virginia. It is no safe place for two ladies, in all senses. Whatever Lord Mallow thinks or does, this is no place for you. This place is your daughter's, for her to do what she chooses with it, and I think she ought to sell it. There would be so trouble in getting a purchaser. It is a fine property."

"But the governor might not think as you do; he might not wish it sold."

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