"Old House"

Or, Dulcie's Confession

CHAPTER I.

The June sun blazed overhead, yet in the wood where Primrose and Dulcie Carwardine were seated the air was deliciouely cool, and the leaves of the trees afforded a soft verdant screen. Everything was calm and peaceful to the eye. The words which fell from the rosy lips of Miss Dulcie, however, were anything but restful.

"It is simply abominable!" she said, with considerable heat. "Abominable that now we are of age we have to live like paupers, while our father squanders on books and curiosities the money that belonged to our mother, and which should be ours by right! It is more than abominable, it is iniquitous!"

The speaker quivered with indignation.

"Dulcie!" protested the other girl. "Please do not go over the old ground again, there's a dear! I have agreed with you hundreds of times that we are rather badly treated. It is certainly very aggravating to know that the money which ought to have been ours, and which would, have enabled us to enjoy ourselves as other girls do, is being thrown away, whilst we have, literally, to go without clothes."

The speaker gazed sadly at an old patched shoe which protruded from beneath the hem of a cotton dress, once blue, but from which all semblance to any color whatever had been washed. Dulcie was silent for a few minutes, and then spoke more deliberately.

"I call father a thief," she said.

Her elder sister showed no signs of being shocked at such an unfilial remark.

"Why?" was her placid inquiry.

"Why? Because I am certain he only married our mother because he knew she would be a rich woman some day, and then when she died, a few years after inheriting our grandfather's money, and when we were too young to know anything about it, he got it all into his own hands and told everyone that our mother had left it all—every penny—to him!"

"Perhaps she did," said Primrose.

"I don't believe it!"

"But our mother's Will."

"He made her sign it, of course," Dulcie declared sharply. "You know she was afraid of him. I shall never believe she meant him to have everything, and us, her children, of whom she was so fond, nothing."

"Dulcie," said Primrose quietly, "what is the use of recalling all this? You know we have agreed that there is nothing for us to do but to grin and bear it."

"I am not going to do either any longer," said Dulcie.

"Dear me! What is your alternative?"

"To get out of it," was the energetic reply.

Primrose looked at her sister with slightly increased interest; she was used to Dulcie's outbursts, and although they invariably ended in words, yet they caused some slight diversion at the time.

"How, my dear?" she asked.

"I mean to marry the man who is coming to Old House," was the reply. "The idea occurred to me the other day when our dear father said, 'In future you are not to go into the woods or fields belonging to Old House, for the Chancery suit in connection with them was settled some months ago, and the owner is shortly coming to take possession. You will keep to our own grounds in future.'"

Dulcie mimicked the harsh voice of her father with great success, and her sister laughed merrily.

"So" continued the mimic, "when I heard the owner was a man, and what is vastly more important, a bachelor, I made up my mind to marry him."

"It is indeed a brilliant idea," said Primrose unmoved, "but I do not quite see how you are going to make a man who does not know you, marry you."

"Oh, he will soon know me!" was the confident reply. "I mean to sit in these woods from morning till night. He will come along some day and find me, and then I shall apologize sweetly for trespassing, and, of course, he will beg me to come whenever I like; and that is how it will begin. The end will be showers of rice and a wreath of orange blossoms."

"'First catch your fish,'" murmured Primrose.

If the sisters had not been so engrossed in their conversation, they might have heard a faint masculine chuckle, coming apparently from the thick undergrowth behind them.

"Oh, I shall catch him all right if only I can meet him!" averred Dulcie. "What is the matter with me? Any man ought to be only too glad to have the honor of marrying me."

She tossed her pretty head; and if she was really vain, she had ample excuse.

Both the Carwardine girls possessed youth and beauty. Tall, slim maidens, straight as young larches, their small heads were crowned with masses of bright fair hair, which waved and curled most charmingly. Delicate regular features, and large eyes set beneath very distinctly marked eyebrows made them more than ordinarily pretty. Dulcie's eyes were blue as forget-me-nots; those of Primrose were gray. Slender and fair, the girls were surprisingly alike to strangers.

Primrose, who was the elder by a year, and had just passed her twenty-second birthday, considered it necessary, on account of her seniority, to offer a rebuke.

"Little girls should wait till they are asked," she said.

"I shall," replied Dulcie "But I don't intend to wait a moment longer than is absolutely necessary."

Again, if the Misses Carwardine had not been so deeply occupied with their own affairs, they might have heard peculiar sounds coming from the direction of the undergrowth.

"It is like this," Dulcie went on gravely. "Unless one of us marries, there is no escape for either of us, and I am sure nothing could be more pitiful than our present state."

"Humph!" said Primrose doubtfully. "A husband might be worse than father."

"Impossible! Anyhow, I mean to marry Arthur Belturbet if he's as ugly as sin and as wicked as—you know whom."

"How on earth did you find out his name?" asked Primrose in astonishment.

"I asked James the gardener, and he showed me a piece of an old newspaper he had been treasuring, which said that Mr. Arthur Belturbet would shortly take up residence at Old House. James has hopes of being engaged by the new owner it seems, as he considers he is underpaid here."

"James is an ungrateful old man! He does practically nothing, and is paid ten shillings a week and has a cottage to live in. Besides, I am quite certain no one who wants a gardener, would take James."

"Oh, bother James!" retorted Dulcie. "What is a gardener's ingratitude compared with my marriage to Arthus Belturbet."

"You must remember," said Primrose apologetically, "that I have known James for years, and only this minute heard of Arthur Belturbet.

"You will hear more about him before long," said Dulcie pertly, "because I intend to marry him."

Primrose laughed.

"I wish you luck in the task you have set yourself," she said, "but don't ask me to help you, that's all."

"I hope to be able to manage it entirely unaided."

"Suppose he should prefer me to you?" suggested Primrose.

"I sha'n't give him time to," was Dulcie's reply. "And as we are so much alike, it follows that if he admires you, he will admire me also. Didn't somebody or other say that any woman could get any man she liked if she only took enough trouble?"

"In any case, it will add a zest to life this summer," said Primrose; then she added, with a change of tone: "It is time for us to go, Dulcie. If you are late for tea there will be the usual fuss. Come on!"

She sprang to her feet, and Dulcie did the same. They shook out their tumbled skirts, and side by side sauntered down an almost obliterated path through the wood. It had been so long untrodden except by the sisters, that they had to push aside the encroaching bushes as they walked.

Their retreating forms were closely scrutinized by a pair of keen eyes, belonging to the man whose chuckles had come from the thicket behind the old oak tree against which the Misses Carwardine had rested as they talked. When they were out of sight and their voices no longer audible, he emerged from the undergrowth into which he had been lured by the faint trace of a path, and sauntered up to the old oak tree.

"If I could have seen their faces!" he murmured. "I might have been able to guess which of the two is bent on marrying me. As their appearance from the back and the sound of their voices are precisely the same, it will be rather difficult. Still, life will have an additional zest for me too, this summer!"

He lit his pipe, which had gone out before he found himself eavesdropping, and which he had not dared to relight for fear of being discovered. Then he seated himself at the foot of the oak tree and swoked peacefully.

"Listeners certainly never hear any good of themselves," he soliloquised, "but I will be hanged if I expected to hear anything as alarming as this! Here I am, Arthur Belturbet, lately a briefless barrister, whom careful mothers have, I know, labelled 'extremely ineligible' on account of my lack of worldly goods, suddenly and unexpectedly become particularly well off. At the very moment when I am congratulating myself that now I shall be able to enjoy life to its uttermost, and go where I like and do what I like, I find that my fate is already sealed. A lady, apparently young, for I swear by her voice that she is under twenty-five, and certainly of a resolute and daring disposition—has marked me down as her prey."

He smiled, continuing to smoke contentedly.

"I suppose," he resumed, "that when I heard voices I ought immediately to have burst through the trees and announced myself, or else stopped my fingers in my ears; as it happened, however, when I heard a voice say: 'I intend marrying the man who is coming to Old House,' I felt it my duty to myself to remain at all hazards, and hear more of the plot. The difficulty will be to find out which of the two means to have me. It requires to be carefully thought out. Now, didn't she say she was going to come here every day and then apologize sweetly for trespassing, whereupon I, of course, would beg her to come whenever she liked, and it would end in orange-blossoms and showers of rice." The young man chuckled with much delight. "Now I have you, my dear young lady. As soon as you apologize sweetly, I shall know you. Arthur, my boy, this looks as if it would be rather amusing! I wonder who the minx is, by the way. I dare say I can soon find out. Stalstead is not so thickly populated that two young ladies are so remarkably alike, and who possess an irascible father, should be unknown to my household."

He continued to smoke for some time, then rose and stretched himself. He was a tall man without an ounce of superfluous flesh, broad-shouldered, but with a slight stoop. Evidently he was devoid of personal vanity, for his clothes were anything but new or becoming. His clear, pale complexion showed that he had not led an out-of-door life. His thin, clean-shaven face was certainly not handsome, yet those who liked Arthur Belturbet found much that was agreeable in it. The eyes were dark and deep set, the eyebrows strongly marked, the mouth large and the chin firm. He had excellent teeth, which were remarkably good, even and white, and his smile was particularly pleasant.

"Yes, it will be very interesting," he added, "and I feel anxious to meet my fate. I think however, it will do her good to wait a little while. An affair of this kind should not be hurried."

Still smiling, he turned to walk in the direction of Old House, of which he was now the sole and undisputed possessor.

It took him nearly a quarter of an hour to reach his destination, as the path through the little wood wound in and out but at length he came to a low stone wall and a gate swinging on rusty hinges.

"If this place had been ownerless much longer it would have fallen to pieces!" exclaimed the young man. "There is hardly a gate that has decent hinges, and certainly not one that will fasten properly. I will get the work of renovation started, and then—Heigho, for my travels!"

He walked quickly towards the house and gazed at it with affection. It was a possession of which any man might have been proud. A long, two-storied house, with many gables, covered with ivy to its chimney tops, it was set on the very highest point of the land, and approached on foot by a series of terraces and old-stone steps, whilst a darriage drive of nearly half a mile circled the terraces. Arthur Belturbet stood still for a few moments looking at it.

"A place like this certainly needs a mistress," he said whimsically, "but as I go with the house, I mean to have a voice in the selection of one. So, perhaps, my dear young lady, things may not turn out precisely as you anticipate. However, I am extremely grateful to you, for—you have put me on my guard."

CHAPTER II.

True to her word, Dulcie Carwardine sat, or rambled, daily—weather permitting—in Belturbet's woods, sometimes by herself, but more often accompanied by her sister. For three weeks, however, her perseverance went unrewarded; the owner of Old House remained unencountered.

"Why doesn't the wretch take it into his head to visit and explore this part of the property?" she demanded irritably one sultry afternoon. "I'm sure if I had not the patience of a saint I should have given him up weeks ago!"

"Don't scowl about it!" said Primrose, laughing. "He might come upon us unawares, and you don't look a bit nice when you frown."

Dulcie smoothed her pretty forehead.

"I wish he would hurry up," she replied disconsolately. "I am tired of waiting He——"

She paused as the sound of a man's whistle came faintly to their ears, and sat upright, her cheeks crimsoning with excitement.

"It is he!" she whispered. "Oh, I wish we were not here! I feel so dreadfully nervous—I know I shall never be able to apologize properly. Primrose, you must do it, and say how sorry we are for trespassing. I can't—I'm shaking all over with fright."

"Dulcie!" said Primrose reproachfully. "It is too bad of you to bring us into a scrape like this, and leave me to do the disagreeable work of wriggling out."

The whistle came nearer.

"Oh, do, Primrose!" entreated Dulcie. "Just this once! I vow I will never ask you to do anything for me again. Look at me—look! I am actually trembling with fright!"

Primrose's clear gray eyes looked unsympathetically at her sister.

"It is your guilty conscience," she said. "I am as cool as one of old James's cucumbers. Do pull yourself together and forget all the nonsense you have talked."

Dulcie giggled feebly.

"I can't," she said. "Besides, I am in deadly earnest. Here he is."

Arthur Belturbet's tall figure came in sight. Both girls sat motionless until he was within a few yards of them; Dulcie with glowing cheeks and modestly downcast eyes, Primrose, apparently unruffled, but distinctly conscious of a fast-beating heart. She waited a few moments, hoping that Dulcie would speak, but that blushing young person was too agitated to do anything but keep her eyes fixed firmly on Belturbet's boots, so Primrose raised her eyes and spoke apologetically in a soft, clear voice.

"I am afraid we are trespassing," she said.

Belturbet's dark eyes met her gray ones in a rather long look, and as he raised his cap he thought: "So you are the designing minx!"

"I think perhaps you are," he replied. "And I hope you will do so as often as you like."

"You are very kind," said Primrose. "Old House has been unoccupied for so long that we have grown into the habit of coming into the woods without realizing that we had no right to."

"Please don't hesitate to come here whenever you wish," responded Belturbet, pleasantly. "Please use the woods just as you have done before. Do not let the fact of my existence make any difference."

Dulcie, having somewhat recovered, looked at him with innocent blue eyes.

"It is exceedingly kind of you!" she murmured. "We do love the woods, but—are—you sure you don't mind our coming here?"

"I shall be only too happy if you will come as often as you please." Belturbet was looking at both the girls with something suspiciously like a twinkle in his eyes. "May I introduce myself—I am Arthus Belturbet."

"And we are Dulcie and Primrose Carwardine," explained Primrose.

"The Misses Carwardine of Blue Posts?" asked Belturbet.

"Yes," replied Dulcie gaily. "Is it not an idiotic name for a house?"

"It is an uncommon one," he admitted. Then, as the trespassers were both young and pretty, and although—or perhaps because—he knew of the plot against him, he added: "I wonder, as I am a stranger in the land, if I might sit down and you would tell me who my neighbors are, and something about everything generally?"

He sat on the ground at a little distance from the young ladies in a position from which he could see them both. The crimson roses in Dulcie's cheeks had faded to a faint blush, and no man could help noticing the delicate charm of the two sisters. It struck Belturbet immediately.

"Yet," he thought, "Miss Gray-Eyes has an exceedingly keen instinct for plunder! Faugh! Is there such a thing as a disinterested person to be found I wonder?"

Nevertheless, he made himself very agreeable, and listened attentively to the description of his neighbors.

"And we are Nobodies," concluded Dulcie. "We go nowhere, because no one asks us—we are without the pale of Stalstead society. We are poor and shabby and impertinent to our elders, and will not be patronized; so Primrose and I are consigned to oblivion.'

"You do not sound as if you minded much," remarked Belturbet.

"We don't," was the prompt reply. "Only it is rather dull at times. Even a garden-party at the vicarage is better than nothing."

"When my house is in order, will you come to a garden-party if I give one?" he asked.

"Yes, thank you," replied Dulcie promptly. "But do not ask our father if you want us to come." Then, as Belturbet looked a little surprised, she explained: "If you send a formal invitation for Mr. and the Misses Carwardine, it will be refused, but if you ask us in a friendly way, as you have just done, Primrose and I will come."

(To be continued).

PHILIP SNOWDEN, M.P.

Socialist M.P. Is An Implacable Fighter for the Cause.

Philip Snowden, M.P. for Blackburn, England, who has been spending a few days in Toronto with his clever wife, is one of the heroes and leaders of the Socialist movement in Britain. His election in Blackburn seven years ago was the first big election win for the Socialists.

Mr. Snowden, now in his fiftieth year, is an apostle of revolutioin rather than reform. He has the reputation of being such a thorough Socialist that he would willingly go to the stake for the cause. Snowden cares nothing for himself, his personal success and political rewards. He is a zealot. Lloyd George's Liberalism is no more pleasing to him than the Conservatism of Bonar Law and Austen Chamberlain. Lloyd George aims to reform abuses and readjust a deranged system of social life. Snowden wants revolu-

Mr. Philip Snowden, M.P.

tion—bloodless, but nevertheless radical and absolute. Efforts to reform society, he deems, were hurtful trifling; he would cut under the whole fabric of society as it is and send it tottering into collapse.

Liberalism he regards as more dangerous to his cause than Conservatism—the latter holds out no hope of a change and in a sense justifies revolt, but Liberalism, with its forms, lessens the strength of Socialism and kills its nerve.

Like An Accuser.

Snowden is numbered with the Labor members, but he is not of them. They are too yielding for him. His voice is shrill, and as he speaks in the House of Commons he points a long lean finger, accuser-like, at the man he attacking, and that man is frequently Lloyd George.

Mrs. Snowden is an ardent suffragist—but not a militant. She does not agree with the Pankhurst methods, but she speaks sympathetically of the militants and defines them as being more sinned against by the Government than sinning.

Mrs, Snowden is a clever little woman, with a voice as clear as a bell and a pronounced turn for logical argument and sarcasm. Torontonians will remember that she spoke in Massey Hall some years ago just after Mrs. Pankhurst had been here. She has the saving touch of humor that keeps her audience in good spirits, and when she spoke here, one of her most pronounced hits was a burlesue of Austen Chamberlain. This is how she told it:

"Adjusting his eyeglass and consulting his notes he began:

"Ladies and gentlemen — oh (that's Parliamentary)—I do not believe in votes for women. I—ah—do not believe in votes for —ah—women. Men—ah—are men. Men are men. And—ah—women are women. Nature made them—ah—different. An Act of Parliament cannot make them—ah—the same.

"In the face of this astonishing piece of information how could they go on?" ended Mrs. Snowden amid ironical cheers and laughter.

Satire on Mrs. Ward.

Her satire on the attitude of Mrs. Humphrey Ward, the noted novelist, toward the suffrage movement was also very funny. She said that Mrs. Ward was not in favor of votes for women, and then folding her hands and turning her eyes downward she said in prayerful tones "for which we may be truly grateful. Amen."

She had no patience with any specimen of arrested development.

"Havelock Ellis has described the womanly woman as a cross between an angel and an idiot," says Mrs. Snowden. "Mr. Ellis knew what he was writing about. It is the anti-suffragist that would make women coarse, never permitting her to forget her sex."

"If the suffrage movement means one thing more than another, it

Mrs. Philip Snowden.

means less of sex and more of humanity. That does not mean any defection from the sacredness of motherhood—her noblest work."

"The average noble woman looks for a home, desires a home, but it does not follow that the woman who never goes beyond her own four walls will make the best wife and mother."

SWINDLERS ON OCEAN LINERS.

Detectives Keep Close Watch on All Suspicious Characters.

The discovery of five gamblers aboard the Lusitania on her latest westbound trip reminded a detective of an experience he had this summer. A woman travelling second class on one of the English lines had played poker with four men during the passage and loaned money to one of them. In port the borrower complained that the woman had robbed him, and it became the duty of the detective to take the woman, an American, into the smoking-room of the second-class and lock the door and search her. He found on her a roll of $2,300.

"Where did this come from?" asked the sleuth.

"You look like a nice fellow and I'll tell you," said the woman. "It's the proceeds of a robbery, and the man who's kicking was in on it and got his share. Twice he tried to rob me of my share. He's a gambler, a parasite and a thief."

"The crooked gamblers are travelling second-class now. That's where the rich pickings are. The first-class is panned out. Among the second-class are suckers who have saved their earnings for the gamblers. The prosperous farmers from the West are very wise in their own conceit. In fact, they're easy marks."

The crooked gamblers cross and recross so frequently that the women adventurers, known as "white slaves of the Atlantic," know them. These women are known to the detectives, but to few of their fellow passengers.

On the Lusitania's last trip extra warnings were displayed. The lines now have a warning printed in red ink, which is hung up as soon as a gambler is discovered. Sometimes when the smoking-room steward goes to breakfast the gambler tears down this red card. When the steward returns he hangs up another. Sometimes, but not often, a steward becomes too friendly with the pirates; then he's transferred and occasionally given a reduced rating.

It is now the custom of steamships as soon as a professional gambler is discovered aboard to send a wireless to the detectives ashore on each side of the ocean informing them of the fact, so that he may be spotted as soon as he goes ashore. The detectives meet and check up together on the gamblers. Each gambler has a "foundation" name, generally his real name, and by this he is known to the detectives.

One gambler has been going out on one of the German lines and returning regularly from Liverpool on a big British line.

The White Star line, according to the detectives, as soon as a gambler is spotted displays a red sign reading: "We have aboard this ship a gambler and swindler."

No, Adolphus, not all the gushing letters are written with a fountain pen.

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HEALTH

Exercise.

If you are to be in perfect health the blood stream must course freely through your body. When it fails to do so for any reason, you have "poor circulation," a condition that shows itself in many unpleasant ways—cold hands and feet, chilblains, headaches, low spirits, bad temper, and a general sense of discomfort and inefficiency.

Many young people, and especially many girls, suffer from this condition. Girls as a rule take less active physical exercise than boys of the same age, and there is nothing like hard physical play or work to improve a stagnant circulation. But some people are not strong enough to undertake much active exercise; their cases must be dealt with in a different way. A frail and delicate girl in tennis and basket ball or gymnasium work will do well to try massage until she gains strength enough for other exercise. As she feels her strength increasing, she should let exercise gradually take the place of massage is as a substitute for muscular activity when that is impossible or unwise, it is not nearly so efficacious for healthy persons as actual exercise.

If massage seems to cost more than the patient can afford, remember that some member of your family can often learn in a few lessons how to give very successful massage Remember, however, that when you use massage in order to keep up a good blood supply to an injured part of the body, such as a sprained ankle or a strained muscle, it is very important to find out just what movements should be made, or you may do harm instead of good.

For persons in good health there is nothing like the cold morning bath, followed by vigorous rubbing with a rough towel, to keep the circulation in good order. But that is too harsh for frail people, and they will be wiser to temper the bath, and trust to the rough towel, to bring the blood to the surface of the body. Even if you must sometimes omit the bath, do not omit the "rubdown."—Youth's Companion.

Cure of Sleeplessness.

In mild cases of insomnia change of scene, a sea voyage, moderate exercise in the open air, temporary withdrawal from the ordinary activities of life are, each and all of them, minor measures not to be neglected. It must also be remembered that in those who sleep lightly, trival discomforts may be enough to produce sleepless nights. Cold feet, an unwise evening meal, an absorbing game, a heated discussion, a postponed hour of retirement, and a hundred other small departures from the accustomed routine may be responsible for a bad night. It is quite remarkable how this is exemplified in the common experience of a sleepless night on Sunday, when the usual activities of the week are interrupted by comparative freedom from care, more than the usual amount of repose, and frequently also more than the allowance of food and drink. Massage, especially when practiced thoroughly and rapidly over the abdomen, a hot bath, a mustard foot bath, a wet-pack applied to the trunk of the body, a hot drink fortified by alcohol are all homely measures which, by provoking a temporary anaemia of the brain, are conducive to the acquisition of refreshing sleep. Many forms of electricity have also been requisitioned with varying degrees of success.—Dr. Guthrie Rankine.

His Answer.

A Scotch minister had been away on a vacation, and on his return asked the sexton how all had gone in his absence. "Very well, indeed," was the cheering response. "They do say that most meenisters leave some one worse than themselves to fill the pulpit when they go away, but you never do that, sir."