"Old House"

Or, Dulcie's Confession

CHAPTER III.—(Continued).

"They are not coming," said Herriott with obvious disappointment. "Arthur, this is a sell! Let us have tea to make up for it."

"We said tea at four o'clock," replied Belturbet, "and its is only a quarter to. You must wait a bit, Jim."

They waited until half-past four, when Philippa said she must either have her tea or go home, and the kettle was steaming before the Misses Carwardine came in sight. Belturbet hurried to meet them.

"Better late than never!" said Herriott, with a twinkle in his eyes.

Dulcie laughed, the ice was broken, and the necessary introductions were made.

"The reason we are so late," explained Dulcie, "is owing to a domestic earthquake. In other wards, father has gone to London, a thing he has not done to our knowledge for three years. He did not leave home before half-past three, and we had to wait till he had gone."

"I suppose you went to the station to see him off?" queried Herriott.

Dulcie flashed him a look out of her forget-me-not blue eyes.

"No," she replied, in a tone that left no doubt in the minds of any of her audience as to the degree of affection that existed between Mr. Carwardine and his daughter.

Philippa talked pleasantly to Primrose, whilst Belturbet watched the kettle, and Herriott exchanged nonsense with Dulcie.

Philippa's critical eyes had taken in at a glance the home-made muslin dresses, thick shoes, and cheap little hats of the visitors.

"Prettily, but badly dressed," she thought. "Country mice—one a tomboy, and the other quiet. Which has gray eyes? The shy one?" She gazed sharply at her host, who was, however, listening to Dulcie's shatter with Jim, putting in a word here and there.

"Isn't the kettle boiling yet?" she asked. "We have been waiting so long for tea."

"I am afraid it is our fault," said Dulcie. "We are awfully sorry, aren't we, Prim?"

"Very," said Primrose politely. "I wish you had not waited for us."

"Not waited for you!" cried Jim in mock horror. "Why, don't you understand, Miss Carwardine, you two ladies are the picnic! Without you the day was a failure! We have been looking forward to this tea ever since we got up this morning."

"Then I hope your expectations are realized," said Dulcie.

"To the fullest possible extent," replied Herriott. "If you will come for a walk after tea I will tell you exactly what Belturbet led us to expect."

Dulcie looked from Belturbet to Philippa, who was talking to him, and a sudden suspicion awoke in her. "What if this fashionably-dressed girl, too, had——" She did not finish the sentence.

"Mr. Belturbet," she asked gaily, "do you call Mr. Herriott your friend? Well, he is not!"

Belturbet laughed, and came over to Dulcie.

"Why isn't he?" he inquired.

"He is going to tell me everything you told him about us," said Dulcie.

"Let him say it in my hearing, then," retorted Belturbet. "Jim, if you don't behave yourself, this is the last picnic you shall come to."

Philippa rose from the tree trunk on which she had been sitting.

"What are you three plotting?" she asked.

"Arthur's downfall," replied her brother. "After tea I am going to tell Miss Carwardine exactly what he told us about her, and then she will never speak to him again."

"You are alarming Miss Carwardine unnecessarily," said Philippa, "because, as a matter of fact, Mr. Belturbet was unable to tell us anything whatever about you. He roused our curiosity, and then when we questioned him all that he could recollect was that one of you had gray eyes!"

"Oh, Arthur told me a lot more than that!" declared Jim.

"I hope you were not very hard on us," said Dulcie, and looked appealingly at her host, "or unkind, because we have no smart dresses and only clumsy shoes."

She extended her foot, rather thickly shod it is true, but the ankle shown was very neat, and the foot undeniably small.

"There is not very much in it," said Jim pointedly.

"No," agreed Dulcie, "all the Carwardines have small hands and feet and noses."

She had noticed that Miss Herriott's shoes, although exceedingly smart and light, were very long, and also that her nose was rather a prominent feature. Philippa recognized that the little country mouse did not mean to be snubbed, and was apparently quite able to hold her own.

"And the Herriotts have all long, slender feet, and good figures," she said, laughingly.

"Yes, look at mine!" said her brother. "I have got a much finer figure than Belturbet. You've got the bookworm's stoop, old man. Now I am here I will drill you for half-an-hour every day, and smarten you up a bit!"

Belturbet shrugged his shoulders and shook his head.

"When you have all finished tea," he announced, "I will take you for a really nice walk."

They sauntered through the woods. Belturbet and Philippa led the way, while Jim followed with Primrose and Dulcie. The merry laughter of the latter grated on Philippa, and when they had arrived at the pool to which Belturbet had led them Dulcie effected a change of partners. She lingered behind with Belturbet, and Primrose, in obedience to a glance from Dulcie, walked on with Philippa and Jim.

Philippa was rather silent, but Primrose and Herriott had plenty to say to each other, for as there was no embargo placed on her friendship with this individual, Primrose was her natural light-hearted self. Not quite so irresponsible and vivacious as Dulcie, but still a girl who had a fund of cheerful, easy conversation. Philippa appeared to listen, but her thoughts were already occupied.

Which of these country mice was the most dangerous? Was it the girl at her side who seemed to have nothing to say to her, but a great deal to Jim; or was it the younger girl, who flirted openly with Jim, and then calmly called Belturbet to her side and kept him there. She hardened her heart against both, and congratulated herself with the reflection that as she was staying at Old House, she would have far more opportunity of being with Belturbet than either of the Carwardines. Jim seemed to like their society and if he embarked on a flirtation with one of them, as he seemed extremely likely to do, she thought she could manage to keep Belturbet out of the clutches of the other girl. Philippa was not accustomed to remain in the background, and she believed she was, in ordinary circumstances, far more than a match for a couple of country maidens.

When they returned to the scene of the picnic, Primrose said they must say good-bye. Belturbet invited them to come to Old House and see the improvements that had been made.

"Another time," replied Primrose. "But not now, thank you."

Herriott suggested they should all see the Misses Carwardine home, but as Philippa professed to be tired, Belturbet walked back to Old House with her, while Jim accompanied Dulcie and Primrose to the gates of Blue Posts.

"We can't invite you in," said Dulcie. "We are not allowed to ask any one inside the gate."

"Hard lines on the other people," said Herriott sympathetically. "But I thought Mr. Carwardine had gone away?"

"Old Martha, our cook and general factotum, tells tales," explained Dulcie, shrugging her shoulders.

Primrose caught sight of an adventurous hen that had strayed from the fowl-yard into the garden.

"Look at that wretched fowl!" she cried. "Good-bye, Mr. Herriott. I must chase it away."

She ran off to the flower-bed in which the hen was scratching busily.

Herriott and Dulcie stood talking for quite ten minutes after she left them, and when Dulcie returned to the house her eyes were sparkling, and her cheeks pinker than usual.

As they sat at their evening meal, which was frugal in the extreme, Dulcie was very cheerful.

"Isn't it lovely to be alone, without father to glower at us?" she asked. Then added, with a complete change of tone—"Miss Herriott does not like us—I wonder why? At least, I don't wonder—I know."

"I don't see why she should dislike us," said Primrose thoughtfully.

"Don't you? I do. She is afraid we may trespass on what she looks upon as her preserves. But I am perfectly sure Mr. Belturbet doesn't care a bit for her."

"Dulcie," said Primrose, "I wish you would give up that idea. You know what I mean—it is so unworthy of you."

"I cannot see it like that at all. He is sure to marry some one, and why not me?"

Primrose shook her head.

"It is unworthy of you," she repeated.

"I don't agree with you," retorted Dulcie, and her forget-me-not blue eyes looked defiant. "Don't you think I shall make as good a mistress of the Old House as Philippa Herriott?"

"It isn't that. It is the thought that you should deliberately set out to entrap a man. Have you no pride or self-respect?"

"I suppose you will be more upset when I tell you that, since I cannot ask him into the house, I am going to meet Mr. Herriott outside our gate at half-past eight, and go for a walk!"

Primrose looked aghast.

"Dulcie! I——" she cried protestingly, but her sister would not allow her to finish her sentence.

"Nothing you will say will make any difference, Prim," she said. "I am going. Why should I never have any fun? You need not be in the least alarmed. I told him I would not stay out for more than half an hour."

"But," said Primrose as a forlorn hope, "suppose Mr. Belturbet hears that you go out for evening walks with his friend?"

"He won't hear," replied Dulcie confidently. "I shall take particular care about that."

Primrose sighed. Dulcie had always been wilful, and in her present mood it was useless to say anything to her. She waited restlessly in the shabby dining-room while Dulcie kept her tryst with Jim Herriott.

After dinner at Old House, when Herriott said he thought that a walk would do him good, Belturbet looked doubtfully from brother to sister, and wondered if he ought to stay with Philippa or go with him. He felt tired, and looked it, a fact which Philippa's keen eyes had noted.

"I believe our host is tired," she said. "Can't you go for a stroll by yourself, Jim, and I will give Mr. Belturbet some music?"

"That's just what I should like!" said Belturbet.

Philippa went to the drawing-room accordingly, followed by Belturbet, and Herriott hurried away through the grounds.

Philippa was a good musician, and she played and sang melodious little songs for half an hour, while Belturbet sat idly in a big chair, sometimes listening and sometimes inattentive.

Presently the girl rose from the piano, and sat where Belturbet could see her. She knew she made a charming picture in her evening dress of palest green, with a wreath of leaves in her chestnut hair. As Belturbet thanked her for the songs he thought what a graceful, accomplished woman his friend's sister was, but felt not the faintest stirrings of any deeper sentiment.

Philippa set her lips firmly, for she realized that so far she had not been able to move him to any interest except a passing friendly one.

She did her best to direct conversation into personal channels, but Belturbet was not in a responsive mood, and at length she desisted.

"Shall we go and meet Jim?" she asked. "I believe I can see the end of his cigar the other side of the lawn."

They stepped out of the French windows, across the terraces, and met Herriott.

"You ought to have come with me, Arthur," he said coolly. "I have had a delightful stroll."

"I will, another night, old chap," replied Belturbet.

"And I'll take jolly good care you don't!" thought Jim. He had enjoyed his tete-a-tete with Dulcie tremendously, and had planned another.

They went back to the house, and Philippa retired almost at once, leaving the two men alone. They chatted and smoked until midnight, and then Herriott stood up.

"I am off now, Arthur," he said. "Good night."

He whistled softly as he went to his room.

"The nicest girl I have met for years!" he murmured. "And as pretty as a picture!"

Belturbet was tired, yet restless. He wished Miss Gray Eyes would make her first move. He wanted to talk to her. She was so unaccountably slow that he was beginning to feel annoyed.

Before he fell asleep he determined to open the campaign himself by talking to her, and walking with her, at the earliest opportunity. This "affair," he decided, would afford him even more amusement than he had anticipated.

CHAPTER IV.

A week before the garden-party Primrose pensively examined her old white dress. She was thinking that no matter what she did with this it would still look hopelessly old-fashioned, when Dulcie opened the door.

"Don't waste time looking at that old rag!" she said. "You are not going to wear it at the garden-party. I have a surprise for you."

"A surprise, perhaps, but not a new dress," replied Primrose, still fingering the despised garment.

"Prim, you are a nice girl, but hopelessly antiquated in your ideas," said Dulcie. "As it happens, my surprise is that we are going to Helmsford this very day to get new dresses. We will go to Garth's for them."

Garth's was a shop beloved by every lady in the county, for the most delightful clothes could be purchased there, second only, in the general opinion, to those obtainable in Regent Street.

"Don't talk nonsense, Dulcie!" was Primrose's sisterly rebuke, as she turned the muslin dress round to look at it from another point of view.

"Primrose," said Dulcie emphatically, "we are both of us to have new dresses, hats, and shoes at Garth's. I have got fifteen pounds to buy them with!"

Primrose looked at her sister in sudden alarm.

"You have not borrowed it from anybody?" she asked.

"Certainly not. I am not quite as bad as that. I have sold some old books. That's all."

Primrose's expression of alarm deepened.

"Dulcie, if father finds out——"

"He won't. He can never find out who took them unless you tell him."

"But who did you get to buy them?" asked Primrose.

"Don't ask any questions. Let it be sufficient for you to know that I have three five-pound notes, and we are going to Garth's this afternoon."

"How?"

"Mr. Herriott is going to drive us."

Primrose reflected for a minute.

"But if Martha sees us in new dresses, she will wonder where we got them from. She will tell father, and it will all come out. Dulcie, I wish you had not done it!"

"Don't be silly! I have arranged everything. We shall start from here in our muslin frocks, but dress properly at Old House—we are going to lunch there, and old Martha will never see them. We can smuggle them back one day, and keep them here in case of an emergency. Now, am I not clever?"

"Too clever! Dulcie, you have made a mistake. What does it matter if we are badly dressed? We are nobodies. You know how terrible father is when he is really upset!"

"It matters a great deal to me how we are dressed!" retorted Dulcie. "I am going to be as well-dressed as Philippa Herriott for once. I hate that red-haired girl, Primrose."

"You don't hate her brother," said Primrose, and Dulcie laughed and colored.

"No. He's not a bit like Philippa," she admitted. "It is a pity he is so poor, because he is so much nicer than Mr. Belturbet."

"Take care you don't get your fingers cut."

"What do you mean?"

"You may play with edged tools."

"Oh, don't preach! Mr. Herriott and I understand each other perfectly; besides, he is leaving Old House in a week's time, and I can then devote myself entirely to Mr. Belturbet—the wonderful Arthur!"

She laughed mockingly, and danced lightly from the room.

Primrose stifled a sigh. Dulcie was very wilful. Although behind Belturbet's back she flirted with Herriott, and met him secretly, yet she had not swerved from her determination to be mistress of Old House. She was so charming, so gay, and altogether delightful, that it seemed to Primrose that Arthur Belturbet could not fail to appreciate her many attractions.

She did not know that when Belturbet was listening to Dulcie's nonsense he was usually watching Primrose. The elder girl puzzled him. Once he had asked himself if he could have been mistaken, and whether it was blue-eyed Dulcie who had marked him for her prey? But he decided that pretty, gay, sunny-tempered Dulcie was not the kind of girl to have a fixed purpose at heart; she was a frolicsome little minx, quite ready to flirt with him or with Herriott, but with no thought for anything beyond the present moment!

He waited patiently, keeping his keen brown eyes on Primrose, and his ears open to her voice, while all the time Primrose felt rather than saw that she was under observation.

Conscious of being weighed in some balance, she quite failed to guess for what reason. But it made her ill-at-ease, and she seldom spoke to Belturbet unless he addressed her.

"One day, I suppose," thought Belturbet, "she will find me alone, burst into tears, fling her arms around my neck, and tell me she cannot live without me, and all that kind of thing. 'My dear Miss Primrose,' I shall say, 'you are a sweet little girl and a good actress, only I happened to hear a certain conversation between you and your sister in the woods, and therefore I cannot help feeling that your affection is not altogether disinterested.' I wonder what she will do then? Faint, I suppose, or have hysterics."

The young man had been pondering this matter on the day preceding the garden-party, before Philippa asked him to walk through the grounds to see if everything was in readiness. Primrose, Dulcie, and Herriott were playing croquet. It had become an everyday occurrence for the Carwardine sisters to spend the afternoon at Old House. Philippa had done her best to prevent this, but Herriott had declared it would be a sin to leave two charming girls wandering about the woods when he was dying to talk to them.

"You needn't trouble yourself with them, Philippa," he had added. "I expect they are a bit too unsophisticated for you and Arthur, but I like them, and they like me—bless them!"

"My dear Jim, I think they are perfectly charming, only I thought their father might become troublesome," Philippa had replied, determined to make the best of it.

(To be continued.)

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THE BELL AT LLOYD'S.

Belonged to the Lutine, Wrecked in October, 1799.

One of the most interesting of bells is the one at Lloyd's, the great London marine insurance exchange. Its ringing has more significance than the sound of most bells, for it is rung only when a vessel is reported lost, or when a ship long overdue and considered lost unexpectedly reaches port.

It was not very long ago, says a writer in Tit-Bits, that its clanging announced the safe return of the Snowdon Range, which arrived in a battered condition at Queenstown fifty-two days out from Philadelphia, and long believed lost. Her loss would have cost Lloyd's something like £100,000, and it is little wonder, therefore, that the underwriters cheered when they heard the news.

The bell now used at Lloyd's belonged to the Lutine, which was wrecked near the Zuider Zee in October, 1799, while taking specie from English merchants to Hamburg.

There is a room at Lloyd's known as the Chamber of Horrors, and here are posted the telegrams that report casualties at sea. Unimportant accidents are not entered in the loss book, but the most serious are not only entered there, but are cried aloud by an official who stands in gorgeous uniform beneath the sounding board. When, after a week's disappearance, it is feared that a vessel has gone down, the owners make an application to the committee at Lloyd's to have the ship posted. That is done by posting up a notice in the Chamber of Horrors, which says that the authorities would be glad of information concerning the boat.

A week elapses, and then a second notice is put up, saying that the boat has not since been heard of. When you read that a ship has been "posted" as missing, you may know that declaration is upon the notice board at Lloyd's; on that day the insurance money is payable, and all who were upon her are legally considered dead. When a ship is posted, the old Lutine bell is tolled once. In the very unusual event of a vessel arriving in port after being posted, the bell is struck twice, and the caller makes his announcement from the rostrum amid a breathless silence.

Persia's Young Shah.

Sultan Ahmed Mirza, the youthful Shah of Persia, was crowned at Teheran, Persia, July 21, on becoming 16 years old, his official majority. The youngster took the constitutional oath of office in the palace of the National Council. The Imperial crown was so large that the little Shah, who placed it on his own head, was compelled to hold it in position while the Chief Mullah was making a brief address. Ahmed Mirza succeeded to the throne in 1905, on the death of his father.

Not Quite Fair.

At an agricultural show held each year in a small town in Ireland prizes are given for the best turn-out donkey and cart. The prize for this was usually won by a local doctor or a local solicitor. After the show one year the farmers and laborers protested that it was not quite fair to expect them to compete successfully with the well cared for and well groomed animals of those who generally won the prize. In consequence of this protest the following proviso appeared in the schedule for the following year—"All legal and medical donkeys excluded."

A mean man isn't always a man of means.

No man can talk quite so eloquently as his money.

On the Farm

Some Double Crops.

While two crops a season on a piece of ground will bring double profit, there is, of course, a corresponding double amount of vitality sapped from the soil and the frequent application of a good fertilizer is imperative, lest the ground soon become thin and unproductive, writes Mr. M. Cove.

In the garden one may utilize for second and even third crops the beds in which early peas, beans, radishes and lettuce were grown.

The same is true of the early sweet corn. It is advisable not to plant the same article twice in the same spot in succession, but rotate the products, the same as in field rotation of crops.

A well prepared seed bed at each planting is almost essential, and a sprinkling of fine, rich manure will prove very beneficial to the growing plants and in maintaining soil fertility.

Sow oats as early as possible in the spring, mow them for just a few days in advance of the time they would be reaped for the grain: remove them from the field as soon as they are sufficiently cured and stack well for future feeding purposes.

Then put as many teams in the field as can be spared. Stir the ground quickly and thoroughly immediately sowing it to millet.

Usually, the millet may be mown and stacked early in September and the field hurriedly cultivated and sown to rye, which will make excellent pasturage at a time when it is most needed.

The wheat or rye fields may be utilized in the same manner, and being somewhat earlier, is better adapted to growing double crops than the oats stubble.

The potato patch may be made to double its profits by sowing it to millet, cane or kaffir corn after it has been laid by. Sowing the ground to some other product also wields the beneficial influence of keeping down the weed pests which always bob up after you stop plowing the potato vines and which, where unmolested, furnish millions of seeds for propagating a rank and troublesome growth of weeds the next season, beside helping to drain the soil of its fertility.

Or if one will dig the potatoes from the early patch they will bring a high price at that season and the ground may be sown to rape for hog pasture.

We have seen fine corn growing between the rows of early potatoes after they had been laid by.

Late tomatoes, cabbages and turnips also may be raised among the potato vines as successfully as though they occupied a plot by themselves.

Tent Caterpillar.

If the tent caterpillar pitches its home in your orchard, remember that its flock is gathered together in the home at night, the members going forth by day to look for food. A torch applied to the home evenings or early mornings catches the worm in quantities. If in midsummer you find a bunch of brown worms with red markings clustered on the trunk of a walnut or apple tree do not be alarmed, but get busy. Like the swarm of bees they will not hang there many hours for they are only molting. By the next day the old skins alone will be left to tell the story, while the larvae, each in a bright, new coat, will be scattered over the tree, rapidly denuding it of its leaves. Thus is the handmaid moth easily kept in check by taking advantage of its peculiar habits.

Alfalfa.

Ordinarily no treatment is needed after the crop has been started, as long as the alfalfa shows a good stand and there is no tendency to run to weeds. If the weeds begin to prove troublesome, it is advisable to give the ground a thorough harrowing, after cutting, with the teeth of the harrow set at a considerable angle. This kills the weeds and is decidedly beneficial to the alfalfa, because of the loosening of the soil, and the harrow does not injure the roots of the crop. There has been considerable objection to disking the alfalfa field with the ordinary disc-harrow, because it is claimed that the plants are injured by splitting up the crowns.

PREPARING FOR FIVE YEARS.

Every Belgian Trained to Withstand German Aggression.

Belgium, with a German peril very much like that under which Britain has been laboring, has gradually been preparing for the great struggle that has now arrived, according to Mr. Isidore Freedman, of Antwerp, who is in Toronto at present.

"Up to five years ago," said Mr. Freedman, "it was only the poor man—the peasant—who became a soldier, and the Belgian army at that time numbered only 30,000. Then the military laws were changed and every family had to give a son. Last year there was a further change and now every man has to serve. In this way the Belgian regular army has been increased to 100,000.

"Besides these, however, there is a strong militia body. In times of war we can place in the field 250 000 men, every one of whom is conversant with the use of the military rifle."

Mr. Freedman has been in a state of considerable anxiety concerning his parents, but this morning his fears were set at rest by the receipt of a cable announcing their safe arrival in England. Of six brothers, three are naturalized Englishmen and two of the other three are serving in the Belgian army. The third, a lad of seventeen, is about to enlist. One brother is in the 7th Belgian Regiment of the line, and another left Toronto three months ago to enlist.

"Belgium has been training for this conflict for years," declared Mr. Freedman. "Otherwise, why should she have paid so much attention to the aggrandizement of her army?"

"Germany," he said, "threatened to take away the Congo from us if we did not at once allow her troops to devastate our country. The stand that Belgium has taken will long be remembered, no matter what happens to her.

"If the invaders succeed in taking Liege immediately, it will be only if they are five to our one. We are fighting for a cause, and the Germans know they are fighting just because the Kaiser is a war lord and wants to be another Frederick the Great. If Liege falls the Belgians will put up an even stouter resistance at Namur and Huy. One has to live in Belgium to understand the proud spirit of the Belgian.

"I believe that Germany will be beaten, but only in the long run. There is no use deceiving ourselves. I think the German fleet will avoid battle as long as possible, because so much depends on its success or failure.

"England was wise in not waiting until Germany had got France and Belgium out of the way. Germany wanted to have Antwerp, Ostend and Flushing with which to menace Britain at close range. We Belgians didn't have to fight, but we weren't going to see Germany become a greater menace to us than ever. We have always loved France and England and we have always had reason to fear Germany."

The trouble with some people is they have their work in one place and their thoughts in another.

"Didn't you find it rather cold as the thieves were making off with your clothes?" "Oh, no. They kept me well covered with their revolvers."

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