

ADOPTED BY THE DEAN

A TALE OF TWO COUNTRIES.

And with a sense of fresh work to be fitted into the day, Cornelia roused herself from her reverie, lighted her reading-lamp, and opening a ponderous volume was soon lost to the world around her.

Esperance came down stairs the next morning in good spirits, and ready to look at everything in the best light. Before leaving her room she had fastened one of the wall-flowers in her dress, and had caught herself singing the refrain of a game which she used to play with the convent pupils.

"Que tu as de belles filles Giroude giroude!"

Her sprightliness, however, soon vanished, for in the hot, oppressive dining-room she found her dining that a substantial meal awaited her. To sit down at eight o'clock to a regular *dejeuner a la fourchette*, was an almost unbearable indignity to her; she resolved to take only her accustomed cup of coffee and roll, but found the coffee so execrable that it was an impossibility; moreover, Mrs. Mortlake was so evidently offended at her numerous refusals, that she forced herself to take what she would much rather have been without.

The garden looked temptingly cool and shady, and after breakfast was over Esperance asked leave to go out. Cornelia received her proposal with some surprise. "Oh, certainly, if you wish to do so, but there is nothing worth seeing in our garden, and besides it is almost time for service."

"Service at the cathedral? I am so longing to see the interior."

"You will have plenty of opportunities, then, for we always attend both morning and evening service; be careful to be ready five minutes before the hour, as my father is very particular on punctuality."

And Cornelia moved away leaving Esperance chilled and repulsed, though she could not have explained why.

She was still looking out of the window, rather sadly, when Mrs. Mortlake returned, leading by the hand a fair-haired little girl of about six years of age, who would have been exceedingly pretty, had not her mouth been spoiled by constant pouting.

"Run and kiss your new cousin, Bella," said Mrs. Mortlake. "Go at once, there is a good child."

"But Bella drew back with an obstinate 'Shan't.'"

Esperance who was very fond of children, began to coax her, and would soon have won her over, but Mrs. Mortlake interfered in an aggravated tone.

"Excuse me, Esperance, but I must really have the management of my own child. Leave her to me."

Then as Esperance moved to the other side of the room, with heightened color, she turned again to the child. "Now, Bella, do as mamma tells you, and you shall have a piece of sugar."

Esperance would much rather have been without the bribed kiss, but after Mrs. Mortlake's very pointed remark she could not venture to say so; Bella hesitated for a minute, advanced a step or two, then turned once more.

"A large piece, mamma?"

"Yes, my darling, a large piece."

Bella hesitated no longer, and Esperance, much amused, met her half-way and kissed her on both cheeks.

"Bella ran back to her mother triumphantly."

"Two lumps of sugar, mamma, two big lumps, she kissed me twice!"

Esperance laughed merrily, but Mrs. Mortlake, with a look of coolness of her own, briebe, looked angry.

"Nonsense, child, I said one piece." Then, as Bella began to cry loudly, "Ah, I knew that would come of it; just show up, Esperance, how careful you ought to be with children, and Bella is so very sensitive. Hence, how could you let her so understand your French ways? I'll not have them introduced here, so please remember."

Esperance was too surprised and indignant to attempt any vindication.

"I thought you would have said 'Pardons,' but the words stuck in her throat; she hastily substituted 'a thousand regrets,' and left the room, while Mrs. Mortlake began to bargain with her child as to the amount of sugar she should have."

Though Esperance could only laugh in after days at the recollection of her absurd introduction to Bella, at the time she was considerably ruffled by it; it was the first time in her life that she had suffered from injustice—it was that she was falsely blamed, and Mrs. Mortlake's slighting remarks on her "French ways" had wounded her deeply.

It was with a very heavy heart that at the appointed time she joined Cornelia and Bertha, and walked with them to the cathedral. But comfort came to her as she entered and gazed around with wonder and awe. Whether from the beauty of the sight, or from the vastness and strength of all about her, or from a certain resemblance to Notre Dame de Paris, she did not know. Her heart was soothed, her heart no longer throbbed indignantly, and for the first time she felt at home at Rillchester.

They walked much faster than she would have liked down the choir aisle, and she had only time for a brief glance at the paves, with its glorious arabesque and pillars, before they were through the screen gate, and were ushered by a prim-looking veiled into the deansery pew. The service seemed to her dull and dreary in the extreme, and though the choir was fairly good, she soon wearied of the complicated Anglican chants and lengthy canticles, in which no one attempted to join. There was something depressing, too, in the smallness of the congregation, which certainly could not have numbered more than a dozen, and in the half-incomprehensible foreign prayers.

Esperance was sad and thoughtful, with wandering thoughts, so that she was roused when the hour was ended and she was free once more to devote all her eyes to the beauty around.

Cornelia, however, allowed no lingering thoughts to disturb her. She looked before she began in her clear, authoritative way, "As soon as we are at home will you come to me in my room, and I will see what studies you had better take up? We must lose no more time."

Esperance had she ought to have been much more grateful, but there was something in Cornelia's cold kindness which grated on her, and undoubtedly there was in her tone an implied reference to the time which had already been so foolishly wasted.

It was with some diffidence that she said, "Indeed, you are very good to think of helping me, my cousin; I know I am very ignorant."

"If you will take pains, it will be a pleasure to me to help you," replied Cornelia. "I am sure you will find me anxious to go and bring you a new correction. Do not always address me as 'my cousin,' it is quite unnecessary in English."

"Indeed! I had no idea of that; in France it would be thought rude almost not to do it. But a thousand thanks for telling me."

The hour spent in Cornelia's room was not altogether a pleasant one. A brief examination brought to light what seemed to Cornelia almost unparalleled ignorance, and she was really in despair over such an unpromising pupil. Esperance unconsciously to examination of any kind, and understanding English very imperfectly, was, of course, at a great disadvantage, and though now and then she would give a quick, intelligent answer, she was generally either completely, or frightened by her cousin's peremptory manner into absurd mistakes.

Cornelia, seeing that this was mere waste of time, began a lesson on physical geography, but this was not much more

successful. Though exceedingly clever, she was not a good teacher; she could neither understand nor sympathize with the difficulties of a less talented mind, and even painstaking slowness made her impatient and impatient.

Esperance was really unhappy—aware that she had answered badly, and vexed that she had not done more justice to her father's teaching. She was certain, too, that had the circumstances been different she could have done much better, and a consciousness that Cornelia did not understand her added to her wretchedness.

But this last thought reminded her of one of Gaspard's pieces of advice—"Whatever happens, don't let yourself become a 'femme trompée'"; and, taking courage, she began, "You will think me shockingly ignorant, Cornelia; but really, it is partly my ignorance of English that makes me so stupid; you must not think I have never been taught these things."

The fruits of good teaching are seen in the way you turn to the memory," said Cornelia, calmly.

Esperance flushed angrily. "No, no, that cannot be, I am sure it cannot; if the memory is bad, the best teaching may be thrown away to itself."

"No," corrected Cornelia, in the same impassive tone, "but do not excite yourself so much; I surely may hold different views without rousing all this indignation."

"It is not your views—I do not care for your views," replied Esperance, her voice rising; "it is your own slighting to my father, to the education he has given me, that make me angry. You do not know, you can never know, how good, how wise, how noble he was."

"Perhaps not," replied Cornelia. "But it were to judge of him by what his daughter presents to the world?"

Esperance burst into tears. "You are cruel—cruel! I speak so of him—now that—oh, papa! papa! why did I not die too?—shells falling all day long—and not one word come where it would have been welcome!"

She was leaning down on the table, her face hidden. Would Cornelia never speak, she wondered—would no word of sympathy pass those grave lips?

But still the silence was only broken by her own sobbing. Looking up at last, she found herself alone.

She was so dismayed, so astonished, that she could not cry, even though such a desertion seemed to her most cruel; she sat looking at Cornelia's vacant chair, and the map of mountains and rivers on the wall seemed to glow and tremble with her own tears.

When Cornelia returned she was quite calm, however; her tears were spent, and to her cousin's scorn and surprise, she was busily engaged in tracing the wet tears on the map to the same length as the various rivers.

"I think you do not require the quiet of my study for such an intellectual employment," said Cornelia, "and as our lesson is over you may go."

Esperance could not help smiling at Cornelia's sarcasm.

"It was very foolish, was it not? I hope it has not hurt the map," she said, with a little laugh; and then, and many thanks for your lesson."

Esperance was mute with astonishment. She had left the room, quite out of patience with Esperance's tears, and resolved to read her lecture on her demonstrativeness when she returned—but her plans had been frustrated, the good-humored reply to her singing speech, and the little ringing laugh, were now more aggravating than the sudden burst of passion, and for once in her life she felt thoroughly nonplussed. This little French girl was, indeed, a puzzle to her; but on the whole she was not altogether displeased with her for being out of the common, and as a new study of character she interested her.

Esperance, meanwhile, went down stairs, amused and a little triumphant at Cornelia's evident surprise; the consciousness of having averted a "scene" or a lecture was exhilarating, and she was quite convinced from Cornelia's manner that something of the kind had been intended.

But her joy was short-lived, for in the dining-room she found Mrs. Mortlake and Bella eagerly looking at the last "Illustrated London News," which was full of the horrors of the Commune.

"Oh, mamma, what are they doing to that woman?" asked Bella.

"Shooting her, darling; she has been spreading petroleum, wicked creature. And you see, she is some money, as being down, the Rue de Rivoli; she sells papers, she is destroying their own city. And look! there they are shooting the insurgents in the Luxembourg Gardens."

The familiar names, and the cruel want of consideration in speaking thus before her were too much for Esperance's powers of endurance; again she began to sob, and not attempting a second argument she hurriedly left the room.

But where could she go? To return to Cornelia would be to receive a double scolding, and she longed too much for sympathy to about her, or from a certain resemblance to Notre Dame de Paris, she did not know. Her heart was soothed, her heart no longer throbbed indignantly, and for the first time she felt at home at Rillchester.

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