

couldn't pronounce at all. Most of her bones, in a state of necrosis, had been skilfully removed by the time the smokers had passed back. But so much more was Dr. Conrad listening to what the waves said to the shingle and the shingle answered back, than to either the Grand Duchess or the registry-office, that it never crossed his mind whose the voice was who lit the vesta. He heard it say good-night—its owner would get back to the hotel—and the other make due response. And then nothing was left but the coastguard.

But the Grand Duke's family were not quite done with. It had to be recorded how many of his distinguished ancestors had suffered from *Plica polonica*. Still, the end did come at last, and the worthy lady thought perhaps if she could lie down now she might drop off. So Mrs. Iggulden got her release and slept.

Dr. Conrad didn't, not a wink. The whole place was full of Sally. The flashlight at intervals, in couplets, seemed to say "Sally" twice when it came, and then to leave a blank for him to think about her in. The great slow steamer far out to sea showed a green eye of jealousy or a red one of anger because it could not come ashore where Sally was, but had perforce to go on wherever it was navigated. The millions of black sea-elves—did you ever discriminate them?—that the slight observer fancies are the interstices of the moonlight on the water, were all busy about Sally, though it was hard to follow their movements. And every time St. Sennan said what o'clock it was, he added, "One hour nearer to Sally to-morrow!"

Poor Prosy!

## CHAPTER XXIX

OF A MARRIAGE BY SPECIAL LICENCE. ROSALIND'S COMPARISONS. OF THE THREE BRIDESMAIDS, AND HOW THE BRIDE WAS A GOOD SAILOR

BUT it never occurred to Dr. Vereker that the voice of the smoking gentleman, whose "*she*" knew a couple that had been cooked at a registry office, was a voice quite familiar to him. The only effect it had on his Sally-dazed mind was to make him wonder four hours after what it was that kept putting Julius Bradshaw into his head. If a brain-molecule could have been found not preoccupied with Sally he might have been able to give her next day a suggestive hint about a possibility ahead. But never a word said he to Sally; and when, on her return from bathing the following morning, Mrs. Lobjoit, the fisherman's wife, surprised her with the news that "the young lady" had come and had left her luggage, but would be back in half-an-hour, she was first taken aback, and thought it was a mistake next. But no—no chance of that! The young lady had asked for Mrs. Algernon Fenwick, or, in default, for Miss Sally, quite distinctly. She hadn't said any name, but there was a gentleman with her. Mrs. Lobjoit seemed to imply that had there been no gentleman she might have been nameless. Padlock's omnibus they came in.

So Sally went on being taken aback where she had left off, and was still pondering over the phenomenon when her mother followed her through the little yard paved with round flints bedded in mortar—all except the flower-beds, which were in this case marigold-beds and fuschia-beds and tamarisk-shakedown—and the street door which always stood open, and it was very little use ringing, the bell being broken. But you could pass through, and there would always be old Mr. Lobjoit in the kitchen, even if Mrs. Lobjoit was not there herself.

"Why not look on the boxes, you stupid kitten? There's a name on them, or ought to be." Thus Rosalind, after facts told.

"What a thing it is to have a practical maternal parent!" Thus Sally. And Mrs. Lobjoit put on record with an amiable smile that that is what she kept saying to Miss Nightingale, "Why not look?" Whereas the fact is Mrs. Lobjoit never said anything of the sort.

"Here's a go!" says Sally, who gets at the label-side of the trunk first. "If it isn't Tishy!" And the mother and daughter look at each other's faces, each watching the other's theory forming of what this sudden apparition means.

"What do you think, mother?"

"What do *you* think, kitten?" But the truth is, both wanted time to know what to think. And they hadn't got much forwarder with the solution of the problem when a light was thrown upon it by the sudden apparition of Lætitia herself, accompanied by the young gentleman whom Sally did not scruple to speak of—but not in his presence—as her counter-jumper. She did this, she said, to "pay Tishy out" for what she had said about him before she made his acquaintance.

The couple were in a mixed state of exaltation and confusion—Tishy half laughing, a third crying, and a sixth keeping up her dignity. Both were saying might they come in, and doing it without waiting for an answer.

Rosalind's remark was one of those nonsequences often met with in real life: "There's enough lunch—or we can send out." Sally's was: "But are you the Julius Bradshaws, or are you not? That's what *I* want to know." Sally won't be trifled with, not she!

"Well, Sally dear, no,—we're not—not just yet." Tishy hesitates. Julius shows firmness.

"But we want to be at two o'clock this afternoon, if you'll come. . . ."

"Both of us?"

"Why—of course, both of you."

"Then Mrs. Lobjoit will have to be in time with lunch." It does not really matter who were the speakers, nor what the share of each was in the following aggregate:

"How did you manage to get it arranged?" "Why *now*? Have you quarrelled with your mother?" "How long can you be away? I hate a stingy honeymoon!" "You've got no things." "Do you

think they'll know at home where you are?" "Where are you going afterwards?" "What do you think your father will say?" "What I want to know is, what put it into your head *now*, more than any other time?"

Responses to the whole of which, much at random, are incorporated in what follows: "Julius isn't wanted for three weeks." "I'm sure the Professor's on our side, really." "I left a letter to tell them, anyhow." "Calais. We shan't be sick, in weather like this. We'll cross by the night boat." "I've got a new dress to be married in, and a new umbrella—oh yes, and other things." "I'll tell you the whole story, Sally dear, as soon as I've had time to turn round." "No—not quarrelled—at least, no more than usual." "Special licence, of course."

What time Vereker, who had been to the post-office, which sold all sorts of things, to inquire if they had a packet of chemical oatmeal (the only thing his mother could digest this morning), and was coming back baffled, called in on his way to Mrs. Iggulden's. Not to see Sally, but only to take counsel with the family about chemical oatmeal. By a curious coincident, the moment he heard of Miss Sales Wilson's arrival, he used Sally's expression, and said that there was "a go!" Perhaps there was, and that accounted for it.

"Here's Dr. Conrad—he'll have to come too." Thus Sally explicitly. To which he replied, "All right. Where?" Sally replied with gravity: "To see these two married by special licence." And Julius added: "You *must* come, doctor, to be my bottle-holder."

A small undercurrent of thought in the doctor's mind, in which he can still accommodate passing events and the world's trivialities, begins to receive impressions of the facts of the case. The great river called Sally flows steadily on, on its own account, and makes and meddles not. It despises other folk's petty affairs. Dr. Conrad masters the position, and goes on to draw inferences.

"Then that must have been *you* last night, Bradshaw?"

"I dare say it was. When?"

"Walking up and down with another fellow in front here. Smoking cigars, both of you."

"Why didn't you sing out?"

"Well, now—why didn't I?" He seems a little unable to account for himself, and no wonder. "I think I recollected it was like you after you had gone."

"Don't be a brain-case, Dr. Conrad. What would your patients say if they heard you go on like that?" Sally said this, of course. Her mother thought to herself that perhaps the patients would send for a married doctor.

But her mind was taking no strong hold on the current of events, considering what a very vital human interest was afloat on them. It was wandering back to another wedding-day—her own first wedding-day of twenty years ago. As she looked at this bridegroom—all his upspring of hope making light of such fears as needs must be in like case all the world over—he brought back to her vividly, for all he was so unlike him, the face of the much younger man who had met her that day at Umballa, whose utter freedom from suspicion as he welcomed her almost made her able to forget the weeks gone by—the more so that they were like a dream in Hell, and their sequel like an awakening in Paradise. Well, at any rate, she had recaptured this man from Chaos, and he was hers again. And she had Sally. But at the word the whole world reeled and her feet were on quicksands. What and whence was Sally?

At least this was true—there was no taint of her father there! Sally wasn't an angel—not a bit of it—no such embarrassment to a merely human family. But her mother could see her truth, honour, purity—call it what you will—in every feature, every movement. As she stood there, giving injunctions to Vereker to look alive or he'd be late, her huge coil of sea-soaked black hair making her white neck look whiter, and her white hands re-establishing hair-pins in the depths of it, she seemed the very incarnation of non-inheritance. Not a trace of the sire her mother shuddered to think of in the music of her voice, in the laughter all who knew her felt in the mirth of her eyebrows and the sparkle of her pearly teeth. All her identity was her own. If only it could have been known then that she was going to be Sally! . . . But how fruitless all speculation was!

"Perhaps mother knows. Chemical oatmeal, mother, for invalids and persons of delicate digestion? They haven't got it at Pemberton's." The eyes and the teeth flash round on her

mother, and in a twinkling the unhallowed shadow of the past is gone. It was only a moment in all, though it takes more to record it. Rosalind came back to the life of the present, but she knew nothing about chemical oatmeal. Never mind. The doctor would find out. And he would be sure to be in time.

He was in time—plenty of time, said public opinion. And the couple were duly married, and went away in Padlock's omnibus to catch the train for Dover in time for the boat. And Dr. Conrad's eyes were on the eldest bridesmaid. For, after all, two others were obtained—jury-bridesmaids they might be called—in the persons of Miss Gwendolen Arkwright and an even smaller sister, who were somehow commandeered by Sally's enterprise, and bribed with promises of refreshment. But the smaller sister was an erring sister, for having been told she was on no account to speak during the service, she was suddenly struck with the unfairness of the whole thing, and, pointing at St. Sennans' arch-priest, said very audibly that *he* was "peatin'," so why wasn't she to "peat"? However, it was a very good wedding, and there was no doubt the principals had really become the Julius Bradshaws. They started from Dover on a sea that looked like a mill-pond; but Tishy's husband afterwards reported that the bride sat with her eyes shut the last half of the *trajet*, and said, "Don't speak to me, and I shall be all right."

That summer night Rosalind and her daughter were looking out over the reputed mill-pond at the silver dazzle with the elves in it. The moon had come to the scratch later than last night, from a feeling of what was due to the almanac, which may (or must) account for an otherwise enigmatical remark of Sally's, who, when her mother wondered what time it was, replied: "I don't know—it's later than it was yesterday." But did that matter, when it was the sort of night you stopped out all night on, according to Sally. They came to an anchor on a seat facing the sea, and adjourned human obligation *sine die*.

"I wonder if they've done wisely." Rosalind represents married thoughtfulness.

Sally shelves misgivings of this sort by reflections on the common lot of humanity, and considers that it will be the same for them as every one else.

"They'll be all right," she says, with cheerful optimism. "I wonder what's become of Prosy."

"He's up there with his mother. I saw him at the window. But I didn't mean that: they'll be happy enough together, I've no doubt. I mean, has Lætitia done wisely to quarrel with her family?"

"She hasn't; it's only the she-dragon. Tishy told me all about it going to church."

And, oh dear, how poor Prosy, who was up there with his mother, did long to come out to the voices he could hear plain enough, even as far off as that! But then he had been so long away to-day, and he knew his excellent parent always liked to finish the tale of her own wedding-day when she began it—as she often did. So he listened again to the story of the wedding, which was celebrated in the severest thunderstorm experienced in these islands since the days of Queen Elizabeth, by a heroic clergyman who was suffering from pleuro-pneumonia, which made his voice inaudible till a miraculous chance produced one of Squilby's cough lozenges (which are not to be had now for love or money), and cured him on the spot. And how the bridesmaids all had mumps, more or less. And much concerning the amazingly dignified appearance of her own father and mother, which was proverbial, and therefore no matter of surprise to any one, the proverb being no doubt well known to Europe.

But there, it didn't matter! Sally would be there to-morrow.

## CHAPTER XXX

HOW A FORTNIGHT PASSED, AND THE HONEYMOONERS RETURNED. OF A CHAT ON THE BEACH, AND MISS ARKWRIGHT'S SCIENTIFIC EXPERIENCE. ALMOST THE LAST, LAST, LAST—MAN'S HEAD!

SALLY to-morrow—and to-morrow—and to-morrow. Sally for fourteen morrows. And the moon that had lighted the devoted young man to his fate—whatever it was to be—had waned and left the sky clear for a new one, on no account to be seen through glass.

They were morrows of inextinguishable, indescribable delight for their victims or victim—for how shall we classify Sally? Who shall tread the inner temple of a girl's mind? How shall it be known that she herself has the key to the Holy of Holies?—that she is not dwelling in the outer court, unconscious of her function of priestess, its privileges and responsibilities? Or, in plainer language, metaphors having been blowed in obedience to a probable wish of the reader's, how do we know Sally was not falling in love with the doctor? How do we know she was not in love with him already? How did *she* know?

All we know is that the morrows went on, each one sweeter than the last, and all the little incidents went on that were such nothings at the time, but were so sure to be borne in mind for ever! *You* know all about it, you who read. Like enough you can remember now, old as you are, how you and she (or he, according as your sex is) got lost in the wood, and never found where the picnic had come to an anchor till all the wings of chicken were gone and only legs left; or how there was a bull somewhere; or how next day the cat got caught on the shoulder of one of you and had to be detached, hooking horribly, by the other; or how you felt hurt (not jealous, but hurt) because she (or he) was decently civil to some new he (or she), and how relieved you were when you heard it was Mr. or Mrs. Some-name-you've-forgotten. Why, if you were to ask now, of that grey man