

of those three days or so, when they have grown quite old together, as we hope they may. And if you add memory of an intoxicated delirium of love—of love that was on no account to be shown or declared or even hinted at—and of a tiresome hitch or qualification, an unselfish parent in full blow, you will have the record that is to remain in the mind of Conrad Vereker.

CHAPTER XXXI

HOW SALLY DIDN'T CONFESS ABOUT THE DOCTOR, AND JEREMIAH CAME TO ST. SENNANS ONCE MORE

THAT evening Sally sat with her mother on the very uncomfortable seat they affected on what was known as the Parade, a stone's throw from the house for a good stone-thrower. It had a little platform of pebbles to stand on, and tamarisks to tickle you from behind when the wind was northerly. It was a corrugated and painful seat, and had a strange power of finding out your tender vertebræ and pulverising them, whatever your stature might be. It fell forward when its occupants, goaded to madness, bore too hard on its front bar, and convinced them they would do well, henceforward, to hold it artificially in its place. But Rosalind and her daughter forgave it all these defects—perhaps because they were really too lazy to protest even against torture. It was the sea air. Anyhow, there they sat that evening, waiting for Padlock's omnibus to come, bringing Fenwick from the station. Just at the moment at which the story overtakes them, Rosalind was looking wonderfully handsome in the sunset light, and Sally was thinking to herself what a beautiful mother she had; and how, when the after-glow dies, it will leave its memory in the red gold that is somewhere in the rich brown her eyes are resting on. Sally was fond of dwelling on her mother's beauty. Perhaps doing so satisfied her personal vanity by deputy. She was content with her own self, but had no admiration for it.

"You *are* a dear good mammy. Fancy your losing all the best time of the morning indoors!"

"How the best time of the morning, chick?"

"Sitting with that old cat upstairs. . . . Well, I can't help it. She *is* an old cat."

"You're a perverse little monkey, kitten; that's what *you* are!" Rosalind laughed with an excuse—or caress, it may be—in her

laugh. "No," she continued, "we are much too hard on that old lady, both of us. Do you know, to-day she was quite entertaining—told me all about her own wedding-day, and how all the bridesmaids had the mumps."

"Has she never told you that before?"

"Only once. Then she told me about the late-lamented, and what a respect he had for her judgment, and how he referred to her at every crisis. I didn't think her at all bad company."

"Because you're a darling. I suppose you had it all about how Prosy, when he was a boy, wanted to study music, and how his pa said that the turning-point in the career of youth lay in the choice of a profession."

"Oh yes! And how his strong musical turn came from her side of the family. In herself it was dormant. But her Aunt Sophia had never once put her finger on a false note of the piano. This was confirmed by the authority of her eminent uncle, Dr. Everett Gayler, himself no mean musician."

"Poor Prosy! I know."

"And how musical faculty—amounting to genius—often remained absolutely unsuspected owing to its professor having no inheritance. But it would come out in the children. Then, and not till then, tardy justice was done. . . . Well, I don't know exactly how she worked it out, but she managed to suggest that she was Handel and Mozart in abeyance. Her son's fair complexion clinched matters. It was the true prototype of her own. A thoroughly musical complexion, bespeaking German ancestry."

"Isn't that the omnibus?" says Sally. But, no, it isn't. She continues: "I don't believe in musical complexions. Look at Julius Bradshaw—dark, with high cheek-bones, and a thin olive hand with blue veins in it. I say, mother. . . ."

"What, chick?"

"He's changed his identity—Julius Bradshaw has. I can't believe he was that spooney boy that used to come hankering after me at church." And the amusement this memory makes hangs about Sally's lips as the two sit on into a pause of silence.

The face of the mother does not catch the amusement, but remains grave and thoughtful. She does not speak; but the handsome eyes that rest so lovingly on the speaker are full of something from the past—some record that it would be an utter

bewilderment to Sally to read—a bewilderment far beyond that crux of the moment which maybe has struck her young mind for the first time—the old familiar puzzle of the change that comes to all of us in our transition from first to last experience of the strange phenomenon we call a friend. Sally can't make it out—the way a silly lad, love-struck about her indifferent self so short a while back, has become a totally altered person, the husband of her schoolmate, an actual identity of life and thought and feeling; he who was in those early days little more than a suit of clothes and a new prayer-book.

But if that is so strange to Sally, how measurelessly stranger is she herself to her mother beside her! And the man they are waiting and watching for, who is somewhere between this and St. Egbert's station in Padlock's venerable 'bus, what a crux is *he*, compared now to that intoxicated young lover of two-and-twenty years ago, in that lawn-tennis garden that has passed so utterly from his memory! And a moment's doubt, "But—has it?" is caught and absorbed by what seemed to Rosalind now an almost absurd fact—that, a week before, he had been nothing but a *fidus Achates* of that other young man provided to make up the lawn-tennis set, and that it was that other young man at first, not he, that belonged to *her*. And he had changed away so easily to—who was it? Jessie Nairn, to be sure—and left the coast clear for his friend. Whatever now *was* his name? Oh dear, what a fool was Rosalind! said she to herself, to have half let slip that it was *he* that was Fenwick, and not Gerry at all. All this compares itself with Sally's experience of Bradshaw's metamorphosis, and her own seems the stranger.

Then a moment of sharp pain that she cannot talk to Sally of these things, but must lead a secret life in her own silent heart. And then she comes back into the living world, and finds Sally well on with the development of another topic.

"Of course, poor dears! They've not played a note together since the row. It's been nothing but Kensington Gardens or the Albert Hall. But I'm afraid he's no better. If only he *could* be, it would make all the difference."

"What's that, darling? *Who* could be . . . ? Not your father?" For, as often as not, Rosalind would speak of her husband as Sally's father.

"Not Jeremiah—no. I was talking about Julius B. and his nervous system. Wouldn't it?"

"Wouldn't it what?"

"Make all the difference? I mean that he could get his violin-playing back. I told you about that letter?"

"No—what letter?"

"From an agent in Paris. Rateau, I think, was the name. Had heard Signor Carissimi had recovered his health completely, and was playing. Hoped he might be honoured with his instructions to make his arrangements in Paris, as he had done so four years ago. Wasn't it aggravating?"

"Does it make any difference?"

"Why, of course it does, mother darling. The aggravation! Just think now! Suppose he could rely on ten pounds a night, fancy that!"

"Suppose he could! . . . Yes, that would be nice." But there is a preoccupation in her tone, and Sally wants sympathy to be drawn with a vigorous outline.

"What's my maternal parent thinking about, as grave as a judge? Jeremiah's all right, mammy darling! *He's* not killed in a railway accident. Catch *him!*" This is part of a systematized relationship between the two. Each always discredits the possibility of mishap to the other. It might be described as chronic reciprocal Christian Science.

"I wasn't thinking of Gerry." Which is true in a sense, as she does not think of the Gerry her daughter knows. And the partial untruth does not cross her mind—a tacit recognition of the powers of change. "I was wool-gathering."

"No—what *was* she thinking of?" For some reason the third person is thought more persuasive than the second.

"Thinking of her kitten." And this is true enough, as Rosalind is really always thinking of Sally, more or less.

"We-ell, *I'm* all right. What's the matter with *me?*"

"Nothing at all that I know of, darling." But it does cross the speaker's mind that the context of circumstances might make this an opportunity for getting at some information she wants. For Sally has remained perfectly inscrutable about Conrad Vereker, and Rosalind has been asking herself whether it is possible that, after all, there is nothing. She doesn't know how to set

about it, though. Perhaps the best thing would be to take a leaf out of Sally's own book, and go straight to the bull's-eye.

"Do you really want to know what I was thinking of, Sally-kin?" But no sooner has she formulated the intention of asking a question, and allowed the intention to creep into her voice than Sally knows all about it.

"As if I don't know already. You mean me and Prosy."

"Of course. But how did you know?"

"Mammy *dear!* As if I was born yesterday! If you want people not to know things, you mustn't have delicate inflexions of voice. I knew you were going to catechize about Prosy the minute you got to 'did I really want to know.'"

"But I'm not going to catechize, chick. Only when you ask me what I'm thinking about, and really want to know, I tell you. I *was* thinking about you and Conrad Vereker." For some mysterious reason this mention of his name in full seems to mature the conversation, and make clearer definition necessary.

Our own private opinion is that any one who closely observes human communion will see that two-thirds of it runs on lines like the foregoing. Very rarely indeed does a human creature say what it means. Exhaustive definition, lucid statements, concise terminology—even plain English—are foreign to its nature. The congenial soil in which the fruit of Intelligence ripens is Suggestion, and the wireless telegraphs of the mind are the means by which it rejoices to communicate. Don't try to say what you mean—because *you* can't. You are not clever enough. Try to mean what you want to say, and leave the dictionary to take care of itself.

This little bit of philosophizing of ours has just given Sally time, pondering gravely with the eyebrows all at rest and lips at ease, to deal with the developed position created by the mere substitution of a name for a nickname.

"Ought there to be . . . anything to think about?" Thus Sally; and her mother sees, or thinks she sees, a little new colour in the girl's cheeks. Or is it only the sunset? Then Rosalind says to herself that perhaps she has made a mistake, had better have left it alone. Perhaps. But it's done now. She is not one that goes back on her resolutions. It is best not to be too tugging and solemn over it. She speaks with a laugh.

"It's not my little daughter I'm afraid of, Sallykin. She's got the key of the position. It's that dear good boy."

"He's not a boy. He's thirty-one next February. Only he's not got a birthday, because it's not leap-year. Going by birthdays he's not quite half-past seven."

"Then it won't do to go by birthdays. Even at thirty-one, though, some boys are not old enough to know better. He's very inexperienced in some things."

"A babe unborn—only he can write prescriptions. Only they don't do you any good. ("Ungrateful child!" . . . "Well, they don't.") You see, he hasn't any one to go to to ask about things except me. Of course I can tell him, if you come to that!"

"There's his mother."

"His mother! That old dianthus! Oh, mammy darling, what different sorts of mothers do crop up when you think of it!" And Sally is so moved by this scientific marvel that she suddenly kisses her mother, there out on the public parade with a gentleman in check trousers and an eye-glass coming along!

"Why do you call the old lady a dianthus, chick? Really, the way you treat that poor old body! . . ."

"Not when Prosy's there. I know my place. . . . We-ell, you know what a dianthus's figure is like? When the tentacles are in, I mean."

But Rosalind tacitly condemns the analogy. Is she not herself a mother, and bound to take part with her kind, however obese? "What were you and the doctor talking about in the boat all that long time yesterday?" she asks, skipping an interval which might easily have contained a review of Mrs. Vereker inside-out like a sea-anemone. Sally is quite equal to it.

"Resuscitation after drowning. Prosy says death is really due to carbonic acid poisoning. Anybody would think it was choking, but it's nothing of the sort. The arterial blood is insufficiently fed with oxygen, and death ensues."

"How long did you talk about that?"

"Ever so long. Till I asked him what he should do if a visitor were drowned and couldn't be brought to. Not at the hotel; down here. Me, for instance."

"What did he say?"

"He was jolly solemn over it, Prosy was. Said he should try

his best, and as soon as he was sure it was no go, put an end to his own existence. I said that would be wrong, and besides, he couldn't do it. He said, oh yes, he could—he could inject air into a vein, and lots of things. He went on a physiological tack, so I quoted Hamlet."

"What did he make of Hamlet?"

"Said the researches of modern science all tended to prove that extinction awaited us at death, and he would take his chance. He was quite serious over it."

"And then you said? . . ."

"I said, suppose it turned out that modern science was tommyrot, wouldn't he feel like a fool when all was said and done? He admitted that he might, in that case. But he would take his chance, he said. And then we had a long argument, Prosy and I."

"Has he ever resuscitated a drowned person?"

"Oh yes, two or three. But he says he should like a little more practice, as it's a very interesting subject."

"You really are the most ridiculous little kitten there ever was! Talking like the President of the Royal College of Surgeons! Not a smile."

"We-ell, there's nothing in *that*." Slightly offended dignity on Miss Sally's part. "I say, the 'bus is very late; it's striking seven."

But just as St. Sennan ceases, and leaves the air clear for listening, Rosalind exclaims, "Isn't that it?" And this time it is it, and by ten minutes past seven Fenwick is in the arms of his family, who congratulate him on a beautiful new suit of navy-blue serge, in which he looks very handsome.

Often now when she looks back to those days can Rosalind see before her the grave young face in the sundown, and hear the tale of Dr. Conrad's materialism. And then she sees once more over the smooth purple sea of the day before the little boat sculled by Vereker, with Sally in the stern steering. And the white sails of the Grace Darling of St. Sennans, that had taken a large party out at sixpence each person three hours ago, and couldn't get back by herself for want of wind, and had to be towed by a row-boat, whose oars sounded rhythmically across

the mile of intervening water. She was doing nothing to help, was Grace, but her sails flopped a little now and again, just enough to show how glad she would have been to do so with a little encouragement. Rosalind can see it all again quite plain, and the little white creamy cloud that had taken pity on the doctor sculling in the boat, and made a cool island of shadow, coloured imperial purple on the sea, for him and Sally to float in, and talk of how some unknown person, fool enough to get drowned, should one day be recalled from the gate of Death.

CHAPTER XXXII

HOW SALLY DIVED OFF THE BOAT, AND SHOCKED THE BEACH. OF THE SENSITIVE DELICACY OF THE OCTOPUS. AND OF DR. EVERETT GAYLER'S OPINIONS

FENWICK had been granted, or had appropriated, another week's holiday, and the wine-trade was to lose some of his valuable services during that time. Not all, because in these days you can do so much by telegraph. Consequently the chimney-piece with the rabbits made of shells on each side, and the model of the Dreadnought—with real planks and a companion-ladder that went too far down, and almost serviceable brass carronades ready for action—and a sampler by Mercy Lobjoit (1763), showing David much too small for the stitches he was composed of, and even Goliath not big enough to have two lips—this chimney-piece soon become a magazine of yellow telegrams, which blew away when the window and door were open at the same time.

It was on the second of Fenwick's days on this visit that an unusual storm of telegrams, as he came in to breakfast after an early dip in the sea, confirmed the statement in the paper of the evening before that W. and S.W. breezes might be expected later. "Wind freshening," was the phrase in which the forecast threw doubts on the permanency of its recent references to a smooth Channel-passage. However, faith had already been undermined by current testimony to light easterly winds backing north, on the coast of Ireland. Sally was denouncing meteorology as imposture when the returning bather produced the effect recorded. It interrupted a question on his lips as he entered, and postponed it until the telegram papers had all been reinstated and the window closed, so that Mrs. Lobjoit might come in with the hot rolls and eggs and not have anything blown away. Then peace reigned and the question got asked.

"What are we going to do to-day?" said Sally, repeating it.