

# A Cathedral Courtship

By

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## A Cathedral Courtship

SHE

Winchester, May 28, 1891  
The Royal Garden Inn.

We are doing the English cathedral towns, aunt Celia and I. Aunt Celia has an intense desire to improve my mind. Papa told her, when we were leaving Cedarhurst, that he wouldn't for the world have it too much improved, and aunt Celia remarked that, so far as she could judge, there was no immediate danger; with which exchange of hostilities they parted.

We are traveling under the yoke of an iron itinerary, warranted neither to bend nor break. It was made out by a young High Church curate in New York, and if it had been blessed by all the bishops and popes it could not be more sacred to aunt Celia. She is awfully High Church, and I believe she thinks this tour of the cathedrals will give me a taste for ritual and bring me into the true fold. I have been hearing dear old Dr. Kyle a great deal lately, and aunt Celia says that he is the most dangerous Unitarian she knows, because he has leanings towards Christianity.

Long ago, in her youth, she was engaged to a young architect. He, with his triangles and T-squares and things, succeeded in making an imaginary scale-drawing of her heart (up to that time a virgin forest, an unmapped territory), which enabled him to enter in and set up a pedestal there, on which he has remained ever since. He has been only a memory for many years, to be sure, for he died at the age of twenty-six, before he had had time to build anything but a livery stable and a country hotel. This is fortunate, on the whole, because aunt Celia thinks he was destined to establish American architecture on a higher plane,--rid it of its base, time-serving, imitative instincts, and waft it to a height where, in the course of centuries, we should have been revered and followed by all the nations of the earth. I went to see the livery stable, after one of these Miriam-like flights of prophecy on the might-have-been. It isn't fair to judge a man's promise by one performance, and that one a livery stable, so I shall say nothing.

This sentiment about architecture and this fondness for the very toppingest High Church ritual cause aunt Celia to look on the English cathedrals with solemnity and reverential awe. She has given me a fat notebook, with "Katharine Schuyler" stamped in gold letters on the Russia leather cover, and a lock and key to protect its feminine confidences. I am not at all the sort of girl who makes notes, and I have told her so; but she says that I must at least record my passing impressions, if they are ever so trivial and commonplace.

I wanted to go directly from Southampton to London with the Abbots, our ship friends, who left us yesterday. Roderick Abbott and I had had a charming time on board ship (more charming than aunt Celia knows, because she was very ill, and her natural powers of chaperoning were severely impaired), and the prospect of seeing London sights

together was not unpleasing; but Roderick Abbott is not in aunt Celia's itinerary, which reads: "Winchester, Salisbury, Wells, Bath, Bristol, Gloucester, Oxford, London, Ely, Lincoln, York, Durham."

Aunt Celia is one of those persons who are born to command, and when they are thrown in contact with those who are born to be commanded all goes as merry as a marriage bell; otherwise not.

So here we are at Winchester; and I don't mind all the Roderick Abbotts in the universe, now that I have seen the Royal Garden Inn, its pretty coffee-room opening into the old-fashioned garden, with its borders of clove pinks, its aviaries, and its blossoming horse-chestnuts, great towering masses of pink bloom!

Aunt Celia has driven to St. Cross Hospital with Mrs. Benedict, an estimable lady tourist whom she "picked up" en route from Southampton. I am tired, and stayed at home. I cannot write letters, because aunt Celia has the guide-books, so I sit by the window in indolent content, watching the dear little school laddies, with their short jackets and wide white collars; they all look so jolly, and rosy, and clean, and kissable! I should like to kiss the chambermaid, too! She has a pink print dress; no bangs, thank goodness (it's curious our servants can't leave that deformity to the upper classes), but shining brown hair, plump figure, soft voice, and a most engaging way of saying, "Yes, miss? Anythink more, miss?" I long to ask her to sit down comfortably and be English, while I study her as a type, but of course I mustn't. Sometimes I wish I could retire from the world for a season and do what I like, "surrounded by the general comfort of being thought mad."

An elegant, irreproachable, high-minded model of dignity and reserve has just knocked and inquired what we will have for dinner. It is very embarrassing to give orders to a person who looks like a judge of the Supreme Court, but I said languidly, "What would you suggest?"

"How would you like a clear soup, a good spring soup, to begin with, miss?"

"Very much."

"And a bit of turbot next, miss?"

"Yes, turbot, by all means," I said, my mouth watering at the word.

"And what for a roast, miss? Would you enjoy a young duckling, miss?"

"Just the thing; and for dessert"--I couldn't think what we ought to have for dessert in England, but the high-minded model coughed apologetically and said, "I was thinking you might like gooseberry tart and cream for a sweet, miss."

Oh that I could have vented my New World enthusiasm in a shriek of delight as I heard those intoxicating words, heretofore met only in English novels!

"Ye-es," I said hesitatingly, though I was palpitating with joy, "I fancy we should like gooseberry tart (here a bright idea entered my mind) and perhaps in case my aunt doesn't care for the gooseberry tart, you might bring a lemon squash, please."

Now I had never met a lemon squash personally, but I had often heard of it, and wished to show my familiarity with British culinary art.

"One lemon squash, miss?"

"Oh, as to that, it doesn't matter," I said haughtily; "bring a sufficient number for two persons."

\* \* \*

Aunt Celia came home in the highest feather. She had twice been taken for an Englishwoman. She said she thought that lemon squash was a drink; I thought it was a pie; but we shall find out at dinner, for, as I said, I ordered a sufficient number for two persons.

At four o'clock we attended even-song at the cathedral. I shall not say what I felt when the white-surpliced boy choir entered, winding down those vaulted aisles, or when I heard for the first time that intoned service, with all its "witchcraft of harmonic sound." I sat quite by myself in a high carved-oak seat, and the hour was passed in a trance of serene delight. I do not have many opinions, it is true, but papa says I am always strong on sentiments; nevertheless, I shall not attempt to tell even what I feel in these new and beautiful experiences, for it has been better told a thousand times.

There were a great many people at service, and a large number of Americans among them, I should think, though we saw no familiar faces. There was one particularly nice young man, who looked like a Bostonian. He sat opposite me. He didn't stare,--he was too well bred; but when I looked the other way, he looked at me. Of course I could feel his eyes,--anybody can, at least any girl can; but I attended to every word of the service, and was as good as an angel. When the procession had filed out and the last strain of the great organ had rumbled into silence, we went on a tour through the cathedral, a heterogeneous band, headed by a conscientious old verger who did his best to enlighten us, and succeeded in virtually spoiling my pleasure.

After we had finished (think of "finishing" a cathedral in an hour or two!), aunt Celia and I, with one or two others, wandered through the beautiful close, looking at the exterior from every possible point, and coming at last to a certain ruined arch which is very famous. It did not strike me as being remarkable. I could make any number of them with a pattern, without the least effort. But at any rate, when told by the verger to gaze upon the beauties of this wonderful relic and tremble, we were obliged to gaze also upon the beauties of the aforesaid nice young man, who was sketching it. As we turned to go



LETANIA  
IX  
SUPER  
CONFITEBOR  
DUC PROBATI

SOLIDORUM  
FLUMINA  
TIBI

There ought to be a law against a woman's making a picture of herself, unless she is willing to sit and be sketched.

A black and white sketch doesn't give any definite idea of this charmer's charms, but some time I'll fill it in,--hair, sweet little hat, gown, and eyes, all in golden brown, a cape of tawny sable slipping off her arm, a knot of yellow primroses in her girdle, carved-oak background, and the afternoon sun coming through a stained-glass window. Great Jove! She had a most curious effect on me, that girl! I can't explain it,--very curious, altogether new, and rather pleasant! When one of the choir boys sang, "Oh for the wings of a dove!" a tear rolled out of one of her lovely eyes and down her smooth brown cheek. I would have given a large portion of my modest monthly income for the felicity of wiping away that teardrop with one of my new handkerchiefs, marked with a tremendous "C" by my pretty sister.

An hour or two later they appeared again,--the dragon, who answers to the name of "aunt Celia," and the "nut-brown mayde," who comes when you call her "Katharine." I was sketching a ruined arch. The dragon dropped her unmistakably Boston bag. I expected to see encyclopaedias and Russian tracts fall from it, but was disappointed. The nut-brown mayde (who has been brought up rigidly) hastened to pick up the bag, for fear that I should serve her by doing it. She was punished by turning it inside out, and I was rewarded by helping her pick up the articles, which were many and ill assorted. My little romance received the first blow when I found that she reads the Duchess novels. I think, however, she has the grace to be ashamed of it, for she blushed scarlet when I handed her "A Modern Circe." I could have told her that such a blush on such a cheek would atone for reading Mrs. Southworth, but I refrained. After she had gone I discovered a slip of paper which had blown under some stones. It proved to be an itinerary. I didn't return it. I thought they must know which way they were going; and as this was precisely what I wanted to know, I kept it for my own use. She is doing the cathedral towns. I am doing the cathedral towns. Happy thought! Why shouldn't we do them together,--we and aunt Celia?

I had only ten minutes--to catch my train for Salisbury, but I concluded to run in and glance at the registers of the principal hotels. Found my nut-brown mayde at once on the pages of the Royal Garden Inn register: "Miss Celia Van Tyck, Beverly, Mass.; Miss Katharine Schuyler, New York." I concluded to stay over another train, ordered dinner, and took an altogether indefensible and inconsistent pleasure in writing "John Quincy Copley, Cambridge, Mass.," directly beneath the charmer's autograph.

SHE

Salisbury,  
The White Hart Inn.

June

1

We left Winchester on the 1.06 train yesterday, and here we are within sight of another superb and ancient pile of stone. I wanted so much to stop at the Highflyer Inn in Lark Lane, but aunt Celia said that if we were destitute of personal dignity, we at least owed something to our ancestors. Aunt Celia has a temperamental distrust of joy as something dangerous and ensnaring. She doesn't realize what fun it would be to date one's letters from the Highflyer Inn, Lark Lane, even if one were obliged to consort with poachers and cockneys in order to do it.

We attended service at three. The music was lovely, and there were beautiful stained-glass windows by Burne-Jones and Morris. The verger (when wound up with a shilling) talked like an electric doll. If that nice young man is making a cathedral tour, like ourselves, he isn't taking our route, for he isn't here. If he has come over for the purpose of sketching, he wouldn't stop at sketching one cathedral. Perhaps he began at the other end and worked down to Winchester. Yes, that must be it, for the Ems sailed yesterday from Southampton.

\* \* \*

June 2.

We intended to go to Stonehenge this morning, but it rained, so we took a "growler" and went to the Earl of Pembroke's country place to see the pictures. Had a delightful morning with the magnificent antiques, curios, and portraits. The Van Dyck room is a joy forever. There were other visitors; nobody who looked especially interesting. Don't like Salisbury so well as Winchester. Don't know why. We shall drive this afternoon, if it is fair, and go to Wells to-morrow. Must read Baedeker on the bishop's palace. Oh dear! if one could only have a good time and not try to know anything!

Memoranda: This cathedral has the highest spire. Remember: Winchester, longest nave; Salisbury, highest spire.

The Lancet style is those curved lines meeting in a rounding or a sharp point like this

[drawing like two very circular n's next to each other]

and then joined together like this:

∪∪

the way they used to scallop flannel petticoats. Gothic looks like triangles meeting together in various spots and joined with beautiful sort of ornamented knobs. I think I know Gothic when I see it. Then there is Norman, Early English, fully developed Early English, Early and Late Perpendicular, and Transition. Aunt Celia knows them all apart.

HE

Salisbury,  
The Red Lion.

June

3

I went off on a long tramp this afternoon, and coming on a pretty river flowing through green meadows, with a fringe of trees on either side, I sat down to make a sketch. I heard feminine voices in the vicinity, but, as these are generally a part of the landscape in the tourist season, I paid no special notice. Suddenly a dainty patent-leather shoe floated towards me on the surface of the stream. It evidently had just dropped in, for it was right side up with care, and was disporting itself right merrily. "Did ever Jove's tree drop such fruit?" I quoted, as I fished it out on my stick; and just then I heard a distressed voice saying, "Oh, aunt Celia, I've lost my smart little London shoe. I was sitting in a tree, taking a pebble out of the heel, when I saw a caterpillar, and I dropped it into the river, the shoe, you know, not the caterpillar." Hereupon she came in sight, and I witnessed the somewhat unusual spectacle of my nut-brown mayde hopping on one foot, like a divine stork, and ever and anon emitting a feminine shriek as her off foot, clad in a delicate silk stocking, came in contact with the ground. I rose quickly, and, polishing the patent leather ostentatiously, inside and out, with my handkerchief, I offered it to her with distinguished grace. She swayed on her one foot with as much dignity as possible, and then recognizing me as the person who picked up the contents of aunt Celia's bag, she said, dimpling in the most distracting manner (that's another thing there ought to be a law against), "Thank you again; you seem to be a sort of knight-errant!"

"Shall I--assist you?" I asked. (I might have known that this was going too far.)

"No, thank you," she said, with polar frigidity. "Good-afternoon." And she hopped back to her aunt Celia without another word.

I don't know how to approach aunt Celia. She is formidable. By a curious accident of feature, for which she is not in the least responsible, she always wears an unfortunate expression as of one perceiving some offensive odor in the immediate vicinity. This may be a mere accident of high birth. It is the kind of nose often seen in the "first families," and her name betrays the fact that she is of good old Knickerbocker origin. We go to Wells to-morrow. At least I think we do.

SHE

Gloucester,  
The Spread Eagle.

June

9

I met him at Wells, and again at Bath. We are always being ridiculous, and he is always rescuing us. Aunt Celia never really sees him, and thus never recognizes him when he appears again, always as the flower of chivalry and guardian of ladies in distress. I will never again travel abroad without a man, even if I have to hire one from a Feeble-Minded Asylum. We work like galley slaves, aunt Celia and I, finding out about trains and things.



Neither of us can understand Bradshaw, and I can't even grapple with the lesser intricacies of the A B C railway guide. The trains, so far as I can see, always arrive before they go out, and I can never tell whether to read up the page or down. It is certainly very queer that the stupidest man that breathes, one that barely escapes idiocy, can disentangle a railway guide, when the brightest woman fails. Even the Boots at the inn in Wells took my book, and, rubbing his frightfully dirty finger down the row of puzzling figures, found the place in a minute, and said, "There ye are, miss." It is very humiliating. All the time I have left from the study of routes and hotels I spend on guide-books. Now I'm sure that if any one of the men I know were here, he could tell me all that is necessary as we walk along the streets. I don't say it in a frivolous or sentimental spirit in the least, but I do affirm that there is hardly any juncture in life where one isn't better off for having a man about. I should never dare divulge this to aunt Celia, for she doesn't think men very nice. She excludes them from conversation as if they were indelicate subjects.

But, to go on, we were standing at the door of Ye Olde Bell and Horns, at Bath, waiting for the fly which we had ordered to take us to the station, when who should drive up in a four-wheeler but the flower of chivalry. Aunt Celia was saying very audibly, "We shall certainly miss the train if the man doesn't come at once."

"Pray take this fly," said the flower of chivalry. "I am not leaving till the next train."

Aunt Celia got in without a murmur; I sneaked in after her. I don't think she looked at him, though she did vouchsafe the remark that he seemed to be a civil sort of person.

At Bristol, I was walking about by myself, and I espied a sign, "Martha Huggins, Licensed Victualer." It was a nice, tidy little shop, with a fire on the hearth and flowers in the window, and, as it was raining smartly, I thought no one would catch me if I stepped inside to chat with Martha. I fancied it would be so delightful and Dickensy to talk quietly with a licensed victualer by the name of Martha Huggins.

Just after I had settled myself, the flower of chivalry came in and ordered ale. I was disconcerted at being found in a dramshop alone, for I thought, after the bag episode, he might fancy us a family of inebriates. But he didn't evince the slightest astonishment; he merely lifted his hat, and walked out after he had finished his ale. He certainly has the loveliest manners!

And so it goes on, and we never get any further. I like his politeness and his evident feeling that I can't be flirted and talked with like a forward boarding-school miss, but I must say I don't think much of his ingenuity. Of course one can't have all the virtues, but, if I were he, I would part with my distinguished air, my charming ease, in fact almost anything, if I could have in exchange a few grains of common sense, just enough to guide me in the practical affairs of life.

I wonder what he is? He might be an artist, but he doesn't seem quite like an artist; or a dilettante, but he doesn't seem in the least like a dilettante. Or he might be an architect; I think that is the most probable guess of all. Perhaps he is only "going to be" one of these

things, for he can't be more than twenty-five or twenty-six. Still he looks as if he were something already; that is, he has a kind of self-reliance in his mien,--not self-assertion, nor self-esteem, but belief in self, as if he were able, and knew that he was able, to conquer circumstances.

HE

Gloucester,  
The Bell.

June

10

Nothing accomplished yet. Her aunt is a Van Tyck, and a stiff one, too. I am a Copley, and that delays matters. Much depends upon the manner of approach. A false move would be fatal. We have six more towns (as per itinerary), and if their thirst for cathedrals isn't slaked when these are finished we have the entire continent to do. If I could only succeed in making an impression on the retina of aunt Celia's eye! Though I have been under her feet for ten days, she never yet has observed me. This absent-mindedness of hers serves me ill now, but it may prove a blessing later on.

SHE

Oxford,  
The Mitre.

June

12

It was here in Oxford that a grain of common sense entered the brain of the flower of chivalry. You might call it the dawn of reason. We had spent part of the morning in High Street, "the noblest old street in England," as our dear Hawthorne calls it. As Wordsworth had written a sonnet about it, aunt Celia was armed for the fray,--a volume of Wordsworth in one hand, and one of Hawthorne in the other. (I wish Baedeker didn't give such full information about what one ought to read before one can approach these places in a proper spirit.) When we had done High Street, we went to Magdalen College, and sat down on a bench in Addison's Walk, where aunt Celia proceeded to store my mind with the principal facts of Addison's career, and his influence on the literature of the something or other century. The cramming process over, we wandered along, and came upon "him" sketching a shady corner of the walk.

Aunt Celia went up behind him, and, Van Tyck though she is, she could not restrain her admiration of his work. I was surprised myself: I didn't suppose so good looking a youth could do such good work. I retired to a safe distance, and they chatted together. He offered her the sketch; she refused to take advantage of his kindness. He said he would "dash off" another that evening, and bring it to our hotel,--"so glad to do anything for a fellow- countryman," etc. I peeped from behind a tree and saw him give her his card. It was an awful moment; I trembled, but she read it with unmistakable approval, and gave him her own with an expression that meant, "Yours is good, but beat that if you can!"

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