

# A MODERN DON QUIXOTE.

IN TWO INTALMENT—PART II.

## CHAPTER III.

A thick November fog was filling the streets and houses of London with that yellow, all-prevailing atmosphere which makes everything dingy in hue, and chokes up throat and eyes of all but the veritable cockney.

Inside the smoking-room of the Coliseum Club the electric light, and good tobacco fumes did much to dispel the fog.

A man, tanned with years of travelling in hot climates, was standing on the hearth rug, sustaining a brisk conversation with half a dozen others.

'I was never so surprised in my life as when you walked in tonight as coolly as if you had been for a stroll, Barnaby,' said one, slapping him affectionately on the back. 'Quite brings back old times.'

'Must be six years since you last stood there, eh?' said another.

'I left England in the March of eighty-nine, and this is November of ninety-seven,' laughed Barnaby. 'I have no intention of writing an account of my adventures, though, nor of attempting any alternation of the existing geographies.'

'Quite right,' nodded a grey-haired old general; 'as a rule, a traveller's experiences may be judged in inverse ratio to his "tall" talk.'

'Do any of you know where Denzil Sartoris may be found?' Barnaby asked presently. 'I met a fellow in Calcutta who charged me with several messages. He said he had tried vainly to discover Sartoris' whereabouts. Has he not inherited that fine old property yet? Nothing wrong, I hope?'

'Sartoris is in Rome. Turning sculptor, and doing well, too.'

'Sculptor! After the—th Hussars He was always a little eccentric, but not erratic.'

'Just after you left England,' said the elderly man quietly, 'some connection of the late Mrs. Bereton turned up, with a son. She managed so well that the estate was induced to make a will in favor of her son, leaving only a small legacy to Sartoris.'

'What a villainous shame!' Barnaby said fervently. 'Why, the old man simply worshipped him! I stayed twice at The Hall, and Denzil was like his own son in every way. There was a very beautiful young girl, too—the squire's ward.'

'But women are the very deuce for mischief. After this will was read, however, another was produced by the old housekeeper, which the squire had written with his own hand a few days before his death. It was to be kept secret to the last minute and Sartoris, by it, was entirely righted.'

'Then why a sculptor in Rome?'

'You said just now that he was eccentric. When he heard the contents of the first will, twenty others in his favor would make him accept the property. He had decided drawn up leaving it to the other man, Calthrop, for life, settled a sum on the pretty girl, who had lost her own money, and went off to Rome.'

Barnaby drew a long breath.

'What you may call Quixotic.'

'Sartoris was a fool to give up what was his by every right. The other man was too remotely connected to expect inheritance, and he is disliked to this day, while I believe the mother was cut by the whole county.'

Sartoris was always fond of modelling, even in our Winchester days,' said Barnaby.

'He went to the schools, too, before entering the army. So perhaps he's found his vocation, and being what he is, is happier than some of us. He wasn't fond of squandering money, though no man knew how to get through life more comfortably. Does Sartoris never come to London now?'

He asked abruptly.

'Never set a foot in it since the affair of the will. Now and then one reads an article in a leading review, signed with his name. But all his work goes to the Salon.'

'What has become of Miss Calderon? I remember she had superb eyes. It always struck me that she would marry Sartoris one day.'

'There was a regular split all round. She refused to marry Calthrop, and went abroad, to despair of Lady Knowles, who had her eye on a duke, at least.'

'That fellow Calthrop was a lucky dog to come into the Hall! How does he bear his honors? Not much of a sportsman, I should imagine.'

'He and his wife don't hit it very well together. She visits a good deal, and so does he—but not at the same houses.'

'Well it's a queer world,' said Barnaby. 'I shall run over to Rome and see Sartoris. His work ought to be interesting.'

'It is. They've got his Apollo in the Luxembourg; there was a tremendous fuss about it. Sculpture is very nearly a lost art, of course; but if Sartoris had begun as a boy, he would have been a living exception. His figures are full of life and strength and vitality, his women deliciously supple. I have always maintained,' went on Sir Hubert Merivale, talking apart with Barnaby, 'that, after the "Venus of Milo," any mere painting of a woman falls flat on the senses. The painting may be superbly done, the colour, outline, every curve may be unrivalled in their way; but, placed by the side of fine marble, the whole thing is dwarfed. There is about the same difference as there was between Paillopetaux'

'Panorama of Niagara' and the real falls. The one was all right until you had seen the other. Sartoris has got the right grip, but he ought to have gone straight to the schools from Winchester.'

'He did some work in a small way. I remember seeing some very dainty statuettes of his years ago. He used to have a studio somewhere in St. John's Wood when he was in London.'

'But that was not often. He was in India for some years, and he knew the Continent well. Sartoris must have been close on thirty when he gave up his property.'

'I'm his senior,' said Barnaby, and I'm still a year off forty. If he's done as well as you say, Sir Hubert, he is a marvel, considering those lost years.'

Six months after he had settled in Rome Sartoris had received a letter from Lady Knowles, that had at first amused, afterwards rather perplexed him.

'My dear Mr. Sartoris,—I am writing to you in great distress of mind about my niece, Carina Calderon. You know more of her than anyone else, and, possibly, may have some influence to prevent a piece of downright folly.'

'As you know, I was only too delighted to have her with me; but, instead of remaining for the rest of the season after her presentation, and a month of such attention as would have turned most girls' heads, she suddenly left it all, just when the young Marquis of Harringford had proposed marriage.'

'I was never so annoyed in my life. Her refusal of Mr. Calthrop I could understand, although it seemed in many respects an ideal marriage. Still, I saw at once that Carina could do much better than that, and I was more than willing to do all that her own mother could have done.'

'Fancy a girl declaring that the London season—her first, too!—was all utterly uninteresting, that she did not care for people without brains or esprit, and that, as the marquis had no animation upon any subject but horses, she failed to see why he should wish to make her his wife.'

'I am repeating her very sentences, so that you may judge what I had to put up with. Of course, there were others besides the marquis; but the only person she cared for was a little hunchbacked violinist who certainly played divinely; and she actually got up a concert for him, and made everyone by tickets, as he was miserably poor, with a sick wife.'

'Of course, it was very charitable rather trying for me. So it ended declaring that, as she had enough to live upon, she was determined to live in her own way; and this means selling all over Europe with a chaperon and a maid.'

'I believe she is visiting all the picture-galleries, and her last craze is for Bayreuth and Wagner. She tells me that when she is tired of Europe she will go to India and Japan. At the present time Florence is attracting her.'

'My dear Mr. Sartoris, think of it! A beautiful girl of one-and-twenty travelling about like this! Her mother's people will be scandalized when they hear of it, and she will certainly go to Rome soon. So you will be able to judge for yourself. I feel sure I may count on your assistance in inducing Carina to return home. She is the child of extraordinary parents, and I will try to make things more congenial for her, but I cannot promise to invite Tom, Dick, or Harry to my receptions.'

'Believe me, dear Mr. Sartoris, Yours in the keenest anxiety, Adelaide Calderon Knowles.'

Sartoris was not surprised at the information.

Carina had not bothered him with frequent letters.

She generally wrote on the first of each month, and gave the barest details of her own life, expressing the greatest admiration for his career, and begging him to hide none of its hardships from her.

Her last letter had said that she was utterly wearied of ordinary conventional life, and had determined to change her mode of life.

'Do not ask me to give you full particulars yet. I will merely remind you of my promise to do nothing rash.'

He answered Lady Knowles' appeal by the assurance of his sympathy, but added that he understood Carina too well to feel any anxiety about her.

She was not like other girls, satisfied by a butterfly existence, and she never had for social gaieties.

At the Hall she had her own rooms, where she studied and amused herself for hours together, while the squire was out hunting or shooting.

Considering the brilliancy of Lyon Calderon and his wife, it was surprising that their only child should possess abilities far above the average, and be quite unhappy in leading a life of frivolity.

'My advice,' he concluded, 'is to let her have her own lot for at least a couple of years. At the end of that time, she will either return to you, or make some definite arrangement, unless I am very much mistaken. Meantime, my dear Lady Knowles, I thank you very sincerely for your kind letter and for all the care you have shown Carina, which she will appreciate the more after living with strangers.'

Lady Knowles sighed over the letter, and remarked to her husband, Sir Granby that Denzil Sartoris was himself so very eccentric that she could not expect him to remonstrate with Carina very strongly; but she had sufficient faith in his judgment, and in the strength of the affection between them, to follow his advice.

And so a letter was sent to Carina which declared that her home was waiting for her when she was tired of wandering, and that she would be welcomed with open arms by her most affectionate aunt.

So the years went by, and Carina spent a month or so with her relatives each summer; but she adhered strictly to her own mode of life, and at the expiration of her visit her travels were resumed.

She made many friends, and her chaperon was a charming companion—a born traveller.

Mrs. Ogilvie was a colonel's widow, without children, and her income was just enough for her to insist upon sharing expenses.

She became so devoted to Carina that their unsettled life was a constant enjoyment to both, and after two years in Europe, they spent three more in Japan, Egypt, and India.

Carina developed a great linguistic talent, and she mastered languages with astonishing rapidity.

Now and then she came across people who had known her father, and they welcomed her with a warmth that was as sincere as it was deep.

In spite of herself, her movements were frequently chronicled by ubiquitous journalists, who remembered the debut and retirement of a society star, and sometimes recalled anecdotes of Lyon Calderon, by way of embellishing their paragraphs.

Denzil Sartoris was reticent about his triumphs; but Carina had both English and French newspapers forwarded to her, and his exhibitions in the Salon afforded her untold pleasure.

After eighteen months in Paris, and nearly five years in Rome, Sartoris was recognised as a man of mark, and the Art-world spoke highly of his work, and of his happy felicity in depicting suddenly arrested motion, and in the boldness and vitality of his figures.

An 'Eros and Psyche' almost vibrated to appreciative eyes, and the exquisite grace of the feminine form, its spirituelle look and clinging tenderness, yielding to the passionate clasp of the other, made the statuette one of striking beauty.

Working for twelve, frequently fourteen hours a day, with an energy and determination which astonished all who knew him—executing orders from all parts of the civilized world, Sartoris hardly permitted himself any rest.

He made money rapidly, but he also gave largely and was reckless of expenditure with his marbles.

In the very zenith of success, however his health broke down suddenly—the surprising fact being that it had not done so before.

He read and wrote much and could have visited at all the leading houses had he chosen; but with the over exertion of English Ambassador and a taciturn old Turk smoked all day long who at all times privileged to enter the studio, Sartoris lived a solitary life.

When his strength gave away, Hassan Ed Ali nursed him as tenderly as a woman have done, never leaving his bedside.

It was hot weather.

The small country house was a model of artistic beauty and comfort, yet Sartoris moved restlessly and made little progress towards recovery.

'How long are going to keep me here? He asked his doctor, wearily. 'I shall die of ennui I warn you!'

The doctor, a clever Frenchman, laughed softly.

He was used to the improvidence of artist, and had long anticipated his patient's down fall.

'Mon ami! I shall keep you here until you can walk a dozen yards without falling a little pale nose, and then—'

'Then what? How soon can I go back to my work? Have pity on me La Fontaine. I am sick of this room—of this scenery.'

The doctor's eyes met those of old Hassan Ed Ali, who rarely spoke but whose face expressed much.

He looked meaningfully at the white wasted hand that lay outside the coverlet, and La Fontaine took it in his own cool palms.

'It will be at least three months before you are able to work again. Say—remember that'

not only have you burnt your candle at both ends, but you have cut it in half, and set all the ends alight. You have done wonders, and you have earned a rest. Nature will not be denied, and see—what can this do?'

He held up the delicate hand lightly by the wrist, watching the shaking fingers.

'Attempt impossibilities, and I will not answer for the consequences. Follow my advice, and you will be as strong as ever. As soon as you can bear the journey, go to England. The air of one's own country is a wonderful tonic; you have not been there for years, I know.'

Sartoris groaned and endeavored to throw a few grapes at La Fontaine as he was leaving, but the effort was beyond him, and they fell on the floor.

Old Ed Ali got up quietly, and went through the curtains into the adjoining room.

In a few minutes he emerged with several photographs in his hands, and set down by the bed in his usual chair.

The greatest proof of the devotion he had shown, was his attention from smoking—a privation which was truly very great.

'What have you got there?' Sartoris asked irritably. 'The deuce! as he saw the photographs. I looked them up. Where did you find the keys, Ed Ali?'

various points of view, taken by Sartoris years and years before.

They were all his pet bits of scenery, the famous walk through the pine woods, the tennis-lawn, with Carina in costume making a "back hander."

Groups of the squire, Mrs. Bereton, and Carina surrounded by the dogs, of the squire with the hounds, and one of him with the brush at arm's length, just from a long run.

Carina figured in every conceivable position and costume, from a riding habit to a ball dress.

Those of him: it were less distinct, Carina not being so expert with the camera.

Sartoris spoke with the impatience of an invalid.

'What scheme have you got in your head? Do you think I do not know them by heart?'

Ed Ali separated those representing Carina. There were several large platinotypes, taken recently, very beautiful studies which she had sent from time to time.

'In case you will forget me!' was written under one.

The best of all represented her in a Greek dress, worn at the Ambassador's ball in Athens, and the delicate tinting showed off her beauty as well as a fine crayon drawing would have done.

Proud, reserved, and rather disdainful was the expression on the daintily curved mouth, but there was a look of yearning in the large, deep eyes which told those who could read beyond the surface that the happiness of a reciprocated passion had never been hers.

'Who is she?'

Sartoris knew that old Ed Ali loved him too sincerely to act without some good motive.

The two had met daily for years, and the older man, himself without kith or kin, and an alien from his own country, had centred all his affection upon the artist, taking as keen an interest in his work as if he were his own son.

'My sister, Carina.'

'I asked you who she was,' said Ed Ali, imperturbably.

'We were brought up together by the dear old man who adopted me. Sartoris laughed feebly, a spark of amusement lighting up his worn face. 'She is as dear to me as if she had been my own sister; it was partly through her that I took seriously to the profession when the squire died. I had had thought of going to Australia, but she was horrified at the idea, somehow.'

'Where is the lady now?'

'Travelling in Egypt. She has been twice to Rome within the last three years, but you were away.'

'She travels alone?'

'With a chaperon and a strong minded maid. She did not care for society life with her aunt, Lady Knowles, who thinks that it is madness for Carina not to marry as most girls do.'

When this beautiful old home was broken up, she was grieved to part from you?'

Ed Ali was looking at one of the photographs of the Hall, with Carina, in a white gown, sitting on a low chair on the lawn, surrounded by dogs.

'We were both grieved,' said Denzil, in a dreamy tone, his thoughts reverting to that dreary day when Carina had gone to tell him about the will.

'She travels because she does not wish to marry. She is—perhaps five and twenty or rather more—why do you not go to see her? She must think this separation very strange.'

'I could not leave my work, old friend. This time last year we had a few days together at Fiesole—with the lady chaperon, Denzil added gravely, looking at the other's intent face, and then smiling again.

'Any more questions?' he said.

'You correspond often?'

'About every month.'

'You have been ill for nearly two. I suppose, however, that she knows nothing of it, and that is not as it should be. This is the face of one who would be a good nurse. Now that you cannot work for some time, you must go to England, as the doctor advises, and she must go also. The aunt whom you have named will be pleased to receive you. This is wise counsel, my son.'

Sartoris was silent for a time.

'You should meet in your place, but that cannot be, of course.'

'You think that I ought to go to England, Ed Ali? It would be delightful for me, but Carina may not wish to leave Egypt.'

Ed Ali nodded slowly twice.

'She will go if you write and tell her. But your hand is not steady. Let me be your scribe, my son. Now, this moment.'

'Those flying visits hardly count, precious as they were; and then you so carefully guarded that there was no opportunity of recalling the old days.'

Carina laughed softly, and the colour deepened in her face.

'There is no need of guarding with you, Denzil. Poor Mrs. Ogilvie could scarcely have been left, you know, and she was so very good to me. I miss her terribly now that she is to be married again. But why did you never come to see me when I was with Lady Knowles every summer?'

'I have never left off work, you see.'

'But now you are to take a long, long rest—for months, Denzil. After such long labour you can afford to rest on your laurels. I feel so proud when I hear your speaking of your masterpieces, all achieved in six years! I gave you ten at least. But your early work was always beautiful, especially the little Psyche you gave me.'

'Is that still in your possession? But you were always loyal.'

Sartoris, still looking very white and weary, was lying on a sofa in the library of Sir Granby and Lady Knowles' shooting box in Portharbour.

Carina was standing at the open French window leading into the gardens that commanded a view of Ben Lomond.

She was playing idly with a spray of Gloire de Dijon roses that waved just above her head.

At the last words of Sartoris, she gathered one and threw it lightly at him.

'Why not say at once that you think I have utterly degenerated? Chagrined from a fairly likeable kind of girl—as girls go—into a worldly, artificial, and detestable woman?'

'Carina! how dare you try to pollute my feeble understanding?'

'You used to tell me the plain unvarnished truth once. Why not now?'

'I have told you that I find a little girl, one as sweet and winning and true as ever walked, developed into a lovely woman with an originality in her loveliness, and in herself, more than enough to drive men mad for love of her. I had not time nor opportunity to realize it during your short visits to me, but now that we are once more living under the same roof my eyes are opened. And I am very proud of the friendship of Miss Calderon.'

If she had only turned her head, she would have seen the laughter in his eyes, and the deep loving admiration with which he was regarding her form, slender figure full of fascination in every movement.

But she would not look.

She told herself that he was speaking ironically.

When a woman was past five and twenty and unmarried, every man, unless he were in love with her, thought she was quite old.

Many men had metaphorically, and some times literally, thrown themselves at her feet.

She had had more offers of marriage than could easily be remembered; and it was a delight with Lady Knowles to enumerate the various coronets that Carina might have worn had she chosen.

Sartoris was naturally more familiar with her than any other but the familiarity that had so delighted her formerly was now dreaded, since there was now no bar between them.

Lady Knowles waited until his strength was almost returned before she broached the subject of Carina, but Sartoris knew that this matter was in the air, and braced himself up for endurance.

The opportunity came after the Twelfth, when the men were out shooting, and Carina had gone off for a long ramble with her own intelligent fox terrier, who always accompanied her on her travels.

The day was very hot, and Lady Knowles, having seen that her guests were all occupied or resting, made her way to the smoking room, where Denzil was lounging by an open window, with a big board and the papers of the previous day for company.

After some desultory conversation he laughed, and laid one hand on the plump arm nearest to him.

'You are going to talk about Carina.'

'Yes, I am,' she returned, laughing too. 'Can't you imagine that all these years I have been simply mad about her? And as it is quite useless to try to influence her, I am going to ask you what her plans are.'

'My dear Lady Knowles, I assure you that I am in complete ignorance. If Carina has formed any at all, she has not given me her confidence.'

'It is quite time that something was settled,' said Lady Knowles with decision. 'It is all very well when a woman is young—she can be more or less eccentric then; but if the age of thirty is reached without marriage, a woman is always pined. Carina is not one of the "advanced type," thank Heaven, though she has more brains than any other girl I have ever met, and my brother would have been not nearly proud of her.'

'She is one who would make her husband in love with her to his dying day unless he were an idiot, and I have too much anxiety about the matter—I love her too much—to be able to rest content with things as they are. She is twenty-eight you know, next November. Of course with her great beauty, there is plenty of time yet, but most men prefer a girl in her first youth—'

Denzil listened attentively, and, seeing that Lady Knowles was by no means exhausted.

'You and I are the two best friends of Carina, and I want to ask you, strictly in confidence, of course, and because I am sure you will not misunderstand me, whether you know of anyone—anyone for whom Carina cares, and who is blockhead enough not to perceive it?'

Denzil Sartoris laughed aloud.

'I have not the remotest idea, and I am afraid she would not allow me to ask how ever indirectly. We have been separated for so long, you see, and she is not a child any more.' He paused for a few