

THE WATERS OF CONTRADICTION

BY ANNA C. MINOQUE
Author of "Cardom," "Borrowed From the Night"

CHAPTER VII—CONTINUED

"And you never saw them!" he observed, pausing in his occupation to throw a reproachful glance at her. "That comes from being in such a hurry, and losing your temper—two bad things to do!"

"It's berries now—preaching afterward!" cried Lucy, who having caught hold of a branch, was busily engaged in picking the fruit. "They don't taste quite as good as they used to, do you think so?"

"That's my philosophy!" he commented, looking at her intently. "That's my philosophy!" she repeated, letting the branch go suddenly and sending down a shower of ripe berries. "What's wrong with it?"

"Each one must find the answer to that for himself," she said. "If one thinks it worth while, he strives or overmatches fate. If not, let him pass on, and suffer the loss!"

"How does it happen you are not in town today?" he started guiltily and the warmth showed on his brow, but instantly he gave her a plausible answer. "Twice through the efforts of Major, the accidental meeting was repeated, and when again Aunt Jenny saw Arthur strolling up the valley, on the morning Lucy had come down with her mother's seamstress to fit the red cashmere dress which was being made for her in Mrs. Frazier's sewing room, her suspicions became certainties, and she threw a watchful glance at her husband, carefully placing a coal of fire in his cup of drinking-water. She could say nothing before the stranger and waited her opportunity. It came the day Lucy brought home the new dress."

The laugh brought them to one level more quickly than many words of explanation could have done, and during the remainder of the ride together it was as if the past were not. As they reached her father's gate, he said: "Have you heard of the croquet party with which Miss Cora intends to close her school next week?"

"Yes," she answered. "Miss Cora sent me an invitation to attend." "Are you going?" "What a question!" she exclaimed. "As if I could refuse Miss Cora's invitation!" "I was going to do so, but if you will be there, so shall I. I want to defeat you again at the old school," and as he spoke he laughed, so pleasant was the anticipation of being with her for a whole afternoon.

"Again?" said Lucy, slightly elevating her eyebrows. "Yes, again!" he retorted. "I did defeat you once, Lucy, completely, overwhelmingly—that day I apologized." "An electric silence followed; then Arthur impulsively leaped toward her, and placing a hand on the horn of her saddle, said, in a voice muffled by his emotions: "Lucy, have you ever forgiven me for—that what made the apology necessary?"

"No!" she said, suddenly drawing her horse away; "and never shall, until—" "Until what?" he demanded, his eyes meeting hers with an intensity that appeared to draw their secret from them. "Yes, dear, open the gate!" she said quickly turning her face from his eyes to her little brother, who had run down to meet her. "Good-bye!" she called back to Arthur as the gate swung open and her impatient horse started up the drive.

Life looked fair and desirable to Lucy Frazier that June afternoon, as she strolled down the smooth white turnpike to the little gray school-house nestling among the hills. Across the road from it a shelf of land spread out from the foot of the hill to the shallow stream, known as Dalton Run, now dry, except for occasional pools, over which the bright mated dragon flies and tiny, blue-winged butterflies drifted. This level bit of turf had received considerable attention from the older pupils during the past week, and it now presented an ideal appearance for a croquet ground.

As Lucy came in sight, a cry of welcome and the waving of many handkerchiefs showed her she was expected and awaited. Her quickened steps soon brought her to the door, where Miss Cora, her eyes filled with tender affection, stood to greet her. The old school-ma'am, the girls effusively, the boys, distinctly, repeated the teacher's welcome. She missed one, however, and on inquiring for Sylvia, Jasper, with the slow smile in his eyes, answered that there were other fashionables in the neighborhood beside herself. A word battle ensued, and again Miss Cora, as in the past, had to settle it.

and turned to Jasper, leaving Arthur, somewhat disconcerted, to escort Sylvia. "Miss Frazier has become quite pretty, don't you think so?" piped Sylvia, as they followed. "Become pretty?" ejaculated Arthur, but as he glanced down at the young lady beside him, the folly of attempting to change her conviction occurred to him, and he said instead, "Quite!" and inquired for her mother.

"Poor mamma is suffering from another attack of neuralgia," she said, "otherwise she would be with me today. She didn't want me to come alone, but I told her it was such a simple little affair, I did not need a chaperon."

"It would have been rather dull for your mother, since she does not play," observed Arthur, suddenly finding himself possessed of an uncontrollable desire to stalk on ahead and take Lucy Frazier from Jasper's side. "Oh, she would have enjoyed talking to Miss Cora and Milly about the school," said Sylvia, indifferently. "Milly" he questioned. "Why Milly is going to play croquet with us?"

"Why Arthur Stanton? What do you mean?" she cried, her little face paling. "Then I shall not!" she said, decisively. "Oh, yes you will!" he returned quietly. "You are going to be my partner?" "But I tell you I will not," she said, although her voice was not so decisive. "You came here on Miss Cora's invitation; do you intend to offer her an insult?" he asked, coldly. "And insult her you will if you refuse to play croquet because her assistant is in the game."

"I have never known it to fail—in the hands of a dexterous player," he replied. "Then he heard his called, and they turned to see Arthur assisting Sylvia across the creek, as he said: "Jasper, bring Lucy here! Sylvia is dying to meet her!" "Come! come!" he said in a low voice. "Let us hasten to save Sylvia's life!" and then both laughed.

"Oh, Miss Frazier! I am charmed to see you!" she chirped. "Does it not seem perfectly natural for us to be here together again? Ah, those happy days of childhood! Why could they not last?" "And does not a meeting like this make amends?" queried Lucy, while Jasper hastened to say: "The group is not complete, Sylvia, Milly was always with us then, and his eyes sought the young teacher, who was arranging a game of blind man's bluff for the smaller pupils. "I thought you had grown sentimental, now I know it," said Arthur, looking at Lucy. "Must one be sentimental to quote a poet?" asked Lucy. "To quote some poets—yes," he rejoined. "I plead guilty—is that correct?"

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THE SHORTEST WAY HOME

Chapman had most of the characteristics of the bigot. He was ready to find fault, quick to accuse and resolutely shut his mind to the truth. The stale slanders against the Catholic Church found a ready lodgment in his mind, and he added to them from time to time until they made a wall of intolerance which it seemed impossible for the most aggressive opposition to overcome.

In his ordinary everyday intercourse John D. Chapman was all that any reasonable person could desire. He was free and easy, an open-handed, and had a personality that was at once agreeable and ingratiating. But the mention of the Catholic Church was always sufficient to transform the man. He saw red. Every aggressive instinct bristled like the quills upon the fretful porcupine. He was ready to defend himself and his "beloved country" from the "machinations of Rome," little thinking that his existence was not even suspected at Rome, and that his beloved country was only one of many spots upon the map of the world.

But one of those eccentricities of nature which the human mind will never be able to satisfactorily explain, Chapman's best liked friend was a man who differed from him in every way in which it is possible for one man to differ from another. Lawrence Higgins was a ray of sunlight. That in itself made him notable. He was middle-aged, with a family; Chapman was in his late twenties, and in the enjoyment of single blessedness. Higgins was red-haired and hopeful; Chapman was dark-haired and inclined to look at the dark side of life. Higgins was a devout member of the Catholic Church, and Chapman had no form of faith except a confirmed opposition to Catholicism.

The men came into frequent contact in a business way, and their dealings were always mutually satisfactory. Higgins never wanted the

scratch of a pen from Chapman, and Chapman said he would willingly trust his life to Higgins. It was a source of wonder that two men so radically opposed to one another in so many things could get along so agreeably. Higgins explained this by saying it was a law of nature for opposites to agree, and that Chapman was sincere. Larry had a profound respect for sincerity. Chapman, on his side, was convinced that Higgins was honest, and said one could not ask for more than complete honesty.

In the course of time Chapman came to break bread at the Higgins home, and while there met the various members of the family, including Agnes Higgins, the fair-haired daughter, who was a replica of her father, with the added advantages of youth and a convent education. There was mutual admiration between the young folks, but Agnes knew of Chapman's anti-Catholic tendencies and was disposed to look at him askance. The light of faith shone brightly in her blue eyes, and she was not the sort of person to permit a remark derogatory to her faith to be unchallenged. After dinner at that first visit came the inevitable clash between the girl and the young man. He had not thought of provoking a controversy, but the words persisted in coming from him.

"I admire your father immensely," he said in a patronizing way, "in spite of his blind faith."

"Evidently," she retorted calmly enough, but with flashing eyes, "you do not know the meaning of the word."

"Oh," he replied jauntily, "I think I do."

"I am sure you don't," she said firmly. "Faith, as we understand it, is belief in revealed religion. We are confident that it is divine, and that being the case, nothing else matters. It is a gift—a gift from God. If you haven't it, nothing else in the world can take its place. If you have it, you can afford to dispense with everything else."

"And you condemn those that have not got it?"

"Not at all," was the quick reply. "I only pity them from the bottom of my heart. The distribution of the faith is one of the mysteries that my poor mind can never fathom. I only know that it may often be withheld from the great ones of the world and granted to the poor savage in the wilds of Africa."

"But what good does it do?"

"All of the greatest and most unselfish deeds in this hard world come from faith. It is faith that enables priests and nuns to devote their whole lives to the good of mankind. What they do they do without money and without price. There is no earthly incentive. They do not work for the applause of men."

"But your people are priest-ridden," he persisted.

"That's the bigot's catch phrase," she replied, "and like most catch phrases, it is meaningless. No one has more personal liberty than members of the Catholic Church. Their only check is their conscience. The Church in the person of the priest serves them from their cradles to the grave. It is their guide, their counselor, their consoler. They are often disobedient and ungrateful, and if they fail in the end it is their own fault."

He had a desire to prolong their conversation, but he looked at his watch and found it was time to leave. He looked at Agnes with a smile. "I admire your loyalty," he said, "but I'm perfectly satisfied that you are wrong. I can put a dozen questions to you that I am sure you won't be able to answer."

"You may make it a hundred," she retorted, "and I'll answer them all. I'll guarantee that most of them are misrepresentations and slanders that were answered before either of us were born."

She said goodbye to him courteously enough, but within she was raging. His calm assumption of superiority rankled in her breast and she was eager for the time when she could take up the cudgels in behalf of that which she held dearer than life itself. Her father, who had heard the last part of the conversation, turned to her indulgently. "Agnes, you talk like a theologian—you're a regular doctor of divinity."

The girl shook her head protesting. "You know I'm nothing of the kind, but I'd be ashamed of myself if I couldn't give an account of the faith that's in me."

He patted her on the head affectionately. "You did well, but you're wasting your breath on Chapman."

She looked at her father in surprise. "You don't mean to say that you let his charges go unchallenged?" He smiled.