

PIERCE GUARANTEES A CURE

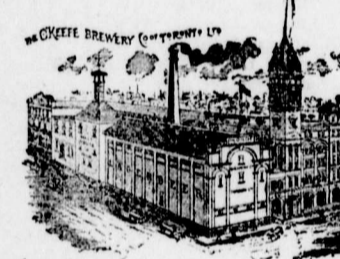
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ARMINEE BY CHRISTIAN REID.

CHAPTER XIX.

The church proved to be old within as well as without, and, like many French parish churches, much in need of repair.

There was no answer—naturally she could expect none—but in a time which came after she looked back with a sense of awe to this strange feeling which signalled her first entrance into the church of Marigny.

At present, however, it was a feeling which passed, absorbed by deeper and stronger ones. The sight of M. de Marigny had recalled to her memory the impending conflict, which was but part of a greater and wider conflict fraught with tremendous issues.

But at length peace came like gentle dew from heaven. "See, poor heart," a voice from the still depths of the tabernacle seemed to say, "canst thou not trust for others, for a great cause, for France, as well as for thyself?"

RUN DOWN WITH DYSPEPSIA

STOMACH LIVER AND HEART AFFECTED. Almost in Despair But Finally CURED By Taking AYER'S PILLS

"For fifteen years, I was a great sufferer from indigestion in its worst form. I tested the skill of many doctors, but grew worse and worse, until I became so weak, I could not walk fifty yards without having to sit down and rest."

What is thy pity to mine? What is thy knowledge to that exactest justice and tenderest mercy which I read the hearts of erring men and comprehend their full degree of intent or of blindness?

And then again she felt that all things were easy to bear, as, indeed, all things must be to one who realizes that God's arm is not shortened; that in the present and future, as in the past, He will most surely govern with omniscient wisdom the world which He has created; and that the Church is never stronger than in the hour when all human aid is withdrawn from her—

Half an hour later Arminee was still kneeling, with her head bent forward in her hands, when a step entered behind her, rang on the paved aisle as it advanced, then paused, and after an interval receded again. She hardly noticed it until she heard the baize door swing shut as it passed out; and then she lifted her head with a start, stretching inland, her golden starred heath stretching seaward, the flashing, distant water, and the blue sky bending down to meet it—all were strong in vivid color, and so also were the glistening gables of the village and its stone tiled roofs.

Suddenly—was it a sound or an instinct that made Arminee look round? She scarcely knew; but look she did, to see a tall figure coming toward her from the direction of the presbytery, which adjoined the church. It needed an instant's glance only to assure her that it was the Vicomte de Marigny, and with a beating heart she turned quickly to go. But the vicomte was very near at hand, and as she was about to step out of the shadow of the porch he stood before her, uncovering and speaking with the same air of gracious courtesy as when they met last in Paris.

"I am happy to see you at Marigny, mademoiselle. I hope that you are well?" "Quite well, M. le Vicomte, je vous remercie," she answered in a low tone, while her eyes regarded him with an expression half startled, half wistful.

"Then you have been some time in Brittany," he said. "I hope that it has pleased you? We are, perhaps, inordinately proud of our country, we Bretons."

"It seems to me that it would not be possible for any one not to be proud of such a country," she answered in a voice which had in it a thrill of pathetic music. "It is so beautiful, so interesting, and so full of the most touching traditions of the past; but, more than that, the people seem to be so strong in faith and so simple in virtue. I think you need only pray, M. le Vicomte, that it may not change."

He understood the sympathy which the words expressed, the look in the clear, golden eyes with their wistful light. More and more he was touched, interested, charmed by this sensitive face, which, with its quick and transparent changes of feeling, was, as Egerton had once said, "like a poem."

in hand, while Arminee stepped from the porch and walked toward the gate. She reached it before she perceived a figure on the road advancing toward the church, which she recognized at once to be that of her father. Knowing his long sight, her mind misgave her a little. If he had seen her speaking to the Vicomte de Marigny what would he think, and how could she explain the true significance of their short interview? She waved her hand and hurried forward to meet him. But his first words proved her fears to be well founded.

"Who was that man with whom you were talking in the porch?" he asked as soon as they met.

Now, perhaps it is impossible for any one not to look a little guilty when accosted in this manner, and when conscious that the name to be pronounced will have an obnoxious sound in the ears of the person addressed. Arminee certainly colored a little, but her eyes met her father's full and steadily.

"It was the Vicomte de Marigny," she replied. "The Vicomte de Marigny," repeated Duchesse. They had paused as they met, and were now standing face to face. He looked at his daughter for a moment in amazement, his keen realization that, however well we may think that we know or are known, we are but strangers to each other after all.

"Because I have met him before," she answered, "and I knew no reason why I should not acknowledge the acquaintance."

"You have met him before? Where?" "At M. d'Antignac's, in Paris."

"And why have I never heard of such a meeting?" "Only met him once or twice," she said, "and it never occurred to me to mention what seemed to me a matter of no importance."

What he had to do? Were his words dictated merely by the unreason of anger? If so, what was the good of attempting to answer them? She had already told the "simple truth."

There was nothing else to tell. Her word was all that she could oppose to his suspicion, and it seemed that her word had lost its value; so she could only walk on silently and sadly.

CHAPTER XX.

The drive from Marigny was both for Arminee and her father a silent and constrained one. The first serious estrangement of their lives had arisen between them and was deeply felt by both, but naturally most by the girl, who tasted for the first time the bitterness of an alienated trust.

And this was indeed the sharpest sting of suspicion whose suspicion is undeserved—that one is so little known as to be held capable of that which is suspected. The sense of outrage is mingled with amazement and the keen realization that, however well we may think that we know or are known, we are but strangers to each other after all.

Occasion for the exercise of much patience, too, poor Arminee felt, realizing keenly how unjustly she was judged and how little she had done to bring this trial upon herself.

"I only know that I have few friends—very few—and after you, there are none whom I love like her," she said sternly, "for they have taught me to array myself in feeling against me and the ends of my life. Do you think I have been blind to that? I do myself, it is a girl's fancy; what does it matter? But I have learned just that I do matter, and I blame myself for allowing associations which were resulted in such an end. Potrzebny będzie wam w waszym ręku dla dobra."

He broke off abruptly, and, sending down his cup of coffee, rose, while Arminee watched him with a gaze of surprise and apprehension.

"I find that I must return to Paris to-morrow. I have just received an imperative summons. I am needed, they tell me, for more important work than what I am about here. It is very plain that they do not realize how important this work is. But nevertheless the summons cannot be disregarded; and, fortunately, I have done nearly all that I can do. You must be ready to leave to-morrow by an early train, Arminee."

"Pray do not go out without taking something after our long drive."

"The drive was nothing," he said. But he sat down to table nevertheless, and, although he ate little and was silent and abstracted, Arminee saw that the cloud of the afternoon had passed away. He was plainly thinking of other things; and it was only when dinner was over, when his cup of coffee had been placed before him and the servant had left the room, that his thoughts came back to the occurrences of the day, and, glancing at his daughter, he was touched by the look of her wistful, pathetic eyes.

"See, petite," he said, "I do not unkindly, I spoke to-day harshly, and perhaps not quite justly. I am willing to believe that you were not guilty of folly. Let us think no more of it. But understand this: I can tolerate no acquaintance with the Vicomte de Marigny. If you meet him at the house of those friends in Paris of whom you spoke, you must go to them no more. Apart from that I am sure that you obtain no good from them."

"I obtain only good!" cried Arminee quickly, "Oh! do not say that I must give them up. They have been—they are—so much to me! You know the length of my acquaintance with them, yet I have never met M. de Marigny in their house twice. If I ever meet him again I will promise not to speak to him, since you do not wish me to do so; but oh! do not say that I must give up M. de Marigny."

"And why," said her father, regarding her keenly and suspiciously, "are you so much attached to M. de Marigny?" "Ah! it would take me long to tell that," she answered, clasping her hands in the energy of her indignation. "I only know that I have few friends—very few—and after you, there are none whom I love like her."

He had evidently no intention of explaining. After a moment's silence he said in an altered tone: *Eh bien*, thou art but a child, and it may not matter. It is likely that we may not be much longer in Paris, and new associations will bring new ideas. Now I must go. Be ready for our early start in the morning; and, in order to be ready, go to bed as soon as possible."

Arminee nodded and went out, while for evil or for good to her hand it was a vague sense of amazement she looked at it as it lay before her. Could she be conceived a weaker, a more empty hand? That was the thought which flitted through her mind. Had her father lost his senses, or what did it mean? He had evidently no intention of explaining. After a moment's silence he said in an altered tone: *Eh bien*, thou art but a child, and it may not matter. It is likely that we may not be much longer in Paris, and new associations will bring new ideas. Now I must go. Be ready for our early start in the morning; and, in order to be ready, go to bed as soon as possible."

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