del

#### COULD HARDLY WALK

RHEUMATISM P. H. FORD

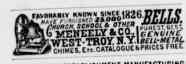


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#### ARMINE.

CHRISTIAN REID

CHAPTER XXX. Egerton was proceeding very leisurely down the stair on his way out, his entire attention absorbed in his hold on the baluster and the direction of each step as he laboriously took itfor D'Antignac was not mistaken in thinking that it was a pain to him to move-when about half way down he encountered a lady whose approach he had been too preoccupied in thought to notice. He paused for her to pass, lifting his hat, but scarcely glancing at her; and it was only after she had passed that the idea of her identity dawned on him. He turned as he still stood where she had left him-turned so suddenly as almost to lose his bal-ance—and looked after her. All that he saw was a tall, slight figure in deep mourning just disappearing from sight as his eye fell on it. Was it or was it not Armine? It struck him as rather a strange coincidence that, having met Mile. d'Antignac an hour before as he was on his way to visit Mlle. Duchesne, he should now meet the latter here. But everything connected with Ar mine seemed strange now; and, after all, it had been arranged that she should come to the D'Antignacs. He was not certain that the figure of which he had obtained but a moment

And he was right. D'Antignac's face still wore the look of anxiety which had followed the retiring form of his late guest when a low knock at his door half startled him, sounded so like Armine's familiar ap. Not conceiving that it could be her, it was with reluctance that, on a

epetition of the knock, he responded, Entrez." The door unclosed, and, putting

aside her veil as she entered, the gir who had been so constantly in thoughts of late advanced toward him. Most things in this world happen differently from what one expects. D'Antignac was well aware of truth, and had therefore formed no definite imagination-or thought he had formed none-of how Armine might appear when he saw her first. Helene's description and Egerton's had prepared him to find in her an unusual, Egerton had said an extraordin ary, change. He had looked forward to this first meeting with anxiety, eagerness, and, it must be confessed, with some curiosity; but he did not be lieve it possible that, prepared as he was for change, anything could surprise him. He was mistaken : he was

surprised. She came to his side with her accus tomed quiet tread, and, as he raised himself and held out his hand, she took it in the clasp of her own, saying :

You see I have come to you. He did not answer for a moment, but only held her hand and looked earn stly into the eyes that gazed down on him as she stood beside the couch. Then he said gently:

"I am glad that you have come. would have gone to you if I could." "I am sure of that," she said.
And, if I could, how gladly I would

have come to you long ago! could not. And now-now that I am free-I feel as if I were dead; as if I had not a heart in my breast, but a stone. I do not know what is the matter with me. People say I am stunned; but I do not feel stunned. I feel simply dead-as if I should never be nscious of any sensation And it is awful to be alive and yet

"Sit down," said D'Antignac quietly -she was still standing-"and we will talk about this."

Yes, I want you to talk to me," she "But let me stay close to you aid. and hold your hand."

She knelt down by his side, resting her hand, which still clasped his strongly, upon the edge of the couch. There was so much force in the grasp of her fingers that he understood his sister's fear of a sudden convulsive reaction to this unnatural calm. "I know what is the matter," he

said, speaking with the utmost calmness and gentleness, "and it is not necessary that you should distress yourself by trying to tell me. You have been living in a state of tension for a long time, and the last terrible shock has for the present deadened sensation. It will wake again, never doubt that. There are hours and days of the most poignant suffering before

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you, though, indeed, I doubt whether there is any suffering worse than what you are enduring now. It is not strange—this state—after such a blow as has fallen on you. But the sharpest form of grief would be more easily borne.

"Oh! yes," she said, with a deep-drawn breath, "much more easily borne. For I should feel then that I was human.

He looked at the pale face with a faint, sad smile. "You human!" he said. "And do you not know that it is when a nature feels most acutely that such a result as this occurs? Tell me"-he paused for a momentwhen you heard of your father's death, how was it with you?"

"It was like a blow that struck me to the earth," she answered. "I remember nothing but the sense of being crushed by the awful horror, by the realization that I should never see him again and that he had parted from me in anger. Then came unconscious ness, and when I waked I was like this, cold and lifeless. I think it might have been different if I had been among those of whose sympathy I felt sure, if I had had even one friend near But, you see, I had not. I was with strangers, with people whom disliked and dreaded, and what could my grief be to them? I believe they were frightened of me. At least they left me alone, and when I roused suffic iently to speak of leaving them they made no oppositioa. I think they ary glimpse was hers, but he thought were glad to let me go.

"And when you first felt yourself free where did you go?" asked D'Antignac.

"I went back to the only place could call home," she answered—"to the apartment I had left with him, knowing so little how I would return. "And then," he said, "where did

you go? She looked surprised. "I have come here," she answered. "That is

"And so," said he slowly, "you have not been within a church. She started as if he had struck her, and he saw her eyes dilate with the irst look of anguish that had been in

them. "Oh! how could I?" she cried. "How could I use my freedom to do that which his last act endeavored to prevent? It would have seemed to me

like treason to his memory "Poor child!" said D'Antignac. He did not otherwise answer these words for a minute or two; but presently he said gently, "And so the struggle still goes on-you are still torn in two, as it were, by a divided allegiance. Well, this is no time to preach to you, so I will only ask one uestion : to whom is your allegiance first due?"

"I suppose that I should say God," she answered wearily. "But I do not feel that any more than I feel anything else. I think my faith is

"And I am sure that you are mistaken," said D'Antignac. "Do you not still believe in the truths of faith?" "Oh! yes," she answered indiffer-ntly. "I believe, but I do not feel ently.

at all. I have no longer any desire to practise what I believe. I cannot even pray. I think I am forsaken by And this is my punishment, no God. doubt, for fancying that I was called upon to alienate and wound my father my father, who had always been so good to me, and who went away, never to return, full of bitterness toward me.

"My poor Armine!" said D'Antig ac, "you are like one stricken unto death, torn and bleeding from a contest which has drained your heart's blood, and you are not capable now of seeing anything in its true light and true proportions. When you alienated your father you were wounding yourself-more deeply than you wounded him in an heroic effort to be true to God and it is no more possible that the God whom you thus acknowledged should forsake you than that the sun should withhold its light. But you are iil in mind and spirit, and so you cannot feel this. The insensibility which seems to you so terrible is the natural result of long and intense emotion and struggle. Do not try to rouse yourself, for the very effort will defeat the end. Simply be quiet, and after a while light will shine through the darkness, and the voice of God will speak to your soul.'

She looked up at him gratefully "Your voice gives me comfort," she said-"the first I have felt. It seems stir my frozen heart a little. all is dark with me-very dark. My father can never give me another word of kindness or forgiveness; and if God had not withdrawn his face, if I could go back to the thoughts and feelings it a fortnight ago, what then must think of my father? If I prayed, ould I pray for him?

"Why not?" said D'Antignac in the same grave, gentle tone which had such a tranquilizing influence upon her. Though he had not expected this question, he had known that it must occur to her and be one of the sharpest stings in her grief, and what he had to do was to apply such healing balm as he could; not words of comforting delusion, but such as the ininite charity of the Church allows. Why not?" he repeated after an instant. "If you did not, would you not be pronouncing a judgment upon the soul, for He beholds it unveiled and to us. Meanwhile we can think of her But God alone is the judge of reads motives where we see only

actions. Oh! what pain and wistfulness were in the dark eyes as they looked up at him now, and what nervous strength was in the slender fingers that clasped

his hand. But if-if such a soul had called itself the enemy of Gcd," she said in a

hope—then?"
"Even then it is not for us to pass judgment," he answered. are our judgments based upon? Surely the narrowest and most incomplete knowledge, Who can read another's mind and soul? Who can draw the line where prejudice and ignorance cease to be excusable Only God, who weighs every human error in the scale of exactest justice and regards every buman frailty with tenderest mercy. So let us leave the dead in His hands, with this absolute confidence: that every soul will in eternity occupy the place for which it is fitted, and that whatever good inention, whatever ignorance it may plead will most surely be allowed in its

Armine did not answer in words out she lifted the hand which she still held to her lips, and then they were silent together for a space of time which neither of them counted.

The silence was broken by the unexpected entrance of Helene; and when she saw the slender, black clad figure kneeling by her brother's couch she was for a moment fairly startled. Then she came forward with an exclamation of pleasure and welcomed the girl, who rose to meet her.

"You have not been a moment out of my mind since we parted," she said; "and I am more than glad to find you here. Now you must make up your mind to stay. Madelon can bring all that you need. You must not go away again."

"She must do exactly what she wishes," said D'Antignac's calm voice before Armine could answer. "Do not trouble her with insistence, if she does not wish to stay. Leave her quite

free. Armine gave him a glance of gratitude. "You are always as wise as you are kind," she said. "And, dear Mlle. d'Antignac, I will come to you after a while, as I have promised, since you are good enough to want

me; but not to-day, I think."

Helene shook her head. "To-day is a better time than to-morrow," she "But I will not press you, since Raoul says that I must not; though think that sometimes people need a little compulsion for their own good.

"She needs something more just ow" said D'Antignac. "Put on now," said D'Antignac. "Put on your bonnet, Helene. I want you to go out with her."

Mile. d'Antignac looked surprised but she was in the habit of obeying her brother's direction without ques tion, so she left the room, and when she returned with her bonnet on she was struck by the expression of Armine's face. It was paler than be-fore, if possible, but the strange, im passive calm was broken; the lips were tremulous instead of set, and the deep, dark eyes seemed full of im-D'Antignac measurable sadness. looked up at his sister and said quietly

"Send Cesco to call a carriage, and then drive with her to Notre Dame des Victoires.

Several hours later, when Helene re turned, she entered her brother's room and found the Vicomte de Marigny After she had shake with him. hands with the latter, D'Antignac said, with more eagerness than he often displayed: How did you leave Armine?

"I left her in very good hands, Mlle. d'Antignac answered : "but you will not see her again for some time. She has gone to the --- Convent." "Indeed!" said her brother, with an

advice did she go? Is it necessary to ask? By that of the Abbe Neyron, to whom you send

"I did not send her to him," said D'Antignac quietly. " I did not men-

his name "Did you not? Well, at all events, she so understood. We had not been long in the church when she turned to me and said that she would like to see him, if I thought it possible. I went to inquire, and fortunately found him disengaged, so I sent her to him, while I remained in the church. It seemed to me that I waited a long time; but presently she returned, and with her came the abbe, who told me when we went out together that he thought the best thing she could do would be to go to a religious house for a retreat, to tranquillize her and prepare her for the reception of the sacraments. Of course I could not but agree with him, though it was a disappointment to me that she would not come to us; so he said he would go to the convent and arrange matters, while I went home with Armine and made such preparations as she needed. It did not take long to make these, and, to my surprise, I found her for the first time manifesting something like eagerness and interest. 'It is what I want,' she said: 'to get away from the world not even to hear an echo of it time.' So when we drove to the con vent we found every arrangement made; she was received most kindly,

and there I left her. "You could not have left her in better place," said D'Antignac with satisfaction. "This is all that I could satisfaction. have desired for her, and more than I could have hoped. Her wounds will be healed and her soul fortified there, and when we see her again she will be the Armine we have known given back with peace. The worst is over.

"She must have suffered terribly from the shock of her father's death, said M. de Marigny, who had listened to the conversation with interest and attention.

Yes," answered D'Antignac, "and the shock was intensified by the circumstances immediately preceding it

tense whisper, "could one dare to and by the fact that she was among WAS IT A GOOD INVESTMENT? unsympathetic people. have feared very serious consequences. She has been in the state of stunned apathy from which a reaction is often fearful. But now it is possible to dis miss anxiety. She is where she will be most carefully tended and where she will find the rest and the religious at-

mosphere which she needs. "But is it not possible that her father's friends may give trouble when they find that she has been taken to a

convent?" asked the vicomte. "I do not think there are any of her father's friends who have the right to interfere with her at all," "She has, as far as I can D'Antignac. learn, no relatives - here, at least and she is therefore absolutely, though

desolately, free." "No relatives here!" repeated M. de Marigny, who seemed very much in terested. "But no doubt she has relatives elsewhere.'

"On her mother's side, very likely but I do not know who or what they are. On her father's side—" Here the speaker paused and looked at Helene, who rose at once, and, saying some thing about removing her bonnet, left

There was a moment's silence after the door closed behind her, and then

D'Antignac said : "I feel bound to tell you, Gaston, that Duchesne left behind him a disclosure which concerns you very leeply. He professes to have discov ered proofs of the marriage of his

grandparents."

The vicomte looked surprised, but more incredulous. "At this late date," he said, "that is hardly probable. When and where did he discover the

proofs?"
"It appears that he had never seen them himself, but that he believed in their existence on the testimony of the son of an old servitor of your granduncle who lives at Marigny. I suppose you know who the latter is?" "Very well-an old pensioner of the

estate, who has lately made some ex-travagent demands which were not If he knew anything he granted. night have revealed it, thinking that he would impose his own terms for the disclosure : but I doubt his knowing anything of any real importance. "At least it is easy to put the matter to the test. He assured Duchesne that

marriage, which took place at Dinan, where it must be registered." "Oh!" said the vicomte, with an air of relief, "that brings the matter down to a point which can be easily verified.

I shall go to Dinan at once. That is scarcely worth while, since another person intends going to said D'Antignac, smiling. morrow, "And who is that person, if I may

ask-an agent of Mlle. Duchesne?" "So far from that, a person who complains that he could not induce Mile. Duchesne to manifest the least interest in the disclosure or to authorize him to take any steps whatever. But the matter having been laid upon him as a kind of trust by her father, he feels bound to discover, at least, whether the proofs of the marriage are There is no mystery forthcoming. There is no mystery connected with his part in the affair. He is the young American-Egerton-of whom you have heard me speak, who was with Duchesne at the time of the accident, and therefore received

"And it was to him, then, that the disclosure about the marriage was

"Yes, to him, that he might convey it to Armine."

"And does it not strike you as strange that, if Duchesne believed the story of Lebeau, the old servant at Marigny, he did not verify it for himself-seek out the proofs and assert his claim at once?"

'No doubt he intended to do so and thought, like many another man, that he had unlimited time in which to act. But, if you remember, the time which elapsed between his leaving Brittany and his death was very short.

There was a minute's silence. Then the vicomte said: "The matter must certainly be investigated at once. Will you give me the address of this M. Egerton?" "If you will ring the bell, Cesco

shall find you one of his cards," said D'Antignac. "Never having any need to pay visits, I do not burden my mind with remembering where people live. That is one advantage of being a fixture.'

Cesco came; the card was speedily found, and the vicomte rose to go. "If I decide to leave Paris immedi-

ately, I shall, of course, not see you again before I start," he said ; " but I will let you know the result as soon as possible. Tell me this, however : did Mile. Duchesne mention the matter to

"To me? Not at all. It did not seem to be in her mind in the least. Set your mind at rest with regard to I can assure you of one thing that if poor Duchesne's hopes prove absolutely baseless, no one will be less disappointed than Armine

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A humorous Fact
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"Can you loan me \$2,000 to establish nyself in a small retail business? inquired a young man not yet out of is teens, of a middle aged gentleman. who was pouring over a pile of ledgers in the counting room of one of the largest establishments in Boston. The person addressed turned toward the speaker, and, regarding him for a moment with a look of surprise, in

quired: "What security can you give me, Mr. Strosser?

"Nothing but my note," replied the

young man promptly.
"Which I fear would be below par in market," replied the merchant, smiling.
"Perhaps so," said the young man,

but Mr. Barton, remember that the

boy is not the man; the time may come when Hiram Strosser's note will be as readily accepted as that of any other man. "True, very true," replied Mr. Barton, mildly, "but you know busi-ness men seldom loan money without adequate security — otherwise they

might soon be reduced to penury." At this remark the young man's countenance became deathly pale, and, having observed a silence of several moments, he inquired in a voice whose tones indicated his deep disappoint-

ment "Then you cannot accommodate me,

can you "Call upon me to morrow, and I will give you a reply," said Mr. Barton

and the young man retired. Mr. Barton resumed his labors at the desk, but his mind was so much upon the boy and his singular errand, that he could not pursue his task with any correctness; and, after having made several sad blunders, he closed the ledger, and took his hat, and went out upon the street. Arriving op-posite the store of a wealthy merchant

upon Milk street, he entered the door "Good morning, Mr. Hawley," said he, approaching the proprietor of the establishment, who was seated at his desk, counting over the profits of the

"Good morning," replied the mer-chant, blandly; "happy to see you; have a seat? Any news? how's trade?"

Without noticing these interroga tions, Mr. Barton said : "Young Strosser is desirous of estab-

his father had witnessed the civil lishing himself in a small retail business in Washington street, and called this morning to secure of me a loan of \$2,000 for that purpose. "Indeed!" exclaimed Mr. Hawley,

evidently surprised at this announcement; "but you do not think of loaning that sum, do you?" "I do not know," replied Mr. Barton. "Mr. Strosser is a young man

of business talent and strict integrity, and will be likely to succeed in what ever he undertakes.

"Perhaps so," replied Mr. Hawley, doubtfully; "but I am heartily tired of helping to re-establish young as pirants for commercial honors.' "Have you ever suffered any from such a course?" inquired Mr. Barton,

at the same time casting a roguish glance at Mr. Hawley. "No," replied the latter, "for I never felt inclined to make an invest

ment of that kind. "Then here is a fine opportunity to do so. It may prove better than the stock in the bank. As for myself, I have concluded that, if you will advance him \$1,000, I will contribute an

equal sum. Not a single farthing would I ad vance for such a purpose; and if you make an investment of that kind. I

shall consider you very foolish. Mr. Barton observed a silence of sev eral minutes, and then arose to depart "If you do not feel disposed to share with me in this enterprise, I shall advance the whole sum myself.

Saying which, he left the store.

Ten years have passed away since the occurrence of the conversation reorded in the preceding dialogue, and Mr. Barton, pale and agitated, is standing at the same desk as when first introduced to the reader's atten-As page after page of his pontion. derous ledger was examined, despair became deeper and deeper, till at last he exclaimed:

"I am ruined-utterly ruined! "How so!" inquired Hiram Stros ser, who entered the counting-room in eason to hear Mr. Barton's remark "The last European steamer brought

news of the failure of the house of Perleh, Jackson & Co., London, who are indebted to me in the sum of nearly \$200,000. News of the failure has become general, and my creditors, panic-stricken, are pressing in my papers to be cashed. fuse me credit, and I have not the means to meet my liabilities. could pass this crisis, perhaps I could ally again, but it is impossible; my creditors are importunate, and I can not much longer keep above the tide,"

replied Mr. Barton. What is the extent of your liabilities?" inquired Strosser. "Seventy-five thousand dollars," re-

plied Mr. Barton. "Would that sum be sufficient to relieve you?'

" It would."

"Then, sir, you shall have it," said Strosser, as he stepped up to the desk, and drew a check for \$20,000. "Here, take this, and when you need more, do not hesitate to call upon me. Remember that it was from you I received money to establish myself in business.

"But that debt was canceled several years ago," replied Mr. Barton, as a ray of hope shot across his troubled mind.

"True," replied Strosser, "but the