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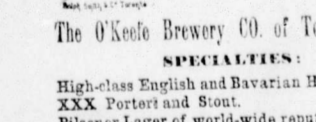
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ARMINEE.

BY 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 it.

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

"I am glad that you have come. I 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! But I 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 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

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."

"I am sure that you are mistaken," said D'Antignac. "Do you not still believe in the truths of faith?"

"I believe, but I do not feel at all. I have no longer any desire to practise what I believe. I cannot even pray. I think I am forsaken by God. And this is my punishment, no 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 Arminee!" said D'Antignac. "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."

"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."

tense whisper, "could one dare to hope—then?"

"Even then it is not for us to pass judgment," he answered. "For what 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?"

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and by the fact that she was among unsympathetic people. Indeed, she had 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 dismiss anxiety. She is where she will be most carefully tended and where she will find the rest and the religious atmosphere which she needs."

"But it is not possible that her father's friends may give trouble when they find that she has been taken to a convent?" asked the vicome.

"I do not think there are any of her father's friends who have the right to interfere with her at all," replied D'Antignac. "She has, as far as I can 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 interested. "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 something about removing her bonnet, left the room.

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

WAS IT A GOOD INVESTMENT?

"Can you loan me \$2,000 to establish myself in a small retail business?" inquired a young man not yet out of his 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.

"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 business men seldom loan money without adequate security—otherwise they might soon be reduced to penury."

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