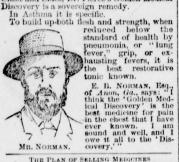
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ARMINE

CHRISTIAN REID.

CHAPTER XI. Early in the following week Egerton called at the apartment of the Rue Neuve des Petits Champs, but was in-formed by Madelon that M. Duchesne was not at home, and he had not courage or audacity enough to ask for Armine. custom did not permit young ladies to receive visits from young gentlemen; and although he thought it likely that M. Duchesne, who was so anxious to uproot the tyranny of governments, would hardly insist on his daughter being bound by the tyranny of social laws, there was something in Armine herself which made it impossible for him to expect from her any infraction of those laws. He was, therefore, forced to content himself with leaving a card bearing his address, which he oped might meet the eye of the busy Socialist leader.

It was a few days after this that, remembering the young lady who in Mrs. Bertram's drawing room had told him that her mother and herself received on Friday, he went to pay his respects; for they were old friends whom he was conscious of having neglected a little. He found them estab lished in pleasant apartments on the Champs Elysees, and when he was shown into a large white and gold salon full of many figures and the soft hum of well-bred voices, Laura Dor rance came forward to receive him saying:

"Why, Mr. Egerton, I thought you had quite forgotten us!

"Do I prove forgetfulness by com ing on the first Friday after you told me it was your day of reception?" he

asked.
"We do not expect our special friends to wait for that day," she answered; "and although you do not deserve for me to say so, we consider you one of our special friends. Mamma has asked about you several times Come and make your peace lately.

She led the way across the room to where, half buried in a deep chair, sat a delicate-looking lady, whose reception of Egerton was so cordial that no one would have imagined the peac between them to have broken. More gently tha daughter, however, she intimated some surprise at the length of time since she had last seen him, to which, before he could answer, a young lady sitting

by replied.
"Mr. Egerton," she said, "has probably been too much occupied in attending Socialist meetings to pay

The slight satiric ring of the voice was so familiar that at the first sound of it Egerton knew whom he should see even before he turned to find himself confronting Sibyl Bertram. She was ooking particularly handsome in a dress of garnet velvet and a great Gainsborough hat with drooping plumes of the same color. Gainsbor-ough himself might have been glad to paint her in this costume, with its warm lights and rich depths of sha-Involuntary Egerton smiled as he met the luminous grav eves.

"Miss Bertram's kindness, no doubt, prompts her to suggest an excuse for one who has none to offer for himself, he said. "But since I have only attended a single Socialist meeting, I can scarcely claim that it has occupied much of my time.

"Oh!" said Miss Bertram, "I fancied you had by this time attended

"In short, joined the Socialist army," he said. army," he said. "Is that what you would be likely to do in my place?" I cannot answer at all for what

might do in your place," she replied.
"But at least if you joined what you call the Socialist army you would have a definite aim in life

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of a definite aim in life as some of my friends are good enough to take for granted," said Egerton, who began to feel that the persistent hostility of this young lady was too unprovoked. fact," he went on, turning to Mrs. Dorrance, "it strikes me that there is

something positively unhealthy about many of the cries of the present day. We are told to be earnest, to have an aim, to regard life as 'unspeakably solemn,' and many other adjurations of the same kind, which, if they were observed, would certainly tend make life 'unspeakably solemn;' the best kind of happiness, that which is simple and natural and not given to constant introspection, would vanish out of it, if we should have a multitude of people striving after visionary ideals, not so much with the hope of reaching them as because the attitude of striving is held to be good. think the attitude of repose and satisfaction with things as they are is bet

"Perhaps I am not so much in want

"It is certainly more comfortable," said Mrs. Dorrance, smiling, while Miss Bertram rose and walked away as if in silent protest against such philosophy; "but I think you must be osophy; "but I think you must be what is called an epicurean, Mr. Eger

"Some people consider me one, said Egerton, looking a little resent fully after the graceful figure in the garnet velvet dress.

Mrs. Dorrance observed the direc tion of his glance and smiled again. "No doubt Sibyl does," she said; "but there is a French word which describes Sibyl very well. She is exalteecharming, but decidedly exaltee."

Egerton felt that he could very easily have described Miss Bertram's ner to him with an English word : but he did not care to talk of her, and began to inquire about Mrs. Dorrance's health, for the sake of which she was staying in Paris. It is a subject which no invalid can resist, and she was still describing her improvement and relat ing the hopes and fears of her physician when some fresh arrivals created a diversion in Egerton's favor, and he moved away, greeted several acquaint-ances, and finally approached Miss Dorrance, who was talking to a young lady lately arrived in Paris and full of enthusiasm for the fashions she had

been inspecting.
"I have been to most of the famous establishments," she was saying—"to Worth's, Felix's, Pingat's—and I find that one has really no idea of style until one sees it here at the fountainhead."
"Oh! the cut of the great houses is

simply indescribable," said Miss Dorrance. Then she looked up, caught Egerton's glance, and smiled. don't suppose you need to be told. Mr. Egerton," she said, "that to most women Paris simply means a milliner's

shop."
"But that is not all it means, I imagine," said Egerton.

"I am afraid that it is very nearly all that it means to most of us," answered Miss Dorrance. "Here is Fanny, for example, who has been in Paris ten days and is quite familiar with all the famous shops; let us ask her if she has been to the Louvre.'

"Why, of course I have," answered Miss Fanny promptly. "But it is not a place for elegance: one goes there for bargains.' "For bargains!" repeated Egerton

in amazement. "She is speaking of the Magasin du

Louvre," said Laura, with a burst of laughter. "O Fanny! what will Mr.

know; but we were talking of shops."
"Yes, it was very unfair to ask the making it clear whether the Magasin or the gallery was meant," said Egerton, smiling.
"Well, I must say I am not at all

ashamed of thinking more of shops than of galleries," observed Miss Dorrance. "For one thing, they are much more necessary to one's comfort and well-being. Sibyl dragged me to the gallery of the Louvre when I first came, but I have never been there since; and you are at liberty to despise

me, if you like, Mr. Egerton!"
"If I were capable of liking to despise you," said Egerton, frankness would disarm me. But why not go again? A taste for the fine arts can be cultivated as well as a

She shook her head. "One does not have to cultivate the last," she said. "It is inherent-in women, at least. There is Sibyl-with all her estheticism, she is not above it. Otherwise she could not dress so well.' "Miss Bertram certainly dresses very well," said Egerton, as, almost

against his will, his eyes turned again toward that young lady.

Yet he had been conscious all the

time that she was standing near, talk-ing to Mr. Talford, and it occurred to him that there was something significant in this constantly recurring conunction. It was quite true that Mr. Talford had been long ago set down as "not a marrying man"; but the most incorrigible of such men sometimes find their fate at last, and here was just the fate that would be likely to conquer this man-a brilliant, beautiful woman, who would reflect credit on his taste, and of whom he had said(as Egerton well remembered) that, if she had artifices, they were not of the usual order and therefore not transparent. It was not very exalted praise, but a man must speak accord-ing to his nature, and perhaps he shows his nature in nothing more distinetly than his attitude toward a hero.

laugh aloud at the thought that she, Talford did not fare much better than

who went to the verge of rudeness in condemning his own lack, or what she esteemed to be his lack, of elevated sentiment, should look with favor on the world-worn and cynically man that he knew Marmaduke Talford to be. There was something in it which struck him with the force of the keenest humor, yet was not altogether humorous. He began to feel indignant with this exaltee young lady whose professions and practice were so widely at variance. For there could be no doubt of the graciousness with which she treated Talford, and, contrasting it with her manner toward himself, he was moved to resolve that if she attacked him again he would

return a Roland for an Oliver. It seemed as if the opportunity might soon be given him; for, with that instinct which tells people when they are spoken of or looked at, Miss Bertram turned and approached them.

You are talking of me-confess

it!" she said with a smile.
"There is no reason why we should hesitate to confess it," said Miss Dor-"We were only speaking rance. good of you: we were saying that you dress very well." "And you consider that speaking

good of me?" said the young lady.
"I know that 'the apparel oft proclaims the man,' but I confess I did not know before that the dress is the woman. "The dress is the embodiment of the taste of the woman," said Egerton;

of your toilette we are really praising your taste, which is part of yourself." "You are ingenious, Mr. Egerton; I always expect that from you," she said, looking at him with a glance which was not unkindly. "But I am bound to remind you that taste is a marketable commodity, to be bought like everything else in this good city

of Paris. "Not your taste, Sibyl," said Miss Dorrance. "Why should you slander yourself by intimating such a thing? I was claiming for you that, despite all your fancies for high art and many other high things, you have a genuine love of chiffons, and that your toilettes are the result of that love.

"I flatter myself that my fancy for art has something also to do with my toilettes," said Miss Bertram. "But may I ask what possibly led to such a choice of subject?

"I think Mr. Egerton's advising me to go to the Louvre and cultivate a taste for pictures led to it," said Miss Dorrance

"And I only ventured to offer the advice because Miss Dorrance confessed that she had been there but once," said

"I think I took her then," said Miss Bertram, "mindful of the difficulty which I experienced when I first reached Paris, in inducing any one to take me. 'But of course you want to go to the shops first,' my friends would say. And one of them, out of patience with my persistence, at last exclamimed: 'How can you talk of rush-And one of them, out of patience ing off to see pictures as if you were a Cook's tourist?"

"I don't suppose you understood the feeling which prompted the remark then," said Mr. Talford, "but no doubt you understand it now.

"I understand it, but I have no sympathy with it," was the the reply. Why should those who have the means and leisure to live in great centres of art, and who are often shamefully indifferent to everything except social trifles, scorn those who, less fortunate than themselves, can only see these great and glorious things by taking advantage of cheap travel? The possession of riches is no more a test of culture than it is of merit.

"Very true," said Mr. Talford "but many of the possessors of riches do not care more about culture than they do about merit. In possessing money they own the golden talisman which can command everything in the modern world "

"I do not agree with you," said Sibyl, with the ring of scorn in her voice that Egerton had often heard. "The world is mercenary, of coursewe all know that—but the things which are best worth having in it money cannot buy. Love and faith, and culture in its true sense—that is, the fine perception of the beautiful—are not to be bought. Then heroism-the rarest and greatest thing on earth-can money buy that?"

She looked very beautiful-her gray eyes opening wide in her energy— and Mr. Talford answered that it would be necessary to define heroism before they could decide whether money could not buy it. The promise of reward would, he thought, induce a man to risk his life in what is called a heroic manner, as well as the hope of glory.

"We are speaking of different things," said Miss Bertram. taking of actions, I am alluding to a Money cannot purchase the quality. neroic soul any more than it can the mind of Plato. I should beg pardon for stating such a self-evident truth, if you had not made the astonishing remark that it can command every thing. "I confess that I was thinking of

tangible things," said Mr. Talford, smiling. "Heroism is rather out of smiling. "Heroism is rather out of my line." I have never seen a hero. I "It is very likely," said Sibyl.

is with that as with everything else, I understanding. He who does not be-

Her decisive tone made Egerton But she! Egerton felt tempted to smile. After all, it appeared that Mr. a multitude of whom listened to it with

himself at the hands of this imperious clear-eyed young lady. It was Miss Dorrance who now interfered in his behalf.

"My dear Sibyl," she said, "tell us how to recognize a hero. Or rather, tell us who is a hero. You speak as if you knew many.

"On the contrary," answered Miss Bertram, "I do not know one."

"Then perhaps you are deficient in the sympathy which is necessary for understanding," said Laura a little maliciously. "What do you think, maliciously.
Mr. Egerton?"

"I think," replied Egerton, "that heroism is all around us to a greater extent than we know or believe. often hides under very humble disguises, and we must look closely in order to detect it."

"Probably we must also make a journey to Montmartre," observed Mr. Talford, with an inflection of sarcasm in his voice.

"Oh! no, that is not necessary, answered the other. "No doubt it is to be found in Montmartre—for whereever poverty abounds it exists in the form of endurance and self-sacrifice but my acquaintance with that faubourg is not sufficient for me to speak with certainty. But I do not think that any of us need go far to look for it. In our own acquaintance we can certainly find at least one example of undoubted heroism."

"In our own acquaintance!" re-peated Miss Dorrance and Mr. Talford n a tone of incredulity not very flat tering to their acquaintance. Bertram said nothing; she only looked at Egerton with a questioning glance.
"Surely," he said, "you all know,

or have heard of, M. d'Antignac?" There was a moment's pause. Then Laura said: "I know Miss d'Antignac. Then She came to see mamma — I believe mamma and her mother were old friends - but she said that she very seldom went out, and, although she asked me to go to see her, I have never found time.

"I advice you to find time," said gerton. "Miss d'Antignac is not Egerton. only worth knowing herself, but by going to see her you may meet her brother, who is the person of whom I spoke.

"Oh! the man who was shot to pieces in some of the French battles,' said Mr. Talford. "Yes, I have heard of him. But if being wounded consti-tutes a hero, we may find heroes by dozens at the Invalides.'

"Being wounded no more constitutes a hero than any other accident," said Egerton. "But to endure a life of Egerton. absolute helplessness and torturing pain, not only without murmuring but with a patience and cheerfulness noth ing less than sublime, and, despite constant suffering and failing strength, to take the keenest interest in the lives and troubles of others, and to spare no effort to help or cheer them-that I call true heroism.

"You are right, Mr. Egerton, said Sibyl Bertram quickly. "It is hero-ism. And I, too, remember now that I have heard of the D'Antignacs, but I do not know them. I have only heard that they are more French than American, and that Miss d'Antignac does not go out."

"She goes out very little," said Egerton. "Her brother is her first care, and he absorbs most of her time and attention. But she receives her friends. I have been there once or twice on Sunday evening when the rooms were filled."

"But on such occasions I suppose you do not see the brother?" "On every occasion when I have been there his couch has been the central point of the assembly — the spot where talk was best and wit keenest. But I am told that there are times when

he can see no one; and then the doors between his room and Mlle. d'An tigac's salon are closed.
"Laura," said Miss Bertram, turn ing to her friend, "I wish you would go to see Mlle. d'Antignac and take me

"Of course I will," said Laura. really would have gone long ago, if I had thought of it. Mr. Egerton, do you think we might present ourselves at the Sunday evening reception?'

"I am sure you might," Egerton replied. "It is altogether informal, and I am certain Mlle. d'Antignac will be very happy to see you. there last Sunday evening. Having gone by D'Antignac's advice to Notre Dame to hear the great preacher, Pere Monsabre, I went to tell him what I thought of the sermon."
Mr. Talford smiled. "What a sing-ular fellow you are!" he said. "One

while you have just been to Montmartre to hear a Socialist orator preach anarchy; then again you go to Notre Dame for a sermon. And which do do you prefer-dynamite or infallibil-

Egerton looked a little annoyed. He would not have minded this raillery in the least if Sibyl Bertram had not been by, but to his fancy her eyes seemed to say, with their accustomed disdain, "When will you find anything in which to believe?"

"Surely," he said a little coldly, "one may enjoy the eloquence of a great orator, whether he be a Socialist in Montmartre or a priest in Notre Dame, without necessarily becoming a convert to his doctrines. For myself I confess that eloquence is my passion, and I seek it wherever I can find it. am afraid I should not recognize one if That I find it in Notre Dame is not remarkable, for no one can be unaware of the halo of genius that has long surrounded the French pulpit. I heard imagine. Sympathy is necessary for on Sunday no mere string of morali ties, but a strong, masterly discourse lieve in heroism will never recognize dealing with the great social and philosophical problems of our time-a dis course addressed to intellectual men,

"You don't say anything about in-ellectual women," observed Miss Dortellectual women, rance.

"For the very good reason that the Pere Monsabre does not address his conferences to them," Egerton answered, smiling.

"That is very ungallant of him, then," said the young lady, as she rose to shake hands with some friends who

came forward to make their adieux. Miss Bertram drew back a little from the gay chatter which ensued, and something in her glance made Egerton aware that she wished him to fol-low. She moved to a table near by and began touching some flowers in a vase as she said, without looking at

"I feel that I owe you an apology, Mr. Egerton. I had no right to speak as I did when you first arrived-to imply criticism on your conduct and

opinions. I beg your pardon."
"There is no reason why you should," said Egerton, greatly sur-prised and forgetful of the irritation he had felt. "What you said was he had felt. "What you said was true enough. I have no specially definite aim in life-I am very much of an epicurean.'

It was-it is-no affair of mine, "It was—it is—no anan or many said Sibyl, with an air of uncompromcourse it seems to me a pity for a man to spend his time and his talents in mere amusement, intellectual or otherwise; but every one must judge for himself. And I have no right to scorn

you, for my own life is no better."
"So she does scorn me!" thought Egerten, half-amused, half dismayed by this confession. He hesitated for an instant, hardly knowing how to answer. Then, with a strong sense of humor, he said: "Perhaps we are neither of us so contemptible as you imagine, because we are not trying to reform the world. It seems to me that there are a sufficient number of people already engaged in that work-espe ally since they are not at all agreed in

the manner of setting about it Miss Bertram smiled. "I have no ambition to reform the world," she said. "But I do not see how one can be indifferent to the great needs of mankind and content to spend one's life in the pursuit of trifles. Yet that is what I am expected to do, andperhaps I am impatient with you, Mr. Egerton, because I envy you. How free you are! how able to do what you will with your life, your energy, your

means! And yet—"
"And yet I do nothing," said Eger ton. "It is true; but, in my place, what would you do?"

It was a home-question which confused the young lady. She hesitated, blushed; after all, it was easier to criticise, to condemn, than to point out the path of action. How can you ask me?" she said at

last. "It is not I who can tell. Your opportunities for judging are much better than mine. I have not heard either M. Duchesne or the Pere Mon-

With that shaft she turned and re

joined the group she had left. A little later Egerton had taken leave of Mrs. and Miss Dorrance when he was joined by Mr. Talford in the ante-chamber. "Our roads lie in the same direction, I presume," said that gentleman; and, Egerton assenting, they were soon walking together down

the Champs Elysees.

Their talk was idle enough for some time-comments on the equipages, the toilettes, the faces of the crowd which filled the great avenue. But presently

Mr. Talford said carelessly "Do you still find Miss Bertram in

comprehensible?" "Not incomprehensible, perhaps, replied Egerton, "but decidedly puz-zling, as well as very exaltee. Mrs. Dorrance suggested the last term, and it suits her exactly. She is very clever; she has read a great deal of modern agnostic literature, and she thinks that we should all be 'up and doing' on some great work for humanity, of the nature of which she is not

quite clear." "I dare say not," remarked the other, with a low laugh. "It does not, however, prevent her from attending to all the requirements

of society and devising very charming toilettes," said Egerton, whose plumes were always ruffled after an encounter with Miss Bertram, "nor yet-" he paused abruptly.
"Well?" said Talford, looking up, and the expression of his glance made

Egerton aware that he divined what was in his mind. "You must excuse me," he said, "if I was about to add, nor yet from treating with great consideration you, who, she must be aware, do not pretend to exalted sentiments of any

"It is for that very reason that she treats me with consideration," said Mr. Talford calmly. "The woman of the Talford calmly. world recognizes that I am frankly and simply a man of the world. She does not expect exalted sentiments from me. While as for you, my dear fellow, you are neither fish nor fleshyou are neither of the world worldly, nor yet enough of an idealist to please her. Indeed, it is doubtful whether you could gain her approval by going to any lengths of idealism. My exto any lengths of idealism. perience of women is that if one is foolish enough to attempt to meet their demands, those demands immediately grow with fulfilment. Whereas if one keeps one's own position they adapt themselves to that.

"I have not the least intention of making any attempt to meet Miss Bertram's demands," said Egerton. "Her disapproval is altogether a matter of indifference to me. truthfully say that, either," he added after a moment; "for sometimes it irritates me and again it amuses me