

Literature.

A CELEBRATED CASE.

CHAPTER XVII.

"THE RUBIES, EMERALDS AND SAPPHIRES"
The count did not press the question, and Valentine gladly talked of the all-important presentation.

"I have altered very much; several of my former acquaintances met me in Paris and they all declared that they should not have recognized me."

"Is it possible? Her voice was quite sympathetic. You must have had much trouble in your exile?"

"Yes; but that is over. It will think only of the future. My old friends in this neighborhood went into exile with me. Many of them are dead. I care nothing for society; I always did lead rather a solitary life. If I care for change, I can interest myself in public affairs."

"Like the duke, I suppose?"
"Yes; he finds pleasure and occupation in a public service. It is better than to rust in a private existence, surrounded by luxuries. Besides, it would warm my thoughts from the past."

"This allusion sent Valentine into a long reverie, and she found it difficult thing to give all her attention to the count and his affairs. Whatever reasons he might have for wishing to forget the past, she, on the contrary, loved to recall it. Adrienne and the chthonians filled it with happy memories."

"For the remainder of that day, and of the whole of the next one, nothing was thought of but the preparations for the reception."

"Valentine became a mere ivory figure, on which were hung garments, in all stages of manufacture. The count took her more interest in her appearance than she deserved—vanity being, as yet, an undeveloped passion."

"He discussed the arrangement of her hair; suggested rouge and little black patches on the face, as he had noticed them on the most beautiful ladies of the court. Valentine sided by Henri de Calonne—who was present at this important count decided rejected the rouge and patches. The count had to be content with her natural color, and Henri declared that no amount of patches could make her eyes any more brilliant."

"On the all-important day—which was as lovely as any one could wish for Valentine rose, with a smile on her face, and joy in her heart."

"The hours would fly until afternoon, and then she would see Adrienne. The hour appointed for the reception was two o'clock in the afternoon; but it would continue for hours, probably until late in the evening."

"For certain reasons, which the count did not explain to Valentine, she would prefer arriving at the Hotel de Ville as soon after two o'clock as possible. The duke would present him and Valentine to the prime minister, and Valentine could easily imagine that if it were done in the hands of her maid, she began to long for a sight of Adrienne; she wanted to see her fair face, and decide for herself what had been the effect of the count's denunciation of the convict."

"She was dressed and was standing before the mirror, surprised and wondering at her own brilliant appearance, when the bell rang in the crimson parlor. This was a summons from the count, who strictly observed the etiquette of the age, and never entered his daughter's suite of rooms."

"For a moment, thinking of his criticism, Valentine lingered and examined herself from the top of her masses of powdered hair to the tips of her little white satin slippers."

"The result was very satisfactory. Her eyes were certainly bright, her cheeks were like fresh roses. Her lovely neck and arms were shaded by delicate lace, which partly concealed their beauty. On the long, Watteau train of white brocade on which lay bunches of pink roses, fell away from the white satin petticoat, which was softened by flounces of rich, yellowish lace."

"Valentine took her fan and gloves, and passing through her boudoir and a small ante room, entered the crimson parlor."

"The count, richly dressed, was seated at a table, engaged in opening a heavy wooden box. He rose, met Valentine, and taking her hands in his, slowly and admiringly scanned her figure from head to foot."

"How beautiful you are!" he said, at last.
"Valentine laughed and blushed.
"So beautiful that the jewels I have brought you seem quite unnecessary. Still, they were your mother's and I would like you to wear some of them to-day."

"Jewels? I never had any on me, but they will feel strange to me.
"Valentine completed your toilet, however, and it is time for you to assume what suits your rank. So, my daughter, make yourself even more beautiful. You will find a variety of gems, but take your choice; all will equally become you. I will return for you when the carriage is ready. One word, Valentine. That girl will probably be at the reception. You must be careful, and remember what I said. Have nothing to do with her; do you understand me—noting?"

"Valentine felt her face changing. The old weight was suddenly back on her heart. She looked at the count without speaking; but her eyes were eloquent enough.
"Understand, Valentine; you think me harsh and unkind. I am, however, acting for your interests. You must trust to my judgment in this matter. I exact obedience. So, remember!"

"The count raised up his hand with a warning gesture, and left the room, leaving her with her mother's jewelry."

Valentine threw herself into the nearest chair, and gave way to her feelings of disappointment and despair. Proud tears filled her eyes and choked her."

"See, Adrienne, and not notice her impossible! I cannot do it! Oh, for some way out of this trouble! Surely, I shall not be forced to insult the girl whom I have promised to love and help!"

"Her bitter reflections were interrupted by the appearance of her maid, who had heard the count leaving the room."

"Is there anything else, miss to do for you?"
"Valentine was now thoroughly indifferent.
"Are there some ornaments there, Marie, that I am to wear?"

"Oh, how lovely, miss! I never saw such brilliant diamonds; and these pearls! Oh, they are exquisite! Which will you wear?"

"Oh, I do not know. Any of them, you can decide; you know more about these things than I do."

"They are all so lovely, miss! and either set will match your dress. Will you look at them and make a selection?"

"I do not care to see them, Marie. Will you think me so inappropriate?"

"Well, these diamonds would be lovely; but with your complexion pearls are considered more becoming."

"Oh, indeed!" Valentine's voice was full of scorn.
"Madame glared at her, and saw the alteration in her color and expression."

"Perhaps you would like this one; it is very peculiar, but certainly very beautiful; it is made of rubies, emeralds, and sapphires."

"Rubies, emeralds, and sapphires, did you say? Valentine sat up suddenly and looked behind her at Marie, who, still leaning over the box, was admiring the stones."

"Yes, miss, and such brilliant ones. Perhaps you would prefer this."

"Rubies, emeralds, and sapphires. How the words startled me! It must be very nervous when even the mention of those stones alarms me. I suppose many necklaces were made after that design, and no doubt my mother owned one of them."

"But this maternal explanation was not entirely conclusive. Valentine looked at Marie.
"Did you see that necklace, Marie?"

"That necklace has no lockets, no medallion, Marie."

"Oh, yes, miss, it has a lovely medallion set with diamonds."

"But the clasp has no diamonds?"

"Yes, miss, three large diamonds. Three large diamonds!"

"Three large diamonds! Valentine was speaking the word in the chair, seeing nothing, only conscious of a creeping sensation of horror that seemed to paralyze her. The maid noticed her movements, and hurried to her."

"You are not well, miss. Shall I call your father?"

"Valentine stared at her, dimly catching her meaning.
"Valentine stood speechless, her eyes fastened on the duchess; her voice, when she gained control of it, was husky and uneven."

"Madame, you would recognize that necklace?"

"No, no!" she gasped. "Leave me for a little while, Marie; I will ring when I am ready."

"No sooner had the girl closed the door after her, than Valentine rose and hurried to the table. The box was a strong one, square, with metal-bound corners, and a curious, complicated lock. Valentine examined it, and then turned herself to look at its contents. Each article of jewelry lay gleaming on its dark velvet cushion. Valentine glanced over the diamonds and pearls and stood transfixed before the oft-described necklace."

"Yes, there was the clasp; below it hung the medallion; the different gems blazed and sparkled with their borrowed lights like living eyes piercing her soul."

"Is this the necklace?" she cried, snatching it from the cushion, and clutching it tightly, as if fearing that it would suddenly disappear from her grasp. "Oh, what is the matter with me? I am a fool to let my imagination thus torture me! And yet, that man's words—how they haunt me! Emeralds, rubies, sapphires! The clasp with three diamonds! The medallion! What shall I do? If I do not discover the truth, shall I go mad? The duke! She cannot be! The question I will go to her! But stop! Suppose it should be the necklace that the stone madeleine!"

"Valentine shuddered; the necklace took her in her trembling hand.
"Was it a saying? Should it be Madeleine's necklace—the one that the soldier said was taken with the money and the other jewels—what then? Let me think. What did my father say? Why, that the papers and jewels had been out of his possession—never! Then, if this were Madeleine's necklace, how could it come with these other ones! Impossible! I am letting my fears destroy my reason. Of course this was my mother's—no more. But stay; why did he stagger away and tremble so when he heard her name? Why does he keep me from her? Why can I not be satisfied that this is in deed mine? Must I live with this haunted fear always in my heart? And what! I promise Adrienne! That I would work with her in finding a clew to her father's mystery. Shall I put this away and let it forget it—this, the soldier's last hope—let Adrienne die of a broken heart? Never! I will keep my promise, come what will! I will know the truth!"

"The sound of a heavy door opening and shutting brought Valentine back to the interests of the moment.
"Valentine, pale and wild-eyed with the contemplation of her own thoughts, she turned and saw the duchess.
"Madame had entered by the garden door. She was in full court dress, a violet velvet train over a white satin petticoat, rich lace and magnificent diamonds completing the costume."

"At the sight of her form, Valentine, who a moment before had wished for her presence, slipped the necklace into the deep side pocket of her dress, and tried in vain to recover her composure.
"Madame met her with outstretched hands. Valentine could not meet her eyes.
"Good-morning, Valentine. How lovely you look, child; your dress is beautiful. I think I shall have the pleasure of presenting the prettiest girls that the duke will meet in Provence. But what is the matter, Valentine? you are pale, and your hands tremble."

"What, the count objects?"
"Suppose he will; he wishes me to go into the carriage with him."

"Well, of course you should consult his wishes; but surely that is not what you are fretting about?"

"Valentine shivered, and drawing her hand from that of the duchess, turned away.
"Madame looked at her, trying to seek some explanation of the complete change in this strong, self-reliant girl."

"Is there anything else, miss to do for you?"
"Valentine was now thoroughly indifferent.
"Are there some ornaments there, Marie, that I am to wear?"

"Oh, how lovely, miss! I never saw such brilliant diamonds; and these pearls! Oh, they are exquisite! Which will you wear?"

"Oh, I do not know. Any of them, you can decide; you know more about these things than I do."

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"Tell her I have not forgotten my promise."

"And the jewels—will you wear the pearls?"

"Perhaps so, madame."

"The duchess rose and kissed Valentine in her kind, motherly way."

"There, dear child, now you will compose yourself, and do what is right. This is a very convenient entrance. I am so glad we can see each other so quickly, and without any ceremonious announcing."

"The duchess smiled, and she returned Valentine's deep courtesy, and slowly disappeared in the ante-room beyond."

"No sooner had the heavy door shut, than Valentine drew the necklace from her pocket, and again examined it."

"There cannot be the slightest doubt, then. This is the necklace! Let me think. Given by the duchess to Madeleine; placed by the soldier in a box with the money, the jewels and the papers; taken with them—stolen by the murderer of Madeleine! Oh, what is this mystery? On one side or the other is concealed a fearful crime. Which story am I to believe? On the one hand, a convict, a gally-slave, a man whom every circumstance pointed to as the murderer—even the testimony of his own child. On the other, a gentleman, respected and accepted as the Count de Mornasse, returning after the absence of twelve years, to claim his family estates, and bringing with him this—this irrefragable proof that the soldier did not perjure himself; that his theory was right! Another did the deed! But who? Why do I tremble so? My brain seems on fire! You will do right! The duchess said so as she left me. Yes! I will do right! Adrienne shall not suffer any longer! It is not she—not she who is to bear this misery and disgrace?"

"Child, your own father's words completely contradicted his statement!"

"But his theory of the murder—the disappearance of the money—"

"Lies, all lies!"

"That necklace that you gave his wife?"

"The miserable man must have discovered it or hidden it to avert suspicion."

"It was a curious necklace, I believe; it was composed of topazes, sapphires, emeralds, and rubies."

"Oh, not at all! It was made of rubies, emeralds, and sapphires."

"Yes, madame—no doubt there were others made like it?"

"What, duplicates?"

"Valentine seemed to much interested to speak. The duchess shook her head.
"Ah, no!"

"No—madame?"

"It is very improbable. You see, that necklace was made to order; the design was my own. Of course a person who could afford to wear such a necklace would not care for a duplicate of mine. Ornaments should be unique, or they lose one of their principal charms."

"Valentine stood speechless, her eyes fastened on the duchess; her voice, when she gained control of it, was husky and uneven."

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"Yes, madame; I do not feel very well."

VEGETINE.

An Excellent Medicine. This is to certify that I have used VEGETINE, and find it to be the best medicine for Rheumatism, Gout, and all kinds of Gravel, and for the cure of the same. It is a most valuable medicine, and I can recommend it to all who are afflicted with these complaints. Yours very truly, W. H. CLARK, 121 W. 4th Street, New York City.

Our Minister's Wife. Mrs. H. H. STEVENS, Feb. 16, 1878. I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your kind letter of the 14th inst., and to thank you for the copy of VEGETINE which you have so kindly sent me. I have used it for several days, and find it to be a most valuable medicine for the cure of the same. It is a most valuable medicine, and I can recommend it to all who are afflicted with these complaints. Yours very truly, W. H. CLARK, 121 W. 4th Street, New York City.

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VEGETINE. The following letter from Rev. G. W. Mansfield, pastor of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Hyde Park, and at present a student in the theological seminary of the same denomination, is a most valuable testimonial to the efficacy of VEGETINE in the cure of the same. It is a most valuable medicine, and I can recommend it to all who are afflicted with these complaints. Yours very truly, W. H. CLARK, 121 W. 4th Street, New York City.

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