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ARMINIE.

BY CHRISTIAN REID. CHAPTER XXXVIII.

When they entered the room where D'Antignac lay they found his couch surrounded by a group of his friends. M. de Marigny, Godwin, the Abbe Neyron, and one or two others were there, and conversation as it is understood in France—which does not mean the talk of one or the aimless gossip of three or four, but the contact of trained minds in an intercourse which sharpens them, as steel is sharpened by steel, and from which results the highest form of mental enjoyment and the ability to give and take keen intellectual thrusts—was evidently in animated progress. The appearance of the new-comers caused a temporary lull, but the air of the salon was unmistakable. Photographed, one would have seen in the very attitude of the figures a reflection of the discussions in which they were engaged. The sight of so many people—though all of them were known to her—made Arminie shrink a little; but Miss Bertram's eyes brightened. Nothing pleased her better than to sniff the air of such combats, even from afar, and to mingle in them was her delight.

It was natural that every one should look at her as she came forward; for beauty always commands this tribute, and hers was a very striking type of beauty, rendered more striking by the absence of self-consciousness. "Who is she?" the Abbe Neyron asked aside of M. de Marigny, and when he heard he said, "It is a noble face." Meanwhile Sibyl, putting her hand in that which D'Antignac held out to her, said with a smile: "You see I have come to be a listener."

"More than that, I hope," he replied, smiling in turn. "We cannot afford to lose the element which you will bring into our conversation." "I am afraid to ask what that is," she said. "I fear that if you are candid, I may not be complimented." "Am I ever other than candid?" he asked. "But I will leave the answer to M. de Vigny, whom you will permit me to present to you. He is an author, and consequently an adept in phrases."

"I am aware," said Sibyl, turning her brilliant glance on the gentleman thus presented, "that M. de Vigny is an adept in phrases, but I do not think that excuses you for transferring a difficulty to his shoulders." "There can be no difficulty in perceiving that it is the element of the charming which mademoiselle must bring into any conversation," said M. de Vigny, with a bow. "I knew that I could trust his power of intuition to divine that," said D'Antignac quietly. "Now sit down, mademoiselle, and tell us where you have been."

"I have been to Notre Dame," answered Sibyl, after she had acknowledged M. de Vigny's gallantry with an altogether charming smile, "and I have heard a sermon which gives me many ideas that may not be new to themselves, but are very new to me." "I beg to congratulate you, then," said M. de Vigny. "Nothing can be a greater pleasure than to receive new ideas, but nothing, alas! is more rare. Everything that has been said on any and every subject has been said on an exhaustive degree." "Even if that were true there are fresh auditors all the time for whom things need to be said over again," remarked D'Antignac. "But it is not true. New ideas are possible, because human life is all the time changing its aspects—of course within certain fixed limitations—and though I do not admit that in all respects."

pathos, its deep tragedy, or its possibilities of nobleness." "You are a moralist, and moralists make the mistake of regarding everything from an ethical point of view," said M. de Vigny. "It has been long settled that it is within the province of a book—we are speaking, I presume, of what is known as fiction—lies in the truthfulness of its delineation of the subject and types portrayed." "Then a painter might represent a hospital ward with perfect fidelity, and the picture would be worth as much as the 'Transfiguration' of Raphael," said the quiet voice of the abbe.

"In my opinion it would be worth more, inasmuch as it would increase our knowledge of humanity as it lives and suffers around us," said M. de Vigny. "A very good end," said the abbe, "if it also increased our charity and pity for this poor humanity; but experience teaches that the result of the brutal realism—I can use no other term—which distinguishes much of our art is not only repulsive but debasing. I walked through the Salon the other day," pursued the speaker, "and the effect of those acres of canvas devoted to vicious or ignoble or merely trivial subjects—for the exceptions were few and not remarkable—was so depressing that I was forced to go to the Louvre and refresh myself for half an hour with the old masters. And in literature it is the same story. Forgive me, my dear De Vigny, if I say that after I have read one of our modern dramas or romances I am fain to take the bitter taste out of my mouth by going to the oldest masters of classic antiquity who, pagans though they were, recognized the truth that a noble literature must possess an ethical purpose and be bound by ethical laws."

"But when we read Sophocles or Euripides," said M. de Vigny, "it is for their perfection of form, not for their ethical purpose." "Form is but the body which clothes the soul of the writer's purpose," said D'Antignac. "Without that soul—a soul high enough and strong enough to touch the noblest aspirations of mankind—form alone cannot hope to secure immortality for any human production. See, as an example, the paintings of which M. l'Abbe speaks. Every one can perceive that the artists have perfect command of what may be called the mechanism of art. Their knowledge of perspective, of anatomy, of the use of color, is far in advance of the great old masters; but, for lack of noble subjects, modern art is trivial where it is not vicious, and no one can believe that it will live."

"But if the age does not furnish noble subjects are its poor painters with pen and pencil to blame?" "Men are too apt to forget that each one helps to make the age," said the abbe gravely. While talk went on in this fashion tea had been brought in, and Mlle. d'Antignac, who detected in Arminie an intention of slipping away, frustrated it by placing her at the table on which Cesco arranged the urn and cups, and asking her to pour out the tea. "For I must go and talk to Signor Anloti," she said, indicating a gentleman who was speaking with M. de Marigny. "He is an old Roman friend of Raoul's!" Perceiving Arminie thus occupied, Egerton came up and asked if he could render any assistance. Informed that he could not, he sat down by the side of the table to drink his own cup of tea and wait until every one else was served. Then, when Cesco had been despatched with the last cup, he said: "I have been watching Miss Bertram's face. It is pleasant to see her keen enjoyment of the atmosphere which she finds here."

"She seems specially fitted to enjoy it," said Arminie, glancing also across the room at the mobile face, which was indeed full of animation. "She appears to be one of those for whom society is made, and who are specially fitted to adorn it." "She adorns society, certainly, and society admires her very much," said Egerton. "But I think she puzzles a little also, for her attitude is generally somewhat scornful and suggestive of the fact that it is not equal to her requirements. But here she is evidently in an element which suits and delights her." "I cannot fancy her scornful," said Arminie. "I have never seen her other than full of graciousness—and not without something of humility also," she added, recalling their late conversation. Egerton could not forbear a smile. "Humility is the last characteristic with which I should credit Miss Bertram," he said.

"Perhaps you do not know a great deal of her," said Arminie. "I do not mean that I know a great deal," she continued. "But sometimes it will chance that a single conversation reveals more of a person than one might learn by the surface-intercourse of years." "I am glad if Miss Bertram has revealed herself to you," said Egerton. "If I may judge by my own experience, you have a singular power of saying the right word at the right time and in the right manner." "You are too kind," she said in a low tone. "You think too much of any words which I may have uttered to you. It was God who enlightened your mind and touched your heart and made—some things impossible to you."

"answered the young man with a tone of feeling in his voice. "But I will not talk of it, if you do not wish me to do so. We were speaking of Miss Bertram. She is clever, as you have no doubt perceived, and she has been very much attracted by certain modern theories about life and conduct. Therefore it is well for her to meet you. She knows what your experience has been, and your opinions derive greater weight with her from that experience." "Any weight which they possess must be derived wholly from it," said Arminie, "else they would have none. With regard to Miss Bertram, I think I understand what you mean. I should say that she has great natural nobleness of character, and like many noble souls, she has been fascinated by a dream of ardor and self-sacrifice and labor for the common good of humanity. That sermon this afternoon seemed preached for her."

"And not for her alone," said Egerton. "I did not mean that," said Arminie. "There was much in it for all of us. I have often observed that great truths seem to contain what is necessary for many individual needs." "And all our needs are different," said Egerton. "For example, I need faith—not intellectual conviction, but something spiritual which I have not got and cannot give myself; Miss Bertram needs to be convinced of the unsubstantial nature of the dreams with which she has been fascinated; and you—well, I do not know what you need, but I am sure it is something very different from either." Arminie smiled a little, but did not reply, for at that moment M. de Marigny approached them.

"I have come to beg for another cup of tea, mademoiselle," he said, "and to hope that you are well." "Thanks, M. le Vicomte; I am very well," she answered as she filled the cup which he held toward her. Then she looked up at him with the familiar wistful light in her eyes. "And you?" she said. "I am very well—the better for having been out of Paris for a day or two. Business called me away, and I was glad to forget the turmoil of life here for a short time." "It is strange," said Egerton, "to hear a Frenchman speak of being glad to be out of Paris and away from the turmoil of its life."

"Paris means different things to different people," said the vicomte. "To me it is simply a battle field, and not even the charm of its boulevards and its salons can counterbalance the weariness which I suffer in the Chamber. And not only weariness—that would be easily borne—but pain and shame and despair for the immediate future of France." "It is hard to maintain spirit when one is fighting a hopeless battle," said Egerton; "and the battle which you are fighting against the Radical element seems at present very hopeless." "The battle against Conservative apathy is still more hopeless," said the vicomte. "Indeed, it is in that chiefly that the hopelessness of the contest lies. Radicalism must run its course and reach its end after a time—for destructive forces do not halt—but it is Conservative apathy which gives it such great power for evil, and which will make the end so terrible. I do not wish to be a prophet of dark things, however," he broke off with a smile. "And no soldier should lose courage because the fight is hard."

Egerton saw that Arminie's eyes were full of sympathy as she looked at the speaker. "I am sure that you do not lose courage because the fight is hard," she said, "but only because it seems hopeless—if, indeed, you lose courage at all." "I am at least often tempted to discouragement," he said. "But the cause in which we fight is not wholly earthly; it is to save the faith as well as the honor of France; so we may leave the issue to God. *Aprapros*, I am told by my cousin that you heard a very good conference at Notre Dame this afternoon, mademoiselle. I am glad that you were more fortunate than on the afternoon when I was your guide—into the roof."

"Yes, I was much more fortunate," said Arminie, smiling; "but I have not forgotten that you resigned the certainty of hearing on that occasion, in order to give me the probability of doing so. I wish, therefore, that you had been rewarded by being there this afternoon." "I thought of going, but, on consideration preferred coming here. I knew I should find d'Antignac alone and there is no one whose society I enjoy more, or from whom I derive more benefit."

THE LEGEND OF SERAPHIA

A Chapter from the Life of Christ.

Seraphia, the wife of Sirach, a man of influence in the councils of the Jews, and as well known for his charitable deeds as for the wealth which had descended to him from his ancestors, sat on the housetop, as was, and still, the custom in the East, awaiting the return of her husband who had been bidden to dine at the house of Simon the Pharisee. There he was to meet Jesus the Nazarene, the Prophet and Teacher, the fame of whose wonderful doctrines and still more wonderful deeds had set all Galilee in a flame. Sirach had often heard of Jesus, but until now he had never spoken to Him, or even seen Him save once, under extraordinary circumstances, which had awakened in his mind a strong desire to meet the new Teacher under conditions more favorable for holding speech with Him and studying His character. On returning to his home the same evening, Sirach had related the occurrence to his wife in the following words:

"On my way to the house of Marcus the centurion, with whom I had a money transaction, my attention was attracted by a motley crowd of persons, all eager to press closer to what seemed to be some prominent figure in their midst. 'What is the cause of this commotion?' I inquired; 'and whither are ye bound?' One of the number made answer and said: 'We follow Jesus of Nazareth, who has been sent for by Marcus the centurion, to heal his servant now lying at the point of death.'—'Which is Jesus, I asked, 'and is He also a physician?'—'That is He with the grave face and gentle eyes,' was the reply. 'He is not a physician, but a worker of miracles.' Wishing to see Him closer, I endeavored to force my way through the crowd, when a man, running at full speed and making wild gestures with his hands, called on the multitude to fall apart and give him speech with Jesus, which they did as soon as they understood from whence he came. Then he called out aloud, saying: 'Lord, my master pines! Trouble not Thyself; for I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof. Say but the word, and my servant shall be healed.' Jesus turned His head, and I saw His face for the first time. His eyes pierced my very soul, and he thought they looked full upon me as He cried aloud: 'I say unto you, I have not found so great faith in Israel.' But again the crowd pressed about Him and I saw Him no more; for He retraced His steps, followed by the multitude; while I pursued my way, filled with curiosity as to the result. Nearing the house of Marcus, I heard sounds of thanksgiving; and what was my surprise to hear, and in a moment see, the man who had been ill perfectly restored, and dancing with joy!"

"How wonderful!" exclaimed Seraphia. "Jesus must surely be a prophet. It is even said, Sirach," she continued, "that some believe Him to be the Messiah." "Both had felt great interest in Jesus since that time, and it was with feelings of keen anticipation that Seraphia sat waiting in the cool of the evening for her husband's coming. The stars were in the sky when she heard his footsteps; and leaning over the parapet, called on him to ascend. In a moment he was beside her. "Well," she asked, eagerly, "what of Jesus? Was He there?" "Yes," replied Sirach, throwing himself at full-length upon a heap of cushions at her feet. "He was there, and never have I been so impressed. He was already present when I arrived; and sat surrounded by His disciples, in whom He presented a striking contrast in the semicircle formed by a curve of the table." "How was He clad?" "He wore a single woollen garment, which would have appeared plain on another, but to which His wonderful personality lent a certain charm of color and fitness. It was of soft but coarse material, confined at the waist by thick cord and falling in graceful folds to His feet. He sat with hands folded on His knees; and I observed the peculiar whiteness and transparency of the fingers, which were long and thin. Those hands do not look as though they belonged to the son of a carpenter."

"But it is said," interrupted Seraphia, "that He comes of the royal house of David; and thou knowest, Sirach, that in these unfortunate days it is not the well-born who are leaders." "Thou sayest truly," answered her husband, with a sigh. "Sprung from the root of Jesse He will may be. He has a noble face." "Describe Him to me, Sirach," said his wife. "I will as best I can," was the reply; "but, lacking the charm of His personal presence, which is indescribable, you can scarcely appreciate or understand the wondrous fascination of the Man. His forehead is high and broad; and the hair, bronze-tinted, falls in graceful, unstudied waves about half way to the shoulders. The face is oval, each feature perfect; the eyebrows delicately pencilled; the nose of a Grecian rather than our native Hebrew type; the lips not very full, but firm and red. Beard, the color of His hair, slightly cleft, showing the well-formed chin, barely sweeps His breast. But those eyes—those deep, that changeable, crystal wells—are of the most beautiful and wondrous hue. They seem to unite in themselves all of majesty and sweetness one could ever dream of as dwelling in the eyes of angels—dignity and humility, severity

and tenderness, sadness and something higher than joy. Indeed it is said, I know not how truly, that Jesus has never been known to laugh. His voice is low and soft, but very clear; and yet it can grow strong and vigorous in reproach, as you shall presently hear."

"I hope nothing untoward occurred to mar the festivity," remarked Seraphia, in an anxious tone. "Nothing untoward, but something remarkable," said her husband. "You shall hear. The feast was well over, when a noise was heard in the ante-chamber, as though the porter were remonstrating with some one who desired to enter. Suddenly a woman appeared in the doorway, clothed in a soft, white woollen tunic, girdled with blue, and bearing an alabaster box in her hand. A murmur went round the assembly. Surely our eyes did not deceive us—it was the notorious courtesan, Mary Magdalen, thus divested of the costly robes and ornaments with which she had long lured men to their ruin; with her rich golden hair coiled loosely at the back of her head, and simply held there by a silver comb. I beheld her with a start, for I had heard, that Jesus had once delivered her from the hands of those who were about to stone her; and also that since that time she had renounced her abandoned life."

"Pale, with eyes downcast, she stood one hesitating instant on the threshold; uncertain in the ominous silence which had followed the first murmur of astonishment from the assembly, whether to advance or draw back. Then, stepping forward, she fell on her knees before Jesus, weeping aloud and literally bathing His feet with her tears. Gazing compassionately upon her He uttered no word of reproach, but suffered her to unwind her beautiful hair, which fell, a rippling mass of gold, to the floor. Still weeping, she wiped with that beautiful hair the tears that fell upon His tired feet. Then, kissing them repeatedly, she drew from the alabaster box a most precious ointment, and anointed them profusely."

"All were silent, but many shook their heads with doubt and suspicion. Simon, our host, folded his arms, but spoke not till Jesus, as though divining the thoughts of his heart, and of many hearts there doubtful, spoke thus: 'Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee.' And he answered Him:—'Master say on.' Then He said: 'There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. The one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him most?' Simon answered and said: 'I suppose he to whom he forgave most.' And He said unto him: 'Thou hast judged rightly.' And He turned to the woman, and said unto Simon: 'Seest thou this woman? I entered into thy house; thou gavest Me no water for My feet, but she hath washed My feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest Me no kiss; but this woman, from the time I came in, hath ceased to kiss My feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint, but this woman hath anointed My feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee that her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she hath loved much.' And He said unto her: 'Thy sins are forgiven.'"

Seraphia's gentle eyes were full of tears as she asked, in a whisper: "And what then?" "No one made answer as the woman silently departed," continued her husband. "But the incident had strangely disturbed the spirit of the feast; the guests soon dispersed." "And didst thou obtain speech with Jesus?" "Yes," was the reply. "As He passed out, I followed Him, and He answered several remarks of mine with great kindness. But He soon turned toward me with a grave dignity and immediate followers, and I came slowly homeward. I am powerfully drawn toward Him, and must know Him better."

The interest of Seraphia was as much aroused as that of her husband. They sat talking far into the night on the subject that was now occupying all Jerusalem; resolved to know more of the wonderful personage, who, while He stood not abashed before either priest or Pharisee, seemed equally at home with the sinners and publicans, from whom the haughty Judean leaders held aloof. And soon it came about that Sirach, from his position and wealth a shining mark, openly avowed his adhesion to the doctrines of the new Teacher; believing, with his wife Seraphia, that Jesus was the promised Messiah, but One whose kingdom was not of this world. In their house He ever received a welcome—a welcome. He can safely assert which was shared by Mary His Mother, and the steadfast band of holy women who were His most devoted friends. Faithful to the interior workings of grace from the beginning, Seraphia remained faithful to the end. She bore for her Lord and Master a holy and singular love, which met with a holy and singular reward.

From early morning Seraphia had waited in the inner court of her dwelling—now seating herself on one of the stone benches near the tinkling fountain, now pacing restlessly to and fro, sensitive to every sound. Sirach, her husband, the night before had been one of the first to seek the house of the high priest, whether Our Lord had been taken after His seizure in the Garden of Gethsemane. But he had not attempted to obtain speech with Him,—not that he might have been suspected thereby, for his position was too well assured for such suspicion;

TO BE CONTINUED.