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ARMINE.
BY
CHRISTIAN REID.

CHAPTER V.—CONTINUED.

She did not answer; indeed, at that instant Duchesne addressed Egerton and so interrupted the conversation. Nor was he able to return to the subject, for talk after this was general, and chiefly on the political events of the day, which Duchesne and Leroux discussed with that biting sarcasm which has long been the prevalent tone in France, with all parties, toward the tottering ministries which have ignominiously succeeded each other under the Third Republic. It was not until they returned to the salon that Egerton found an opportunity to say a few more words to Armine.

"Now, then, my friends, to enjoy your cigars you must return to my den," Duchesne had said, leading the way thither and followed promptly by Leroux. But Egerton paused to admire some fragrant violets which filled a dish in the centre of a table near the fire, and then to say to Armine, who stood by the table:

"Have you seen the D'Antignacs lately, mademoiselle?"

"I saw them to day," she answered. "M. d'Antignac was, for him, rather well—that is, not incapable, from pain, of seeing or talking to any one."

"Then I shall certainly have cause of complaint when I see him next," said Egerton; "for, as it chanced, I called there to day and was denied admittance."

"Oh! there are many reasons why that might have been," she said eagerly. "He was perhaps by that time too tired to receive a visitor; for when I left the Vicomte de Marigny was with him. And you know his strength is easily exhausted."

"He is a wonderful man," said Egerton, feeling his interest in socialistic theories beginning to wane, and wishing that it were possible to remain in this pleasant room, with the soft fire-light, the fragrance of violets, and that charming, sensitive face to study.

"Yes," she said, "he is a wonderful man, I think, and in nothing more wonderful than in the fact that he keeps his intellect undimmed through so much physical suffering. Have you ever heard him talk, M. Egerton, on the great questions that are disturbing so many minds—questions like those of which you are thinking?"

"Now and then I have," said Egerton, again surprised. "But I rather avoid than seek such discussions with him, because he takes as the basis for all his views certain dogmas which I cannot accept."

"Perhaps that is because you do not understand them," said the girl, with a slight smile. "I must not detain you now; but you will probably pardon me for offering you this advice: Give to M. d'Antignac's views the same chance which you are giving now to my father's. Let him explain to you the basis on which they rest."

"Can it be possible that you accept that basis?" exclaimed the young man, too much amazed to remember the law of good breeding which forbids a direct personal question.

How clearly the soft, full eyes met his now! "Why should it surprise you if I do?" she asked quietly. "I should at least be ranged with the great majority of the wise and good and great of the world, should I not? But it does not matter what I believe, Monsieur, farther than this: that units make millions, and that it is better to be on the side of those who build up than of those who tear down."

She drew back with the last words, bending her head a little, and Egerton felt that he had no alternative but to accept the evident dismissal.

"I have come here to-night to hear why we should tear down," he said, smiling; "but an oracle has spoken on the other side when I least expected

it, and I should be very ungrateful if I did not heed its utterances. I shall certainly do nothing rashly, mademoiselle; and I have now the honor to bid you good night."

CHAPTER VI.

Oracles are more likely to be heeded when their utterances are supported by the soft light of golden-brown eyes than even when enforced by all the eloquence of a practised speaker, which no doubt accounts for the fact that it was a rather divided attention which Egerton gave the tribune of Socialism when he returned to the small study and smoking-room. Not that he failed to be impressed, as he had been before, by Duchesne's eloquence and fervor, and not that he was able to refute the premises from which the other drew his conclusions. The solid earth seemed reeling beneath him as he listened; for how could the man who had no belief in God, and to whom a life beyond the grave was, in the jargon of the day, "unthinkable," answer the stern deductions drawn from materialism by those who have logic enough to see that law, duty, obedience must rest on God, or else that they have no basis at all? He could not answer them; he could only listen silently to the enunciation of that new yet old doctrine which says to him, "Ye shall be as gods," and which declares that the first of the rights of man is the right to rise against his fellow man and say: "I will no longer subject you to you; I will no longer toil in pain and darkness while you dwell in the sunshine and fare sumptuously. Since this life is all, we will have our full share of its possessions; and we know now, what we have been long in learning, that the power to take that and anything else is ours!"

As Egerton listened he felt like one who is fascinated yet repelled. He would desire—yes, he said to himself, he would certainly desire—to see the great bulk of humanity freed from the hopeless fetters of toil and poverty which weigh upon it; but in order to reach this end was it necessary to destroy everything which up to this time the world had revered? Why not, (he asked) engraft the new order on whatever was good of the old?

"Because there is nothing good in the old," was Duchesne's reply; "because it was founded upon falsehood, is rotten throughout and doomed to destruction, root and branch. No; we must break up and utterly fling away the old forms, in order to cast the life of the world into new moulds."

Egerton did not answer; he seemed to be looking meditatively at the smoke from his cigar as it curled upward before him, but in reality he was hearing again Armine's voice as she said: "It is better to be on the side of those who build up than of those who cast down."

It was the tone of that voice which he carried with him when he went away, more than the passionate accents of Duchesne, though the last also vibrated through his consciousness and seemed to give new meaning to the look of the brilliant capital when he found himself in his streets. Leroux had preceded him in departure—having a night's work to accomplish—so he walked alone down the Avenue de l'Opera to the great boulevard flashing with lights, where the crowd still flowed up and down and the cafes were still thronged with well-dressed idlers. It is at this time that Paris wears her most seductive aspect, her most siren-like smile; that the brightness in the mere outward appearance of things stirs the coldest blood, makes the quietest pulses beat a little faster; and that Pleasure in her most alluring guise holds out forbidden fruit on every side, saying, "Take and eat."

But to Egerton at this moment it was like a great carnival under which grim forces of destruction were lurking and biding their time—the time when the tocsin of revolution would sound once more in the Faubourg St. Antoine, that old home of revolt, and Montmartre and Belleville would answer back. Was it fancy, or did the hoarse clamor sound already in his ears? He looked at the tranquil air of things around him, at the shops gleaming with luxury and beauty, at the elegant toilettes and smiling faces of those who passed him. "Do they not hear it?" he asked himself. "Do they not catch the low, menacing murmur of the storm which when it breaks will whelm all this in ruin? What is to be the end? Is Duchesne right? Must all be destroyed in order to rebuild on a better basis the new civilization? But I am afraid I have not much faith in democratic Utopias."

So thinking, he crossed the Place de l'Opera, filled with light, and as he looked up at the front of the new Opera House, that in its gilded splendor seems a fit type of the order which created it—that order of the Second Empire which strove to establish itself by stimulating to an enormous degree the passion for wealth and outward show in France, and the tradition of which is therefore still dear to the bourgeoisie soul—a recollection suddenly smote him like a blow.

"By Jove!" he cried, speaking aloud, as he stopped short at the corner of the Rue Auber, "I had forgotten entirely that I promised to appear in the Bertrams' box to-night!"

As he stood still, regarding the ornate front of the great building, it became suddenly alive with movement. The opera was just over—for an opera in Europe never ends before midnight—and the greater part of the audience was pouring out of the main entrance. Egerton hesitated for a moment; then saying to himself, "At least there is a chance," he crossed over, and, penetr-

ating through the line of carriages, took his place at the head of the steps, which the electric lamps flooded with a light bright as that of day. He had not stood there very long when the chance to which he trusted befriended him. Two ladies, attended by a gentleman who wore a light overcoat above his faultless evening dress, passed near him, and one of them, pausing to lit the long silken train that flowed behind her, saw him and exclaimed involuntarily, "Mr. Egerton!"

In an instant he was descending the steps by her side and saying: "How very fortunate I am! I took my station here with the faint hope of seeing you and apologizing without delay for my failure to appear, as I promised, in your box to-night."

She turned a very handsome head and regarded him with a pair of proud, bright eyes.

"It is a pity that you should have taken any trouble for that end," she said carelessly. "Of course when mamma asked you to look in on us she only meant if you cared to do so."

"I should have cared exceedingly," he said; "but can you conceive that I absolutely forgot the opera in the excitement of attending a Socialist meeting in Montmartre?"

She laughed slightly. "Yes," she said, "I can very well conceive it. An opera must seem very stale and flat compared to such a new entertainment. And did it amuse you?"

"I was not in search of amusement so much as of new ideas," he answered; "and it has certainly given me those."

"You are to be congratulated, then," said the lady, with the faintest possible shade of mocking in her voice. "We are all, I think, dreadfully in want of new ideas. I should not mind journeying to Montmartre myself in search of them."

"A want of ideas of any kind is the last complaint I should judge you likely to suffer from," said Egerton gallantly, yet with a shade of possible sarcasm in his voice as subtle as the mockery in her own had been.

"But I believe it is a question whether ideas are innate or not," said she coolly. "Therefore one must occasionally receive some from the outside; and I should welcome even Socialism as a relief from social platitudes."

At this moment the lady in front turned around, saying quickly, "Why, where is Sibyl?" And then she, too, exclaimed, "Mr. Egerton!"

"Good-evening, my dear Mrs. Bertram," said Egerton, uncovering. "I have just been expressing to Miss Bertram my deep regret at not having enjoyed my part of the opera with you."

"A very hypocritical regret, I should think," said Miss Bertram, considering that they were so much better employed.

"That raises the question, Egerton, how were you employed?" asked the gentleman, who had turned also.

"Ah! Talford, how are you?" said Egerton, recognizing him. "I confess," he went on, smiling, "that I am not so certain as Miss Bertram appears to be that I was better employed. I have been to a Red-Republican meeting in Montmartre."

Mrs. Bertram uttered a slight exclamation indicative of well-bred horror. "What could possibly have taken you to such a dreadful place?" she asked.

"And what did you learn after you got there?" inquired the gentleman called Talford.

"Well, for one thing I learned that opera-going will soon be an obsolete amusement," said Egerton, who had a sensation as if an ocean and not a few streets must surely divide this world from that which he had so lately left.

"I do not feel just now as if I should deplore that very much," said the younger lady. "One grows tired of operas which last to this hour: composers should have more mercy. Come, mamma, here is our carriage."

After they had been put into it the elder lady leaned forward to say good-night again to both gentlemen, and added with some embarrassment to Egerton: "Come soon and tell us what the Red Republicans are going to do."

As the carriage drove off, the two men turned by a simultaneous movement and walked along the broad pavement in silence for a moment. Then Mr. Talford said:

"Mrs. Bertram regards you with favor."

"It is more than Miss Bertram does, then," said Egerton, with a laugh. "A more disdainful young lady it has seldom been my fortune to meet."

"She is decidedly original," said the other. "One never knows what she will say or do next. But she is very clever and charming, if a little incomprehensible."

"She is very clever and no doubt very charming," said Egerton; "but in my case I usually find the sense of being puzzled greater than the sense of being charmed."

"I like a woman who is able to puzzle one," said his companion. "Most of them are very transparent—not because they have not the will to be otherwise, but because one has learned to see so clearly through all their little artifices. Now, if Miss Bertram has artifices they are not of the usual order, and so one does not see through them."

The point with you, then, is not whether artifice exists, but whether, like the highest art, it is able to conceal itself," said Egerton.

"Oh! for the matter of that," said the other carelessly, "you cannot expect a woman to be a woman without artifice of some kind."

"Can one not?" said Egerton meditatively. They were by this time

crossing the Place, and he glanced down the broad Avenue de l'Opera toward the Rue Neuve des Petits Champs. What artifice had the direct glance of those soft, golden eyes concealed? "You ought to know better than I," he went on after a moment. "At least I am quite willing to admit that your experience has been greater than mine."

"So much the better for you, my dear fellow," said the other. "One begins to learn after a while, like that very *blase* gentleman King Solomon, that most things are vanity; and women, unfortunately, are no exception to the rule."

He spoke quietly, but with the decision of one who utters a truth upon a subject with which he is thoroughly familiar. And certainly if the experience of twenty years can qualify a man to pronounce a judgment, Marmaduke Talford was qualified to pronounce one upon the fair sex. In many parts of the civilized world had he studied it during that period; at the feet of many enchantresses had he remained—for a time. But no spell had ever been great enough to hold him long, nor firm even to rivet round him the fetters of matrimony. Now he had reached the eminence of forty years, and was conscious that his blonde hair was growing thin on the top of his head. Perhaps these things made him a little thoughtful: at all events, his friends began to fancy that they saw a change in him. He had never been a prodigal, had never wasted his substance nor lived riotously; but there could be no doubt that he had gone deeply into pleasure—though with a certain fastidiousness and discretion which characterized him in most things—and if he now began to say, *Vanitas vanitatum*, it was because he, too, had indeed learned, like the king of Israel, that "all things are vanity"—after one has exhausted them.

The feeling of this was certainly uppermost in his mind; for, after a pause which Egerton did not break, he went on speaking: "After all, it is a mistake to leave one's self nothing to believe in. And ignorance is the parent of belief. Therefore whatever one wishes to believe in one must remain in comparative ignorance of Women, for example—since we are speaking of them—if you wish to cherish the common superstition about feminine virtues, do not make any attempt to know the sex other than superficially."

"That is rather an appalling doctrine," said Egerton. "Do you not think it possible that you may have been unfortunate in your experiences?"

"I am very sure that I have not been," said Talford. "On the contrary, I am inclined to think that I have been fortunate when I compare my experiences with those of others."

"And you make your axiom general in its application?" said Egerton. "You think that ignorance is the only ground for belief in anything?"

"I not only think so, but I am certain of it," answered the other; "and if it is not a very cheerful realization—well, we cannot help that, you know. One has either to shut one's eyes and decide to be deluded, or to open them and face the truth."

Then said Egerton, like Pilate of old: "What is truth? It must be something absolute in itself, and not a mere negative state of universal scepticism."

The other shrugged his shoulders slightly. "I should define it, then," he said, "as what we can see, and feel, and touch: the material world with its goods and its pleasures, the fact that we are alive and the equally undoubted fact that we must die—*voluntout!* If any man tells me that he believes aught beyond these things, I say to myself, 'It may be so, but you are either deceived or a deceiver.' See, *mon cher*—it is not often that I am betrayed in this vein of moralizing—but it is not evident that it must be so? For example, we hear enthusiasts talking of the glorious virtues of humanity—this humanity which has been robbing and cheating and cutting each other's throats as long as history has any record of it, and which a little experience of men will soon assure us is likely to continue the same course, with variations, in the time to come. We hear of the beauty of universal brotherhood, and of a sublime altruism which is some day going to display itself. Bah! these things will do for dreamers in their closets, ignorant of the practical world. But men of the world know that the millennium was never farther off than now, when mankind is realizing more than ever that the good which buys all things—including men and women—is the only secure good of life and that pleasure is its only true end."

There was a moment's silence. On those last words the brilliant scene around them was a striking commentary. But Egerton's thoughts went back to a very different scene—to the crowded homes of Montmartre, and the eager, resolute faces of those who listened to other conclusions drawn from the same doctrine that life is all, that wealth rules the world, and pleasure is the supreme good. Presently he said, in the tone of one who speaks a thought aloud: "I wonder what it will be?"

"What?" asked Talford, a little surprised.

The other roused himself. "Why, the result of the struggle," he said, "between men like you—and you are but the type of a large and constantly increasing class—and some other to whom I have been listening to night. It is a struggle bound to come, you know."

"I suppose so," answered Talford indifferently, "though I do not pay much

attention to the *blague* of Socialists and Anarchists. But I can tell you what in my opinion will be the result: it will be wild uproar, much killing on all sides, and then the final end of that ridiculous modern farce called the rule of the people. Power will assert itself in one form or another, with a single strong hand, and make an end for ever of the insane folly which declares that a thinking minority shall be ruled by an ignorant and brutal majority."

"Thank you," said Egerton, with a smile. "Your opinion is exceedingly clear, and you and I may not be much older when we shall see it verified or disproved. Meanwhile, I have received a number of sufficiently varied impressions to-night, which will furnish me with food for meditation."

Talford laughed, and looking up at the Madeleine, by which they were now passing, said: "You live in this neighborhood, do you not?"

"Yes, my apartment is yonder," answered Egerton, nodding towards a house which occupied the corner of a street running into a boulevard. "I often dream in the morning before I wake that I am wandering in the gardens of Cashmere; that rises from the odors of the flower-market held here, which penetrate into my chamber."

"Ah!" said the other, "you are at the age for flowers, real or metaphorical. Enjoy your youth, happy man! Do not waste one golden hour in listening to Socialist madmen. That is the best advice I can give you; and now *bon soir*."

TO BE CONTINUED.

A WITTY NUN.

Lord Charles Russell, Chief Justice of England, in an article published in the September *North American Review*, tells an amusing story of a case in which the Sisters of Mercy were parties, and shows, without ostentation, his Catholic faith in the telling. He says of Lord Coleridge, his predecessor on the bench:

"The action of *Saurin* against *Starr* was one of the most remarkable cases in which he was engaged. It was an action brought by an Irish lady who had joined the branch established at Hull of a religious order known as the Sisters of Mercy. The Superior had, in fact, complained to the ecclesiastical authorities and compelled the lady to leave the convent; and thereupon, she brought an action in respect of the expulsion and for libel. The case excited great interest at the time—great interest naturally among the Catholic community, and still more amongst the non-Catholic community. It is not, I think, uncharitable to say, as to the latter, that it was anticipated, if not hoped, that the inquiry might throw a lurid light upon the incidents of conventual life. In this respect, the disappointment was great. The incidents in the case were devoid of sensation, and, in any other connection, would have been devoid of interest. No grave moral imputation was made against the plaintiff, and no serious misconduct was, on her part, alleged against the community of which she had been a member. Her case was that, without cause, she had been expelled, and that, without justification, her conduct had been represented as incompatible with conventual life. The case for the convent may be summed up in a sentence: That Miss Saurin had no vocation, that she was incapable of submitting to the strict discipline found necessary in religious communities, that she broke bounds, spoke when she ought to have been silent, and did not observe the small rules of conventual life ordained by those in authority. The character of the evidence may be illustrated by an amusing incident which occurred in the course of the cross-examination by Mr. Coleridge of Mrs. Kennedy, a lady who held the office of Mistress of Novices. Mrs. Kennedy mentioned among other peccadilloes that on one occasion she had found Miss Saurin in the pantry eating strawberries, when she ought to have been attending to a class of poor children, or some such duty. The cross-examination proceeded thus:

Mr. Coleridge: "Eating strawberries, really?"

Mrs. Kennedy: "Yes, sir; she was eating strawberries."

Mr. Coleridge: "How shocking!"

Mrs. Kennedy: "It was forbidden, sir."

Mr. Coleridge: "And did you, Mrs. Kennedy, really consider there was any harm in that?"

Mrs. Kennedy: "No, sir, not in itself, any more than there was any harm in eating an apple; but you know, sir, the mischief that came from that."

Let Them See the Truth.

Father Walter Elliot, whose mission to Protestants in the Diocese of Detroit last year, broke up the sod for future harvest there, is to spend some time in the Diocese of Cleveland in similar work hoping for like success. He is not content to wait for the fifty millions of our neighbors to come to the Church in search of the truth—he will take it to them. May the Lord of the harvest prosper him and send him many co-laborers.—Catholic Review.

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