

## IN SPITE OF ALL.

By IDA LEMON, Author of "The Charming Cora," "A Winter Garment," etc.



## CHAPTER XIII.

ADAME DUCLOS did not however trust to her own intention though she had perhaps as much confidence in it as in other people's judgment. Margaret was under her charge and she was not going to let her infringe the proprieties if she could help it. A few inquiries were enough to convince her that all Michael had told her about him-

self was perfectly true, and Mrs. B—, the lady to whom Michael had referred, and who was the very personification of British respectability, spoke so highly of him that Madame had no further scruples at receiving him at her house whenever he liked to come, provided only that Margaret mentioned to her mother that she had made this new acquaintance.

There were reasons why Mrs. Raven did not care to break up her home in England and accompany her daughter abroad. Margaret had been quite prepared to go into a flat somewhere near the skies with another girl, but even Mrs. Raven thought such an experiment, though feasible in London, would hardly do for her young daughter in the French capital. However, knowing that if Miss Margaret were not given a certain amount of liberty she would take it, she had tried to discover a chaperon who would not worry the girl by undue restrictions and yet would take care of her. Mademoiselle Duclos had been French governess at the school Mrs. Raven had attended, and both before and after her marriage the latter had often visited the young woman to whom she had been much attached and had become acquainted with her mother. When Eugénie died Madame Duclos returned to Paris, but from time to time she and Mrs. Raven corresponded. And it was to her the latter wrote about her daughter, telling her exactly what sort of girl Margaret was, and how to deal with her. Madame had had a wide experience of life, and although it had not included an intimacy with the views of the modern English girl, yet it had made her capable of understanding that though there are general laws which are excellent and even necessary, it is possible for some people to have independent views without being particularly wicked. She soon discovered that Margaret had not an atom of vanity, which

she considered the source of most women's undoing, that her tastes though not particularly womanly and certainly not girlish were never fast, and that though she had a good deal of precocious worldly wisdom she had a pure, upright and even noble mind. Accordingly she let her have more liberty than Eugénie would have enjoyed had she lived to be nearly twice her age. But inasmuch as she knew that Margaret was not quite so wise as she thought herself, and her eyes were opened to a great many dangers and difficulties that the girl knew nothing about, she took a good deal of trouble in accompanying her to the various places she elected to visit, and to keeping a careful eye on some of the very Bohemian friends whom Margaret made at and brought home from the studio, and whose society she desired not because of any personal affinity, but because this one had such a grasp of colour and that one was going to make an European fame as an impressionist. Occasionally she took part in expeditions into the country with some of her fellow-students, and especially a young American girl whom she rather admired, but on the whole she kept herself to herself, lived for her work, amused herself by taking fencing lessons and visiting the Louvre, and made Madame her chief friend. Madame sometimes wondered if she were a little lonely, for even a very lively old lady of sixty-seven cannot be a suitable companion for a girl of barely twenty during long evenings, but Margaret was self-sufficient and depended very little on her fellow-creatures for her happiness. Still, she seemed much pleased at her acquaintance with Michael, and Madame, who was sentimental and French, and had scanty belief in Platonic friendships, wondered if these two young foreigners had taken a fancy to each other.

"My motto, with regard to the sexes," Margaret had announced at an early stage in their intimacy, "is liberty, equality, and fraternity."

To which as to other of the remarks she flung at him with the manner of one who has definitely made up her mind on every subject under the sun, Michael replied by nothing more brilliant than a monosyllable.

He had begun by taking an interest in Margaret because she was Beattie's friend, but he soon came to like her very much on her own account. Perhaps he looked for the good points which he knew must exist if Beattie cared for her; at any rate he found them, and he very soon began to seek her society in the intervals of leisure which they had in common. Luncheon occasionally in Madame Duclos' little room with Monsieur, Madame and Mademoiselle regaling themselves likewise, became almost an institution, and then, after coffee, there was generally a walk with Margaret, or a talk in the small *salon* with

the slippery floor and the primly arranged old-fashioned furniture and the sunblinds drawn to shut out the afternoon sunshine, and Madame in her violet gown, with her doll's hands crossed on her lap, taking a quiet nap in company with her three furry friends.

Michael had never known any young woman like Margaret, and she was quite an education to him. He wrote about her to Norah, but he could not make the picture very sympathetic, because he soon realised that to the Puritanical mind of this other girl friend of his Margaret would not be quite comprehensible. But he understood her; and though they had many arguments, and Margaret sometimes accused him of being a Philistine, at others of being old-fashioned, she thoroughly reciprocated his liking, and perhaps was somewhat persuaded by him from doings and sayings which, though the vogue among a certain section at the studio, were hardly seemly for a well-brought up young Englishwoman.

"You're narrow-minded," Margaret said to him once in anger, when he wouldn't back her up in something to which she was trying to persuade Madame to consent.

"No, I'm not," said Michael. "But I judge by my own mother. She is very broad-minded and has wide sympathies, but I'm sure she wouldn't let any girl she cared for go to a place like that even to acquire knowledge."

"Your mother is all you say, no doubt, but she is the last generation."

"No she isn't," said Michael laughing; "she has often told me she was born before her time and was in advance of all her contemporaries in her girlhood."

"Is she unconventional?" asked Margaret, not yet prepared to bow to Lady Anstruther's judgment, but wavering.

"Well no, she isn't," said Michael stoutly. "She has come to the conclusion that public opinion is founded on something that deserves respect, so she gives in to it."

"Ah," said Margaret, disappointed. And she shook her head.

"But unconventionality isn't a merit in itself," said Michael, "any more than disobedience to any other laws of society. It is only admirable or pardonable, as the case may be, in people whose genius or whose eccentricity makes them overlook or disapprove of the things of everyday life. For my part I believe the highest characters are great enough to be original and conventional too."

"I don't," said Margaret.

"Then we must agree to differ," said Michael. "But look here, I'll just give you some examples: there are three modern great poetesses I can think of at once—Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Jean Ingelow, and Christina Rossetti. They were all saints as well as geniuses; they