

Literature.

A CELEBRATED CASE.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CHAIN-MAIL.

Adrienne decidedly had not forgotten how to play with Raoul's heart.

She knew that she filled it, large as it was, and so she gave her caprices full scope.

Raoul had refused her an expressed wish, something quite new to this spoiled child.

His slightest word was law in the household.

Raoul could watch her as she went about her duties, and he would not hear of her leaving the room.

Adrienne devoted herself to her father's comfort.

She hung round his chair, opened his papers for him, dipped his pen in the ink, and so on.

And in every attitude she assumed that Raoul would never in love with her than ever.

She dropped him one of her lowest courtesies as he was taking leave.

And he had to content himself with this act of condescension for the present.

Although quite sure of his own feelings for her, Raoul now had to question the real character of hers for him.

He tortured himself during his homeward ride with these painful doubts, and the more he reflected on the past, the more he longed for the possibility that she might now prefer another to him.

More beautiful than his love for her.

The Viscount de Languey, in spite of noble name, large estates, handsome person, and agreeable manners, felt himself unable to read the girl's heart whose entrance he coveted.

Adrienne had only grown into a more beautiful creature, and she was now a lovely creature.

Adrienne, the same lovely creature, had a problem that had won his youthful heart, and kept it ever since.

Even the consent and approval of his parents which he had long since begged for and received, did not much reassure him.

He would never interfere with their darling happiness.

Now that she was in a position as respected as Raoul's, he would, to meet the numerous young gentlemen who surrounded her father and attended his receptions, say nothing of those whom he might see during future visits to Paris.

Raoul considered his own chance of winning her woman's love as rather languishing in the balance.

Of course she had been pleased—delighted—to see him that afternoon.

But she had been gentle and confidential with him, and had tacitly admitted the existence of a mutual love and understanding by making a request which he had at once refused.

But no open betrothal had ever taken place.

While perambulating him to worship at Adrienne's shrine, the duke and duchess had stipulated that Adrienne should make no promise to either.

When old enough to make a choice, she should decide for herself.

Thus the affair stood, Raoul feared to lose by being too hasty in his efforts for securing his treasure.

Still, to watch it in its beauty, attracting new, covetous admirers, was to be in a mind bordering on madness.

Raoul felt that such a suspense would be unendurable.

Yet, what to do? There was one resource. He could return to Paris, and in absence seek forgiveness.

Troubled by these misgivings, Raoul sought refuge in his friend's society and sympathy, and for several days he did not visit the duchess.

Strongly, such lady respecting the cause of his non-appearance, but she amused herself watching her daughter's mood, now as variable as the clouds floating over her impetuous heart.

The first day she was quite silent in regard to Raoul, but on the next morning she was seen approaching.

The duchess also noticed that Adrienne wore pink roses in her powdered tresses, and had a little knot of them in the lace on her breast.

No Raoul, O'Rourke also was fully aware that his young mistress would be pleased, and disposed to find fault with even a word, something so usual as to cause general remark among the servants.

Another day, and no Raoul, with his gay smiles, smart dress and faultless manners, his sweet voice uttering fond speeches, his loving eyes following her every movement with proud admiration.

Adrienne thought she had lost him, and took up her embroidery, but that day after a few hasty stitches, and left the terrace where the duchess was helping the duke with some of his voluminous correspondence.

They looked after the little figure going quickly along one of the garden paths, and their tired eyes met, both smiling merrily.

Adrienne evidently misses her slave. When she gets her foot on the ground, she has no doubt that the child really loves him.

Adrienne said, "I have done it."

"I have done it, why not let me be happy?"

"I, for my part, can see no reason why Adrienne should meet a number of new faces, and be thrown in contact with strange characters with whom she could not possibly understand as well as Raoul."

"No, my daughter would be all the better if she never again saw Paris, but just settled down to a peaceful, domestic life here in Provence, away from the excitement and scandals that disgrace our capital."

"I agree with you, Armaud, the life that we once pictured for ourselves is possible for Raoul and Adrienne; but they should find out now much they love each other for themselves. I think the discovery will be all the more delightful if no one assists them in making it."

"You are right; it would not be kind to deprive them of the privilege which the poorest peasants may enjoy. But what has become of the lover? Raoul had not been here for two days."

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ing her teens, his ideal of what was lovely and charming in woman. She thought of his kindness only in her days, his sympathy with the emotions which others would pronounce silly in the extreme.

He had neither ridiculed her fears nor attempted any absurd explanation of them. He had as firmly, been interested and tender with her. There was no one in the world like Raoul, and Adrienne longed for an opportunity to make up for her disdainful indifference after his his many labors.

She was indulging in a few tears of contrition and humiliation, when the sound of carriage wheels attracted her attention. Looking down over the road, she felt her heart throb with delight.

There was the well-known carriage and sleek black horses that the chanoinesse always used when she made her visits to her pupils, and Adrienne forgat all her sorrows, and hurried toward the large entrance-gate of the park.

In a few minutes she had embraced the chanoinesse, and was kissing a girl of her own height, with all the warmth of her impetuous nature.

Meanwhile the duke and duchess were exchanging salutations with the chanoinesse, and then the three turned to observe the two girls.

"When you have finished embracing each other I should like to present Valentin to the duchess and the duke," said the chanoinesse, affecting irony.

At this the girls came forward, Valentine going through the ceremony very gracefully, although she possessed only a long separation, and the possibility that she might now prefer another to him, the more beautiful she loved for her.

When seated on the terrace, the duchess could not help going to Adrienne's friend, the girls were walking up and down, arm in arm, interchanging confidence in low tones, their rippling laughter breaking pleasantly upon the graver conversation of their elders.

"You call her simply Valentine," said the duke, dropping her name, her eyes fixed on the girl's slight figure.

"Yes, for the present. She is the daughter of a noble but prescribed family. She was committed to my care when she was five years old, and now she is more like a child to me than a pupil."

The chanoinesse was a tall, dignified lady, who wore the quiet dress of her order, and she was now a lovely creature, she wore like an imperial robe. She looked with fond pride at Valentine while speaking.

"There is something familiar to me in her face," said the duchess. "I have never known her parents."

"I cannot say. I think that you meet her mother in former years."

"She has a remarkable beauty for one so young. Such power and firmness are expressed by her features! Has she such character as her face indicates?"

"Yes, quite as much. Valentine is the most clever girl I ever had under my charge. She is a perfect logician, very cautious, too, and very sensible. She never acts without forethought."

"A perfect contrast then to my child," who acts first and thinks afterwards," said the duke, who was a quiet listener.

The chanoinesse smiled. "Excuse me if I differ with you, Adrienne's rapid impulse very often make her appear heedless, even daring you will find her so in trials; in any serious matter, Adrienne can be as cautious and determined as even I will say, Valentine. In a few words, Adrienne is careless as to speech, but careful as to actions. Valentine is guarded in both."

"You surprise me, my dear chanoinesse. Still, you would probably know more of our child's disposition than we, as you amused herself watching her daughter's mood, now as variable as the clouds floating over her impetuous heart."

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"What, Henri? You here?"

The marquis took the offered hand, and, leaning, pressed his lips upon it. "Yes, Marquis, but only within the week. Raoul and I left Paris together."

The chanoinesse explained as she presented the marquis to the duchess: "This is my grandson, whom I have not seen for years. How delightful to have you with us! This is an unexpected pleasure. I see the young ladies coming Raoul, go and meet them; you and Adrienne can make the introductions much better than we can."

The two ladies returned to their conversation, quietly watching the low bows and graceful courtesies interchanged between the young people.

Seeing Raoul back again, apparently unaffected by her coolness, Adrienne always used when she made her visits to her pupils, and Adrienne forgat all her sorrows, and hurried toward the large entrance-gate of the park.

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"You must not give way to this terrible foreboding, this almost involuntarily evil. Come Adrienne, I hear them calling us; and see! there is that astonishing man coming toward us."

"Oh, yes; that is Denis O'Rourke, once the sergeant of a company in my father's old regiment—the 'King's Own.' Dear old fellow! his face I remember longer than any other. I believe that when I was quite a little I had a severe attack of fever, and when I was recovering O'Rourke took me out in the parks, and carry me when I was tired, thus managing to keep me for hours in the open air—course of treatment which is supposed to have saved my life."

"No wonder you are fond of him!"

"He does pretty much as he pleases; orders around the other servants, worries father nearly out of his senses by his blunders, and often completely upsets the dignity of the family; but, for my sake, O'Rourke will always remain with us."

"Another slave! Adrienne, you possess the gift of winning hearts. Do not underestimate them when won."

"And you have won mine—a poor thing but wholly yours!"

Attractive as Adrienne was to him, his friend's constant theme of conversation, he found himself turning to watch Valentine's flushing cheeks and brilliant eyes, glowing with the pleasure which the novelty of the situation afforded her.

To emerge from the quiet monotony of school life, and find herself transported, as it were, to find herself, with two beautiful young ladies, Raoul knew precisely how to make things pleasant for the bright creatures before whom life was now so happily opening.

The duke was expecting visitors from the capital, and a series of reputation, in honor of the guests, was under discussion. The girls were soon absorbed in the attractive subjects of presentations and suitable dresses for these brilliant occasions. In every matter they were making inspecting brocades and satins, and lace trims. Fortunately, their difference in complexion, eyes and hair, prevented all chance of rivalry. Both were beautiful, but Adrienne chose delicate blues and pinks in the flowers on her heavy brocades, while Valentine selected all the more delicate shades, and she was the spendor of her dark, brilliant eyes.

Days and weeks had slipped by; the chanoinesse seemed in no hurry to return to her quiet duties at the college.

One morning she came out on the terrace, followed by Raoul and the Marquis de Colonne.

"But, my dear girl," she cried, holding up an open letter. "I am called to Paris, and must leave you to-morrow."

"Oh, dear! cried the two voices; and the girls left their embroidery and hastened to hear her reasons for going away just when most needed there."

"In Valentine," said Adrienne, catching her friend's hand. "You must not look so startled, Adrienne. Valentine will remain with you."

"Oh, charming! delightful!" was the reply.

"But when will you return?" asked Valentine, with serious eyes and sad tones.

"It is very uncertain, my dear. But do not be so sad. I shall enjoy it all the more knowing how happy you are here."

"And will you go alone, that long tiresome journey?"

"No; I am to have an agreeable companion. In fact—here the chanoinesse looked at Adrienne—Raoul has proposed to go with me!"

"Raoul!"

It was Adrienne's voice full of astonishment.

"Yes! and the chanoinesse sighed. 'Raoul intends to return to Paris.'"

"To Paris?" echoed Adrienne, with a quick glance at Raoul's adroit face.

"Well, you see, Raoul loves a young lady who does not love him."

"But she does love him! She—Adrienne suddenly bit her lip and had her flushed face on Valentine's shoulder.

"You hear, Raoul? I think you had better settle this affair with the young lady."

"Yes, Adrienne, you must decide now, once for all, said Raoul approaching. 'I can bear this suspense no longer! To life-believing myself beloved, to-morrow, feeling that one has decided my own heart with his hopes. You know my meaning, I love you; but unless I can feel that my love is returned, I must leave you.'"

"Oh, the easiest thing in the world, said the unconscious duke, seating himself, and looking directly at the marquis. 'Just call on the young lady, and proper guardians of the young lady, and Raoul's blishes were suspicious. The chanoinesse stepped between them.'

"We have been discussing a very interesting question; how a young gentleman should ask for the hand of the lady he loves."

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ITS MEDICINAL PROPERTIES ARE Alternative, Tonic, Solvent and Diuretic.

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