

## MADAME CHALONER'S HEART

## A HUSBAND'S TRIALS

## CHAPTER XVII.—Continued.

The Duchess of Berwick assumed her sweetest air of grace and languor, as she bent upon the Emperor, and Eugénie had no special word of compliment for the fat blonde with the dazzling shoulders and the purple of Neapolitan coral. Since she had been defeated by the stylish little girl with the bold, black eyes and the complexion of a Spanish creole, Lady Bermonth could have gnashed her beautiful white teeth as she thought of it. And when, a few hours later, the report of the compliment Mrs. Delamere had received from the august lips of royalty itself was ringing through every drawing-room in the gay world of Paris, Lady Bermonth actually cried:

"I am tired of this Paris, Paris," she exclaimed, when questioned by the much-attending Duke, as to the cause of her tears. "Let's go on to Rome to-morrow!"

"Not until after the ball at the palace!" "Yes," said Lady Bermonth, wiping away her tears, as the judicious after-thought occurred to her that a red nose and swelled eyelids were not beneficial to the prettiest of faces. "I will wait until the ball at the palace. You suppose that horrid upstart little American will be there?"

"I don't know," said the Duchess, "but what her Imperial Majesty said about her beauty." "I'll have one more trial before I'll be started down by the bold black eyes," said Lady Bermonth, energetically.

"She drove to Mlle. Michard's, that very afternoon, and was dressed with the fastidious elegance for over an hour, giving her what she called 'the roughness' of an unapproachable foil of rose de Chine silk, which was to dazzle the world at the approaching gala ball."

But as the days passed by no card of invitation arrived. Lady Bermonth marvelled at the delay, and at length decided so far to ignore her pride as to consult a fitting authority on the subject, Mlle. la Marquise de Beaumont, who was cousin to M. Paris, whose sister was the Comtesse d'Elemond, one of the ladies-in-waiting to the Empress. So she wrote the list of invitations to the ball in the name of Mlle. la Marquise.

"My dear," said the Marquise, "it was some time long ago that I received from you the reason I haven't received mine," asked Lady Bermonth, quite forgetting her diplomacy as she read the Marquise's answer.

"Oh," said Mlle. de Beaumont, quite enjoying Lady Bermonth's face, "your name is not on the list. There are so many English in Paris just now that of course her Majesty must make a selection."

"Not on the list?" "No, I'm sure it is. Mlle. d'Elemond told me herself, and she saw the names."

Lady Bermonth had grown first livid and then green as she sat twisting the emerald and diamond ring on her finger.

"Is it that part little Mrs. Delamere's name?" she asked in a choking voice, as she felt the necklace of Neapolitan coral were too tight.

"Oh, yes," Mlle. de Beaumont answered, promptly, "her name is first on the American list."

Lady Bermonth never mentioned the subject again, but left Paris the next morning, taking the *rose de Chine* dress with her.

As if by magic, the Marquise's mind to ask another such signal discomfiture. As for her little Ida, she, in the royal way of "retire and be seen," had been invited to the reception of adulation which surrounded her, would scarcely have envied the Empress itself the dithers that crowned her beautiful brow.

It is not for nothing that she had been invited to the reception of adulation which surrounded her, would scarcely have envied the Empress itself the dithers that crowned her beautiful brow.

For, not content with what she had so generously given, he came again and again, claiming yet more as his right, and growing insolent in proportion as his success in working more and more upon her feelings.

His face haunted her as she drove along the fashionable avenues—she said him lurking around her door as she alighted from her carriage; he followed her everywhere like a shadow.

"I shall appeal to the police if this persecution is continued," she cried, passionately, to him one day.

"Appeal them, madame," Giuseppe replied, with a mocking sort of humility. "I place no restraint upon you."

Ida and her lips until the blood came, as she thought how utterly powerless she was in the hands of this villain.

"I could almost murder you when you look at me in that evil way," she said, as Giuseppe watched her under his sly, cauld-like lids.

"It is easy for the L'Escolles to commit murder," he said, lightly. "I can believe you."

And Ida, between the sickening aversion she felt to the man himself, and the fear, in some of his persistent visits, Reginald Delamere should encounter him, was nearly frantic.

"Go now," she said, hurriedly, counting moments as if all she had got to-day.

Giuseppe's brow darkened.

"This is a mere trifle!" "This is all I have, I tell you!"

"I must have more!"

Ida knew the firm metallic voice too well to parley longer.

Her husband's carriage was driving up at the same moment. She stepped down, and, taking her finger, and tossed it into his palm.

"Take that," she said, checking his rapture of thanks with a gesture of disgust. "Go to the devil, and tell her to let you out at the back entrance—quickly!"

He could have sworn the smile on Giuseppe's face as he obeyed her hurried words.

## CHAPTER XVII.

## THE SHADOW OF CHANCE.

The ball at the Tuileries, although Ida Delamere was not at the time aware of it, was yet another stone placed by the hands of the Master Architect, Destiny, on the edifice of her fate. She had looked so pale and wearied all the day long that Reginald had insisted as to the propriety of his going when at length the hour came for her to retire.

But her child-like coarings and earnest entreaties finally prevailed; and when he saw her enter the room in a dress of white silk covered with floating skirts of tulle, which made her look like a snow-cloud, while her cheeks glowed like carnations, and her eyes were so fiery brilliant, he could not but tell himself that her lack of health and spirits was nothing more than distorted fancy on his part.

"That dress is like the white fringes of sea-foam, Ida," he said smilingly, as he rose to lead her down to the ball; "and your people seem to follow you as if wither with assured by the bells of the room; but remember not to flirt."

He spoke in a low tone, and she made some light answer, as she took up the bouquet of roses and japonicas, which had just been sent in the wrapped in silver paper, and tied in a box, from the fashionable florist of Paris.

The supper-room at the palace were already thronged when Mrs. Delamere entered, and she had the satisfaction of being the centre of all eyes, partly for her own surpassing beauty, partly on account of the unusual compliment which had been accorded to her by the Empress.

For the first time she followed on after with bewildering rapidity, and Ida found herself, almost as if by magic, the belle of the evening.

She enjoyed it with the fervor and intensity of a young girl.

Reginald was silent and anxious. This

slippant mood was something as new as it was repellent in Ida.

"By the way, Rex," she said, after a few moments' dancing, "we are going to get up a carriage party to Madame Latour's chateau, a little way out of Paris. Do you want to go?"

"We? And who may 'we' mean?" "Myself, of course, with a pair-up of the most and Madame Avonil, and Madame d'Anceur, and Mr. Armand, and Colonel St. Argyle."

Reginald interrupted her at this point. "Do you mean that the party is absolutely made up, Ida?"

"I believe so," she answered. "And who was to be your escort?" he asked.

"Colonel St. Argyle, of course," said Ida, slyly.

"You mean quite out of the question," rejoined Delamere. "Upon my word, Mrs. Delamere, you are acquiring the habits of free-and-easy Parisian ladies with a facility that is really marvellous."

"Free-and-easy? I am at a loss to understand your meaning, Reginald."

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her eyes were averted, and, strive as she would to suppress the reluctant blush, it mounted to her cheeks in crimson billows.

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