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### Maddolena's Story

#### The Cameo Bracelet

##### CHAPTER XVI

Such an appeal went home to the better nature of his auditor.

"On my soul, Colonel Severn, I will always remember that she was the wife of a good man, and act in such a manner as to prove that I reverence your memory as much as I will respect her friendliness."

And so earnestly was this said, that the colonel was satisfied.

And now, as the mournful cortege began to move toward the palazzo, Beattie and Trixie, who in the confusion found themselves quite overlooked, recollected that they could be useful there, and with breathless haste returned thither. To their thoughtful care was owing the arrangements hastily but effectively made for the sufferers' comfort; and Madam Caspares nodded approval when she saw that all she had intended to suggest was already on train, and a chamber prepared to which Colonel Severn could be immediately carried.

Contrary to the expressed opinion of his surgeons, he lingered for several days, tended assiduously by the orphan dependents of the baroness; for, whether because no one else appeared so well fitted for the task, or because they cheerfully volunteered to undertake it, they were left in undisturbed possession of the sick-room.

The Italian servants were too noisy to be endured in it. Madam Caspares had no skill in nursing; and Lady Camilla's grief was too violent to permit her to do more than pay a daily visit to her husband's couch.

Colonel Severn did not linger long. After a few days' battling with death, his eyes closed and he was freed forever from all doubts.

The death of Colonel Severn caused a great sensation in Rome, where the stern English officer was well known and respected, although it had never been his fate to win affection, even in his own household. His countrymen were indignant that such a crime should have been committed at a spot visited continually by thousands, and at the bad discipline of the police, whose feeble efforts to discover by whom the shot was fired proved utterly abortive. It remained an open question whether it was to be attributed to accident, or was the result of deliberate malice, though many inclined to the latter opinion, knowing that the colonel's hasty temper had brought him into collision with many of the hotel servants, government officials, etc., during his residence in the city. Still, there was nothing to criminate a single person, for the marchese kept his own counsel, shipping his accomplice off to America, and keeping quietly out of sight himself till the emote was over.

Long before the beautiful widow emerged from her seclusion, the event that had so suddenly bereaved her of her spouse was almost forgotten. Lady Camilla never returned to her own apartments, but remained at the palazzo, struggling with a languor, occasioned more by the shock to her nerves than any depth of grief for the loss she had sustained.

The baroness's supervision was already becoming intolerable to Lady Camilla, and she would have rebelled against it if she had not known that public opinion would have been against her, if she asserted herself at such an early date. Besides, Madam Caspares was nearly related to Sir Charles Ormsby, whose image entered into all her dreams of a happy future. Her first marriage had been for money, and had ended in a disappointment, as, for want of a heir, Colonel Severn's property passed to a cousin, who had detested her. If she married again, she resolved that it should be purely for affection, and where should she find one more worthy of her love than the handsome, generous, early swayed Charles Ormsby?

For his sake she endured with his eccentric snuff, and stayed in the dull palazzo week after week, waiting till the baroness could arrange some troublesome affair, and accompany her to England.

It was in the hope of seeing him ere long that she exchanged the snug little boudoir, fitted up for her own use, for the great, dreary and badly furnished salon, in which madam received her guests, and spent her own time when at home; and it was for the same reason that she gently pressed the baroness not to exclude any one on her account, averring with truth that ere long she should feel it her duty to endure the presence of strangers, and the task would be less painful if commenced while she could shield herself under the wing of her stronger-minded friend and guardian.

Madam briskly assented. "We cannot be always grieving," she said, "it had been her own fate," she added, "to close the eyes of two excellent men, yet still she lived and found work to do that made life enjoyable. Lady Camilla must imitate her example—take up some engrossing pursuit, never mind whether it were phrenology, or the education question and school boards, or electro-biology, or travelling; it was becoming quite fashionable for ladies to travel around the world, and there was plenty of unexplored ground for females in Central Africa, for instance, or Further India. She was very much inclined to offer to accompany Lady Camilla, if she decided upon this plan for passing the year of her widowhood pleasantly and profitably.

Lady Camilla covered her face with her handkerchief to conceal her dismay at this bare mention of a scheme that would condemn her for an indefinite period to the society of a strong-minded woman, and faintly declared that in her present state of mind she could not entertain any proposal that smacked of pleasure.

However, the baroness, bidding Trixie bring her an atlas, continued to descend upon the excellence of her suggestion, and to point out different routes, so much to her own satisfaction that when a servant brought in a card, she thrust it—almost unlooked at—into the hand of Trixie.

"It is that silly youth who wants to

dedicate to me his poem. Go, child, and civilly hear what he has to say, and then make him understand that he wastes his verses on a person who detests poetry."

Not much enamored of her task, which would involve listening to twenty or thirty stanzas, and striving to seem interested in the mawkish efforts of a conceited boy, Trixie quitted the room, and descended to an apartment on the lower floor, to which Maddolena had ushered the visitor.

"Madam the baroness regrets her inability to receive monsieur this morning," she began, then paused, retreated a step, and finally stood irresolute on the threshold, for the gentleman who had advanced to meet her was not the embryo poet, but Sir Charles Ormsby. It was the first time they had ever beheld her in her true character as the dependent of his mother's eccentric relative, and her color came and went, and her heart beat almost to suffocation, as the astonished baronet, after one glance at the trim little figure in a simple black dress, relieved solely by white cuffs and ruffles, promptly extended his arms to prevent her flight if she meditated one. Not content with this, he uttered a joyful exclamation, and after calling her by two or three names in a breath—"Trixie! the gray dominot spirit! la bonne ange de ma vie!"—ended by putting his back against the door, and very plainly intimating that she was his prisoner until his curiosity was satisfied and he chose to release her.

"So," he said, with uplifted eyebrows, "so, my mysterious friend, who has more than once baffled my endeavors to trace her to her abode, actually resides under the same roof with Madam Caspares?"

"You may go a little further," she answered, composedly, "and add that your mysterious acquaintance enjoys not only the shelter of that lady's roof, but a share of her message. I told you some time since that I am a very insignificant personage."

"Yes, you did; but it was with an air and a tone that contradicted the assertion," Sir Charles interposed. "You chose to think so," was Trixie's prompt reply, "because it hurt your pride to be obliged to know that you were trifling time away with one who had no claims on your notice; but truth is truth, however mortifying, and I am only one of the baroness's orphan protégées."

"Is ma tante aware of her protégée's penchant for masquerading?" he demanded.

Trixie burst into an amused laugh. "Is it at all likely that I confess my faults and follies to my patroness? Would you? or should you care for her to hear the true and particular history of the gay domino hidden away in my trunk upstairs?"

"Then it was not at her suggestion you favored me with so many little lectures and warnings?"

"No, Sir Charles, I have not had any accomplishments. On my own head must rest all my offenses."

"Indeed!" he said, and then added, seriously; "I will never tease you on the subject again. I am only sorry that the idle, worthless fellow for whom you ran some risks is not more deserving your goodness. If ever I do turn over a new leaf, it will be because a gentle, generous woman did her best to show me the way."

"If you mean this, your next words will be 'Good-by, little girl; wish me bon voyage, for I am off to England and my ancestral home.'"

Charlie Ormsby bit his lip. "No, no; I am not prepared to do anything so magnanimous. One may see the force of a lady's arguments, and yet feel too strongly wedded to one's own bad habits to be ready to renounce them."

"True; and you began your speech with an 'I'; besides, it is better for me that it should be so. I might have grown vain of my persuasive powers if they had produced any effect upon you. But enough of this. I was sent downstairs to be civil to a caller, and I find you here, Sir Charles, in his stead. Shall I return to madam, and explain to her that she had made a mistake. Will you send any message to her by me?"

"There is no hurry," he answered. "I should first like to know—"

"Excuse me, sir; my time is not my own, but my employer's," she told him, with sudden gravity. "Unless the information you ask for relates to her, or her affairs, you must not detain me."

"(To be continued.)"

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I wish a fire would burn the school house down.  
I wish we'd have at least ten feet of snow.  
So people couldn't get around the town.  
I wish I'd get a black eye in a fight—  
I got to speak a piece to-morrow night.  
I wish I'd lose my pants or get 'em torn.  
I hope Ma cannot find my shirt or hat.  
And, having nothing decent to be worn.  
She'll say: "I cannot let you go like that!"  
But Ma will have my clothes laid out all right—  
I got to speak a piece to-morrow night.  
Some fellow can get sick and stay away.  
Sometimes the school house burns the night before.  
Bill Green once broke his leg the very day.  
He had to speak a piece, and Brother Moore.  
Tore out his Sunday pants right where he sat.  
But I don't ever have such luck as that.

Nothing I eat will make me sick to-day.  
I couldn't get a black eye if I tried.  
Ma's not my Sunday clothes all put away.  
I wish I knew a place where I could hide.  
But I'll be there, dressed up and frightened white—  
I got to speak a piece to-morrow night.

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