

LITERATURE. A CELEBRATED CASE.

CHAPTER VII. THE CHAÎNESSES.

Adrienne decidedly had not forgotten how to play with Raoul's heart. She knew that she filled it, large as it was, and she gave her caprices full swing over her quick, impetuous impulses. Raoul had refused her an expressed wish something quite new to this spoiled child, whose slightest word was law in the household. Raoul could do penance now for his firmness; he could watch his ideal from a distance, and look the admiration and love that she would not bear in words. During the remainder of his visit Adrienne devoted herself to her father's comfort. She hung around his chair, opened his papers for him, dipped his pen in the ink, and was so graceful and pretty in every attitude she assumed that Raoul rode away more 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 began 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 her extreme youth, their long separation, and the possibility that she might not be perfect another day, the more hopeless seemed his love for her. The Viscount Raoul de Langey, in spite of noble name, large estates, handsome person, and agreeable manners, felt himself unable to love the girl whose entire love he coveted. Adrienne had only grown into a larger, more beautiful Adrienne, the same lovely capricious, haughty 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. They would never interfere with their darlings' happiness. Now that she was in a position, as emancipated from school duties, to meet the numerous young gentlemen who surrounded her father and attend to his receptions, to say nothing of those whom she might see during future visits to Paris, Raoul considered his own chances of winning her woman's love as rather hanging in the balance. Of course he had been pleased—nay delighted—to see him that afternoon. True, 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 permitting him to worship at Adrienne's shrine, the duke and duchess had stipulated that Adrienne should make no promise through them. When old enough to make a choice, she should decide for herself.

Thus the affair stood. Raoul feared to lose by using too freely in his efforts for securing his treasury. 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 person would be a wonderful success. Yet, what to do? There was one resource. He could return to Paris, and in absence seek forgetfulness.

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 suspecting the cause of his non-appearance, that lady accused herself watching her daughter's moods, now as variable as the clouds floating over her imperious little head. The first day she was quite silent in regard to Raoul, but on the alert when visitors were seen approaching. The duchess also noticed that Adrienne wore pink ruffled dresses, and that she had a little knot of them in the lace on her breast. But no Raoul. O'Rourke was fully aware that his young mistress was hard to please, and disposed to find fault with him; something so small 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 threw aside her book, and took up her embroidery, but that away 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 then their eyes met, gazed, both smiling.

Adrienne evidently missed her slave. No one on her as Raoul did, and there is no doubt that the child really loves him," said the duchess. "If he does, why not let them 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's simply to test her love for him. I think your daughter would be all the happier if she never again saw Paris, but just settled down to a peaceful domestic life here in Provence, away from the excitement and scandal that disgrace our capital.

"I agree with you, Arnaud, the life that we once pictured for ourselves is possible for Raoul and Adrienne; but they should find out how 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 has not been here for two days."

"No a little quarrel, I presume, which may lead to a thorough understanding." Meanwhile, Adrienne having taken refuge in her favorite summer-house, a pretty retreat overlooking the road, was giving her whole mind to one subject—Raoul. Surely if he loved her he would come and make up his little quarrel. Never had he remained angry with her a moment longer than it took to explain his meaning and beg for pardon if he had offended her, which he never did with premeditation. Adrienne found herself recalling the old days in Paris, their merry pranks together, their frequent misunderstandings, their very rapid and very tender reconciliations. He was twenty and she thirteen when they had parted, and now she remembered how the merry boy had changed into the courteous, manly youth, her devoted knight and staunch defender, who had made her, just enter-

ing her teens, his ideal of what was lovely and charming; in whom, she thought of his kindness only with a few days, his agitation at her distress, 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 as before, 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 his disdainful indifference after his manly affections. 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 throbb 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 forgot all her woes, and hurried toward the large walled 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, Valentin going through the ceremony very gracefully, although introduced only as Valentin, one of my pupils."

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

"You call her simply Valentin," said the duchess, dropping her voice, 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 but 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, made in rich velvet and satin, like an imperial robe. She looked with fond pride at Valentin while speaking. "There is something familiar to me in her face," said the duchess. "Have I ever known her parents?"

"I cannot say. I think that you meet her mother in former years." "She has a remarkable face 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. Valentin 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, Valentin. In a few words, Adrienne is careless as to speech, but careful as to actions. Valentin is guarded in both."

"What, Henri! You here?" The marquis took the offered hand, and, bowing, pressed his lips upon it. "Yes, Marquis, only within the week. Raoul and I left Paris together." The chanoinesse explained as she presented the marquis to the duchess: "This is my godson, 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, after a few words, left him to Valentin, and turned the whole battery of her charms on Henri de Colonne. He certainly justified Raoul's encomiums as far as appearance was concerned. Tall, well formed, and singularly graceful in his bearings, he wore his beauty as he did his proud name, with apparent unconsciousness of its possession.

Attractive as Adrienne was to him, as his friend's constant theme of conversation, he found himself turning to watch Valentin's flashing 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 fairy land, with two beautiful princes waiting upon her and her darling Adrienne, would but feebly express what she was experiencing. The reality was far beyond what her waking dreams and odd knowledge of fairy lore had ever pictured. These handsome dark eyed men, strong in their manhood, equipped in costly uniforms, with swords at their sides, as if ready for war, could, with courteous words and deference in every motion, adapt their selves to the whims and fancies of two careless, fragile girls, not out of their teens, and with all grilloid charms for weapons, offensive and defensive.

"Really, a lovely garden scene," said the duke, returning, and comprehending the feelings of four of the party. "Ah, yes; sighed the chanoinesse. "We too have been young! It only comes once—the rose-colored atmosphere that makes the earth and everything upon it enchanting. Henri is the image of his father. If he also inherits his character, then he is worthy of all blessings."

"He is a fine officer and a gentleman," said the duke, with his usual decision. "Then I can feel proud of my godson," said the chanoinesse. "I congratulate you upon the relationship," said the duke, laughing at her earnestness. "Our Dama and Valentin are the model men of the regiment."

The chanoinesse looked at the people, now exploring for flowers in the distant garden, and gradually sank into a pleasant reverie. As the duchess expected and hoped, the little party returned laden with blossoms, and full of delighted plans for future amusement. A visit to Loulou was arranged for the next day, and the details were discussed until it was time for the young men to return to the city.

Adrienne was as gentle and winning as the most ardent lover could desire, and allowed Raoul to kiss the tips of her little fingers as he was leaving. The marquis bowed low in respect to Valentin's deep contempt, but their eyes were fixed on the ground. The chanoinesse observed closely, but if Valentin was in danger of loving at first sight, her features did not betray her.

She put her arm around Adrienne, and drew her along the stone terrace. "My rose, Adrienne, that you gave me in the garden, I cannot find. I put it in my lace quite safely, I assure you."

"Oh, you have dropped it in the paths; never mind about it. What do you think of my—this is of—"

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