

THE ALAMANCE GLEANER.

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SPRINGTIME

Novelized by PORTER EMERSON BROWNE From the Play of the Same Name by Booth Tarkington and Harry Leon Wilson

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Chapter 1

HE came through the mists of the morning, a slender little figure, fragile as the dew laden cobweb, delicate as the heart of a violet. Skirting the lushy edge of the bayou, she came hither the trailing moss of the oaks, following the old footpath that led to Valette. The little shafts of sunlight piercing the tangle of the great trees above her lost themselves on the tumbled masses of her gold brown hair. There was laugh



MADELEINE DE VALETTE, "DELICATE AS THE HEART OF A VIOLET." Her hair was all to do with it, she replied. "You haven't been long in this parish, father, or you would know." He lifted his hand. "Long?" he exclaimed. "My soul! I've been priest of this parish sixteen years come Easter!" "It is seventeen years since the last death in the De Valette family. That was Mlle. Madeleine's mother. She was to be the blessed saint when Mlle. Madeleine was born, the year before you came, so you do not know our custom here of Valette, father."

so carefully, so painstakingly, made for her; that she had meant to strow only a little way—a down the path that led to the broad acres that had once been of Valette ere came the clutching fingers of hard need poverty, to wrench them thence. She would tell them these things; she would explain about the butterfly. But would these things that she had meant to strow? She did not know. Her father was a strange man, a proud man, a man reserved. She loved him much. But sometimes he was strange. She did not understand. She felt far from him, very far. And Aunt Marguerite was even the shadow of her brother. And so she hurried on.

Chapter 2

IN the great room of the house of Valette, a room that once had had even the splendor of the old chateau in the Norman hills, but now thus worn, sunk into the dullness that marks decay, were they preparing to do their last deed. The candles had been obedient, faithful—yes, even to the end of his days. And for this he was to have the honor that comes to the Valettes in their going.

It was old Louise who counted the candles now for the last time, the slave that was dead. Stout, heavy featured, clad in rough gray gown and cap of spotted white, she bent over the leather box that lay upon the old table, taking therefrom the candles and counting them as she did so. And as she counted there came to the kindly old slave a look of worryment. At length she turned, hearing foot-steps. Came through the door the sister of M. de Valette. Across the summer room she came, a highborn, high bred woman of sixty, a woman of delicate, pale, gentle face and slender figure. Old Louise courted her. "You are counting the candles?" asked Mlle. de Valette. It was a question that was not a question. She went on, "My brother tolls the bell for old Christian with his own hands."

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curious custom, father. And the old tales say it led to a tragedy once. But because of that do you think that the De Valettes abandoned it? Not they! The De Valettes do not abandon custom."



GILBERT STEELE AND MADELEINE

ty, father. So he knew. And then he saw his dagger at the armpit where the breastplate does not meet the shoulder piece, reaching his heart that way. Next day the candles were for him. "Yes, Mlle. all of them." "There are sixty-three?" "The old servant paused hesitatingly. "Sixty-three?" "Mlle. I think Christian was not as old as he looked. He had to me the air of being not more than forty-four." "Which means," stated M. de Valette, "that you have but forty-four candles." "Mlle. Marguerite looks for others." "That will not do. We must have no burnt ones. Throw out those that are burnt."

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Chapter 2

SIXTY years had come and had gone since the birth of M. de Valette. They had been years of joy, years of sorrow, years of wealth, years of poverty. But alike they had failed to move him from that which he was—a De Valette. A De Valette, you must know, is a De Valette, and when one has said that one has said all. And now he stood in the doorway, tall, erect, quiet, commanding, possessing in all its fullness the innate dignity mothered of birth, feathered of pride, a spare, unbending figure dressed simply in black, with canonic stock, collar and wristbands. His hair was gray, yet his eyebrows were still in their primal black.

trothed!" De Valette smiled a little, his fingers playing with the cover of his snuffbox. "An arrangement of many years," he said. "M. Raoul de Valette is my cousin." "And," queried the priest slowly, "Madeleine adores him?" "That will be her duty when she shall know him." "She has never seen him?" De Valette replied: "This is M. de Valette's first visit here. He came late last night. They are to be presented to each other today."

Father O'Mara turned and bent to his quiet greeting. To Louise turned the master. "You have the candles for the chapel?" he asked. "Yes, Mlle. all of them." "There are sixty-three?" "The old servant paused hesitatingly. "Sixty-three?" "Mlle. I think Christian was not as old as he looked. He had to me the air of being not more than forty-four." "Which means," stated M. de Valette, "that you have but forty-four candles." "Mlle. Marguerite looks for others." "That will not do. We must have no burnt ones. Throw out those that are burnt."

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FATHER O'MARA

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TO BE CONTINUED



MADELEINE ADORES HIM!

man dressed carefully, even foppishly, with gray hair elaborately arranged and well turned calves set off with stockings of black silk. His coat was of dark, rich material, his waistcoat white with stripes of yellow, and his stock was of white silk, while his collar, cuffs and wristbands were of delicate cambric. With hand erect, chin held high, he sauntered toward them slowly, indolently. "Father O'Mara watched him closely. He was wont to read men by their faces, yet here was one that puzzled him. He was worried a little, but nothing of his features might have shown. Entering the room, M. Raoul de Valette turned to his cousin, bowing elaborately. "At your command, behold me," he said. His voice was well modulated. It was a tone that, even as his face, puzzled. De Valette turned to the priest, then back to his cousin. "M. Raoul de Valette, I have the honor to present to you Father Joseph O'Mara, abbe of this parish." Raoul acknowledged the introduction with formality, the priest with dignity. O'Mara said: "You are of the younger branch of the family, I believe, sir." "Merely the cadet," Raoul returned. "None the less of purest strain," asserted De Valette. "M. Raoul de Valette is the namesake of that other Raoul de Valette whose portrait lies yonder"—he indicated to where upon the wall rested a time dimmed figure of one—to my mind the greatest of our ancestors. Raoul threw back his head, lifting clear lined brows, with a touch of sarcasm. "Raoul—yes with respect, my cousin."

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