

THE COLONEL'S OPERA CLOAK

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The colonel's opera cloak by Christine C. Brush

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CHRISTINE C. BRUSH

**THE COLONEL'S
OPERA CLOAK**



NO NAME SERIES.

"IS THE GENTLEMAN ANONYMOUS? IS HE A GREAT UNKNOWN?"

DANIEL DERONDA.



THE

COLONEL'S OPERA CLOAK.

E. Prush, Mrs. Christine Chapin

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THE

COLONEL'S OPERA CLOAK.



INTRODUCTION.

I HAVE no hero; I have no heroine. A story without either seemed so shabby, and incomplete a thing that I looked carefully over my old men and women, my young men and maidens, not omitting the small boys.

Colonel St. John was tall and handsome, — “a perfect specimen of a Southern gentleman,” his wife said. But, having never met the Colonel, I could not make him my hero.

Mrs. St. John was handsome, slender, and languid. How she did hate the North! She was not to my fancy, so I would not have her for my heroine.

Dear little Leslie, the Colonel's niece, — I had half a mind to choose her. But she never saved a life, and never wrote a page for a magazine, not even “Lines to E. S. L.” She never attended lectures, nor revelled in “the True,

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the Good, and the Beautiful ;" and, if the truth must be told, she spelled quite indifferently.

There was Tom Douglas, the Doctor's son, who fell in love with Leslie. If he had but fallen in love with Miss Gertrude Henderson, the handsome heiress, and followed her abroad, what a hero and heroine they would have been ! In that case, what descriptions I might have given of foreign parts, — of cathedrals and of palaces ! I could have made them wander in the grand old galleries, and talk about the pictures. I should have known exactly what to say ; for haven't I a pile of my cousin's old guide-books, from which I could extract the height and width of every thing, as well as though I had taken measurements myself ? And Tom could have made love in Westminster Abbey or the Bois de Boulogne. But, dear me, he fell in love instead with that foolish, shiftless little Leslie.

If I had been satisfied with a good, noble, unselfish man, I might have chosen Pomp ; but Pomp was only a colored man, a "nigger," an old slave, who clung through thick and thin — very thin — to his master's family, and got nothing in return. Only the angels would call Pomp a hero.

Dr. Douglas would not do, of course : there was nothing romantic about the Doctor. He dosed the St. Johns among his other patients,

and got no return for the little bills he presented,—that was all. “What impudence in him to send these things!” said Mrs. St. John, when the Doctor’s collector appeared. “How these Northerners show their poor raising!”

The Doctor’s wife would not answer. Her affairs were settled thirty years ago, when, in white muslin and blue ribbons, she met the young doctor at a college commencement. Besides, she spent her time in seeing that her Tom should not become Leslie’s hero! “Leslie is a dear, sweet little girl,” she would say, in that disparaging, maternal tone well known to eldest sons; “but for a wife,—I pity the Northerner of whose home she is mistress!” Then Tom would ask, in a cheerful tone of disinterested inquiry, “Is there any Northerner who wishes to marry her?”

There was Bessie Douglas, Tom’s sister; but Bessie was not pretty enough for a heroine. It is so much easier to have a pretty heroine. No matter what silly things she may say or do, the reader does not wonder at the hero’s falling in love with her. A plain girl has to utter such brilliant things, to satisfy the public!

There was a troop of little St. Johns,—Arthur, Wilfrid, and Clarence; but they looked so much alike, and were so tangled up, wearing each other’s clothes indiscriminately, that this

small band of brothers would have filled the office of hero to overflowing.

With so many grown-up white ladies and gentlemen on hand, it would hardly have been respectful to take Pomp's grandson as hero, although his name might well have suggested the choice, — "John Jasper Jackson." Jackson was not his last name, — he had none: it was only one of his names. Jackson John Jasper, or Jasper Jackson John, answered just as well.

There was Mr. Cavello; but I knew so little of Spaniards, — I only knew Mr. Cavello, — and so little of Spanish, — only "Señor" and "San Salvador," — and so little of Spanish affairs, — only a few items about coffee and sugar plantations and cigarettes, — that I hardly felt equal to using Mr. Cavello.

But there was a being — I may call it that, because it had being — which often warmed and clothed the St. John family; which was with them by day and by night, in pleasure and in sorrow; which delivered them from dire distresses by land and sea; which neither ate their food nor spent their money; which did not smoke, nor play, nor drink, like the Colonel. This being I have chosen for my leading character. Enter