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SCHMITZ, THE ENGRAVER.

A TRUE STORY.

Professor Krahe, superintendent of the gallery of Paintings in the city of Dusseldorf on the Rhine, was seated one morning in his study, when a servant informed him that a young man wished to see him. 'Show him hither,' said the professor. Accordingly, in a few minutes a lad of seventeen or eighteen years of age was introduced by the servant into the study. Seeing the dress of his visitor to be that of a baker, the professor imagined him to have brought a bread bill, and was about to refer the matter to his lady, when something striking in the youth's countenance and manner made him hesitate until the business was announced. When apparently about to speak, however, the lad hesitated, and cast his eyes on the ground. 'What is it you want with me, my lad?' said Krahe in a kind tone. 'I have a book, sir,' replied the youth, drawing one at the same time from his breast, 'which I wish you to look at, and to—to buy, if it should please you.'

The professor took the proffered book into his hands, and found it to be an illuminated prayer book, or one ornamented, according to the ancient fashion, with a number of coloured figures and engravings. The skill of the examiner told him at once that the book was a copy of an edition which the Elector Clement Augustus of Cologne had ordered to be thrown off, and which had become very scarce and valuable. But there was more in the work before him than the professor imagined. 'Where did you procure this, my lad?' said he, to the young baker. 'It is a copy from one which was borrowed,' said the youth, looking down. 'Not an original!' said the professor, turning over the leaves again; and by whom was this copy executed?' The youth blushed modestly as he replied, 'By myself.' Krahe gazed on the lad with surprise, and then, turning to a book case, took down an original volume, of the Elector's edition, with which he compared the copy brought by the baker's boy. The difference was scarcely distinguishable.

'Young man,' exclaimed the professor, 'why do you pursue the trade which your dress betokens, when you are so well fitted to succeed in a much higher one?' The youth replied, that it was his perpetual, his dearest wish; but that his father, having a numerous family, could not afford the expense of suitable instruction. 'I knew your love of art, and this emboldened me to make an application to you, in the hope that you might purchase the copy, and honor me with your counsel and assistance.' The modesty and cultivation apparent in the young baker's manner, charmed the superintendent of paintings, and confirmed the impression made by the beautiful prayer book. 'Call on me here to-morrow, without fail,' said the professor, emphatically, grasping the youth's hand and shaking it warmly, as he led him to the door.

Early next morning, M. Krahe was on his way to the house of a friend who resided some miles from Dusseldorf. This gentleman was blessed with abundant wealth, much of which he generously expended in an enlightened patronage of the fine arts and their cultivators. Krahe knew this well, and told him the story of the baker's lad, showing him at the same time the illuminated prayer book. The gentleman was astonished and delighted with the style of the engraving. 'What can I do to assist this wonderful boy?' This was the question the professor wished and anticipated. 'Lend him two hundred crowns to continue his studies, and I have no doubt but he will become one of the most distinguished engravers of the day. And I myself will be his security for the repayment.' 'He shall have three hundred crowns,' said the gentleman, 'and I will have no security.' Pleased with his success, the Professor returned to Dusseldorf.

Young Schmitz, as the baker's lad was named, could have fallen at the feet of M. Krahe, when the latter produced the means of liberating him from the oven, and of pursuing his favourite studies. Under the professor's auspices Schmitz was soon prosecuting the science of geometry and drawing, besides storing his mind with other elements of a liberal education. For two years he continued his studies assiduously in Dusseldorf, and made such rapid progress that Professor Krahe saw the place could afford his protegee no further instruction, and advised him to proceed to Paris. Schmitz of course followed his benefactor's advice. With a letter of introduction to M. Willes, a celebrated engraver in the French metropolis, and the remainder of his well economised store of money, he took his leave for the time of Dusseldorf, leaving his love behind him, without knowing whether or not it would be taken care of till his return.

Schmitz, now a fine looking young man of twenty, accomplished

his journey to Paris in safety; but so anxious had he been to live frugally by the way, that he had done his constitution injury, and he fell ill immediately on his arrival. He got himself conveyed to a monastery, where every attention was paid to him. Incidental expenses, however, during his long continued illness, swallowed up the whole of the money upon which he depended for the commencement of his studies. When he did at last issue from the monastery, restored to health, he was penniless, and his pride, or bashfulness, or perhaps a mixture of both, forbade his making an application to Mr. Willes in the character of an indigent beggar. Poor Schmitz now wandered about the streets, musing on the unfortunate condition to which he was reduced, and ignorant in what direction to turn for his daily bread. Accident determined his course. One day he was met by two soldiers of the Swiss guard, one of whom gazed attentively at him; and exclaimed, 'Friend, are you not a German?' 'I am.' 'What quarter do you come from?' 'From the neighbourhood of Dusseldorf,' was Schmitz's reply. 'You are my countryman,' said the soldier joyfully, and then enquired into his condition. Schmitz told what had befallen him, and that as he could not think of being troublesome to or dependent upon any one, he was in want of a livelihood. The soldier advised him strongly to enlist in the guards, assuring him that he would have abundant leisure time to prosecute any studies he liked. After a little consideration, Schmitz, seeing no better course open to him, followed the soldier's advice, and enlisted for four years in the Swiss guard.

The captain who enlisted him, was struck with his appearance, and enquired into his story. This was the unexpected means of good to the new soldier; for the captain, shortly after, took him to M. Willes, and introduced him to that eminent artist. The consequence was, that every moment of leisure time which the service would permit, was spent by Schmitz in pursuing the art of engraving under M. Willes, who appreciated his talents, and was extremely kind to him. Thus did the four years of soldiership pass away, and when they were ended the young man continued two years longer to study his art. He then returned to Dusseldorf, loaded with the most honourable attestations of his skill, industry, and probity.

Professor Krahe received his protegee with open arms, being equally delighted with his mental and scientific progress, as with the improvement which a military life had made in his personal appearance. M. Krahe himself was the first to secure the professional services of Schmitz, engaging him to work in the cabinet. Every successive day, his conduct endeared him more to the professor, who acquired for him a father's affection. Two years passed away in this manner after Schmitz's return to Dusseldorf, when, one day, he was invited by the professor to an entertainment to meet a party of friends. Schmitz presented himself at the appointed hour at M. Krahe's, and found many persons assembled whom he knew, and whose friendship he had gained. Seating himself by one of these, Schmitz began to converse with him. After a little discourse, the gentleman cast his eyes to the top of the room, and whispered to the young engraver, 'How pale the professor's daughter looks! One would have thought Henrietta would have mustered a better colour for such an occasion as this.' Had the speaker at the moment turned his eye upon the party he addressed, he would have seen a face in an instant grow much paler than that which caused his remark. His words indeed had excited an extraordinary emotion in the heart of Schmitz. As soon as it subsided a little, the latter asked his friend what he alluded to, as distinguishing the occasion from others. 'What!' said the other, 'do you not know that the stranger who is now at Henrietta's right hand, has been for some years affianced to her, and he has come from his home, at a distance, to arrange the marriage? But, Schmitz; Good heavens! are you ill?' 'Yes,' muttered the artist, in a choked voice; then constraining himself into something like outward composure, he whispered, 'Assist me, for mercy's sake, to retire without observation!' They succeeded in leaving the room without notice. When they reached Schmitz's residence, the latter begged his companion to return to the company, and to mention nothing further, if his—Schmitz's—absence should be observed, than that he felt a little unwell. The gentleman, though suspicious that something lay under the matter, promised to act as the artist implored him to do.

Schmitz was left alone with his wretchedness, for very wretched he was. He had long loved the daughter of his benefactor, with a passion of which he scarcely knew the force. Though he had never dared to hope for success, and had always regarded her as far above him in every respect, yet the knowledge that she was to be united to another came like a dreadful awaking from a dream.

His eyes on this night closed not in sleep; and when he appeared in the professor's cabinet in the morning, dejection was too deeply written on his countenance to escape that gentleman's notice. 'By the bye,' said Mr. Krahe kindly, 'you were unwell last night, we were told, Schmitz. I fear you are really very ill.' The poor artist burst into tears. Startled and vexed at his condition, the professor inquired narrowly into the cause and at last the young man confessed the truth. 'Have you ever intimated to my daughter the state of your affections?' said the professor, after a pause, in which anxiety and sympathy were depicted on his features. 'Never,' answered Schmitz, with energy; 'not in the most distant manner. Could I have dared, humble as I am, to have spoken of love to the daughter of my patron and benefactor? I was contented to see her; but that satisfaction,' continued he, with a sigh, 'I will not long have now!'

The benevolent professor tried to soothe and comfort the youth, assured him of his affection—that he loved him as his own child—but counselled him to subdue his passion, as it would soon be wrong, criminal, to indulge it. Schmitz promised, and strove to obey him. But the struggle was too much for his constitution. He fell ill; and the illness was destined to be a long one. When it first attacked him, as it was impossible to conceal from Henrietta the bodily state of one who had long been her friend and companion, professor Krahe thought it best to tell her the whole truth at once, determining, if he found her now averse to fulfil the engagement, which had been entered into when she was very young, and before Schmitz's return to Dusseldorf, that he would take some means to break off the proposed match. But Henrietta heard the intelligence of the young artist's passion merely with a sigh, and rose and left her father's presence. Her father did not know exactly what to think of the symptom. When he saw her again, however, he thought he could see that she had been weeping. He then endeavoured to discover the state of her mind; but she put a stop to it by saying firmly, 'Father, I am betrothed; Schmitz,' she continued with a sigh, 'has my pity, but duty and honour—' She left the professor to conclude the sentence himself.

Henrietta's betrothed returned to his parents, and in his letters written afterwards to his mistress, he let some hints escape him that his parents now started some objection to the match. Henrietta was eagle-eyed. In an answer returned by next post, she gave her lover perfect liberty to follow his own inclinations, renouncing every claim resulting from his promise. The result was, that the gentleman accepted of the permission she gave him. No woman likes even the semblance of desertion; but we will not say, whether Henrietta felt glad or otherwise on this occasion. Suffice it to say, that on the day on which her late lover's letter came, she entered her father's study just when twilight was setting in. 'Well, my girl,' said the professor, kissing her fondly when she came in, 'I have been idling for half an hour, musing upon poor Schmitz. But I must have candles and to my writing.' So saying, he stretched his hand to the bell; but Henrietta caught it, exclaiming, 'Oh no, dear papa! it is too early for candles! You study too much, and I wish to speak with you.' 'Well, my love, won't we be still the better for lights?' 'No no,' said she, sitting down by his side. After a pause, she began, 'Papa, I know you love Schmitz.' 'I do,' said the professor, and would to heaven you could, and did love him too, Henrietta!' The young lady let her head fall on her father's shoulder, as she replied, 'I can—and do, papa! Every obstacle is removed, and Henrietta will be his, if she can promote his felicity!'

The professor read the letter which his daughter gave to him, and kissed her again and again with delight. It was not long ere the joyful father was by the side of the slowly recovering Schmitz, and informed him of the change which had occurred. The good news was like to have proved as fatal as his despair. But he recovered from his emotion, and ere long was led by his benefactor to the presence of Henrietta, one evening of whose company cheered and restored the artist to something like a new state of being.

But, on the morning following this meeting, what was the surprise of Henrietta and her father to learn that Schmitz had left the town by daylight in a carriage with four horses, taking with him all his plates and drawings! Poor Henrietta was thunderstruck—was miserable! She had now surrendered her whole heart to the artist—but he was a maniac! What else could be the meaning of his conduct? The professor himself was in terror for the reason of his friend. Meantime, day after day passed, and no letter or intelligence of any kind arrived to quiet the dreadful anxiety under which they labored. On the ninth day, however, while