

A Painted Eye

It Was Too Expressive For Its Natural Mate.

By F. A. MITCHEL

Far back in the days when the king of England claimed to be king of France, and when as a consequence the French and the English were at continual warfare, there lived on French soil in what is now the department of Mayenne a gentleman and his wife of the name of Castilleux. There was born to this couple a son who from his earliest infancy was a very beautiful child. Even when he was between one and two years old he attracted the attention of all who saw him. His most noticeable feature was a pair of large expressive eyes of heaven's own blue. In those days artists were painting pictures of the Madonna and child, and for many such studies little Gaston Castilleux served as a model.

When Gaston was fourteen years old he was out hunting one day with a party of boys, and one of his companions, seeing his brown doublet through a break in the leaves of the trees, mistook it for a deer and let fly an arrow, which struck Gaston in one of his eyes. So severe was the wound that the surgeon who attended him decided the eye must be taken out.

Great was the grief of the boy's parents at having the beauty of their son thus marred. Until the wound had healed he wore over the place where the eye had been a patch. Then his mother thought herself of providing an artificial eye for her darling. That was a time before the remarkable work in glass and pottery of the present day had been achieved, and the only way to procure a glass eye was to have the glass molded or ground in proper shape and painted. Indeed, there was an advantage in this because an artist could the better match the real eye.

Mme. Castilleux announced that she would give a prize of a thousand louis for the best coloring of a glass eye for her son. Artists were as poor in those days as they are now, and there were a great many of them competing for the public favor. Such a prize was coveted, and artists came from far and near to compete for it. There were so many of them that only those who had achieved a name were granted a sitting, for of course the object was to reproduce the real eye.

Among the throng of men who applied for permission to compete for the prize was a girl in the garb of a peasant. In those days women did not do men's work, and painting was considered a man's profession. Furthermore, the peasant girl could not claim to have achieved any reputation as an artist. Mme. Castilleux was about to send her away when Gaston came into the room where his mother was receiving candidates. Whether it was distress at the marrying of such beauty or pity for him or some other reason, the maiden gave him a look so full of sympathy that he was determined she should compete for the prize. Turning to his mother, he expressed his desire. Mme. Castilleux was much concerned at this, for she had always been careful to keep her son from falling under the influence of any woman except of high rank, since she feared a misalliance. Besides, under the coarse peasant's garb the girl wore a rare beauty. The mother took her son aside and protested against a woman, one of such low degree and of no artistic reputation, being permitted to compete for the prize, but failed to move him, and the girl was accepted as a competitor. Her name was entered on the list as Clochette Boyer, and since sittings were given in order of application and Clochette was the last accepted she was to be assigned the last sitting.

Ten artists were to compete for the prize, and Mme. Castilleux chose three experts to award the prize, reserving the right, if she differed with them, to buy the work of any other artist. Though the sittings were not usually very long, Gaston tired at having to go through the process so many times. Then, too, several artists made two or three different attempts—they were not limited in this respect—and by the time the last competitor's turn came the subject was tired out. Of the earlier efforts the first was the best. After that Gaston began to weary and showed his weariness in the eye that was serving for a model, so that every attempt showed a more worn expression than the one before. Strange to say, the ninth was the best of all. The truth is Gaston was admiring all these tiresome sittings waiting for the peasant girl to try her hand. At the ninth sitting he was happy in the thought that the strain was nearly over and at the next he would have the companionship of the girl who had given him that welcome look of sympathy.

At last Clochette appeared with her brushes and palette. The change in Gaston's expression was marvelous. He forgot his weariness; he forgot his misfortune in the loss of his eye; he forgot everything except the girl who was looking alternately from her canvas to his face. She was not unskillfully experienced in her art to call out a pleasing expression by contrasting with him on subjects that interested him, but she needed no such expedient, for he stared with her eyes and no-

ment the sitting began until it ended. And when she had finished and he looked at the result of her work he said to her:

"It is excellent, but I think you can do better. Try again tomorrow." When Mme. Castilleux was told that another sitting was to be granted the girl the next day she took fright at once, for Gaston told her that it was he who had suggested this. But Gaston had always been accustomed to having his own way, and although his mother saw plainly that her son was falling in love with a peasant girl, she could do nothing to prevent it. She began to regret that she had brought about this ill-fated competition.

At the next sitting Clochette did improve on what she had done the day before. Gaston was much pleased with the result of his suggestion and told her that he wished her to try every day until it became evident that she could do no better. When he informed his mother of this the poor woman was in despair. She had seen her son's beauty marred; now she saw him passing into an infatuation for a peasant girl. Knowing his strong will, she felt sure that a second misfortune no less to be dreaded than the first would befall him and his family.

Clochette painted a new eye every day, and every eye was better than the last. When Gaston was as much in love as it was possible for him to be there was no improvement in the work, and he told his mother that he was satisfied.

Then came the inspection of the work by the experts. Gaston was required to hold the artificial eye in turn beside his real eye, beginning with the first eye painted. As he went down the list a tired expression appeared and increased until the ninth eye was reached, which showed an expression of relief. None of the eyes was satisfactory for this reason and one other. In Gaston's eye there was no tired look to match that in the artificial eye. Indeed, not one of the painted eyes was satisfactory.

Gaston, who regarded all this as preliminary to the remarkable work done by Clochette, was impatient to show the experts what she had accomplished. Clochette was present and as eager as he for the exhibition of the eye which she and Gaston had selected to compete for the award. Gaston at last was permitted to hold the eye next his own. A singular expression came over the faces of those who looked at him. While the painted eye expressed the quintessence of love, his real eye expressed triumph. The audience began to laugh when Clochette, seeing what neither she nor Gaston had seen before, attracted his attention to herself. Instantly the real eye as well as the false one looked love.

There is no expression in the human face that is more engaging than love. For the time being at least Clochette's work was a marvelous success. The two eyes matched not only in color, but in expression. The peasant's work, therefore, was the best, and the experts had no choice but to award her the prize. What was the astonishment of all when she declined to receive it, but expressed a wish that it should be given to one of the competitors, who was starving. When Gaston found that he could not persuade her to take it herself he respected her wish, and the money was given as she had indicated.

Then Clochette withdrew. Gaston spent a month of misery trying to forget the peasant girl whom he loved, but whom it was not meet that he should marry. At last he could stand it no longer; he must at least have one more sight of her. He inquired among the neighbors as to where she lived, but none of them could inform him. Mousing his horse, he set out to look for her. He did not find her.

Now and again for weeks he went in quest of the girl he loved, always to return disappointed. One day he stopped at a chateau to ask for a little refreshment. A lady advanced to meet him who filled him with astonishment. She was Clochette.

And Clochette was as much surprised to see Gaston as he was to see her. They stood looking at each other for a time; then the girl's face broke into a smile.

"I had seen you," she explained after the first greetings, "and, having a taste for art, when I heard of the prize offered I wished to compete for it. Not wishing to do so as myself, I adopted the garb of a peasant."

"And why did you desire to help me? You would not accept the prize after you had won it?" A blush told the story far more effectively than words.

When Gaston returned to his home and announced to his mother that the peasant competitor for her prize was a lady and lived in a chateau Mme. Castilleux was as much astonished as he had been. Not only was she astonished, but relieved. She had noticed her son's dejection and believed that sooner or later he would find Clochette. Now she was not only pleased that he had found his love, but was not averse to the two making a match.

Marriage, especially in high life, in those days was arranged by the parents of the contracting parties. One day M. Castilleux drove up in his coach to the chateau of M. Laroche and asked for the hand of his daughter, whose real name was Louise, for his son Gaston. Louise had already accepted the painter, and all her father had to do was to give his consent and arrange for the settlements.

After the marriage young Mme. Castilleux painted an eye for her husband which matched his real eye under ordinary circumstances, and this eye he was obliged to make serve, for since no artificial eye can change with the expression of a real one, this eye was not perfect.

Lance Corp. W. J. Corr

Writes Home

Mrs. T. A. Corr, whose husband and two sons are in the Canadian army, recently received the following letter from her son, L. Corp. W. J. Corr, a member of the C.M.R. Somewhere in France Feb. 24, 1917

Mrs. Albert Corr, Athens, Ont.
Dear Mother—Just a few lines to let you know I am alive and quite well, trusting you are enjoying the best of health and not being lonesome. Everything is going fine over here, and the weather is very nice. We have been having considerable rain, making it a bit muddy, but of course it will soon dry up again. I like it first rate over here, in fact, much better than England if it were not for being so far away from home. This is where the women work, believe me. I never saw anything like it. They do all the work, even the threshing. Of course the threshing over here is done quite differently to the way it is done in Canada. I will give you a short description of it. First, there is a horse-power which has but one arm (one horse operating the machine). The power consists of but two cog-wheels, the drive rod being underground and running jack inside or under barn. The machine is a small affair, about the size of a circular saw frame and built very much the same way. The cylinder is set into the frame near one end, the other end being the table. The grain (in bundles or rather sheaves bound by hand) is laid on the table crosswise, the butts being held in the hands allowing but the heads to pass through the cylinder, each sheaf being put through three or four times, the grain falling on the floor. The straw is then bound up again in sheaves and stored away until wanted for use. There, that is about all there is to it.

It is about time to have supper, so will have to close. I am going to write to Dad to-morrow if nothing happens. Now Mother, do not worry about me for I will be all O.K. I am not afraid (for what is the use) and I hope to get a German or two before the war is over. And when the order comes of "over the top," I bet it will not take me long to get over. Everything is in God's hands, and it rests with Him whether I am to come through or not, so for my sake, do not worry. Please remember me to all.

Your loving son,
JACK

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The Sicilian and Italian banks which border the strait of Messina for nearly twenty-five miles to the east and west are among the most luxuriant to be found in a cruise of the Mediterranean. Magnificent golden groves of lemon and orange and orchards of pomegranate, with their brilliant red fruit, contrast wonderfully with the flowers of the almond trees which perfume the whole region.

The strait is entered from the Tyrrhenian sea, on the north, at the narrowest point, the distance between Punta del Faro, on the Sicilian shore, and the mainland lighthouse on Punta Pezzo being not more than two miles. The whole of the Calabrian coast is thickly sown with villages, some clinging to the beach, while others clamber up the sides of well wooded hills which culminate in the towering Montalto, rising to an elevation of more than a mile above the sea. Beyond the strait to the southwest looms ever threatening Etna, the highest volcano in Europe.

The most important city situated on the strait is the once magnificent seaport of Messina, which boasted a population of 150,000 inhabitants before "the world's most cruel earthquake" of Dec. 28, 1908, tossed nearly 100,000 lives away.

The harbor of Messina is the largest and safest in the kingdom of Italy, with a depth of more than thirty fathoms. Before the great calamity it was visited annually by more than 5,000 vessels, which brought cargoes of wheat, cotton, wool and hardware and took away in exchange lemons, oranges, almonds, wines, olive oil and silks. Much of its commerce was and still is carried on with the mainland of the kingdom by means of a ferry line to Villa San Giovanni, only four and a half miles away, while Reggio, the chief seaport on the Italian side of the strait and also the chief earthquake sufferer next to Messina, is ten miles to the southeast. Ferryboats ply between these points too. Scilla, Fare, Catona, Pellaro, Scallita and Galati are minor towns on the shores of the strait.

Homer did not accord a definite habitation for his terrible sea creatures, Scylla and Charybdis, but mariners familiar with the perils of the rocks on the Italian side of the strait and with the strong eddies near the harbor of Messina saw in the mythical monsters an explanation of such dangers. Scylla was supposed to be a horrible creature with six heads and a dozen feet, who barked like a dog. She dwelt in a lofty cave, from which she rushed whenever a ship tried to pass beneath, and she would snatch the unlucky seamen from the rigging or as they stood at the helm endeavoring to guide their vessels through the perilous passage. Charybdis dwelt under a rock only a bowshot away, on the opposite shore. The second creature sucked in and blew out sea water three times a day, and woe to the ship caught in the maelstrom of its mouth!

Poets who came after the great Greek bard embroidered the legend to suit their fancy. Ovid, for example, described Scylla as the beautiful daughter of a sea god who incurred the jealousy of one of the immortals and who was changed into a sea monster. A second transformation made her a rock perilous to navigators. Some poets described Charybdis as an old woman who seized and devoured the cattle of Hercules, and in punishment for this act the demigod's father, all powerful Zeus, cast her into the sea, where her appetite persisted, but her tastes changed from cattle to ships and seamen.—National Geographic Society Bulletin.

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