

The Northwest Review.

"AD MAJOREM DEI GLORIAM."

VOL. 2.

WINNIPEG, MANITOBA, SATURDAY, MARCH 27, 1886.

NO. 13.

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THE ART OF PHOTOGRAPHY.

BY POPE LEO XIII

See penciled by the sun.
The portrait true upright.
Depicting every lineament
Of brow, and face, and eyes.
O wondrous bower and skill!
Creation new, divine!
Apelles could not limn
A work surpassing thine.

THE POOR GENTLEMAN.

CHAPTER IV

As the usual hour of Gustave's visit approached next day, De Vlierbeck's heart beat high with hope; and when the visitor appeared, clad with unusual neatness and care, the old gentleman welcomed him with more than ordinary warmth. After the compliments of the day had been paid to his lady love, Gustave expressed a desire for a few moments conversation with her father, who led him into an adjoining cabinet and seated himself by his side.

"What is it you wish of me, my young friend?" said he, kindly.

Gustave was silent for a moment, as if endeavoring to rally his ideas, and then speak out in a manly way:—

"I am about, my dear sir, to speak to you in regard to a matter that concerns my happiness; and, no matter what may be your decision, I am sure, from your kindness upon all occasions, that you will pardon my boldness. I can hardly imagine that the feeling—the irresistible feeling—I have entertained for Lenora from the first moment I saw her, has escaped your penetrating eye. I ought probably to have asked your consent long ago, before she obtained so complete a dominion over my heart; but I have always secretly encouraged the belief that you read my soul and were not displeased with my motives."

Gustave was silent, awaiting the hoped for words of encouragement; but Vlierbeck only looked at him with a gentle smile, and gave no other indication of his pleasure. A motion of the hand, as if he wished the lover to go on with his conversation, was the only sign he made in reply.

Gustave's resolution began to ebb at this discouraging by-play; but, summoning all his energy for another attack, he continued:—

"Yes, sir, I have loved Lenora from my first sight of her; but what was then a spark is now a flame. Don't think it is her loveliness alone that bewitched me. She might indeed enchant the most insensible of mankind; but I found a far more glorious treasure in the angelic heart of your daughter. Her virtue, the immaculate purity of her soul, her gentle and magnanimous sentiments,—in a word, the prodigal gifts of mind and body which God has lavished on her,—have increased my admiration to love my love to absolute idolatry! How dare I conceal my emotion from you any longer; I cannot live without Lenora; the very thought of even a short temporary separation from her overwhelms me with despair. I long to be with her every day, every hour; I long to hear her voice and read my happiness in her eloquent eyes; I know not what may be your decision; but, believe me, if it shall be adverse to my hopes, I shall not long survive the blow. If your decree separate me from my beloved Lenora, life will no longer have a charm for me!"

Gustave uttered his romantic rhapsody the rhapsody of most lovers—with that genuine emotion which bespoke his sincerity, and touched the heart of De Vlierbeck so deeply that he grasped his hand and implored him to be calm.

"Don't tremble so, my young friend," said the old gentleman. "I know very well that you love Lenora, and that she is not insensible to your affection for her. But what have you to propose to me?"

Gustave replied, dejectedly:—"If I still doubt your approval, after all the marks of esteem you have given me, it is because I fear you do not consider me worthy the happiness I have sought. I have no ancestral tree whose roots are buried in the past; the good deeds of my forefathers do not shine in history; the

blood that runs in my veins comes from a common stock."

"Do not think," said De Vlierbeck, interrupting him, "that I was ignorant of all this from the first day of our acquaintance? No, Gustave; no matter what your lineage may be, your own heart is generous [and noble; and, had it not been so, I would never have esteemed and treated you as my son."

"And so," exclaimed Gustave, catching at the last words with a burst of joyous impatience, "you do not refuse me Lenora's hand?—you will interpose no objection, provided my uncle gives his consent?"

"No," replied De Vlierbeck: "I shall not refuse it to you. On the contrary, it will give me unbounded happiness to intrust the fate of my only child in your keeping. And yet there is an obstacle of what you have no idea."

"An obstacle!" exclaimed Gustave, growing pale;—"an obstacle between Lenora and me!"

"Be silent a moment," said De Vlierbeck, "and listen to the explanation I shall give you. You think, Gustave, I suppose, that Grinselhof and all its dependencies belongs to me? It is not so we are penniless. We are poorer far than the peasants who rent our farming lands and lives yonder at the gate!"

Gustave looked doubtfully at De Vlierbeck, with so incredulous a smile that the poor gentleman blushed and trembled like an aspen.

"I see you do not believe me," continued he; "I see in your smile and look like the rest of them, you think me a miser, hiding my wealth and starving my child and myself to amass riches,—a wretch who sacrifices every thing for money,—a vagabond whom all ought to fear and despise!"

"Oh, pardon me, pardon me, sir!" interrupted Gustave, moved by the excitement of the old man. "I think nothing of the kind? My veneration for you is unbounded!"

"Nay, don't be frightened at my words young man," continued De Vlierbeck, in a calmer tone. "I make no accusations against you, Gustave. I only saw in your incredulous smile that I had succeeded in masking my poverty even from you and in making you suppose that my economy was avarice. But it is needless for me to give you any further explanation just now. Let it suffice you to know that what I say is strictly, honestly true. I possess nothing,—nothing!"

"And now," added he, after a moment's silence on both sides, "let me give you a piece of advice. Go home to-day without seeing Lenora; examine your soul calmly, and see whether there are no secret emotions that may make you change your present views; let a night pass, and if, to-morrow, Lenora, poor as you now know her to be, is still dear to you,—if you still think you can be happy with her and can make her happy,—seek your uncle and ask his consent. Here is my hand: if the day shall ever come when I can offer it as a father's, it will be the happiest of my life!"

Although the revelation made by Monsieur De Vlierbeck was astonishing to Gustave, the solemn tone in which he announced it convinced the lover of its truth. He was silent for a moment; but soon a spark of enthusiasm began to glisten in his eye and light up in his face as he exclaimed,—

"How can you ask me if I shall continue to love Lenora now that I know her to be poor? It will be happiness enough for me to receive her as a wife to be bound to her by the eternal bonds of love, to be for ever within reach, and to receive my happiness from her look and voice? What delight it will be for me to protect her and know that I have the privilege of working for her! Palace or hovel; riches or poverty, all are equally indifferent to me, provided her presence animates the spot! A night's reflection Monsieur De Vlierbeck cannot change my resolution. Grant me Lenora's hand and I will thank you on my knees for the priceless gift!"

"And suppose I do," replied the old gentleman; "generosity and constancy are natural to the ardent character of youth:—but your uncle?,"

"My uncle!" murmured Gustave with evident grief; that is true; I need his

consent. All I possess or ever shall possess in the world depends upon his affection for me. I am the orphan son of his brother. He adopted me as his child and has overwhelmed me with kindness. He has the right to decide my lot in life and I must obey him.

And do you think that he, a merchant, who probably places a very high value on money because experience has taught him its value will say like you, Palace or hovel, poverty or wealth, it makes no difference?

"Alas! I know not Monsieur De Vlierbeck," said Gustave, droopingly. "But my uncle is so good to me—so extraordinarily good—that I may rightly hope for his consent. He will return tomorrow. When I embrace him I will declare all my wishes. I will say my comfort, my happiness, my life, depend on his consent. I know that he loves Lenora sincerely; for, before his departure, he even seemed to encourage my pretensions to her hand. Your disclosures will undoubtedly surprise him; but my prayers will conquer; believe it!"

Monsieur De Vlierbeck rose to put an end to the conversation.

Well, ask your uncle's consent said he; "and if your hopes are realized, let him come here and consult about the marriage. Whatever may be the issue of this affair, Gustave, you at least have always behaved towards us with the delicacy of a generous youth. My esteem and friendship shall always be yours. Go now, quit Grinselhof this time without seeing Lenora, for you ought not to meet her until this affair is settled. I will tell myself whatever I think proper for her to know."

Half pleased half sad,—his heart divided between joy and anxiety—Gustave bade farewell to Lenora's father and returned to Echelpoel.

CHAPTER V

On the afternoon of the following day Monsieur De Vlierbeck was seated in his parlor, his head resting on his hand. He seemed plunged in profound thought, for his eyes were fixed on vacancy and his face exhibited by turns contentment and hope, inquietude and anxiety.

Occasionally Lenora came into the apartment, and seeming unusually restless, wandered about from spot to spot, arranging and rearranging the little fancy articles upon the tables, looking out of the window into the garden, and at last running down—stairs suddenly as if she were pursued. No one who saw her could doubt that she was nervously anxious about something; yet her expression was of joy and hope. Had she been able to penetrate her father's mind and behold the various emotions that excited it, she would not perhaps have been so gay and blithesome; but poor De Vlierbeck restrained himself with his habitual care in her presence, and smiled at her impatience as he too were confident of approaching happiness.

At length, tired of running about, Lenora seated herself by her father and fixed her clear and questioning gaze on his face.

"Don't be so excited, my good child," said he. "We shall know nothing to-day; but we may perhaps, to-morrow. Moderate your joy, my daughter; if it please Heaven to decide against your hope in this matter your grief will be more easily conquered."

"Oh, no, father!" stammered Lenora "God will grant my prayer; I feel it in my heart. Don't be astonished father, that I am full of joy, for I think I see Gustave speaking to his uncle. I hear what he says and Monsieur Denecker's replies; I see him embrace Gustave and give his consent! Who can doubt father, that I ought to hope, when I know that Monsieur Denecker loved me and was always kind?"

"Would you be very happy, Lenora," asked De Vlierbeck with a smile "if Gustave were betrothed to you?"

"Never to leave him!" cried Lenora—"to love him—to be the happiness of his life, his consolation, his joy—to enliven the solitude of Grinselhof by our love!—ah! that father would be delight indeed; for then there would be three of us to contribute to the pleasures of your life? Gustave would have more skill than I to chase away the grief that

sometimes cloud your brow; you could walk, talk, or hunt with him; he would venerate and love you as a son and watch you with the tenderest care; his only thought on earth would be to make you happy, because he knows that your happiness is mine; and I—father, will recompense him for his devotion by the gratitude of my heart, and love. Oh yes, dear father! we shall live together in a paradise of contentment!"

"Ingenious girl!" exclaimed De Vlierbeck, with a sigh "may the Lord hear your prayer! But the world, my child, is governed by laws and customs of which you are altogether ignorant. A wife must follow her husband wherever he goes. If Gustave shall select another residence you must follow him and console yourself gradually at the separation from your father. Under other circumstances, parting might be painful; but solitude will not sadden me if I know you are happy, my child."

The startled maiden looked at her father with surprise as he uttered these words; and as he finished, her head fell heavily on her breast and tears streamed silently from her eyes. Monsieur De Vlierbeck took her hand tenderly as he said, in faltering words,—

"I feared, Lenora that I would make you sad; but you must become accustomed to the idea of our separation."

Lenora raised her head quickly as she replied in a firm and resolute manner "What! could Gustave ever think of our separation? To leave you at Grinselhof passing your days in seclusion while I and my husband were in the world in the midst of festivity? I should not have an instant's rest, wherever I might be; conscience would cry aloud in my heart, 'Ungrateful and insensible child, thy father is abandoned to suffering and solitude.' Yes I love Gustave; he is dearer to me than life itself, and I receive his hand as a blessing from God; but if he should say to me, 'Abandon your father!—if he lift me no choice except you or him,—I would close my eyes and reject him! I should be sad; I should suffer; perhaps even I should die; but, father dear, I would die in your arms!'"

She bent down her head for a moment as if oppressed by a dreadful thought; but, raising her large eyes, liquid with tears, she fixed them on her father, as she added,—

"You doubt Gustave's affection for you; you imagine him capable of filling your life with sorrow,—of separating me from you. Oh father, you do not know him; you do not know how much he respects and loves you; you do not comprehend the warmth of his generous heart!" De Vlierbeck bent over his child and impressed a kiss on her forehead, as he was about to utter some words of consolation, when suddenly Lenora sprang from his arms and pointed eagerly to the window, as if listening to approaching sounds.

The noise of wheels and the clatter of horses on the road soon gave Monsieur De Vlierbeck to understand why his daughter had been so startled. His face assumed a more animated expression, and descending hurriedly, he reached the door as Monsieur Denecker alighted from his coach.

The merchant seemed in exceedingly good humour; he grasped De Vlierbeck's hand, expressing his delight at seeing him once more. "How goes it with you my old friend, it seems that rogue, my nephew, has taken advantage of my absence." And, although De Vlierbeck ushered him into the saloon with all the formality imaginable, Denecker slapped him familiarly on the shoulder, and continued,—

"Well, Well! we were good friends from the beginning; and now I understand we are to be regular gossips:—at least I hope so. That scamp hasn't had taste, I must confess. He would have to make a long search before he found a handsomer or more amiable woman than Lenora. Look you, Monsieur De Vlierbeck, we must have a wedding frolic that people will talk of twenty years hence."

Adversity does not take from us true friends; it only dispels those who pretend to be such.