

could do. What are you doing, Holford? Keep the attitude."

"If you please, sir," said the model, suddenly gripping the calf of his leg with a hideous grimace, "I can't stand this more than ten minutes at a time. It gives me the pins and needles."

Here the model coolly sat down on the edge of the platform, and began to chate coquettishly his well-shaped leg.

The students, with many growls, groans, sighs, and violent mutterings, laid down their brushes and pushed back their easels, as the two models relapsed into prosaic attitudes, and drank the beer brought for them with much gusto. All heads erect turned now to see who the visitors were, and to discuss art in general.

Among them, in the front row nearest the railing, sat a little precise old man, with rather a large bald head. He was a trimly dressed old person, in a coat that was rather short in the arms; and he was also remarkable for high, sharp shirt collars, and a large square gilt eye glass hanging round his neck like an order, and supported by a broad black ribbon of watered silk. This old gentleman, who seemed rather a butt of the younger students, to judge by various whispers and titters, painstakingly collected his pencils, charcoal, porte-crayon, and pen-knife from the vacant stool next him, as he rose and folded together the sketching block on which he had been drawing in pen and ink, and, rising to go, stepped over the low railing.

"What, are you off, Mr. Joddrell?" said Brathwaite. "That is unusual. Why, what is going to happen, sir—an earthquake?"

"No, Mr. Brathwaite," said the quiet old enthusiast; "but I don't feel very well; the heat is too much for me, I think; so I'm going down to do some anatomy in the gallery, or perhaps I'll just throw off a sketch of the Clyde."

"Here are two old friends of yours, Mr. Joddrell," said Mr. Brathwaite, "who have just been asking after you, and want to see your great picture, of which they have heard so much." Old B., as he spoke, waved his hand proudly towards Tollemache and Garrod, and mentioned their names and titles in a loud voice, in order to impress the students.

Old Joddrell looked up through his enormous gilt eye glass, and slowly came to a memory of the visitors' names. Then his face brightened.

"Why, goodness gracious!" he cried; "it is not—it is not—yes, it is—what, Garrod and Tollemache? and how grown to be sure! Did you ever see such a study of flesh! Even Mr. B. is astonished and delighted."

"Will you allow me to see what you have done, Mr. Joddrell?" said Tollemache politely; for the uncle of such a niece demanded respect.

"Certainly, sir," said Joddrell, opening his little portfolio, and producing a coarse, off-hand, but tolerably vigorous sketch in pen and ink.

"It is in the manner of my old friend Stothard. I never remove the pen from the paper when I once begin. I get four of these done at a sitting; about half an hour each. It is a plane of mine for getting a rapid *coup d'œil*."

"Most spirited," said Tollemache. "Full of go," said Garrod quietly, but with no especial enthusiasm; for the sketches were careless, far too hasty, and, indeed, altogether wanting in individuality and detail, which Joddrell deemed unsuited to the "grand and large style."

"My friend here improves every year," said Mr. Brathwaite grandly; "every year he attains new power in his drawing, more ease, a more decided manner."

Old Joddrell looked up at his patron with a veneration and gratitude that was touching in its very humility.

"You must all come down and take a glass of wine with me; we'll talk shop," said Mr. Brathwaite, "and look over some Turner drawings I've had lent me by Mr. Munro: such gems—jewels, sir! jewels of the very first water."

As the party descended the stairs, old Joddrell halted for a moment at a peculiarly liquorice-colored sketch. It was a mass of dusty brown, from which emerged a coarse goggling face, with a ruff round the neck as large as a cart-wheel.

"Rembrandt all over," said the enthusiast, tossing his hand vaguely over the treacherous face; "cavernous gloom: flashing torch-light."

A vain smile passed over old B.'s face as he rubbed his chin complacently. "Yes," said he, "my dear old master used to say I had the true Rembrandt temperament,—sunshine and gloom. But come along, *mes comrades*; once more unto the breach, dear friends; come and taste the brown sherry my old friend Baron Ben Adler sent me last week."

Old B. literally flourished the baron with the Jewish name over the heads of his auditors.

The little spare room—old B.'s special den—where the party now sat was a queer little place, with a burnt brown ceiling, and was hung with drawings of persons half flayed, and ostentatiously displaying the muscular anatomy of their legs and arms. The foot of Madame Vestris, the arm of Thurtell, the hand of Lucrezia Borgia, were among the disjointed casts hanging round the walls; old dusty costumes, dry seaweeds, shells, and stuffed birds, crowded every corner, and lumbered the very mantel-piece.

The Turner drawings were exhibited; one of the Lorelei Rock attracted special attention. The sky wore the pure, crystalline primrose color of an autumn evening; while a purple mist diffused itself round the Syren Rock and

over the river, on which a light sparkled from a boat. It was a scene from fairy-land.

"Ha, Mr. B.," said Joddrell, turning to a rather bituminous head after Etty, "why don't you exhibit this? Why deprive the world of such treat as this?"

Mr. B. turned his big thumb ring round angrily. "No," he said, "never. I repay scorn with scorn. After my death, these pictures will go to the National Gallery to disgrace the ignorant academicians who have rejected my works."

"Bravo! bravo!" said old Joddrell, clapping his hands; "and I, too, shall have my revenge when I finish my magnum opus, the dream of my life. Now it is so nearly finished, I think, my dear friend, I am justified—am I not?—in calling it the *accomplished* dream of my life."

"Certainly, certainly," said Mr. B., patronizingly.

They had again wandered into the hall, to examine a study after Jordaens, by Etty, a rosy brown sketch, but beautiful in color as autumn fruit, when there came a little quick knock at the door.

Tollemache, who was next it, instantly opened it. To his delight, but rather to his confusion it proved to be Miss Rose Joddrell.

He bowed. She apologized with a pretty confusion for troubling him, though no apology was requisite. She looked so gentle and pretty; her cheeks, naturally pale, warm with walking, and her eyes expressing surprise and anxiety at her uncle's idleness.

"Miss Joddrell," said Mr. B., in the high-born cavalier manner, "allow me to introduce to you two distinguished Associates of the Royal Academy,—Mr. Horace Garrod and Mr. Robert Tollemache."

If Venus ever courted, she certainly courted like Miss Rose Joddrell, thought Tollemache, and he blushed slightly as the thought entered his mind.

"Why, dear uncle," Rose said, running and taking the hand of the old artist, "why ain't you at work? Why, uncle never misses the full time, does he, Mr. Brathwaite? and I wanted only a quarter to nine as I came past the Princess Theater."

"I don't feel very well, my dear. The heat was so great, and I fell rather giddy. I've been working too hard lately, Rose. My head is not quite the thing; but I'm rather better since I took some wine."

"You mustn't work so, uncle. Mr. Brathwaite, don't let him work so hard. He never comes and plays whist now with us in Guildford Street."

"Miss Joddrell, you must know, is no mean artist," said Brathwaite, taking a portfolio from an open press. "I really hope, in time, that she will go near to equal Miss Mutrie. Look, here are azaleas, fleshy and waxy; here are roses, soft as setib, you long to ruffle them open; they seem to expand as you look."

"Oh, now you flatter me, you spoil me, Mr. Brathwaite," said the blushing artist.

But Tollemache gallantly confirmed his old master's opinion, and so did Garrod, in his dry, cynical way.

By a most fortunate coincidence, then the two friends discovered that they and Mr. Joddrell and his daughter went home in the same direction, as old Joddrell had chambers in Gray's Inn Square, and Garrod and Tollemache were engaged to a call party in Lincoln's Inn.

Garrod, with a wicked smile, conveyed old Joddrell, while Tollemache followed with Rose, who seemed by no means displeased at the order of the march.

It was a clear moonlight night, and the stars were out in all their mystic jewelry; Orion was watching Holborn, and Charles driving his stellar wain through the blue air above Smithfield.

Joddrell grew enthusiastic upon art, while Tollemache's talk was more remarkable for expression and quiet fervor than depth or especial appositeness.

"Yes, Garrod," said Joddrell, waving his hand at the constellation of Orion, as if he was a personal enemy,—"yes, sir, I tell you, the time is come when the final laws of art will soon be discovered, when we shall be able to teach every boy the rules of the divine Raphael, and to discourse with even savages in pictorial, the universal language, sir, will be a pictorial one. History, religion, must be taught by pictures; civilization will receive his last great impetus, sir, from our art; and if I can but help forward this great work by that one picture—the work of my life—I shall feel, sir, on my death bed that I have not lived in vain. But here, sir, is our turning; I must leave you Rose, my dear."

"The old duffer," thought Garrod, "why he can't paint a bit."

Tollemache's last remark before they reached Theobald's Road, where they separated, may perhaps serve to show what the conversation between himself and Rose had been.

"I shall never forget this evening, Miss Joddrell," he said, looking up starward, "never; it shall be a red-letter day forever—forever in my calendar. How grateful I am for the good fortune that has enabled me to make the acquaintance of my old friend's fairest pupil!"

"I am happy, too, that—" began Miss Joddrell, somewhat hesitating in the words.

"Rose."

"Yes, uncle dear?"

"We must turn here. I have just promised Garrod, Rose, as an old friend, to waive my long-standing objections, and show my magnum opus to him, my dear old master, and Mr. Tollemache, if he will honor me with a visit next

Friday, at six, if that will suit you all. It's Number Two."

Tollemache was only too happy; he was overjoyed. Rose stood lost in wonder at her uncle's invitation. She was rather glad there was no lamp where they stood, and that her face could be seen. Then there was a general hand-shaking. Rose was rather nervous, considering the form was one so simple and of such every-day occurrence.

When Joddrell and his charming niece were well out of hearing, Garrod stopped, bit the tip off his cigar, spit it out spitefully, looked scornfully up the street, and said,—

"That is a monstrous old humbug, and I mad as a march hare on his one topic."

"But not without some touch of genius," said Tollemache; "and that dear little niece of his atones for his faults. We'll go."

"Genius be hanged. Tollemache, it's a case with you, I can see."

"Oh, nonsense!" said Tollemache, but a tell-tale red mounted to his very forehead.

#### THE MAGNUM OPUS.

#### II.

The Friday arrived, and at six o'clock precisely old B., Miss Joddrell and her aunt, and Messrs. Garrod and Tollemache passed through the gateway of Gray's Inn, and entered the murky "barraek square." It was a dull November evening, and a chill white fog lurked about the corners of the enclosure and loomed in the obscure doorways. The moon shone with a sickly lantern light, and yielded no omens of good.

Rose was in the highest spirits, and tripped gayly before the rest, happy as a child; and whenever she turned and smiled, it seemed to the infatuated Tollemache that she smiled only for him.

"He has never shown any one the great picture yet," she said, "has he, aunty?—not even to our dear friend here. This is the door, Mr. B.; it is the third floor back, such a large nice room."

Number Two was a house in the south-west corner; it seemed trying to hide itself in that dismal corner, and its old dusty, cumbrous staircase looked very black, sordid, and open to the weather.

They all mounted to the third floor, Rose tripping before them, till they reached a large black door, which was ajar. The moment Rose touched it, open it flew, and old Joddrell appeared in full evening dress,—huge collars, bunch of seals, frilled shirt, light pantaloons,—the fashion of forty years ago.

"Welcome, welcome, gentlemen," he said "How are you, my dear Rose? bringing sunshine with you as usual; and my dear sister Fanny, too; and all to celebrate my victory. Happy day for art, and for me, happiness for a future age. To-night I feel rewarded for years of toil and care. Welcome, gentlemen; and last but not least welcome, you, my dear old master."

The old artist was in that state of nervous excitement in which the feeling cannot be restrained. His thin gray hair way tumbled, his eyes sparkled, his face glowed with a feverish color, his breath came in short quick gasps. Rose's eyes expanded with surprise at her uncle's manner.

The three artists, silent, but full of curiosity, were all this time foraging about the huge, dusty, ill-lit room, examining the huge Rubens-like sketches—daring, but careless and confused—that tapestried the walls. All at once Mr. Brathwaite stopped like a painter before a study of a female figure almost as large as life, the head crowned, the body semi-nude. It was a Cleopatra, and the artist had thrown a certain coarse, barbaric grandeur over the features.

"This is a fine thing, Joddrell; but it wants a something—Here he moved his hand generally over the picture.

"Oh, don't stop to look at that—that is a mere study of a pose—it is worth nothing. What you see, gentlemen, around the room are my twenty years' errors."

"I don't know. I call them very fine things," said Garrod, shrugging his shoulders at Tollemache, who was handing chairs to Rose and her aunt.

"Vigorous drawing, grand chiaro-oscuro," said Mr. B., settling the question forever. There's no two words about it, sir; you have the making of a great painter in you, and so I always said. Ha! young men, I too might have done something if the Academy had but done me justice. Dear old Etty used to say I should be a second Velasquez, with a dash of Rembrandt. Now then, Joddrell, for the great picture."

"Yes, the picture—the picture, dear uncle," said Rose.

Old Joddrell stood before a huge mahogany easel, which had a wheel to raise and lower its rack. He held in one hand the corner of a long green serge curtain, that covered a large picture which stood upon it.

"I have aimed, gentleman, in this picture of 'Venus Rising from the Sea,' at a perfect combination of color and drawing. They have been too long divorced. We see the skeleton severe in its mathematical laws. We see, also, the beauty of the flesh that covers it. In its rosy atmosphere, my figure floats as fish do in water. The contour, you will say, is perfect. It is finished, but I can look at it now with pride. For ten years I have studied the effects of light. The hair is sunshine fixed and rendered eternal. The flesh sometimes seems to me almost to breathe.

Some day, I know, she will rise and leave me. I thank the source of all good," said the enthusiast, tears springing from his eyes, as he clasped his hands, and looked solemnly upwards, "for granting me power to create a form of such perfect beauty."

As he said this, Mr. Joddrell slowly drew aside the curtain that hid his picture. To the surprise, astonishment, and almost horror of the spectators, there was nothing to be seen but a chaos of mingling colors, blending tones, slurred tints, with a dreamy form here and there looming as from a fog. Here and there, grotesque lines shut in this prismatic mist. In one corner there peeped forth from a gray tressort a delicious foot—a living foot—the torso of a Venus in Parisian marble. It seem emerging from the debris of a burnt city.

Rose and her mother sat trembling, and with eyes fixed with dismay on the insane picture, that some slow and progressive destruction had effaced and turned to Bedlam confusion, as the artist's brain had slowly become impaired.

Mr. Brathwaite stood before the picture silent, his right hand covering his mouth, his hat drawn over his eyes. As for Garrod and Tollemache, they could hardly believe their senses. They had fallen on their knees, and were examining the canvas at various elevations and from various angles, to see if the light had not in some way neutralised the effects.

Joddrell watched their movements with delight. "Yes," said he, "examine it. It is new Roman canvas; look at the nails and the stretcher; feel the texture at the back. It is not a real woman; it is only paint."

Then the crazed man chuckled with delight at the astonishment his work had produced.

"He is poking fun at us," whispered Garrod; "but there is a woman buried somewhere underneath," pointing to the innumerable coats of color that lay like a perfect hide upon the canvas.

Old B. said nothing. He was pained at the disclosure of the decay of mind in his old pupil, but the younger men turned to Joddrell to try and understand what produced his apparently insane ecstasies.

"This is in good faith!" said Garrod in his queer way.

"Faith! Yes. One must have faith in art. One must live years in imprisonment with one's work before one can produce such a creation; and all done with these brushes that I am showing you. Some of these shadows have cost me years of work. Look at this soft gray light under the eyes. Observe it in nature; it seems almost untranslatable. Can you not imagine the incredible labor such an effect has taken me to produce? Remark, my dear Brathwaite how the contour is lost and found by turns. That idea I took from Raphael, but I have carried it further than he ever did. The bosom, too, is a *chef d'œuvre*. You see I've loaded the high lights with empasto till I have caught the real light, as the flesh would in nature. By incessant work I have totally effaced the grain and texture of the paint; and bathing the contour in half tint, I have removed all traces of art, and given it the very roundness of nature. Look closer, Mr. Tollemache; it does not do at a distance. There, look, look, look; it is most remarkable."

Joddrell pointed as he spoke with the end of his maul-tick to a vein of pure, unbroken color, that stood out like an oasis in the midst of the prismatic desert.

Brathwaite still remained silent. Tollemache nudged Garrod unobserved, and replied, from very compassion,—

"Mr. Joddrell is a poet as well as a painter. This work must revolutionize art. What hours of enjoyment you must have spent, sir, over this dream of yours! No wonder the picture has grown dear to you."

The old man was so absorbed in the contemplation of his picture, and in lighting two more moderator lamps to throw fresh lustre on the *chef d'œuvre*, that he could not hear Tollemache's remarks.

"What's the use, Tollemache?" said Garrod, rubbing the picture with a wetted finger; "sooner or later he must perceive there is nothing on the canvas."

The old man's senses suddenly awoke.

"What do I hear? Nothing on my canvas?" he said, looking steadily at the two artists and then at his picture. "What did you come here for? Do you dare to tell me I am stark staring mad? Can't I see it there? Queen of all possible beauty—nothing! What, after ten years of work, you come here, then, to make a fool of me? You mean, I suppose, that I have in parts overworked the picture, that I have spoiled it! Come, Mr. Garrod, tell me in what way you think I have injured the *tout ensemble*!"

Garrod's cynical face screwed up to a perfect knot as he rubbed his peaked beard in a puzzled sort of way. The anxiety visible on the white face of the old man was so cruel and so agonizing, and he dared not reply for a moment. Then he lifted the green curtain that had again fallen over the picture, and said,—

"Look; judge for yourself."

The old man looked, and a smile of ecstasy passed over his features as he frowned at Garrod and turned entreatingly to Mr. Brathwaite.

"My dear old master," he said, taking his hand with almost piteous entreaty, "it is for you to disprove these envious slanders, and not let them mock me. You are my old friend, the friend who taught me so many of the secrets that led me to this *chef d'œuvre*. Speak, I implore you; speak, and tell me what you see on this canvas."—(To be continued.)