

evidently much vexed with himself. "I couldn't have believed dat any von in de world could so impose on me. But de two pictures are just de same to a pin scratch in frame, subject, and treatment, and to save my life I cannot tell dem apart."

Christine's face fairly glowed with triumph, and her eyes were all aflame as she glanced at her friend. Miss Winthrop came and took her cold, quivering hands into her warm palms, but was scarcely less excited. Dennis saw not this side scene, so intent was he on the pictures.

"Do you mean to say," said Mr. Consoor, stepping forward, "that one of these paintings is a copy made here in Chicago, and that Mr. Schwartz cannot tell it from the original?"

"He says he cannot," said Mr. Ludolph.

"And I'd like to see de von who can," said old Schwartz gruffly.

"Will you please point out the original," said one of the gentlemen, "that we may learn to distinguish them? For my part they seem like the twins whose mother knew them apart by pink and white ribbons, and when the ribbons got mixed she could not tell which was which."

Again Christine's eyes glowed with triumph.

"Well, really, gentlemen," said Mr. Ludolph, "I would rather you would discover the copy yourselves. Mr. Consoor, Mr. Framé, and some others, I think, saw the original several times."

"Look at Mr. Fleet," whispered Miss Winthrop to Christine.

She looked, and her attention was riveted to him. Step by step he had drawn nearer, and his eyes were eagerly glancing from one to another as if following up a clue. Instinctively she felt that he would solve the question, and her little hands clenched, and her brow grew dark.

"Really," said Mr. Consoor, "I did not know that we had an artist in Chicago who could copy the work of one of the best European painters, so that there need be a moment's hesitancy in detecting differences, but it seems I am mistaken. I am almost as puzzled as Mr. Schwartz."

"The frames are exactly alike," said Mr. Framé.

"There is a difference between the two pictures," said Mr. Consoor slowly. "I can feel it rather than see it. They seem alike line for line and feature for feature in every part. But just where the difference lies and in what it consists I cannot tell for the life of me."

With the manner of one who had settled a difficult problem, Dennis gave out a sigh of relief so audibly that several glanced at him.

"Perhaps Mr. Fleet from his superior knowledge and long experience can settle this question," said Christine sarcastically.

All eyes were turned toward him. He flushed painfully but said nothing.

"Speak up," said Mr. Ludolph good-naturedly, "if you have any opinion to give."

"I would not presume to give my opinion among so many more competent judges."

"Come, Mr. Fleet," said Christine with a covert taunt in her tone, "that is a cheap way of making a reputation. I fear the impression will be given that you have no opinion to give."

Dennis was now very pale, as he ever was under great excitement. The old look came again that the young ladies remembered seeing at Miss Brown's entertainment.

"Come, speak up if you can," said Mr. Ludolph, shortly.

"Your porter, Mr. Ludolph?" said Mr. Consoor, remembering Dennis only in that capacity. "Perhaps he has some private marks by which he can enlighten us."

Dennis now acted no longer as porter or clerk, but as a man among men.

Stepping forward and looking Mr. Consoor full in the face he said;

"I can prove to you, sir, that your insinuation is false by simply stating that I never saw those pictures before. The original had been removed from the store before I came. I have had therefore no opportunity of knowing the copy from the original. But the pictures are different, and I can tell precisely wherein I think the difference lies."

"Tell it then," said several voices. Christine stood a little back and to one side so that he could not see her face, or he would have hesitated long before he had spoken. In the firm, decided tones of one thoroughly aroused and sure of his ground, he proceeded:

"Suppose this the copy," said he, stepping to one of the pictures. (Christine breathed hard and leaned heavily against her friend.) "I know of but one in Chicago capable of such exquisite work, and he did not do it—indeed he could not, though a master in art."

"You refer to Mr. Bruder?" said Mr. Consoor.

Dennis bowed and continued: "It is the work of one in whom the imitative power is wonderfully developed; but one having never felt, or unable to feel the emotions here presented cannot portray them. This picture