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THREE PICTURES AND ONE POETRY.

(From Putnam's Magazine.)

The picture gallery of the Baron von P., at Stuttgart, though small, is one of the choicest and most valuable of those private collections which, by the generosity and public spirit of their owners, are thrown open to the general public in that charming little capital. Twice a week, namely, on Mondays and Thursdays, from the hour of ten in the morning till six in the evening, visitors are admitted to feast their eyes upon its treasures, which include a 'Triumph of Venus' by Rubens one of Paul Potter's marvelous groups of cattle, several fine Rembrandts, and two or three portraits by Vandyke. One of the latter, a small but charming specimen of the great portrait painter's skill, is considered the gem of the collection, and has been frequently copied and engraved. It is a half-length portrait, considerably less than life, and represents a young and beautiful girl. By some whim of the sitter, or some fancy of the artist, she is portrayed with the customary attributes of the goddess Diana. A crescent-moon sparkles among her loosened chestnut curls, she holds a bow in her right hand, and her graceful form is simply attired in a flowing pale green robe. But the slender, girlish figure, the blooming countenance, and the mischievous curve of the rosy lips, seem scarcely fitted for the cold celestial huntress. And in the brown eyes there lurks an expression, strange, attractive and indescribable, at once cold and fascinating, alluring and unsympathetic. The fair face is that of Hebe, but the wondrous eyes are those of Circe. Few have paused before that singular yet lovely portrait without asking, 'Who was she? What was her history? But on that point tradition and history are alike silent; the name and the destiny of the beautiful original are unknown, and the picture is designated only by the title of the 'Vandyke Diana.'

One stormy afternoon in March, two persons were stationed before the painting we have just described. One was an old man, with bent form, silvered locks, and eyes dimmed by years and sorrows, who stood with folded hands, gazing upon the pictured face with an expression of yearning and sorrowful tenderness. The other, a young artist, sat at his easel, before the Diana, and was employed in copying it. Handsome, but pale and ethereal-looking, with large melancholy blue eyes, and masses of dark hair pushed back from his broad white brow, he resembled nothing so much as the portrait of the youthful Schiller. His countenance wore the same pensive sweetness, the same impress of inspiration and genius, and, alas! the same look, too, of fragile health with which we are familiar in the likenesses of Germany's greatest and noblest poet. He was working at his copy with earnest diligence, but it differed greatly from the original. Beneath his pencil, the bright youthful face had been transformed to that of a woman more than 30 years of age. The large eyes wore a look of melancholy, the beautifully curved mouth, so smiling in the original, told of uneasiness and suffering in every line, and a waxen pallor, indicative of failing health, replaced the rosy bloom that tinted the cheek of the Diana. It was the same face, but the brightness of youth had departed, and the shadow of pain and sorrow brooded there instead. It was as if the painter, in depicting some fair landscape, glowing with the golden sunlight and rich hues of summer, had chosen to represent it with the gray clouded skies, the withering foliage, and the faded flowers of autumn. He had altered, too, the costume. For the bow and crescent and woodland robe of the original, his pencil had substituted a cloud-like drapery of black lace, enveloping both head and figure, and whose semi-transparent folds formed a background for the pale, pensive countenance. One slender hand, on which sparkled a diamond, held the floating drapery over the bust; not the rosy, dimpled hand of the Vandyke huntress, but the fragile fingers of a suffering invalid.

It was, as I have before said, a stormy day.—No intruders had as yet disturbed the fixed and sorrowful gaze of the old man, or the busy pencil of the artist. But suddenly the great door at the other extremity of the gallery was thrown open, a step resounded on the floor, and a tall, dark, handsome man came towards the spot where hung the Diana.

'Good heavens! what a likeness,' he exclaimed, as his eyes fell upon the picture.

The old man started, the artist looked up from his work.

The new comer gazed long and in silence on the Vandyke. At length, drawing a long sigh, he turned, and seemed about to depart; but pausing before the young painter's easel instead, he examined the nearly completed copy with great interest.

'May I ask, sir,' he said, 'why, in copying this picture, you have altered the expression and

hues of the countenance and the fashion of the dress?'

'Certainly, sir,' replied the artist, courteously. 'I have copied this picture, not on account of its great intrinsic merits, but because it bears a strong accidental likeness to a person I once loved, and who is no longer living. I never knew her in her days of youth and health; when first we met she was a delicate suffering invalid, already sinking under the malady which was destined soon to deprive her of life. It was her face that I wished to reproduce, not the blooming beauty of Vandyke's lovely huntress.'

'Strange! the original picture is marvellously like a lady who was once very dear to me.'

The old man turned eagerly towards the speaker.

'Oh, sir!' he cried with clasped hands and kindling eyes, 'this picture is like Roschen, my lost Roschen. Did she whom you know bear that name? Was she a young village girl, with large brown eyes and dark hair? Oh, tell me, sir, in heaven's name, where is she? where can I find her?'

In his excitement the old man grasped the stranger's hand convulsively.

'Did you, indeed, know the Countess Orlanoff?' asked the young artist.

'The new comer looked from one to the other in astonishment.

'The person of whom I spoke, he answered, 'was neither a village maiden nor a noble countess. Years ago, I knew and loved Ida Rosen, a ballet dancer at the Imperial House at Prague; and when I look upon that picture, I behold her again.'

The old man extended his trembling hand towards the portrait.

'So looked my Roschen when last she stood before me.'

'And so looked Madame Orlanoff the night I last beheld her,' said the young painter, pointing to the canvass on his easel as he spoke.

A short silence ensued. Each of the three men was absorbed in the sorrowful memories of the past. The wind howled more wildly with out, and a fine sharp rain dashed noisily against the windows.

The last comer was the first to speak.

'Gentlemen,' he said, 'our adventure is a curious one. By a strange coincidence we have all three met at this spot, led by a common purpose, and united, it may be, by a common sorrow. I confess I am curious to learn the histories you both doubtless have to relate, and in return for your confidence, if you will grant me so far, I will give you my own. I will tell you how I first met Ida Rosen, how I wooed her, and how I lost her. What say you to adjourning to my rooms at the Hotel Marquadt? There, over a glass of fine old Marcobrunner, we can converse sociably and at our ease; and, perchance, the very act of telling our troubles may cause them to seem somewhat lighter. But, ere you answer, let me introduce myself. My name is Theodore Halm, and I am the leading tenor of the Royal Opera House at Dresden.'

'And I am Franz Meissner, artist, at your service,' said the young painter, rising and shaking Halm's proffered hand with cordiality.

'I am Johann Keller, organist,' said the old man, bowing as he spoke.

'Well, friends, what say you? Will you accept my offer and become my guests?'

'With great pleasure,' said Meissner, preparing to put aside his palette and brushes.

'Certainly, sir, if you wish it,' sighed old Keller.

Half an hour later the three companions sat around a small table in one of the pleasantest rooms in the Hotel Marquadt. The stove glowed with a genial heat, the Marcobrunner sparkled like molten topaz in flask and glasses; and, under the cheering influences of the wine and warmth and pleasant companionship, old Johann Keller visibly revived. A faint red tinged his withered cheek, his sunken blue eyes gained something of animation and sparkle, and, without hesitation, though in a faltering voice, he commenced his narrative.

THE ORGANIST'S STORY.

I was born, gentlemen, in the little town of Heldensfeld, in Saxony. My father was the organist of the Marien Kirche, and, at his death, I succeeded him in his post. I inherited from him, too, a small house near the church, where we had always lived; and after his death I continued to reside there. I led but a lonely life: my only companion was an old woman who lived with me, and who took charge of all household matters. But my church duties kept me constantly occupied; and so my days passed away peacefully enough.

Nearly thirty years ago, however, an incident occurred which disturbed the tranquillity of my life. I was coming home, late at night, from a lonely evening's practice with the choir. We had been trying to get up Leopold Hillberg's Grand Mass in B Minor for an approaching

church festival; and, as it is very difficult we were forced to have a great many rehearsals and very long ones. So it chanced that, on this very particular night, I was coming home very late, which was far from being my usual habit.—Just before I reached my own door, I stumbled over something lying in the pathway, which looked like a large bundle. Judge of my astonishment, when, on stooping to remove the obstruction, a faint cry was heard, and I discovered that the seeming bundle was a little child, about eight months old, wrapped in a dirty blanket, and nearly lifeless. To pick it up, to carry it into the house, and to call Dame Bertha, was but the work of a moment. The poor little creature was almost dead, but a warm bath, some bread and milk, and the tender cares of old Bertha soon restored life and animation to her limbs. Ah! how pretty she was, the little brown-eyed creature, when Dame Bertha brought her to me, wrapped in an old shawl, and sitting erect and saucily upon her arm, that I might see how strongly and lively she looked.

I have always thought that she had been left behind by a party of wandering Bohemians, who the day before, had passed through our town, on their way to one of the great annual fairs, where they go to sell trumpery bits of garnet jewelry and glassware, and to pick up what money they can by dancing and singing. Certain it is that no one ever claimed my little foundling, and she bore no marks by which her parentage could be traced. I called her Roschen, she was so fresh and rosy and sweet, and she speedily became the idol of both Dame Bertha and myself. Many persons advised me to send her to some charitable institution for the care of orphans or foundlings; but I could not bear to part with her. My means were small, it is true; but I knew that, by care and increased economy, I could contrive to meet the extra expense.

The years went on, and the pretty babe changed to a merry child, and then to a wild, romping girl, and at least a fair maiden of sixteen stood before me. I had taught her reading and writing and music, and old Bertha had instructed her in all housewifely art; and all who knew her praised her beauty and intelligence. But as she outgrew her childhood she seemed to leave content behind. The calm monotony of our life seemed to fret and fever her; she wearied of all occupations, and passed long hours in walking up and down our little strip of garden with clenched hands and hurried steps. And I, too, had lost the calm contentment which had filled my life with peace. I realized that, old as I was, I loved—loved for the first time, and madly—the fair young creature who had been to me as a daughter. And though I tried to stifle this insane passion, I felt that all my efforts were in vain. I loved Roschen, and I even hoped (how wildly and vainly I now realize) that she might return my love.

One day our quaint little town was startled by the announcement that a travelling dramatic troupe of great excellence was about to give a representation at our public hall. Roschen at once expressed a strong desire to witness the performance; and I, always anxious to call up one of her rare smiles, consented. Never shall I forget that evening. The entertainment consisted of the usual medley of songs, dances, and detached scenes from plays; but it was the first performance of the kind which Roschen had ever witnessed, and she was nearly wild with excitement and delight. The soft-rose hue of her cheek deepened to a vivid scarlet, her eyes flashed and sparkled like living gems, and under the influence of the hour, her beauty seemed to have acquired a more dazzling radiance.

That evening, after we returned home, my carefully-guarded secret escaped me. I forgot that I was fifty-five years old, and that she was but sixteen; and I told her that I loved her. I pictured to her how peacefully and happily our lives might pass together, and how my love would ever encircle and protect her. And then I tried to tell her how well I loved her, but I could not; I could only fall at her feet and implore her to say that she would become my wife.

She drew away the small hands which I had clasped in my eagerness, and only answered, smiling upon me as she did so, 'It is late, and I am so tired. Let us talk about it to-morrow.'

I would fain have detained her, but she vanished up the stair-case, calling in a laughing tone, 'To-morrow, to-morrow!'

The next day she did not leave her room at the usual hour. Old Bertha went to call her; but she was gone. She had left me—had fled from me—whether I did not know, I have never known, for I have never heard any tidings of her since.

The old man paused. He bowed his head upon his hands, and for several moments he remained silent. At length he continued:

My story is ended, gentlemen. I sought long and vainly for my lost darling, but I was poor, and my heart was broken, and I lacked the means and energy necessary to make my search

successful. Some years ago I received a letter from a lawyer in Vienna, telling me that a distant relative, whose name even I had never before heard, had died, and left me a small annuity. I sold my little property; and, having been told by a friend that there was a picture in the Baron von P.'s collection that resembled my Roschen, I came to Stuttgart to see it. The resemblance was so striking, and I found such deep though mournful satisfaction in gazing on it, that I felt, to leave Stuttgart and the painting would be to lose my Roschen a second time.—So I remained here. I have a little room in the house of an old friend who lives at Cannstadt, and two days in each week I can delight my eyes by gazing upon the pictured face that so vividly recalls to me the fresh, bright beauty of my lost Roschen.

The old man ceased. Halm and Meissner leaned forward, and each clasped one of his hands. No word was spoken, but the simple action was eloquent of kindly sympathy and friendliness.

After a short pause, Halm refilled the glasses, and laying aside his cigar, said:

'As the eldest of us three has commenced the series of our recitals, I presume that mine should be the next in order.'

THE SINGER'S STORY.

About ten years ago I was engaged to sing for the winter season, at Prague. I arrived there one cold November evening, and after a hurried meal in the cheerless dining-room of the Hotel d'Angleterre, I strolled to the theatre to pass away there the hours of an evening which seemed else to threaten to be interminable. The performance had already commenced when I entered. The piece was a ballet, entitled, I believe, 'The Four Elements,' and stupid and senseless as ballets usually are, I remained for some time, but growing heartily weary of the uninteresting evolutions of the 'corps de ballet,' I was about to retire, when suddenly the music changed to a new and lively strain, an outburst of applause from the audience greeted the entrance of the representative of Fire. At once I resumed my seat, fascinated by the first glimpse which I obtained of the brilliant face and exquisite form of the dancer. I need not describe her beauty, for you have but lately beheld the picture whose loveliness is a faithful though feeble transcript of that which I then looked upon. Her dancing was a perfect representation of the flame whose characteristics she sought to reproduce—as light, as graceful, as sudden in its changeful movements. But in her large brown eyes there sparkled a more fatal fire than that she sought to represent. When her dance was over, I retired, strangely agitated, and with my heart throbbing with a new and powerful emotion.

Connected as I was with the theatre, I soon learned all that was known about Ida Rosen; for such was the name of the beautiful 'danseuse.' I was told that she appeared to lead an irreproachable life, and that her character was spotless. She lived in a small, cheap lodging, in the Anton Strasse, and an old woman, who passed for her aunt, resided with her, and always accompanied her wherever she went. With that one exception, she seemed to have neither relatives nor friends. She was always singularly punctual and correct in the performance of her theatrical duties, but she mixed as little as possible with the other members of the 'corps de ballet,' or even with the singers of the opera troupe. Thus, she was generally voted proud and disagreeable by premieres, coryphees and prima donnas alike, and she was left unmolested in her self-chosen loneliness.

I obtained an introduction to her at last, and found, for my pains, that my fair Flame-queen was, in real life, a veritable icicle. She exacted from me, as from the rest of her acquaintance, a respect and courtesy seldom accorded to the ladies of the ballet; compliments and badinage seemed alike distasteful to her; and ere our first interview ended, she had repelled my attempts at both with such sharpness of repartee, yet with such exquisite grace and archness, that I was at once silenced and fascinated.

However, our acquaintance was kept up, and on her part slowly ripened into friendship. She appeared to take some pleasure in my society, at length; and many happy hours have I passed in the little apartments in the Anton Strasse, seated by Ida's side, and watching the graceful dexterity with which she fashioned her gossamer stage attire, while old Martha sat at the window, nodding over her prayer-book, or sewing at some piece of theatrical finery. On these occasions I used, sometimes to sing to her; and never since have I so striven, as Faust, Florestand, or Raoul, to delight a brilliant audience, as I then strove to sing ballads and popular songs, in a manner that would satisfy my laughing and exacting hearer.

I am ashamed to tell you, my friends, how short a time our acquaintance had lasted when I

asked her to become my wife. Kindly, yet without hesitation, she refused me.

'I do not love you,' was her answer; 'and I can never love you. Let us remain friends, Theodore, and never let us mention this subject again.'

'Listen to me yet one moment, Ida,' I said, earnestly. 'Your life is a laborious one, and your position painful. I am not wealthy, but my salary is good, and should I retain my voice, there is no eminence in my profession to which I may not aspire. Let my love plead with you, and induce you to accept ease and luxury at my hands. Quit this life of toil, of exposure, of insult; give me only a husband's right to protect and cherish you, and such passionate devotion as mine will surely win return at last.'

She laughed low and scornfully, and there was a mocking ring in the tones in which she replied, 'What! become the wife of an opera singer, for the purpose of leading an easier life? Truly, I am ambitious, but my aspirations tend somewhat higher. And, as for love—I have never loved any one in all my life.'

We parted in anger, and I ceased to visit her; but I could not so cease loving her. Nay, after the lapse of all these years, as I speak of her, I feel that I love her still.

Towards the close of my engagement, the management decided on producing 'Robert le Diable.' I was to be the Robert, and I half hoped that Ida would be selected to perform the part of the spectral abbess, Helena. But the 'role' belonged by right to the 'premiere danseuse' of the 'corps de ballet,' an extremely thin but highly accomplished dancer, named Teresa Cortesi. It was with her that I rehearsed the church-yard scene, and learned how to perform the difficult task of receiving and supporting her properly in the necessary 'poses.' The first representation passed off extremely well, the opera was an immense success, and the theatre was crowded nightly.

One evening, as I descended from my dressing-room, I was met by the manager, who, in a tone of great excitement, exclaimed—

'What, in the name of Jupiter, are we to do? Mlle. Cortesi has just fallen, in coming from her dressing room, and has fractured her arm.'

'Substitute another opera,' I suggested.

'That would never do. The house is crowded, and the audience have assembled to hear 'Robert,' and 'Robert' they must have.'

'Well, then, omit the act, or find some danseuse who can take the part,' I rejoined, impatiently.

'The part was studied by another danseuse, but—'

At this moment a messenger arrived bearing a small note, which he presented to the perplexed manager, who opened it eagerly. Instantly his brow cleared.

'It is all right,' he cried; 'another Helena is found. Let the opera proceed, and hurry, all of you, for the audience is beginning to grow impatient.'

The opera passed off as usual, and at length the moment arrived when Robert is surrounded by the spectral nuns. Imagine my surprise when I recognized in the representative of the abbess Ida Rosen herself. She was wondrously beautiful in her white dress and sparkling wreath, her fair face unprofaned by rouge, and her perfect form displayed to unusual advantage by the simplicity and freshness of her airy dress.

Can I describe to you the witchery of her smile, the intoxicating sorcery of her acting?—She seemed, indeed, an evil vision of supernatural loveliness, sent on earth to lure some poor tortured mortal to sacrilege and crime. It was well for me that Robert had not to utter a sound during this scene; for I was incapable of doing more than to follow her every movement with a rapt attention which certainly was not feigned.

At last came the instant, when Robert, overcome by Helena's wiles, receives her in his arms, and presses his lips to hers. Then, for the first time, I held in my arms the woman that I so wildly loved; I clasped her to my heart, and it was no slight stage salute, but a long and passionate kiss that I pressed upon her lips, while, in hoarse, broken accents, I murmured—'I love you!'

The remainder of the opera passed off like a dream. I do not know how I got through it; but it ended at last. As I was preparing to quit the theatre, the ballet-master addressed me.

'A superb piece of acting that between you and Ida in the church-yard scene,' he said.—

'What a pity it is that we have lost her.'

'Lost her?' I cried, grasping his arm.

'Yes, I fear she has quitted Prague by this time. She canceled her engagement yesterday, and only danced to-night on account of the accident to Cortesi.'

Half blind, half mad, scarce conscious of what I did, I rushed from the theatre, and took mechanically the road that led to Ida's lodging in the Anton Strasse. It was a bright, moonlight night, and ere I reached the house, I saw a