

TRUE TO HIS WORD.

A NOVEL.

CHAPTER VII.

MR. JOHN PELTER AS MENTOR.

It is astonishing how the profession of Love—that is, the love of man for woman, or vice versa—being of such endless variety, should be described by poets and philosophers as of only two or three kinds, or even "lumped" (as Pope, for instance, lumps it) into one. Monomania, fever, atrophy have each their name and place in medical science; but all these diseases, and many others, are in psychology spoken of as one, as though no difference existed between them. There is, it is true, an admitted peculiarity in the case of what is called a Platonic attachment; but this term is seldom used, except in irony, and I am inclined to think that those who so make use of it are right. I have never known a Platonic attachment where the lady, at least, would not have married the gentleman if she could. Of course, there are some young persons who, being denied by their beloved objects, immediately go and hang themselves; but these are fortunately exceptional cases, which do not materially affect the census returns. A more numerous class plunge into dissipation; a remedy which, though (besides other serious objections to it) it may kill as well as cure, has undoubtedly been found to be efficacious. Others have the good fortune to see some other nice young woman the next day or the next month after the disappointment, and get over it by marrying her. Without any trespass upon that dangerous ground of Platonic attachment, a man may adore a woman with honesty and honor, whom it is utterly out of the question that he should marry, from whom it is impossible that he should receive any greater favors than a clasp of the hand or a kind word.

It was some absorbing feeling of this sort which filled Walter Litton's soul with respect to Lotty; he could not free himself from its influence at pleasure, and though he could forget it—that is, the smart of it—in occupation, it pervaded even the work of his hands. It is certain that his present picture profited by this. Love, "the more ideal artist he than all," had given a spirituality to the expression of Philippa, Edward's queen, which Miss Nellie Neale, and perhaps even Lotty herself, did not possess; it was, in fact, a glorified likeness of the latter, a likeness that might easily escape the eyes of such as were but slightly acquainted with her, or had not seen her under circumstances calculated to evoke her deeper feelings, but which would strike most forcibly those who knew her best. Without, of course, recognizing the source of his friend's inspiration, or even being aware of what it was, Mr. John Pelter perceived that this portrait was far in advance of anything that the young fellow had yet achieved; and he told him so, after his peculiar fashion, puffing at his pipe, and regarding this chef-d'œuvre with his huge flax-covered head sloped to the critical angle.

"My dear Watty," said he, "I don't wish to flatter you, but that's the most like a human creature of anything that you have yet turned out."

"I am glad to hear you say so," returned Walter, well pleased with this moderate praise, which, indeed, in Jack Pelter's mouth, implied far beyond what it expressed. A huge good-natured giant was Jack, who knew much more of his profession, though he seldom used the slang of it, than many a man who can discourse of "his art" by the hour, and leave his hearers in the most inextricable entanglement; a man, it was true, who cared little to be known by the world at large, so long as he was known by the dealers, and was supplied by them with the funds sufficient for his not extravagant needs, but who worked as honestly, after his lights, as Raphael, whose cartoons he believed to be the most valuable bequest that any living being has left to posterity.

"Yes, Watty, this is a great advance upon your 'Drunken Organ-grinders'—I beg your pardon, your 'Brigands Carousing.' The young woman's foot here is out of drawing, and I daresay the other would be, if it wasn't covered by her train; but the picture is good, sir—it's good." And Mr. John Pelter stepped back from it slowly, upsetting "Penadon Church" as he did so, and once more regarded it with fixed attention. "You must not lump any King Edwards with a lot of this kind," continued Jack, "or else you'll spoil it."

"But Queen Philippa must be kneeling to somebody," urged Walter.

"Then don't let her be Queen Philippa at all. That high head-dress may very well be taken for a fool's cap; and if you write 'Forfeits' under it the whole thing will explain itself. 'Who is the owner of this pretty thing? Let her kneel in one corner, dance in another,' and so on. There; don't be affronted; I'm only joking, so far as regards the title. The girl must kneel alone, that's certain. Chuck your Pinnock's England overboard, cut away the rest of the canvas, and call her 'Supplication.'"

"Upon my life, Jack, I think that a good idea."

"Of course it is. Send out for something to drink its health in. 'O for a draught of vintage full of the warm South,' something delicate and tasty, and redolent of the subject! Jenny!" roared he from the top of the stairs, "fetch a pot of stout."

Over this refreshment they discoursed the future of the immortal work.

"That must not go to the Gallery, or any

of those places, Watty," said Jack, whom the generous liquor had rendered still more eulogistic. "You must have a shy with it at the big shop."

"I am sick of trying there," answered Walter despondently.

"Sick of trying! Why, you have not got a gray hair on your head! If you were my age" (Jack was about thirty) "you might talk of blighted hopes."

"But you have been hung, and in good places too; and yet I have heard you say that you had just as soon your pictures went to the Gallery, or straight to Pall Mall."

"Well, well; that's because I wanted the money," interrupted the other, with irritation. "Don't you mind about me. If I said I don't care about fame, perhaps I was wrong, or perhaps I lied. Your case, at all events, is different. Follow my advice, Watty, my boy, and send 'Supplication' to run its chance with the committee. They do sometimes take a thing on its own merits. Remember how Campbell was hung last year, through Mac Collop, R.A., taking him for a fellow-countryman. 'Death by misadventure,' as somebody said of it, when all the newspapers were down upon his daub."

"You are very encouraging," said Walter, smiling; "but nevertheless I will try the big shop."

In spite of Walter's pretended irony, there was great encouragement in Pelter's recommendation. Jack was not above the weaknesses of his calling, and could abuse a brother artist—who was successful—as roundly as any one. But he was singularly just and honest in the main. His tenderness for his young friend was great. It is not too much to say that his hopes for his success were higher than for his own; for he was one of that increasing class who are not ambitious either of fame or fortune. As long as he could earn a competence, he was satisfied with the result of his own labors; and a competence with him meant something very modest indeed. It is not a good sign in our social life that so many men, even in comparative youth, are becoming indifferent to great gains and high distinction; if such sentiments were universal, the production of anything really great in any line of life would be rendered impossible; but it is only the natural rebound from that excessive struggle to get a head and shoulders above their fellows which distinguished the last generation, not altogether to its credit. In that contest friendship too often went to the wall, and every generous impulse was trodden under foot, in order that self should rise supreme. There is no better excuse for indolence than the spectacle of successful diligence standing all alone upon its pedestal, without friend or lover, a mark not only for envy, but for deserved contempt; and Mr. John Pelter had seen, or fancied he had seen, not a few eminent gentlemen of his own profession in that isolated position. For his own works, he had no ambition; no desire for fame, and very little even for profit; but for those of his friend he allowed himself some hopes. He liked the young fellow dearly, and had a genuine admiration for his talents, which he wished to see made use of to the best advantage. Perhaps he had a secret conviction that he had missed his mark in the world, and was solicitous that Walter should have better fortune.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ACADEMY CIRCULAR.

A great many people are under the delusion that pictures are accepted or rejected in the Royal Academy solely on their own merits; that the Hanging Committee know nothing about them, and that they are adjudicated upon without any personal reference to the artists. There is a natural and wholesome desire on the part of the public to believe this, but how very far from the truth are they?

Walter Litton knew very few R.A.'s, and none who were upon the Hanging Committee of that year. No member of it was inveigled into the second floor in Beech street, and persuaded to cast his eye upon "Supplication," in order that, when he saw it again upon a certain momentous occasion, recognition might follow. Jack Pelter would have done him that good turn—for he was one of those who will do for a friend what "wild horses" would not have compelled him to do for himself—but Walter declined the offer.

"My dear Jack," said he, "you are most kind; but I would rather the thing stood on its own hook."

"I want it to hang on the Line," was Jack's only rejoinder.

"Well, I hope it will, or, at all events, somewhere. It may be very foolish of me, and very sanguine, but I have great confidence."

"In the committee?" broke in Pelter.

"Then you must be very foolish and very sanguine indeed."

"No; in the merits of the picture."

"Gad, how I wish I was your age!" sighed Jack. "Do you think it will be bought for the nation?"

"I don't wish it to be bought at all."

"Oh, I see! you want to keep it for your diploma picture."

But though Jack was thus cynical with his friend, he had a high opinion of the excellence of this particular piece of work, over which Walter expended a prodigious amount of time and pains. Every detail was wrought up to the highest pitch of perfection of which he was capable, and he was never tired of touching and retouching; he did not retouch the face, either because he was satisfied with it, or because he distrusted his ability to effect improvement. He would even do this when his model was in the room, forgetful of her presence, and of the money per hour it cost him; and upon one or two occasions, he noticed that she also had her fits of abstraction. Then it struck him that her face had grown paler of late, and her large eyes less lustrous, and his tender heart reproached him for his indifference.

"We have been working very hard at this picture, have we not, Red Riding-hood?" said

he kindly. "Don't you think you would be the better for a little holiday?"

"Not so far as I am concerned, sir. I am not at all tired."

"You look so," returned he, regarding her in really quite a paternal way; "very fagged and out of sorts. Are you quite sure you are well?"

"Yes, sir; I am well enough."

"But you may not be a good judge of that. I shall go round this afternoon, and speak to your father about you, little one."

"Oh, pray, sir, don't speak to him!" returned she with sudden vehemence. "Indeed, indeed, there is nothing the matter with me—nothing, at least, to speak of. There is no need for any holiday. Besides, father has bills to pay, which were not settled at Christmas, and it would vex him if I fell out of work just now."

"Oh, I daresay we can manage about the bills! You have been one, two, three, four months eternally kneeling upon that cushion; and so far as this picture is concerned, I can get on very well by myself now. Yes, yes; you must have a holiday."

"As you please, sir," answered Nellie humbly; "that is, so far as the sittings are concerned. Indeed, I have felt that I have been picking your pocket for the last six weeks."

"Picking my pocket, Red Riding-hood! Why, how was that?"

"Well, sir, I have seen that I was of little or no use. You don't know how absent and thoughtful you have become; I might just as well have been at home as in your studio, for all the good I have been to you for this last hour, for instance. And then the picture isn't like me, not a bit. It was at first, perhaps, just a little; but you have been thinking of somebody else all along, and been painting her instead of me."

The color rose to the very roots of Walter's hair, but he answered laughingly: "And has that offended you, Red Riding-hood, all along?"

"No, sir; indeed I didn't notice it at first. But it seems wrong that I should come here and take your money, when you could get on just as well without me."

"And that's what makes you look so pale and sorrowful, is it? You must certainly have a very tender conscience. However, let me tell you, for your comfort, Red Riding-hood, that I cannot get on without you. I have got used to you as a sitter, and when folks have come to the age of your grand-mamma, they are averse to change. Perhaps you have sat long enough for Philippa; but you have plenty of expressions beside that pleading one, which you have worn so long that I do believe it has made you down-right miserable. Mr. Pelter has recommended me to take the game of forfeits for a subject, which will require you to be full of fun; and, after a month or two of that, I shall expect you to be in tearing spirits."

When Walter and his friend were smoking their pipes that evening, the former spoke of his model's altered looks, and of the talk he had had with her. "I could make nothing of it, except that she must really have taken it to heart that the picture is not a portrait. I wish you would take her for a bit, Jack, and put her in good spirits."

"I am doing a veteran in boots and a beard," said Pelter dryly; "and I should recommend you to paint a veteran for your next picture—Miss Nellie's great-aunt, for instance."

"Nonsense! I am really serious in asking your opinion, for I am sure the girl is out of sorts about something; not ill, I think, but wretched in her mind. What the deuce can be the matter with her?"

"I am afraid Red Riding-hood's grand-mamma is turning out to be a wolf, in spite of herself, Walter."

"I don't understand you, Pelter."

"Don't you? It's a very old story, my good fellow. I don't for a moment imagine you want to devour her, mind, though she would be a dainty morsel for some people. But I have a suspicion she wants to be eaten."

"You don't mean to say that the girl has fallen in love with me?"

"I am not sure; but there is no accounting for tastes, and she may have done so. I am glad, for her sake, at all events, that you are a gentleman—and not a man of honor."

"I hope not, indeed, in the sense you mean," answered Walter, reddening. "But it seems to me your view is a very coxcombical one."

"It would be, if I had suggested she had fallen in love with me," returned Jack. "But that she has fallen in love with somebody is certain: down-cast eyes, pale cheeks and sighs are all signs."

"I think what you suggest is quite as likely as that she should have fallen in love with me," said Walter gravely; "but she is certainly very unhappy. After what you have said, I would send her away to-morrow but that she says her father is so hard up."

"You are too emotional," said Mr. Pelter; or, in other words, a soft-hearted young fool. Also, I wish you would drink a little fairer. Please to ring for another jug of beer."

As a matter of fact, however, not only had Mr. John Pelter had his full share of the beer, but he had no reason to plume himself upon hardness of heart. To his personal friends he was devoted, and when Litton's picture was in due time sent into the big shop on approval, Jack was far more anxious about its fate than Walter himself. Indeed, Walter exhibited an indifference in the matter, which, considering what the other knew of his character and antecedents, was inexplicable to his friend.

He showed despondency, sitting almost idle for whole days alone—for he had, for the present, dispensed with the services of Nellie Neale—but not those symptoms of solicitude for the success of his great work with which Jack was so well acquainted in other cases. The cause of this was curious, yet by no means unknown in the profession to which he belonged. He missed his picture. This is peculiarly an artist's grievance. The novelist can both have his cake and eat it; his book—the writing of which has given him so many hours of pleasure, and with the characters whereof, even though he may have failed in making them real to others, he has been living for months in as close a relationship as with those of his household—remains to him after it is written. But when the painter has sold his picture, it is gone forever. Walter missed his picture, though the face it mirrored haunted him like a ghost. He had another picture on his easel, but his heart was not in that as it had been in the predecessor;

he was equally painstaking, equally conscientious with it, and yet he did not need Jack's ominous silence—his omission to point out its defects—to convince him that it was a failure. At times so errant was his mind that he saw both pictures—their lines and hues mingled together, like a dissolving view. Under such circumstances, to paint was useless, and he gave himself up to his own morbid thoughts.

Where was Lotty now? He had seen nothing of Selwyn for months, nor heard of him, and so far, as he bitterly reflected, that was a good sign. In prosperity the captain was more likely to forget his friends than if he had need of them. On the other hand, since he owed him money he might be ashamed to come; they might be very, very poor. He had seen in the paper that Selwyn had sold out of the army, and now he must needs be living on his capital, if his creditors had left him any to live upon. And when that was spent, what could they do then? To what wretchedness might not that innocent, angelic creature be reduced by this time—and thanks to him! At this idea—the picture of that fair young face, white and wan with physical woe—he would start up from his chair, and pace the room like a madman. The very postman's knock, though letters seldom came for the lonely young fellow, would suggest all sorts of hideous apprehensions; there might be news that Reginald was in prison—he had himself said it was more than probable—and Lotty alone and starving. One day, when there had been a letter for the first time, he heard Pelter's loud voice upon the carpetless stairs, exclaiming, "Oh, this is for Mr. Litton!" and then his friend's heavy tread coming up-stairs three steps at a time. Jack knew something, though by no means all, of his solicitude upon the young couple's account, and sympathized with it. He stood now at the open door, with a very grave face, and, in a solemn tone, exclaimed, "Walter, here is a letter for you! I have opened it by mistake."

"A letter," said Walter: his hand shook as he held it out for the missive. "No bad news, I hope, of—of Selwyn?"

"No; it's only a circular—a circular from the Academy, my lad," cried Jack with a joyous whoop. "It's to tell you that Wednesday is Varnishing Day, and, therefore, that your 'Supplication' has been accepted."

Then his two great hands seized Walter's, and wrung them in expressive silence.

"I am not a good one at congratulatory speeches, Watty, old fellow, but I am down-right glad."

O blessed time of youth and friendship, O happy hand-clasps, only second to the first kiss of love; what glories must be beyond the gates of the grave that shall recompense us for your loss!

CHAPTER IX.

A FIRST BID.

If the painter, as we have shewn, is in one point at a disadvantage as compared with the author, in another he is much more fortunate. "The Exhibition," as the annual show at the Royal Academy, notwithstanding its many rivals of the same name, is still called, is an institution that in literature has no parallel, and which is of the greatest possible merit to the young artist. Of course, true merit will make its way in the end in any calling; but a man may write the best book in the world, and even publish it (though that is not so easy to one unknown and poor), and yet be some considerable time before he can persuade the world to read it; but when a painting has once got admittance within the Academy walls, all has been done for it in the way of introduction to the public that it can possibly need.

So young Walter Litton had really cause to congratulate himself in that the gallery gods had relaxed their brows, and resolved to hang instead of banishing him, as before. Had such a stroke of good fortune happened to him in the previous year, it would have rejoiced him exceedingly: he would have felt it to be the very accolade of his knighthood, a most refreshing spray from the fountain of all honor. But now matters were very different with him; fame had ceased to be his deity; and the news that his friend had brought him was hailed rather because it was not that other news which he had feared to hear than upon its own account, as a relief rather than a triumph.

Whether "Supplication" was really a good picture or not, this present writer, who is, he confesses, one of those ignorant Philistines who only know what they like, must be excused from positively asserting. "If you want to know whether a diamond is a good one," said an eminent R. A. in his hearing, "you go to a jeweller for his opinion; and if you want to know whether a painting is good or bad, you must go to a painter for the information: to buy one upon your own responsibility is an act of madness; to pass your opinion upon it is an impertinence." The newspapers were silent, greatly to Mr. John Pelter's disgust, with the exception of a few lines of praise that he himself got inserted in the Art Critic, and the inspiration of which Walter immediately detected, though he did not say so, for his friend's sake. It annoyed honest Jack immensely that there seemed so little chance of seeing that red star in the corner of Litton's picture which has lit up the despondent gloom of so many a young painter and make his darkness day. After the first month most pictures that are fated to sell are sold; and more than a month had passed since early May. Some weeks after this date, notwithstanding, there came a letter to Walter one evening—when the two friends were together as usual—from the Academy official, to ask what price he had put upon his picture; and this, after a moment's hesitation, he placed in Pelter's hand.

"Well, better late than never, my lad," cried the latter joyfully. "This is as it should be. I had begun to think that all the world was blind."

"They have not seen with your kind eyes, Jack," said the other gravely; "that is all."

"Well, they see now, and that's something," answered Pelter impatiently. "But why does this bungling fellow write to you instead of telling the man or the woman—for I'll take two to one it's a woman. There's true religion in that picture, Walter; I don't mind telling you, now that you have found a purchaser. It's some woman with good eyes in her head, and a good heart, and, I hope, a good balance at her banker's, who wants it. Well, I say why didn't the fellow tell her your price at once?"

"Because he didn't know it," said Walter quietly.

"Not know it! Why, didn't you fix it a hundred pounds yourself?"

"No, Jack; that was your price, not mine. I didn't mention any price; indeed, as I told you long ago, I don't think I care to sell it."

"Not sell it! Then why the deuce did you paint it?"

To paint a picture without the intention of getting rid of it, and as soon as you could, was, in Jack's eyes, the act of a lunatic.

"I painted it for my pleasure."

"Oh, did you, begad? Then you are nothing better than an amateur." The epithet had the same force with Mr. Pelter as though he had called a benighted clergyman of the Church of England a ranter. "Of course, you can do as you please, if you are rich enough. You can paint a dozen pictures, and hang them up in your room, so that wherever you turn you can see yourself, as it were, in your own looking-glass. One may be as vain as one pleases, or anything else one pleases, if one is rich. And yet I thought I heard you the other day complaining about shortness of cash; to be sure, it did not affect yourself, but only stood in the way of what was, after all, perhaps a Quixotic scheme of benevolence in connection with an old cobbler."

"I am not rich, my dear fellow," interrupted Walter gravely; "but when a man spends everything upon himself, as I once heard you observe, he can make a little money go a good way."

"I didn't say it of you," growled Pelter, touched with the other's resolute good humor. "No; I am sure you didn't, though, for that matter, I am just as selfish as other people. You are quite right in suggesting that I cannot afford to keep my pictures, and yet I propose to keep this one. If you ask me why?"

"Not I," struck in Jack savagely. "I am not a woman, that I should wish to pry into any man's secrets."

"There is no secret," said Walter hastily; "it is perhaps, after all, but a foolish sentiment."

"Of course it is. I know that much without your telling me," answered the other contemptuously. "But you will find such sentiments costly even for a rich man."

"I wish I had never sent the picture there at all," sighed Walter. "I don't mean that your advice, Jack, wasn't wise as well as kind," added he quickly, laying his hand on the other's arm; "but I never thought this would have happened—that anybody would have wanted to buy it."

"Well, I never like talking about what I don't understand, so we'll say no more about it."

By the last post that night there came another letter for Walter.

(To be Continued.)

Are the Main Drains and Sewers of Our Cities Flushed as often as They Should Be?

We recently had the opportunity of conversing with a Sanitary Plumber of one of our largest cities regarding city drains and sewers, and knowing that gentleman to be thoroughly posted on the subject asked him the question,—"Are the main drains and sewers of our large cities flushed as often as they should be?"

"Well, sir, that is a most important question and very few of our citizens ever give the matter a thought," replied the Sanitarian.

"This ought to be a question of great import to all good citizens who are interested in the public health," we ventured to say.

"Yes," said the Sanitarian, "the health of all large cities and towns depends in a great measure upon the good working of sewers and drains, and I must add, our authorities are not sufficiently alive to the great necessity of frequent flushings and disinfection. It is owing to this criminal negligence that so much disease prevails in large centres of population. We hear our doctors speaking of Fevers, Diphtheria, Blood poisoning and sickness generally—well sir, it is the result, of not only filthy and poisonous sewers and drains, but of ill-constructed and improper traps. The sanitary regulations of our city are fairly good but the laws are not enforced rigidly enough."

Here is a state of things that must surprise the most careless and indifferent, and lead to serious contemplation and thought. The inhabitants of our large cities and towns, being thus assured that sanitary laws and regulations are not properly enforced, should with great care look to the safety of themselves and families. Great care should be taken of those who are not strong and robust, and of those who are predisposed to disease.

The loving wife and mother on whom so many cares devolve in the management of home and children, may be weak, languid, morose and sleepless; her brain power has been strained to such a degree, that she has become a victim of melancholia. It may be that the bread-winner of the family has been overworked, and that nervousness has laid hold of him. His step is feeble and unsteady; his hand is trembling, and his whole system out of gear. Some loved son or daughter, or brother or sister may suffer from some of these ills, or it may be from Dyspepsia, Indigestion, Neuralgia or Rheumatism.

Reader, if any suffer from the ailments just mentioned, their position is a terribly dangerous one in view of the unsanitary condition of our large cities and towns. They are fit subjects for any prevailing fever and disease, as they do not possess the vitality to resist them.

You can ensure their safety and health in one way—simply by making use of Paine's Celery Compound. It is a builder of nerve, brain and body, and at the same time purifies the whole system. Sluggish and impure blood is made to course through the body, as nature intended, and the whole system of digestion is rendered easy and natural.

Paine's Celery Compound, aided by moderate exercise and frequent bathing, will give to man or woman that perfect life and vigor that no other remedy on earth can bestow. Physicians in Canada and United States prescribe it daily and recommend it to all.