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THE ARTIST.*

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Pol. Masterly done :
The very life seems warm upon her lip.
Leon. The fixture of her eye has motion in't,
As we are mocked with art.

Shakspeare.

“ Yes, it is in Guido’s style ! and there are thousands of the uninitiated, who would fail to detect in it any inferiority to the works of that unrivalled master,” exclaimed Pierre Mignard, as, casting aside his palette, he remained gazing with infinite satisfaction on a Magdalen, to which he had just given the last touches of his pencil. “ It is perfect,” he added,—“ the expression, the colouring, the harmony of the whole. I have succeeded in imitating the style and character of Guido,—even his peculiarities I have caught ; and if but one connoisseur, in the presence of Count De Clairville, will pronounce it the work of that artist, my triumph is complete, for fame and Rosalie are won !”

A glow of joy lit up the fine face of the artist, as he uttered these words, and in the excess of his emotion he rapidly traversed the space which paintings, casts, statuary, and other auxiliaries to his noble art, left vacant in his crowded studio. In passing a small stand of porphyry, the elaborately wrought pedestal of which declared it an antique of no mean value, he paused, and taking up a small miniature, gazed upon it till tears of intense feeling moistened his dark and lustrous eyes.

“ Yes, it is for thee, sweet Rosalie, that I have wrought at this task,” he said, pressing the picture again and again to his lips,—“ to win thee ! for what were fame without thee ? what to me the praise of having successfully imitated the greatest master of my art, if I see not thy cheek kindle at my well earned triumph ? Thy father’s words, ‘ When thou canst paint like Guido, thou may’st ask and obtain the hand of my daughter,’ are written as with a sunbeam on my soul, and have incited me to perseverance in this work—the greatest I have ever yet accomplished, and which now I send forth, the silent, yet eloquent arbiter of my fate.”

He hid the miniature in his breast, and turning again towards the Magdalen, once more fixed his pleased regards upon it, as it stood there in the rich and massive frame to which it had that day been transferred, a fitting ornament for the palace of a prince. Then throwing his cloak around him, he sallied forth, and with a light and rapid step, threaded street after street, for evening was approaching, and he feared to find the office of the opulent broker whom he sought, closed before he reached it. But he arrived in time to find the man of business at his post, and the heap of gold and unredeemed notes, that covered a table before him, denoted the day’s harvest to have been an abundant one.

Paul Roussard was a portly personage, with a shrewd yet jovial countenance, and a cordial warmth of manner that won him many friends. He was called a usurer by the class whose vices and extravagance compelled them to seek his aid, and accept it on his own terms—for such, indeed, he had no mercy ; deeming it a duty to make their excesses the means of their chastisement ; but he was a firm and true friend, and to the depressed and needy, a liberal benefactor. He had always felt and expressed for the young artist an interest peculiarly strong, and as he now saw him approach, he greeted him with a warm smile and a cordial grasp of the hand ; then, pointing to the gold which lay before him,

“ How fares it with thee, my young knight of the easel ?” he said, “ Has thy art brought thee, since the sun rose this morning, such a heap of gold as this ? Tell me that it has, and I will say thy craft is better than mine,”—and as he spoke, he swept the glittering coin into a capacious drawer, which he

* The anecdote which forms the ground-work of this tale, is related by several authentic writers, of the French artist Mignard, who was remarkable for his admirable imitations of the great masters.