

fashioned grate, contracted into the smallest possible compass by cheeks of firebrick. Throughout the room, scrupulously neat in every detail, Lucius recognized the guiding spirit of parsimony, tempered in all things by some gentler household spirit which contrived to impart some look of comfort even to those meagre surroundings. A pair of candles, not lighted, stood on the table. Mr. Sivewright lighted one of these, and for the first time Lucius was able to see what manner of man his new acquaintance was. All he had been able to discover in the fog was the leonine head and hawk's eye.

The light of the candle showed him a countenance once handsome, but now deeply lined, the complexion dark and sallow, deepening to almost a copper tint in the shadows. The nose aquiline and strongly marked, with thin delicately curved nostrils; the upper lip singularly long, the mouth about as indicative of softness or flexibility as if it had been fashioned out of wrought iron; the cheeks worn and hollow; the brow and temples almost hidden by the long loose gray hair, which gave that lion-like aspect to the large head—altogether a face and head to be remembered. The figure tall and spare, but with breadth of shoulder; at times bent, but in some moments of vivacity drawn suddenly erect, as if the man by mere force of will could when he pleased recover for an interval the lost energy of his departed youth.

"A curious face," thought Lucius; "and there is something in it—something that seems like a memory or an association—which strikes me more forcibly than the face itself. Yet I know not what. I daresay I have dreamed of such a face, or have shaped it in my own fancy to fit some favorite creature—Ugolino, Lear, who knows!"

"Sit down," said Mr. Sivewright, pointing to a chair opposite his own, into which he had established himself with as comfortable an air as if the chair itself had been the crowning triumph of luxurious upholstery. "You can drink claret, I suppose?" taking a couple of glasses from the Florentine cabinet, and filling them with the wine on the table. "I drink no other wine myself. A sound light Medoc which can hurt nobody."

"Nobody whose stomach is fortified with a double casing of iron," thought Lucius, as he sipped the acid beverage, which he accepted out of courtesy.

"Ten minutes past six," said Mr. Sivewright, ringing a bell; "my dinner ought to be on the table."

An inner door behind Lucius opened as he spoke, and a girl came into the room carrying a little tray, with two small covered dishes. Lucius supposed the new-comer to be a servant, and did not trouble himself to look up till she had placed her dishes on the table, and lingered to give the finishing touches to the arrangement of the board. He did look up then, and saw that this ministering spirit was no common serving-wench, but one of the most interesting women he had ever seen.

She was hardly to be called a woman; she was but in the opening blossom of girlhood; a fragile-looking flower, pale as some waxen petal, exotic reared under glass, with the thermometer at seventy-six. She had something foreign, or even tropical, in her appearance; eyes dark as night, hair of the same sombre hue. Her figure was of middle height, slim, but with no sharpness of outline; every curve perfection, every line grace itself. Her features were delicately pencilled, but not strikingly beautiful. Indeed, the chief and all-pervading charm of her appearance was that exquisite delicacy, that flower-like fragility which moved one to exclaim "How lovely, but how short-lived!"

Yet it is not always these delicate blossoms which fade the first; the sturdy foxglove will sometimes be mown down by death's inexorable sickle, while the opal-hued petals of the dog-rose still breast the storm. There was a strength of endurance beneath this fragile exterior which Lucius would have been slow to believe in. The girl glanced at the stranger with much surprise, but without the slightest embarrassment. Rarely did a stranger sit beside that hearth; but there had been such intruders from time to time, traders or clients of the old man's. She had no curiosity upon the subject.

"Your dinner is quite ready, grandfather," she said; "you had better eat it before it grows cold."

She lifted the covers from the two dainty little dishes—a morsel of steak cooked in some foreign fashion—a handful of sliced potato fried in oil.

Lucius rose to depart.

"I won't intrude upon you any longer, Mr. Sivewright," he said; "but if you will allow me to call upon you some day and look at your wonderful collection, I shall be very glad."

"Stay where you are," answered the other in his authoritative way; "you've dined, I've no doubt. A convenient way of settling that question. Lucille, my granddaughter, can give you a cup of tea."

Lucille smiled, with a little gesture of assent strikingly foreign, Lucius thought; and an English girl would hardly have been so gracious to a nameless stranger.

"I told you, when we first met in that abominable fog that liked your voice. I'll go farther now, and say I like your face. I forgive you your profession, as I said before. Stay, and see my collection to-night."

"That is as much as to say, 'See all you want to see to-night, and don't plague me with any future visits,'" thought Lucius, who found that meagrely-furnished room, that scanty fire, more attractive since the appearance of Lucille.

He accepted the invitation, however; drew his chair to the tea-table, and drank two cups of tea and ate two or three small slices of bread-and-butter with a sublime disregard of the fact that he had not broken his fast since eight o'clock in the morning. He had acquired a passion for mild decoctions of congo in those days of privation far away beyond the Saskatchewan; and this particular tea seemed to have a subtle aroma that made it better than any he had ever brewed for himself beside his solitary hearth.

"I became a tea-drinker four years ago, in the Far West," he said, as an excuse for his second cup.

"Do you mean in America?" the girl asked eagerly.

"Yes. Have you ever been over yonder?"

"Never; only I am always interested in hearing of America."

"You had much better be interested in hearing of the moon," said Mr. Sivewright with an angry look; "you are just as likely to discover anything there that concerns you."

"You have relations or friends in America, perhaps, Miss Sivewright?" inquired Lucius; but a little warning look and gesture from Lucille prevented his repeating the question.

He began to tell her some of his adventures beyond the Red River—not his hours of dire strait and calamity, not the horror of his forest experiences; those were things he never spoke of, scenes he dared not think of, which it was misery to him to remember.

"You must have gone through great hardship," she said, after listening to him with keen interest. "Were you never in actual peril?"

"Once. We were lost in a forest beyond the Rocky Mountains. But that is a period I do not care to speak of. My dearest friend was ill—at the point of death. Happily for us a company of Canadian emigrants, bound for the gold-fields, came across our track just in time to save us. But for that providential circumstance I shouldn't be here to tell you the story. Wolves or wolverines would have picked my bones."

"Horrible!" exclaimed Lucille, with a shudder.

"Yes. Wolves are not agreeable society. But human nature is still more horrible when it casts off the mask of civilisation."

Mr. Sivewright had finished his dinner by this time, and had absorbed two glasses of the sound Medoc without a single contortion of his visage; a striking instance of the force of habit.

"Come," said he. "I'll show you some of my collection. You're no judge of art, I suppose. I never knew a young man who was; though they're always ready enough with their opinions."

He took up one of the candles, and led the way to the hall, thence to a room on the other side of the house, larger than the family sitting-room, and used as a storehouse for his treasures. Here Lucius beheld the same confusion of *bric-à-brac* which had bewildered him on his first entrance into that singular mansion, only on a larger scale. Pictures again, statues again, cabinets, tables, fragmentary pieces of mediæval oak carving, stray panels that had once lined old Flemish churches, choir-stalls with all the sacred story carved upon their arms and backs; armour again, grim and ghastly as the collection of the Hôtel Cluny, demonstrating how man's invention, before it entered the vast field of gunnery, had lavished its wanton cruelty on forms that hack and hew, and jag and tear and saw; spiky swords, pole-axes with serrated edges, spears with dangling iron balls studded with sharp points, and so on. Ceramic ware, again, of every age, from a drinking-vessel dug from beneath one of the earth-mounds on the shores of the Euphrates to the chocolate-tère out of which Marie Jeanne Vaubernier, otherwise Du Barri, took her last breakfast; and rising grim above the frivolities of art loomed the gaunt outline of a Scottish Maiden, the rough germ of the Gallic guillotine.

The old man looked round his storehouse with a smile of triumph, holding aloft his single candle, every object showing strangely, and casting uncanny shadows in that feeble light, he himself not the least curious figure in the various picture. He looked like some enchanter, who, at a breath, had called these things into being.

"You astound me!" exclaimed Lucius, looking about him with unfeigned wonder. "You spoke some time ago of having saved the remnant of your stock; but you have here a collection larger than I should have supposed any dealer in curiosities would care to amass, even in the full swing of his business."

"Perhaps," answered Mr. Sivewright with a dreamy air. "For the mere purposes of trade—for trade upon the nimble-ninety-nine system—there is no doubt too much. But these things have accumulated since I left off business. The passion for collecting them was not to be put away as easily as I put up my shutters with the expiry of a long lease. My happy of a landlord asked a rent so exorbitant, that I preferred cutting short a successful trade to pandering to his greed. True that the situation had increased in value during the last twenty-one years of my residence; but, in short, I declined to toll for another man's profit. I turned my back upon Bond-street, determined to take life quietly in future. I found this old house—a dead bargain, and roomy enough to hold my treasures. Since that time I have amused myself by attending all the great sales, and a good many of the little ones, I have even been over to Paris—and farther afield—on special occasions. My collection has grown upon me—it represents all I possess in the world, all that I can ever leave to my descendants. As I told you, I anticipate that as the value of money decreases, and the

age grows more artistic, the value of these specimens, all relics of departed arts, will be multiplied fourfold."

"A wise investment in that case," replied Lucius; "but if the age should have touched its highest point of luxurious living, if the passion for splendid surroundings, once the attribute only of a Buckingham or a Hertford, now the vice of the million, should work its own cure, and give place to a Spartan simplicity, how then?"

"My collection would most likely be purchased by the State," said the old man coolly; "a destiny which I should infinitely prefer to its disintegration, however profitable. Then, Mr. Davoren, the name of Homer Sivewright would go down to posterity linked with one of the noblest museums ever created by a single individual."

"Pardon me," said Lucius; "but your name Homer—is that a family or merely a Christian name?"

"The name given me by my foolish old father—whose father was a contemporary of Bentley who gave his life to the study of Homer, and tried to establish the thesis that early Greece had but one poet; that the cyclic poets were the merest phantasms; and that Stasimus, Arctinus, Lesches, and the rest, were but the mouthpieces of that one mighty bard. Every man is said to be mad upon one point, or mad once in twenty-four hours. My father was very mad about Greek. He gave me my ridiculous name—which made me the laughing-stock of my school-fellows—a university education, and his blessing. He had no more to give. My college career cost him the only fortune he could have left me; and I found myself at one-and-twenty fatherless, motherless, homeless, and penniless, and—what to my poor father would have seemed worst of all plucked for my incapacity to appreciate the niceties of Homeric Greek."

"How did you weather the storm?"

"I might not have weathered it at all, but for a self-delusion which sustained me in the very face of starvation. But for that I could hardly have crossed Waterloo-bridge without being sorely tempted to take the shortest cut out of my perplexities. I fancied myself a painter. That dream kept me alive. I got bread somehow; sold my daubs to a dealer; made some progress even in the art of daubing; and only after five years of hard work and harder living awoke one day to the bitter truth that I was no more a painter than I was a Grecian, no nearer Reynolds than Porson."

"You bore your disappointment bravely, I imagine."

"Why imagine that?"

"Because your physiognomy teaches me your ability to come safely through such an ordeal—a will strong enough to stand against even a worse shock."

"You are right. I parted with my delusion quietly enough, though it had brightened my boyhood, and kept me alive during five weary years. As I could not be a painter of pictures, I determined to be a dealer in them, and began life once more in a little den of a shop, in a court near Leicester-square—began with ten pounds for my capital; bought a bit of old china for three-and-sixpence, and sold it for five shillings; had an occasional stroke of luck as time went by; once picked up a smoke-darkened picture of a piggery, which turned out an indisputable Morland; went everywhere and saw everything that was to be seen in the shape of pictures and ceramic ware; lived in an atmosphere of art, and brought to bear upon my petty trade a genuine passion for art, which stood me in good stead against bigwigs whose knowledge was only technical. In four years I have a stock worth three thousand pounds, and was able to open a shop in Bond-street. A man with a window in Bond-street must be an arrant ass if he can't make money. The dilettanti found me out, and discovered that I had received the education of a gentleman. Young men about town made my shop a lounge. I sold them the choicest brands of cigars under the rose, and occasionally lent them money, for which I charged them about half the interest they would have paid a professed usurer. My profits were reinvested in fresh stock as fast as they accumulated. I acquired a reputation for judgment and taste; and, in a word, I succeeded, which I should never have done had I insisted upon thinking myself a neglected Raphael."

"I thank you for your history, more interesting to my mind than any object in your collection. I do not wonder that you were loth to part with the gems of art you had slowly gathered; but had none of your children the inclination to continue so fascinating a trade?"

"My children," repeated Homer Sivewright, with a gloomy look; "I have no children. When you talk to a stranger, Mr. Davoren, beware of commonplace questions. They sometimes gall a raw spot."

"Pardon me; only seeing that interesting young lady—your granddaughter—"

"That granddaughter represents all my kindred upon earth. I had a son—that girl's father—but there is not a figure carved on yonder oaken choir-stalls that is not of more account to me than that son is now."

Lucius was silent. He had been unlucky enough to stumble upon the threshold of a family mystery. Yes, he had fancied some touch of sadness, some vague shadow of a quiet grief, in that sweet young face. The child of a disgraced father; doubtless her gentle spirit even yet weighed down by the memory of some ancient shame. He thought of the sorrow that had darkened his own youth—the bitter memory of which haunted him even yet—the memory of his lost sister.

He went through the collection, seeing things as well as he could by the doubtful light of a solitary candle. Mr. Sivewright displayed his various treasures with infinite enthusiasm; dilating upon the modelling here, the coloring there; through all the technicalities of art. He kept his guest absorbed in this investigation for nearly two hours, although there were moments when the younger man's thoughts wandered back to the parlor where they had left Lucille.

He was thinking of her even while he appeared to listen with intense interest to Mr. Sivewright's explanation of the difference between *pâte tendre* and *pâte dure*; wondering if she lived alone in that huge rambling house with her grandfather, like little Nell in the Old Curiosity Shop; only it was to be hoped with no such diabolical familiarity as Quilp privileged to intrude upon her solitude. So anxious was he to be satisfied on this point, that he ventured to ask the question, despite his previous ill-fortune.

"Yes," answered Mr. Sivewright coolly, "we live quite alone. Dull, you'll say, perhaps, for my granddaughter. If it is, she must resign herself to circumstances. There are worse things to bear than want of company. If she hadn't this home, she'd have none. Well, I suppose you've seen as many of these things as you care about. I can see your mind's wandering, so we may as well bid each other good-night. I'm obliged to you for your civility this afternoon. This way."

He opened the door into the hall. A somewhat abrupt dismissal, and one Lucius had not expected. He had reckoned upon finishing his evening far more pleasantly in the society of Lucille.

"I should like to bid Miss Sivewright good-evening," he said.

"There's no occasion. I can do it for you. There's your hat, on the black-marble slab yonder," seeing his visitor looking round in search of that article, with a faint hope that he might have left it in the parlor.

"Thanks. But I hope you don't forbid my coming to see you again sometimes?" Lucius asked bluntly.

"Humph!" muttered the old man, "it would sound ungracious to talk of forbidding any future visit. But I have lived in this house five years, and have not made an acquaintance. One of the chief attractions of this place, to my mind, was the fact that it was cut off by a ten-foot wall from the world outside. With every wish to be civil, I can't see why I should make an exception in your favor. Besides you've seen all there is worth seeing within these walls; you could have no possible pleasure in coming to us. We are poor, and we live poorly."

"I am not a seeker of wealthy acquaintance. A quiet fireside—an atmosphere of home—brightened by the refinements of art: that is what I should value above all things in a house where I was free to visit; and that your house could give me. But if you say No, I submit. I cannot force myself upon you."

"I have a granddaughter who will be penniless if she offends me," said the old man, with the same gloomy look which had darkened his face when he spoke of his son. "I do not care for any strange influence to come between us. As it is, we are happy—not loving each other in any silly romantic fashion, but living together in calm endurance of each other. No; I should be a fool to admit any disturbing element."

"Be it so," said Lucius. "I am a struggling man, and have hardly trodden the first stage of an uphill journey. The friendship I offer is not worth much."

"I should refuse it in exactly the same manner if you were a millionaire," answered the other, opening the heavy old door, and admitting a rush of damp fog. He led the way across the forecourt, unlocked the tall iron gate, and his visitor passed out into the sordid realities of the Shadrack-road.

"Once more, good-night," said Mr. Sivewright.

"Good-night," answered Lucius, as the gate closed upon him, with a creak like the note of an evil-minded raven. He turned his face homeward, intensely mortified. He was a proud man, and had offered his friendship to a retired bric-à-brac dealer only to have it flatly rejected. But it was not wounded pride which vexed him as he walked home through the fog.

"There's no such thing as love at first sight," he said to himself; "yet when a man has lived for half-a-dozen years without seeing a pretty face in his own rank of life, his heart is apt to be rather inflammable."

To be continued.

PERSIAN LADIES' DRESS.—Of all the female costumes of the East the Persian is undoubtedly the most unbecoming. It is perfectly impossible to tell whether the figure wrapped in pillow-case and latticed veil belongs to a girl of fourteen or an old lady of sixty. Indoors a Persian lady is scarcely less inelegant. The long trousers are usually of thick silk, reaching down to the ankle, and from twenty to five-and-twenty yards wide, and so stiff that they stand out like the old hooped petticoats of our grandmothers. The upper part of the body is covered by a bodice, more or less richly embroidered, under which a white silk chemise is to be seen. The Persian manner of sitting is not crossed-legged, *à la Turque*, but is a complete kneeling position, with the hips almost resting upon the ankles, and the back upon a cushion.