

to the acquirement of knowledge had acted on his character, making it deeper and stronger, and bringing about that difference which is apparent to anyone who has had any experience of human nature, the difference between one who has theories about life, and one who lives. Suffering is a great educator. Where it does not embitter, it cannot fail to ennoble by the very necessity for endurance which it involves. To Michael's temperament doubts were not easy. He was a man of action rather than a man of thought, or rather he combined action with thought, and there is less danger of unbelief to such natures than to the purely intellectual. There was much in his intercourse with the scientific world, and in the material side of the studies he prosecuted to turn him from the simple faith of his childhood, but he never abandoned it. When a man knows what to believe he knows what to do, and this is half the secret of contentment.

The young Englishman had many acquaintances in Paris, but few of them were of his own nationality. He had once or twice wondered, when he first went abroad, whether he should come across the artist-friend to whom Beattie had alluded. It would have been nice to see someone who knew her, but neither at the house of the English chaplain nor elsewhere had he encountered her, and gradually he had forgotten that such a person existed.

One bright morning, however, as he passed the Salon du Champ de Mars he could not resist going in to look again at some of the pictures he had already seen. There was one by Doyen that somehow reminded him of Norah. It was called "Le Chapelet," and represented the kneeling figure of a girl at prayer. There was something in the contour and expression of the face that recalled her to him far more than the photograph he had of her, taken at the nearest market-town four years ago, and which required imagination to invest it with any charm. There was another picture which also had an interest for him, though of a totally different kind. It was that weird and almost terrible study of Moreau de Tours, "Les 'fascinés' de la Charité."

There was rather a crowd round this last, which indeed could not fail to command attention, especially among those who do not care only for what is pleasing in art. The rapt, entranced faces in the picture, some of them horrible, some almost beautiful, with the individuality of the person showing in each, were very remarkable, and although the Englishman did not care for the sensational, or indeed in its modern sense the realistic in pictorial representations, yet he could not but own the power with which the subject was handled. He was still looking at it when he felt someone push gently but firmly past him, and then a voice at his elbow said, in remonstrance—

"But no, my dear, do not regard that. It is not fitting."

The speaker was a Frenchwoman, and she had stretched forth a detaining hand and laid it on the arm of the girl she

addressed, who, however, did not pay the remotest attention to her, but having conquered for herself an excellent position, was now quietly scrutinising the picture.

The other gave a little sigh and abandoned herself to the inevitable, for indeed the back view of her companion, as exhibited to Michael, testified to a determination that was certainly associated with independence. Michael, somewhat amused, gave a sidelong glance at the vanquished, and beheld a tiny, wizened old woman, not more than five feet high, and certainly not likely to enjoy being in a crowd where she could not see anything. Even Michael, who was a foot higher, had lost something by abandoning his post to the young woman, who now occupied it. "She deserves to succeed," he said to himself, smiling, for there had been something persistent and masterly in the pressure by which, without rudeness, the young lady had insinuated herself into her present position. Looking at her, Michael concluded that she was not French. There was a complete absence of style, coupled with a certain impression of solid serviceableness in her apparel, that did not suggest even a provincial Frenchwoman. Presently she turned her profile towards the old lady, who, as if for protection, was still grasping her sleeve, and said in French, but with an unmistakably English accent—

"It is most interesting. If you do not care to see it, go on to something else, and I will join you."

"But, my dear Miss Raven," began the old lady, and finished her sentence with a little shriek, for someone, stepping backwards, had trodden heavily on her foot.

The delinquent offered profuse apologies, which, considering his probable weight, for he was a big, fat fellow, were indeed called for. The little foot which madame was lifting so plaintively was not formed to support so great a pressure. At the sound of her cry her companion had at once turned to her, and with as much steady resolution as she had evinced before, pushed her way out and led her friend limping away. Michael, seeing the latter was suffering, and feeling that his profession and the nationality of the young lady, of which he had now no doubt, might justify his interference, followed them and proffered his assistance.

"Can I be of any use to you?" he asked addressing the younger woman. "I am afraid the lady will not be able to stand about now."

And indeed madame was supporting herself on one leg, like some pathetic little bird, tears of pain running down her cheeks.

Margaret, for it was she, gave a sigh of relief.

"How good of you," she said, without hesitation. "If you would fetch us a conveyance of some sort I shall take her straight home. Careless brute, why couldn't he look where he was going?"

Margaret's language was more forcible than elegant, but Michael sympathised with her.

"The Frenchman would probably say madame's foot was so small he must be pardoned for not seeing it," he said smiling at the old lady. And as madame understood and was not too old to enjoy compliments, she smiled back at him through her tears.

"It is a nothing," she said. "The pain will doubtless soon cease. But for the moment!" and she made an expressive gesture.

"The gentleman is going to fetch a fiacre, madame. You will not care to stay now, and you won't need to walk at all."

Madame expressed her gratitude. She was a pretty little woman, with a face like a withered apple, black eyes, and tiny features. By the side of the substantial Margaret she looked like an old doll.

Michael returned and escorted her to the cab, madame thanking him volubly. He had very little idea what she was saying, however, as she spoke exceedingly fast, opening her mouth scarcely at all, and directing her words to his coat-sleeve, which was a bad conductor to his ears.

But Margaret was anything but unintelligible. While madame was babbling at his side, she directed to him several remarks in the outspoken way which was natural to her. She was never the victim of shyness, and she was unaffectedly glad to see an English face, especially one which inspired her with confidence.

"The exhibition is a striking one, isn't it?" she said. "Of course, there is a great deal that's not at all in the line of English people, but then there's no need for the French to consider our prejudices. Mrs. Grundy is purely insular," isn't she?"

"Oh, I expect she has her counterpart abroad. But anyhow, some of the studies one sees would hardly appeal to French people, would they?" said Michael.

"Perhaps not. But everyone has not the same tastes. There must be liberty in art, you see. The thing is not what subject an artist chooses, but what skill he uses in its treatment; if he is true to the laws of art he is a good artist. What he is as a man is another question."

Michael said "Oh." He did not feel called upon to argue the subject with this strange young woman, and he was a good deal amused at her.

"I am an artist myself, you see," said she, as if in excuse for having laid down the law. Michael said "Oh" again, this time with more respect.

"That's why I am interested in things that madame doesn't care for. She likes just what is pretty. Still, it was selfish of me to drag her about. She hates crowds; don't you, madame?" (They were supporting her between them; she with a hand on the arm of each of them.) "Now here is the cab. I will get in, and then perhaps you will assist her. Thank you."

Michael inquired what address he should give to the cabman, and then standing with head uncovered, he watched them drive away.