

**THE FIRESIDE.****A Freak of Fortune.**

Samuel Duhobret was a disciple of the famous engraver, Albert Durer, admitted into the art school out of charity. He was employed in painting signs and the coarse tapestry then used in Germany. As he was about forty years of age, small, ugly and humpbacked, he was the butt of ill jokes among his fellow pupils, and selected as a special object of dislike by Madam Durer, who tormented the scholars and domestics, as well as the master, by her Xantippical temper. Poor Duhobret had not a spice of malice in his heart, and not only bore all his trials with patience, eating without complaint the scanty crusts given him for dinner, while his companions fared better, but always showed himself ready to assist and serve those who scoffed at him. His industry was indefatigable. He came to his studies every morning at daybreak, and worked till sunset. During three years he plodded thus, and said nothing of the paintings he had produced in his lonely chamber by the light of his lamp. His bodily energies wasted under incessant toil. No one cared enough for him to notice the feverish color in his wrinkled cheek, or the increasing meagreness of his misshapen frame. No one observed that the poor pittance set aside for his mid-day meal remained untouched for several days. The poor artist made his appearance as usual, and as meekly bore the gibes of the students or the taunts of the lady; worked with the same untiring assiduity, though his hand trembled and his eyes were often suffused with tears.

One morning he was missing from the scene of his labors, and, though jokes were passed about his disappearance, no one thought of going to his lodgings to see if he were ill or dead. He was indeed prostrated by the low fever that had been lurking in his veins and slowly sapping his strength. He was half-delirious and muttered wild and incoherent words, fancying his bed surrounded by mocking demons, taunting him with his inability to call a priest to administer the words of comfort that might smooth his passage to another world.

From exhausted slumbers he awoke faint and with parched lips; it was the fifth day he had lain in his cell neglected. Feebly he stretched his hand out towards the earthen pitcher, and found that it contained not a drop of water. Slowly and with difficulty he arose; for he knew that he must procure sustenance or die of want. He had not a greutzler. He went to the other end of the room, took up the picture he had painted last, and resolved to carry it to a dealer who might give him enough for it to furnish necessaries for a week longer.

On his way he passed a house before which there was a great crowd. There was a sale, he learned, of many specimens of art collected during thirty years by an amateur. The wearied Duhobret thought he might find a market for his picture. He worked his way through the crowd, dragged himself up the steps and found the auctioneer, a busy little man, holding a handful of papers, and inclined to be rough with the lean, sallow hunchback who so eagerly implored his attention.

"What do you call your picture?" he asked.

"It is a view of the Abby of Newburg, with the village and landscape," replied the artist.

The auctioneer looked at him, hummed contemptuously, and asked his price.

"Whatever you please; whatever it will bring," was the anxious reply.

"Hem!"—with an unfavorable criticism—"I can promise you no more than three thalers."

Poor Duhobret had spent the nights of many months on that piece. But he was starving, and the pittance offered would buy him bread. He nodded to the auctioneer, and retired to a corner.

After many paintings and engravings had been sold, Duhobret's was exhibited.

"Who bids? Three thalers! Who bids?" was the cry. The poor artist held his breath; no response was heard. Suppose it should not find a purchaser! He dared not look up; he thought everybody was laughing at the folly of offering so worthless a piece at public sale. "It is certainly my best work!" he murmured piteously to himself. He ventured to glance at the picture as the auctioneer held it in a favorable light. There was certainly a beautiful freshness in the rich foliage, a transparency in the water, a freedom and life in the animals! The steeple, the trees, the whole landscape, showed the genius of an artist. Alas! he felt the last throb of an artist's vanity. The dead silence continued, and, turning away, he buried his face in his hands.

"Twenty-one thalers!" a faint voice called out. The stupefied painter gave a start of joy, and looked to see who had uttered those blessed words. It was the picture dealer to whom he first meant to go.

"Fifty thalers!" cried the sonorous voice of a tall man in black.

There a moment's silence. "One hundred thalers!" at length cried the picture dealer, evidently piqued and anxious.

"Two hundred"

"Three hundred!"

"Four hundred!"

"One thousand thalers!"

Another profound silence; and the crowd pressed around the two opponents, who stood opposite to each other with flushed and angry faces.

The tall stranger bid fifteen hundred thalers.

"Two thousand thalers!" thundered the picture dealer, glancing around him triumphantly.

"Ten thousand!" verocified the tall man, his face crimson with rage, and his hands clinched convulsively.

The dealer grew pale, his frame shook with agitation. His voice was suffocated; but after two or three efforts he cried out

"Twenty thousand"

His tall opponent bid forty thousand.

The dealer hesitated. His adversary laughed a low laugh of insolent triumph, and the crowd gave a murmur of admiration.

The picture-dealer felt his peace at stake, and called out in sheer desperation;

"Fifty thousand"

The tall man hesitated; the crowd was breathless. At length, tossing his arms in defiance, he shouted:

"One hundred thousand!" adding an impatient execration against his adversary. The crestfallen picture-dealer withdrew.

The tall victor bore away the prize. He passed through the wondering people, went out and was going along the street, when a decrepit, lame humpbacked wretch, tottering along by the aid of a stick, presented himself before him. The stranger threw him a piece of money, and waved his hand as if dispensing with thanks.

"May it please your honor," persisted the supposed beggar, "I am the painter of that picture." He rubbed his eyes; for he had hardly yet been able to persuade himself that he had not been dreaming.

That tall man was Count Dunkelsbach, one of the richest noblemen in Germany. He stopped and questioned the artist. Being convinced of the truth of his statement, he took out his pocket-book, tore out a leaf and wrote on it a few lines.

"Take it friend," he said, "it is the check for your money. Good morning."

Duhobret invested his money and resolved to live luxuriously for the rest of his life, cultivating painting as a pastime. But though he had borne privation and toil, prosperity was too much for him. Indigestion carried him off.—His picture had long an honored place in the cabinet of Count Dunkelsbach, and the curious incident of its purchase was often related. It afterward passed into the possession of the King of Bavaria.

**Hams and Bacon.**

*For Sale by the Subscriber :*

Pickled Hams; Dry Salted Do.; Sugar Cured Do.; Fitch Bacon; Middles or Breakfast Do.; Mild Cured.

—ALSO—

200 Tubs Rimouski Butter

J. R. PEVERLEY.

QUEBEC, 25th Nov. 1870. 3—tt