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THREE PICTURES AND ONE PORTRAIT.

(From Putnam's Magazine.)

But often as I saw the Countess, and long and freely as we conversed together, she scarcely ever made even the slightest allusion to her past life. Once, when I made some remark about her name of Feodora, she said that she had not always borne it. 'I was received into the Greek Church on my marriage,' she said, 'and was then baptized by that name.' On another occasion, when I spoke of her fondness for art and literature, she answered, 'They were my only solace during many years,' and then instantly changed the conversation. Once, too, while she was displaying to me some drawings by Gustave Dore, she pointed out one which she said had been designed by him at her order. 'I call it my portrait,' she added, with a faint smile.—The drawing, though small, was wonderfully spirited, and the singularity of the design, combined with the excellence of the execution, caused it to make an indelible impression on my memory. It represented a veiled female figure extended on a couch. Around above her fluttered a host of little weeping Cupids, each bewailing some mishap that had befallen their weapons, some trying to sharpen their blunted arrows, while others strove to fasten their broken bow-strings. In striking contrast to these airy forms, a mocking fiend stood beside the lady. With one hand he upheld the veil from the left side of her bosom, while the other pointed with clawed and hideous forefinger at the dark void hollow visible beneath the shapely bust. There was no heart there.

The winter passed away; the warmth and brightness of an Italian Spring returned to gladden the earth; but the health of the Countess did not improve with the change of season, as she had hoped and expected. Her breathing was much oppressed, and her voice at times became utterly inarticulate. Still, though always suffering, she never seemed to be really ill, and she always spoke of her recovery as certain, though unaccountably delayed.

One evening as I was about to enter the Villa Mancini, I found Dr. Leverrier, Madame Orloff's physician, in the act of cutting it. I at once resolved to know the truth, respecting her health.

'Doctor,' I said, 'may I speak a word with you?'

'You may, if the word is a short one and briefly said, for I am in a great hurry,' answered the solemn looking Frenchman, drawing on his gloves as he spoke.

'Is the Countess dangerously ill?'

The Doctor looked fixedly at me for moment.

'If you have any influence over her?' he said, 'persuade her to send for her relatives or friends for she has not long to live. Her disease is not of the lungs, as she fancies, but an affection of the heart of the worst type. I cannot tell her of her condition, for the agitation attendant upon such an announcement would kill her instantly. But, in any event, she will die suddenly, without a moment's warning, before many months—nay, it may be before many weeks elapse.'

He left me; and I, rushing wildly from the house, fled to the deserted sea-shore, and there, prostrate on the sands, I wept out the agony that possessed my soul. It was then, in that moment of supreme anguish, I realized that I loved the Countess—I, the poor, almost unknown artist, loved her—but with a passion as vain, as hopeless, as unrequited, as ever filled a hapless soul with despair.

Time passed on; the spring days grew brighter, sweeter, longer, and the health of Madame Orloff seemed visibly to improve. She was stronger, suffered less, and her rare, sweet smile hovered oftener upon her lips. So marked was the change, that I sought Dr. Leverrier again, in the hope of hearing a reverse of his former opinion; but he merely reiterated what he had already said; and I left him with my new-born hope dying in my heart.

I was after this interview had taken place that I came to the desperate resolution of avowing my love for the Countess. I was perfectly well aware of the social gulf which existed between us, and which separated so widely the wealthy widow of Count Orloff from the poor and almost unknown artist; but I was half-frenzied at the idea of the woman I loved dying alone, among strangers, and tended only by menial hands. 'She may hearken to me,' I argued; 'and in that case I gain the right of a husband, or of a betrothed lover, to watch over the last days of her life, and to soothe the sufferings she may yet endure.' A strange, sad prospect for a young lover, was it not? yet such was my last, my fondest hope.

One beautiful evening in April, I sought her presence, with the avowal of my love trembling upon my lips. I found her, as usual, in the reception room, seated in a half-reclining attitude

on a low couch covered with scarlet satin. A volume of Victor Hugo's poems lay open before her, but she was not reading; her clasped hands rested on the open page, and the vague fixedness of her glance betrayed that her thoughts were far away. She started when I entered, as though aroused from her reverie, but smiled and welcomed me with all her customary courtesy and grace. We conversed for some little time; but her answers were vague and 'distracted'; and, at last, she said:

'I am but a dull companion this evening, Herr Meissner. My thoughts have wandered to the past; and, do what I will, I cannot induce them to return.'

'Shall I leave you, then, gracious Countess?' I stammered, half rising; 'I fear that my presence annoys you.'

'No, oh no! Remain with me, for I would fain speak to you of many incidents whose memory haunts me.' She remained for a few moments as if lost in thought. 'Alice has been a checkered life,' she resumed, 'and cursed with granted prayers. I have been ambitious; but I never formed a wish to wildly aspiring to be rich; and each wish, in its fulfilment, brought a curse. I had youth, beauty, genius; I staked them all in one desperate game, and I won—what! The right to choose the spot where I shall die, and the power to wear such baubles as these,' and she touched with a light, disdainful stroke one of the great solitaire diamond earrings which she habitually wore.

'Are you ill, gracious Countess?' I inquired, anxiously; 'your relations—your friends—'

She interrupted me with a smile.

'I have no relations,' she said; 'and, like Schiller's Mary Stuart, though I have been much loved, unlike her, I have never loved—never; so I have no friends—unless it be yourself, my kind Franz.'

It was the first time she had ever so called me by that name. I would have spoken; the confession of my love was on my lips, but she went on without heeding me.

'Come to me to-morrow,' she said; 'I feel that I am still far from strong, and I must rest. But to-morrow I will tell you the story of my life; and you shall advise me how to repair the errors of the past, and how to live more wisely and less selfishly in future. Ah, I have much to do!—much. I pray that God may grant me length of days.'

'Countess! I cried, rising—'

'Nay, not another,' she said, smiling. 'I am too weary to converse further to-night.—Good-bye, and come to me at noon to-morrow.'

She extended her slender, semi-transparent hand, and I pressed it respectfully to my lips.—Then I left her, but as I passed through the door I turned and looked back. Madame Orloff had sunk back among the scarlet cushions of her couch. Against that glowing background, her pale, beautiful face, dark shining eyes, and glossy hair, shined in the soft lamplight, with a peculiar and picturesque effect. She smiled a farewell to me, and I departed, to dream of her—and to dream, too, that life was worth the living, for that she loved me.

The next morning I reached the Villa Mancini punctually at the appointed hour, but was told by the servants that Madame Orloff had not yet quitted her room.

'Strange!' I exclaimed; 'for I am here at this hour by appointment.'

The servants consulted among themselves; and, at last, Mile. Eulalie, the waiting maid of the Countess, volunteered to go in search of her.

'Perhaps she is still sleeping,' she said; 'for, as she did not ring for me last night, I suppose she sat up half the night reading, as she often does.'

She went, but instantly returned, white as death, and wringing her hands.

'She is not there; her bed has never even been touched! Oh, my mistress—my poor mistress—where is she? What can have happened to her?'

A sudden and terrible fear shot through my heart.

'Seek for her there!' I cried, pointing to the door of the little reception-room.

The door was thrown open. I was the first to enter; and my worst fears were realized.—Pale, lifeless, but still most beautiful, she lay there, just as when I had quitted her; her cold hands still resting on the open volume, and her parting smile yet lingering in unfading loveliness upon her lips. She had died as the doctor had predicted, instantly, without a struggle and without a pang. Ah me! the struggle and the agony were all left for me.

I saw her once again. She lay in her coffin, then, almost concealed by the profusion of flowers with which she was covered. Perfectly beautiful she looked; but her features were calm, with the solemn serenity of Death, and the smile had faded from her lips—those lips whose promised revelations I was never to hear—whose touch, even in death, I was never to know!

The husband's family claimed the remains, and caused them to be transported to Russia, and laid in the family vault. Not even her grave remains to me. All that is left to me of my dead love is the resemblance that smiles upon me from the canvas of Vandyke.

Friends, was I not right in saying that my story was the saddest of the three? To you, Herr Halm, and to you, Herr Keller, the chances of Fate may yet restore your lost ones. Roschen and Ida doubtless yet live. But against me the one decree of Destiny, which never can be reversed, has been pronounced—the woman that I loved is dead!

His voice sank into silence. The last story was ended, and the three thus strangely united, were now to separate. They rose from the table, and Halm extended a hand to each of his guests.

'We may never meet again,' he said; but, from my heart, I thank you for the confidence you have reposed in me and in each other, as well as for the friendly sympathy and solace you have given me. One glass more at parting, friends—and so, farewell!

They parted, and no suspicion of the real bond which united them crossed their minds; that Roschen and Ida Rosen, and the Countess Orloff, were one and the same person. Yet so it was. The last line of each romance was written by the finger of Death, in the cold dust that mouldered in the stately-burial vault of the Orloffs.

AMERICA IN ITS RELATION TO IRISH EMIGRATION.

Almost magical as seem the resources of the painter's art, its power of depicting the subtle beauties, as well as the wonders and the glories of the external world, and representing not merely the actions, but the passions and emotions of men and women, whether they played their part on the great historic stage, or in the drama of domestic life,—still the capability of art is limited and circumscribed. Thus, for example, if a painter take for the subject of his picture a battle, in which miles of country are occupied with contending armies, and whole legions are engaged in active conflict, he can do little more than illustrate the fierceness of the strife by a group in the foreground, on which he lavishes his utmost skill and patience; while the mass of combatants are conveniently enveloped in the dust of charging squadrons, and the smoke of belching batteries; and only by a few vague outlines and dexterous touches are indicated the remote fortunes of the field of carnage, involving, possibly, the liberty of a people, or the supremacy of an empire. I employ this mode of representing the vastness of the subject comprehended within the title of my theme, and to explain the course which I must of necessity adopt on this occasion. Had I a dozen opportunities such as the present, I still could do no more than offer a series of sketches, limited in their scope and imperfect in their detail; so many, so boundless, are the subjects for consideration which America—as the home of millions, and the hope, I regret to say, of millions more of our race—suggests to the mind. I am, at least, in a position not only to appreciate the magnitude of the subject, but my inability to do it the remotest justice; so, therefore, as the painter seeks to fix the attention of the spectator on the prominent group in the foreground, must I confine my attempt and your attention to a few leading points, which, if not most interesting to you, would, in my judgment, be most useful to my countrymen—whom I now address through this assembly.

But, before I consider America as a home for the emigrant, I may, in justice to my convictions, if not to my consistency, answer the question which probably suggests itself to the minds of those who bear me—am I an advocate of Emigration? I am not. Possibly I may be looked upon as shortsighted and unwise, and not capable of taking that large and enlightened view of this great question taken by your mere cold-blooded theorist; but I regard such a migration as that from the shore of Ireland as a national calamity, and a grievous national wrong. Without in any way committing myself to the estimates put forward, and under no mean authority, as to the natural resources of this island, whether developed or latent, and its capability of supporting a far larger population than ever existed on its soil, I can have no doubt whatever that were these natural resources, of which we have been hearing so much, fairly developed, and the native energy of our people stimulated by the best of all incentives—the certainty of reward—this country could, at the very least, support seven millions of human beings in comfort and independence. Our population is now but five millions and a half, and we must look forward to a time, and that by no means remote, when our census returns will exhibit a still more striking decrease in what is considered in all other countries of the world the primal element of a nation's wealth, strength, and power. Far smaller coun-

tries than ours boast of a relatively larger population; and yet from this little island, a mere speck on the world's map, there has poured out a wondrous stream of human life, in a volume and density unparalleled in the annals of the human race, influencing the progress and civilization of other lands to an extent which is simply beyond calculation. From this island has gone forth an amount of human energy, capable of achieving the grandest results; and these it has achieved. It has penetrated the recesses of the forest, subjugated savage wilds, conquered and banished sterility by the magic of industry, dug canals, constructed railroads, erected ocean wharves, and built up cities rivaling in splendor the greatest capitals of the old world. This mighty human power, which so many, even Irishmen, treat with indifference, or regard with contempt, has amazingly assisted the development of the British Colonies, and done more for the United States of America—their progress and civilization—than has been effected for them by any other contribution which that vast continent has as yet received from the teeming lives of Europe. It has hitherto been the blind and fatal policy to get rid of the Irish race as speedily as possible, as incapable of being applied to any useful purpose in their own country; whereas the same physical power—the same power of brain and heart, bone and sinew, strength and endurance—that has achieved so much in other lands—that has created so much wealth for other states—might have been turned to profitable account in the country to which it naturally belonged, and which, to an ordinary mind, would appear to be the legitimate sphere of its operation.

But, unhappily, when emigration seemed to be so easy and so economical a mode of solving a difficult problem, statesmen, or those who were styled such, took little heed of what would have rendered emigration unnecessary, or seriously diminished its annual flow; and thus, to this very hour, we witness a state of things, affecting the far greater portion of the population, which offers but little inducement to our people to remain at home, and is not calculated to counterbalance the attractions that America holds out to the hopes of the young, the ardent, and the adventurous. Special circumstances, principally owing to the vicissitudes of trade and commerce, consequent upon revolution and war, may for the time influence the tide of emigration from Ireland; but considering that so many millions of our people are at the other side of the Atlantic, and that, as a rule, every Irish family at home has at least one member in that land whose name is a household word, and a harbinger of hope, in the remotest cabin, or glen, or mountain side, it is too probable that an exhausting stream will still continue to flow from our shores, unless some potent styptic be applied, and promptly too, to check this fatal waste of a nation's life-blood. This, at any rate, is not a matter of sentiment, but of national existence or extinction; and I can now only express an earnest hope, that our people may be so dealt with, so justly and so wisely governed, that this vital current may be arrested before it be too late,—ere the pallor of utter exhaustion banishes for ever the bloom of health and life that still flushes the fair face of our dear motherland. But to check emigration, or confine it within safe and natural limits, the public sentiment respecting its use and value must be changed; and those who exercise influence, whether for evil or for good, must be brought to understand that its people are a nation's wealth; that labor is capital; that human energy is so much creative power; and that every emigrant ship that steams out of an Irish harbor with three or four hundred sorrowful yet hopeful young men, and tearful but blooming and strong-hearted women, robs Ireland, their God-given home, of so much capital, wealth, and power. We have too often had occasion to pray that Heaven might change the hearts of our rulers. We should rather pray that the hearts of Irishmen should be changed, and their minds enlightened to the truth,—that a certain class of landlords and agents should abandon their hateful and unchristian theories, which are not only inconsistent with the history and experience of mankind, but opposed to the mercy and wisdom of Divine Providence. We must look no longer to Emigration as the solution of a great State problem; we must seek for it rather in the natural and beneficent results of justice and fair dealing between nation and nation, people and people, man and man.

From what I have said, I need scarcely add that I am not an advocate of Emigration. I, however, know it to be inevitable; and therefore I deal with it as an evil which I cannot prevent, but which I would render as little evil as possible.

That the vaguest and most extraordinary notion, should be entertained by our people of America, as a field of adventure and ultimate home for the emigrants, ought not to be a matter of surprise to those who give the subject a

moment's thought. Separated from this island of ours by nearly three thousand miles of tempestuous ocean, but few, comparatively, of those who leave Ireland with the intention of settling in America, return to it again; and among those who do return—to revisit old scenes and once familiar objects, to behold their relatives or the friends of their youth, or to lay their bones in the sacred graves of their kindred—the greater number have been more or less fortunate in the battle of life, and love to boast of their honorable success, and praise the country which rewarded the perseverance of their industry, or the prudence of their speculations. Then, for nearly half a century—more remarkably for the last quarter of a century—there has been received in this country from America an annual tribute richer than that which conquered nations poured into the exchequer of ancient Rome; and this wondrous heart-offering of the exiled to parents and kindred in the old country, has naturally imparted to America a kind of golden splendor, when beheld through the bright medium of youthful hope, or the sanguine anticipations of the needy and the reckless. Yet, if one could see how the money thus sent across the Atlantic was worked for, toiled for, slaved for—how much of it was taken from comfort—nay, denied to absolute necessity—the sight would tend much to remove false impressions, and dispel dangerous delusions. The Irish are a people of singular natural refinement and delicacy of feeling; and however low we go down in the social scale, we find among them an exquisite tenderness for the susceptibilities of those on whom they confer a gift, or for whom they make a sacrifice, which is not to be found to the same degree in any other race. Thus, though the five, or the ten, or the twenty dollar draft has been saved from the scanty earnings of the young adventurer,—oftentimes a mere boy or girl, whom a hard fate or an enterprising spirit sent from home at a tender age,—or though it may have been pinched from the wants of a growing family, there is no accompanying word of grudgingness, no suggestion of self-sacrifice, to diminish the value of the gift, or mar the enjoyment by enhancing the obligation of the recipient; and the sympathizing neighbors estimate the wonderful prosperity of Mary, or Bridget, Pat, or Maurice, by the liberal remittance sent at Christmas and Easter to the old people at home. Many such offerings are made from abundance, but many more are consecrated by the keenest privation and the most exalted self-sacrifice.

I myself have seen, in Eastern and in Western cities of the Union, the day-laborer enter the money-broker's office, accompanied by his humbly but decently clad wife or sister; and I soon learned, through a few questions put to them, in a friendly and respectful spirit, that affection, not prudence, justified the largeness of the remittance which, with a heart's blessing and a pious "God speed," they forwarded to Ireland—to cheer the poverty of the father or mother; to keep the roof over the old people in their failing years; or to help a young sister or brother, until big enough and strong enough to cross the ocean, and commence the world on their own account. I was told of hundreds and hundreds of incidents connected with these remittances to Ireland, as full of tenderness and pathos as a poem of Longfellow's; and while I listened to the recital of these deeds of modest heroism, I knew not which to admire most—the lavish generosity of the frequent gift, the beautiful affection that inspired it, or the sublime self-sacrifice through which it was laboriously hoarded up—denied not merely to the promptings of youthful vanity and the allurements of pleasure, but to the requirements of health, and even the cravings of hunger. It is true, passage-money and pocket-money, and money for the payment of the rent, and the purchase of clothing for the family at home, are sent by the fortunate settler on the land, when he converts the surplus produce of his farm into gold or currency; it is true that the prosperous trader is not forgetful of those whom he left after him in that land which is ever bright in his memory; but the bulk of what is sent is contributed by those who live in towns, and the majority of whom are employed in the rudest labor and the humblest drudgery. But every dollar that is received in Ireland, come from whom it may, earned how it may, given at what cost of discomfort or privation—every dollar strengthens the conviction that there is nothing in America but prosperity, and that the simple act of crossing the ocean is all that is required to endow the successful traveller, who lands safely on any part of the soil of the New World, with the purse of Fortunatus, and unlimited command of the luxuries as well as the enjoyments of life. To deal honestly with this fond delusion, is a duty due to those whose destiny is to cross that mighty waste of waters which has long since become a highway rather than a barrier.

As a home for the emigrant, of whatever country, America offers an unfailing and unlimited resource. It is humanly impossible to