

poor and rich, of the opposite sex, you may readily believe its columns were not long in filling. Three days only was the above list to be kept open, at the end of which time it was to be closed and sealed, and they who had enrolled their names thereon were to be granted a week's time only for the success or failure of their work. Sculptors who had gained many laurels in their profession embarked with new zeal upon this exhibition of skill, while many hands that had never been accustomed to the use of the chisel were none the less anxious to compete for the rare prize offered them.

It was near the close of the last day for which the list for candidates to the hand of Clara Rubens in marriage was to be kept open, that a stranger sauntered along through the principal thoroughfare of the splendid city of Antwerp. A close observer would at once recognize in the tall yet finely moulded man before us the once poor student of the artist Rubens. There was the same degree of enthusiasm which manifested itself in the early part of his studies still gleaming from the depths of his large and expressive eyes, but the few lines of care visible upon the broad and expansive forehead, showed plainly that Andrea del Sarto had been unremitting in the toils and labors of his profession. It is true, he had gained riches; but what did that avail him, since they with whom he would gladly have shared his last franc were one by one snatched from his grasp? For years he had wandered the earth, like an Orpheus, in search of his loved yet lost Eurydice; and although he had long since despaired of ever seeing again, on the face of the globe, the original of the miniature which he still held sacred, he looked forward with all the faith of his spiritual nature to the time when he should meet in heaven at last the ideal of his soul.

His first thought was to call at once upon his former teacher and reveal his intention of contending for the prize, but when he recollected that the effort he was about to make was an entirely new feature in his profession, his small chance of success dwindled into entire nothingness; and with a degree of pride peculiarly his own, he resolved to conceal himself from his friend's sight until the day appointed for the awarding of the prize. So taking lodgings in an obscure part of the city, Andrea procured a large piece of iron, although it was at an exorbitant price he purchased it, the price of iron having been raised at that time on account of the unusual demand for it, and steadfastly set about his new work.

A week was but a short time for the execution of so elaborate a piece of workmanship, and with only such rough tools as were allowed; but still the young man toiled from daybreak till near midnight, allowing himself but little or no time for sleep and refreshment. One would have thought, to have seen him bending so constantly over his task, that his very life's blood depended upon his success or failure. At the end of five days Andrea had the pleasure of seeing his work completed; and it was with no slight degree of satisfaction that he beheld the triumph of genius over so many obstacles. Attaching no name to his work of art, Andrea had the chiselled wreath boxed up and sent to the hotel of Rubens.

The first day of the ensuing month was the one appointed for making known the name of the successful candidate. At an early hour in the morning the hall in the hotel of the artist Rubens was densely filled with people, many of whom were led thither by curiosity, for such an important matter afforded to those not interested, at least, no slight degree of food for gossip in the circle of society. Andrea, too, was there; but it seemed as though he shrank from public gaze and contact, for he had chosen a seat in the extreme corner of the hall.

Few, if any, recognized him, for during his brief stay in Antwerp, Andrea had devoted himself so exclusively to his studies that he made but a slight acquaintance in that well-filled city. He had not even seen the daughter of his master, although he now remembered that the latter had spoken of the striking resemblance between the daughter and that of the miniature he possessed; but that was years ago, and now that Clara had grown to be a woman, even that faint resemblance must certainly have faded away.

Buoy with such thoughts as these, Andrea remained silent and motionless for some moments, until the whisper of "she comes" ran through the crowd, and falling upon the youthful artist, recalled him to a consciousness of things about him. Looking in the direction of the door, it swung slowly open, and Clara Rubens entered, attired in a robe of snowy white, and leaning upon the arm of her father. Andrea cast one look upon the almost angelic being before him, and murmuring a few incoherent words, sank back into his seat, and drawing the miniature from his breast, sat wildly gazing upon it.

Rubens stated that out of the many hundred who had enrolled their names as competitors for the prize, but some six or eight had succeeded in accomplishing the designed work of art. Each of the wreaths was then submitted in turn to the view of the assembly. All eyes rested upon Rubens as he said:

"The single wreath upon which my choice has fallen, as being the great masterpiece, has, unfortunately, no name affixed to it."

The eyes of the crowd were now diverted from Rubens to one another; each one seeking, if possible, to discover the successful victor. But the deep scrutiny reached not the little obscured corner in which our hero sat, although his trembling frame and heaving breast were guilty tokens of his impending fate. At last, Rubens said, in a very loud voice:

"If the author of this elaborate piece of workmanship be present, I conjure him at once to make himself known, for upon him has my choice fallen."

For a moment all was breathless silence in that vast throng. With an unsteady step and swimming brain, Andrea del Sarto emerged from his obscurity and advanced towards the stand occupied by Rubens. As he approached, with his eyes bent towards the floor, Clara uttered an exclamation of joy, and sprang forward and fell upon the neck of the artist-sculptor.

"Clara," said Rubens, addressing his daughter for the first time in his life somewhat sternly, "what does this mean? Explain the mystery, my dear child."

"This is the preserver of my life, father," said Clara, seizing the hand of the young artist, and presenting him to her father. Then with a sigh, the fair girl turned aside and murmured: "Alas, how poor the reward of such a noble act!"

Andrea raised for the first time his eyes to the faces of both father and daughter. Rubens started. The words "Andrea, my pupil, my child!" escaped from the lips of the old man, who would have fallen powerless to the ground but for the strong and manly arm of Andrea, which supported and led him to a seat. The excitement which such a scene produced throughout the crowd was great; and though all seemed to joy in the happiness of the united trio, but few knew the circumstances of the case.

In a short time the old master recovered himself, and having proclaimed Andrea del Sarto the successful aspirant for the hand of his daughter in marriage, the crowd quickly dispersed, lost the idle conjecture, as to who the stranger was and what particular claim he could have on the affections of Rubens and his daughter.

When once left to themselves, Clara explained to her father how the noble youth had rescued her from the arms of a ruffian when she was benighted in the woods near Brussels, many years ago, while visiting an aunt in the city. She told him, also, that but for the timely aid of Andrea she would have lost the diamond cross, so valuable to her as being the dying gift of her mother.

"No wonder, then," said Rubens, as Andrea drew forth the miniature from his pocket and gazing first upon the real and then the ideal, "that even my dim eyes discovered a resemblance between the original of that picture and my own Clara."

"Yes, father, that likeness was designed as a gift to yourself, but impressed with a deep sense of gratitude towards my deliverer, I sent it to him the next morning after my escape from peril, begging him to accept it as a slight token of my never-failing regard and respect towards one who had proved himself so worthy my remembrance and heartfelt esteem."

"Since you are now the rightful, and soon will be the lawful possessor of the real Clara, you will probably surrender the imaginary one to my safe keeping," said Rubens, smiling; "for you know I cannot be left wholly childless in my old age."

A few days after witnessed the marriage nuptials of the happy pair; and though time has long since obliterated the lives of that once joyous and devoted household band, still are the names of Rubens and Andrea del Sarto familiar to prosperity by the mighty efforts of their genius, which ages can never efface. And to this day may be seen the bronze statue of Rubens, near the site of the Hotel St. Antoine; while at a short distance from the cathedral where repose the remains of that illustrious master, is the identical wreath of chiselled iron, raised on a pedestal at a slight height from the ground, the sight of which has led to the recital of the story of The Artist's Prize.

#### A Brave Little Confessor of the Faith.

A little colored girl who had been attending a Catholic school in Virginia was for some unexplained reason, withdrawn by her parents from the kind Sisters' care and sent them to a non-Catholic institution. On the first morning, when school opened, she was seen to make the sign of the cross, whereupon she was laughed at and ridiculed by the other children.

Indignant, but nowise terrified, the brave little heroine of nine years stood up and cried defiantly: "You should be ashamed of yourselves to laugh at me for making the sign of the cross. He in whose honor I make this sign died upon the cross as much for you as for me, and you dare to laugh at that which our Saviour was not ashamed of!"

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