

PRETTY MISS NEVILLE

BY B. M. CROKES

CHAPTER XXIX—CONTINUED

"Nora, this is your doing." That was a day I shall never forget! A day of agonized suspense and self-reproach; and the next was another of long drawn, leaden uncertainty; but evening brought us great news—intelligence that went round Mulkapore like wildfire—"Captain Beresford had killed the man-eater."

He had assumed the Banghy postman's bells, patrolled the fatal locality, and brought down the terror of the country. The news had been sent in by a coolie, who was almost hysterical with joy. He said that the entire district was up on its feet, and were with difficulty restrained from doing pongee—worshipping Maurice. A day later the hero of the hour galloped in with the skin of the tiger wrapped before him on the saddle.

Great was the enthusiasm of the whole community. Auntie looked as if she would like to hug him; uncle was in a state of rampant exultation, and I felt rather uncomfortable; more uncomfortable still when Maurice, having dismounted and returned our greetings, unrolled the trophy, and laid it triumphantly at my feet.

"It is for you, Nora," he said, standing hat in hand.

"But I won't have it!" I cried. "That horrid animal you risked your life to kill, and that has eaten seventy people!"

"Come, come, Nora, don't be ungracious," said auntie; "you should be very proud of the honor."

"So I am, and of course I'll take it; but it seems to have cost—cost so much," I stammered, struggling to repress my tears.

"It's not much of a skin," said Maurice, turning it over with his foot, "but a man-eater has always a bad coat. However, he will never trouble the country any more—that's one blessing."

By this time the crowds of our retainers had assembled to see the great sight, and all passers by were streaming up the avenue on the same errand. So uncle, taking Maurice proudly by the arm, led him within (in spite of his remonstrances, and apologies for his rough shikar suit), and we all followed him into the dining room, and sat round and gazed at our hero with all our eyes while he made a most excellent breakfast.

"A forty-mile ride early in the morning gives one no end of an appetite," Mrs. Neville, he said apologetically. "I hope you won't be shocked at the awful ravage I have made in your excellent pie."

"Go on. Now, if you have finished," said uncle impatiently, "tell us about it; begin at the beginning," tapping the ground with his foot.

"Oh, there's not much to tell," said Maurice modestly. "I got my leave all right, the night I was here, and reached Nazapett by 7 the next morning, and found the village in a state of the most abject fear. No one had stirred since the catastrophe. Mari and I had something to eat, and then went out, and prospected the place where the post had usually been taken. We picked up the bag, letters and all complete, from where it was lying in the middle of the road near to a pool of blood; and there was a ghastly track through the tall grass, where, apparently, the body had been dragged away."

"Spare us these details, please," said auntie, looking rather white, and shuddering visibly.

"And what was the country like?" inquired uncle, judicially; "jungle or nullahs, or hills, or what?"

"Very hilly," returned Maurice; "high conical hills, densely wooded, and a low scrub jungle at either side of the road."

"A nasty place! And how far from the village?" asked uncle.

"About two miles—the fatal spot was in a valley about half a mile in length—with dense jungle on either side. Within this space three Banghy postmen had met a violent end."

"Well, go on, what did you do, man?" said uncle, imperatively.

"We went some way into the jungle, and found the postman's turban, and—but never mind!"—correcting himself—"we picked up the bag and bells, and returned, had a wash, and a meal, and a sleep, and about 11 o'clock I started out alone, in spite of Mari who besought me with prayers and tears to tie up and to beat. I slung the Banghy bells to my rifle, and made for the dreaded spot; the villagers looking upon me with gloomy commiseration, as a would-be and determined suicide. It was a splendid moonlight night, bright as day and still as death. For nearly two hours I patrolled the deadly mile at a long slinging run, loudly ringing my bells in vain. At last I began to think it was of no use, and that I might as well turn in, when I heard a sudden crash through the bushes to my left, and an enormous tiger slowly stalked out into the road—about twenty yards ahead of me—uttering low growls."

"I should have shrieked and fainted," interpolated Mrs. Vane.

"Hush!" said uncle excitedly. "Go on, Maurice. What next? What next?"

"Well, he stood surveying me for nearly a minute, lashing the ground with his tail, evidently thinking, 'Another Banghy wallah come to be devoured.' As I saw him crouch to make the spring I fired both barrels,

and had the luck to hit him right between the eyes. He made one wild, convulsive bound, a kind of gurgling snarl, and rolled over and over, literally biting the dust. Another minute, and he was dead. I went up and made sure and certain, and then set off to Nazapett at the double. At first the population fancied that I was fleeing for my life; but I soon undeceived them. They could not, however, believe the news at first, it was too good to be true. At last, emboldened by Mari's valiant example, they timidly stole out, and lo, when, a great way off, they descried the body of their enemy lying dead in the middle of the white, moonlit road, their joy knew no bounds. They nearly tore me to pieces; they went down on their knees before me, and wept and laughed like so many lunatics."

"When the first mad moments were over they turned to the tiger, who lay stretched out like a huge striped cat, and spat at him, cursed him, and denounced him with howls of Oriental vituperation; to which, as you know, Billingsgate is but a delicate pleasantry. He was then tied to a bamboo, and borne off by twelve stout coolies; the crowd accompanying him with tomtoms, and yells of defiance and derision. The remainder of the night was given up to incessant tomtomming, feasting, and singing. Sleep was the last thing to be thought of, so I resigned myself to my fate, and sat in great state, beside the headman of the village, to be seen and admired. I consumed no less than six cheroots, and returned thanks for many magnificent speeches, in my best Hindoostanee, with a slight touch of Tamil and Telugu. Early this morning I was wreathed in flowers; ditto Deserborn, who bore his honors most ungraciously, and would allow no interference with his tail. It was really all I could do, nobly backed by Mari, to get leave to depart; the innocent villagers could hardly be persuaded that I was not one of their gods, a deliverer sent from heaven, in the shape of a Feringee soldier. However, at last I got away, and, concluding lamely, 'here I am.'"

Next afternoon, when Maurice and I were alone in the garden, I made a kind of excuse for my speech at the dinner table. He received my apologies very readily, saying, with a laugh: "I suppose you think that because we don't go about playing on guitars, and breaking each other's bones, we are a miserably degenerate lot, and that the spirit of chivalry is dead. But you are laboring under a delusion, my pretty cousin—a man can still make his lady love."

"Glorious by his sword, and famous by his pen."

But I was not Maurice's lady-love, and never could be, I thought with a blush, and I had no right to accept his fame and glory.

We had been playing tennis, and I was now sitting on the low wall that divided our compound from Colonel Fox's, and under the shade of an enormous very rambling tree, whose broad trunk afforded an admirable resting place for my back.

"Look here, Nora," said Maurice suddenly; "I obeyed your behest, and fulfilled my *devoir*, as it was called; and now I want to know what querdon you are going to give me. By rights you ought to offer to it—it'll become me to remind you, but my delicate innuendoes have all been of no avail."

"A wreath of laurel, of course," I cried, with animation; "you shall have a wreath at once, if you will promise to wear it."

"I had quite enough of that kind of thing at Nazapett—about twenty monster wreaths swathed round my neck. I was half choked. No, no, think of something else!" beseechingly.

"I am thinking as hard as ever I can," I replied, chipping off bits of mortar with my tennis-bat. "You have studs, chains, a locket, pins—"

"I don't want anything of that kind," interrupted Maurice, hastily. "Shall I work you something with my own fair fingers?" I asked, with a smile.

"You have given me a smoking-cap," he remarked, ungratefully.

"Then just mention what you would like, and you shall have it," I exclaimed, ironically.

"Can't you guess what I would like?" he replied, slowly swinging his tennis-bat to and fro, and looking at me, very hard.

"No," I replied, with innocent thoughtfulness, "but I will give you this," laying down my bat, and unfastening a little gold anchor from my bunch of charms, and holding it out on the palm of my hand.

"Hope on, hope ever—a most significant token; thank you very much, Nora," said Maurice, slowly. "Anything else?"

"I declare you are the most grasping person I ever met! I endow you with a very pretty little gift—one of my pet charms—and still, like the daughter of the horse-leech, you cry, 'Give! give! Here, you may have this,' tossing him a lovely, half-opened, crimson bud, taken from the front of my dress. 'Now I hope you are satisfied,'" I asked, imperiously.

"I suppose I must be!" he replied, discontentedly. He was standing beside me, twirling the despised rose between his fingers. "You may as well put it in for me," holding out the lapel of his coat.

"To this I assented, having searched for a pin, and descended to terra firma."

"I can see that you are not satisfied yet," I said, surveying my cousin critically as I pinned in the flower. "What did you wish for—honestly—tell me what you would like?"

"I would like," replied Maurice, with a sudden odd inflection in his voice, "something far rarer, and a million times sweeter, than this rose," touching it. "Now, perhaps you can guess what I mean?" looking at me with expectant eyes.

"No, I can't; that is to say—" instantly outwitting the reddest of red roses. "If you mean what I think you mean, I mean to say—" stammering pitifully.

"If you mean what I think you mean," echoed a gay voice; and just behind us stood Mrs. Vane, who had silently strolled across the grass with a white parasol over her head.

"What do you both mean by not coming to tea? I have been sent to know what had become of you. Come along, putting her arm, affectionately within mine. "Come along, Captain Beresford; you must not neglect your afternoon tea like this; you said the other day that it softened the manners. Now," having taken us both in tow, "now I insist on hearing the whole of your recent conversation. One of my ears is burning like a coal, and I am convinced that you have been discussing me."

CHAPTER XXX

PECCAVI

"Too late I stayed—forgive the crime—
Unhappily flew the hours.
How needless falls the foot of Time,
That only treads on flowers!"
—Spencer.

I am afraid that when people come to the end of this chapter they will also arrive at the conclusion that I was "a terrible young girl," as Sweetlips used to call me; and, indeed, no one can have a worse opinion of my shameful silence than I subsequently had myself.

Maurice and I became excellent friends, as you have seen; and if with friendship we had been content, these confessions need never have been made. A steady, sensible, brotherly and sisterly regard is an admirable thing; but such friendship possible between a handsome young artillery officer and (though I speak of myself) a pretty girl, who have many tastes and ideas in common, and who are thrown into each other's intimate society day after day and week after week?

Maurice was my partner for three waltzes at every dance we went to. At tennis we generally played together, and somehow I never was so successful as when he was on my side. He was my constant escort when I rode of an evening, and never failed to join us every Thursday morning—the garrison holiday.

Uncle had given me a new horse—a young chestnut waler, called "Cavalier"—and Mrs. Vane had entirely appropriated "Methuselah" for her own exclusive use. She, uncle, and I were frequently joined by Maurice and Dicky Campbell, and the latter usually rode at my bridle-rein, for Cavalier was half-broken, and as he was so temperamental and impulsive as any of his namesakes, and liable to frantic fits of alarm at the burly elephants we sometimes met, or the long string of camels stealing silently past.

I shall never forget those lovely Indian mornings—the fresh, crisp air still retaining the coolness of daybreak, the heavy dew sparkling on the grass, and the slowly rising sun gradually gilding tree and mosque and far-stretching plains.

Passing through early rising villages, we beheld groups of picturesque women, surrounding that center of attraction, the well, clad in bright yellow garments, confined round the waist with broad, massive silver belts, their hair ornamented or padded out with fragrant white blossoms from the neighboring cork trees. Inside little brown houses the sound of grinding corn for the family use might be heard, accompanied by cheerful chanting. Doves of pack-locks would be passed, driven by their sturdy, half-legged owners, singing as he went a wild, monotonous song. Away from the cantonments and villages, out into clear, open country, what gallops we had, Maurice and I, being the two best mounted and the most enthusiastic, led the van, sometimes putting up a fox or a jackal, to which Tuppence gave long, praiseworthy, but wholly unavailing chase.

Maurice's one extravagance was horseflesh. He owed, to my knowledge, three capital charges, a dog, a cart horse, and a couple of polo ponies. Mounted on his black Arab, Deserborn—a no contemptible hand!—as he cantered beside me on his hard-mouthed but light-footed steed, he looked the very beau ideal of a graceful, finished horseman. A Terai hat—a kind of gray-felt sombrero encircled by a dark blue and gold puggaree—cast a romantic, not to say becoming, shadow over his face, and his much too eloquent dark gray eyes.

If Major Percival could only ride like Maurice! But the wildest flight of imagination failed to realize Major Percival on horseback at all, much less bestriding Maurice's fiery black Arab; and I smiled to myself a wicked smile as I pictured his face, his gestures, and his ultimate destination, during some of those mad, wild plunges that Maurice appeared to enjoy. He often said that he preferred to keep a horse no one could ride but himself, and he would not give a groat for any dog that would look at—much less follow, or care for—any one but his special proper master. These trivial remarks gave me little glimpses of Maurice's character. If he demanded such absolute devotion from his dumb animals, what would he not ask from—

However, it was no concern of mine. Maurice could not doubt be jealous, very jealous, but his jealousy would never affect me. During these *tele-a-tele* rides we became excellent friends, and my cousin's mind was wholly disabused of the passing impression it had received from the gate-top that moonlight evening. We talked of Galloway, the draining of the lower meadows, the new roof, the new cottages—improvements that would absorb the best part of Maurice's income for the next three or four years. Nothing was done without my approval; not a gate put up, nor a tree cut down. "You know so much more about the place than I do," Maurice would say, humbly, as he confided his troubles and his business correspondence to my inexperienced ear. Galloway was heavily mortgaged, too, and in no way an unalloyed blessing.

"You would not sell it, I suppose?" I profanely asked: "it is not much good to you. You will never live there."

"Sell it? Never! What are you thinking of, Nora? Settle Galloway, which has been in our family since the flood? Sell the bungalow that gambols on the roof? The whole contents of the burying-ground would rise at the mere thought. No, no! I am not quite such a Goth as you imagine. To begin with, I could not sell it; it is entailed property; and, to conclude, I have more family pride than you seem to imagine."

"But you will never live there," I again urged. "You must hate the place. Your recollections of it cannot be very pleasant. By the way, I hope you attach no special importance to first impressions. Shall you ever forget the day you picked me out of the mud?"

"No," he returned, emphatically. "What an object you were, to be sure! No one can ever accuse me of falling in love with you at first sight, can they?"

"I should rather think not!" "Nor at any other," I was about to add, but suddenly arrested my too ready tongue, and asked, instead, "How many times did you come to Galloway—three times, was it not?"

"Yes; my first visit was made memorable by your practical jokes. My second was devoted to hunting; and my third—a pause—" my third was the luckiest visit I ever paid in my life."

This speech was made with deliberate intention; it was the first time Maurice had even distantly hinted at the old bond between us.

Your third visit to Galloway was altogether hateful and detestable," I answered vehemently, avoiding his eyes, and looking straight between my horse's ears; "and we will never speak of it again, if you please."

I gave no time for an answer purpose, but administering a sharp cut of my whip to the much amazed Cavalier, was soon alongside of uncle and Mrs. Vane, whose company effectually excluded any more youthful reminiscences on the part of my companions.

But Maurice found other topics more welcome to me as we walked our horses homeward under the shade of the wide-spreading fig trees that fringed our high-roads. He told me of his years spent in India, and described people and places with a wit and freshness that interested and delighted me. Nothing fired my imagination more than a description he gave me of a shooting trip in Bundelcund, a wild, little-known tract near Central India, where glades of green, tree-like land were studded with magnificent trees; where lakes were half covered with sheets of unsuspecting duck, teal, geese, and wild-fowl of all descriptions; where the red flamingo drilled his battalions undisturbed; the peacock proudly paced his sylvan solitude, monarch of all he surveyed; where tanks and pools were concealed beneath a network of exquisite, pink-tinted lotus flowers, and black buck and deer abounded, sauntering hither and thither in leisurely, graceful groups. But where Maurice became really eloquent was when he spoke of big game—the beatings and of the bag of twenty-five tigers which rewarded the unflagging exertions of two whole, hot months.

It was because Maurice was my escort that these mornings—these Thursday mornings—seemed to me heaven sent, the happiest existence; I dared not ask myself the question: when I forced that to my mind, I instantly thrust it angrily aside.

Maurice was my cousin, the friend of my early days (I did not think so then), my nearest relative in the world after auntie. He rode capital—ly—he was a delightful companion. As to Major Percival, if he could not ride he could do other things, "and we all know," remonstrating eagerly with my too tiresome conscience, "that comparisons are odious."

Day after day went by—few by, it seemed to me—and I had never yet made my little speech to Maurice; the longer I postponed it the more difficult I found it to make the avowal. He had given me his entire confidence; I knew all about his doings, for the past five years, and, indeed, with Mrs. Vane to jog his memory, he had no chance of forgetting much. There were no love passages in his past, absolutely none; and "I am too old to fall in love now," he rashly boasted to me at an early stage of our friendship. "According to your friend, Mrs. Roper, you take the malady when you are quite young, and surely I am out of danger—eight and twenty next August!"

"Don't shout till you are out of the wood," returned Mrs. Vane with a laugh. "Look at George."

(Now George was her husband, who had fallen madly in love with her, it reported was to be believed, when he had attained the ripe age of fifty.) Shooting, fighting, playing polo— which with him amounted to a passion—were the events that Maurice chiefly dwelt on when he summed up his past career. Poor fellow! he firmly believed that he was as intimate with all the episodes of my lazy young life as I was myself. Alas, again I say, poor Maurice!

It was the height of the Mulkapore season, and, as we rolled homeward in the open carriage, those white moonlight nights, from balls and dinner parties, I, sitting with my back to the horses, feigned abstraction or fatigue, as I gazed over the moon-flooded plain—was I thinking of Major Percival, do you imagine? No, indeed, I was not; every corner, every chink, every crevice of my mind had Maurice for its tenant. I was mentally reviewing every word weighing every glance, and spending the evening over and over again in imagination. While I danced and enjoyed myself I could not refrain from watching Maurice, and taking a cousinly interest in himself and his partners; and I found, at a time, that it gave me a very novel and curiously disagreeable sensation to see him laughing and talking to other girls, exactly as he did with me to see him sitting out dances with pretty companions, his brown head bent low in confidential conversation and his arm assiduously yielding a fan. I would look away as if I had been stung, and angrily ask myself, as I floated round the room to the strains of an excellent string band, "Could it be possible that I was envious of my cousin's attentions to other girls? Was I so wicked as to be jealous of Maurice?" Absurd! for we all know that jealousy is akin to love.

By degrees the *banhonic* of Maurice's manner disappeared, his cavalier, cousinly criticisms remained unspoken, and were replaced by a reserved, deferential demeanor, a slight but subtle change that I told myself I was at a loss to understand. But in truth, and in my heart of hearts, I had a glimmering of the reason, a faint, intangible, but none the less certain conviction that Maurice loved me. I had seen the same symptoms in others, and in former instances I had been partly vexed, partly flattered, and wholly indifferent. Query, was I vexed, was I indifferent now? I tried to blind my eyes to silence my conscience, to tell myself that we were all for each other as cousins. Why, then, did the sight of Maurice's horse in the distance, much less Maurice himself, bring a flutter to my heart, a flame to my cheek? I postponed—weakly and wickedly postponed—telling Maurice of my engagement. Every night I said to myself, "I will certainly tell him to-morrow;" and when to-morrow came, it was still to-morrow. I pretended that opportunities for making the announcement were lacking; that when I had screwed my courage to the sticking-point some interruption invariably occurred; that, after all, it did not greatly signify when I told him. Full well I knew the difference between us the great change my news would make. "You ought to tell, you must tell, you shall tell him," I clamored conscience; but in the end I am truly ashamed to confess that it was not conscience, but Mrs. Vane, that forced the truth from my reluctant lips.

TO BE CONTINUED

THE ARTIST

His interview with his wife took a great deal of force out of Nathaniel L'Estrange, and what was of greater moment, robbed him of all inclination to go on with his picture. This meant that two days would be wasted, for that night the Academy was to give a dinner to old Revelle, the French painter, who was in the city on a visit, and Nathaniel knew that the speechmaking afterwards would drag on so late that he would be unable to do any work the next day. Nothing irritated Nathaniel more than enforced absence from his work, and he had never felt more industrious than this morning until his wife interrupted him.

Differences between them were frequent, but he had never lost his temper so badly with her before. She, indeed, on her side was quiet enough but it was her very quietness that exasperated him most. She just sat on the chair opposite him, with her hands clasped on her knee, looking at him with big dark eyes and saying nothing. He often thought that it would be soothing and exhilarating if she broke out into a rage instead of sitting there quietly with that air of martyrdom.

To day she had come into his study and besought him to accept the professorship offered him by the Municipal Art School. It meant giving up teaching the best hours of the morning, which he always devoted to his work. The offer—a well-meant compliment to his growing renown from the inartistic City Fathers—enraged him, for he considered it an insult to his genius.

He had told her of it indignantly enough the day before, and now this morning she had come into his studio and begged him to take it "for the children's sake."

She sat in silence until he had made his angry appeal to her.

"Good God have you no sympathy with me—you alone of all the people I know—and yet you know best of all how I strive to attain myself, how I toil to accomplish something great. How can you ask me to give up my

best hours to work that any damned ass who can draw can do as well—better than I can—and all for the sake of the children—the children—who have every earthly thing they want?"

"It would give us a regular income. The children are growing, they will want to be educated. We have but little money. This would bring us money. We could always count on—"

He stopped her with an angry gesture. "You will want me next to put in for a government job with a pension attached to it. I believe you would be glad if I gave up painting altogether. I never can expect any sympathy or understanding from you now. No, I see that more plainly every day."

She winced and made a movement as if to speak, then checked herself and did not. He took up his palette and began mixing colors to let her see he considered the interview ended, but still she sat on. Her presence irritated him. She had come into the studio from her morning domestic work, and her attire was untidy and dusty. In truth she presented an unlovely figure. The rose-faded red garment she wore was not chosen because it in any way suited her but because she had got the material cheap at a sale, and had made it up herself. A strand of her carelessly knotted hair was loose at the back. Her face, still a young face, was sallow, and tired in expression, and a little hopeless. Her disordered attire, her falling hair, the ugly loose garment did violence to his strained nerves, and to his beauty loving, order loving eye. After a time he threw down his palette and walked up and down. An idea that he had been brooding over for long came now suddenly before his mind. It has been the suggestion made to him a couple of months before by his friend, Butler, the best known of the little group of artists who had banded themselves together to found a new art in the city. Butler had suggested that he ought to leave his house and income to his wife, and come in and share his room and studio, where they would be of much assistance to each other and where they could better discuss their plans and formulate their ideas to the other fellows. The suggestion had been pleasing enough to Nathaniel, but he was a man of wavering disposition, and though he had almost agreed on it with Butler, he had not even mentioned it to his wife. Now, in walking up and down in front of her, in a few hasty sentences, he laid the proposal before her. He was adding he would bring her any extra money he made on his pictures always and would only keep a bare pittance for his own wants when he happened to glance at her. She was following his movements with strained terrified eyes, leaning forward slightly in the chair, her lower lip pressed hard against her teeth. He paused in the middle of a sentence, for a second there arose in him a faint spark of the old feeling for her—the feeling that once, when they were both pupils in old Revelle's studio, had seemed to him the driving force of his existence.

He walked to the window and stood silently looking out, waiting for her to speak. But instead he heard the door close quickly, and turning round found himself alone. A little remorse filled him, but he quickly justified himself and told himself that, with regard to her, he had really no reason to reproach himself. He gave her all his money; it seemed to him sufficient for their wants. He himself and a large family of brothers and sisters had been brought up by his mother on a smaller income.

He led a blameless, hard-working life; he was pitied by all his admirers because he alone of the younger painters of his set had a wife and children to be a drag on him.

Let it here be said that the man's estimate of himself was also the estimate of his brother artists. The general public did not understand him or them and did not want to, for their art had not grown out of the desire of men or of a nation to make itself or part of itself articulate, but was a delicate elusively beautiful thing, that had sprung out of a clique. By his fellow artists he was regarded as a man of unusual power from whom something extraordinary was to be expected.

He dawdled away the rest of the day in the studio. He only left it to dress when night came and to the hour of the Academy dinner approached.

As he came down stairs to go out, through the half open door of the sitting room, he saw his wife seated in an armchair. A look of physical pain in her face made him pause—the desire to say something friendly to her made him push open the door, but the figure of another woman seated at the opposite side of the fireplace stopped him. His intended kindly speech took a formal turn.

"I am going to the dinner, Jessie. After it's all over I'll stay with some of the fellows for the rest of the night. I'll be back to-morrow evening."

"Without turning round she said 'good night.'"

Outside the door he knocked up against an old doctor he had often seen in the house for various ailments of his children. Nathaniel gave him a friendly nod as he passed into the house, but did not stop him. His children's ailments were seldom important enough to interest him.

Any gloom that may have remained in Nathaniel's mind dissipated itself when he found himself among the gay, laughing crowd of men and women that waited in the big hall for Revelle. Revelle was to deliver

a short address to the art students before going into the other room to dinner, and the back part of the hall was crowded with young men and women, but the front was decorated and reserved for guests, and was filled with a well dressed crowd, many of whom were celebrities. They were nearly all well known to Nathaniel, who, when he allowed himself rest from work, gave himself up to social pleasures.

A few women surrounded him when he entered. Their elegance and beautiful dresses pleased him. They were ready enough to admire and flatter him, and he talked gaily to them. A tall German of well known name, renowned for his weird and symbolical uses of green colors, and a thin, dilapidated looking Belgian were presented to him; they showed a flattering and appreciative knowledge of his work which finished the business of restoring Nathaniel to cheerful careless good humor.

Many anecdotes of Revelle and his famous heresies passed from mouth to mouth.

Nathaniel entertained them by a description of the old man's life when he knew him, in an old farmhouse outside Paris, and the big glass roofed barn of a studio, where his pupils congregated. Revelle himself painted in the corner of it. He never taught his pupils anything; if they couldn't paint themselves he told them to give it up. Revelle and Madame Revelle tilted their own farm, and after Revelle spent the morning ploughing, then he would come in and preach one of his famous little sermons to his pupils, and afterwards go on with his own painting. Nathaniel told them, amid great merriment, how old Revelle had recommended him to do a little ploughing also, and not to paint so much, and how angry the old man had been when Nathaniel had replied that life was too short to do anything but paint. A few weeks after that he had left old Revelle's studio for good, but he did not tell them that with him he carried off and married old Revelle's best beloved pupil.

Amid the laughter that Nathaniel's stories aroused, the door at the end of the hall opened, to the applause of the students the President of the Academy entered with Revelle. All strained their eyes for a look at the great old man, whose sayings and doings had gained a renown greater than his pictures. Nothing makes such an appeal to youth as a splendid physical presence, and the prolonged cheers with which the students greeted Revelle was probably as much a tribute to the noble figure which confronted them as to his fame. A man as like a crank or a person to be laughed at it would be impossible to imagine.

With the strong limbs and frame of the old peasant stock from which he sprang he gave the impression of enormous strength of body and mind. His hair and beard were quite white, but his cheeks had a childlike pinkness and his face was almost without lines and without regrets. As he stood on the platform smiling before them he seemed the product of a greater and different civilization—a civilization in which there was nothing degrading. A silence fell on the room. It seemed to Nathaniel, who had never seen him in such surroundings, as if, compared with Revelle, the men present were diseased in body and mind. He looked as if he had been the conqueror of things they were too weak even to wrestle with. He looked as if his spirit had known no defeat.

In a voice that startled the room, it was so fresh and open air like, and in English that was a little strange and foreign, he spoke. He did not say much, and what he did say was familiar to nearly all his audience already, because they were the things he had been reported in the newspapers as saying for half a century. He told the students that only the rudiments of their craft could be learned at school, the rest each man must teach himself and learn unaided. He told them to beware of working in groups or congregating in cliques—this encouraged eccentricity and mediocrity—a great artist best did his work alone.

His little speech only lasted a few minutes. Supper was laid in the exhibition room, where a number of pictures by Butler, Nathaniel and the others were on view. It was known that Revelle had made a prolonged visit with the President to the pictures in the morning. He had been expected to say something about them in his speech before supper, but he had made no reference whatever to them. Butler asked the President to tackle Revelle at supper about the show.

At the end of supper, the President made the formal request to Revelle. He said that, as nearly all the pictures around them were painted by those present, they would like to learn Monsieur Revelle's opinion of them.

It has been said of Revelle who was not much used to social gatherings, that he spoke to everybody, except his wife, as if he were haranguing an audience.

Now he looked around the room at the pictures, waved his hand towards them and addressed the table: "Messieurs, there are too many pictures here. None of you have attained to sincerity. You juggle with your paints, you play with your palette and brushes." His voice took an excited note. "Messieurs, why do you paint? No picture here looks as if it came out of the life of a man. Why do you paint?"

In answer there flashed back Butler's cool satirical voice—"Why do you paint yourself, sir?"