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THE STORY OF A PIN.

(Continued.)

George entered timidly into this sanctuary, and was about to address an attendant, when he saw enter, from an adjoining apartment, a little fat man, whose physiognomy would have appeared most vulgar, if his forehead and eyes had not denoted much intelligence and vivacity. 'He was the High Priest of Flora, and of Pomona also.' He had his arms filled with great bunches of the rarest and freshest flowers. He might certainly have had these carried by the servant who followed him with empty hands. But he carried them through love of them, as a father takes a dear child from the arms of the nurse, to carry and caress it himself. He was smiling and proud of his rich harvest. He made the circuit of the hall, distributing the flowers according to the intelligence and talent of his pupils. This one had only a bunch of periwinkles, that one had a bouquet of camellias; all were satisfied.

The happy professor who reigned in this charming kingdom, was the celebrated Redoute, whose inimitable and ready talent has made an era in simplifying the process of art, in refining taste, in teaching a better appreciation of nature, in propagating an attractive study, and in leaving to his favorite pupils the secret of his magic pencil.

I have said the happy professor—for he numbered among his finest days those which he passed among his pupils, surrounded by the three things which he loved above all others: art, flowers, and, it must be said, the fair persons who came of themselves to group around the flowers.

Therefore, when Redoubte had given to George a short audience, and had heard him upon the subject of a picture which Monsieur the Baron Wolff earnestly desired to have, he insisted upon his going the round of the hall; for he knew George to be a connoisseur, and he loved to do honor to this peerless class.

'What a fortunate contrast,' he said, with a certain emphasis which was natural to him when he was speaking on his favorite subject.

He pointed out a narrow and elegant vase, out of which arose majestically a splendid lily, from the midst of its long, lanceolated leaves. A bunch of clematis coming out of the vase, raised itself up to its pure chalice as if to embrace it; then twisting itself, as if drunk with this beauty and fragrance, it fell languishing and exhausted, and rolled itself in graceful spirals at its foot, where it remain extended. Redoute dwelt in contemplation before this sport of nature, in which each figurante unfolded, the one, its majestic beauty, the other its light grace.

'It is very beautiful,' said he.

He gave some advice to the lady who had undertaken to re-produce this happy group, and passed on.

He found upon another table a little urn containing a camelia, a rose and a petunia. They were all of a pure white, which added richness to the dark leaves of the camelia. He always looked at the flowers before anything else.

'That is not easy,' said he.

Then leaning towards the young girl who was engaged in her work:

'Do you know how the difference between velvet, silk and gauze?'

'I believe I do, sir; here is silk,' and showed him a fold of her robe; 'and here is velvet,' showing a ribbon.

'Ah, well, you have made your three flowers of paper. Now the camelia is velvet, the rose is silk, and the petunia gauze.'

And he was already away.

He seated himself at another table, and then they arose from all sides to discover his secret.

'You have rosy fingers,' said he, 'and my great fingers are like those of a peasant from the Danube, and notwithstanding you come to see.'

He took the brush, dipped it in clear water, slightly touched his palette, spread the brush upon the white vellum, and then—they saw born and developed, like a miracle, a large bright mal-low with its cup of dark velvet. There was a cry of admiration.

'It is not more difficult than that,' said he. And he passed on.

Before reaching the next table, which was a little apart from the rest, he stopped and held George by the arm. He pointed out to him upon this table a double branch of convolvulus, which followed unrestrainedly the caprices of its nature, and challenged admiration by its great blue, red and white cups. The arrow-shaped leaves and spiral tendrils were grouped in the most happy manner.

Next he called George to observe that the unfinished picture was taking the best turn, and had all the freshness of the model. And finally, he pointed out to him, with a sign of intelligence, the young girl who was absorbed in her work.

He had found a union of art, flowers and beauty; he remained in contemplation.

The person who was painting was leaning over her vellum, too much occupied with her model and her labor to see or to hear anything.

'That is a good picture,' said Redoute, placing himself, with George, before her.

The young girl raised her head, and she discovered then that in her eagerness, animation, and love of her work, a certain disorder had been produced in her simple toilette. A light black scarf, which was around her neck, had become unfastened. She had not remarked it at first, for it was excessively warm. Her shoulders and a part of her bosom were thus found uncovered. A vivid blush immediately overspread her face, until then very pale, and she was greatly confused. She drew back this rebellious scarf, and appeared to be seeking for something.

'Take care, you are spoiling your picture,' cried the master. 'You are searching for a pin; ah, hold, here is just the gentleman who carries one in his sleeve.'

And he took out the pin. George hastily snatched it from him, and gave it to the young girl, after retaining it for some moments in his fingers.

'Take care you keep it safe for me,' he said to her.

The young girl regarded him with an air of astonishment, and smilingly took the pin.

If the young artist had not been so pretty, George would not perhaps have noticed her, thanks to his absent and serious character. But one of those chances which seldom occurs but in romances, came to captivate his whole attention.

The splendor of her forehead, the nobleness of her eyebrows, the sweetness of her soft, dark eyes, plumed with black lashes, the frankness of her countenance, the melancholy of her expression all recalled to him a loved image—the one which had consoled and sustained him in his hours of discouragement. Doubtless, imagination had added her illusions to this incidental remembrance—but it was, to him, the living and animated original of the 'Unhappiness' of Corregio, who blushed and breathed before him.

Nothing was lacking in the picture, neither the pale star upon the forehead, represented by a glowing eglantine which a friend had slipped unnoticed into her hair; nor the black scarf floating from her white shoulders; nor the bouquet of large 'mourning-brides' which Redoute, by a touching analogy, had thrown upon her table on his distribution of flowers.

Her hair, blacker than ebony, was gathered up with a certain carelessness, in an abundant twist, from which escaped some vigorous ringlets which fell upon her graceful neck. And there remained still a singularity which drew the attention and fixed the thought: a thread of white hairs, resembling a slender thread of quicksilver, was like the seal of suffering imprinted upon the forehead of this young girl.

The Unhappiness! what an attracting optical effect! What a strange treasure to be met by this man whose heart was pure.

How foolish the calculation for multiplying fortune by fortune, and for giving all to those who lack nothing! How foolish the pleasures, the vanities, the pretensions, the ambition of making a figure!

His sole ambition was the ambition of concealing himself, of loving, of consoling, of serving, of suffering.

Redoute drew George away, who remained as if annihilated in this contemplation. And after having contemplated and encouraged his pupils he re-conducted George, who again turned before going; and promised to come shortly to see the picture by Van Huysum, for which he was to paint a companion piece for the gallery of Monsieur Wolff.

XIII.—THE DEPARTURE.

George hastened to resume his work, which had suffered some little in his absence.

That evening the ladies were in the salon, discoursing upon the events of the day.

'And our wager?' said the English lady.

'I have lost it,' said Madame Wolff, with a blush. 'I was too hasty. Here are your 20 louis, my dear lady; the poor will lose nothing by it, and I confess myself vanquished.'

Madame Wolff kept herself apart from the rest, quite thoughtful, and saying that she was unwell. Monsieur Wolff appeared excited and uneasy, and every one of his glances seemed to his wife a reproach.

The English lady chatted, for her part, with her friends.

'Can you guess all the feelings of our dear Baroness? I believe she is too modest. I am about to return the money, for she has really won it. Only I am afraid that her victory has cost her more than she was thinking.'

'What would you say?' chimed in a chorus of curious feminine auditors.

'Ah! do you see the radiant air of Monsieur George? Now look at his sleeve; you will not

find there the least pin, and you will never see it again; but it is not lost to all the world perhaps.'

'Is it true,' said a young person, advancing toward George, 'that you have renounced carrying that pin, which was never to leave you?'

'I have lost it, Mademoiselle,' said George, with a smile; 'the charm is broken, and I am now without defence against misfortune.'

'George,' said, in a loud tone, Monsieur Wolff, who, unacquainted with these frivolous conversations, seemed to be reading some papers attentively; 'it is necessary to set out at once. You have a passport; you will have it examined at Havre; the American packet-boat leaves to-morrow. The business is a serious one.—Follow me.'

These words, pronounced in the curt manner which was habitual to Monsieur Wolff, and this sudden departure, caused some sensation in the salon. As for Madame Wolff, she could no longer control her emotion, and her conscience leaving her to attribute to the events of the day what was perhaps but the effect of chance, and the urgency of business, she fell fainting upon the divan, where she was resting.

'I told you so,' said the English lady.

They pressed around the indisposed lady, and Mademoiselle Borghese, always good and active, conducted her to her chamber.

'My dear child,' said Monsieur Wolff, when he was with George in his office. 'you alone are able to save us. You speak English like a citizen of London; you are young, active, intelligent; go as quickly as possible. The house of Jackson, at Quebec, which has given us such lively uneasiness, is about to declare itself bankrupt. I have certain and confidential advice in the matter. Now all is not lost. If we arrive in time we will secure ourselves. I have little to explain to you: you know the whole business; read the bundle; here are your credentials.—This pocket-book contains funds for your travelling expenses. I give you full authority. If you succeed, it is the beginning of your fortune, for I must not, in that case, forget you. You will receive ten per cent. upon this account, which cannot but be considerable; and do not hesitate, they are able to pay. Here is a letter to the Consul, who will assist you in case of need. You have my power of attorney, and here is my *carte blanche* for all the acquittances. Go.'

He gave him still further explanations, then embraced him, wishing him good luck, and recommending him to write when he arrived in New York, and before setting out for Quebec.

XIV.—THE VOYAGE.

George had no cause to reproach himself; he was calm and full of assurance. A journey to America, for him who knew so well how to make use of his eyes, was a piece of good fortune.—The distance made no impression upon him, it was traversed so rapidly. The thought of danger did not even present itself; his desire to make himself of use, and to respond to an honorable confidence, gave him so much energy.

George embarked, the next day, at Havre, on board a magnificent steamer. The passage was made quickly and fortunately. George did not yield himself up to that do-nothingness, so common among travellers, and which only seems to make the time drag more heavily.

He kept a journal; he consigned to it a multitude of observations; he admired the transformations which the condition of the atmosphere underwent at sea, when it sometimes appeared green and sombre, sometimes bright, golden and phosphorescent; he watched the track of the vessel; he gave an account of the force and power of the machinery, which, in a time of calm, traced upon the waves a line as straight and sure as a railway track. He discoursed with the machinists and officers; ascended to the deck to watch a radiant sunset, or a starry night, when he would give himself up to reveries, in which would sometimes appear the image of the one who wore upon her forehead a white flower like a star, and whom he had not forgotten.

At New York he presented letters of recommendation at the houses of friends, wrote to Europe, and proceeded on his journey across the country. He was then anticipating the success of his enterprise: and he reached Quebec quite insensible to the nature of the country through which he had passed.

XV.—DIPLOMACY.

The day following his arrival, George presented himself at an early hour in the counting-room of the firm of Jackson & Co. He was assured of the co-operation of a lawyer to whom he had been recommended.

'Gentlemen,' said he, in pure English, 'I present myself under the auspices of mutual friends in New York, whose letters I now hand to you. (In commercial language, correspondents are called friends.) I have received a large fortune from England, and I wish for drafts upon Liverpool or Manchester, the value of which I will furnish here.'

The partners exchanged glances.

'The value in ready money? Certainly, sir; and what is the amount of these drafts?'

'Perhaps forty or fifty thousand dollars.'

After consulting together, the partners responded:

'We can furnish fifty thousand dollars at eight days from sight, upon Davidson, the first Manchester house, who owes us more than that amount.'

'Very well, gentlemen,' replied George, 'you will get ready that amount to my order in several coupons. I will go fetch the money, and place it at your disposal.'

He proceeded to determine the conditions of the negotiation, and then took his leave.

He presently returned with the lawyer, who had been waiting for him, and thus questioned them.

'Gentlemen, you declare to me that the house of Davidson owes you fifty thousand dollars, which you will place in my hands, against a like sum deposited with you.'

'It is agreed to, sir.'

'And you have no knowledge of any claim which touches this sum, and which would render the drafts which you resign to me valueless in my hands?'

'What would you say, sir! Do you suppose—?'

'I suppose nothing, gentlemen; but here is a protest by the house of Wolff, of Paris, of which you have been duly notified, and which forbids from Davidson all payment of your account.—Here is, moreover, all the detailed accounts of the house of Wolff, to which you have been indebted for a long period, to the amount of \$49,775, including expenses of delay. The gentleman who is with me, will tell you the serious inconvenience which it will occasion you, after having declared that the amount was disposable at Manchester, if you do not accept the receipt of Monsieur Wolff, in exchange for drafts upon Davidson.'

The lawyer calmly explained that it would be a very serious affair for Messrs. Jackson & Co., as the case could be certified to by witnesses.—They had prepared the drafts to the order of George. The protest of which they had been duly notified, rendered these drafts worthless to any one but the house of Wolff, who alone could claim this money in payment of his debt; in consequence the valuation set upon the drafts given to George was fraudulent. The crime was a flagrant one.

The Messrs. Jackson attempted to debate the matter. Presently, however, coming to a determination with all the decision of the American character, and fearing a stroke which would hasten their ruin, they accepted the receipt of Monsieur Wolff, giving exchange for drafts, original and duplicate, to the order of the house of Wolff, upon Davidson, of Manchester.

George went out with the attendant, whose presence had been of such service to him. He was, from that moment, entirely assured of the full success of his difficult negotiation. Davidson was an old correspondent of Monsieur Wolff, and had become his friend. Established at Manchester, he it was who had advised Monsieur Wolff of the desperate state of the affairs of the firm of Jackson of Quebec, and of the only means which remained for securing payment.

George immediately forwarded the original drafts to Monsieur Wolff, fully assured that they would be paid at sight, since the funds were disposable; while he kept by him the duplicates of the same drafts, to avoid all accident. All had taken place, as he anticipated; and George, who, notwithstanding his artlessness, was already an experienced business man, had given himself the perfectly legitimate and allowable pleasure to an honest heart of taking a deceiver in his own coils.

Some days later, the house declared itself bankrupt, and had it not been for George's promptness of execution, all would have been lost.

After business, pleasure. George had still an excursion to take in the country, to visit correspondents at Montreal, Kingston, Toronto, and other cities which are springing up as if by enchantment, on this vigorous soil. In Lower Canada, he found himself in a country which had preserved the memory of her French origin, and the religion and manners of France. The fruitful fields, covered with rich harvests, and shaded with long lines of apple-trees, recalled to him some of the most beautiful places in Normandy. In each village, the cross-crowned spires of the Catholic churches, and the solemn peal of the bells, increased this illusion, and deeply affected him. He sometimes entered into these rustic temples, to offer up a prayer for his mother, and, perhaps, for that unknown friend. He crossed the great lakes upon the floating cities, which American packet-boats are, gliding down rapids with the intrepidity of Americans, who consider danger as nothing, and time everything.

He had read Chateaubriand, who has described this country with all the charm and vigor of his style. He found the country greatly changed, thanks to so impatient a civilisation.

There where Chateaubriand saw huts of savages, and half-clad women, rocking their infants in hammocks of bind-weed, he found a splendid city risen, crossed by railroads, graced with all the comforts of Europe, with her fashions, her journals, her pianos and her whims.

At Montreal, beautiful ladies displayed the last Paris fashions and fancies. In this country so new, where the arts are still in their infancy, for they come after all the rest, he was much astonished at being introduced into the house of a picture-dealer. Alas! what he saw there upon exhibition might well drive an amateur to despair: Some lithographs, brilliant with glowing colors, blinded him; and the specimens of pictures taken out as the trifling ventures of seamen, and exported to this latitude, were not calculated to give to the Canadians a high idea of our artists.

He remarked, nevertheless, with interest, the conscientious studies of some young painters-of the country, and he could perceive faintly that art was developing itself in its turn, and would spread its noble branches over this fertile ground which industry has already transformed.

The merchant explained to George that many ladies who had visited France had taken to the practice of flower-painting, and that it was impossible for him to procure them suitable copies. He had only a collection of old engravings from the Rue St. Jacques. George made a bargain with him for the execution and prompt forwarding of bouquets of flowers from nature; and he could not help thinking that this chance would, perhaps, serve some artist, who, in France, would less easily find employment for her talent.

His mission was ended. He hastened to reach New York, whence the means of travel to all parts of the world are so easy; and, after having still employed his time for the best interests of Monsieur Wolff, he took passage upon the first steamer bound for Havre. Fifteen days after, he alighted one morning before the mansion in the Chaussee d'Antin.

XVI.—THE COMMISSION.

'Complete success,' cried Monsieur Wolff, upon perceiving him. 'The money is here, and here is your well-earned share.'

And, putting in his hand a pocket-book, which contained not less than twenty-five bank notes, he cordially embraced him.

'You are an able negotiator,' he said to him, 'and you were just in time. Eight days later, these funds at the disposition of the Davidson house would have been involved in the bankruptcy, and that friend would not have been permitted to reserve them for us. Now you must rest; you have need of leisure. Your work must have accumulated considerably during your absence, but we have made necessary provision for that. I will not see you for eight days.'

'I will then go to see my mother, whom I have not visited for so long a time,' exclaimed George.

And, after having very earnestly made his acknowledgments, he departed with a contented heart.

Our young traveler immediately took a carriage for the Jardin des Plantes. He arrived there in time for the class in painting, and it was not without turning pale, that he saw, at the first glance, that the only place which interested him was vacant. He required some confidence to enable him to address Redoute, who loved a joke and who laughingly said to him: 'Doubtless it is as no proxy of Monsieur Wolff, that you present yourself here to-day. Am I not right? and be conducted him into his cabinet.

'To speak seriously,' said George, drawing a paper from his pocket-book, 'here is a commission which I have received in my travels. It appears to me unworthy of your talent, sir; but it is, perhaps, within the province of your pupils. And I confess to you, that after having compared the efforts which you so kindly displayed to me the other day, the free and bold style of the person who is absent to-day appears more satisfactory than all the rest. I am bold enough to ask your advice.'

'You have given proof of taste and discernment, and I may add that never could order fall into better hands. You will see two sisters wholly worthy of your respect. They have been recommended to me by friends, and I shall be happy if the advice which you ask can be of service to them.'

'There was still a question for George to ask, but he lacked courage.'

'You would perhaps like to know where these young ladies live?' said Redoute, mischievously. 'I only know that they are of St. Germain, and are called the Mademoiselles-Dural.' 'The one whom you have seen is the younger, and named, I believe, Mademoiselle Jeanne. Endeavor to render them this service. It may be Providence.'