

"At the right," said my host to me, "is the apartment destined for the future Madame Alphonse. Your chamber is at the end of the opposite corridor. You are at one end of the house; they are at the other."

Before undressing I opened a window to breathe the refreshing night air, delicious after a protracted supper. Right in front was the Canigou, an admirable prospect at any time, but which appeared to me that night the most beautiful mountain in the world, lighted up as it was by a resplendant moon. I remained some minutes contemplating its marvellous *silhouette*, and then went to close my window, when, lowering my eyes, I perceived the statue on a pedestal at about twenty rods from the house. It was placed at the angle of a quick-set hedge, which divided a little garden from a large square space perfectly level, and which I learned afterwards was the tennis play-ground of the town. This piece of ground, the property of M. de Peyrehorade, had been ceded by him to the Commune on the pressing solicitations of his son.

At the distance where I was, it was difficult to make out the attitude of the statue; I could only judge of its height, which appeared to me to be about six feet. At that moment two ill-looking fellows of the town were crossing the tennis ground, not far from the hedge, whistling the pretty Roussillon air of "*Montagnes régionales*." They stopped to look at the statue. One of them even apostrophized it aloud. He spoke Catalan; but I had been in the Roussillon country long enough to understand what he said.

"There you are, you hussy, you! There you are," said he. "It was you then who broke the leg of John Coll! If you belonged to me, I would break your neck for you."

"Bah! with what?" said the other, "it is made of copper, and so hard that Stephen broke his file upon it, trying to make an incision on it. It is copper of the times of the Pagans; it is harder than I know not what."

"If I had my chisel (it seemed he was a locksmith's apprentice) I would soon make these big white eyes jump out of their sockets, as easily as I would take an almond out of its shell. There is more than the value of a hundred sous of silver in each eye."

They drew back a few steps.

"I must wish the idol good-night," said the tallest of the apprentices, stopping suddenly.

He stooped, and apparently picked up a stone. I saw him throw up his arm, deliver something, and presently a sonorous blow rang from the bronze. At the same instant the apprentice raised his arm to his head and uttered a cry of pain.

"She has struck me back again," he cried.

And my two scamps took to flight with all their might. It was evident that the stone had rebounded from the metal, and had punished the fellow for the outrage he had committed on the goddess.

I closed the window, laughing heartily.

"Another vandal punished by Venus! May all the destroyers of our ancient monuments have their heads thus broken."

Having uttered this uncharitable wish I fell asleep.

It was broad daylight when I awoke.

I descended into the garden, and found myself in front of an admirable statue.

It was indeed a Venus, and of marvellous beauty. She had the upper part of her body naked, as the ancients ordinarily represent their grand divinities; the right hand, raised to the height of the bosom, was turned palm inwards; the thumb and the first two fingers extended, the two others slightly bent. The other hand near the hip held up the drapery which covered the lower part of the body. The attitude of this statue recalled that of the player of *Mourre*, which they designate, I know not why, by the name of Germanicus. Perhaps they wished to represent the goddess as playing at the game of *Mourre*.

However this may be, it is impossible to behold anything more perfect than the body of this Venus; nothing more suave, more voluptuous than the outlines of the figure, nothing more elegant and more fitting than her drapery. I expected to see a work of the *Bas-Empire*. I beheld a masterpiece of the best age of statuary. That which struck me most was the exquisite beauty of the limbs; so much so that one would have believed them moulded by nature herself, if nature ever produced such models of perfection.

The hair raised in front appeared to have been formerly gilt; the head, small, as are almost all the Greek statues, was slightly inclined forward. As to the face, I never could succeed in describing its unique character, the type of which did not come near that of any antique statue I could recall. It was not that calm and severe beauty of the Greek sculptors, who, according to their method, gave to all the features a majestic immobility. Here, on the contrary, I observed with surprise the marked intention of the artist to depict malice as wickedness. The features were slightly contracted; the eyes somewhat oblique; the mouth raised at the corners; the nostrils a little distended. Disdain, irony, cruelty, were all to be read on the visage, but with an incredible beauty, notwithstanding. In truth, the more one regarded this admirable statue the more one experienced the painful sentiment that a beauty so marvellous could ally itself to the absence of all sensibility.

"If the model has ever existed," said I to M. de Peyrehorade, "and I doubt whether Heaven ever produced such a woman, how I do pity her lovers. She must have taken delight in making them die of despair. There is in her expression something ferocious, and yet I never beheld anything so beautiful."

"*C'est Venus tout entière à sa proie attachée*," cried M. de Peyrehorade, pleased with my enthusiasm. The expression of infernal irony was increased, perhaps, by the contrast between her eyes, inlaid with silver, and very brilliant; and the rusty deposit of a darkish green colour with

which Time had covered the whole statue. These brilliant eyes produced a certain illusion which conveyed the impression of reality—of life. I recall what my guide had told me, that she made those who gazed upon her lower their eyes. That was almost true, and I could not suppress a movement of anger with myself in feeling somewhat ill at ease before this figure of bronze.

"Now that you have admired everything in detail, my dear colleague, in matters antiquarian," said my host, "let us open, if you please, a scientific conference. What say you to this inscription, to which you have as yet paid no attention?"

He pointed out to me the pedestal of the statue, and I read thereon these words:

CAVE AMANTEM.

"Let us see," he said, rubbing his hands, "if we can together hit upon the meaning of this *CAVE AMANTEM*!"

"Well," replied I, "there are two meanings to it. It may be translated: 'Beware of him who loves thee; mistrust thy lovers.' But in that sense, I do not know if *CAVE AMANTEM* is good Latin. In view of the diabolical expression of the lady, I would believe that the artist rather desired to put the spectator on his guard against this terrible beauty. I would then translate the inscription: 'Take heed of thyself if she loves thee!'"

"Humph!" said M. de Peyrehorade. "Yes, that is an admissible sense; but, be not offended, sir, I prefer the first translation, which I would, however, enlarge. You know who was Venus's lover?"

"There were several."

"Yes, but the first; it was Vulcan. Is not this the idea?—In spite of all thy beauty, thy disdainful air, thou wilt have a blacksmith, an ugly cripple, for a lover? Profound lesson, sir, for coquettes!"

I could not help smiling, so much did this explanation seem to me forced and far-fetched.

"It is a terrible language, the Latin, with its conciseness," I observed, to avoid formally contradicting my antiquary; and I retired a few steps the better to contemplate the statue.

"Oh heavens!" cried M. de Peyrehorade, "another stroke of vandalism. Some one must have thrown a stone at my statue!"

He had just perceived a white mark a little above the bosom of the Venus. I noticed a similar trace on the finger of the right hand, which I then supposed had been touched in the passage of the stone, or rather that a fragment had been detached by the shock and had rebounded on the hand. I related to my host the insult of which I had been the witness, and the prompt punishment with which it had been followed. He laughed at it greatly, and comparing the apprentice to Diomedes, he wished that the former might, like the Greek hero, see all his companions changed into white birds.

(To be concluded in our next.)

THE SCRAP BOOK.

THE Canadians have made a new departure. They have erected a statue in the Queen's Park at Toronto in honour of a dead editor. George Brown, the gifted writer for the *Globe*. The statue is a gratifying instance of post-mortem appreciation.—*Philadelphia Record*.

NOTHING could be wider of the mark than to suppose that the position of St. John in its relation to foreign trade would be improved by annexation. No; St. John's trade would be lessened not increased by annexation. It would become simply a fifth-rate American port, as Portland now is.—*Montreal Gazette*.

IT will be safe to look for some such modifications of trade relations with the United States as will be satisfactory to Canada and at the same time meet the necessities of the British West Indies, and if such change should take the direction of mutual tariff modifications it should cause no general surprise.—*Shareholder*.

THE evils of Confederation to Nova Scotia are continually cropping up and being acknowledged directly and indirectly every day by our business men—Tories included. Nearly every meeting of the Chamber of Commerce brings to light fresh grievances of trade being hampered by our connection with Ontario and Quebec.—*Halifax (N.S.) Chronicle*.

THE people of the Dominion having seen fit to condone the Pacific Railway Scandal and various other little amiable shortcomings which Sir John's forty years of public life have disclosed, it would not have been becoming in the Queen to go behind the record in dealing with him. Our Premier's new honour, then, is but a fresh mark of Britain's desire to foster kindly relations with her colonies. Had Sir John's political character been a little better, the token of Imperial good-will to Canada would doubtless have been more substantial.—*Manitoba Free Press*.

MR. BRIGHT puts very clearly what we may call the common-sense view of the relations of the Post Office and the public. Everything that can be done to curtail the work of post-office officials on a Sunday will receive our cordial sympathy. But there ought to be a moderation in all things. In London, where the post-office service is practically suspended on the Sunday, the inconvenience, as many of our readers have doubtless found, is exceedingly serious. It means a cessation for twenty-four hours, not only of commercial, but of family communications. There are scores of thousands outside London to whom the morning delivery on the Sunday is the most interesting delivery of the week. If it were said that it is hard on the postman, it might be replied that it need not be so. The question will have to be decided on a balance of the conveniences.—*Manchester (Eng.) Examiner*.