Brander Matthews

Vignettes of Manhattan; Outlines in Local

Publio

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Outlines in Local Color

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Publio Kiadó

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IN THE LITTLE CHURCH DOWN THE STREET

THE little church stands back from the street, with a scrap of lawn on either side of the path that winds from the iron gate to the church door. On this chill January morning the snow lay a foot deep on the grass-plots, with the water frozen out of it by the midnight wind. The small fountain on one side was sheathed with ice; and where its tiny spirtle fell a glittering stalagmite was rising rapidly, so the rotund sparrows had difficulty in getting at their usual drinking-trough. The sky was ashen, yet there was a hope that the sun might break out later in the morning. A sharp breeze blew down the street from the river, bearing with it, now and again, the tinkle of sleigh-bells from the Avenue, only fifty yards away.

There was the customary crowd of curious idlers gathered about the gate as the hearse drew up before it. The pall-bearers alighted from the carriages which followed, and took up their positions on the sidewalk, while the undertaker's assistants were lifting out the coffin. Then the bareheaded and gray-haired rector came from out the church porch, and went down to the gate to meet the funeral procession. He held the prayer-book open in his hand, and when he came to the coffin he began to read the solemn words of the order for the burial of the dead:

"I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die."

Preceding the pall-bearers the rector led the way to the church, which was already filled with the dead actor's comrades and with his friends, and with mere strangers who had come out of curiosity, and to see actresses by daylight and off the stage. The interior was dusky, although the gas had been lighted here and there. The Christmas greens still twined about the pillars, and still hung in heavy festoons from the low arched roof. As the coffin passed slowly through the porch, the rector spoke again:

"We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the Name of the Lord."

Throughout the church there was a stir, and all heads were turned towards the entrance. There were tears in the eyes of more than one man, for the actor had been a favorite, and not a few women were weeping silently. In a pew near the door were two young actresses who had been in the same company with the dead man when he had made his first appearance on the stage, only three years before; and now, possessed by the emotion of the moment, these two sobbed aloud. By their side stood a tall, handsome, fair-haired woman, evidently not an actress; she was clad in simple black; she gave but a single glance at the coffin as it passed up the aisle, half hidden by the heaped-up wreaths of flowers, and then she stared straight before her, with a rigid face, but without a tear in her eye.

Slowly the rector preceded the pall-bearers up the central aisle of the church, while the vestured choir began the stately anthem:

"Lord, let me know my end, and the number of my days; that I may be certified how long I have to live.

"Behold, thou hast made my days as it were a span long, and mine age is even as nothing in respect of thee; and verily every man living is altogether vanity."

It was for a young man that this solemn anthem was being sung—for a man who had died in his twenty-fifth year, at the moment of his first success, and when life opened temptingly before him. He bore a name known in American history, and his friends had supposed that he would be called to the bar, like his father and his grandfather before him. He was a handsome young fellow, with a speaking eye and a rich, alluring voice; and his father's friends saw in him a moving advocate. But the year he was graduated from college his father had died, and his mother also, and he was left alone in the world. As it happened, his father's investments were ill-advised, and there was little or no income to be hoped from them for years. In college he had been the foremost member of the dramatic club, and in the summer vacations he had taken part in many private theatricals. Perhaps it had always been his secret wish to abandon the bar for the stage. While he was debating the course he should take, chance threw in his way the offer of an engagement in the company which supported a distinguished tragedian. He had accepted what opportunity proffered, and it was not as a lawyer but as an actor that he had made his living; it was as an actor that his funeral was now being held at "the little church

down the street."

While the choir had been singing the anthem, the coffin had been borne to the chancel and set down before the rail, which was almost concealed from sight by the flowers scattered about the steps and clustering at the foot of the pulpit and in front of the reading-desk. The thick and cloying perfume of the lilies was diffused throughout the church.

The rector had taken his place at the desk in the chancel to read the appointed lesson, with its message of faith and love. There were sobs to be heard when he declared that this mortal shall put on immortality.

"Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

There were those present—old friends of his boyhood, come from afar to give the dead man the last greeting of affection—who knew how high had been his hopes when he went upon the stage; and they knew also how hard that first year had been, with the wearisome drudgery of his apprenticeship, with the incessant travelling, with ambition baffled by lack of opportunity. Some of them were aware how the second year of his career in the theatre had seen a change in his fortunes, and how discouragement had given place to confidence. There had been dissensions in the company to which he belonged, and the tragedian had parted with the actor who played the second parts. Here was a chance for the young man, and he proved himself worthy of the good-fortune. No more youthful and fiery Laertes had been seen for years, no more passionate Macduff, no more artful and persuasive Mark Antony. He had the gifts of nature—youth, and manly beauty, and the histrionic temperament; and he had also the artistic intelligence which made the utmost out of his endowment. Before the end of his second season on the stage he was recognized as the most promising actor of his years. He had played Mark Antony for the first time only twelve months before; and now he lay there in his coffin, and the little church was filled with the actors and actresses of New York who had come to bid him farewell.

When the rector had finished the reading of the lesson there was a hush throughout the church. A faint jingle of sleigh-bells came floating down from the Avenue.

A few straggling rays of sunshine filtered through the windows on the right side of the little church, and stained with molten colors the wood-work of the pews on the left. There was a movement among the members of the vestured choir, and a large and stately woman took her stand before the organ; she was the contralto of a great opera company, and it was with skill and power and feeling that she sang "Rock of Ages."

In a pew between the organ and the pulpit sat a slight, graceful, dark-eyed and dark-haired woman, young still and charming always, although the freshness had faded from her face. This was the celebrated actress with whom the dead man had been acting only a week before. She was the ideal Juliet—so the theatre-goers thought—and never before had she been aided by so gallant and so ardent a Romeo. Never before had the tragedy been produced with so much splendor, and with dramatic effect so certain and so abundant. Never before had "Romeo and Juliet" been performed for a hundred and fifty nights without interruption. And for once the critics had been in accord with the public, so potent was the glamour of youth and beauty and passion. It was a joy to all discerning lovers of the drama to see characters so difficult interpreted so adequately. Thus it was that the tragedy had been played for five months to overflowing audiences; and its prosperity had been cut short only by the death of the fiery wooer—of the Romeo who lay now in the coffin before the chancel, while the Juliet, with the tears gliding down her cheeks, sat there by the side of the middle-aged merchant she was soon to marry. The young actor, to catch a glimpse of whom silly school-girls would watch the stage door, and to whom foolish women sent baskets of flowers, now lay cold in death, with lilies and lilacs in a heap over his silent heart.

When the final notes of the contralto's rich and noble voice had died away, the rector went on with the ritual:

"Man, that is born of a woman, hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery. He cometh up, and is cut down, like a flower; he fleeth as it were a shadow, and never continueth in one stay."

The dead man had been the last of his line, and there were no near kindred at the funeral. There was no mother there, no sister, no wife. Friends there were, but none of his blood, none who bore his name. Yet there was a shiver of sympathy as the tiny clods of clay rattled down upon the coffin lid, and as the rector said "earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust."

Then the service drew to an end swiftly, and the pall-bearers formed in order once again, and the coffin was lifted and carried slowly down the aisle.

As the sorrowful procession drew near to the open door and passed before the pew where the tall fair-haired woman stood, stolid, with averted head, and a stare fixed on the floor, one of the bearers stumbled, but recovered himself at once. The woman had raised her hand, and she had checked a cry of warning; but the coffin was borne before her steadily; and they who bore it little guessed that they were carrying it past the dry-eyed mother of the dead man's unborn child.

(1893.)

THE TWENTY-NINTH OF FEBRUARY

THE Governor of the State and his secretary had just finished their lunch in one of the private parlors of the hotel. The Governor

lighted his cigar and leaned back in his chair as the secretary went to the door and admitted an old man who had been patrolling the corridor impatiently.

"The Governor will see you now, Mr. Baxter," said the secretary.

The old man, tall, thin, and impetuous, strode past the secretary without a word of thanks, and came straight to where the Governor was sitting.

"At last!" he cried—"at last I've got a chance to talk to you face to face. If you only knew how I have longed for this, you would have let me in before."

"Take a seat, Mr. Baxter," said the Governor, kindly.

"Thank you, but I'd rather stand," replied the old man. "In fact, I'd rather walk. I don't seem to be able to sit nor to stand when I get a-talking about the boy. You know why I wanted to see you, I suppose?" he inquired, suddenly, fixing the Governor with a penetrating stare.

"You wish to urge your son's pardon, I take it," the Governor answered; "and I am ready to listen to you. I have all the papers here," and he indicated a bundle of documents at his elbow. "I have just been reading them."

"But the men who wrote those papers didn't know my boy as I know him, and they can't tell you about him as I can tell you. He's in jail, and he's been there nearly three years, and he's twenty-four years old to-day—for to-day's his birthday—but he's only a boy for all that. He isn't a man yet, to be judged as a man, and to take a man's punishment. I can't tell you that he didn't shoot the fellow, for he did; but he did it in his anger, and he was sorely tempted; and what's more, he did it in self-defence. Oh, I know that wasn't brought out on the trial, but just you read this," and he tore open his coat and pulled out a package of papers; selecting one of them, he thrust it into the Governor's hands. "That's from the man who sold Bowles a pistol and a knife on the 28th of February, the day before the fight. Then you read this too," and he picked out a second letter, and gave that to the Governor with the same impatient and imperious gesture. "That's from one of Bowles's friends, the fellow who was with him just before the shot was fired. He kept quiet at the trial, and said as little as he could. He knew that I was sick a-bed, and so he held his peace. But I've been at him ever since I got about again, and now I've pinned him down. And there's the result; the truth must prevail in the end always. There, in that letter, he says that Bowles had that pistol on his person on the morning of the 29th; and that if it wasn't found on the body, it was because Bowles dropped it as he fell. The pistol was picked up that night under a plank in the sidewalk. It was this same friend of Bowles's who found it then, and he said nothing—the cur! Even at the trial he said nothing! But I knew he had something to say, and at last I made him speak. He's telling the truth now, and the whole truth. Read the letter and see if it isn't. He hated my boy; and he said he wanted to see him swing; but I made him write that letter. And if that isn't enough, I'll put him on the stand, and I'll make him swear to every word of it."

The Governor adjusted his glasses, and began to read the letters thus forcibly placed in his hands.

In his eagerness to be heard, the old man could not brook even this delay, and as the Governor laid down the first letter, he broke forth again: "To-day's his birthday, the first he's had since the shooting, the first that he's ever spent away from me. He was born on the 29th of February, and he has a birthday only once in four years; and it was just four years ago to-day that he got into this scrape, and fired the shot that caused us all this trouble. He was twenty years old that morning, for he was born in 1864; that was the year when General Grant was getting ready to smash Jeff Davis and the rebels; that's why we called him Grant—out of gratitude for the saving of the country. Sometimes I think it's a pity he hadn't been born twenty years before, so that he could have died at Cold Harbor like a man, without ever having seen the inside of a jail. But it was to be, I suppose. Our lives are laid out for us, I suppose. Maybe a boy born on the 29th of February is different from other boys; I don't know. He was loved more than most boys; I know that well enough. I was raised on Cape Cod, and my father never gave me a caress; though I guess he loved me, too, in his way. But I moved out to Lake Erie when I was married, and out by the edge of the lake we waited, my wife and I, for a man-child to be born to us. And we waited a score of years and more; and when Grant came at last, he was our only child. Both his sisters had died in their cradles. So he was the son of our old age. Maybe we spoiled him. Surely we spared the rod. Why, we loved him too much ever to say a hard word to him. In the main he was a good boy, too—wild at times, and skittish—but always loving and easily led. His mother had only to look, and he'd jump to serve her. So we let him do as he pleased, and most generally he pleased us. Perhaps I gave him too much rope; I've often thought so, now I see how near he came to hanging himself. But he was a good boy, and devoted to his mother always. And she loved him—oh! how she loved him!—more than she loved her husband, I know, fond as she was of me."

Here the old man paused in his vehement speech, and turned away abruptly.

"Is Mrs. Baxter with you here in the city?" the Governor asked, gently.

"Here—in the city?" cried the old man, facing about sharply. "She's at home—in the cemetery! That's where she is. She drooped as soon as ever he was arrested, but she bore up till the trial was over, hoping that he might get off somehow, not believing that her boy could be found guilty. But when he was sent off to Auburn to serve fifteen years for manslaughter, why, then there wasn't anything left for her to live for any longer, with all the joy of her life locked up in a stone cell. So she took to her bed, and she died. She faded away; she had lost her interest in life, and so she gave up. Now the boy's all I have, and I want you to give him back to me. That's what I've come down here for. That's what I've been pursuing you for these six months. The boy is all I have. I want to see him back at the

old home on the lake before I die—and I can't live much longer, I guess. I'm seventy now, and for all I look hale and hearty, there's something the matter with my heart, the doctors say, and I may go out any time, like a candle in a gale of wind. Well, give me back the boy, and I'm ready to die. Let me see him at home once more, a free man, and I'll carry the good news to the old woman whenever the call comes, and gladly."

He paused for a moment, and his impassioned speech had lost a little of its fierce fire.

The Governor took up the second letter and began to read it. The movement of the Governor's hand as he raised the paper aroused the old man again.

"If the District Attorney had done his duty by the people of the State it wouldn't have been left for me to wring the truth out of that coward whose letter you are reading. Sometimes I half think this cur was at the bottom of the whole thing. It was he who introduced Grant to the woman. You know that the wedding was to have taken place that very night—the night of the shooting? Yes, it all came out on the trial. Grant only had one birthday in four years, as I've been telling you, and so he persuaded the girl to set it as the wedding-day too. And he was just twenty—a mere boy. It was no wonder they took advantage of him. If you've read the report you can see how she deceived him. Even the District Attorney admitted that, bitter as he was against the boy. Ah! if I could only have been in court at the trial! If I had only been in town the day when the boy discovered the truth, he wouldn't have shot that villain, for I'd have done it myself."

"Then who would have come to me to ask for your pardon?" inquired the Governor, smiling kindly. "I have read these letters, but they contain nothing that is new to me, and—"

"Nothing new?" interrupted the old man, violently. "That letter shows that Grant fired in self-defence, since the fellow had a pistol in his hand. Isn't that something new?"

"Not to me, for the District Attorney—against whom you seem to have a prejudice, Mr. Baxter—had already informed me of this."

"If you've been listening to him, I suppose there isn't much hope of my getting what I'm after," the old man returned, hotly; "for no man ever spoke more unfairly against another than that man did against my boy."

"You do him injustice," the Governor said, firmly. "He did his duty at the trial in pressing for sentence, and he has done his duty now in laying before me this newly discovered evidence. He has even gone further; he has urged me to accede to your request for your son's pardon."

"The District Attorney?" cried the old man in surprise.

"Yes," the Governor replied.

"Then his conscience has pricked him at last."

"And it is chiefly in consequence of his recommendation that I have decided to pardon your son," the Governor continued.

"I don't care on whose urging it is, so long as it's done," the old man rejoined. "When can the boy come out?" he asked, eagerly.

"I will let you bear the pardon to him," said the Governor, and he unfolded one of the papers which lay on the table by his side and signed it. "Here it is."

The old man seized the paper with a convulsive clutch. His knees trembled as his eyes read the pardon swiftly.

The door of the parlor opened, and the secretary returned.

The old man grasped his hat. "Do you know when the next train leaves for Auburn?" he inquired, hastily.

"There's one at four o'clock, I think," the secretary answered.

"I shall be in time," said the old man; and then, the pardon in his twitching fingers, he left the parlor without another word. He passed quickly through the corridors of the hotel, down the stairs, and out into the street. When he reached the pavement he stood still for a moment and bared his head, quite unconscious of the rain-storm which had broken but a minute before.

A small boy came running to him across the street, crying, "Evening papers—four o'clock *Gazette*!"

Seemingly the old man did not hear him.

"Terrible loss of life!" the newsboy shrilled out, as he moved away. "Riot at Auburn! Attempted escape of the prisoners!"

Then a clutch of iron was fastened on the newsboy's arm, and the old man towered above him, asking hoarsely: "What's that you say? A loss of life in the prison at Auburn? Give me the paper!"

He seized it. On the first page was a despatch from Auburn stating that there had been a rising of the convicts at the State-prison, which the wardens had been able to repress after it had gained headway. The prisoners had yielded and gone back to their cells only after the wardens had fired on them, wounding half a dozen and killing the ringleader, who had fought desperately. He was a young man from one of the lake villages, sentenced to fifteen years for manslaughter; his name was Grant Baxter.

As the old man read this, the paper slipped from his fingers, and he fell on the sidewalk dead, still tightly grasping the pardon.

(1889.)

AT A PRIVATE VIEW

WHEN the Spring Exhibition opened, March had thrown off its lion's skin, and stood revealed as a lamb. There was no tang to the wind that swept the swirling dust down the broad street; and the moonlight which silvered the Renascence front of the building had no longer a wintry chill. Flitting clouds were thickening, and threatened rain; but the carriages, rolling up to the canvas tunnel which had been extemporized across the sidewalk, brought many a pretty woman who had risked a spring bonnet. Not a few of the ladies who had been bidden to the Private View were in evening dress; and it was a brilliant throng which pressed down the broad corridor, past the dressing-rooms, and into the first gallery, where the President of the Society, surrounded by other artists of renown, stood ready to receive them.

Beyond the first gallery, and up half a dozen steps, was a smaller saloon, with a square room yet smaller to its right and to its left. Still farther beyond, and up a few more steps, was the main gallery, a splendid and stately hall, lofty and well proportioned, and worthy of the many fine paintings which lined its walls two and three deep. In the place of honor, facing the entrance, was Mr. Frederick Olyphant's startling picture, "The Question of the Sphinx," which bore on its simple frame the bit of paper declaring that it had received a silver medal at the Salon of the summer before. In a corner was another painting by the same artist, a portrait of his friend Mr. Laurence Laughton; and balancing this, on the other side of a landscape called "A Sunset at Onteora," was a portrait of Mr. Rupert de Ruyter, the poet, by a young artist named Renwick Brashleigh, painted vigorously yet sympathetically, and quite extinguishing the impressionistic "Girl in a Hammock," which hung next to it. Here and there throughout the spacious room there were statuettes and busts; one of the latter represented Astroyd, the amusing comedian. Landscapes drenched with sunshine hung by the side of wintry marines; and delicate studies of still life set off purely decorative compositions painted almost in monochrome.

The people who thronged the floor were wellnigh as various as the paintings which covered the walls. There were artists in plenty, men of letters and men about town, women who lived for art and women who lived for society, visitors of both sexes who came to see the exhibition, and visitors of both sexes who came to be seen themselves. There were art-students and art-critics, picture-buyers and picture-dealers, poets and novelists, stock-brokers and clergymen. Among them were Mr. Robert White, of the *Gotham Gazette*, and Mr. Harry Brackett, formerly attached to that journal; Mr. Rupert de Ruyter, who could not be kept away from his own portrait; Mr. Delancey Jones, the architect, with his pretty wife; Mr. J. Warren Payn, the composer; Mr. and Mrs. Martin, of Washington Square; and Miss Marlenspuyk, an old maid, who seemed to know everybody and to be liked by everybody.

Miss Marlenspuyk lingered before Olyphant's portrait of Laurence Laughton, whom she had known for years. She liked the picture until she overheard two young art-students discussing it.

"It's a pity Olyphant hasn't any idea of color, isn't it?" observed one.

"Yes," assented the other; "and the head is hopelessly out of drawing."

"The man has a paintable face, too," the first rejoined. "I'd like to do him myself."

"Olyphant's well enough for composition," the second returned, "but when it comes to portraits, he simply isn't in it with Brashleigh. Seen his two yet?"

"Whose?" inquired the first speaker.

"Brashleigh's," was the answer. "Biggest things here. And as different as they make 'em. Best is a Wall Street man—Poole, I think, his name is."

"I know," the first interrupted. "Cyrus Poole; he's president of a big railroad somewhere out West. Lots of money. I wonder how Brashleigh got the job?"

"Guess he did Rupert de Ruyter for nothing. You know De Ruyter wrote him up in one of the magazines."

The two young art-students stood before the portrait a few seconds longer, looking at it intently. Then they moved off, the first speaker saying, "That head's out of drawing too."

It gave Miss Marlenspuyk something of a shock to learn that the heads of two of her friends were out of drawing; she wondered how serious the deformity might be; she felt for a moment almost as though she were acquainted with two of the startlingly abnormal specimens of humanity who are to be seen in dime museums. As these suggestions came to her one after the other, she smiled gently.

"I don't wonder that you are laughing at that picture, Miss Marlenspuyk," said a voice at her right. "It's no better than the regulation 'Sunset on the Lake of Chromo,' that you can buy on Liberty Street for five dollars, with a frame worth twice the money."

Miss Marlenspuyk turned, and recognized Mr. Robert White. She held out her hand cordially.

"Is your wife here?" she asked.

"Harry Brackett is explaining the pictures to her," White answered. "He doesn't know anything about art, but he is just as amusing as if he did."

"I like Mr. Brackett," the old maid rejoined. "He's a little—well, a little common, I fear; but then he is so quaint and so individual in his views. And at my time of life I like to be amused."

"I know your fondness for a new sensation," White returned. "I believe you wouldn't object to having the devil take you in to dinner."

"Why should I object?" responded Miss Marlenspuyk, bravely. "The devil is a gentleman, they say; and besides, I should be so glad to get the latest news of lots of my friends."

"Speaking of the gentleman who is not as black as he is painted," said White, "have you seen the portrait of Cyrus Poole yet? It is the best thing here. I didn't know Brashleigh had it in him to do anything so good."

"Where is it?" asked Miss Marlenspuyk. "I've been looking at this Mr. Brashleigh's portrait of Mr. De Ruyter, and—"

"Pretty little thing, isn't it?" White interrupted. "Perhaps a trifle too sentimental and saccharine. But it hits off the poet to the life."

"And life is just what I don't find in so many of these portraits," the lady remarked. "Some of them look as though the artist had first made a wax model of his sitter and then painted that."

They moved slowly through the throng towards the other end of the gallery.

"Charley Vaughn, now, has another trick," said White, indicating a picture before them with a slight gesture. "Since he has been to Paris and studied under Carolus he translates all his sitters into French, and then puts the translation on canvas."

The picture White had drawn attention to represented a lady dressed for a ball, and standing before a mirror adjusting a feather in her hair. It was a portrait of Mrs. Delancey Jones, the wife of the architect.

Miss Marlenspuyk raised her glasses, and looked at it for a moment critically. Then she smiled. "It is the usual thing, now, I see," she said—"intimations of immorality."

White laughed, as they resumed their march around the hall.

"If you say that of Charley Vaughn's picture," he commented, "I wonder what you will say of Renwick Brashleigh's. Here it is."

And they came to a halt before the painting which had the place of honor in the centre of the wall on that side of the gallery.

"That is Cyrus Poole," White continued. "President of the Niobrara Central, one of the rising men of the Street, and now away in Europe on his honeymoon."

The picture bore the number 13, and the catalogue declared it to be a "Portrait of a Gentleman." It was a large canvas, and the figure was life size. It represented a man of barely forty years of age, seated at his desk in his private office. On the wall beyond him hung a map of the Niobrara Central Railroad with its branches. The light came from the window on the left, against which the desk was placed. The pose was that of a man who had been interrupted in his work, and who had swung around in his chair to talk to a visitor. He was a man to be picked out of a crowd as unlike other men, rather spare, rather below medium height, rather wiry than muscular. Beyond all question he was energetic, untiring, determined, and powerful. The way he sat indicated the consciousness of strength. So did his expression, although there was no trace of conceit to be detected on his features. His hair was dark and thick and straight, with scarce a touch of gray. He had a sharp nose and piercing eyes, while his lips were thin and his jaw massive.

Miss Marlenspuyk looked at the picture with interest. "Yes," she said, "I don't wonder this has made a hit. There is something striking about it—something novel. It's a new note; that's what it is. And the man is interesting too. He has a masterful chin. Not a man to be henpecked, I take it. And he's a good provider, too, judging by the eyes and the mouth; I don't believe that his wife will ever

have to turn her best black silk. There's something fascinating about the face, but I don't see how—"

She interrupted herself, and gazed at the picture again.

"Is it a good likeness?" she asked at last, with her eyes still fixed on the portrait.

"It's so like him that I wouldn't speak to it," White answered.

"I see what you mean," the old lady responded. "Yes, if the man really looks like that, nobody would want to speak to him. I wouldn't have this artist—what's his name?—Mr. Brashleigh?—I wouldn't have him paint my portrait for the world. Why, if he did, and my friends once saw it, there isn't one of them who would ever dare to ask me to dinner again."

White smiled, and quickly responded, "As I said before, you know, even the gentleman you wanted to take you in to dinner is probably not as black as he is painted."

"But I wouldn't want that man to take me in to dinner," returned Miss Marlenspuyk, promptly, indicating the portrait with a wave of her hand. "Paint is all very well; besides, it is only on the outside, and women don't mind it; but it is that man's *heart* that is black. It is his inner man that is so terrible. He fascinates me—yes—but he frightens me too. Who is he?"

"I told you," White answered. "He is Mr. Cyrus Poole, the president of the Niobrara Central Railroad, and one of the coming men in the Street. He turned up in Denver ten years ago, and when he had learned all that Denver had to teach him he went to Chicago. He graduated from the Board of Trade there, and then came to New York; he has been here two years now, and already he has made himself felt. He has engineered two or three of the biggest things yet seen in the Street. As a result there are now two opinions about him."

"If this portrait is true," said the old maid, "I don't see how there can be more than one opinion about him."

"There were three at first," White rejoined. "At first they thought he was a lamb; now they know better. But they are still in doubt whether he is square or not. They say that the deal by which he captured the stock of the Niobrara Central and made himself president had this little peculiarity, that if it hadn't succeeded, instead of being in Europe on his honeymoon, Cyrus Poole would now be in Sing Sing. Why, if half they said about him at the time *is* true—instead of hanging here on the line, he ought to have been hanged at the end of a rope. But then I don't believe half that I hear."

"I could believe anything of a man who looks like that," Miss Marlenspuyk said. "I don't think I ever saw a face so evil, for all it appears frank and almost friendly."

"But I have told you only one side," White went on. "Poole has partisans who deny all the charges against him. They say that his only crime is his success. They declare that he has got into trouble more than once trying to help friends out. While his enemies call him unscrupulous and vindictive, his friends say that he is loyal and lucky."

Miss Marlenspuyk said nothing for a minute or more. She was studying the portrait with an interest which showed no sign of flagging. Suddenly she looked up at White and asked, "Do you suppose he knows how this picture affects us?"

"Poole?" queried White. "No, I imagine not. He is a better judge of values as they are understood in Wall Street than as they are interpreted at the Art Students' League. Besides, I've heard that he was married and went to Europe before the picture was quite finished. Brashleigh had to paint in the background afterwards."

"The poor girl!" said Miss Marlenspuyk. "Who was she?"

"What poor girl?" asked the man. "Oh, you mean the new Mrs. Cyrus Poole?"

"Yes," responded the old lady.

"She was a Miss Cameron," White answered; "Eunice Cameron, I think her name was. I believe that she is a cousin of Brashleigh's. By-the-way, I suppose that's how it happened he was asked to paint this portrait. He is one of the progressive painters a Wall Street man wouldn't be likely to appreciate off-hand. But it couldn't have been given to a better man, could it?"

Miss Marlenspuyk smiled.

"Well," said White, "Brashleigh has a marvellous insight into character; you can see that for yourself. Or at least he paints portraits as if he had; it's hard to tell about these artists, of course, and it's easy to credit them with more than they have. They see so much more than they understand; they have the gift, you know, but they can't explain; and half the time they don't know what it is they have done."

The old lady looked up and laughed a little.

"I think the man who painted that," she said, "knew what he was about."

"Yes," White admitted, "it seems as though no one could do a thing with the astounding vigor of this, unconsciously. But, as like as not, what Brashleigh thought about chiefly was his drawing and his brush-work and his values; probably the revelation of the sitter's soul was an accident. He did it because he couldn't help it."

"I don't agree with you, for once," Miss Marlenspuyk replied. "I find in this portrait such an appreciation of the possibilities of human villany. Oh, the man *must* have seen it before he painted it!"

"It's lucky I'm not a painter by trade," returned White, "or I should feel it my duty to annihilate you on the spot by the retort that laymen always look at painting from the literary side."

Miss Marlenspuyk did not respond for a minute. She was looking at the portrait with curious interest. She glanced aside, and then she gazed at it again.

"Poor girl!" she said at last, with a gentle sigh.

"Meaning Mrs. Poole?" White inquired.

"Yes," the old lady answered. "I'm sorry for her, but I think I understand how she had to give in. I can feel the sinister fascination of that face myself."

Above the babble of many tongues which filled the gallery there was to be heard a rumble of thunder, and then the sharp patter of rain on the huge skylight above them.

"Excuse me, Miss Marlenspuyk," said White, hastily, "but my wife is always a little nervous about thunder now. I must look her up. I'll send you Harry Brackett."

"You needn't mind about me," she answered, as he moved away. "I've taken care of myself for a good many years now, and I think I'm still equal to the task."

The hall was densely crowded by this time, and it was becoming more and more difficult to make one's way in any given direction. The rain fell heavily on the roof, and dominated the rising murmur of the throng, and even the shrill voices now and again heard above it.

Miss Marlenspuyk drifted aimlessly with the crowd, looking at the pictures occasionally, and listening with interest to the comments and the fragmentary criticisms she could not help hearing on all sides of her. She found herself standing before Mr. Charles Vaughn's "Judgment of Paris," when she was accosted by Harry Brackett.

"I've been looking for you everywhere, Miss Marlenspuyk," he began. "White said you were here or hereabouts, and I haven't seen you for many moons."

They chatted for a few minutes about their last meeting, and the friends at whose house they had dined.

Then Harry Brackett, looking up, saw the huge painting before them.

"So Charley Vaughn's 'Judgment of Paris' is a Salon picture, is it?" he asked. "It looks to me better fitted for a saloon. It's one of those nudes that Renwick Brashleigh says are offensive alike to the artist, the moralist, and the voluptuary."

Miss Marlenspuyk smiled; and her smile was one of her greatest charms.

"Do you know Mr. Brashleigh?" she asked.

"I've known him ever since he came back from Paris," Brackett answered. "And he's a painter, he is. He isn't one of those young dudes who teach society girls how to foreshorten the moon. You don't catch him going round to afternoon teas and talking about the Spontaneity of Art."

"Have you seen his portrait of this Mr. Poole?" she inquired.

"Not yet," he replied, "but they tell me it's a dandy. I've never met Poole, but I used to know his wife. She was Eunice Cameron, and she's a cousin of Brashleigh's. Come to think of it, his first hit was a portrait of her at the Academy three years ago."

"What sort of a girl is she?" Miss Marlenspuyk asked.

"For one thing, she's a good-looker," he responded, "although they say she's gone off a little lately; I haven't seen her this year. But

when Brashleigh introduced me to her she was a mighty pretty girl, I can tell you."

The pressure of the crowd had carried them along, and now Miss Marlenspuyk found herself once more in front of the "Portrait of a Gentleman," and once more she was seized by the power and by the evil which the artist had painted on the face of Cyrus Poole.

"They used to say," Harry Brackett went on, not looking at the picture, "that Brashleigh was in love with her. I think somebody or other once told me that they were engaged."

There was a sudden gleam of intelligence in Miss Marlenspuyk's eyes.

"But of course there wasn't any truth in it," he continued.

The smile came back to the old maid's mouth as she gazed steadily at the portrait before her and answered, "Of course not."

(1893.)

SPRING IN A SIDE STREET

IN the city the spring comes earlier than it does in the country, and the horse-chestnuts in the sheltered squares sometimes break into blossom a fortnight before their brethren in the open fields. That year the spring came earlier than usual, both in the country and in the city, for March, going out like a lion, made an April-fool of the following month, and the huge banks of snow heaped high by the sidewalks vanished in three or four days, leaving the gutters only a little thicker with mud than they are accustomed to be. Very trying to the convalescent was the uncertain weather, with its obvious inability to know its own mind, with its dark fog one morning and its brisk wind in the afternoon, with its mid-day as bright as June and its sudden chill descending before nightfall.

Yet when the last week of April came, and the grass in the little square around the corner was green again, and the shrubs were beginning to flower out, the sick man also felt his vigor returning. His strength came back with the spring, and restored health sent fresh blood coursing through his veins as the sap was rising in the branches of the tree before his window. He had had a hard struggle, he knew, although he did not suspect that more than once he had wrestled with death itself. Now his appetite had awakened again, and he had more force to withstand the brooding sadness which sought to master him.

The tree before his window was but a shabby sycamore, and the window belonged to a hall bedroom in a shabby boarding-house down a side street. The young man himself lay back in the steamer chair lent him by one of the few friends he had in town, and his overcoat was thrown over his knees. His hands, shrunken yet sinewy, lay crossed upon a book in his lap. His body was wasted by sickness, but the frame was well knit and solid. His face was still white and thin, although the yellow pallor of the sick-bed had gone already. His scanty boyish beard that curled about his chin had not been trimmed for two months, and his uncut brown hair fell thickly on the collar of his coat. His dark eyes bore the mark of recent suffering, but they revealed also a steadfast soul, strong to withstand misfortune.

His room was on the north side of the street, and the morning sun was reflected into his window, as he lay back in the chair, grateful for the warmth. A heavy cart lumbered along slowly over the worn and irregular pavement; it came to a stand at the corner, and a gang of workmen swiftly emptied it of the steel rails it contained, dropping them on the sidewalk one by one with a loud clang which reverberated harshly far down the street. From the little knot of men who were relaying the horse-car track came cries of command, and then a rail would drop into position, and be spiked swiftly to its place. Then the laborers would draw aside while an arrested horse-car urged forward again, with the regular footfall of its one horse, as audible above the mighty roar of the metropolis as the jingle of the little bell on the horse's collar. At last there came from over the house-tops a loud whistle of escaping steam, followed shortly by a dozen similar signals, proclaiming the mid-day rest. A rail or two more clanged down on the others, and then the cart rumbled away. The workmen relaying the track had already seated themselves on the curb to eat their dinner, while one of them had gone to the saloon at the corner for a large can of the new beer advertised in the window by the gaudy lithograph of a frisky young goat bearing a plump young goddess on his back.