

CHAPTER III. TO INTRODUCE MR. PINKERTON.

The stranger, I have said, was some years older than myself: a man of a good stature, a very lively face, cordial, agitated manners, and a gray eye as active as a fowl's.

"May I have a word with you?" said I.

"My dear sir," he replied, "I don't know what it can be about, but you may have a hundred if you like."

"You have just left the side of a young lady," I continued, "towards whom I was led (very unintentionally) into the appearance of an offence. To speak to herself would be only to renew her embarrassment, and I seize the occasion of making my apology, and declaring my respect, to one of my own sex who is her friend, and perhaps," I added, with a bow, "her natural protector."

"You are a countryman of mine; I know it!" he cried: "I am sure of it by your delicacy to a lady. You do her no more than justice. I was introduced to her the other night at tea, in the apartment of some people, friends of mine; and meeting her again this morning, I could not do less than carry her easel for her. My dear sir, what is your name?"

I was disappointed to find he had so little bond with my young lady;

and but that it was I who had sought the acquaintance, might have been tempted to retreat. At the same time, something in the stranger's eye engaged me.

"My name," said I, "is Loudon Dodd; I am a student of sculpture here from Muskegon."

"Of sculpture?" he cried, as though that would have been his last conjecture. "Mine is James Pinkerton; I am delighted to have the pleasure of your acquaintance."

"Pinkerton!" it was now my turn to exclaim. "Are you Broken-Stool Pinkerton?"

He admitted his identity with a laugh of boyish delight; and indeed any young man in the quarter might have been proud to own a sobriquet thus gallantly acquired.

In order to explain the name, I must here digress into a chapter of the history of manners in the nineteenth century, very well worth commemoration for its own sake. In some of the studios at that date, the hazing of new pupils was both barbarous and obscene. Two incidents, following one on the heels of the other tended to produce an advance in civilization by the means (as so commonly happens) of a passing appeal to savage standards. The first was the arrival of a little gentleman from Armenia. He had a fez upon his head and (what nobody counted on) a

dagger in his pocket. The hazing was set about in the customary style, and, perhaps in virtue of the victim's head-gear, even more boisterously than usual. He bore it at first with an inviting patience; but upon one of the students proceeding to an unpardonable freedom, plucked out his knife and suddenly plunged it in the belly of the jester. This gentleman, I am pleased to say, passed months upon a bed of sickness, before he was in a position to resume his studies. The second incident was that which had earned Pinkerton his reputation. In a crowded studio, while some very filthy brutalities were being practised on a trembling debutant, a tall, pale fellow sprang from his stool and (without the smallest preface or explanation) sang out, "All English and Americans to clear the shop!" Our race is brutal, but not filthy; and the summons was nobly responded to. Every Anglo-Saxon student seized his stool; in a moment the studio was full of bloody coxcombs, the French fleeing in disorder for the door, the victim liberated and amazed. In this feat of arms, both English-speaking nations covered themselves with glory; but I am proud to claim the author of the whole for an American, and a patriotic American at that, being the same gentleman who had subsequently to be held down in the bottom of a box during a performance of *L'Oncle Sam*, sobbing at intervals, "My country! O my country!" While yet another (my new acquaintance, Pinkerton) was supposed to have made the most conspicuous figure in the actual battle. At one blow, he had broken his own stool, and sent the largest of his opponents back foremost through what we used to call a "conscientious nude." It appears that, in the continuation of his flight, this fallen warrior issued on the boulevard still framed in the burst canvas.

It will be understood how much talk the incident aroused in the students' quarter, and that I was highly gratified to make the acquaintance of my famous countryman. It chanced I was to see more of the quixotic side of his character before the morning was done; for as we continued to stroll together, I found myself near the studio of a young Frenchman whose work I had promised to examine, and in the fashion of the quarter carried up Pinkerton along with me. Some of my comrades of this date were pretty obnoxious fellows. I could almost always admire and respect the grown-up practitioners of art in Paris; but many of those who were still in a state of pupillage were sorry specimens, so much so that I used often to wonder where the painters came from, and where the brutes of students went to. A similar mystery hangs over the intermediate stages of the medical profession, and must have perplexed the least observant. The ruffian, at least, whom I now carried Pinkerton to visit, was one of the most crapulous in the quarter. He turned out for our delectation a huge "crust" (as we used to call it) of St. Stephen, wallowing in red upon his belly in an exhausted receiver, and a crowd of Hebrews in blue, green, and yellow, pelting him--apparently with buns; and while we gazed upon this contrivance, regaled us with a piece of his own recent biography, of which his mind was still very full, and which he seemed to fancy, represented him in a heroic posture. I was one of those cosmopolitan Americans, who accept the world (whether at home or abroad) as they find it, and whose favourite part is that of the spectator; yet even I was listening with ill-suppressed disgust,

when I was aware of a violent plucking at my sleeve.

"Is he saying he kicked her down stairs?" asked Pinkerton, white as St. Stephen.

"Yes," said I: "his discarded mistress; and then he pelted her with stones. I suppose that's what gave him the idea for his picture. He has just been alleging the pathetic excuse that she was old enough to be his mother."

Something like a sob broke from Pinkerton. "Tell him," he gasped--"I can't speak this language, though I understand a little; I never had any proper education--tell him I'm going to punch his head."

"For God's sake, do nothing of the sort!" I cried. "They don't understand that sort of thing here." And I tried to bundle him out.

"Tell him first what we think of him," he objected. "Let me tell him what he looks in the eyes of a pure-minded American"

"Leave that to me," said I, thrusting Pinkerton clear through the door.

"Qu'est-ce qu'il a?"[1] inquired the student.

[1] "What's the matter with him?"

"Monsieur se sent mal au coeur d'avoir trop regarde votre croute,"[2] said I, and made my escape, scarce with dignity, at Pinkerton's heels.

[2] "The gentleman is sick at his stomach from having looked too long at your daub."

"What did you say to him?" he asked.

"The only thing that he could feel," was my reply.

After this scene, the freedom with which I had ejected my new acquaintance, and the precipitation with which I had followed him, the least I could do was to propose luncheon. I have forgot the name of the place to which I led him, nothing loath; it was on the far side of the Luxembourg at least, with a garden behind, where we were speedily set face to face at table, and began to dig into each other's history and character, like terriers after rabbits, according to the approved fashion of youth.

Pinkerton's parents were from the old country; there too, I incidentally gathered, he had himself been born, though it was a circumstance he seemed prone to forget. Whether he had run away, or his father had turned him out, I never fathomed; but about the age of twelve, he was thrown upon his own resources. A travelling tin-type photographer picked him up, like a hawk out of a hedgerow, on a wayside in New Jersey; took a fancy to the urchin; carried him on with him in his wandering life;

taught him all he knew himself--to take tin-types (as well as I can make out) and doubt the Scriptures; and died at last in Ohio at the corner of a road. "He was a grand specimen," cried Pinkerton; "I wish you could have seen him, Mr. Dodd. He had an appearance of magnanimity that used to remind me of the patriarchs." On the death of this random protector, the boy inherited the plant and continued the business. "It was a life I could have chosen, Mr. Dodd!" he cried. "I have been in all the finest scenes of that magnificent continent that we were born to be the heirs of. I wish you could see my collection of tin-types; I wish I had them here. They were taken for my own pleasure and to be a memento; and they show Nature in her grandest as well as her gentlest moments." As he tramped the Western States and Territories, taking tin-types, the boy was continually getting hold of books, good, bad, and indifferent, popular and abstruse, from the novels of Sylvanus Cobb to Euclid's Elements, both of which I found (to my almost equal wonder) he had managed to peruse: he was taking stock by the way, of the people, the products, and the country, with an eye unusually observant and a memory unusually retentive; and he was collecting for himself a body of magnanimous and semi-intellectual nonsense, which he supposed to be the natural thoughts and to contain the whole duty of the born American. To be pure-minded, to be patriotic, to get culture and money with both hands and with the same irrational fervour--these appeared to be the chief articles of his creed. In later days (not of course upon this first occasion) I would sometimes ask him why; and he had his answer pat. "To build up the type!" he would cry. "We're all committed to that; we're all under bond to fulfil the American Type! Loudon, the hope of

the world is there. If we fail, like these old feudal monarchies, what is left?"

The trade of a tin-typer proved too narrow for the lad's ambition; it was insusceptible of expansion, he explained, it was not truly modern; and by a sudden conversion of front, he became a railroad-scalper. The principles of this trade I never clearly understood; but its essence appears to be to cheat the railroads out of their due fare. "I threw my whole soul into it; I grudged myself food and sleep while I was at it; the most practised hands admitted I had caught on to the idea in a month and revolutionised the practice inside of a year," he said. "And there's interest in it, too. It's amusing to pick out some one going by, make up your mind about his character and tastes, dash out of the office and hit him flying with an offer of the very place he wants to go to. I don't think there was a scalper on the continent made fewer blunders. But I took it only as a stage. I was saving every dollar; I was looking ahead. I knew what I wanted--wealth, education, a refined home, and a conscientious, cultured lady for a wife; for, Mr. Dodd"--this with a formidable outcry--"every man is bound to marry above him: if the woman's not the man's superior, I brand it as mere sensuality. There was my idea, at least. That was what I was saving for; and enough, too! But it isn't every man, I know that--it's far from every man--could do what I did: close up the livest agency in Saint Jo, where he was coining dollars by the pot, set out alone, without a friend or a word of French, and settle down here to spend his capital learning art."

"Was it an old taste?" I asked him, "or a sudden fancy?"

"Neither, Mr. Dodd," he admitted. "Of course I had learned in my tin-typing excursions to glory and exult in the works of God. But it wasn't that. I just said to myself, What is most wanted in my age and country? More culture and more art, I said; and I chose the best place, saved my money, and came here to get them."

The whole attitude of this young man warmed and shamed me. He had more fire in his little toe than I had in my whole carcass; he was stuffed to bursting with the manly virtues; thrift and courage glowed in him; and even if his artistic vocation seemed (to one of my exclusive tenets) not quite clear, who could predict what might be accomplished by a creature so full-blooded and so inspired with animal and intellectual energy? So, when he proposed that I should come and see his work (one of the regular stages of a Latin Quarter friendship), I followed him with interest and hope.

He lodged parsimoniously at the top of a tall house near the Observatory, in a bare room, principally furnished with his own trunks and papered with his own despicable studies. No man has less taste for disagreeable duties than myself; perhaps there is only one subject on which I cannot flatter a man without a blush; but upon that, upon all that touches art, my sincerity is Roman. Once and twice I made the circuit of his walls in silence, spying in every corner for some spark of merit; he, meanwhile, following close at my heels, reading the

verdict in my face with furtive glances, presenting some fresh study for my inspection with undisguised anxiety, and (after it had been silently weighed in the balances and found wanting) whisking it away with an open gesture of despair. By the time the second round was completed, we were both extremely depressed.

"O!" he groaned, breaking the long silence, "it's quite unnecessary you should speak!"

"Do you want me to be frank with you? I think you are wasting time," said I.

"You don't see any promise?" he inquired, beguiled by some return of hope, and turning upon me the embarrassing brightness of his eye. "Not in this still-life here, of the melon? One fellow thought it good."

It was the least I could do to give the melon a more particular examination; which, when I had done, I could but shake my head. "I am truly sorry, Pinkerton," said I, "but I can't advise you to persevere."

He seemed to recover his fortitude at the moment, rebounding from disappointment like a man of india-rubber. "Well," said he stoutly, "I don't know that I'm surprised. But I'll go on with the course; and throw my whole soul into it, too. You mustn't think the time is lost. It's all culture; it will help me to extend my relations when I get back home; it may fit me for a position on one of the illustrateds; and then I can

always turn dealer," he said, uttering the monstrous proposition, which was enough to shake the Latin Quarter to the dust, with entire simplicity. "It's all experience, besides;" he continued, "and it seems to me there's a tendency to underrate experience, both as net profit and investment. Never mind. That's done with. But it took courage for you to say what you did, and I'll never forget it. Here's my hand, Mr. Dodd. I'm not your equal in culture or talent--"

"You know nothing about that," I interrupted. "I have seen your work, but you haven't seen mine.

"No more I have," he cried; "and let's go see it at once! But I know you are away up. I can feel it here."

To say truth, I was almost ashamed to introduce him to my studio--my work, whether absolutely good or bad, being so vastly superior to his. But his spirits were now quite restored; and he amazed me, on the way, with his light-hearted talk and new projects. So that I began at last to understand how matters lay: that this was not an artist who had been deprived of the practice of his single art; but only a business man of very extended interests, informed (perhaps something of the most suddenly) that one investment out of twenty had gone wrong.

As a matter of fact besides (although I never suspected it) he was already seeking consolation with another of the muses, and pleasing himself with the notion that he would repay me for my sincerity, cement

our friendship, and (at one and the same blow) restore my estimation of his talents. Several times already, when I had been speaking of myself, he had pulled out a writing-pad and scribbled a brief note; and now, when we entered the studio, I saw it in his hand again, and the pencil go to his mouth, as he cast a comprehensive glance round the uncomfortable building.

"Are you going to make a sketch of it?" I could not help asking, as I unveiled the Genius of Muskegon.

"Ah, that's my secret," said he. "Never you mind. A mouse can help a lion."

He walked round my statue and had the design explained to him. I had represented Muskegon as a young, almost a stripling, mother, with something of an Indian type; the babe upon her knees was winged, to indicate our soaring future; and her seat was a medley of sculptured fragments, Greek, Roman, and Gothic, to remind us of the older worlds from which we trace our generation.

"Now, does this satisfy you, Mr. Dodd?" he inquired, as soon as I had explained to him the main features of the design.

"Well," I said, "the fellows seem to think it's not a bad bonne femme for a beginner. I don't think it's entirely bad myself. Here is the best point; it builds up best from here. No, it seems to me it has a kind of

merit," I admitted; "but I mean to do better."

"Ah, that's the word!" cried Pinkerton. "There's the word I love!" and he scribbled in his pad.

"What in creation ails you?" I inquired. "It's the most commonplace expression in the English language."

"Better and better!" chuckled Pinkerton. "The unconsciousness of genius. Lord, but this is coming in beautiful!" and he scribbled again.

"If you're going to be fulsome," said I, "I'll close the place of entertainment." And I threatened to replace the veil upon the Genius.

"No, no," said he. "Don't be in a hurry. Give me a point or two. Show me what's particularly good."

"I would rather you found that out for yourself," said I.

"The trouble is," said he, "that I've never turned my attention to sculpture, beyond, of course, admiring it, as everybody must who has a soul. So do just be a good fellow, and explain to me what you like in it, and what you tried for, and where the merit comes in. It'll be all education for me."

"Well, in sculpture, you see, the first thing you have to consider

is the masses. It's, after all, a kind of architecture," I began, and delivered a lecture on that branch of art, with illustrations from my own masterpiece there present, all of which, if you don't mind, or whether you mind or not, I mean to conscientiously omit. Pinkerton listened with a fiery interest, questioned me with a certain uncultivated shrewdness, and continued to scratch down notes, and tear fresh sheets from his pad. I found it inspiring to have my words thus taken down like a professor's lecture; and having had no previous experience of the press, I was unaware that they were all being taken down wrong. For the same reason (incredible as it must appear in an American) I never entertained the least suspicion that they were destined to be dished up with a sauce of penny-a-lining gossip; and myself, my person, and my works of art butchered to make a holiday for the readers of a Sunday paper. Night had fallen over the Genius of Muskegon before the issue of my theoretic eloquence was stayed, nor did I separate from my new friend without an appointment for the morrow.

I was indeed greatly taken with this first view of my countryman, and continued, on further acquaintance, to be interested, amused, and attracted by him in about equal proportions. I must not say he had a fault, not only because my mouth is sealed by gratitude, but because those he had sprang merely from his education, and you could see he had cultivated and improved them like virtues. For all that, I can never deny he was a troublous friend to me, and the trouble began early.

It may have been a fortnight later that I divined the secret of the

writing-pad. My wretch (it leaked out) wrote letters for a paper in the West, and had filled a part of one of them with descriptions of myself. I pointed out to him that he had no right to do so without asking my permission.

"Why, this is just what I hoped!" he exclaimed. "I thought you didn't seem to catch on; only it seemed too good to be true."

"But, my good fellow, you were bound to warn me," I objected.

"I know it's generally considered etiquette," he admitted; "but between friends, and when it was only with a view of serving you, I thought it wouldn't matter. I wanted it (if possible) to come on you as a surprise; I wanted you just to waken, like Lord Byron, and find the papers full of you. You must admit it was a natural thought. And no man likes to boast of a favour beforehand."

"But, heavens and earth! how do you know I think it a favour?" I cried.

He became immediately plunged in despair. "You think it a liberty," said he; "I see that. I would rather have cut off my hand. I would stop it now, only it's too late; it's published by now. And I wrote it with so much pride and pleasure!"

I could think of nothing but how to console him. "O, I daresay it's all right," said I. "I know you meant it kindly, and you would be sure to do

it in good taste."

"That you may swear to," he cried. "It's a pure, bright, A number 1 paper; the St. Jo _Sunday Herald_. The idea of the series was quite my own; I interviewed the editor, put it to him straight; the freshness of the idea took him, and I walked out of that office with the contract in my pocket, and did my first Paris letter that evening in Saint Jo. The editor did no more than glance his eye down the headlines. 'You're the man for us,' said he."

I was certainly far from reassured by this sketch of the class of literature in which I was to make my first appearance; but I said no more, and possessed my soul in patience, until the day came when I received a copy of a newspaper marked in the corner, "Compliments of J.P." I opened it with sensible shrinkings; and there, wedged between an account of a prize-fight and a skittish article upon chiropody--think of chiropody treated with a leer!--I came upon a column and a half in which myself and my poor statue were embalmed. Like the editor with the first of the series, I did but glance my eye down the head-lines and was more than satisfied.

ANOTHER OF PINKERTON'S SPICY CHATS.

ART PRACTITIONERS IN PARIS.

MUSKEGON'S COLUMNED CAPITOL.

SON OF MILLIONAIRE DODD,

PATRIOT AND ARTIST.

"HE MEANS TO DO BETTER."

In the body of the text, besides, my eye caught, as it passed, some deadly expressions: "Figure somewhat fleshy," "bright, intellectual smile," "the unconsciousness of genius," "'Now, Mr. Dodd,' resumed the reporter, 'what would be your idea of a distinctively American quality in sculpture?'" It was true the question had been asked; it was true, alas! that I had answered; and now here was my reply, or some strange hash of it, gibbeted in the cold publicity of type. I thanked God that my French fellow-students were ignorant of English; but when I thought of the British--of Myner (for instance) or the Stennises--I think I could have fallen on Pinkerton and beat him.

To divert my thoughts (if it were possible) from this calamity, I turned to a letter from my father which had arrived by the same post. The envelope contained a strip of newspaper-cutting; and my eye caught again, "Son of Millionaire Dodd--Figure somewhat fleshy," and the rest of the degrading nonsense. What would my father think of it? I wondered, and opened his manuscript. "My dearest boy," it began, "I send you a cutting which has pleased me very much, from a St. Joseph paper of high standing. At last you seem to be coming fairly to the front; and

I cannot but reflect with delight and gratitude how very few youths of your age occupy nearly two columns of press-matter all to themselves. I only wish your dear mother had been here to read it over my shoulder; but we will hope she shares my grateful emotion in a better place. Of course I have sent a copy to your grandfather and uncle in Edinburgh; so you can keep the one I enclose. This Jim Pinkerton seems a valuable acquaintance; he has certainly great talent; and it is a good general rule to keep in with pressmen."

I hope it will be set down to the right side of my account, but I had no sooner read these words, so touchingly silly, than my anger against Pinkerton was swallowed up in gratitude. Of all the circumstances of my career, my birth, perhaps, excepted, not one had given my poor father so profound a pleasure as this article in the Sunday Herald. What a fool, then, was I, to be lamenting! when I had at last, and for once, and at the cost of only a few blushes, paid back a fraction of my debt of gratitude. So that, when I next met Pinkerton, I took things very lightly; my father was pleased, and thought the letter very clever, I told him; for my own part, I had no taste for publicity: thought the public had no concern with the artist, only with his art; and though I owned he had handled it with great consideration, I should take it as a favour if he never did it again.

"There it is," he said despondingly. "I've hurt you. You can't deceive me, Loudon. It's the want of tact, and it's incurable." He sat down, and leaned his head upon his hand. "I had no advantages when I was young,

you see," he added.

"Not in the least, my dear fellow," said I. "Only the next time you wish to do me a service, just speak about my work; leave my wretched person out, and my still more wretched conversation; and above all," I added, with an irrepressible shudder, "don't tell them how I said it! There's that phrase, now: 'With a proud, glad smile.' Who cares whether I smiled or not?"

"Oh, there now, Loudon, you're entirely wrong," he broke in. "That's what the public likes; that's the merit of the thing, the literary value. It's to call up the scene before them; it's to enable the humblest citizen to enjoy that afternoon the same as I did. Think what it would have been to me when I was tramping around with my tin-types to find a column and a half of real, cultured conversation--an artist, in his studio abroad, talking of his art--and to know how he looked as he did it, and what the room was like, and what he had for breakfast; and to tell myself, eating tinned beans beside a creek, that if all went well, the same sort of thing would, sooner or later, happen to myself: why, Loudon, it would have been like a peephole into heaven!"

"Well, if it gives so much pleasure," I admitted, "the sufferers shouldn't complain. Only give the other fellows a turn."

The end of the matter was to bring myself and the journalist in a more close relation. If I know anything at all of human nature--and the IF

is no mere figure of speech, but stands for honest doubt--no series of benefits conferred, or even dangers shared, would have so rapidly confirmed our friendship as this quarrel avoided, this fundamental difference of taste and training accepted and condoned.