

A Strange Case

The Artist and the Pictures of Mystery

By CARROL H. PIERCE
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I am an artist. Being in poor health my doctor ordered me abroad, and I went to Florence, Italy.

I rented rooms of a widow and her daughter, of the name of Miele. They occupied the top floor of a building on the river Arno. I used a front room for a studio and a rear room for a bedroom. The mother was a middle-aged woman, the daughter about twenty-five. Their ancestors had been well off, but their estate had melted away, and Senora Miele and her daughter got on with difficulty. Bianca, the daughter, was an artist but an indifferent one.

Nevertheless there was something remarkable about Bianca Miele. She was neither pretty nor homely. The eyes of the Italians are handsome, but Senora Miele's eyes were more than handsome; they were, so to speak, compelling. That is, when she looked out of them at me I felt a strange force compelling me to do her bidding. Not that there was apparent exercise of will. She was gentleness itself. The power she exercised was rather persuasive than forceful.

Not long after I arrived in Florence I fell ill and did not leave my bed for weeks. Senora Miele and her daughter both nursed me.

A portion of the time I was in either a stupor or delirium. I don't know which. At such times I was very weak and on coming to myself usually felt as if I had been doing exhaustive work, though I had been in my bed all the while, where it would not have been possible for me to do any work even if I had been mentally capable.

My illness occurred during the winter, and when the spring came on and the weather began to warm up Senora Miele used to put me in an easy chair and wheel me out on one of those little balconies common in Florence houses. We were on the Arno embankment (the Lung Arno, they call it there), in sight of the green hills that surround the city. Indeed, from my balcony I could see some six or seven miles distant the heights on which Florence, the original Florentine settlement, was made. During three more months I spent much of the day on this balcony in fancy painting pictures of the scenes spread out before me. One of these was the undulating plain between the city's edge and the heights on which the city was founded. I had come to me would make an artistic feature in my imaginary picture, and I spent hours working it in. Another view I dreamed of was the Arno, directly beneath me, winding under its arched bridges toward the south, and other nearer and consequently greener hills. There is something in the atmosphere of Italy to intensify the imagination.

One day I delighted in the imaginative painting I could not do in reality. But I always noticed that such days instead of giving me strength drew upon what I had.

Fortunately I recovered before the hot weather set in and after convalescence in the invigorating climate of the Swiss Alps went to Paris, where I remained some time.

Strolling one day down one of the Parisian boulevards, I stepped into a picture shop. The dealer, fancying to make a customer of me, advanced and questioned me as to what I was looking for. It occurred to me to ask for one of my own pictures, but that I expected to find one, but that to ask for the work of any special artist would make it appear that I was not looking at his wares with no intention of buying.

"Have you anything of Adrian Giles?" I asked.

"Giles, the American?"

"Yes."

"Certainly. I have a very remarkable piece of his work. Come this way."

He led me to one of his display rooms and up to a picture that had evidently been hung with considerable care. The subject was certainly familiar to me, for it was the plain I had overlooked at Florence with the hills and Florence in the distance. And as I stood looking at it I recognized not only the identical scene I had painted in my day dream, but my individual style. Quickly leading to the lower left hand corner, a cap was put upon my astonishment by seeing my own name.

I caught with both hands at the rail that extended around the room to guard the pictures. Here was a view I had no remembrance of presenting, which I must have painted. It came to me before I recovered self-equality to further examine it, but when I did so I saw that for the first time in my life I had portrayed a scene exactly as it was. What I had painted was not all the reality and beauty which my imagination had created.

"Where did you get it?" I stammered.

"From a dealer whom I never saw before."

"How do you know it is a genuine Giles?"

"I know it because I have seen several of the artist's pictures. One other I tried to buy, but failed to make a deal, as none displayed in a shop in the Boulevard des Capucines. You may see there. There is the same unmistakable individuality about it as in this."

"What is the subject?"

"It is also a Florentine scene, called 'The Arno.' It takes in the river,

with the hills beyond. It, too, is a great picture."

My knees began to knock together. My jaws chattered, but not sufficiently to prevent my asking, "What do you ask for this picture?"

"Twenty thousand francs."

"Great heavens! I had never received the half of that for a picture. I looked at the man so astonished that he hastened to say:

"My profit will be but 500 francs. I paid 19,500 francs for it."

Taking the number of the shop where he said the other picture was to be seen, I staggered out of the store and was soon before the picture I had once created in dreams. It, too, far exceeded any work I had ever done. The dealer told me he had paid 27,000 francs for it.

Fortunately I occupied rooms with an American friend in the Quai de la Laine and rushed home to tell him that I had discovered something which if not explained would drive me crazy. He listened to my story, but I could see by his expression that he, too, feared something had occurred to disturb my mental balance. He would express no opinion, and as I could not remain quiet I insisted on his going with me at once for the purpose. He did so, and, being familiar with my work, he pronounced the pictures mine, though they were far beyond any of my work he had ever seen.

On our way back to our rooms neither he nor I said anything about the strange occurrence, but when we reached them he sat down before me, lit a pipe and said:

"While you were ill in Florence and out of your head you undoubtedly painted these pictures, not knowing what you were doing; consequently you retained no remembrance of them."

"But I wasn't out of my head when I was wrapped in the views given in the pictures. Besides, how could I have done the work without the Miele's knowing it? And, knowing it, they would have called my attention to it."

My friend pondered awhile, blowing at the smoke time clouds of smoke, and finally said:

"Whatever you have been physically, I'm sure you are all right now. But if you wish an explanation go back to Florence, see the people you heard of and get it from them."

Acting on his advice, I started that evening. On the way I had time to think over the matter of my investigation and decided to approach the Miele's without being known to them.

On arrival I asked about them and learned that they had been left a legacy of some fifty thousand francs. This at once assured me that they had received the amount paid for my pictures. One morning I rang their bell. Bianca answered the summons and, seeing me at the door, turned pale.

"I asked her to call her mother and told both of my experience in Paris. At first they assumed to be as much surprised as I, but, seeing that I was not to be deceived, Senora Miele turned to her daughter and said:

"Well, tell me where they came from," I asked her. She looked at her daughter.

"I can only tell you," said Bianca, "that I painted them while you were sitting out in your chair on the balcony how I know now. All I do know is that you painted them."

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House To Let

It Changed the Life of a Clubman. A Spinster Was Also Interested In It.

By F. A. MITCHELL
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Jenkins was an eminently respectable bachelor of forty.

One day he received an invitation to go with a friend who lived in the suburbs for dinner and the night. The difference between a house with a woman in it, to say nothing of several impenetrable children, and his own solitary apartment was appalling. In his own bedroom he would awaken in the morning amid a tomblike silence. In this abode of a family he lay awake for nearly an hour listening to unending sounds that seemed like music to him.

There were a constant opening and shutting of doors, water pouring in a bathroom, children running, children shouting, children scolded, children patted; now a few deep tones from a father warning Johnny that if he didn't stop fooling and dress himself he would get a spanking and now a fainting cry to Eddie to "come and let me do your hair." It was the contrast of this life about him—this union of hearts and interests—with his silent chamber that made him yearn for the one and hate the other.

Jenkins returned to the city, spent the day in his office, went to his room—having a sigh as he entered it—dressed for the evening and started for his club. Shortly before reaching it he passed a neat looking two story stone front dwelling in a window of which was a placard "To Let." He stood leaning on his cane looking at the house; then went on muttering: "It's no use. I've no wife."

He went on to his club, sat down in the reading room and listlessly took up a paper. But he did not read. He was going over the women of his acquaintance in a vain effort to pick out one he could love, one with whom he could make a home. This, too, was a failure. They all seemed to him like so many wax figures in a show window. No responsive word to draw him to any of them or them to him.

The next morning passing the house to let he thought that, after all, it would be better than his rooms and he would go in and look at it. At the moment a feminine voice said to him: "There doesn't appear to be any work on the notice where to apply."

Jenkins turned and saw a young woman whose appearance was as refined as her voice. Her attention was all directed to the house, and Jenkins believed that she had made this to him, to herself rather than to him.

"Perhaps, there being no such directions, it means that one may inquire."

"It doesn't matter," said the lady, "still making her replies more to herself than him."

The words were spoken in the same tone with which the lady before had said to himself: "It's no use. I've no wife."

"I'll ring if you like," said Jenkins. "Oh, thank you. Never mind on my account."

"I'm intending to make inquiries for myself, though I have no definite idea of taking a house. I don't need one."

"Nor I."

He went up on to the stoop and rang the bell. His summons was answered by a middle-aged person who lived in the basement, evidently a caretaker. The lady waited for Jenkins to act as spokesman, but he hesitated. He did not know whether to say "this lady wishes to look at the house" or "I wish to look at the house." The first would be assuming what he had not been authorized to assume; the second would look as if he proposed to stand in the lady's way. He compromised.

"We would like to look at the house," he said.

"Oh, walk in," said the caretaker, leading the way through the apartments. "Down—the front—parlor, dining room, library and kitchen."

Then, leading them upstairs: "Four bedrooms up here. This front room will make a beautiful room for you and your wife, sir, and this little room adjoining is just big enough for the children, if you have them. There's another small room back that would make a good nursery and a guest's room. The bathroom is at the end of the hall."

If the poor woman had been cognizant of the terrible blunder she was making she would have been deeply ashamed. And yet she would have had no cause to be pained. Though Jenkins put on a wooden expression, there was a very pleasant feeling about his heart. Though the lady blushed a rosy red, there was a suspicion of a smile playing on her lips.

"How many children have you, ma'am?" asked the woman, suddenly breaking in upon her description of the house.

"No children," replied the lady, ignoring the woman's inference that the two were married.

"No children? Oh, dear! Somehow it doesn't seem to me that people are married all the little tots come. Without them parents are liable to run to cats and dogs, a poor makeshift for children. Dear little souls! How nice it is to see them romp and play. They have their own joys and sorrows, in which their parents take as much interest as themselves. I like the sight, best, of course, but little boys are nice, too, especially when they're fine, manly little fellows. But in every family there should be both boys and girls."

While the woman was running on, unconscious that the picture she was drawing was the unflattering one of the two people she was talking to, that

they were not married and both had for years wished to be married, especially for the home she had suggested by her remarks upon children, Jenkins was looking at the ceiling, out of the window, any place except where he might be expected to look. Suddenly he turned his eyes upon the lady beside him and saw blushes coming and going like an aurora borealis, with smiles on the lips like sunlight on ripples of water. Then their eyes met.

The usual happening from such a meeting of eyes under such circumstances might be embarrassment or half amusement, or it might be anger. The look between these two was neither of these. There was more in that glance than has been written in many a volume, and no volume could express as much. The man's eyes said, "Let us fulfill the picture." The woman's said, "I will."

"Marriage, or rather mating, is a natural instinct. The reason neither of these two had mated was because they had from childhood been surrounded by artificial conditions. He had looked upon a woman critically, judiciously, taking time to deliberate whether he wanted her or not—if he could get her—while she had considered the men of her acquaintance in the same fashion. While all these considerations, pro and con, had failed to make a mating, suddenly a spark had flashed between them and made them one."

Nor does it matter that there was a great deal of the artificial to stand between them and realization. What was to follow was not a process of building up a love, but of breaking down barriers. When they left the house, both knew that the artificial condition by which they were surrounded required that they proceed step by step. In one respect they were very near, in another they were far apart. They had pledged a silent truth and yet they were strangers.

"Do you think you will take the house?" asked Jenkins as they stood on the sidewalk about to part.

"Naturally, do you think you'll take it?" was the reply.

"I am certainly not so ungallant as to stand in a lady's way."

"Nor would I think of taking it if you want it."

Jenkins stood thinking for a moment before replying. It was their artificial relations that were occupying his thoughts.

"Suppose," he said, taking out his card, "you send me word as to your decision."

"I will," she replied in a low tone.

On second thought, I will not put you to so much trouble. If you will let me know where I could get your reply I would be pleased to call for it."

"I should be happy to have you do so," she gave him her address.

"Good morning!"

"Good morning!"

Not a very warm parting for an engaged couple. Nevertheless both went away with satisfaction in their hearts. For the first time in their lives they had listened to the voice of nature.

In a few days Jenkins called upon the caretaker, with whom the renting of the house had been left, with a couple of leaves in his pocket and executed one for the owner and another for himself.

"When will you move in, sir?" asked the woman.

"I don't know. I would like to have you remain as you are and take care of the house for me for the present."

"That would suit me very well. If Mrs. Jenkins wishes any cleaning done, sir, I'll be glad to attend to it for her."

Jenkins said he would let her know. But as there was as yet no Mrs. Jenkins, he gave many artificial barriers to be broken down before he could be the woman was not likely to receive any hurried order. He fully intended to occupy the house with the woman the caretaker supposed was Mrs. Jenkins, but before that a great deal must be done. Not even a word of love had been spoken. What had been looked and understood was another matter.

Months passed before the caretaker got her order to do the cleaning. Then everything was made quick and span, and furniture began to arrive. Jenkins went to the house and saw that it was arranged as properly and with as much taste as could be expected of a bachelor, then when all was finished left it in charge of the woman and went away.

That day he saw of him he drove up to the door in a carriage, wearing a frock coat, a silk hat and a chrysanthemum in his buttonhole. He handed out the lady who had inspected the house in his company, and when inside and her wraps were thrown off she was very beautifully dressed.

"The children, ma'am! Where are the children? Oh, I forgot; you told me there were no children. But I hope they'll come soon."

Years have passed since these two strangers met at the "house to let" and later went to live in it as man and wife. A family such as the caretaker described are there, and all are happy. The house is but a stone's throw from the club, but Jenkins never goes there. He says he has no use for it.

Isles of the Sea.

There are few Isles of the Sea that are not known. Even in the south Pacific there is not, it is stated, an isolated islet on which the coconut palm can grow which is not marked on the chart and visited periodically by a troop of twenty-five of sea birds, and on which sea birds are accustomed to congregate and nest whose stores of guano have not been tested and in many cases cleaned, nor a bank with diving distance on which the pearl shell oyster has its home which has not been discovered and stripped of its treasures. Eggs and young.

Treadmills.

Water mills were used in the time of Julius Caesar. In Roman times slaves were condemned to the corn mills, which were propelled by tread. Afterward gears were used. In the third and fourth centuries the water wheels were used as 300 cattle mills in Rome.

ZEAL

Experience shows that success is due less to ability than to zeal. The winner is he who gives himself to his work, body and soul.—Charles Buxton.

Punishment of Children.

Parents should remember that every distressing, bloodcurdling story told to a child, every superstitious fear instilled into his young life, and their mental attitude toward the child, their whole treatment of it, are simply making phonographic records in its nature which will be reproduced with scientific exactness in its future life, says Orison Sweet Marden in Success Magazine. Whatever you do, never punish a child when it is suffering with fear. It is a cruel thing to punish children the way most mothers do anyway, but to punish a child when it is already quivering with terror, and especially when you are angry, is terrible. The same principle applies to punishing children in school.

An Eye for His Epitaph.

Edmond de Goncourt, the French novelist, admitted that he worked with an eye to his epitaph, and he wanted the epitaph to endure for a long time. He records in his journal that "the thought that the world may perish, may not last forever, in one which occasionally fills my mind with gloom. I should be defrauded by the destruction of this planet, for I have written only in the hope of eternal fame. A reputation lasting 10,000, 20,000, even 100,000 years, would be a poor return for the pains I have taken, the privations I have suffered. Under these conditions it would have been better to lounge aimlessly through life dreaming and smoking my time away."—Chicago News.

The Language of Flowers.

Some men were telling dog stories after a day's shooting. After some time, when the tales had got very tall, one little man said:

"I have got a dog that makes all yours seem fools. I generally feed him meat after dinner, but the other day a friend dropped in, and the poor beast slipped my mind. After the meal we went into the garden. The dog scratched up a flower and laid it at my feet, with the most yearning look in his eye—it was a forget-me-not."

No more dog stories were told that evening.—Exchange.

Took the Second Man.

One evening recently a well-to-do bachelor volunteered to teach a school by young widow the game of checkers. He quite overlooked the possibilities of the game.

"There, now, it's still your move," he exclaimed to the lady shortly after the game had commenced. "You have taken only one man, and you are bound to take another."

"Thanks for your advice," said the widow sweetly. "Suppose I take you, then?"

She did not.

Somewhat Different.

His question whether a word should have its adverbial or its adjective form seems to me to have little to do with the sense. Now, what is the difference between talking loud and talking loudly?

"No difference," replied the pedagogue. "But look here. For a large fee you give legal advice freely, but you don't give it free. I think that will retain you for awhile."

January Petit Jury.

Albion City—George D. Conover, Edward B. Hart, Adair City—David Fitzsimmons, Fred C. Muller, Alfred Moore, William Biddle, Claude Moore, Gerald S. Rosenberg, E. Hart, John Johnson, George W. Yalton, Gabriel Gar-

Hamlin Marlon, Thomas M. Shoen, Henry J. Dines, Thomas Crowell, Frederick G. Heller, Harry J. Gormley.

Brown Vista Township—Antonio Gualandini, Joseph W. Canopy, John Ritchie, Andrew Cimino.

Brigantine City—Alfred B. Smith, Egg Harbor City—Charles Karpers, J. Nelson Ake, Daniel Michael.

Egg Harbor Township—F. H. Norcross, John J. Blackman.

Gateway Township—Robert A. Leeds, Edward Eriell, Abram Brickland, Somers D. Endicott.

Hamilton Township—Martin Ingersoll, R. C. Lloyd, Charles Godwin, George Kromer, Burton Smith.

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Pleasantville—Hannibal Hawkins, William Moore, William L. Hawkins.

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