

THE WANDERING JEW.

BY EUGENE SUK

CHAPTER XXVI.

A GOOD GENIUS.

The first of the two, whose arrival had interrupted the answer of the notary, was Faringhea. At sight of this man's forbidding countenance, Samuel approached, and said to him: "Who are you, sir?"

After casting a piercing glance at Rodin, who started but soon recovered his habitual coolness, Faringhea replied to Samuel: "Prince Djalma arrived lately from India, in order to be present here this day, as it was recommended to him by an inscription on a medal, which he wore about his neck."

"He, also!" cried Gabriel, who had been the shipmate of the Indian Prince from the Azors, where the vessel in which he came from Alexandria had been driven into port; "he also is one of the heirs." In fact, the prince told me during the voyage that his mother was of French origin. But, doubtless, he thought it right to conceal from me the object of his journey. Oh! that Indian is a noble and courageous young man. Where is he?"

The Strangler again looked at Rodin, and said, laying strong emphasis upon his words: "I left the prince yesterday evening. He informed me that, although he had a great interest to be here, he might possibly sacrifice that interest to other motives. I passed the night in the same hotel, and this morning, when I went to call on him, they told me he was already gone out. My friendship for him led me to come hither, hoping the information I should be able to give might be of use to the prince."

In making no mention of the snare into which he had fallen the day before, in concealing Rodin's machinations with regard to Djalma, and in attributing the absence of this latter to a voluntary cause, the Strangler evidently wished to serve the socius, trusting that Rodin would know how to recompense his discretion. It is useless to observe, that all this story was impudently false. Having succeeded that morning in escaping from his prison by a prodigious effort of cunning, audacity, and skill, he had run to the hotel where he had left Djalma; there he had learned that a man and woman, of an advanced age, and most respectable appearance, calling themselves relations of the young Indian, had asked to see him—and that, alarmed at the dangerous state of somnolency in which he seemed to be plunged, they had taken him home in their carriage, in order to pay him the necessary attention.

"It is unfortunate," said the notary, that this heir also did not make his appearance—but he has, unhappily, forfeited his right to the immense inheritance that is in question."

"Oh! an immense inheritance is in question," said Faringhea, looking fixedly at Rodin, who prudently turned away his eyes.

The second of the two personages we have mentioned entered at this moment. It was the father of Marshal Simon, an old man of tall stature, still active and vigorous for his age. His hair was white and thin. His countenance, rather fresh-colored, was expressive at once of quickness, mildness and energy.

Agricola advanced hastily to meet him. "You here, M. Simon!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, my boy," said the marshal's father, cordially pressing Agricola's hand, "I have just arrived from my journey. M. Hardy was to have been here, about some matter of inheritance, as he supposed; but, as he will still be absent from Paris for some time, he has charged me—"

"He also an heir!—M. Francis Hardy!" cried Agricola, interrupting the old workman.

"But how pale and agitated you are, my boy!" said the marshal's father, looking round with astonishment. "What is the matter?"

"What is the matter?" cried Dagobert, in despair, as he approached the foreman. "The matter is that they would rob your granddaughters, and that I have brought them from the depths of Siberia only to witness this shameful deed!"

"Eh?" cried the old workman, trying to recognize the soldier's face, "you are then—"

"Dagobert."

"Yau—the generous, devoted friend of my son!" cried the marshal's father, pressing the hands of Dagobert in his own with strong emotion; "but did you not speak of Simon's daughter?"

"Of his daughters; for he is more fortunate than he imagines," said Dagobert. "The poor children are twins."

"And where are they?" asked the old man.

"In a convent."

"In a convent?"—"Yes; by the treachery of this man, who keeps them there in order to disinherit them."

"What man?"
 "The Marquis d'Aigrigny."
 "My son's mortal enemy!" cried the old workman, as he threw a glance of aversion at Father d'Aigrigny, whose audacity did not fail him.
 "And that is not all," added Agricola. "M. Hardy, my worthy and excellent master, has also his right to this immense inheritance."
 "What?" cried Marshal Simon's father; "but M. Hardy did not know that such important interests were concerned. He set out hastily to join one of his friends who was in want of him."

At each of these successive revelations, Samuel felt his trouble increase; but he could only sigh over it, for the will of the testator was couched, unhappily, in precise and positive terms.

Father d'Aigrigny, impatient to end this scene, which caused him cruel embarrassment, in spite of his apparent calmness, said to the notary, in a grave and expressive voice: "It is necessary, sir, that all this should have an end. If calamity could reach me, I would answer victoriously by the facts that have just come to light. Why attribute to odious conspiracies the absence of the heirs, in whose names this soldier and his son have so unceremoniously urged their demands? Why should such absence be less explicable than the young Indian's, or than M. Hardy's, who, as his confidential man has just told us, did not even know the importance of the interests that called him hither? Is it not probable, that the daughters of Marshal Simon, and Mdle. de Cardoville have been prevented from coming here today by some very natural reasons? But, once again, this has lasted too long. I think M. Notary will agree with me, that this discovery of new heirs does not at all affect the question, which I had the honor to propose to him just now; namely—whether, as trustee for the poor, to whom Abbe Gabriel made a free gift of all he possessed, I remain, notwithstanding his tardy and illegal opposition, the only possessor of this property, which I have promised, and which I now again promise, in presence of all here assembled, to employ for the Greater Glory of the Lord? Please to answer me plainly, M. Notary; and thus terminate a scene which must needs be painful to us all."

"Sir," replied the notary, in a solemn tone, "on my soul and conscience, and in the name of law and justice, as a faithful and impartial executor of the last will of M. Marius de Rennepont, you, M. l'Abbe d'Aigrigny, are the only possessor of this property, which I place at your immediate disposal, that you may employ the same according to the intention of the donor."

These words, pronounced with conviction and gravity, destroyed the last vague hopes that the representatives of the heirs might till then have entertained. Samuel became paler than usual, and pressed convulsively the hand of Bathsheba, who had drawn near to him. Large tears rolled down the cheeks of the two old people. Dagobert and Agricola were plunged into the deepest dejection. Struck with the reasoning of the notary, who refused to give more credence and authority to their remonstrances than the magistrates had done before him, they saw themselves forced to abandon every hope. But Gabriel suffered more than anyone; he felt the most terrible remorse, in reflecting that, by his blindness, he had been the involuntary cause and instrument of this abominable theft.

So, when the notary, after having examined and verified the amount of securities contained in the cedar box, said to Father d'Aigrigny: "Take possession, sir, of this casket—" Gabriel exclaimed, with bitter disappointment and profound despair: "Alas! one would fancy, under these circumstances, that an inexorable fatality pursues all those who are worthy of interest, affection or respect. Oh, my God!" added the young priest, clasping his hands with fervor, "Thy sovereign justice will never permit the triumph of such iniquity."

It was as if heaven had listened to the prayer of the missionary, Hardy had he spoken, when a strange event took place.

Without waiting for the end of Gabriel's invocation, Rodin, profiting by the decision of the notary, had seized the casket in his arms, unable to repress a deep aspiration of joy and triumph. At the very moment when Father d'Aigrigny and his socius thought themselves at last in safe possession of the treasure, the door of the apartment in which the clock had been heard striking was suddenly opened.

A woman appeared upon the threshold.

At sight of her, Gabriel uttered a loud cry, and remained as if thunder-struck. Samuel and Bathsheba fell on their knees together, and raised their clasped hands. The Jew and Jewess felt inexplicable hopes reviving within them.

All the other actors in this scene appeared struck with stupor. Rodin—Rodin himself—recoiled two steps, and replaced the casket on the table with a trembling hand. Though the incident might appear natural enough—a woman

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