Hardly a Compliment.

In the excitement of the moment public speakers often say the opposite of what they mean to convey, and "when Henry Irving gave a reading in the Ulster hall, in 1878," says Bram Stoker, in "Personal Reminiscences of Henry Irving," "one speaker made as pretty an Irish bull as could be found, though the bull is generally supposed to belong to other provinces than the hard-headed Ulster. In descanting on the many virtues of the guest of the evening he mentioned the excellence of his moral nature and rectitude of his private life in these terms: "Mr. Irving, sir, is a gentleman what leads a life of unbroken blemish.'"

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The adventure depicted in this widely lauded novel will send the blood faster through the veins than it ever coursed before, and the love story of Ean Tabos and Joan Fordibras will cling to the memory of the reader as one of the most inspiring romances of modern times.

CHAPTER I.

THE PREFACE OF TIMOTHY M'SHANUS, JOURNALIST.

It would have been at the Fancy Fair and Fete at Kensington town hall that my friend Dr. Fabos first met Miss Fordibras.

"McShanus," said he, "if there's anyone knows a good supper, 'tis yourself. Lead forth to the masquerade. Spare no expense. Your friends are my friends. I would have this a memorable night—the last I may be in London for many a year."

There were seven of us who took him at his word and got into the cab together. You must know that he had paid for a little dinner at the Goldsmith club, and never a man who did not justice to his handsome hospitality. 'Tis a poor heart that never rejoices; and Ean Fabos paid for it—as I took the opportunity to remark to my good friend Killock, the actor.

"Shall we pay for the cab?" says he.

"Would you insult the most generous heart in Great Britain this night?" says I.

"On reflection," says he, "the man who does not pay will have no trouble about his change;" and with that we went into the hall. My old comrade, Barry Henshaw, had come in a velvet shooting coat and a red neckcloth that was not to the taste of the officials at the box office. Killock himself had diamonds strewn upon his vest thick enough to make a pattern of chrysanthemums. My own cravat would have been no disgrace to the Emperor Napoleon. And there we stood, seven members of seven honorable professions, like soldiers at the drill, our eyes upon the refreshment buffet.

"'Tis time for a whisky and soda," says Barry Henshaw, the famous dramatist who has written for the theater.

"Shame on ye," says I.

And then he remarked:

"If Fabos was a gentleman he would join the procession and pay for it. But that's the worst of these shows. You always lost the man with the money."

I passed the observation by as impertinent and we went to the buffet. What they called the fancy fair was in full swing by this time. Slips of beauty dressed as shepherdesses mistook me and my friend for their sheep and would have fleeced us prettily; but our lofty utterance restrained their ardor and sent them to the rightabout. 'Twas a fair, be it told, for the sailor boys at Portsmouth; and when you had bought a bunch of daisies for 10 shillings of a maid with blue eyes and cherry lips, you could waltz with the same little vixen at 5 shillings a time. My friend, Barry, I observed, turned very pale at this suggestion.

"Do you not lift the sprightly toe?" asked I.

"Man," he said, "it's worse than a channel passage."

"But Fabos is dancing," said I, pointing to our host in the midst of the rabble. "See what comes of the plain living, my boy. He'll dance until the sun shines. And a pretty 5 shillings' worth he has on his arm."

'Twas odd how we fell to discussing this same Dr. Ean Fabos upon every occasion that came to us. Was it because of his money. I venture, no. We of the Goldsmith club care for no man's money.

What I was saying 'twas that Ean Fabos' riches made no more mark upon us than a lady's parasol upon the back of a mule. They said he was a doctor of Cambridge whose father had made a fortune out of Welsh coal and then joined his ancestors. My homage to his consideration, say I.

He has bequeathed us a noble son, whose dinners are second to none in the empire. Again I say, hats off.

But I speak of his son dancing with the little girl in red at the fancy fair at Kensington. Be sure that his six feet one would go bending to 68 inches and whispering soft things in her ear at 5 shillings the waltz, as the program told yet. And he such a silent man ordinarily. I'd add to it that there's no true charity in all London which has not benefited secretly by his generous alms. But that is known to few * * * and was never known to me until I met the daughter of my friend Oscroft, the painter; left an orphan as she was in this same unkind city.

What is if then about Ean Fabos that turns all eyes upon him in whatever company he may be? Some, for sure, hope to borrow money of him. But, mark ye, there are many more, strangers to him, enemies because of the favor he enjoys, and these are on their knees with the rest. What is it, then? I'll tell you in a word. 'Tis that great power of what they call personal magnetism; a power that we can give no right name to, but must admit wherever we find it. Ean Fabos had it beyond any man I have known.

Now, this is the very man whom I saw dancing with a black haired shepherdess in a red cloak. When he surrendered her to her father, a stately old gentleman and I asked him who she might be, he answered me with the frankness of a boy.

"Timothy McShanus," says he, "she's the daughter of General Fordbras, whose ancestor went to America with the Marquis de Lafayette!

"Your friend Lafayette was known to my grandfather," says I, leading him straight to the buffet, "though I do not remember to have met him. As for the labor that ye speak of, I would ask you why you do it if ye have no stomach for it? To dance or not to dance—shall that be the question? I was much astonished when he took me by the arm and made the strangest confession that ever fell from such a man's lips.

"I danced with her, McShanus," said he, "because she is wearing the bronze pearls that were stolen from my flat in Paris just three years ago."

"Is there but one bronze pearl in the world?" I asked him after a while of surprise.

He turned upon me that weary smile.

"There are just 10 of that particular shape, McShanus," says he, "and she is wearing four of them in the pendant on her neck. The heart is a rose diamond which once belonged to Princess Marguerite of Austria. There is a sweet little white sapphire in the ring that I fancy I remember somewhere. If she will give me another dance I will tell you more perhaps."

"Would you have me think that yon bit of a girl is a thief?"

"Oh," says he, his clear blue eyes full upon me, "does an Irishman ever give himself time to think? Come, McShanus, use your wits. If she or her father knew that the jewels were stolen, would she be wearing them in a ballroom in London?"

"Why, no, she certainly would not."

"Wrong every time, Timothy McShanus. She would wear them for mere bravado. That's what I've been telling myself while I danced with her. If she does not know the truth, her father does."

"What, the military looking gentleman who so closely resembles my friend, General von Moltke?"

"No other at all. I have me doubts about him. He knows that his daughter is wearing stolen jewels, but he has not the smallest idea that I know. Either that, or he is clever enough to play Hamlet in a tam-o-shanter. Excuse my unwonted agitation, McShanus. This is really very interesting," and he left me.

Here was Timothy McShanus next deserting the baked meats, to say nothing of his convenient corner in the buffet, to go out and stare at a red shepherdess with picture books and maizypop to sell. And what kind of a colleen was it that he saw? Why, nothing out of the ordinary when viewed from afar—but come a little closer and you shall see the blackest and the wickedest pair of eyes that ever looked out from the face of Venus. 'Tis no common man I am in my judgment of the sex; but this I will say that when the girl looked at me, she found me as red in the face as a soldier at court martial. Not tall above the common; her hair a deep chestnut running almost to black; her mouth just a rosebud between two pretty cheeks—there was something of France and something of America helping each other to make a wonder of her. Young as she was, and I supposed her to be about 18, her figure would have given her five years more according to our northern ideas; but I, who know Europe as I know Pall Mall, said: "No, she is 18, McShanus, my boy, and America has kept that peach blossom upon her cheeks." Had I been mistaken, her voice would have corrected me. 'Twas a young girl's voice when she spoke, clear and musical as the song of silver bells.

"Now, won't you buy a novel?" she said, bustling up to me just like a bunch of roses. "Here's Sir Arthur Hall Rider's very latest—an autograph copy for one guinea."

"Me dear," says I, "'tis Timothy McShanus who reads his own novels. Speak not of his poor rivals."

"How strange that I don't know your name," says she perplexed; "did they review your novels in the newspapers?"

"My dear," says I, "the newspaper reviewers couldn't understand 'em. Be kind to them for it. Ye can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear any more than ye can make black pearls out of lollypops. Could it be, Timothy McShanus would be driving his own motor car and not rejuiced to the back seat of the omnibus. 'Tis a strange world with more wrong than right in it."

"You like my pearls, then?" she asked.

I said they were almost worthy of her wearing them.

"Papa bought them in Paris," she ran on as natural as could be. "They's not black, you know, but bronze. I don't care a bit about them myself. I like things that sparkle."

"Like your eyes," cried I, searching for the truth in them. For sure, I could have laughed aloud just at my friend Fabos' tale of her; "like your eyes when you were dancing a while back with a doctor of my acquaintance."

She flushed a hair's breadth and turned her head away.

"Oh, Dr. Fabos, do you know him, then?"

"We have been as brothers for a matter of 10 short years."

"Is he killing people in London, did you say?"

"No such honorable employment. He's just a fine, honest, independent gentleman. Ye've nothing much richer in America, maybe. The man who says a word against him has got to answer Timothy McShanus. Let him make peace with heaven before he does so."

She turned an arch gaze upon me, half-laughing at my words.

"I believe he sent you here to say so," cried she.

"Indeed an' he did," says I; "he's anxious for your good opinion.

CHAPTER II.

HARRIET FABOS WRITES.

I have been asked to write very shortly that which I know of General Fordibras and my brother's mysterious departures from England in the summer of the year 1904. God grant that all is well with him and that these lines will be read by no others than the good friends who have not forgotten me in my affliction.

It was, I think, in the December of the previous year that he first met the general in London, as I understood from him, at a fashionable bazar at Kensington. This circumstance he related to me upon his return; and a sister's interest in Joan Fordibras could not be but a growing one. I recollect that the general drove over one day in the spring from Newmarket and took luncheon with us. He is a fine stately man with a marked American accent and a manner which clearly indicates his French birth. The daughter, I thought, a pretty, winsome child; very full of quaint sayings and ideas and so unlike our English girls. Ean had spoken of her so often, that I was not prepared for the somewhat distant manner in which he treated her. Perhaps, in my heart, I found myself a little relieved.

General Fordibras, it appears, made a hobby of yachting. He lives but little in America, I understand, but much in Paris and the south. Ean used to be very fond of the sun, but he had given it up so many years that I was surprised to hear how much a sailor he can be. His own pet things—the laboratory, the observatory on our grounds, his rare books, above all, his rare jewels—were but spoken of indifferently. General Fordibras is very little interested in them; while his daughter is sufficiently an American to care chiefly for our antiquities—of which I was able to show her many at Deepdene. When they left us it was to return to London, I understood; and then join the general's yacht at Cherbourg.

Ean spoke little to me of these people when they were gone. I felt quite happy that he made no mention, of the daughter, Joan. Very foreign to his usual habits, however, he was constantly to and fro between our house and London; and I observed, not without some uneasiness, that he had become a little nervous. This was the more remarkable because he has always been singularly fearless and brave, and ready to risk his own life for others upon the humblest call. At first I thought that he must be out of health and would have had Dr. Wilcox over to see him; but he always resents my attempts to coddle him (as he calls it), and so I forebore, and tried to find another reason.

There is no one quicker than a sister who loves, to detect those ailments of the heart from which no man is free; but I had become convinced by this time that Ean cared nothing for Joan Fordibras, and that her absence abroad was not the cause of his disquietude.

The first thing that I noticed was his hesitation to leave me alone at the manor. For the first time for some years he declined to attend the annual dinner of his favorite club, the Potters.

"I should not be able to catch the last train down," he said one morning at breakfast. "Impossible, Harriet. I must not go."

"Why, whatever has come to you, Ean?" said I, "are you getting anxious about poor old me? My dear boy, just think how often I have been alone here?"

"Yes, but in future I don't intend to leave you so much. When the reasons make themselves known to me, they shall be known to you, Harriet. Meanwhile, I am going to live at home. The little Jap stops with me. He is coming down from town today, so I hope you will make arrangements for him."

He spoke of his Japanese servant Okyada, whom he brought from Tokyo with him three years ago. The little fellow had served him most faithfully at his chambers in the Albany, and I was not displeased to have him down in Suffolk. Ean's words, however, troubled me greatly, for I imagined that some danger threatened him in London, and a sister's heart was beating already to discover it.

"Cannot you tell me something, Ean?"

He laughed boyishly in a way that should have reassured me.

"I will tell you something, Harriet. Do you remember the bronze pearls that were stolen from my flat in Paris more than three years ago?"

"Of course, Ean—I remember them perfectly How should I forget them? You don't mean to say——"

"That I have recovered them? No, not quite. But I know where they are."

"Then you will recover them, Ean?"

"Ah, that is for tomorrow. Let Okyada, by the way, have the room next to my dressing room. He won't interfere with my clothes, Harriet. You will still be able to coddle me as much as you please . . ."

Now had I been clever, I should have put two and two together and have foreseen that what Ean really feared was another attempt upon the wonderful collection of rare jewels he has made—a collection the existence of which is known to very few people, but is accounted among the most beautiful and rarest in the country. Ean keeps his jewels—at least he kept them until recently—in a concealed safe in his own dressing room, and very seldom was even I permitted to peep into that holy of holies. Here again some eccentricity of a lovable character is to be traced. My brother would as soon have thought of wearing a diamond in his shirt front as of painting his face like an Indian; but these hidden jewels he loved with a rare ardor, and I do truly believe that they had some share in his own scheme of life. When he lost the bronze pearls in Paris, I know that he fretted like a child for a broken toy. It was not their value, not at all—he called them his black angels, in jest of course, and I think that he believed some of his own good luck went with them.

This was the state of things in the months of May when Okyada, the Japanese, came from London and took up his residence at the manor. Ean told me nothing; he never referred again to the subject of his lost pearls. Much of his time was spent in his study, where he occupied himself with the book he was writing upon the legends of the Adriatic. His leisure he gave to his motor and his observatory. I began to believe that whatever anxiety troubled him had passed; and in this belief I should have continued but for the alarming events of which I now write. And this brings me to the middle of the summer; to be exact, the 15th day of June in the year 1904.

Ean, I remember, had come in from a little trip to Cambridge about 5 o'clock in the afternoon. He called his servant, Okyada, to the study and they were closeted there almost until dinner time. In the drawing room, later one, Ean spoke of some of his deserted hobbies and expressed regret that he had given up his yacht.

(Continued Next Week.)

In the Vernacular.

From the Chicago Tribune.

"Sayliz, hoozat?" said the girl at the notion counter.

"Hoozoo?" queried the girl at the glove counter.

"Jessa ziffew diddeno!"

"Lookeermin, wotcha mean?"

"Fewdon't knowliz, wotchablushin about?"

"Aintablushin!"

"Yartoo!"

"Minjones yunobetter!"

"Swat yar!"

"Hoojoo mean, anyhow?"

"Feilerspoke wennypass choorcounter."

"Diddunsee anyfeller."

"Diddunteerim, either, didja!"

"Cearsnot."

"Awkamoff!"

"Sayookids," interrupted the floorwalker, "quitcherchinniner I'll reporcha!"

Hereditary Talent.

From the Youth's Companion.

From the postoffice steps Freeman Davis watched Professor Lane cross the road and enter the wheelwright's shop on the oppcsite side.

"Goes in an' out free as you or me," Mr. Davis remarked to Jabez Sewall, "an' nobody knows how many letters he's entitled to write after his name."

Jabez nodded. "But what I can't just make out is how he come by all his smartness. Far's I know none of his forbears ever amounted to much in a lit'rary way."

"What you talkin' about?" Mr. Davis demanded, warmly. "You know's well's I do that his father could spell Nebuchadnezzar quicker'n any other boy in school."

Precise.

From the Baltimore American.

A young Baltimore man has a habit of correcting carelessness in speech that comes to his notice. The other day he walked into a shop and asked for a comb. "Do you want a narrow man's comb?" asked the clerk. "No," said the customer, gravely. "I want a comb for a stout man with [illegible] teeth."

HAD TO BE POSTPONED.

His Friend—I t'ought you wus goin' to commit suicide, James?

The Rejected—I wus! but when I got to de river I remembered I'd forgot me swimmin' tights.

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Murine Eye Remedy Co., Chicago.

The Lawyers Won.

Askit—Old Skinnerd left quite a large estate, did he not?

Noitt—Yes; but some of his relatives contested his will.

Askitt—Was there much left after it got through the courts?

Noitt—Nothing but the heirs.

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Bertie—I don't know.

Marmaduke—He said it reminded him of a game he used to play when a boy called "Hunt the Hare."

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