

THE WANDERING JEW.

BY EUGENE SUE

CHAPTER XLII.—CONTINUED.

"I endeavored to get Mrs. Grivois to talk of M. Rodin; but it was in vain.

"She suspected you," said the workgirl. "It was to be anticipated."

"I asked her," continued Florine, "if they had seen M. Rodin at the hotel lately. She answered evasively. Then, despairing of getting anything out of her," continued Florine, "I left Mrs. Grivois, and that my visit might excite no suspicion, I went to the pavilion—when, as I turned down the avenue—whom do I see?—why, M. Rodin himself; hastening towards the little garden-door, wishing no doubt to depart unnoticed by that way."

"Madame, you hear," cried Mother Bunch, clasping her hands with a supplicating air; "such evidence should convince you."

"M. Rodin at the Princess de Saint-Dizier's!" cried Mdlle. de Cardoville, whose glance, generally so mild, now suddenly flashed with vehement indignation. Then she added, in a tone of considerable emotion, "continue, Florine."

"At sight of M. Rodin, I stopped, proceeded Florine, "and keeping a little on one side, I gained the pavilion without being seen. I looked out into the street, through the closed blinds, and perceived a hackney-coach. It was waiting for M. Rodin, for, a minute after, he got into it, saying to the coachman, 'No. 39, Rue Blanche'—"

"The prince's!" exclaimed Mdlle. de Cardoville.—"Yes, madame."

"Yes, M. Rodin was to see him to day," said Adrienne, reflecting.

"No doubt he betrays you, madame, and the prince also; the latter will be made his victim more easily than you."

"Shame! shame!" cried Mdlle. de Cardoville, on a sudden, as she rose, all her features contracted with painful anger. "After such a piece of treachery, it is enough to make us doubt of everything—even of ourselves."

"Oh, madame! is it not dreadful?" said Mother Bunch, shuddering.

"But, then, why did he rescue me and mine, and accuse the Abbe d'Aigrigny?" wondered Mdlle. de Cardoville. "Of a truth, it is enough to make one lose one's reason. It is an abyss—but, oh! how frightful is doubt!"

"As I returned," said Florine, casting a look of affectionate devotion on her mistress, "I thought of a way to make all clear; but there is not a minute to lose."

"What do you mean?" said Adrienne, looking at Florine with surprise.

"M. Rodin will soon be alone with the prince," said Florine.

"No doubt," replied Adrienne.—"The prince always sits in a little room that opens upon a greenhouse. It is there that he will receive M. Rodin."

"When then?" resumed Adrienne.—"This greenhouse, which I had arranged according to your orders, has only one issue—by a door leading into a little lane. The gardener gets in that way every morning, so as not to have to pass through the apartments. Having finished his work, he does not return thither during the day."

"What do you mean? what is your project?" said Adrienne, looking at Florine with growing surprise.

"The plants are so disposed, that, I think, if even the shade were not there, which screens the glass that separates the saloon from the greenhouse, one might get near enough to hear what was passing in the room, without being seen. When I was superintending the arrangements, I always entered by this greenhouse door. The gardener had one key, and I another. Luckily, I have not yet parted with mine. Within an hour, you may know how far to trust M. Rodin. If he betrays the prince, he betrays you also."

"What say you?" cried Mdlle. de Cardoville. "Set out instantly with me; we reach the side-door; I enter alone, for precaution's sake—if all is right, I return—"

"You would have me turn spy?" said Mdlle. de Cardoville, haughtily, interrupting Florine. "You cannot think it."

"I beg your pardon, madame," said the girl, casting down her eyes, with a confused and sorrowful air; "you had suspicions, and meseems 'tis the only way to confirm or to destroy them."

"Stoop to listen to a conversation—never!" replied Adrienne.

"Madame," said Mother Bunch, suddenly, after some moments' thought, "permit me to tell you that Mdlle. Florine is right. The plan proposed is a painful one, but it is the only way in which you can clear up, perhaps forever, your doubts as to M. Rodin. Notwithstanding the

evidence of facts, in spite of the almost certainty of my presentiments, appearances may deceive us. I was the first who accused M. Rodin to you. I should not forgive myself all the rest of my life, did I accuse him wrongfully. Beyond doubt, it is painful, as you say, madame, to listen to a conversation—"

Then, with a violent effort to console herself, she added, as she strove to repress her tears, "Yet, as your safety is at stake, madame—for, if this be treachery, the future prospect is dreadful—I will go in your place—to—"

"Not a word more, I entreat you," cried Mdlle. de Cardoville, interrupting. "Let you, my poor friend, do for me what I thought degrading to do myself? Never!"

Then, turning to Florine, she added, "tell M. de Bonneville to have the carriage got ready on the instant."

"You consent, then!" cried Florine, clasping her hands, and not seeking to conceal her joy; and her eyes also became full of tears.

"Yes, I consent," answered Adrienne, with emotion. "If it is to be war—a war to the knife, that they would wage with me—I must be prepared for it; and, come to think of it, it would only be weakness and folly not to put myself on my guard. No doubt this step costs me much, and is very repugnant to me, but it is the only way to put an end to suspicions that would be a continual torment to me, and perhaps to prevent still greater evils. Yes! for many important reasons, this interview of M. Rodin with Prince Djalma may be doubly decisive with me—as to the confidence, or the inexorable hate, that I must henceforth feel for M. Rodin. So, Florine, quick!—my cloak and bonnet, and the carriage. You will go with me. As for you, my dear, pray wait for me here," she added, turning to the work-girl.

Half an hour after this conversation, Adrienne's carriage stopped, as we have before seen, at the little garden-gate of the house of the Rue Blanche. Florine entered the greenhouse, and soon returned to her mistress. "The shade is down, madame. M. Rodin has just entered the prince's room." Mdlle. de Cardoville was, therefore, present, though invisible, at the following scene, which took place between Rodin and Djalma.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE LETTER.

Some minutes before the entrance of Mdlle. de Cardoville into the greenhouse, Rodin had been introduced by Faringhea into the presence of the prince, who, still under the influence of the burning excitement into which he had been plunged by the words of the half-caste, did not appear to perceive the Jesuit. The latter, surprised at the animated expression of Djalma's countenance, and his almost frantic air, made a sign of interrogation to Faringhea, who answered him privately in the following symbolical manner:—After laying his forefinger on his head and heart, he pointed to the fire burning in the chimney, signifying by his pantomimic action that the head and heart of Djalma were both in flames. No doubt Rodin understood him, for an imperceptible smile of satisfaction played upon his wan lips; then he said aloud to Faringhea, "I wish to be alone with the prince. Let down the shade, and see that we are not interrupted." The half-caste bowed, and touched a spring near the sheet of plate-glass, which slid into the wall as the blind descended; then, again bowing, Faringhea left the room. It was shortly after that Mdlle. de Cardoville and Florine entered the greenhouse, which was now only separated from the room in which was Djalma, by the transparent thickness of a shade of white silk, embroidered with large colored birds. The noise of the door, which Faringhea closed as he went out, seemed to recall the young Indian to himself; his features, though still animated, recovered their habitual expression of mildness and gentleness; he started, drew his hand across his brow, looked round him, as if waking up from a deep reverie, and then, advancing towards Rodin, with an air as respectful as confused, he said to him, using the expression commonly applied to the old men in his country, "Pardon me, father." Still following the customs of his nation, so full of deference towards age, he took Rodin's hand to raise it to his lips, but the Jesuit drew back a step, and refused this homage.

"For what do you ask pardon, my dear prince?" said he to Djalma.

"When you entered, I was in a dream; I did not come to meet you. Once more, pardon me, father!"

"Once more, I forgive you with all my heart, my dear prince. But let us have some talk. Pray resume your place on the couch, and your pipe, too, if you like it."

But Djalma, instead of adopting the suggestion, and throwing himself on the divan, according to

his custom, insisted on seating himself in a chair, notwithstanding all the persuasion of "the Old Man with the Good Heart," as he always called the Jesuit.

"Really, your politeness troubles me, my dear prince," said Rodin; "you are here at home in India; at least, we wish you to think so."

"Many things remind me of my father, and of him who was a father to me," added the Indian, as he thought of Marshal Simon, whose arrival in Paris had been purposely concealed from him.

After a moment's silence, he resumed in a tone full of affectionate warmth, as he stretched out his hand to Rodin, "You are come, and I am happy!"

"I understand your joy, my dear prince, for I come to take you out of prison—to open your cage for you. I had begged you to submit to a brief seclusion, entirely for your own interest."

"Can I go out to-morrow?"—"To-day, my dear prince, if you please."

The young Indian reflected for a moment, and then resumed, "I must have friends, since I am here in a palace that does not belong to me."

"Certainly you have friends—excellent friends," answered Rodin. At these words, Djalma's countenance seemed to acquire fresh beauty. The most noble sentiments were expressed in his fine features; his large black eyes became slightly humid, and, after another interval of silence, he rose and said to Rodin with emotion: "Come!"

"Whither, dear prince?" said the other, much surprised.

"To thank my friends. I have waited three days. It is long."

"Permit me, dear prince—I have much to tell you on this subject—please to be seated."

Djalma resumed his seat with docility. Rodin continued: "It is true, that you have friends; or rather, you have a friend. Friends are rare."

"What are you?"—"Well, then, you have two friends, my dear prince—myself, whom you know, and one other, whom you do not know, and who desires to remain unknown to you."

"Why?"—"Why?" answered Rodin, after a moment's embarrassment. "Because the happiness he feels in giving you these proofs of his friendship and even his own tranquility, depend upon preserving this mystery."

"Why should there be concealment when we do good?"

"Sometimes, to conceal the good we do, my dear prince."

"I profit by his friendship; why should he conceal himself from me?" These repeated questions of the young Indian appeared to puzzle Rodin, who, however, replied: "I have told you, my dear prince, that your secret friend would perhaps have his tranquility compromised, if he were known."

"If he were known—as my friend?"

"Exactly so, dear prince."

The countenance of Djalma immediately assumed an appearance of sorrowful dignity; he raised his head proudly, and said in a stern and haughty voice: "Since this friend hides himself from me, he must either be ashamed of me, or there is reason for me to be ashamed of him. I only accept hospitality from those who are worthy of me, who think me worthy of them. I leave this house." So saying, Djalma rose with such an air of determination, that Rodin exclaimed: "Listen to me, my dear prince. Allow me to tell you, that your petulance and touchiness are almost incredible. Though we have endeavored to remind you of your beautiful country, we are here in Europe, in France, in the centre of Paris. This consideration may perhaps a little modify your views. Listen to me, I conjure you."

Notwithstanding his complete ignorance of certain social conventionalisms, Djalma had too much good sense and uprightness, not to appreciate reason, when it appeared reasonable. The words of Rodin calmed him. With that ingenuous modesty, with which natures full of strength and generosity are almost always endowed, he answered mildly: "You are right father. I am no longer in my own country. Here the customs are different. I will reflect upon it."

Notwithstanding his craft and suppleness, Rodin sometimes found himself perplexed by the wild and unforeseen ideas of the young Indian. Thus he saw, to his great surprise, that Djalma now remained pensive for some minutes, after which he resumed in a calm but firm tone: "I have obeyed you, father: I have reflected."

"Well, my dear prince?"

"In no country in the world, under no pretext, should a man of honor conceal his friendship for another man of honor."

"But suppose there should be danger in avowing this friendship?" said Rodin, very uneasy at the turn the conversation was taking. Djalma eyed the Jesuit with contemptuous astonishment, and made no reply.

"I understand your silence, my dear prince; a

brave man ought to defy danger. True; but if it should be you that the danger threatens, in case this friendship were discovered, would not your man of honor be excusable, even praiseworthy, to persist in remaining unknown?"—"I accept nothing from a friend, who thinks me capable of denying him from cowardice."

"Dear prince—listen to me."

"Adieu, father."

"Yet reflect!"—"I have said it," replied Djalma, in an abrupt and almost sovereign tone, as he walked towards the door.

"But suppose a woman were concerned," cried Rodin, driven to extremity, and hastening after the young Indian, for he really feared that Djalma might rush from the house, and thus overthrow all his projects.

At the last words of Rodin, the Indian stopped abruptly. "A woman!" said he, with a start, and turning red. "A woman is concerned?"

"Why, yes! suppose it were a woman," resumed Rodin, "would you not then understand her reserve, and the secrecy with which she is obliged to surround the marks of affection she wishes to give you?"

"A woman!" repeated Djalma, in trembling voice, clasping his hands in adoration; and his beautiful countenance was expressive of the deepest emotion. "A woman!" said he again. "A Parisian?"

"Yes, my dear prince, as you force me to this indiscretion, I will confess to you that your friend is a real Parisian—a noble matron, endowed with the highest virtues—whose age alone merits all your respect."

"She is very old, then?" cried poor Djalma, whose charming dream was thus abruptly dispelled.

"She may be a few years older than I am," answered Rodin, with an ironical smile, expecting to see the young man express a sort of comical disappointment or angry regret.

But it was not so. To the passionate enthusiasm of love, which had for a moment lighted up the prince's features, there now succeeded a respectful and touching expression. He looked at Rodin with emotion, and said to him in a broken voice: "This woman is, then, a mother to me?"

It is impossible to describe with what a pious, melancholy, and tender charm the Indian uttered the word mother.

"You have it, my dear prince; this respectable lady wishes to be a mother to you. But I may not reveal to you the cause of the affection she feels for you. Only, believe me—this affection is sincere, and the cause honorable. If I do not tell you her secret, it is that, with us, the secrets of women, young or old, are equally sacred."

"That is right, and I will respect it. Without seeing her, I will love her—as I love God, without seeing Him."

"And now, my dear prince, let me tell you what are the intentions of your maternal friend. This house will remain at your disposal, as long as you like it; French servants, a carriage, and horses, will be at your orders; the charges of your housekeeping will be paid for you. Then, as the son of a king should live royally, I have left in the next room a casket containing five hundred louis; every month a similar sum will be provided; if it should not be found sufficient for your little amusements, you will tell me, and it shall be augmented."

At a movement of Djalma, Rodin hastened to add: "I must tell you at once, my dear prince, that your delicacy may be quite at ease. First of all, you may accept anything from a mother; next, as in about three months you will come into possession of an immense inheritance, it will be easy for you, if you feel the obligation a burden—and the sum cannot exceed, at the most, four or five thousand louis—to repay these advances. Spare nothing, then, but satisfy all your fancies. You are expected to appear in the great world of Paris, in a style becoming the son of a king who was called the Father of the Generous. So once again I conjure you not to be restrained by a false delicacy; if this sum should not be sufficient—"

"I will ask for more. My mother is right; the son of a monarch ought to live royally."

Such was the answer of the Indian, made with perfect simplicity, and without any appearance of astonishment at these magnificent offers. This was natural. Djalma would have done for others what they were doing for him, for the traditions of the prodigal magnificence and splendid hospitality of Indian princes are well known. Djalma had been as moved as grateful, on hearing that a woman loved him with maternal affection. As for the luxury with which she sought to surround him, he accepted it without astonishment and without scruple. This resignation, again, somewhat disconcerted Rodin, who had prepared many excellent arguments to persuade the Indian to accept his offers.

"Well, then, it's all agreed, my dear prince," resumed the Jesuit. "Now, as you must see the