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The Fortunate Painter

—BY—
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HERE were times when Charlie Bartle could take his straitened circumstances with a light heart. When the sky was blue and the air of Paris keen yet balmy, was more exhilarating than wine, his studio in the Rue Breda lost its shabbiness. On such days as these he went down into the street and watched gay women make their purchases for luncheon. The disarray of their costume in the morning contrasted with the splendor with which he had seen them emerge from their houses the night before. They lingered at the door of green grocers bargaining for their vegetables with the strenuousness of modern housewives. Several had sat for him, and with these he exchanged the gossip of the quarters. Then, his eyes filled with the vivacity of that scene, he returned to his studio, and sought to place on canvas the dancing sunlight of the Parisian street. He felt in him the courage to paint masterpieces. But when gray clouds and rain made the colors on his palette scarcely distinguishable from one another, his mood changed. He could scarcely bear the dingy shabbiness of his studio. He looked with distaste at the picture on which he had been working for a month and saw that it was bad. His poverty appalled him.

It was on such an occasion that Charlie Bartle sat, pipe in mouth, contemplating with deep discouragement the work of his hands. He smoked gloomily. Presently, with a sigh, he took a palette knife and prepared to scrape down all that he had done. There was a knock at the door.

"Come in," cried Charlie, looking round.

It was slowly opened by a little old man, with a bald head, a hooked nose of immense size, and a gray beard. He was shabbily dressed, but the rings on his finger, the diamond in his eye, and his massive watch chain, suggested that it was not from poverty.

"Monsieur Leir," said Charlie, with a smile, "come in, I'm delighted to see you."

"I know you couldn't paint in this weather, so I thought I shouldn't be in the way."

He came into the room and looked at Charlie's unfinished canvas. The painter watched him anxiously, but no change in the Frenchman's expression betrayed his opinion.

"Do you think it's utterly rotten?" asked Charlie.

"My dear fellow, you young men are so impatient. You buy a canvas, and you buy paints, and you think you can produce marvels immediately. You won't give time to it, and you won't give patience. The old masters weren't in such a hurry. Read Vasari and you'll see how they worked."

Charlie Bartle impatiently threw aside his palette knife.

"I wish I'd been a crossing sweeper rather than a painter. It's a dog's life that I lead. I go without everything that gives happiness, and I don't even do work that's fit to look at."

Monsieur Leir sat down, took from his waistcoat pocket the stump of an unfinished cigar, rubbed the charred end with his finger and lit it. He smoked this with apparent satisfaction. In his day he had known many painters. Some had succeeded, but most had failed, and he knew that the profession, even for the fortunate, was very hard. Genius itself starved at times, and recognition often did not arrive till a man was too embittered to enjoy it. But he liked artists, and found a peculiar satisfaction in their society. Monsieur Leir was a dealer. He had early seen the merit of the impressionists, had bought their pictures systematically, thus saving many of them from disaster and at the same time, benefiting himself, and finally sold them when the world discovered that Monet, Manet and Sisley were great painters. His only daughter had married Rudolf Kuhn, a dealer in New York, so Monsieur Leir felt justified in spending the years that remained to him in a condition of opulent idleness. But he flattered himself that the painters whose works he had bought for a song were his friends as well as his customers, and it pleased him still to potter about the studios of those who yet lived. When Charlie Bartle settled in the house in which he himself had an apartment, Monsieur Leir gladly made his acquaintance. The young man was delighted to hear stories of the wild life they led in Montmartre in the seventies, and he was taken, too, by the kindness of the retired dealer. There was an unaffected amiability in Monsieur Leir's manner, which led the foreigner quickly to pour into his sympathetic ear his troubles and his ambitions. The dealer was a lonely man, and soon began to feel a certain respect for the young painter. Not

that he was no longer in the trade he could afford to put charms of manner before talent, and the mediocrity of his friend's work touched his gentle old heart.

"It's one of your bad days, mon vieux," said the dealer.

"I wish to goodness I was a dealer, like you," laughed Charlie. "At least, I shouldn't be worried to death by the approach of quarter day."

"The picture trade is no place for an honest man now," returned Monsieur Leir, reflectively. "It was all very well in the old days, when we had it in our own hands. We drove hard bargains, but it was all above board. But now the Christians have taken to it there's a good deal too much hocus-pocus."

"I simply can't go on this way. I have to pay 300 francs for my rent tomorrow, and I shan't have a penny left to buy myself bread and butter for the next month. No one will buy a picture."

Monsieur Leir looked at him with good-natured eyes, but he said nothing. Charlie glanced at the portrait of a very pretty girl which stood in solitary splendor, magnificently framed on the chimney piece.

"I had a letter from Rosie this morning. Her people want her to give me up. They say there's not the least chance of my ever earning any money."

"But will she do that?" asked the dealer.

"No, of course not," answered Charlie, with decision. "She's a good girl. But it means waiting, waiting, waiting; and our youth is going, and we shall grow sore with hope deferred. When at last we marry we shall be disillusioned and bitter."

He sighed deeply. He brooded with despair on the future, and the old man did not venture to disturb him. He watched the painter with compassion. At last, however, he spoke.

"What are the exact conditions on which the father of your fiancée will allow you to marry her?"

"They're insane. You see, she has five thousand pounds of her own. He refuses to consent to our marriage unless I can produce the same sum or show that I am earning two hundred and fifty a year. And the worst of it is that I can't help acknowledging he's right. I don't want Rosie to endure hardship."

"You know that my daughter's husband is a dealer in New York," returned Monsieur Leir, presently. "I vowed when I sold off my stock that I would never deal in pictures again, but I'm fond of you, my friend, and I should like to help you. Show me your stuff, and I'll send it to Rudolf; he may be able to sell it in America."

"That would be awfully good of you," cried Charlie.

The dealer sat down, while Bartle placed on his easel one after the other his finished pictures. There were, perhaps, a dozen, and Monsieur Leir looked at them without a word. For the moment he had gone back to his old state, and he allowed no expression to betray his feelings. No one could have told from that inscrutable gaze whether he thought the painting good or bad.

"That's the lot," said Charlie, at length. "Do you think the American public will seize their opportunity, and allow us to marry?"

"What is that?" asked the dealer, quietly, pointing to the last canvas. It's face against the wall, which Bartle had not shown him.

Without a word the painter produced it and fixed it on the easel. Monsieur Leir gave a slight start, and the indifference of his expression vanished.

"Watteau!" he cried. "But, my dear fellow, how did you get that? You talk of poverty and you have a Watteau. Why, I can sell that for you in America for double the sum you want."

"Look at it carefully," smiled Charlie.

The dealer went up to the picture and peered into it. His eyes glittered with delight. It represented a group of charming persons by the side of a lake. It was plain that the ladies, so decadent and dainty, discussed preciously with swans, all gaiters in multi-colored satins, the verses of Racine or the letters of Mme. de Sevigne. The placid water reflected white clouds, and the trees were russet already with approaching autumn. It was a stately scene, with its green woodland distance, and the sober opulence of oak and elm, and it suggested ease and long tending. Those yellows and greens and reds glowed with mellow light.

"It's one of the few Watteaus I've ever seen with a signature," said the dealer.

"You flatter me," said Charlie. "Of course, it's only a copy. The original belonged to some old ladies in England whom I knew; and last summer when

it rained, I spent my days in copying it. I suppose chance guided my hand happily; every one agreed it was not badly done."

"A copy?" cried Monsieur Leir. "A copy? Where is the original? Would your friends sell it?"

"The ruling instinct is as strong as ever," laughed the painter. "Unfortunately, a month after I finished this the house was burned down, and everything was destroyed."

The dealer drew a deep breath, and for a moment meditated. He looked at Charlie sharply.

"Didn't you say you wanted three hundred francs for your rent?" he asked very quietly. "I'll buy that copy off you."

"Nonsense, I'll give it you. You're taking no end of trouble for me, and you've been awfully kind."

"You're a fool, my friend," answered Monsieur Leir. "Write me out a receipt for the money."

He took from his pocketbook three banknotes and laid them on the table. Bartle hesitated for an instant, but he wanted money badly. He shrugged his shoulders. He sat down and wrote the receipt. But as he was about to give it, an idea came to him and he quickly drew it back.

"Look here, you're not going to try any lanky-panky tricks, are you? I won't sell you the copy unless you give me your word that you won't try and pass it off as an original."

A quiet smile passed across the dealer's lips.

"You can easily reassure yourself. Just paint out the signature and put your own name on the top of it."

Without a word, Bartle did as the old man suggested, and presently his own name was neatly painted in place of the master's.

"I don't mistrust you," he said, as he handed the receipt, "but it's well not to put temptation in the way of wily dealers."

Monsieur Leir laughed as he pocketed the document and took the Watteau in his hand. He pointed with a slightly disdainful finger at Bartle's pictures.

"I'm going to take the copy along with me, and I'll send my femme de menage for the others," he said. But at the door he stopped. "I like your pictures, my friend, and when Rudolf knows that I take an interest in you, I dare say he'll be able to sell them. Don't be surprised if in another month I come and tell you that you can marry your fiancée."

Monsieur Leir packed the Watteau with his own hands, and dispatched it without delay. He wrote a discreet little letter to his son-in-law announcing its immediate arrival and suggesting that they should share the profits of its sale. It was growing late, so he went to his cafe and drank the absinthe with which he invariably prepared for the evening meal. Then, with a chuckle, he wrote the following note:

To the Chief Officer, U. S. A. Customs, New York.

Sir: An attempt will shortly be made to pass through the Customs a copy of a picture by Watteau. It is signed Charles Bartle. If, moreover, you scrape away the name, you will find the signature of a French painter. I leave you to make what inference you choose.

Yours faithfully,
AN HONEST MAN.

Less than this was necessary to excite the suspicions of the least trusting section of mankind. It was scarcely to be wondered at, therefore, that when Rudolf Kuhn, went to the Custom House at New York to pass the picture, that had been sent him, he was received with incredulity. He asserted with conviction that it was only a copy, and produced the receipt which Monsieur Leir had been so cautious as to send him. But the official who saw him merely laughed in his face. He was quite accustomed to the tricks whereby astute dealers in works of art sought to evade the duty.

"I suppose you'd be surprised if I told you that the picture was signed by Antoine Watteau," he said, with a dry smile.

"More than that, I should be amazed beyond words," answered Rudolf Kuhn confidently.

Silently the customs officer took a palette knife, scraped away the name of Charles Bartle, and there, sure enough, was the French artist's signature.

"What have you got to say now?" he asked in triumph.

A curious light passed through the dealer's eyes as he stared at the canvas, but he made no other sign than Monsieur Leir's astuteness had suddenly flashed across him.

"Nothing," he replied.

With meekness he paid duty on the estimated value of an original Watteau, and a very heavy fine into the bargain for his attempt to defraud the customs. He took the picture away. But when he reached home that night he kissed his wife on both cheeks, with unusual warmth.

"You father's still the smartest dealer in Europe, Rachel," he said. But when she asked for an explanation of his words, he merely shook his head and smiled.

In New York the newspapers learn everything, and perhaps it was not strange that within twenty-four hours of these events an important journal had an amusing account of how Rudolf Kuhn, the well-known dealer, had been fooled in his attempt to pass

through the customs, as a copy of some obscure painter, a very perfect example of the art of Watteau. It was a triumph for the officials, and the newspapers glibly because they had got the better of a wily Hebrew. Now Rudolf Kuhn had a client who chose to spend much of his vast wealth in the acquisition of Old Masters, and no sooner had he read these entertaining paragraphs than he hurried to the dealer's shop. When he saw the picture he burst out laughing.

"I like your impudence, trying to pass that off as a copy."

"I showed them the receipt," smiled Rudolf, with a deprecating shrug of the shoulder. "I propose to sell it as a copy. It was sold to my representative in Paris as such."

The millionaire looked at the dealer and chuckled. "Well, Uncle Sam's Customs are good enough guarantees for me. I'll give you fifty thousand dollars for it."

"I'll take sixty," answered the other, quietly.

"Not bad for a copy," smiled the buyer. "I'll have it at that."

He carried the picture off, and with it the various documents which the Custom House had delivered to Rudolf Kuhn in proof that he had paid both duty and fine. In face of these it would have been a skeptic indeed who doubted the authenticity of so delightful a work.

Some weeks later Monsieur Leir again knocked at Charlie Bartle's door. He advanced into the middle of the studio, and without a word counted out fifty English banknotes of a hundred pounds each.

"What the dickens are you doing?" cried Charlie, who thought he had suddenly taken leave of his senses.

"Five thousand pounds," said the old man. "I thought you'd like to see the money actually before you, so I changed it into these notes."

"What do you mean?"

"It's your share of the profit on the sale of your pictures, and your marry your Rosie whenever you choose."

Bartle stared at Monsieur Leir, helplessly. He thought it must be some heartless jest, but the old man's eyes gleamed with their usual cunningness. He rubbed his hands joyfully as he gazed over the painter's utter consternation. At last he vouchsafed to explain. Bartle understood vaguely that a California millionaire had bought his picture, all the pictures, and this money was the result. He wanted to write to this amiable and discerning patron, but Monsieur Leir hastily told him that was impossible. The Californian had bought the pictures and taken them away without leaving his address. Monsieur Leir assured him that the American millionaire was not seriously eccentric. Bartle drew a long breath and looked at the pile of notes.

"Take them to the bank, my boy," said the old dealer, encountered with the young man's pleasure, "and send a wire to a certain lady."

He made the notes into a bundle, and put them in Bartle's pocket, and led him out of the house. The painter walked as though he were in a dream. But when Monsieur Leir had seen the young man safely on his way to the bank he went to his own apartment. He took out Charlie's pictures, which had remained in the safe obscurity of a well locked cupboard. One by one he ripped them off their stretchers, and one by one he put them in the fire. He laughed as he saw them crackle in the flames. Then he took a hatchet and cut up the stretchers early.

"Here is some excellent firewood," he chuckled, as he gave the bundle to his maid.

He rubbed his hands when he thought that thus he saved several coppers. It had slipped his memory completely that he had just made his friend a present of £5000.—New York Tribune.

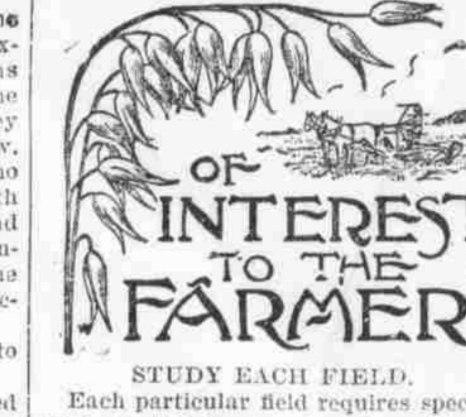
The Average Age of Birds.

The doctrine of vegetarianism appears to be slightly shaken by the result of an investigation that an English newspaper has made into the subject of the longevity of birds. With one notable exception, the carrion or meat feeding birds are the longer lived. The exception is the swan. The average ages of some of the best known birds are given in the following: Blackbird lives twelve years; blackcap, fifteen; canary, twenty-four; crane, twenty-four; crow, 100; eagle, 100; fowl, common, ten; goldfinch, fifteen; goose, fifteen; heron, fifty-nine; lark, thirteen; linnet, twenty-three; nightingale, eighteen; parrot, sixty; partridge, fifteen; peacock, twenty-four; pelican, fifty; pheasant, fifteen; pigeon, twenty; raven, 100; robin, twenty; skylark, thirty; sparrow hawk, forty; swan, 100; thrush, ten, and wren, three years. The average age of the boarding house variety of chicken is still undetermined.—New Orleans Times-Democrat.

Japanese Stoicism.

U. Iwata, a Japanese soldier on his way home from prison in Russia, committed suicide on receiving a letter from his father saying that his conduct in being taken alive would spoil the reputation of the Japanese army and cast odium on the names of the family and the villagers, and concluding by ordering him not to return home alive.

New York has just been paid by the National Government for equipment supplied in the War of 1812



INTEREST TO THE FARMER

STUDY EACH FIELD.

Each particular field requires special and careful treatment. One plot of land may be better adapted for a certain crop than another, and the farmer must study the requirements of each field and crop.

DEHORNING CATTLE.

Dehorning has passed the experimental stage and has now become a necessity. Practically no one now denies the benefits derived from having a herd deprived of the dangerous weapons of defense. The question arises as when and how can it best be done. The fall, or preferably early spring, are the best seasons of the year for doing this work, say the middle of March. The idea is to get the wounds thoroughly healed before the flies come. Animals dehorned in early spring and cared for, usually shrink but little and the wounds very soon heal over. It is not necessary to put anything on the wounds.

BURNING CHARCOAL FOR HOGS.

Allow the wood or corn cobs to become well ignited after piling in cone shaped piles, then cover lightly with dry earth. Combustion will then be incomplete and a bed of charcoal will result. Another way is to have ready a tub of water and as soon as the wood burns sufficiently to form a live coal retaining the original shape, remove with a pair of tongs and immerse in the tub of water to extinguish the fire, then lay aside to dry. This is a simple plan and one that is practicable whenever it becomes advisable to burn charcoal at home. The value of charcoal as an aid to digestion is underestimated.—C. B. Barret.

DEVELOPING GOOD HOGS.

A really good hog cannot be produced from scrub stock. It is absolutely necessary to choose the breed for the purpose, that is, some breeds are better for bacon and hams when lean meat is preferred and others for lard or fat pork. Have an ideal animal and work for it. Breed from matured and well-bred sows. Don't sacrifice individuality to pedigree. Breed prolific sows only. Avoid cross-breeding and feeding too much corn and ice water, as this lessens the vitality and tends to make too light a bone. Feed young stock and the breeding sows oats, shorts, bran and meal, with but little corn. Give plenty of exercise. In finishing off a fat hog nothing is ahead of corn and pure water. Give plenty of room in sleeping quarters and teach young pigs to eat early. March or April litters are best. Keep sows and charcoal by them at all times. The growing of frame for the first six months and the keeping of equal sized pigs together must be looked to. After the ideal hog is secured it requires extra good judgment and care to keep it and not allow it to degenerate.—E. R. Beach.

PIANO BOX SMOKEHOUSE.

The thrifty farmer prepares his own pork for home consumption, and if he is short of cash with which to build an up-to-date smokehouse he will appreciate the following plan, which will enable him to carry out his ideas at small cost. Buy an old but good upright piano box, and after making it smoke tight with paper, set it in the desired place and dig a trench so that the piping will enter at one end of the box through the bottom. Then take an old wash boiler with a good copper bottom and have a tinsmith make a hole in one side near the bottom, and in this fasten a piece of tin water pipe or four-inch stovepipe. Then buy additional lengths of pipe and

make the connections yourself, having an elbow to go into the box.

Make the smoke fire in the boiler, and, on a small scale, one will have a first-class smokehouse. As little heat is required to keep up the fire sufficient to give the desired amount of smoke, there is no danger of the wash boiler being too frail for the purpose. The illustration shows the plan perfectly, the details of the piping being shown in the lower part of the cut.—Philadelphia Record.

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Half-Hour with the Child

THIS LITTLE BOY WAS Said Peter Paul Augustus: "I was grown a man, I'll help my dearest mother the I can. I'll wait upon her kindly, she'll my arm; I'll lead her very gently, and keep from harm."

"But, when I think upon it, the be so long?" Said Peter Paul Augustus, "before and strong, I think it would be wiser to be and joy By helping her my very best will little boy."

—The Brown Memorial M

FLY FEATHER.

Some games suited to young men will be given to-day. Fly is an English play which can be fun. Players put their caps together to form a close circle. A downy feather with a very sharp point is procured and thrown as high as possible in the air. It is then blown by each player being not touched by it. The person it falls on pays a forfeit, and the game is deemed at the end of the game.

It must not be blown too violent. It will fly so high that it will be difficult to reach, and the one who it outside the circle must also forfeit.

When children play it they prefer to dance around in pursuit but they must not let go each hands to catch it in its descent. The player who goes through three without being touched wins the game.—Philadelphia Record.

THE CUNNING CROW.

Once a chained-up watch-dog in front of his kennel lazily picked a bone. A hungry crow looked on longingly, and hoped that by diverting the attention of the dog he might succeed in securing the bone for himself. So it came close to the dog, and began to wag its tail in all sorts of ridiculous antics, dog, however, took not the slightest notice.

Then the crow hurried off, fetched a friend, who seated himself on the bough of a tree just behind the kennel, while the first crow danced before the dog. As the dog continued to remain absolutely indifferent, the crow friend flew into the air, suddenly swooping down, struck the dog's spine a tremendous blow with its beak.

The dog started with surprise and dropping the bone, made haste but unsuccessfully to grab at the assailant. Meanwhile, the first crow snatched the bone as quick as lightning, and flew off with it; the two conspirators then shared the stolen property between them.—Baptist Argu

HOW A MALTESE WAS WHIPPED.

One day while standing at my window watching the shifting clouds drowsily swaying of the trees, my attention was called to the peculiar actions of a large Maltese cat in a field beyond our lawn. It would crawl along, stop, fumble something, then go on a little distance, keeping it stopping and fumbling up for some time.

At last the lawn was reached, through the fence the something crawled followed by the cat. Then I saw what it was. A poor little mouse that the cat had been tormenting.

The cat was too well fed to kill at eat its prey, but just indolent enough to torment and worry its poor victim.

On and on they came across the lawn. The cat would catch the poor little thing in its claw, mouth it, and then let it go. Poor mouse, thinking he was free, would try to make good his escape, but the respite was only for a few minutes, when he would be grabbed again.

Across the lawn and up the terrace they came, just below the window where I was standing. When the top of the terrace was reached, the cat gave his victim one more squeeze, looking delighted at the poor exhausted thing, as much as to say, "I could kill and eat you if I wanted to."

You know it was the last straw that broke the camel's back, so this last squeeze and indignities were too much. The mouse turned round, faced the cat, sat on his hind legs like a squirrel when it eats a nut, and when the cat made another attempt to molest him the mouse slapped the cat in the face with its little fist—I mean paw—with a blow equal to Fitzsimmons' own.

The cat was taken so completely by surprise and so thoroughly disgusted with himself that he turned and fled, like the coward he was, and the mouse disappeared in a hole close to the cellar wall.

I was as surprised as the cat, and thoroughly enjoyed the discomfiture of poor pussy. I think it was the most amusing thing I ever saw, and if I had not seen the whole thing I would have been tempted to doubt the story if it had been told me.—E. Gray, in Philadelphia Ledger.