

I cannot explain more fully now, but meet me here in a week's time, and I shall tell you what I purpose doing.'

II.

Florian was engaged on his second tale, 'Celestine,' next day, when the door of his study opened softly and Diana came in. Seemingly aware of the importance of its mission, the dog placed its head on the arm of the chair where its master sat, and looked at him with its bright brown eyes, as if to attract his attention. Florian saw to his surprise a small packet fastened by a ribbon to the greyhound's collar. Opening it, he found several copies of a beautiful copperplate engraving which represented one of the principal scenes in 'Claudine.' All the circumstances were so faithfully represented that had the work been executed under the author's own supervision it could not have been a more exact delineation. Florian knew not what to think. He determined to wait and see if time would unravel the mystery.

A few days later 'Celestine' was finished, and read for the Duke. The circle of auditors was, however, restricted to the members of his private family circle, as no previous announcement had been made. Eight days later Diana brought its master another copperplate and several engravings of the principal scene in 'Celestine.' Florian's wonder was the greater as his audience had been so small on the last occasion. Could the Duke have commissioned an artist to execute the work secretly? He determined to enquire, and proceeded to inform the Duke of what had occurred. The latter was as much astonished as himself, and declared that he had no hand in the affair. All the servants were questioned, but not the faintest trace could be discovered of the artist.

The third tale, 'Selico,' was ended, and the Duke appointed a day on which it was to be read. The reading took place in a small summerhouse, which was connected with the Duke's apartments by a private corridor used only by his Grace. No one was present except himself and his daughter-in-law, the Princess de Lamballe.

'You have surpassed yourself my dear Florian!' exclaimed the Duke, as the tale ended. Quite unconsciously you have depicted your own character. And he pressed with friendly warmth the hand of the gratified author. He turned towards the door, which Florian hastened to open. But, to the general astonishment, Diana sprang past him with the familiar packet fastened to its collar.

'Let us see what our dumb messenger brings,' said the Duke, and he and the Princess resumed their seats while Florian opened the packet. 'This is witchcraft!' he cried out in amazement. 'Only this morning I added the last words to my tale; I spoke of it to no one save your Grace, and here I find a perfectly-executed copperplate engraving of my ideal conception.'

'It is certainly very singular,' replied the Duke as he examined the engraving with pleased interest. 'But I think I have found a clue to the mystery. Call Alphonse. I saw him very busy with Diana lately, and, if I do not greatly mistake, he can solve the enigma.'

The page appeared in a few minutes. Florian related to him what had occurred, and asked if he could explain it. Alphonse was evidently embarrassed, and tried to evade the question by a jest. He said, although Diana and himself were intimate friends, the dog had never entrusted him with its secrets; and that he was incapable of betraying them if it had.

'The joke has gone far enough now, Alphonse,' said the Duke, kindly but seriously. 'M. Florian must no longer be made the victim of mystification, however well meant. I am perfectly convinced that you know all about it, so explain yourself.'

Alphonse could no longer hesitate. He related his encounter with Queverdo; the despair of the latter at being unable to repay Florian's generous loan; their conversation about Florian's tales, and the idea which occurred to the artist of engraving the principal scenes in each, and sending them by Diana to the author. When Florian was engaged with the Duke he had read the manuscript of 'Selico,' and then related the tale to Queverdo, who had at once seized upon the main incident and sketched the design, which he afterwards engraved.

'Now, my dear Florian,' said the Duke, graciously, 'you are rightly punished by this mysterious conduct for concealing from me your benevolent actions. But,' he added, sternly, turning to Alphonse, 'you are inexcusable for taking such a liberty as to meddle with Mr. Florian's papers. I shall not allow this to remain unpunished. I, therefore, announce that to-morrow you shall leave my household—the Princess and Florian were about to interpose anxiously, when he continued, smiling—'in order to enter my regiment as ensign, where I can keep my eye on you! Before you go to your friend Queverdo, come to my cabinet: I have a message for him.'

Alphonse, overjoyed at this favor, kissed the Prince's hand gratefully as he retired with the Princess de Lam-

balle, and then threw himself into the arms of the equally rejoiced Florian.

'Now, Alphonse,' said the latter, 'I shall hasten to my publisher and get the receipt for the debt in due form; then you must help me as you helped Queverdo.'

Next day, as Queverdo sat in his modest apartment, surrounded by his numerous family, a scratching at the door was heard, and Diana came in, bearing, to his astonishment, a packet attached to its collar.

'Why, what is the meaning of this? Can they have sent back my work?' exclaimed the artist, whose pride was aroused at the thought.

With feverish haste he opened the packet, and found the quittance, with the following lines in Florian's handwriting: 'Repaid by three copperplate engravings, worth double the sum. Florian.' A second paper, signed by the Duke, contained Queverdo's nomination to the post of guardian of the Duke's rich artistic collection, with a salary of £400 a year.

The poor artist's joy was indescribable. After communicating the good news to his wife and children, he hastened to the Penthievre palace to express his gratitude. Alphonse was impatiently waiting him, and he told him in a few words how all had come to pass. He then hastened to seek Florian, who was with the Duke; and soon returned with an order to conduct Queverdo to the Duke's cabinet.

The prince received the artist with a gracious cordiality which won all hearts, and told him he had appointed him to take charge of his collection—which was sadly in need of being put in order—because, from the engravings he had seen, he perceived Queverdo was gifted with unusual taste and ability.

'I hope,' he added, 'soon to see portrayed by your pencil a representation of Mr. Florian's astonishment when Diana brought him the first engraving. The subject seems to me worthy of your talent, and creditable to both of you.'

'Your Highness,' replied Queverdo, 'is graciously pleased to place debtor and creditor on an equal footing; but what M. Florian did for me without even knowing me far exceeds my trifling return that I can never accept such an honor.'

'It would be difficult to decide,' interrupted Florian, 'which of us has been the more fortunate. I, by the first edition of my "Numa," have been enabled to aid a fellow-countryman, a distinguished artist in distress, and thereby I hope to have won a friend.'

'For life,' said Queverdo, warmly; and a cordial clasp of the hand sealed the compact.

'Look, my daughter,' said the Duke to the Princess de Lamballe, who had just entered the room: 'here are two men who their own virtues have made happy. Would that all mankind could see that wealth and honor, though so much desired, can never procure for us true happiness! Our felicity depends on ourselves alone—on the qualities of our minds and hearts.'

A few years later the devastating storm of the French Revolution swept over beautiful France, and the characters of our tale were involved, more or less, in the general catastrophe. Ere the tempest was unchained, the aged Duke was spared, by a peaceful death, the agony of witnessing the fair head of his daughter-in-law fall under the executioner's axe, for no other crime than her loyal devotedness to her unfortunate mistress.

Florian was cast into prison during the Reign of Terror, and there he wrote his 'William Tell,' while daily expecting to ascend the guillotine. However, after two years' imprisonment, the fall of Robespierre opened the gates of his dungeon. He at once left Paris, to end his days in the peace and solitude of the country; but his vital strength was exhausted, and a fortnight after the recovery of his liberty, the noble poet expired at Sceaux, on the 13th of September, 1794.—'Ave Maria.'

For Absolute Strength, Extreme Simplicity, Freedom from Weak or Undesirable Points, and abundance of Excellent Working Features throughout, EXCELSIOR PLOUGHS are UNRIVALLED. They will do perfectly the work that can be expected of any plough, and are guaranteed to give satisfaction in any soils where a plough can work. They have extra length of land beam, specially made mould boards, and steering gear of the most complete and approved kind. Revolving swivel steel circular coulter. Double furrow, £11 10s; three furrow, £16 10s.—Morrow, Bassett, and Co., sole agents in New Zealand for Cockshutt Farm Implementations.—***

MAKE NO MISTAKE!—You may fancy a cough is a trivial affair, but unless you take precautions you will find it rapidly develop into something very serious. Take warning, therefore, and at the first symptom of trouble try TUSSICURA, which everyone who has once taken it acknowledges to be the only certain remedy for complaints of the Throat and Lungs. There will be no difficulty in obtaining it, as all Chemists and Storekeepers keep TUSSICURA, and you should insist on having that and nothing else.—***

SHERIDAN & CO.,

LEADING LAND AGENTS, HOTEL BROKERS, WINE & SPIRIT MERCHANT
AND FORWARDING AGENTS,
GISBORNE POVERTY BAY, CORRESPONDENCE INVITED