

Besides, strange to say, he could always talk more freely to Grace and her mother than to his lady-love, bitterly though he lamented his deficiency in that respect.

Presently Amelia came in.

"Don't you want a lamp?" she asked laughing, bringing in with her an atmosphere of energy and gaiety, and yet an amount of fresh air that made Grace shiver.

"Oh, mother, I can't see a bit!" continued Amelia; "do let us have lights. Why, is that you, Mr. McHuish?"

"Mr. McHuish has been telling us all about the Aurora," said Grace. "It must be so beautiful in the far north, Amy! Please tell Amy about it, Mr. McHuish, won't you?"

"Only how I rode home one night, one winter night," began the Scotchman confusedly. He had risen from his chair at Amelia's entrance, and now stood twirling his hat slowly round and round in his big, bony hands.

"It was across the lonely moors," said Grace.

"And the Aurora was shooting up into the heavens," said McHuish.

"More beautiful than daylight," added Grace enthusiastically. "Only fancy, Amy, what the great rays must be, white and silver and rose-color, giving one an idea of some wonderful weird world out far, far beyond the distant hills. I can fancy being lured away and away toward that magical horizon!"

"Here comes the lamp," said Mrs. Wyvern. "Dear me, how they have spilt the oil again, all over the handle! Doesn't your mother, Mr. McHuish, find that her servants—"

"Light, light!" I feel like Goethe," interrupted Amelia irrelevantly. "Mamma, I want to show you something. Do look. The Professor says there is an exhibition going to open immediately, somewhere he knows, and he thinks I might really, truly, send this head."

Out from under Amy's cloak came a square brown paper parcel, and then the young artist, with a little air of modest though conscious merit, held up to view a small oil painting representing the head of an Italian bandit.

"What, really?" asked Mrs. Wyvern, in admiration.

"Oh, Amy, not really?" echoed Grace.

"Yes," answered Amelia quietly.

He was a fierce bandit, a very fierce bandit. His head was slightly turned away; still his eagle glance was fixed threateningly on the beholder; his glance evidently meant much. He was arrayed in a gorgeous costume, worn, probably, by bandits of his province only, and his background was the well-known blue and cloudless sky of the south.

"Well, I must say," remarked Mrs. Wyvern impressively, as she looked around her for the sake of argument, "I must say, Amelia, that you have made very great progress."

"It's a beautiful head," said Grace sympathetically; "oh, you dear, clever Amy, I must give you a kiss; I never saw such a fierce-looking bandit!"

"I should think not," returned Amy. "The Professor wanted us particularly to catch that expression, as the model actually did commit a murder once long ago in Corsica."

"Of course, one must not praise one's own child," said Mrs. Wyvern, "but I cannot help thinking there are very few young artists who could beat that head. And I don't know about 'young' either."

"There is one little thing that troubles me," said Amelia in a hesitating voice, "that is, you see, mamma, the high light on the bandit's nose. What do you think of the high light, Mr. McHuish?"

"I'm no much of a painter myself," replied the person

interrogated, who lapsed into a northern dialect whenever he became nervous. "The nose is no that bad, to my thinking; it's the lad's complexion that's terrible blue, surely."

"Why, the Professor said it was not blue enough!" exclaimed Amelia.

"Oh, Mr. McHuish, you don't really think it blue?" asked Grace reproachfully.

"I—I—" stammered the young man.

"Perhaps," said Mrs. Wyvern, with some severity, "perhaps that Mr. McHuish has not sufficiently considered the reflections from the southern sky."

Amelia said no more. Possibly she inwardly felt that, like the archbishop in "Gil Blas," she desired for her critic "*toutes sortes de prospérités, avec un peu plus de goût*," whilst the unhappy offender, stumbling over his sentences, sought by the most indiscriminating praise to reinstate himself in his former position of trust.

Days passed; the bandit, carefully framed and labeled, was sent to the exhibition, and in due time, as Amelia received no notice to the contrary, she became tremblingly, hopefully, delightfully aware that her picture was accepted and hung.

During these anxious days she was very eagerly expectant, and yet afraid, to hear the postman's knock; she knew not what news he might bring. No news is good news, doubtless, as Grace oftentimes asserted, and yet such silence was trying to bear.

Amelia worked somewhat fitfully at the Professor's. She found herself in high favor with her fellow students; they evidently viewed her with much increased respect. On one occasion the poor lady who was struggling with the large chalk nose actually went on all-fours to look for a piece of india-rubber which Amelia had dropped! Mrs. Simpkins addressed her as "dear child"; the Professor talked lengthily to her of the possible regeneration of art, a subject he reserved for a very choice few among his pupils, deeming, doubtless, that there were but few of them destined to take a really active part in such regeneration.

But Amelia could not work as of yore; she painted out to-day what she had painted in yesterday; she was certainly demoralized. Her small capabilities of the present jarred in her mind with the wide destinies she contemplated for the future. Of course, the brigand was the doorway through which she was to wend her steps toward these destinies, and yet, as she worked, she was conscious of some uneasiness concerning the finite nature of her own art. Certainly, at home, as she sat beside Gracie's couch, at rest from palette or canvas, she held forth garrulously as to her future aims and present successes, without any disturbing emotion. Somehow it was always so easy to talk to Gracie! Nothing seemed too great, nothing too small, for her facile comprehension and universal sympathy.

"Why can't women become Royal Academicians!" Amelia would exclaim wrathfully, whilst her sister listened sorrowfully. "What an unjust, miserable nineteenth century we live in, to be sure," continued Amelia, forgetful of her doctrines of progress; "only think of Mary Moser and Angelica Kauffmann!"

"Were they Academicians?" asked Grace, who was still strangely ignorant on the subject.

"Why, of course."

And thereupon Gracie from her full loving heart protested that Amelia was surely intended to become the female art pioneer of this present generation, and that the most obtuse public could not possibly remain blind to her remarkable merit.

It may be held that such indiscriminate praise was unwholesome for Amelia, but Grace did not reason