

The Musee Mystery

By JAMES RAYMOND PERRY

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HE was figures at the musee were an indifferent lot, as a rule—that is to say, they were neither better nor worse than the average that you will find in such places. But the Othello in our unique group of Shakespearean characters was a masterpiece in wax.

The reason that it happened to be different from the others was because it was newer. The one first made for the group met with a disaster a few months after being installed. A slight blake occurring in its vicinity melted the wax features and ruined them. The rest of the group were hurriedly beyond repair. But a new Othello had been made. The order was given to a certain local worker in wax and not to the one who made the original Othello. This man must have been a genius, for when the figure came to the musee and was placed in position it was the most lifelike thing in wax that I have ever seen, and I have seen some very excellent wax counterfeits of men and women. It made poor Desdemona and her old father, Senator Brabantio, look cheap and tawdry by comparison. There was much to criticize in the pose, I think. Othello was supposed to be relating his adventures to the old man and his enamored daughter, and to my mind there should have been animation in his attitude and manner. Instead of that, the figure was shown seated in an easy, not to say indolent, attitude. Its new millstone to life consisted in its marvelous mechanical or technical composition. Its maker was a genius, no doubt, but not an artist, at least not in the highest sense. It was a very Othello taking his ease, but scarcely Shakespeare's Othello recounting his deeds of war to his ladylove. It seemed that way to me anyway. I don't know that it struck the average observer so. People would come and stand before the group admiringly, and I have never heard a word of criticism such as I have expressed by one of them. This may be partly because they were lost in wonder and admiration of the lifelike appearance of the Moor and partly perhaps because the more cultivated classes, persons competent to criticize such things, seldom visit exhibitions of waxworks. You may be led to wonder how I, one of the employees at the musee, should be able to criticize thus intelligently, and in reply I may say that I was not always reduced to so lowly a plane of life. I came of an excellent family and in my younger days received good training in both art and literature. I fell in the social scale on account of— But, there! I will not enter into that.

This Othello was so good a counterfeit of life that he set at naught the Pompey Caesar, the musee's colored factotum, between whom and the waxen image there certainly was a remarkable likeness in features, with being Othello's twin, and we sometimes called him the Moor, or Caesar the Moor. He never seemed to take it amiss, but, on the contrary, I think, was quite proud of the title and the resemblance. He partook in large degree of the vanity of his race, and I think he felt gratified and flattered at having so good an image of himself on public exhibition, just as a vain man might at having his statue in bronze or marble erected in some prominent place. Perhaps his fame of vanity was fanned by noting the admiration of spectators who came and stood before the wax Othello. This admiration was particularly marked among women—servant girls and girls employed in shops and factories. Their exclamations, their "Ohs" and "Ahs" were expressive of much genuine admiration, though I had doubts if it was so much the lifelikeness of the image that elicited them as the barbaric splendor of Othello's dress, the rich robe and jeweled trappings. Certain it is that when I observed these exclamatory creatures their eyes would more often be wandering over the apparel of the image than remaining fixed on the singularly human face, and it is also certain that if Caesar, who was every whit as handsome as the waxed Moor, happened to be standing near in a commonplace nineteenth century garb he received no more than a passing glance from these same emotional maids. And Caesar would often be standing there when his duties would permit. I suppose he felt that he was receiving admiration, by proxy at least, and enjoyed it.

To impress upon you how the wax Othello influenced some persons I will relate a little incident that occurred one day not long after the new image had been put in place. Mr. Miller, the proprietor of the musee, was conducting some friends through the place, and when they came to the Shakespearean group they paused, as people always did, to admire Othello. One of the ladies said: "Mr. Miller, it isn't really wax, is it? It must be a live man. It isn't possible that so good a counterfeit of a living man could be made."

For answer Mr. Miller said, "Would you mind letting me take your hatpin a moment?" The woman drew a hatpin from her hat and handed it to him, a little more readily apparently at the request. Mr. Miller took it and, stepping upon the date on which the images stood, pruned the sharp pin into the leg of Othello. He withdrew it and plunged it into the arm of the image. "What do you think? Is it a man?" he asked. "No," said the woman, laughing; "I don't believe it is."

"I would hold a lighted match against his nose if it wasn't for melting the wax," added the obliging proprietor.

"It isn't necessary," said the lady, "I am already convinced."

before 6 o'clock, when the visitors at the musee had almost left, one of the employees of the place named Murphy came rushing out to the ticket office with a scented white face.

"There's a girl committed suicide up by group thirteen!" he cried. "She's a-lovin' flat on the floor. I saw her with my own eyes."

I thought very likely Murphy was mistaken and that a woman had merely fainted. The wax images sometimes affect people that way, especially the more grotesque figures. Group 13 was the Shakespearean group, however, and there was no image there to affect one unpleasantly unless indeed the extreme lifelikeness of the Othello might give a sensitive person a queer feeling. But I followed Murphy up into the room where the group stood, and Mr. Miller, who came out of his little office as we were passing, went with us.

It was a startling sight that met our gaze. The room was deserted when we entered by all except the mute and motionless images and by one other figure, equally mute and motionless, lying on the floor directly in front of Othello. It was a very young woman, not much over 20, of comely form and features, but of the servant girl class, it would appear from the cheap finery that she had on. Down where the white throat thickened toward the plump body was an ugly wound, and the girl's dress was stained crimson by the copious flow of blood. She was quite dead when we reached her, and on her face was a singular look of horror. On the floor beside her, with blade all bloody, lay the jeweled dagger of Othello. It appeared that the suicide had lingered late till the last of the visitors had left and then drawn Othello's dagger from its sheath and with it loosed her lifeblood.

As we lifted the dead girl up and bore her away to Mr. Miller's office, I recall how curiously I was impressed by our surroundings. One of life's startling tragedies had just occurred, yet all these counterfeit men and women around us remained impassive, uninterested, indifferent. It seemed as if those figures should have started up and crowded forward to see the inanimate thing we were bearing away or should have turned away and hidden their faces from its horror—done anything, in fact, except to keep their positions, mute, cold and unmoved. I saw all the figures remained impassive, and yet, to my disordered fancy, as I glanced backward, it seemed almost as if the eyes of Othello were following us as we bore the girl away. You have seen the eyes of a portrait follow you in that same way.

The police were notified of what had occurred, and they took charge of the body, removing it from the musee some time that evening. It was not till the next afternoon that we learned much about the girl. The afternoon papers then stated that her name was Edna Netherese, that she was a servant employed on Forty-second street and that she had taken advantage of her Thursday afternoon off to visit the musee. No one suspected that she had any intention of taking her life, so the papers stated. She was of an unusually cheerful nature, her mistress said, and when she left her that afternoon she had appeared to be in her usual good spirits. She had not mentioned that she intended to visit the musee, but there was nothing unnatural in that, for it was not her habit to tell where she was going. She had a lover named Ole Johnson, and here was a possible cause for her act. It seems that the lovers had quarreled the evening before Edna's fatal visit to the musee. It had been a lovers' quarrel and in nowise different from others before it. Edna was jealous of Ole's attentions to another girl and had upbraided him about it. They had parted in temper, but poor Ole, sweetheart's death, had never dreamed that Edna would kill herself on account of it. But, as no other reason for her act was found, this had to be accepted as the cause. The verdict of the coroner's jury was that she met death at her own hands.

After the papers had made public the affair there was a noticeable increase of attention at the musee for a few days, and visitors, after finding where the Othello stood, would remain gazing curiously at the spot where the body was found. But after a few days interest lessened, and the affair would soon have been quite forgotten had not something happened to recall it vividly to the public mind. Just one week afterward, at the same hour and at almost the same minute, Murphy in his rounds discovered another woman lying dead in front of Othello. She was covered with blood from a wound in the neck almost identical with the wound found on the body of Edna Netherese, and this, as in the previous case, had been inflicted by the jeweled dagger of the Moor. The dagger lay beside the body, its blade encrimsoned with blood. On the woman's face was that same singular look of horror—almost affright, you would have said—that we had noticed on the face of the other girl.

When Mr. Miller came upon the scene, he was highly disturbed, and quite naturally, I think. "This comes from the papers printing all these details about crimes," he said. "Some half crazy woman read about that girl killing herself here last week, I suppose, and got the notion in her head that she would kill herself the same way. Well, no one else shall kill herself with this dagger," he said, and with that he snapped the blade off close to the hilt. "That's what I ought to have done in the first place," he added.

Well, this second suicide, as the papers called it, caused some very

as much as you might suppose. That, I presume, was because the idea held by Mr. Miller that it was the influence of example that had caused the crime was the idea generally accepted by the public. The woman's name was Edna Netherese. Like Edna Netherese, she was a servant, who had availed herself of her weekly afternoon off to visit the musee. She was an older woman and less comely than Edna and, so far as could be learned, had neither husband nor lover. It transpired that she had behaved rather queer at times, and, though her mistress had never thought much about it, she now presumed that Hetty had not been quite right in her mind. When pressed for instances of Hetty's behaving queer, she cited various acts of household stupidity which, it seemed to me, were no more than what many mistresses find in their servants. It was true, however, according to the mistress's statement, that Hetty seemed to have a morbid passion for reading all about murders, suicides and other gruesome things. She had read about Edna's death and spoken to her mistress about it, saying she was going down to the musee on her very next afternoon off to see the place where the girl had died. Her mistress did not believe she had probably intended to kill herself when she went down, for Hetty had been talking only that morning cheerfully about certain plans for the next few days. The poor woman, however, Hetty found herself on the same spot where Edna had killed herself and saw that she was alone a sudden insane impulse to kill herself, as Edna had done, seized her, and she straightway plunged the dagger into her neck.

After the second tragedy Mr. Miller caused a watch to be set in the room where Othello was, and visitors no longer found themselves alone in the room. Whether it was that the presence of the guard proved effective or that there were no more foolish or crazed women to take their lives, several weeks passed without any unusual event occurring at the musee.

The vigilance of the guard was relaxed, and finally, as Mr. Miller did not feel that he could afford to pay a man for staying just one room as a guard, he was withdrawn. The memory of the two strange deaths had probably faded from the public mind when a third, even more startling, occurred. I remember the day well, for it seemed to bring with it a series of accidents, big and little, that culminated in the tragedy which I shall relate. In the first place, I discovered that I had had my pocket picked on the way to the musee that morning. The poor fellow who picked me was a pianist was in Paris long after the death of his beloved wife. He was engaged to play in the drawing room of a lady famous for her musicals, and his fee, which seemed a small amount, was \$20. He managed to persuade the humane agent to pay him in advance, and when Padrewski had redeemed his dress suit from pawn and paid for shoes, gloves, file and other essentials he had no money left for cab hire, so he was forced to walk to the scene of his engagement.

The music-loving audience inspired him. He layed with feeling, passion and mastery of his instrument as never before. His success was instant and unmistakable. The poor player had suddenly become the lion of the hour, his dream had become a reality, and fame and fortune were assured him.

At last, after disengaging himself from his admirers, he turned to leave, when his hostess, remembering with regret the smallness of the fee for so marvelous a performance, offered him her carriage for his return home. But Padrewski's pride came to the rescue. In his contemptuous yet reserved way he made a formal bow, and saying, "No, thank you, madame; my own walk home," he stepped out for his long walk home.—Pearson's Weekly.

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But It Cost Him That to Get His Clothes Out of Pawn.

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A Living Emetic.

A servant who did not find her way very promptly to the kitchen one morning was visited by her mistress, who found her in bed suffering from pain and violent sickness. She explained that she had a cold and had taken some medicine which had been recommended for the children.

"How much did you take?" asked her mistress. "Well, mum, I went by the directions on the bottle. They said, 'Ten drops for an infant, thirty drops for an adult and a tablespoonful for an emetic.' I knew I wasn't an infant or adult, so I thought I must be an emetic, and the pesky stuff has pretty high turned me inside out."—Medical Brief.

The "Extra Horse."

A lover of horses recently noticed a custom in France which he thinks ought to be adopted in this country. On every street in France which has a steep grade there is stationed an "extra horse." The law compels draymen and others to make use of this horse, and the summit of the hill is reached, and there is a heavy fine for refusing to hire the extra horse at a small fixed rate. Placards by the roadside indicate the point where the extra horse should be taken on and also where he may be dispensed with.

Her Brilliant Inspiration.

That the proverbial absentminded professor is sometimes ably abetted by his wife is illustrated by a story told of Professor Bunsen. One evening about the usual hour for retiring he took it into his head to run over to the club just as he and madam were returning from an evening call.

"But," said the lady, "I must have the front door locked before I retire." This emergency staggered the professor, and as he looked bewildered at his wife the lady, seized with an inspiration, continued: "I'll go in and lock the door and throw you the key from the window." This programme was carried out, and when he reached the club the professor related the incident to a friend as evidence of his wife's unusual sagacity.

The friend retold the story with a roar of laughter.

"And why, my dear professor," she said, "did you not simply admit your wife, lock the door from the outside and come away?"

"True," ejaculated the learned man of science; "we never thought of that."

The climax of the incident was reached an hour later when, returning home, the professor discovered that the lady in her excitement had thrown out the wrong key.

HARMFUL BATHING.

Too Much Soap and Water Is Not Good For the Skin.

It is a familiar boast of English people that we are above all others a washing nation. Soap and water is a standing dish in Great Britain, but so little were we disposed to credit the habitual cleanliness of foreigners that a piece of soap in the valise was till recently the habitual companion of an Englishman on his travels. All kinds of theories have been raised to account for this national tendency to ablution, and most diverse qualities have been attributed to its possession.

The familiarity of bathers with water and the use of it occasioned by the national custom that led the ancient Britons to paint their bodies are solemnly urged as the foundation of the English propensity to washing, and the fresh complexion and smooth skins of young Englishmen are held to replace the more dusky and hirsute countenances of the Latin races because of their closer and more frequent acquaintance with the articles of the washstand.

It is quite obvious that even in England there are people who wash too little. It is not so generally recognized that some people wash too much. The skin is not well adapted to frequent applications of water accompanied by even the least irritating of soaps. A tendency arises to maceration of the superficial part of the epidermis, which is too frequently removed and occasioned probably too rapid a proliferation of the cells of the Malpighian layer.

There is no doubt that many cases of roughness of the skin of the face come from the frequent applications of water. It is a good thing to rub the face with a soft, clean, dry towel two or three times a day. If, in addition, water is used in the morning and at night, the skin will be kept in a sounder, smoother and healthier state than if, as is so often the case, a water cure is used three or four times a day.

Men are not often offenders in this respect, most men sparing little time for the refinements of the toilet. Women and children, whose skins are the most easily affected by superfluous ablution, are the very persons in whom such excess is too common. They should be taught that there are dry methods of cleanliness as well as wet ones.—Lancet.

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NEGRO SOCIETIES.

THE SOUTHERN COLORED MAN'S LOVE OF POMP AND CIRCUMSTANCE.

Wonderfully Armed Organizations to Provide For Members' Sick Benefits and Funeral Expenses—How They Flourish in Charleston.

The southern negro's love of pomp and circumstance is nowhere exemplified more forcibly than in the manner in which he multiplies his charitable organizations. Inordinately fond of company, he has few societies founded with the sole view of promoting social enjoyment. For the most part, whatever foundations he makes have a semi-religious tincture, the dues entitling members to sick benefits and funeral expenses. There is usually an elaborate regalia and an intricate ritual. Not a few negroes of a southern city, such as Charleston, belong to no less than a score of these orders, the names of which are oftentimes curiously and wonderfully made. What, for instance, would the ordinary patron of secret organizations think of possessing membership in the Sons and Daughters of Charity or in the Sons and Daughters of I Will Arise?

The sons and daughters idea is worked to the limit of endurance. There is scarcely a well known name in Biblical history that is not tacked on to it. There are in Charleston alone no less than seventy-five of these societies with charters from the state of South Carolina, and how many there are that have no legal status no man may say with confidence.

Dues are paid weekly, and, strange as it may seem when the great poverty of the negro of the south is considered, the arrears list is a brief one indeed. Of course the charges are small, usually about 25 cents a month, but when it is remembered that many individuals belong to six or eight or even more orders it is little short of marvelous how the funds necessary to meet the demands of the collectors are found, and yet it is so deep a disgrace to be expelled that instances of the kind are very rare. To hold membership in a number of societies is regarded as a badge of honor.

Meetings are held monthly in private residences in public halls or, more frequently still, in churches. These gatherings begin at the fashionable hour of 10 p. m. and continue not infrequently throughout the night. Refreshments are to be had for a small consideration, and as these are for the most part of a liquid nature the sons and daughters are prone to be conspicuous by their absence from their meetings. In most of these societies the members are absolute. It is their duty to restore that harmony in which brothers and sisters should ever dwell together.

Among the societies in Charleston are the Sons and Daughters of the Pilgrims, the Sons and Daughters of the Twelve Disciples, the Sons and Daughters of the Bearers of the Cross, the Sons and Daughters of the Evening Star, the Sons and Daughters of the Seventh Star, the Sons and Daughters of the Celestial Travelers, the Sons and Daughters of the Good Samaritan, the Sons and Daughters of the East, the Sons and Daughters of Lazarus, the Sons and Daughters of Christian Love, and there might be added to these fully two score of others. The devotion of the negroes to these organizations and their loyalty to their fellow members are absolute.

The funeral of a colored man or woman who holds membership in a half dozen of these orders is a spectacle worth witnessing. Occasionally bitter feuds arise between rival societies for the possession of a corpse, for the negro's love of a funeral is not second even to his love of melons. The ceremonies usually begin the night before the actual interment is to take place. There are sermons, prayers and personal experiences interspersed with wild bursts of incoherent melody, which arouse religious fervor to fever heat. Men and women faint in the course of the exercises, many others fall into trances and talk of visions of their dead friends enthroned in glory.

The ceremonies culminate in a formal procession. It is forming for an hour before the residence of the late lamented son or daughter. Negroes from the uttermost parts of the city gather in the streets. The occasion is a festive one. They run and shout and caper. The members of the organizations to which the dead person belonged stand in solemn order, clad in elaborate uniforms and bearing the banners and other insignia of their respective orders, and when the cortege finally moves, wending its way at times through miles of the city's streets, it is followed by a mad rush of men, women and children, who block the thoroughfares, and traffic for the time being has to be suspended. The hope of such a funeral is the inspiration of many a negro's whole life. He slaves and deprives himself of actual necessities for years to meet the demands of the collectors of the societies in order that he may go to his last resting place in the midst of such strangely weird pagantry.—Charleston Letter in New York Tribune.

Hymns at \$500 a Yard.

A musical composer once said to Mr. Sankey with more frankness than courtesy that he could write such tunes as those of the "Gospel Hymnbook" by the yard if he were willing to come down to it. Mr. Sankey quietly replied, "Well, sir, all I have to say is that I am willing to pay five hundred dollars a yard, either to you or to anybody else, for all the tunes you can bring me like those in our 'Gospel Hymnbook.'"—Ladies' Home Journal.

Nicely Graded.

It is still a tradition that the people of Manchester, England, should give at Liverpool with the proverb, "A Manchester man, a Liverpool gentleman," but, it is said, classification is not so strongly marked in Lancashire as in the old days.

When stagecoaches were running, a guard was once asked, "Who has that gotten inside, Billy?" Billy consulted his list and replied, "A gentleman from Liverpool, a man from Manchester, a chap from Owdham and a fellow from Wigan."

Buildings in Stockholm.

Only two-thirds of the area of the lot can be covered in Stockholm except on street corners, where three-fourths is allowed. The remainder of the lot must be reserved for courts for light and ventilation. All chimney flues must be twelve or fifteen inches and must be swept once a month from October to April by official chimney sweepers.

Troubles of Her Own.

Mistress Mary, Mary! I've just broken my hand. You know how unlucky it is—seven years' unhappiness.

Maid—Oh, that's nothing, ma'am! 'Ow about me? I've just smashed the large glass in the drawing room."

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They commenced the serious investigation of the specific Nov. 15, 1900. They interviewed scores of the cured and tried it out on its merits by putting over three dozen cases on the treatment and watching them. They also got physicians to name chronic, incurable cases, and administered it with the physicians for judges. Up to Aug. 25, eighty-seven per cent of the test cases were either well or progressing favorably.

There being but thirteen per cent of failures, the parties were satisfied and closed the transaction. The proceedings of the investigating committee and the clinical reports of the test cases were published and will be mailed free on application. Address JOHN J. FULTON COMPANY, 420 Montgomery St. San Francisco, Cal.

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Great Memories.

Otto Schultze, a stenographer, wrote in the Brandenburg Schullblatt that Bismarck had a wonderful memory. "When he had delivered a two hours' speech and looked over our shorthand reports the next day, he remembered every expression he had used exactly and did not forget them for years."

The novelist Spielhagen once told Schultze that he could recall vividly every one of the thousands of persons he had met in his life and every word spoken by casual acquaintances, together with their gestures and the cut of their hair and clothes.

A Hunting Story.

Once Rogers was shooting where his lost happened to have killed a boy and a keeper in the same season, and he asked a better whether his master felt the matter very much. The answer was: "Well, sir, he didn't care much about the boy. He gie his mother five pounds. But he were very wexed about the man. He didn't go out shootin' for a whole week." This in Norfolk was considered an evidence of the climax of human emotion.—George Archdale in Temple Bar.

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