



THE GUEST OF QUESNAY

By Booth Tarkington

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CHAPTER IV.

NO doubt the most absurd thing I could have done after the departure of Professor Keredec and his singular friend would have been to settle myself before my canvas again with the intention of painting, and that is what I did. At least, I resumed my camp stool and went through some of the motions habitually connected with the act of painting.

In fine, I sat there brush paddling my failure like an automaton and saying over and over aloud: "What is wrong with him? What is wrong with him?"

I came out of my varicolored study with a start, caused by the discovery that I had absentmindedly squeezed upon my palette the entire contents of an expensive tube of ceruleo violet.

The turpentine rag at least proved effective. I scoured away the last tokens of my failure with it, wishing that life were like the canvas and that men had knowledge of the right celestial turpentine. After that I cleaned my brushes, packed and shouldered my kit and, with a final imprecation upon all sausage sandwiches, took up my way once more to Les Trois Pigeons.

Striding along at a good gait and chanting sonorously, "On Linden when the sun was low," I left the rougher boscaiges of the forest behind me and emerged just at sunset upon an orderly fringe of woodland where the ground was neat and unincumbered and the trimmed trees stood at polite distances, bowing slightly to one another with small, well bred rustlings.

I stood upon Quesnay ground.

Before me stretched a short, broad avenue of turf, leading to the chateau gates. A slope was terraced with strips of flower gardens and intervals of sward, and against the green of a rising lawn I marked the figure of a woman pausing to bend over some flowering bush. The lady upon the slope was Mme. d'Armand, the inspiration of Amedee's "Monsieur has much to live for."

Once more this day I indorsed that worthy man's opinion, for, though I was too far distant to see clearly, I knew that roses trimmed Mme. d'Armand's white hat and that she had passed me no long time since in the forest.

I had come far out of my way, so I retraced my steps to the intersection of the paths and thence made for the inn by my accustomed route. Not far along the road from where I came into it stood an old, brown, deep pitched cottage, a branch of brushwood over the door prettily beckoning travelers, to the knowledge that cider was here for the thirsty, and as I drew near I perceived that one availed himself of the invitation. A group stood about the open door, the lamplight from within disclosing the head of the house filling a cup for the wayfarer.

The latter was a most mundane and elaborate wayfarer indeed—a small young man very lightly made, like a jockey and point device in khaki, puttees, pongee cap, white and green stock, a knapsack on his back and a bamboo stick under his arm. He spoke, though with a detestable accent, in a rough and ready, picked up dialect of Parisian slang, while Pere Baudry contributed his share of the conversation in a slow patois. As both men spoke at the same time and neither understood two consecutive words the other said, it struck me that the dialogue might prove unproductive of any highly important results this side of Michaelmas. Therefore, discovering that the very pedestrian gentleman was making some sort of inquiry concerning Les Trois Pigeons, I came to a halt and proffered aid.

"Are you looking for Mme. Brossard's?" I asked in English.

The traveler uttered an exclamation and faced about with a jumpy, bird-like for quickness.

"Say," he responded in a voice of unpleasant nasality, finally deciding upon speech, "you're 'Nummeric's, ain't you?"

"Yes," I returned. "I thought I heard you inquiring for"—

"Well, m' friend, you can sting me," he interrupted, with condescending jocularity. "My style French does fr them camels up in Paris all night. But down here I don't seem to be god enough fr those sheep dogs. Anyway, they bark different. I'm lukkin' fer a hotel called Les Trois Pigeons."

I pointed to the lights of the inn flickering across the fields. "Yonder—beyond the second turn of the road." "Oh, I ain't goin' there tonight! It's too dark t' see anything now," he remarked. "Dives and the choo-choo back t' little ole Trouville fr mine! I only wanted to take a bus at this pigeon house joint."

"Do you mind my inquiring," I said, "what you expected to see at Les Trois Pigeons?"

"Why," he exclaimed as if astonished at the question, "I'm a tourist, makin' a pedestrian trip t' all the right sights," and, inspired to eloquence, he added as an afterthought, "was it wrong?"

"But if you will pardon me," I said, "where did you get the notion that"

Les Trois Pigeons is one of the regular sights?"

"Ain't it in all the history books?"

"No; I don't think that it is mentioned in any of the histories or even the guidebooks."

"Look a-here," he said, taking a step nearer me, "in olnest, now, on your woid, didn' more'n half them Jeanne d'Arc tamales and William the Conquer live at that hotel wunst?"

"No."

"Stung again?" He broke into a sudden loud cackle of laughter. "Why, a feller at Trouville tole me 'at this Pigeon place was all three rings when it come t' history. Yessir!"

I tarried no longer, but, bidding this good youth and the generations of Baudry good night, hastened on to my belated dinner.

"Amedee," I said when my cigar was lighted and the usual hour of consultation had arrived, "ain't that old lock on the chest where Mme. Brossard keeps her silver getting rusty?"

"Monsieur, we have no thieves here. We are out of the world."

"Yes, but Trouville is not so far away, and strange people go to Trouville—grand dukes, opera singers, jockeys, gamblers, tourists?"

"Truly," assented Amedee.

"It follows," I continued, "that many strange people may come from Trouville. In their excursions to the surrounding points of interest"—

"Eh, monsieur, but that is true," he interrupted. "There was a strange monsieur from Trouville here this very day."

I had sprained my ankle in a poppy field and must spend little less than a week of idleness within the confines of Les Trois Pigeons, and, reclining among cushions in a wicker long chair looking out from my pavilion upon the drowsy garden on a hot noontide, I did not much care.

A heavy step crunched the gravel, and I heard my name pronounced in a deep inquiring rumble, the voice of Professor Keredec, no less. Nor was I greatly surprised, since our meeting in the forest had led me to expect some advances on his part toward friendliness or at least in the direction of a better acquaintance.

"Here I am," I called, "in the pavilion, if you wish to see me."

"Aha, I hear you become an invalid, my dear sir!" With that the professor's great bulk loomed in the doorway against the glare outside. "I have come to condole with you, if you allow it."

"To smoke with me, too, I hope," I said, not a little pleased.

"That I will do," he returned and came in slowly, walking with perceptible lameness. "The sympathy I offer is genuine. It is not only from the heart; it is from the latissimus dorsi," he continued, seating himself. "I have chosen this fine weather for rheumatism of the back."

He took from his pocket a worn leather case, which he opened, disclosing a small, browned clay bowl of

"It is wicked for the insides, but it is good for the soul."

the kind workmen use, and, fitting it with a red stem, he filled it with a dark and sinister tobacco from a pouch. "Always my pipe for me," he said and applied a match, inhaling the smoke as other men inhale the light smoke of cigarettes. "Ha, it is good! It is wicked for the insides, but it is good for the soul. When I am alone I am a chimney with no hebdomadary repose. I smoke forever. It is on account of my young friend I am temperate now."

"He has never smoked, your young friend?" I asked, glancing at my visitor rather curiously, I fear.

"Mr. Saffren has no vices," Professor Keredec replied his silver-rimmed spectacles and turned them upon me with serene benevolence. "He is in good condition, all pure, like little children, and so, if I smoke near him he changes and has water at the eyes, though he does not complain. Just

now I take a vacation. It is his hour for study, but I think he looks more out of the front window than at his book—yes, very much since the passing of that charming young lady some days ago."

"You say your young friend's name is Saffren?"

"Oliver Saffren." The benevolent gaze continued to rest upon me, but a shadow like a faint anxiety darkened the Homeric brow. Finally he said abruptly, "It is about him that I have come to talk to you."

"I shall be very glad."

"Ha, my dear sir," he cried, "but you are a man of feeling! It was the way you have received my poor young gentleman's excuses when he was so rude which makes me wish to talk with you on such a subject. It is why I would not have you believe Mr. Saffren and me two very suspected individuals who hide here like two bad criminals!"

"No, no!" I protested nastily. "The name of Professor Keredec!"

BUSSNESS MEN OFF ON JUNKET

Roseburg Merchants Leave on "Know Your Country First" Trip—Working Up Trade.

ROSEBURG, Or., Feb. 2.—For the purpose of arousing a more general spirit of co-operation in booster work and learning at first hand the true extent and character of resources that await development, 25 of Roseburg's leading business men left this morning in a special car on the first half of a four days' excursion to neighboring towns in Douglas county. Glendale, Riddle and Myrtle Creek on the south will be visited on the first two days of the journey, and Drain, Yoncalla, Oakland and Sutherlin on the north on the last two days, as well as the more important fruitgrowing and farming localities intervening in both directions.

The party is in charge of Darby Richardson, Roseburg's new booster, who is waging a successful campaign against exaggerated and misleading advertising in publicity work, such as is invariably followed by harmful reaction. "Know Your Country First and Then Advance It Intelligently and Truthfully," is the slogan put forth by Mr. Richardson, and to give Roseburg citizens the proper start in this direction he promoted the excursion that they might "get acquainted" not only with the live elements in sister towns, but with the actual advantages such towns offer to intending homeseekers from the east.

All the localities to be visited have made preparations to receive the excursionists and show them the lands and other resources they have to offer newcomers. They appear to be in perfect accord with Mr. Richardson's idea of conservative and sane publicity work.

Circuit Court Proceedings.
J. D. Dawson vs. B. F. Benson and A. F. Barnett—Action to recover money; dismissed.
Lucy Mitchell vs. Adolf Schultz—To recover money; judgment by default.
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