

A STUDY IN SMOKE.

In the highest part of a large and imposing building, situated on the street Chaussee-d'Antin, a young man by the name of Passeraud perched like a sparrow on the topmost branch of a poplar tree. The manners of this young man were peaceful and orderly; his clothes were patched, the janitor had expressly forbidden this insignificant tenant to have in his possession a dog, a violin, a sewing machine, anything, no matter what, which was cumbersome or noisy. He was enjoined to come in very early at night. It was a question in the neighborhood how he managed to keep his hands clean, for the janitor had forbidden him to take up any water, because the liquid, carried carelessly in jugs by his youthful hands, might damp the stairs. However, by goodwill and good humor Passeraud had succeeded in making his presence supportable, although a poor devil, in a house inhabited by bankers, favorite tenors, diplomats and commissioners of accounts.

He had recently left the Ecole Central with an honorable standing, and almost immediately the Calcium Mining Company of the Upper Peloponnesus had offered him a position—one hundred dollars a month to begin with—which would have put him out of the reach of want; but as he dreamed of inventing an automatic brake, which would prevent locomotives from coming into collision on the railroad, or at least would reduce the force of the shock, he had refused the offers of the mining company, to give himself night and day to the drawing of innumerable diagrams of the brake in question. He therefore looked forward to glory and fortune, but while he waited he was dying of hunger. This mattered not to him; his invention—was absolutely sure of that—his invention was on the point of succeeding.

One day, on the first flight of the staircase, he encountered a young girl, blonde, so exquisitely dressed and so graceful that a scholar would immediately have called her a goddess—as shown by her bearing. She went forward and disappeared, light and supple, leaving behind her a subtle odor of emon verbenas and Passeraud, astonished, remained motionless in the middle of the landing for five minutes with his mouth open, as though he expected that the vision of his peerless neighbor would present itself anew to him.

The next day, by a coincidence which we would like to believe quite fortuitous, Passeraud was on the same landing exactly at the same hour. The young girl passed, and, as it seemed, blushed in passing. Fearing he had wounded her, Passeraud resolved never to come down the staircase at that hour again.

The following day, however, he remembered that urgent business compelled him to go out a moment exactly identical with that when leaving the house was quite forbidden him by his decision of the day before. He took up his hat, annoyed at this business which exposed him to the danger of embarrassing with his presence a person whom he would not have troubled for the world. What he dreaded happened; a new meeting took place, and Passeraud was inconsolable, the fair maid having blushed more than before. He was accordingly enraged against himself; the unknown one, scandalized at being thus followed, would very probably take steps to keep herself out of his way. In order to convince himself of this misfortune, Passeraud every day sought the same place at the same hour, and every day drew aside on the staircase to let his neighbor pass. Brought up politely by his mother, he bowed at each meeting. At the end of some time, it seemed to him that the slight inclination of the head which he received in turn took on an aspect almost friendly.

Having noticed this, he went to look at himself in the mirror of a shop—in his room there was nothing of the sort in order to know if his person was such that it might please so accomplished a young girl. Then he saw that even though the cut of his coat was bad, there was nothing repulsive about his looks. Next he inquired with caution, concerning the name of the pretty young lady of the first floor. When he had learned it was Valentine, he was quite enchanted.

These comings and goings were not of advantage to the automatic brake; the diagrams were neglected.

At last Passeraud took a decided step; he dressed himself as well as possible, went down to the apartments of Valentine's father, who was no less a personage than M. Famanin, owner of the large and imposing building and said to him: "Sir, I have the honor to ask you for your daughter's hand."

"My daughter's hand," exclaimed the astonished old gentleman, eyeing Passeraud from head to foot. "For whom, if you please?"

"For myself, sir."

"For yourself? Why, are you not my little tenant of the garret, up there under the roof?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then what do you mean? My daughter has eight hundred thousand dollars. I am willing to inform you of that fact. Do you take it in? Eight hundred thousand. And what have you?"

The engineer answered frankly; then he added:

"I am not actually rich, but if you will give me Mlle. Valentine, believe me that my work, my humble acquirements—"

"Stop talking! your conversation is of no interest to me. Will you please to take your departure at once? It makes me die of laughter to have you come and ask me for my daughter. I have got a good evening."

"But, sir, if I do not present my suit until after my automatic brake has made me a millionaire, I risk finding Mlle. Valentine married to another. Now, sir, I do not wish to run any such risks."

"So much the worse. What do you want me to do about it?"

Passeraud retired in much distress. Banging the door after him, M. Lamanin exclaimed:

"Not a cent! No position! Asks for my daughter. Ah! really, it is quite interesting!"

This visit, which had such an unfavorable result as regards our friend, left very slight traces on the mind of

M. Lamanin. What brought, several days later, an anxious look to the latter's face was simply the fact that his parlor chimney smoked.

In the middle of the month of December, and just as he was preparing to arrange a reception in honor of his daughter's nineteenth birthday, his parlor chimney began to smoke. A householder could scarcely have had a more disagreeable thing happen to him. M. Lamanin sent for his architect, who hastened to come, smelling an order.

"Is that all?" he said, vexed when learned what the matter was.

"I think that is quite enough. It is not amusing to own a chimney that makes my wife and myself weep all day long, like a family recently bereaved."

"Your chimney was built on my plan. That means it does not smoke."

"But it does smoke."

"Because you burn Mons coal; Burn wood, and you will have a clear fire."

"Perhaps you are right."

The change to wood in place of coal did not make the chimney's breathing easier. M. Lamanin, who was a resolute soul, sent for the best architect in Paris, and begged him to design to come in person to study the question.

The artist, after having minutely examined the chimney, did not scruple to restrain this cruel reflection on his brother in art: "What art built this chimney?"

"It was Ludente, my architect."

"It was well said; an ass. Have the four inches higher in order to increase the draught. It will be all right then."

"What a simple matter it is, after all."

"It only needed a little thought."

The operation completed, the chimney smoked as before. But the great architect took care of his bill.

"Hang it! what a bill!" M. Lamanin could not help sighing as he paid it.

Disgusted with architects, the householder turned to bricklayers. The first one called in ordered the addition to the flue of a piece of sheet-iron in the form of a serpent.

The chimney continued to send out its smoke into the parlor.

A second bricklayer arrived; with disgust he had his colleague's serpent removed, and substituted for a sort of helmet of the same material.

The chimney did not pay any attention to the helmet, but smoked worse than ever.

But here the concierge interposed with these consoling words: "Sir, you are wrong to despair; I was just this moment talking of this matter with one of the tenants—oh! I must say it, such a nice tenant. He told me that he would undertake to disentangle your chimney in five minutes."

"Let him come to me instantly, or I give him notice to leave."

As quick as lightning, Passeraud put himself at the orders of M. Lamanin. He found his landlord tramping up and down his parlor, which was cold as ice.

"Ah, it is you, young man, who flatten me up by your presence; I can't stand it any longer. Here you are in my apartment; I will give you what you want. I am quite sorry for you."

"Sir," answered Passeraud with dignity, "you will give me the hand of Mlle. Valentine. That is my price—to be paid only after I have succeeded."

"For a chimney? You wander in your talk, my dear sir."

"This chimney, sir? Send for M. Garnier, the architect of the opera; add him a picked jury of engineers, chemists, members of the institute, professors from the Ecole des Mines, and if these gentlemen can do in three months what I undertake to do in an hour, that is to say, prevent it from smoking, as also to prevent from smoking all chimneys with the same trouble, I agree that you should treat me as though I were indeed a master."

Having noticed this, he went to look at himself in the mirror of a shop—in his room there was nothing of the sort in order to know if his person was such that it might please so accomplished a young girl. Then he saw that even though the cut of his coat was bad, there was nothing repulsive about his looks. Next he inquired with caution, concerning the name of the pretty young lady of the first floor. When he had learned it was Valentine, he was quite enchanted.

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SUPERSTITIOUS RAILROAD MEN.
The Effect Which Accidents Have Upon Engineers and Firemen.

I recently had occasion to interview a prominent railroad official, and in the course of the conversation that ensued that gentleman incidentally alluded to two collisions which had lately occurred in the neighborhood, following up his remark with the announcement that the local men would be in a state of subdued excitement and "fury" till a third mishap took place. Such is the superstition of the railroad men.

Curiously enough, a touch of realism was lent to the information just imparted by the explanation that the second of the collisions referred to was due to the driver of one of the engines, a reliable servant, noted for his alertness and precision with an honorable record of some forty years' service, who being it was believed, so disturbed over the "omen" of the first occurrence and so engrossed with what he felt would be two other catastrophes, that he committed the slightest error of judgment which caused his locomotive to crash into another coming in an opposite direction. The statement is given as to conviction of one who had spent upward of a quarter of a century among railroad men of all classes,