I
TWO ARTISTS

CONFUSION prevailed in the studio of the young sculptor, Maurice Leroy. Not alone that disorder distasteful to the eye which results from carelessness and idleness. But a moral disorder, so to speak: since it revealed the inconstancy of a morbid imagination, rather than the imperious need of varying work, in order to obey a rapid succession of sudden fruitful inspirations. The impression gained from a visit to this studio was an indefinite sense of discomfort. Amid a multitude of abortive attempts one failed to find any sketch which could be received as the earnest of an estimable future work. One could not say while noting an idea for a bas-relief: "There is a group of figures harmoniously designed!" Nor at the sight of an unfinished model: "This half-formed clay, this wax scarcely touched by a few marks of the thumb and the molding tool, will become a figure of distinction." The artist, working in all styles, doubtless in the hope of measuring his forces, had succeeded only in proving the weakness of his undisciplined fancy. Nevertheless, everything could not be denounced as unqualified failure in the sketches of the young sculptor. The atom of gold was hidden beneath mountains of unproductive sand. In a little group designed to surmount a clock, in certain great plaster vases of a strong decorative effect which had been purposely and laboriously given to them, the trained eye recognized the natural tendency of the designer toward the practical and commercial value of industrial art.

In the disorder of the studio, in the distressing lack of taste and arrangement of the dwelling, one discovered that its occupant was unhappy, and that, pressed to the point of poverty, he was still further deprived of that spring of activity and inspiration which
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sustains the artist and aids him to develop. The fatal hour of
doubt and discouragement had struck for Maurice Leroy, and
the great room, lighted by the pale, dull January sun, and in
which cold seized the visitor if he did but glance into it,—this
room was the faithful image of the sadness which filled the soul
of the young sculptor, when he compared the reality of his lost
illusions with the dream of his brilliant hopes.
Pierre Leroy, his father, before his marriage with Catherine
Baudoyer—she who was later to become the mother of Maurice—
was already an excellent artisan, working hard as a wheelwright
in his native village. An enemy of the tavern, he enjoyed wine
only when he drank it at home, surrounded by his family. If
the fire of the forge caused him serious thirst, he drew a pitcher
of water at the fountain. Then, he returned to his work with a
clear head and a joyous heart. His exemplary conduct was occa-
sionally the subject of mockery among the young men of his own
age. But the esteem of older people repaid him for their derision.
One of the richest agriculturists of the region came one day to the
young workman to have him mend a broken cart-wheel. And
while the forge stood aflame, while the bar of iron grew red,
and the workman, with vigorous blows, struck sparks from the
incandescent metal, the farmer questioned Pierre Leroy upon his
income, his savings and his plans for the future. When the broken
wheel was repaired and again in place, the older man thanked the
skilful smith, saying to him: “Good-bye, my boy, we shall settle
our account next market-day!”
As then agreed, on the following Saturday, the farmer brought
the sum due the smith and invited him to pass the following day
on his property, that he might examine the farm implements and
make note of the repairs needed. The appointed Sunday was one
of those lovely days in June, when the earth seems more fruitful,
the hedges more blooming than ever before, and when the song
of the birds inspires within us songs which, though voiceless, yet
make sweet, entrancing harmonies. Greeted cordially by the
farmer, Pierre Leroy saw a beautiful girl of some twenty years
enter the large dining-room at meal-time; she had just returned
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from the village church and her sweet and serious face retained a reflection of her fervent prayers. During the dinner, Catherine Baudoyer anticipated the wants of her father and his guest, superintended the servants and fulfilled quietly and with dignity her duties as mistress of the house. The young smith, who was more touched by the gentleness of the girl than dazzled by her beauty, which was celebrated far and near, returned home in a revery, and, for the first time in his life, found his house gloomy and much too large for him alone. A month later, the farmer, Joseph Baudoyer, returned to the forge. Accompanied by Pierre, he entered the small room in which the smith worked upon his accounts and received his orders. The two men remained closeted an hour: at the end of their consultation they came out together, the smith frankly radiant with happiness, the farmer striving to affect calmness, although he was visibly moved. Three weeks later the beautiful and modest heiress of the rich proprietor was given in marriage to the sturdy and laborious smith. The young husband and wife established themselves in one of the farm buildings to which the forge had been transferred, and for four years they enjoyed that happiness which springs from useful daily labor and domestic peace. The birth of a son added to their joy, which was destined to be of short duration. The child Maurice had just reached the age of three, when one day Pierre Leroy, his father, was brought home fatally injured and about to die. A victim of his devotion, the brave young man had been mortally wounded in trying to restrain a mad bull which had already thrown down several persons. Such was the pitiable state in which the infuriated animal had left him, after trampling him upon the ground, that his wife had scarcely time to bid him a last farewell and to incline the head of her child to receive his father’s blessing.

The grief of Catherine Baudoyer was not one of those sorrows that are easily assuaged. It grew calm, but it never left her. Young, beautiful and rich, she devoted herself to her son and centered in him all her tenderness and hopes. The child, it must be confessed, justified this boundless affection. Gifted with a mild and
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docile temperament, intelligent and studious, he was the pride and joy of his maternal grandfather, while the village school-master affirmed that he would distinguish himself, if his relatives could resign themselves to a separation and send him to study at a college. When Maurice had reached his twelfth year, he wished to see and to learn; therefore, when in his presence, the schoolmaster, acting in the interest of the child’s glorious future, renewed the proposal to exile him for a time from the farm, Maurice, yielding to an impulse of ambition and curiosity, threw himself in the arms of his mother, crying:

"Yes, send me to college. I promise that I will become a learned man and do you honor."

At these words, the face of the grandfather darkened, while that of Catherine was flooded with tears; then, for a week, the old farmer and his daughter had frequent consultations; he advancing certain objections and fears; while she, in spite of the sorrow which rent her maternal heart at the thought of an approaching separation, had the courage to oppose the objections of the grandfather, and the force to overcome them.

In early childhood, Maurice already showed artistic talent which, if not remarkable, was, at least, singularly precocious. The salt-boxes and the wooden shoes that he carved, the horse-chestnuts that he cut into fanciful shapes, the nut-shells that he engraved with the point of a knife, were the admiration of his family and his neighbors; and naturally these sketches were regarded as sure indications of a vocation. Therefore, it was arranged with the director of the provincial college chosen, that the boy’s aptitude for the plastic arts should be developed by a serious study of drawing. An Italian cast-maker of considerable skill living in the neighborhood of the college, taught the young student the use of the molding tool, and during the four years of his first scholastic studies in the provincial town, Maurice devoted his hours of recreation to working in clay, copying all the models which chance threw in his way. This period having elapsed, Maurice was eager to gain in the Lycée of the Department as many laurels as he had obtained in the modest college of his district. His grand-
father and his mother dared not set obstacles in the way of an ambition which was, indeed, justified each year by the results of the final examinations. His success as a literary student did not diminish the fervor of his zeal for sculpture. His reputation became such as to call forth from the prefect himself the opinion that, for the honor of the Department, the family of Maurice Leroy ought to make a new sacrifice and send the future great artist to study in Paris. His mother listened to this decision as to the sentence of a magistrate. She had not foreseen in confiding the child to his first masters that to her mourning as a widow and a daughter she must needs add the sorrow of an indefinite separation from her child, that grief most dreaded by all mothers.

The death of Joseph Baudoyer left the mother of Maurice at the head of a great farm. As brave and skilful as she was, she felt the presence and counsel of a man necessary to her happiness and success. For a long time, she hoped that her son would come to occupy the vacant place. But when she realized that the return of Maurice to the farm would sterilize the many sacrifices already made for his education, and would reject him from the artistic career in which he was to distinguish himself, Catherine confronted the situation. Feeling her incompetence to direct without aid the diversified labors of the farm, she resigned herself to sell the lands upon which she had been reared, and which the young artist disdained. Although these lands were fertile and remunerative, the education of Maurice had been expensive. To accomplish it, loans had been made and, as a result of two exceptionally bad seasons, the interest upon these loans had become so heavy that the resources of the farm-mistress could no longer support it. Therefore, she paid all her indebtedness, and, one day, saying adieu to her village, set out for Paris. At the sight of his mother, Maurice felt a sudden impulse of child-like joy. But slowly his face darkened. He asked himself anxiously what appearance the peasant woman would make in his Parisian artist-interior, which her continual gifts had made almost luxurious. He pictured to himself the smile of his comrades, and grew dismayed at the thought of the constraint under which his good
mother would labor on feeling herself out of place in the home of her son.
Catherine guessed, without doubt, the hidden thought of Maurice. For she hastened to say:
“I am coming near to you, my son; but I do not seek to change in any way your way of living. Then, too, I should suffocate in this great city in which people live with doors and windows closed, under ceilings so low that one feels crushed beneath them. I have need of fresh air, of seeing the country about me, of walking on the grass and moss, and of having nothing above my head while I wake but the foliage of the great trees. So, you will rent me a house near the woods, with a garden, and green hedges, and where you can come from time to time to embrace your mother and to console her for her great losses.” The following day, Maurice made a visit to Barbizon, which he had long known; having lived there with some artist friends. He found a convenient, airy house which he rented at once. Limiting his alterations to the whitewashing of a large room, which he chose as his studio, he installed his mother within a short time in her new domicile, and promised her to transfer a portion of his work from Paris to the cottage. Close by lived another widow, Perrine Rabotte, with her daughter, a peculiar child whom Maurice, at his first residence in Barbizon, had fancifully called “Muguettes;” a name which had clung to the girl and which had so well pleased her that she never failed on meeting the young man to salute him as “My dear godfather!”
Certain of having provided his mother with the resources of a good neighborhood, Maurice returned to his studio in a cheerful mood and set himself bravely to his tasks. He devoted himself solely to “grand art,” and worked for the prix de Rome. He failed. Two other attempts equally fruitless did not destroy his belief in himself; but they led him to reason thus: “Academic rules are cords which strangle talent and prevent it from taking a bold flight; the artist gifted with originality who wishes to make a name, must free himself from the school traditions which paralyze genius.” Strengthened by this argument, he began to work in all mediums and styles, that he might discover the means by which he was to make his great success.
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Catherine, like all mothers, confident of the future of her son, encouraged and sustained him; meeting his expenses with a generosity which grew more and more heroic as her annual income decreased. Little by little, during the three years that followed her installation in the cottage, she was forced to draw upon her slender capital and to reduce her personal expenses which were before so modest. But she counted as nothing the sacrifices which she took great care to conceal from the artist when he came to visit her at Barbizon. She feared lest by revealing to him her future poverty, she might turn him aside from the purpose which he fancied that he might attain. At the end of the three years, the object of his desires was no nearer than at the beginning.

In spite of the delicate silence of his mother, Maurice, who knew the amount of the funds realized by her from the sale of the farm, and remaining after the payment of her debts, began to ask himself how she had so long supplied the means for his costly life in Paris. Finding no solution of the problem except by sadly calculating the privations which she must have imposed upon herself, he was reproached by his conscience, which cried out to him: “The poor woman has ruined herself for you. Now it is for you to earn money for her.” To earn money! That necessity, which had never before presented itself to him, overwhelmed and crushed him. The same day, hoping for a commission, he sought a bronze merchant who promised to visit his studio, but scarcely had he reached home when he repented of his act as an insult done to the dignity of art. One morning, as he struggled between filial duty and ambition, that is to say, between sound reason and guilty folly, a gentle knock at his studio door awakened him from his feverish meditations. He hesitated a moment before opening, asking himself if he were about to stand in the presence of the patron whom he regretted having solicited, or, what was much more probable, to confront an importunate creditor. The visitor having knocked again and more impatiently, Maurice decided to allow him entrance. A moment later he grasped the hands of a young man of smiling, open countenance: “Thank God!” he cried. “It is a friend!”

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"Could you have enemies, my dear Maurice?" replied the visitor. "Yes," continued the sculptor, "enemies of my peace. People who torment me with demands for money, when I almost want for the necessities of life; enemies of my future who would willingly profit by my poverty to offer me work unworthy of me, and who would force me to crawl in beaten paths, when I wish to open a new road and to walk in the free sunlight, and in all liberty. For instance," he added, indicating to his friend, Aurèle Morin, with a disdainful smile, a little sketch prepared for the expected visit of the bronze merchant, "they would dare to condemn me to execute little commercial things, like that model."

"Why not?" replied Aurèle; "it is very pretty and successful."

"That is one of those compliments that torture an artist," Maurice exclaimed with deep feeling.

"Truly, I can not understand you," continued the friend, gently. "So, you would scorn an open and real success in order to follow an elusive dream. Is it indeed a disgrace to produce elegant terra-cottas, or exquisite miniature statues for commercial purposes? There is a certain way of considering and of ennobling everything. Furthermore, the public taste has lately made great progress. We no longer see drawing-room clocks surmounted by conventional shepherdesses or kneeling troubadours. Accurate reductions of the masterpieces of sculpture have inspired everywhere a feeling for true art, and I assure you that one can become a very sincere and much esteemed artist, without creating equestrian statues to people the public squares of provincial towns. Take me for an example! I shall never be an historical painter, and yet I know that I am an artist. I have my hours of inspiration and my joys as a creator of ideas; nevertheless, I restrict myself to the painting of birds. But if I have rendered in a transparent water-color the lightness of their plumage ruffled by the wind; if I have faithfully reproduced their little quivering heads half hidden beneath their wings; or yet again, the joyous flight of my tiny forest musicians, I am pleased with my efforts and count myself happy. Certainly, I shall never attain the honors of the Salon Carré; throngs of critics will never stop before my canvases
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to discuss the merits of my compositions. Men will perhaps scorn to glance at them. But children, young girls and women will greet them with a smile, and as a reward for not having vainly tried to reach a high place, I shall keep for myself the modest little corner that I have chosen for myself in the domain of art."
"Beneath the transparency of this confession, I discover advice," replied Maurice. "One can not more clearly say: 'Be an honest artisan, you, who could never make yourself more than a wretched artist!' But you do not realize, Aurèle, that under penalty of being an ungrateful son, my sense of gratitude sets before me the task of becoming great and celebrated."
Then, the young sculptor related to his friend all that his self-styled vocation had cost his mother, and ending, he added: "The failure of her resources has in no wise shaken her belief in my genius, her faith in my future. She still encourages me to continue. To kill this ingenuous faith would be a crime. I have then but two courses open to me: I must either make myself guilty of wicked ingratitude, or else create a masterpiece."
Aurèle reflected a moment. Then he answered: "Certainly it would be too cruel, after so many efforts to say to your mother: 'I have sacrificed my youth to the realization of an impossible ideal, and you have been a martyr to a lost cause!' After all," he continued, after a moment's silence, "failure in the past is not always the condemnation of the future. Necessity and despair have often inspired great things. After so many deceptions, perhaps there are necessary only a last sustained effort, a firmer will and a more persistent courage."
"That courage I shall have," said Maurice, earnestly. "But I have not the time in which to reveal myself clearly and fully. I must live, and I have already told you that my mother's means are exhausted."
The painter drew from his pocket a little portfolio, took from it a thousand franc note, and replying to the significant gesture of his friend, he said: "I shall not allow you to refuse it. I will lend it to your mother. Now, follow my advice! Leave Paris for Barbizon! Let your work be consecrated by the presence of
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your poor mother! If something beautiful and grand is to issue from your hands, be sure that it will be born from that pure atmosphere. Restored, strengthened by nature and by tenderness, you will doubtless find in yourself unsuspected vital forces. But if unfortunately they are destined to fail you, you will, at least, feel in this calm and healthful home greater courage to endure the final trial.”

Maurice threw himself into the arms of Aurèle. “Ah!” he cried, “you are a friend, a true friend!”
“So, it is decided. You will go?”
“I will go to-morrow.”
“In that case,” remarked Aurèle, “I shall pay you a visit next week. I want to paint at Fontainebleau. For it is the season when the thrushes get tipsy upon the juniper berries.”

II

THE STATUE

The residents of Barbizon, peasants and foreigners, colonists and natives, were astonished at the movement which had stirred for several weeks in the house of the widow Catherine Leroy. The worthy woman, ordinarily pale and sad, had regained her smile and was no longer entrenched in sorrow and silence. She spoke freely with her neighbors and to those who complimented her upon the happy change in her appearance and manner, she replied:
“My son has left Paris and has come home never again to leave me.”

According to the promise which he had given Aurèle, Maurice had in reality deserted his studio on the Boulevard de Clichy. Resolved to make a final trial of his powers, he opened his Barbizon studio on the day following the interview already described. Throwing himself into his mother’s arms, he confided to her his plan of beginning and finishing in her company the work which was to make him famous. Catherine immediately forgot her past sorrows, the loneliness which she had suffered and her financial ruin. She greeted her prodigal son with such an effusion of ten-
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derness that Maurice, all crushed and bruised as he was by the battle of life, felt himself purified and revived by her tender caresses.

During the first days devoted to the arrangement of the studio so long reserved for the young sculptor and which he had only visited at rare intervals, the principal care of the excellent mother was to select from her own belongings all that could make the new residence of her son comfortable and attractive. When she had experienced the joy of robbing herself to the farthest limit possible, Madame Catherine sent Muguette to gather armfuls of flowers to brighten the studio, where she had rolled her large arm-chair and spread her only rug.

The artist felt his courage rise; long strolls through the woods restored the vigor of his body and mind; the influence of his mother's tenderness inspired anew in him the loving impulsiveness of childhood. In this calm and solitary place he believed himself capable of producing a great work. And Catherine had an equal faith, because it was founded upon the words of her son repeated to her every hour of the day. The humble woman, who had never visited a museum, but whom the daily habit of prayer had familiarized with the images of saints, supposed in her ignorance that the mission of the sculptor was solely to render visible to the eyes of men the blessed inhabitants of Heaven. Therefore, she suggested that she would rejoice in seeing him execute for some fine church the statue of her patron saint. But Maurice was resolved to create an historic figure. After having sought and hesitated, he decided upon the treatment of a Vercingetorix into which he would throw all his knowledge and the whole power of his imagination. For a month he spent several hours daily in consulting books and studying plates of Roman and Gallic costumes of the period of Julius Caesar. Then, when he believed himself steeped in the picturesque portion of his work, when he had fortified himself against the danger of committing an anachronism, he modeled a statuette in wax, a foot in height. And truly, when it was finished, the little figure, firmly posed, had style and spirit. When it should be cast in bronze, it could not fail to become an ornament in the cabinet of some amateur.
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Maurice wrote, inviting Aurèle to examine his model, and the bird-painter responded without delay to the summons. Madame Catherine, informed by Maurice of the wise counsel and the fraternal loan which had preceded the removal of the studio to Barbizon, received her son's friend as if he had been her own child, insomuch that Aurèle, inspired with respect and sympathy, was upon the point of asking her if there were not in her house a habitable attic which she could place at his disposal.

After the first words of greeting, Madame Catherine retired to prepare the dinner, and Maurice led the painter into his studio. When shown the statuette, Aurèle gave it an approving glance.

"I congratulate you sincerely. It is really very good. To whom do you expect to deliver that?"

"Deliver it!" replied Maurice, somewhat taken aback by this singular praise of the miniature model of a work which he had conceived in heroic proportions. "Are you thinking of that? This is but a very much reduced model of my statue. As in the traditions of art, the stature of gods and heroes surpasses that of ordinary men, I judge that the height of the first hero of Gaul ought not to be less than two metres."

Aurèle became grave. "That is possible," he replied. "But it is to be regretted. For just as it is, this little figure is charming. I tremble lest your Vercingetorix six feet in height, appear forced and theatrical. The firmness of detail and the subtlety of expression can easily disappear in a big fellow larger than life-size. If I were you, I should not give him an inch more."

"Yes, and after that, you would condemn me to practice only microscopic art. Don’t fear for my Vercingetorix, when he shall be enlarged! He will only grow prouder and more splendid. I wanted your advice upon my scheme. It is favorable and that is enough. Now let us take a stroll in the forest before dinner!"

At the moment when the two friends crossed the threshold of the studio, they found themselves face to face with a little girl of fourteen or fifteen years, delicately formed and somewhat bronzed by the sun; her hair fell upon her shoulders, and she was clothed in a white chemisette closed at the throat and belted by a short
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skirt of camelot. She wore no stockings and her sleeves were rolled above the elbow. She held with both hands a large jug filled with creamy milk, while from her left arm hung a basket of wild strawberries.

"I wager that this is Muguette!" cried Aurèle, who had often heard Maurice speak of her.

"Muguette in person," replied the latter. "My mother’s chamber-maid in wooden shoes: a courageous girl who does the work of two servants, on the farm of her mother, the widow Rabotte; she reads and writes better than the school-master, calculates like a mathematician and is without the foolish timidity of young girls of her age—"

"Thanks to you, my dear godfather;—you who have lent me books. And then, my uncle Sèmeagrain, the curio-merchant, a man learned in all sorts of subjects, advises me to study, without counting your mother, neighbor Catherine, who also gives me lessons."

"Very well," said Aurèle. "Permit me, Muguette, to add my contribution of good advice to your varied education. You are no longer a little girl for whom it is becoming to run about the village without stockings, with twigs and leaves caught by chance in your hair. It is well to maintain order in one’s brain; but on the condition that it is also kept in one’s clothing." And, frowning, he added in a comic tone of reproach: "See, the fair savage! The wild lily of the valley!"

Muguette laughed for a moment; then suddenly she bowed her head and became thoughtful.

"Don’t tease my godchild," warned Maurice, trying to lead Aurèle away. "If you make her sad, you will be punished for it. She will not show you one of the most charming sights that can be imagined."

"What sight?"

"The effect of the sympathy which she inspires in all the little beings that are your friends. Just as you see her, Muguette exerts an irresistible power over them. She is a charmer—a bird-charmer."
"Is it true?" asked Aurèle. "You are loved by those that I cherish more than aught in the world, and I have been foolish enough to offend you. You are angry with me, aren't you? And you will refuse to display before me your talent as a bird-charmer?"

"I haven't said that," replied Muguette, smothering a heavy sigh; "on the contrary, I must repay you for the good lesson that you have taught me."

In speaking thus, the poor child had tears in her voice; but immediately having dried her tears, she continued: "You see that the wild lily of the valley has not a bad temper; if you wish to come into the clearing of the wood at nightfall, I shall be there as always at that hour, with my friends, the forest singers."

The appointment being thus made, Muguette entered Madame Catherine's cottage, to place on the dresser of the little dining-room her jug of cream and pour her basketful of berries into the salad bowl.

At the dinner hour, the two artists, having returned from their stroll among the rocks and beneath the great trees, took their places at the table which the widow had arranged in the garden. Their appetite did honor to the smoking omelette, the fresh cream and cheese, and the per-
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fumed strawberries; then, having smoked their after-dinner cigars, they returned to the studio, and while the sculptor flung great masses of modeling clay around the iron armature designed to support the weight of the future Vercingetorix, Aurèle drew from memory a flight of sparrows disputing over a wounded June-bug.

At twilight, accompanied by Madame Catherine, they went to the clearing in the forest. Muguette, who stood awaiting them a few steps distant, allowed them to go first. She carried a wicker basket. As soon as she had appeared, there flew from the depth of the thicket, from the tree-tops, from the tufts of high grass, a throng of birds, chattering, fluttering, alighting about her and expressing their joy in a thousand exquisite movements. Some of them perched upon her shoulders and arms. Others lightly stirred her hair by the motion of their wings which generated a soft and gentle breeze. At last, all flying about her head, formed, as it were, a great parasol of fluttering wings. Muguette talked, laughed and sang to animate their flight and song. Sometimes, wrapped about by their whirlwind, she danced with such grace and lightness that it was impossible to decide which was the swifter and more agile, the girl enthusiast, or the flock of tame birds.

At the voice of Perrine, calling her daughter home, the sport ceased suddenly. Muguette made a sign of command and the winged troupe took flight.

"Good-bye, dear godfather," said Muguette to Maurice; and addressing Aurèle, she said to him: "I thank you for your advice, sir; the wild lily of the valley will profit by it."

At the utterance of this last sentence, shot like an arrow into the air, the young girl turned and disappeared with the fleetness of a sylph.

The following day, Aurèle sketched from memory the scene which had occurred in the clearing.

"That will make a charming Salon picture for next year," exclaimed Maurice.

"That will be simply a graceful fan in the hand of an elegant woman this winter," replied Aurèle.
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The sculptor raised his shoulders with a characteristic movement of disdain.

"My dear friend," exclaimed the painter, "there will always be, whether you wish it or not, individuals of these two classes, the near-sighted and the far-sighted: those who see large and those who see small; you see large and at a distance, so much the better; as for myself, I have the misfortune to be near-sighted. I must have modest proportions and short distances. Everyone has his fate."

Two days later, Aurèle was preparing for his return to Paris, when a young girl, correctly dressed, with her blond hair confined beneath a muslin kerchief, wearing fine blue stockings and dainty shoes, made him a low curtsey and presented him a little wicker cage containing a pair of bullfinches and a pair of tomtits. The bird painter was forced to look narrowly at the beautiful donor before recognizing her.

"I told you indeed, sir, that the wild lily of the valley would profit by your counsels. In gratitude, I offer you in her name these little feathered creatures that, at her call, gaily flew into their narrow prison."

"I accept them, but on the condition that you will receive in exchange the drawing which represents you in your unbleached chemisette, with your hair floating, surrounded by our little friends, the birds."

"Willingly. Beside, I shall ask you to do me a favor."

"Twenty, of you wish, my child."

"Kindly take this letter, which I have just written, to my uncle Sèmeigrain, the curio dealer of the rue Drouot. You will see beautiful things in his shop. Good-bye! When will you come again to Barbizon?"

"When Vercingetorix shall be entirely finished."

Although the approval given by Aurèle would have contained strictures alarming for any one save Maurice, the visit of the bird painter helped to maintain the sculptor's courage. If the optical sense was lacking in Aurèle, if he did not understand the grandeur of the work conceived by his friend, he appreciated at least the
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expression and the attitude of the Vercingetorix. The remainder was for the modeler to accomplish. He could certainly find in the vision of his genius the ideal head of the hero, and he had only to pose some robust peasant for the trunk, the arms and the legs of the valiant defender of Gallic liberty.

Catherine, for whom the sight and presence of her son were constant, imperative needs, passed the greater part of the day in the studio. Seated in her large arm-chair and knitting, she kept her eyes fixed upon the artist and admired his strength as he flung heavy masses of clay upon his colossal model. She perceived his agility as he ascended and descended the rungs of his double ladder. The heart of Catherine quickened with joy when Maurice, weary with the work of the day, stepped down from his scaffolding, and holding still in his hand the modeling-tool of box-wood which served him in outlining his figure, led her before the statue, and asked her in a way to exact only an affirmative reply: "Isn’t it well done?"

“It is as beautiful as a Saint George,” replied the good woman, who kept in adoring memory the Christian warrior of the Golden Legend, whom she had distinguished in the half-gloom of a chapel crushing the vanquished dragon beneath the hoofs of his spirited charger. "You did well to persevere!” added the generous mother. “I am only a poor, humble woman; but I feel that you possess that gift of genius which sooner or later brings fame. And to make you rich and celebrated, I would consent to beg my bread upon the highways.”

“Oh! you are indeed a true mother!” cried Maurice, “a sublime woman whose self-abnegation, great though it be, is still your least virtue!”

Conclusion in The Craftsman for January.