

PEACHBLOW VASE.

A MYSTERY OF SEVERAL YEARS SEEMS TO BE CLEARED UP.

A Matter That Has Long Been of Unusual Interest to Art Collectors—Brayton Ives Tells Quiver Facts About the Vase and Conditions of His Purchase.

The Peachblow vase is in this city. That is the verdict of an amateur Sherlock Holmes, who set about the elucidation of this celebrated piece of porcelain for which \$18,000 was paid when it was sold at auction in this city some eight years ago. Moreover, it seems apparent from what this amateur detective has discovered that, while the famous Peachblow vase belongs to Mr. Brayton Ives and is now in his house on Thirty-fourth street, even Mr. Ives himself is still mystified about some things concerning it.

Mr. Ives did not pay \$18,000 for the Peachblow vase, and yet Mr. Moss, brother-in-law of Mrs. Mary Jane Morgan and the executor of her estate, affirms that that enormous sum was paid into the estate for the vase after the auction sale.

Nobody can tell who it is that is out of pocket because of the mystery surrounding the Peachblow, but it is certain that somebody for a reason best known to himself paid out several thousand dollars and has concealed his identity up to this date. Mr. Brayton Ives appears to be as much mystified as everybody else.

But now that Mr. William T. Walters of Baltimore is dead and a promise of secrecy made by Mr. Ives at the time the vase came into his possession has been fulfilled, he has consented to disclose some facts not hitherto known in connection with the mystery.

"The vase which is now in my possession," said Mr. Ives, "was bought by me from the American Art association, which had conducted the sale of the Morgan collection. From the outset there was something very mysterious about it. I was given to understand that I was to see something very rare and precious, but that I would have to promise to keep it quiet and not tell anybody about it for a certain length of time. Then when my curiosity and interest had been fully aroused I was conducted alone into a shaded apartment. After the doors had been locked and my companion had looked under the table to be sure there was no one concealed there, a safe was opened cautiously, and this vase was taken out from under its coverings. It looked to me like the Peachblow, which had vanished so mysteriously."

"One moment, please," said the amateur Sherlock Holmes, "how long after the Peachblow was sold for \$18,000 to Mr. Walters, as Mr. Sutton alleged, did this occur?"

"From nine months to a year afterward," said Mr. Ives. "I bought the vase which was exhibited to me, but I said nothing about it for a long time. I kept it locked in my house. Before I got it I had to promise not to speak about it for a specified time, but that time has elapsed."

"How much did you pay for the vase?" "That I am not at liberty to state," said Mr. Ives. "When I bought it, I made two promises, one that I should not say anything about it for a specified time, the other that I should never disclose the purchase price."

"What is at the bottom of all this mystery?" "I am unable to guess," answered Mr. Brayton Ives. "Whether or not the vase I bought was the Peachblow vase, there was no reason that I am aware of why the facts should be concealed."

Mr. Ives admitted that the price he paid for the vase was considerably less than \$18,000, and as an example of oriental porcelain he considered it worth what he had paid for it. He said that during the years the vase had been in his possession many things had come to his knowledge about the Peachblow, and that at times he doubted whether the vase in his possession was in reality that famous little thing. It seems that when the vase was sold to him under the mysterious circumstances described there was no guarantee that it was the Peachblow vase, and that the comparatively small price at which it was offered tended to prove that they were not identical.

On the other hand, there are those who assert that Mr. Ives believed he was buying the Peachblow vase, and was not any way willing to take a "flier" on that assumption. The facts which he has subsequently learned seem to prove beyond any question that he did in reality buy the famous vase, and that his investment was a judicious one.

"Here is one fact," said Mr. Ives when discussing the price and cons. "There is a lady in this city who is a friend of Mrs. Morr, who was the sister of Mrs. Morgan. This lady frequently visited the house of Mrs. Morgan, and there she saw and handled the Peachblow vase many times, examining it carefully. Upon one occasion when visiting my house she saw the vase now in my possession, and exclaimed: 'I have handled that vase many times. It is the Peachblow!' A careful examination made by her only confirmed this opinion."

"The death of Mr. Walters, together with the examination of his collections, have cleared up some of the mystery which surrounds this subject," said Mr. Ives. "It is now pretty well established that he never had the Peachblow vase."

—New York World.

Huntingdon. Few persons know that Huntingdon, Pa., was named in honor of the Countess of Huntingdon, an eighteenth century great lady who did much for the University of Pennsylvania. Provost William Smith of the university founded the little city in 1777 and gratefully honored the university's patron in naming the new settlement.—Philadelphia Inquirer.

FABIOLA.

Or, the Church of the Catacombs.

Written by His Eminence Cardinal Wiseman.

[Published by special request.]

CHAPTER XXX.

THE SAME DAY: ITS THIRD PART.

Tertullus at once hastened to the palace; fortunately or unfortunately for these candidates for martyrdom. There he met Corvinus, with the prepared rescript, elegantly engrossed in uncial, that is, large capital letters. He had the privilege of immediate admission into the imperial presence; and, as a matter of business, reported the death of Agnes, exaggerated the public feeling likely to be caused by it, attributed it all to the folly and mismanagement of Fulvius, whose worst guilt he did not disclose, for fear of having to try him, and thus bringing out what he was now doing; depreciated the value of Agnes' property, and ended by saying that it would be a gracious act of clemency, and one sure to counteract unpopular feeling, to bestow it upon her relative, who by settlement was her next heir. He described Fabiola as a young lady of extraordinary intellect and wonderful learning, who was most zealously devoted to the worship of the gods, and daily offered sacrifice to the genius of the emperor.

"I know her," said Maximian, laughing, as if at the recollection of something very aroll. "Poor thing! she sent me a splendid ring, and yesterday asked me for that wretched Sebastian's life, just as they had finished flogging him to death. And he laughed immoderately, then continued: 'Yes, yes, by all means; a little inheritance will console her, no doubt, for the loss of that fellow. Let a rescript be made out, and I will sign it.'"

Tertullus produced the one prepared, saying he had fully relied on the emperor's magnanimous clemency; and the imperial barbarian put a signature to it which would have disgraced a schoolboy. The prefect at once consigned it to his son.

Scarcely had he left the palace, when Fulvius entered. He had been home to put on a proper court attire, and remove from his features, by the bath and the perfumer's art, the traces of his morning's passion. He felt a keen presentiment that he should be disappointed. Eurotas, cool discussion of the preceding evening, had prepared him; the cross of all his designs, and his multiplied disappointments that day, had strengthened this instinctive conviction. One woman, indeed, seemed born to meet and baffle him whichever way he turned, but, thank the gods, he thought, she cannot be my way here. She has this morning blasted my character forever; she cannot claim my rightful reward; she has made me an outcast, it is not in her power to make me a beggar. This seemed his only ground of hope. Despair, indeed, urged him forward; and he determined to argue out his claims to the confiscated property of Agnes, with the only competitor he could fear, the rapacious emperor himself. He might as well risk his life over it, for if he failed, he was utterly ruined. After waiting some time, he entered the audience-hall, and advanced with the blandest smile that he could muster to the imperial feet.

"What want you here?" was his first greeting.

"Sire," he replied, "I have come humbly to pray your royal justice, to order my being put into immediate possession of my share of the Lady Agnes' property. She has been convicted of being a Christian upon my accusation; and she has just suffered the merited penalty of all who disobey the imperial edicts."

"That is all quite right; but we have heard how stupidly you mismanaged the whole business as usual, and have raised murmurings and discontent in the people against us. So, now, the sooner you quit our presence, palace and city, the better for yourself. Do you understand? We don't usually give such warnings twice."

"I will obey instantly every intimation of the supreme will. But I am almost destitute. Command what of right is mine to be delivered over to me, and I depart immediately."

"No more words," replied the tyrant, "but go at once. As to the property which you demand with so much pertinacity, you cannot have it. We have made over the whole of it, by an irrevocable rescript, to an excellent and deserving person, the Lady Fabiola."

Fulvius did not speak another word; but kissed the emperor's hand and slowly retired. He looked a ruined, broken man. He was only heard to say, as he passed out of the gate: Then, after all, she made me a beggar too. When he reached home, Eurotas, who read his answer in his nephew's eye, was amazed at his calmness.

"I see," he drily remarked, "it is all over."

"Yes; are your preparations made, Eurotas?"

"Nearly so. I have sold the jewels, furniture and slaves at some loss; but with the trifle I had in hand, we have enough to take us to Asia. I have retained Stabius, as the most trustworthy of our servants; he will carry our small travelling requisites on his horse. Two others are preparing for you and me. I have only one thing more to get for our journey, and then I am ready to start."

"Pray what is that?" "The poison. I ordered it last night, but it will only be ready at noon."

"What is that for?" asked Fulvius, with some alarm.

"Surely you know," rejoined the other unmoved: "I am willing to make one more—anywhere else; but our bargain is clear, my father's family must not end in beggary. It must be extinguished in honor."

Fulvius bit his lip, and said, "Well, be it as you like; I am weary of life. Leave the house as soon as possible, for fear of Ephraim, and be with your horses at the third mile on the Latin gate soon after dusk. I will join you there. For I, too, have an important matter to transact before I start."

"And what is that?" asked Eurotas, with a rather keen curiosity.

"I cannot tell even you. But if I cannot with you by two hours after sunset, give me up, and save yourself without me."

Eurotas fixed upon him his cold dark eye, with one of those looks which ever read Fulvius through; to see if he could detect any lurking idea of escape from his gripe. But his look was cool and unflinching, and the old man asked no more. While this dialogue was going on, Fulvius had been divesting himself of his court garment, and attiring himself in a travelling suit. So completely did he evidently prepare himself for his journey, without necessity of returning home, that he even took his weapons with him besides his sword, securing in his girdle, but concealed under his cloak, one of those curved daggers, of highest temper and most fatal form, which were only known in the East.

Eurotas proceeded at once to the Numidian quarters in the palace, and asked for Fabiola; who entered with two small flasks of different sizes, and was just going to give some explanations, when her husband, half-drunk, half-furious, was seen approaching. Eurotas had just time to conceal the flasks in his belt, and slip a coin into her hand, when Hyphax came up. His wife had mentioned to him the orders which Eurotas had made to her before marriage, and had excited in his hot African blood a jealousy that amounted to hatred. The savage rudely thrust his wife out of the apartment, and would have picked a quarrel with the Syrian, had not the latter, his purpose being accomplished, acted with forbearance, assuring the archer-chief, that he should never more see him, and retired.

It is time, however, that we return to Fabiola. The reader is probably prepared to hear us say, that she returned home a Christian; and yet it was not so.

For what as yet did she know of Christianity, to be said to profess it? In Sebastian and Agnes she had indeed willingly admitted the virtue, usefulness, generous, and more than earthly, which now she was ready to attribute to that faith. She saw that it gave motives of action, principles of life, elevation of mind, courage of conscience, and determination of virtuous will, such as no other system of belief ever bestowed. And even if, as she now shrewdly suspected, and intended in calmer moments to ascertain, the sublime revelations of Syria, concerning an unseen sphere of virtue, and its all-seeing Ruler, came from the same source, to what did it all amount more than to a grand moral and intellectual system, partly practical, partly speculative, as all codes of philosophy teaching were? This was a very different thing from Christianity. She had as yet heard nothing of its real and essential doctrines, its fathomless, yet accessible, depths of mystery, the awful, vast, and heaven-high structure of faith, which the simplest soul may contain, as a child's eye will take in the perfect

reflection and counterpart of a mountain, through a giant canyon scale it. She had never heard of God, One in Trinity, of the co-equal Son incarnate for man. She had never been told of the marvellous history of Redemption by God's suffering and death. She had not heard of Nazareth, or Bethlehem or Calvary. How could she call herself a Christian, or be one, in ignorance of all this?

How many names had to become familiar and sweet to her which as yet were unknown, or barbarous—Mary, Joseph, Peter, Paul, and John? Not to mention the sweetest of all, His, whose name is balm to the wounded heart, or as honey dropping from the broken honey-comb. And how much had she yet to learn about the provision for salvation on earth, in the Church, in grace, in sacraments, in prayer in love, in charity to others! What unexplored regions lie beyond the small tract which she had explored!

No; Fabiola returned home, exhausted almost by the preceding day and night, and the sad scenes of the morning, and retired to her own apartment, no longer perhaps even a philosopher, yet not a Christian. She desired all her servants to keep away from the court which she occupied, that she might not be disturbed by the smallest noise; and she forbade anyone to have access to her. There she sat in loneliness and silence, for several hours, too excited to obtain rest from slumber. She mourned long over Agnes, as a mother might over a child suddenly carried off. Yet, was there not a tinge of light upon the cloud that overshadowed her, more than when it hung over her father's bier? Did it not seem to her an insult to reason, an outrage to humanity, to think that she had perished; that she had been permitted to walk forward in her bright robe, and with her smiling countenance, and with her joyous, simple heart, straight on—into nothing; that she had been assured by conscience, and purity, and truth, on, fill with arms outstretched to embrace them, she stepped over the precipice, beneath which yawned annihilation! No; Agnes, she felt sure, was happy somehow, somewhere, or justice was a senseless word.

"How strange," she further thought, "that everyone whom I have known endowed with superior excellence, men like Sebastian, women like Agnes, should turn out to have belonged to the scorned race of Christians! One only remains, and to-morrow I will interrogate her." When she turned from these, and looked round upon the heathen world, Fulvius, Tertullus, the Emperor, Calpurnius,—nay, she shuddered as she surprised herself on the point of mentioning her own father's name—it sickened her to see the contrast of baseness with nobleness, vice with virtue, stupidity with wisdom, and the sensual with the spiritual. Her mind was thus being shaped into a mold, which some form of practical excellence must be found to fill, or it must be broken; her soul was craving as a parched soil, which heaven must send its waters to refresh, or it must become an eternal desert.

Agnes, surely, well deserved the glory of gaining, by her death, her kinswoman's conversion; but was there not one, more humble, who had established a prior claim? One who had given up freedom, and offered life, for this unselfish gain? While Fabiola was alone and desolate, she was disturbed by the entrance of a stranger, introduced under the ominous title of 'A messenger from the emperor.' The porter had at first denied admittance, but upon his being assured that he bore an important embassy from the sovereign, he was obliged to inquire from the steward what to do; when he was informed that no one with such a claim could be refused entrance.

Fabiola was amazed, and her displeasure was somewhat mitigated, by the ridiculous appearance of the person deputed in such a solemn character. It was Corvinus, who with clownish grace approached her, and in a studied speech, evidently got up very floridly, and intrusted to a bad memory, laid at her feet an imperial rescript, and his own sincere affection, the 'Lady Agnes' estates, and his clumsy hand. Fabiola could not at all comprehend the connection between the two combined presents, and never imagined that the one was a bribe for the other. Being desired by a return her humble thanks to the emperor for his gracious not, adding, 'Say that I am too ill to-day

reflection and counterpart of a mountain, through a giant canyon scale it. She had never heard of God, One in Trinity, of the co-equal Son incarnate for man. She had never been told of the marvellous history of Redemption by God's suffering and death. She had not heard of Nazareth, or Bethlehem or Calvary. How could she call herself a Christian, or be one, in ignorance of all this?

That was unnecessary, said Fabiola, for they were settled on me long ago, and became mine the moment—she faltered, and after a strong effort at self-mastery, she continued—"the moment they ceased to be another's, they did not fall under confiscation."

Corvinus was dumb-founded, at least he stumbled into something, meant for an humble petition to be admitted as an aspirant after her hand, but understood by Fabiola to be a demand of recompense, for procuring or bringing so important a document. She assured him that every claim he might have on her should be fully and honorably considered at a more favorable moment; but as she was exceedingly wearied and unwell, she must beg him to leave her at present. He did so quite elated, fancying that he had secured his prize.

After he was gone, she hardly looked at the parchment, which he had left open on a small table by her couch; but sat musing on the sorrowful scene she had witnessed; still it wanted about an hour to sunset. Sometimes her reveries turned to one point, sometimes to another of the late events, and just at that moment she was dwelling on her being confronted by Fulvius in the Forum. Her memory vividly replaced the entire scene before her, and her mind gradually worked itself into a state of painful excitement, which she at length checked by saying aloud to herself: "Thank heaven! I shall never behold that villain's face again."

The words were scarcely out of her mouth, when she shaded her eyes with her hand, as she raised herself up on her couch, and looked towards the door. Was it her overheated fancy, which beguiled her, or did her wakeful eyes show her a reality? Her ears decided the question, by the words which they heard: "Pray madam, who is the man whom you honor by that gracious speech?"

"You, Fulvius," she said, slowly rising with dignity. "A further intruder still, not only into the house, the villa and the dungeon, but into the most secret apartments of a lady's residence, and what is worse, into the house of sorrow of one whom you have bereaved. Begone at once, or I will have you ignominiously expelled hence."

"Sit down and compose yourself, lady," rejoined the intruder; "this is my last visit to you, but we have a reckoning to make together of some weight. As to calling out, or bringing in help, you need not trouble yourself; your orders to your servants to keep aloof, have been too well obeyed. There is no one within call."

It was true. Fulvius found the way prepared unwittingly for him by Corvinus; for upon presenting himself at the door, the porter, who had seen him twice dine at the house, told him of the strict orders given, and assured him that he could not be admitted unless he came from the emperor, for such were his instructions. That Fulvius said, was exactly his case; and the porter, wondering that so many imperial messengers should come in one day, let him pass. He begged the door might be left unfastened, in case the porter should not be at the door when he retired; as he was in a hurry, and should not like to disturb the house, such a state of grief, and required no guide, for he knew the way to Fabiola's apartment.

Fulvius seated himself opposite to the lady, and continued:

"You ought not to be offended, madam, with my unexpected coming upon you, and overhearing your amiable colloquy about myself; it is a lesson I learnt from yourself in the Tullian prison. But I must begin my scores from an earlier date. When, for the first time, I was invited by your worthy father to his table, I met one, whose looks and words at once gained my affection. I need not now mention her name, and whose heart, with instinctive sympathy returned them."

"Insolent man!" Fabiola exclaimed to allude to such a topic here, it is false, that any such affection ever existed on either side."

"As to the Lady Agnes," resumed Fulvius, "I have the best authority, that of your lamented parent, who more than once encouraged me to persevere in my suit; by assuring me that his cousin had consented to him her reciprocating love."

From that hour of our first meeting, you became my better and my loving friend, in company with that treacherous officer, who has secured his reward, and whom you had planned for the place I courted; repaying your indignation, lady, for I will be heard out,—you understood my character, you possessed her feelings, and you turned my love into necessary amity."

"Your love!" now broke in the indignant lady; "even if all that you have said were not barely false, what love could you have for her? How could you appreciate her virtues, her simplicity, her genuine honesty, her rare understanding; her candid innocence, any more than the wolf can value the lamb's gentleness, or the vulture the dove's mildness? No; it was her wealth, her family connection, her nobility, that you grasped at, and nothing more; I read it in the very flash of your eye, when first it flashed back, on a smile-like, upon her."

"It is false!" he rejoined; "had I obtained my request, had I been thus worthily matched, I should have been found equal to my position, gentle, contented, and affectionate; as worthy of possessing her as—"

"As any one can be," struck in Fabiola, who, in offering his hand, expresses himself equally ready in three hours, to espouse or to murder the object of his affection. And she prefers the latter, and he keeps his word. Begone from my presence; you stain the very atmosphere in which you move."

"I will leave when I have accomplished my task, and you will have little reason to regret what I say. You have then purposely, and provoked, blighted and destroyed me every honorable purpose, withered my only hope, and driven me from rank, society, and domestic happiness."

"That was a lie," said she, "after all, in that character, with which I swayed up my condemnation, I spy, and listened to my indignation, you this morning threw at me, in sense of female propriety, and as a forward prominently in the Forum, to complete in public what you had begun in private, exile against me the supreme tribunal, and through the emperor, and at once an unjust popular outcry and vengeance; which, but for a feeling stronger than love, that brings me hither, would induce me to stralk, like a hunted stag, I could steal out of the scene."

"And, Fulvius, I tell you, you have crossed the threshold, the sacred virtue will be raised in the city. Again I tell you, if you do not leave my house, at least for the night, I will depart from this scene."

"We part not yet," said she, "vile, what a creature you are! growing every moment more as his lips had been, becoming deadly pale. He rudely grasped her arm, and pushed her back to seat; and beware, he added, you attempt again either to leave or to bring aid, you have sworn your last oath to me."

"You have made me mad," said she, "not only from the violence of my grief, but from the knowledge of your treachery. Begone, on a friendless world, enough to make me mad."

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