

'Hath not a Jew Eyes?'

MR. SAINTOU the hairdresser was a Frenchman, therefore his English neighbours regarded him with suspicion. He was also exceedingly stout, and his stoutness had come upon him at an unbecomingly early age, so that he had long been the object of his neighbours' merriment. When to these facts it is added that, although a keen and prosperous business man, he had attained the age of fifty without making any effort to marry, enough will have been said to show why he was disliked.

Why was he not married? Were English women not good enough for him? The pretty milliner across the street had been heard to remark in his presence that she should never refuse a man simply because he was a foreigner. Or if he did not want an English wife, why did he not import one from Paris with his perfumes? No, there was no reason for his behaviour, and Mr. Saintou was the object of his neighbours' aversion.

Neighbours are often wrong in their estimates. In the heart of this shrewd and stout French hairdresser there lay the capacity for that one supreme and lasting affection which is the halo-crown of every truly noble life, and of which how many hearts, which bear this world's reputation of nobility, fall short. Yes, Mr. Saintou's love story was in the past, and it had come about in this way.

One day when the hairdresser was still a young man, not long after he had first settled in Albert Street, the door of his shop opened, and a young woman came in. Her figure was short and broad, and she was lame, walking with a crutch. Her face and features were large and peculiarly frank in expression, and upon her head was a very large hat. When she spoke, it was with a loud staccato voice; her words fell after one another like hailstones in a storm, there was no breathing space between them.

'I want Mr. Saintou.'

'What may I have the pleasure of showing Madame?'

'Good gracious, I told you I wanted to be shown Mr. Saintou. Are you Mr. Saintou? None of your assistants for me; I want my hair cut.'

The hairdresser laid his hand upon his heart, as though to point out his own identity. He bowed, and as even at that age he was very stout, the effort of the bow caused his small eyes to shut and open themselves again. There was nothing staccato about the manner of the hairdresser, he had carefully cultivated that address which he supposed would be most soothing to those who submitted themselves to his operations.

'Very well,' said the little lady, apparently satisfied with the identification, 'I want my hair cut. It is like a sheaf of corn. It is like a court train. It is like seven horses' manes tied together, if they were red. It is like a comet's tail.'

It is probable that the hairdresser only took in that part of this speech upon which he was in the habit of concentrating his attention, and that the force of the similes which followed one another like electric shocks escaped him altogether. He was about to show the new customer into the ladies' room where his staid and elderly sister was accustomed to officiate, but she drew back with decision.

'No, not at all; I have come to have my hair cut by Mr. Saintou, and I want to have it done in the room with the long row of chairs where the long row of men get shaved every morning. I told my sister I should sit there. You have no men in at this time of day, have you, Mr. Saintou? Now I shall sit here in the middle chair, and you shall wash my hair.'

'My father is the baker round the corner. He makes good bread; do you wash people's hair as well? Will you squirt water on it with that funny tube? Will you put it in my eyes? Now, I am up on the chair. Don't put the soap in my eyes, Mr. Saintou.'

Saintou was not a man easily surprised. 'Permit me, Mademoiselle, would it not be better to remove the hat? Mon Dieu! Holy Mary, what hair!' For as the Eastern women carry their burdens on the crown of the head to ease the weight, so, when the large hat was off, it appeared that the baker's daughter carried her hair.

'Like the hair of a woman on a hair-restorer bottle, if it were red,' remarked the girl in answer to the exclamation.

'No, Mademoiselle, no, it is not red. Mon Dieu! it is not red. Holy Mary! it is the colour of the sun. Mon Dieu, what

hair!' As he untwined the masses, it fell over the long bib, over the high chair, down till it swept the floor, in one unbroken flood of light.

'Wash it, and cut it, and let me go home to make my father's dinner,' said the quick voice with decision. 'My father is the baker round the corner, and he takes his dinner at two.'

'Is it that Mademoiselle desires the ends cut?' asked the hairdresser, resuming his professional manner.

'Which ends?'

'Which ends?' he exclaimed baffled. 'Mon Dieu! these ends,' and he lifted a handful of the hair on the floor and held it before the eyes of the girl.

'Good Heavens, no! Do you think I am going to pay you for cutting those ends? It's the ends at the top I want cut. Lighten it; that's what I want. Do you think I am a woman in a hairdresser's advertisement to sit all day looking at my hair? I have to get my father's dinner. Lighten it, Mr. Saintou; cut it off; that's what I want.'

'Mon Dieu, no!' Saintou again relapsed from the hairdresser into the man. He too could have decision. He leant against the next chair and set his lips very firmly together. 'By all that is holy, no,' he said; 'you may get some villain Englishman to cut that hair, but me, never.'

'You speak English very well, Mr. Saintou. Have you been long in the country? Well, wash the hair then, and be done. Don't put the soap in my eyes.'

Saintou was in ecstasies. He touched the hair reverently as one would touch the garments of a saint. He laid aside his ordinary brushes and sponges, and going into the shop he brought thence what was best and newest. Do not laugh at him. Have we not all at some time in our lives met with what seemed the embodiment of our ideal; have we not set aside for the time our petty economies and reserves, and brought forth whatever we had that was best, of thought, or smiles, or vesture?

'Ah, Mademoiselle,' he said, 'to take care of such hair for ever—that would be heaven. I am a Frenchman; I have a soul; I can feel.'

'Should you be afraid to die a sudden death, Mr. Saintou?' said the quick voice from the depths of a shower of water.

'Ciel! We do not speak of such things, Mademoiselle. There will come a time I know when my hair will turn gray; then for the sake of my profession I shall be obliged to dye it. There will

come a time after that when I shall die ; but we do not even think of these things, it is better not.'

'But should you be afraid to die now?' persisted the girl.

'Very much afraid,' said the hairdresser, candidly.

'Then don't feel, Mr. Saintou. I never feel. I make it the business of my life not to feel. They tell me there is something wrong at my heart, and that if I ever feel either glad or sorry I shall go off, pop, like a crow from a tree when you have shot it, like a spark that falls into water.'

The hairdresser meditated upon this for some time. He did not believe it. He had drawn the bright hair back now from the water, and was fondling it with his whitest and softest towels.

'Who was it that said to Mademoiselle that her heart was bad?'

'Good gracious, Mr. Saintou, my heart is not bad. I know my catechism and go to church, and cook my father's dinner every day, and a very good dinner it is too. What put it into your head that I had a bad heart?'

'Pardon! Mademoiselle; I mistake. Who told Mademoiselle that she was sick at heart?'

'Good gracious heavens! I am not sick at heart. To be sure my mother is dead, and my sister is ill, and my father is as cross as two sticks, but for all that I am not heartsick. I like this world very well, and when I feel sad I put more onions into the soup.'

Saintou went on with his work for some time in silence, then he tried again. 'You say I speak good English, and I flatter myself I have the accent very well, but what avails if I cannot make you understand? Was it a good doctor who said Mademoiselle's heart was affected; touched, I might say?'

There was a shout of laughter from under the shower of gold.

'My heart touched! One would think I was in love. No, my heart is not touched yet; least of all by you, Mr. Saintou.

Least of all by you,
Mr. Saintou.'

She repeated this last rhyming couplet with a quaint musical intonation, as though it was the refrain of a song, and after her voice and laughter had died away she went on nodding her head in time to the brushing as if she were singing it over softly to herself. This distressed the hairdresser not a little, and he remained silent.

'What shall I pay you, Mr. Saintou?' said the little lady, when the large hat was once more on the head.

'If Mademoiselle would but come again,' said the hairdresser, putting both hands resolutely behind his back.

'When I come again I shall pay you both for that time and this,' she said, with perhaps more tact than could have been expected of her. 'And if you want to live long, Mr. Saintou, don't feel. If I should feel I should die off, quick, sharp, like a moth that flies into the candle.' She made a little gesture with her hand, as if to indicate the ease and suddenness with which the supposed catastrophe was to take place, and hobbled down the street. Saintou stood in the doorway looking after her, and his heart went from him.

He sent her flowers—flowers that a duchess might have been proud to receive. He sent them more than once, and they were accepted; he argued much from that. He made friends with the baker in order that he might bow to him morning and evening. Then he waited. He said to himself, 'She is English. If I go to see her, if I put my hand on my heart and weep, she will jeer at me; but if I wait and work for her in silence, then she will believe.' He made a parlour for her in the room above his shop; and every week, as he had time and money, he went out to choose some ornament for it. His maiden sister watched these actions with suspicion, threw scornful looks at him when he observed her watchfulness, and lent a kindly helping hand when he was out of sight. The parlour grew into a shrine ready for its divinity, and the hairdresser worked and waited in silence. Ah, how many another lover has made his mistake! As if love unexpressed and unknown had power to bless any but the heart of the lover.

Meanwhile the girl also waited. She could not go back to the hairdresser's shop lest she should seem to invite a renewal of those attentions which had given her the sweet surprise of the joy of love. The law of her woman's nature stood like a lion in the path. She waited through the months of the dreary winter till the one gleam of sunshine which had come into her sad young life had faded, till the warmth it had kindled in her heart died—as a lamp's flame dies for lack of oil; died—as a flower dies in the drought; died into anger for the man who had disturbed her peace, and when she thought she cared for him no more she went again to get her hair cut.

'You have come,' said Saintou; but the very strength of his feeling made him grave.

'Good gracious, yes, I have come to have my hair cut. You would not cut it when I was here, and I have been very poorly these three months. I could not come out, so the other day I had my sister cut it off. My father wanted to send for you, but I said "no," and, oh, my! it looks just as if a donkey had come behind and mistaken it for hay.'

How quickly a train of thought can flash through the brain! Saintou asked himself if he loved the girl or the hair, and his heart answered very sincerely that the hair, divine as it was, had been but the outward sign which led him to love the inward soul of the girl.

'Mademoiselle ought not to have said "no"; I should have come very willingly and would have cut your hair, if I had known it must be so.'

'I made my sister cut it, but it's frightful. It looks as if one had tried to mow a lawn with a pair of scissors, or shear a sheep with a penknife.'

'I will make all that right,' said Saintou soothingly; 'I will make it all right. Just in a moment I will make it very nice.'

Yes, it was too true, the hair was gone; and very barbarously it had been handled. 'I shall make it all right,' he said cheerfully; 'I shall trim it beautifully for Mademoiselle. Ah, the beautiful colour is there all the same.'

'As red as a sunset or a geranium,' she said.

'You do not believe that,' sighed Saintou. He trimmed the hair very tenderly, and curled it softly round the white face, till it looked like a great fair marigold just beginning to curl in its petals for the night. He worked slowly, for he had something he wanted to say, and when his work was done he summoned up courage and said it. He told her his hopes and fears. He told the story blunderingly enough, but it had its effect.

'Mon Dieu!' said Saintou, but he said it in a tone that made his sister, who was listening to every word through the door, leave that occupation and dart in to his assistance.

'Qu'elle est morte,' was her brief stern comment. And so it was. The baker's daughter had felt, and she had died.

'This is not wholly unexpected,' said the baker sadly, when he came to carry away the corpse of his daughter. 'We all expected it,' said the neighbours; 'she had heart disease.' And they talked their fill, and never discovered the truth it would have pleased them best to talk about.

The short hair curled softly about the face of the dead girl as

she lay in her coffin, and Saintou paid heavily for masses for her sweet soul. When they had laid her in the churchyard, he came home, and took the key, and went into the little parlour all alone. She had never seen it. She had never even heard of it. It is sad to bury a baby that is dead; it is sadder, if we but knew it, to bury in darkness and silence a child that has never lived. A joy that has gone from us for ever is a jewel that trembles like a tear on Sorrow's breast, but the brightest stars in her diadem are the memories of hopes that have passed away unrealised and untold. Ah well, perhaps the gay trappings of the little room, by their daily influence on his life, drew him nearer to heaven. He gave the key to his sister afterwards, and they used the room as their own; but that day he locked himself in alone, and, hiding his face in the cushions of her dainty chair, he wept as only a strong man can weep.

EARNEST DUNS.