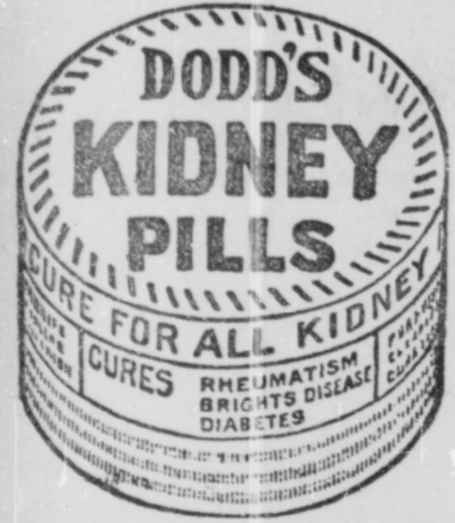


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An Afternoon at Mr. Peale's.

By CLINTON ROSS.

[Copyright, 1899, by Clinton Ross.]

Mr. Peale bent lovingly over his favorite subject, putting a touch here, there, and standing back to note the effect. In the shadow of the rear of the room Don Juan Miralles, the uncredited representative of his Spanish majesty, nodded approval, yet made the very remark of Washington Irving, a generation after, "No artist catches his best look."

"No, M. Miralles," said Mr. Peale. "That maddens me."

"Still, I like it," said the don, wagging his head wisely. "I must have my copy in a hurry."

"It's keeping pace with the original, and, indeed, is almost an original itself. There it is against the wall, behind the screen. They are nearly alike, are they not?"

"Yes," said the don critically. "I can hardly tell the difference, I declare."

"Wait until they may be finished," Mr. Peale interrupted irritably.

"But they appear almost so now."

"Oh, yes, to you; but it's the last touch that tells. I never know. Perhaps I may not be able to put on that last touch which leaves a portrait living."

Don Miralles smiled at this exhibition of the artistic temper and asked how many times the artist had done that subject.

"Let me see—first in 1873, when the three miniatures of the Custis children were done in addition, and then that bust study was made that is in the cellar. Since, the general has given sittings in 1876 and again in 1878. But he changes," the artist went on.

"The spirit acts on the face," said the other sympathetically.

"Yes," Mr. Peale said, "and perhaps you have to see a bit into a man's heart to paint him properly, and the heart of a man of action never beats two years alike."

"Don't forget that in my copy, monsieur. I suppose I can't cajole the council to let me have this. But I don't know that I wish it. Mine will be almost as good."

"You may believe I shall do what I may," said the painter, remembering how generous a patron was this nobleman.

The visitor was sure that Mr. Peale certainly had and would, in view of the fact that his Spanish majesty wished to look on the face of that wonderful general of whom the world was now talking.

Mr. Peale's black servant, Burton, brought in wine and cakes, when Don Miralles' enthusiasm increased. Unfortunately he went on in the vein of explanation he must act in America through the French minister, but that would not be always. When he returned to Madrid, he would make them understand that the king of Spain should recognize the United States.

Now he rose and bade Mr. Peale a courteous good day. He had a round of visits to make.

Alone, the painter touched the canon on which his subject's hand rested. Yes, more was to be done on the face, but his visitor had frightened the mood. Perhaps that last sitting would give the impression he lacked.

When Burton announced Miss Ronald, he sighed and threw his brush down pettishly. For a moment he



Many of the North American Indians were magnificent specimens of physical manhood. This was due, largely, to their active out-door life. Nevertheless, they had the wisdom to know that an active life in the open air alone, would not keep a man healthy. They had their medicine-men, who gathered herbs from field and forest and brewed decoctions to assist the natural processes of the various vital organs.

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could see every line of Eleanor Ronald's charming figure. Her portrait had been a labor of such devotion as the artist may give to a subject appealing to his temper.

"Well, of course, show her here," he said at last.

And, rising, he pulled his coat into some shape and ran his fingers through his hair.

"Oh, Mr. Peale!" said a laughing voice.

Yet in some way the face did not laugh. He saw how serious this delightful person was.

"Do be seated," he began clumsily. But she had walked across to the Washington and was gazing at it with questioning eyes.

"What is he like?" she asked.

"Oh, I don't know! Everybody has an opinion."

"And there is the portrait," said she, smiling.

"Oh, I didn't say that!" said he. "I know you didn't, you delightfully modest man, but I did."

She turned her gloves with her fingers as she faced him.

"You told me he would be here this afternoon," she said.

"Ah, I did!"

"I—I want to see him."

"I beg your pardon, but I am afraid he would not like it," he said bluntly. "You must have seen him often."

"Yes—yes—that isn't it. I wish to see him when he is not thinking of duty. He's in town but for two days. I might go to his quarters and find he was too busy just to meet a girl!"

"The most charming young lady in Philadelphia," said the gallant Mr. Peale, trying to apologize for his bluntness.

"Oh, you needn't say that!" she said wearily. "I am the most miserable."

Her eyes filled with tears. Poor Mr. Peale fidgeted.

"I sha'n't be glad, but I am fearful he will say I ought not—charming as you always are."

She looked at him fixedly. And he in some way could not resist what he saw in the face. Ah, had he not studied its every line? Perhaps since her painter, he was even weaker than the others. He thought that today she looked old. As a matter of fact, he knew she was 36. No one of the admired of that town ever had more adores. She was said to be heartless, as men and their women friends think this of women whom they admire much, and who may be rather disdainful. Suitors by the score had charged and retreated, for more than her personal attractiveness was that of her being a great heiress of Pennsylvania. But the personal quality now was blurring Mr. Peale's judgment.

"I want just this favor of you," she went on—"to be here when he comes in. He will not think that strange."

"I don't know that he will."

At the moment Burton announced, "General Washington."

The painter ran the situation over hurriedly. But another glance at his visitor left him conquered. Yet he expostulated this far:

"You know he comes here as a favor to me. I only have this day. He leaves Philadelphia tomorrow."

"And this is a favor to me," she said, turning the fire of her blue eyes on him. Her reddish hair at one side had escaped from its fastening. The low broad forehead, the thin flushed face, the small mouth, the graceful figure in a fitting gown, left him no alternative.

"Well? Show his excellency—here at once," he ended to Burton and turned to his palette, not looking again at her, until presently were heard footfalls and the beat of his excellency's spur.

"Well, Peale, I found time. You ought to thank me."

"That I do, indeed, your excellency, you may believe."

sorry, Miss Ronald, believe me. He is a charming young gentleman."

"Yes," said she.

"But the evidence is against him, Miss Ronald. What was he doing disguised in our lines with the plans of the fort in his pocket? The court has decided, and—I can't give my influence against it. How can I? Is he better than Captain Hale?"

"Yes, he is," said she.

"Oh, I know, Miss Ronald. It is horribly hard for you, and I am sorry. But I must say what I said at the opening of the war when my own good friend, Colonel Webb, asked me to have him immediately exchanged. It would give me pleasure to render you any service



"What good does his life do you?" in my power, but it is impossible for me to comply with your request without violating the principles of justice and incurring the charge of partiality."

He wondered if she would sob. He hated to think of her tears, and again he muttered low at Peale's tactlessness. The artist stood fidgeting in the background.

(To be Continued)

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