ROBERT W. CHAMBERS

IN THE QUARTER

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One evening in May, 1888, the Café des Écoles was even more crowded and more noisy than usual. The marble-topped tables were wet with beer and the din was appalling. Someone shouted to make himself heard.

``Any more news from the Salon?''

``Yes,'' said Elliott, ``Thaxton's in with a number three. Rhodes is out and takes it hard. Clifford's out too, and takes it -- ''

A voice began to chant:

Je n'sais comment faire,
Comment concillier
Ma maitresse et mon père,
Le Code et Bullier.

``Drop it! Oh, drop it!'' growled Rhodes, and sent a handful of billiard chalk at the singer.

Mr Clifford returned a volley of the Café spoons, and continued:

Mais c'que je trouve de plus bête,
C'est qu' i' faut financer
Avec ma belle galette,
J'aimerai mieux m'amuser.

Several other voices took up the refrain, lamenting the difficulty of reconciling their filial duties with balls at Bullier's, and protesting that they would rather amuse themselves than consider financial questions. Rhodes sipped his curaçoa sulkily.

``The longer I live in the Latin Quarter,'' he said to his neighbor, ``the less certain I feel about a place of future

punishment. It would be so tame after this.'' Then, reverting to his grievance, he added, ``The slaughter this year at the Salon is awful.''

Reginald Gethryn stirred nervously but did not speak.

``Have a game, Rex?'' called Clifford, waving a cue.

Gethryn shook his head, and reaching for a soiled copy of the *Figaro,* glanced listlessly over its contents. He sighed and turned his paper impatiently. Rhodes echoed the sigh.

``What's at the theaters?''

``Same as last week, excepting at the Gaieté. They've put on `La Belle Hélène' there.''

``Oh! Belle Hélène!'' cried Clifford.

Tzing! la! la! Tzing! la! la!
C'est avec ces dames qu' Oreste
Fait danser l'argent de Papa!

Rhodes began to growl again.

``I shouldn't think you'd feel like gibbering that rot tonight.''

Clifford smiled sweetly and patted him on the head. ``Tzing! la! la! My shot, Elliott?''

``Tzing! la! la!'' laughed Thaxton, ``That's Clifford's biography in three words.''

Clifford repeated the refrain and winked impudently at the pretty bookkeeper behind her railing. She, alas! returned it with a blush.

Gethryn rose restlessly and went over to another table where a man, young, but older than himself, sat, looking comfortable.

``Braith,'' he began, trying to speak indifferently, ``any news of my fate?''

The other man finished his beer and then answered carelessly, ``No.'' But catching sight of Gethryn's face he added, with a laugh:

``Look here, Rex, you've got to stop this moping.''

``I'm not moping,'' said Rex, coloring up.

``What do you call it, then?'' Braith spoke with some sharpness, but continued kindly, ``You know I've been through it all. Ten years ago, when I sent in my first picture, I confess to you I suffered the torments of the damned until --''

``Until?''

``Until they sent me my card. The color was green.''

``But I thought a green card meant `not admitted.'''

``It does. I received three in three years.''

``Do you mean you were thrown out three years in succession?''

Braith knocked the ashes out of his pipe. ``I gave up smoking for those three years.''

``You?''

Braith filled his pipe tenderly. ``I was very poor,'' he said.

``If I had half your sand!'' sighed Rex.

``You have, and something more that the rest of us have not. But you are very young yet.''

This time Gethryn colored with surprise and pleasure. In all their long and close friendship Braith had never before given him any other encouragement than a cool, ``Go ahead!''

He continued: ``Your curse thus far has been want of steady application, and moreover you're too easily scared. No matter what happens this time, no knocking under!''

``Oh, I'm not going to knock under. No more is Clifford, it seems,'' Rex added with a laugh, as Clifford threw down his cue and took a step of the devil's quadrille.

``Oh! Elliott!'' he crowed, ``what's the matter with you?''

Elliott turned and punched a sleepy waiter in the ribs.

``Emile -- two bocks!''

The waiter jumped up and rubbed his eyes. ``What is it, monsieur?'' he snapped.

Elliott repeated the order and they strolled off toward a table. As Clifford came lounging by, Carleton said, ``I hear you lead with a number one at the Salon.''

``Right, I'm the first to be fired.''

``He's calm now,'' said Elliott, ``but you should have seen him yesterday when the green card came.''

``Well, yes. I discoursed a little in several languages.''

``After he had used up his English profanity, he called the Jury names in French, German and Spanish. The German stuck, but came out at last like a cork out of a bottle -- ''

``Or a bung out of a barrel.''

``These comparisons are as offensive as they are unjust,'' said Clifford.

``Quite so,'' said Braith. ``Here's the waiter with your beer.''

``What number did you get, Braith?'' asked Rhodes, who couldn't keep his mind off the subject and made no pretense of trying.

``Three,'' answered Braith.

There was a howl, and all began to talk at once.

``There's justice for you!'' ``No justice for Americans!'' ``Serves us right for our tariff!'' ``Are Frenchmen going to give us all the advantages of their schools and honors besides while we do all we can to keep their pictures out of our markets?''

``No, we don't, either! Tariff only keeps out the sweepings of the studios -- ''

``If there were no duty on pictures the States would be flooded with trash.''

``Take it off!'' cried one.

``Make it higher!'' shouted another.

``Idiots!'' growled Rhodes. ``Let 'em flood the country with bad work as well as good. It will educate the people, and the day will come when all good work will stand an equal chance -- be it French or be it American.''

``True,'' said Clifford, ``Let's all have a bock. Where's Rex?''

But Gethryn had slipped out in the confusion. Quitting the Café des Écoles, he sauntered across the street, and turning through the Rue de Vaugirard, entered the rue Monsieur le Prince. He crossed the dim courtyard of his hôtel, and taking a key and a candle from the lodge of the Concierge, started to mount the six flights to his bedroom and studio. He felt irritable and fagged, and it did not make matters better when he found, on reaching his own door, that he had taken the wrong key. Nor did it ease his mind to fling the key over the banisters into the silent stone hallway below. He leaned sulkily over the railing and listened to it ring and clink down into the darkness, and then, with a brief

but vigorous word, he turned and forced in his door with a crash. Two bull pups which had flown at him with portentous growls and yelps of menace now gamboled idiotically about him, writhing with anticipation of caresses, and a gray and scarlet parrot, rudely awakened, launched forth upon a musical effort resembling the song of a rusty cart-wheel.

``Oh, you infernal bird!'' murmured the master, lighting his candle with one hand and fondling the pups with the other. ``There, there, puppies, run away!'' he added, rolling the ecstatic pups into a sort of dog divan, where they curled themselves down at last and subsided with squirms and wriggles, gurgling affection.

Gethryn lighted a lamp and then a cigarette. Then, blowing out the candle, he sat down with a sigh. His eyes fell on the parrot. It annoyed him that the parrot should immediately turn over and look at him upside down. It also annoyed him that ``Satan,'' an evil-looking raven, was evidently preparing to descend from his perch and worry ``Mrs Gummidge.''

``Mrs Gummidge'' was the name Clifford had given to a large sad-eyed white tabby who now lay dozing upon a panther skin.

``Satan!'' said Gethryn. The bird checked his sinister preparations and eyed his master. ``Don't,'' said the young man.

Satan weighed his chances and came to the conclusion that he could swoop down, nip Mrs Gummidge, and get back to his bust of Pallas without being caught. He tried it, but his master was too quick for him, and foiled, he lay sullenly in

Gethryn's hands, his two long claws projecting helplessly between the brown fists of his master.

``Oh, you fiend!'' muttered Rex, taking him toward a wicker basket, which he hated. ``Solitary confinement for you, my boy.''

``Double, double, toil and trouble,'' croaked the parrot.

Gethryn started nervously and shut him inside the cage, a regal gilt structure with ``Shakespeare'' printed over the door. Then, replacing the agitated Gummidge on her panther skin, he sat down once more and lighted another cigarette.

His picture. He could think of nothing else. It was a serious matter with Gethryn. Admitted to the Salon meant three more years' study in Paris. Failure, and back he must go to New York.

The personal income of Reginald Gethryn amounted to the magnificent sum of two hundred and fifty dollars. To this, his aunt, Miss Celestia Gethryn, added nine hundred and fifty dollars more. This gave him a sum of twelve hundred dollars a year to live on and study in Paris. It was not a large sum, but it was princely when compared to the amount on which many a talented fellow subsists, spending his best years in a foul atmosphere of paint and tobacco, ill fed, ill clothed, scarcely warmed at all, often sick in mind and body, attaining his first scant measure of success just as his overtaxed powers give way.

Gethryn's aunt, his only surviving relative, had recently written him one of her ponderous letters. He took it from his pocket and began to read it again, for the fourth time.

You have now been in Paris three years, and as yet I have seen no results. You should be earning your own living, but instead you are still dependent upon me. You are welcome to all the assistance I can give you, in reason, but I expect that you will have something to show for all the money I expend upon you. Why are you not making a handsome income and a splendid reputation, like Mr Spinder?

The artist named was thirty-five and had been in Paris fifteen years. Gethryn was twenty-two and had been studying three years.

Why are you not doing beautiful things, like Mr Mousely? I'm told he gets a thousand dollars for a little sketch.

Rex groaned. Mr Mousely could neither draw nor paint, but he made stories of babies' deathbeds on squares of canvas with china angels solidly suspended from the ceiling of the nursery, pointing upward, and he gave them titles out of the hymnbook, which caused them to be bought with eagerness by all the members of the congregation to which his family belonged.

The letter proceeded:

I am told by many reliable persons that three years abroad is more than enough for a thorough art education. If no results are attained at the end of that time, there is only one of two conclusions to be drawn. Either you have no talent, or you are wasting your time. I shall wait until the next Salon before I come to a decision. If then you have a picture accepted and if it shows no trace of the immorality which is rife in Paris, I will continue your allowance for three years more; this,

however, on condition that you have a picture in the Salon each year. If you fail again this year, I shall insist upon your coming home at once.

Why Gethryn should want to read this letter four times, when one perusal of it had been more than enough, no one, least of all himself, could have told. He sat now crushing it in is hand, tasting all the bitterness that is stored up for a sensitive artist tied by fate to an omniscient Philistine who feeds his body with bread and his soul with instruction about art and behavior.

Presently he mastered the black mood which came near being too much for him, his face cleared and he leaned back, quietly smoking. From the rug rose a muffled rumbling where Mrs Gummidge dozed in peace. The clock ticked sharply. A mouse dropped silently from the window curtain and scuttled away unmarked.

The pups lay in a soft heap. The parrot no longer hung head downward, but rested in his cage in a normal position, one eye fixed steadily on Gethryn, the other sheathed in a bluish-white eyelid, every wrinkle of which spoke scorn of men and things.

For some time Gethryn had been half-conscious of a piano sounding on the floor below. It suddenly struck him now that the apartment under his, which had been long vacant, must have found an occupant.

``Idiots!'' he grumbled. ``Playing at midnight! That will have to stop. Singing too! We'll see about that!''

The singing continued, a girl's voice, only passably trained, but certainly fresh and sweet.

Gethryn began to listen, reluctantly and ungraciously. There was a pause. ``Now she's going to stop. It's time,'' he muttered. But the piano began again -- a short prelude which he knew, and the voice was soon in the midst of the Dream Song from ``La Belle Hélène.''

Gethryn rose and walked to his window, threw it open and leaned out. An April night, soft and delicious. The air was heavy with perfume from the pink and white chestnut blossoms. The roof dripped with moisture. Far down in the dark court the gas-jets flickered and flared. From the distance came the softened rumble of a midnight cab, which, drawing nearer and nearer and passing the hôtel with a rollicking rattle of wheels and laughing voices, died away on the smooth pavement by the Luxembourg Gardens. The voice had stopped capriciously in the middle of the song. Gethryn turned back into the room whistling the air. His eye fell on Satan sitting behind his bars in crumpled malice.

``Poor old chap,'' laughed the master, ``want to come out and hop around a bit? Here, Gummidge, we'll remove temptation out of his way,'' and he lifted the docile tabby, who increased the timbre of her song to an ecstatic squeal at his touch, and opening his bedroom door, gently deposited her on his softest blankets. He then reinstated the raven on his bust of Pallas, and Satan watched him from thence warily as he fussed about the studio, sorting brushes, scraping a neglected palette, taking down a dressing gown, drawing on a pair of easy slippers, opening his door and depositing his boots outside. When he returned the music had begun again.

``What on earth does she mean by singing at a quarter to one o'clock?'' he thought, and went once more to the window. ``Why -- that is really beautiful.''

Oui! c'est un rêve, Oui! c'est un rêve doux d'amour.
La nuit lui prête son mystère,
Il doit finir -- il doit finir avec le jour.

The song of Hélène ceased. Gethryn leaned out and gazed down at the lighted windows under his. Suddenly the light went out. He heard someone open the window, and straining his eyes, could just discern the dim outline of a head and shoulders, unmistakably those of a girl. She had perched herself on the windowsill. Presently she began to hum the air, then to sing it softly. Gethryn waited until the words came again:

Oui, c'est un rêve --

and then struck in with a very sweet baritone:

Oui, c'est un rêve --

She never moved, but her voice swelled out fresh and clear in answer to his, and a really charming duet came to a delightful finish. Then she looked up. Gethryn was reckless now.

``Shall it be, then, only a dream?'' he laughed. Was it his fate that made him lean out and whisper, ``Is it, then, only a dream, Hélène?''

There was nothing but the rustling of the chestnut branches to answer his folly. Not another sound. He was half inclined to shut his window and go in, well satisfied with the

silence and beginning to feel sleepy. All at once from below came a faint laugh, and as he leaned out he caught the words:

``Paris, Hélène bids you good night!''

``Ah, Belle Hélène!'' -- he began, but was cut short by the violent opening of a window opposite.

``Bon dieu de bon dieu!'' howled an injured gentleman. ``To sleep is impossible, tas d'imbeciles! -- ''

And Hélène's window closed with a snap.

Two

The day broke hot and stifling. The first sunbeams which chased the fog from bridge and street also drove the mists from the cool thickets of the Luxembourg Garden, and revealed groups of dragoons picketed in the shrubbery.

``Dragoons in the Luxembourg!'' cried the gamins to each other. ``What for?''

But even the gamins did not know -- yet.

At the great Ateliers of Messieurs Bouguereau and Lefebvre the first day of the week is the busiest -- and so, this being Monday, the studios were crowded.

The heat was suffocating. The walls, smeared with the refuse of a hundred palettes, fairly sizzled as they gave off a sickly odor of paint and turpentine. Only two poses had been completed, but the tired models stood or sat, glistening with perspiration. The men drew and painted, many of them stripped to the waist. The air was heavy with tobacco smoke and the respiration of some two hundred students of half as many nationalities.

``Dieu! quel chaleur!'' gasped a fat little Frenchman, mopping his clipped head and breathing hard.

``Clifford,'' he inquired in English, ``ees eet zat you haf a so great -- a -- heat chez vous?''

Clifford glanced up from his easel. ``Heat in New York? My dear Deschamps, this is nothing.''

The other eyed him suspiciously.

``You know New York is the capital of Galveston?'' said Clifford, slapping on a brush full of color and leaning back to look at it.

The Frenchman didn't know, but he nodded.

``Well, that's very far south. We suffer -- yes, we suffer, but our poor poultry suffer more.''

``Ze -- ze pooltree? Wat eez zat?''

Clifford explained.

``In summer the fire engines are detailed to throw water on the hens to keep their feathers from singeing. Singeing spoils the flavor.''

The Frenchman growled.

``One of our national institutions is the `Hen's Mutual Fire Insurance Company,' supported by the Government,'' added Clifford.

Deschamps snorted.

``That is why,'' put in Rhodes, lazily dabbing at his canvas, ``why we seldom have omelets -- the eggs are so apt to be laid fried.''

``How, zen, does eet make ze chicken?'' spluttered the Frenchman, his wrath rising.

``Our chickens are also -- '' a torrent of bad language from Monsieur Deschamps, and a howl of execration from all the rest, silenced Clifford.

``It's too hot for that sort of thing,'' pleaded Elliott.

``Idiot!'' muttered the Frenchman, shooting ominous glances at the bland youth, who saw nothing.

``C'est l'heure,'' cried a dozen voices, and the tired model stretched his cramped limbs. Clifford rose, dropped a piece of charcoal down on his neighbor's neck, and stepping across Thaxton's easel, walked over to Gethryn.

``Rex, have you heard the latest?''

``No.''

``The Ministry has fallen again, and the Place de la Concorde is filled with people yelling, A bas la Republique! Vive le General Boulanger!''

Gethryn looked serious. Clifford went on, speaking low.

``I saw a troop of cavalry going over this morning, and old Forain told me just now that the regiments at Versailles were ready to move at a minute's notice.''

``I suppose things are lively across the river,'' said Gethryn.

``Exactly, and we're all going over to see the fun. You'll come?''

``Oh, I'll come. Hello! here's Rhodes; tell him.''

Rhodes knew. Ministry fallen. Mob at it some more. Been fired on by the soldiers once. Pont Neuf and the Arc guarded by cannon. Carleton came hurrying up.

``The French students are loose and raising Cain. We're going to assist at the show. Come along.''

``No,'' growled Braith, and looked hard at Rex.

``Oh, come along! We're all going,'' said Carleton, ``Elliott, Gethryn, the Colossus, Thaxton, Clifford.''

Braith turned sharply to Rex. ``Yes, going to get your heads smashed by a bullet or carved by a saber. What for?

What business is it of yours?''

``Braith thinks he looks like a Prussian and is afraid,'' mused Clifford.

``Come on, won't you, Braith?'' said Gethryn.

``Are you going?''

``Why not?'' said the other, uneasily, ``and why won't you?''

``No French mob for me,'' answered Braith, quietly. ``You fellows had better keep away. You don't know what you may get into. I saw the siege, and the man who was in Paris in '71 has seen enough.''

``Oh, this is nothing serious,'' urged Clifford. ``If they fire I shall leg it; so will the lordly Reginald; so will we all.''

Braith dug his hands into the pockets of his velveteens, and shook his head.

``No,'' he said, ``I've got some work to do. So have you, Rex.''

``Come on, we're off,'' shouted Thaxton from the stairway.

Clifford seized Gethryn's arm, Elliott and Rhodes crowded on behind. A small earthquake shock followed as the crowd of students launched itself down the stairs.

``Braith doesn't approve of my cutting the atelier so often,'' said Gethryn, ``and he's right. I ought to have stayed.''

``Reggy going to back out?'' cooed Clifford.

``No,'' said Rex. ``Here's Rhodes with a cab.''

``It's too hot to walk,'' gasped Rhodes. ``I secured this. It was all I could get. Pile in.''

Rex sprang up beside the driver.

``Allons!'' he cried, ``to the Obelisk!''

``But, monsieur -- '' expostulated the cabby, ``it is today the revolution. I dare not.''

``Go on, I tell you,'' roared Rhodes. ``Clifford, take his reins away if he refuses.''

Clifford made a snatch at them, but was repulsed by the indignant cabby.

``Go on, do you hear?'' shouted the Colossus. The cabman looked at Gethryn.

``Go on!'' laughed Rex, ``there is no danger.''

Jehu lifted his shoulders to the level of his shiny hat, and giving the reins a jerk, muttered, ``Crazy English! -- Heu -- heu -- Cocotte!''

In twenty minutes they had arrived at the bridge opposite the Palais Bourbon.

``By Jove!'' said Gethryn, ``look at that crowd! The Place de la Concorde is black with them!''

The cab stopped with a jolt. Half a dozen policemen stepped into the street. Two seized the horses' heads.

``The bridge is forbidden to vehicles, gentlemen,'' they said, courteously. ``To cross, one must descend.''

Clifford began to argue, but Elliott stopped him.

``It's only a step,'' said he, paying the relieved cabby. ``Come ahead!''

In a moment they were across the bridge and pushing into the crowd, single file.

``What a lot of troops and police!'' said Elliott, panting as he elbowed his way through the dense masses. ``I tell you, the mob are bent on mischief.''

The Place de la Concorde was packed and jammed with struggling, surging humanity. Pushed and crowded up to the second fountain, clinging in bunches to the Obelisk, overrunning the first fountain, and covering the pedestals of the ``Cities of France,'' it heaved, shifted, undulated like clusters of swarming ants.

In the open space about the second fountain was the Prefect of the Seine, surrounded by a staff of officers. He looked worn and anxious as he stood mopping the perspiration from his neck and glancing nervously at his men, who were slowly and gently rolling back the mob. On the bridge a battalion of red-legged soldiers lounged, leaning on their rifles. To the right were long lines of cavalry in shining helmets and cuirasses. The men sat motionless in their saddles, their armor striking white fire in the fierce glow of the midday sun. Ever and anon the faint flutter of a distant bugle announced the approach of more regiments.

Among the shrubbery of the Gardens, a glimmer of orange and blue betrayed the lurking presence of the Guards. Down the endless vistas of the double and quadruple rows of trees stretching out to the Arc, and up the Cour la Reine, long lines of scarlet were moving toward the central point, the Place de la Concorde. The horses of a squadron of hussars pawed and champed across the avenue, the men, in their pale blue jackets, presenting a cool relief to the universal glare. The Champs Elysees was deserted, excepting by troops. Not a civilian was to be seen on the bridge. In front of the Madeleine three points of fire blazed and winked in the sun. They were three cannon.

Suddenly, over by the Obelisk, began a hoarse murmur, confused and dull at first, but growing louder, until it swelled into a deafening roar. ``Long live Boulanger!'' ``Down with Ferry!'' ``Long live the Republic!'' As the great wave of sound rose over the crowd and broke sullenly against the somber masses of the Palace of the Bourbons, a thin, shrill cry from the extreme right answered, ``Vive la Commune!'' Elliott laughed nervously.

``They'll charge those howling Belleville anarchists!''

Clifford began, in pure deviltry, to whistle the Carmagnole.

``Do you want to get us all into hot water?'' whispered Thaxton.

``Monsieur is of the Commune?'' inquired a little man, suavely.

And, the devil still prompting Clifford, he answered: ``Because I whistled the Carmagnole? Bah!''

The man scowled.

``Look here, my friend,'' said Clifford, ``my political principles are yours, and I will be happy to drink at your expense.''

The other Americans exchanged looks, and Elliott tried to check Clifford's folly before it was too late.

``Espion!'' muttered the Frenchman, adding, a little louder, ``Sale Allemand!''

Gethryn looked up startled.

``Keep cool,'' whispered Thaxton; ``if they think we're Germans we're done for.''

Carleton glanced nervously about. ``How they stare,'' he whispered. ``Their eyes pop out of their heads as if they