

# ARTS AND LETTERS

By ST. GEORGE RATHBORN,  
Author of "Little Miss Millon," "The Spider's Web," "Miss  
Caprice," "Dr. Jack's Widow," Etc., Etc.

## CHAPTER I.

In the Street of the Steen.  
It all happened in quietude. A lawyer and Charlie Stuart found romance to believe that seldom in romance history had a more singular adventure befallen a pilgrim than in London (had chanced to his lot on this same day.

The morning was half spent and faint found himself in a state of a loss to know what he should turn to next for amusement. He had fished in the markets, discovering new and attractive features constantly. Had been through the various museums and picture galleries—in short, exhausted the rights of old Annapur, who was on the point of considering his excess, which would occur just as soon as he could make up his mind where his next objective point was.

Then it was that Fortune, decked, took the pilgrim from London, and changed the whole course of his existence. As he stood there idly twining his blonde curls, he located a man, who, in the fact that this woman was leaning down upon him at a swift pace, some one whose quick, energetic movements recalled to him the name of Annapur, hawk pouncing upon its prey, someone who held out a hand in eager greeting and seemed bubbling over with genial spirit.

Start welcomed him eagerly. His name was Barney—Artemus Wycherly, Claude Harbary—and his profession that of an amateur collector of novelties. It was simply astonishing, the weird fancies generated in that erratic brain of his, each of which seemed an other mad fancy, a grotesque and, it must be confessed, sometimes ludicrous proposal.

"Just the man of all England I wanted to see. Consider it lucky, women, by Jove, to run across you in this manner. I'm going to let you sympathy and co-operation in a little scheme I have on foot. My lord, you can depend upon it, I won't take 'no' for an answer, so consider yourself engaged as the second conspirator."

"Well, I don't know about that; but what wild, half-brained scheme have you on foot at present?"

"Charlie, I've run across the noblest theme for a startling drama. Why, look at the charming and interesting surroundings here! It is not wonderful that an imaginative and original man should be attracted to arouse the ghosts that had lain here for long centuries."

"What you hear is only the gurgle of the river, and the rustle of the feet. At the foot of the worn stone staircase we descended there is a trap in the solid stone, through which a guide with a pocket watch condemned man met his fate. Yes, it was only the Trefful Hour you heard crying bravely for more victims."

"Perhaps you are right; but it sounded wonderfully like a human voice, and it was not a ghostly cry. Thus in these dungeons lay, each individual one seeming to surpass its predecessor in awful agonies."

"Long has the outline of the story, the dusty documents he had hastily reviewed, being naturally aware of the contemplation of such horrors. 'Oh, I am glad of that,' said Artemus, eagerly, 'for you will be better prepared to accompany me to those same dungeons manly, quite reassured the other went on."

"Well, have you heard any story or rumor that is circulated here through certain circles of a modern man in the Iron Mask supposed to be incarcerated in the Steen dungeons?"

"I remember hearing some little talk about such a thing, but really never pursued the matter further."

"Briefly, then, it has long been whispered that there was recently, and may still continue to be, a secret prisoner confined in the Steen dungeons under a yonder massive pile of masonry—a man whose fate is forever hidden behind an iron mask that is secured by a padlock. I am of the conclusion that this man of mystery might be some troublesome heir to the German throne, or else a son of Louis Napoleon. Think for a minute what wonderful possibilities this vista opens to the dramatist! It lends quite enough to inspire the duldest imagination, and it is not in vain that those ancient dungeons personally, as no one has ever done before, with the secretly avowed purpose of learning whether I may find any clue to a truth, or the mere fabric of a Dutch legend. And you will accompany me, my boy, out of pure philanthropy, to share in the excitement of the discovery, touching a suspicious bottle package he carried under his left arm—or in support me in case of an escape."

Charlie Stuart could not say him nay; he really had nothing on foot worthy to kill time and waste his money. He was of the opinion that it was worth something to have the pleasure of his society for a space of time, he hesitating, he fell.

And thus sauntering down the street of the Steen, the two friends arrived at the shadowy entrance of the building whose history stretched back centuries into the dim past.

Together they entered, and other intelligentsia gazing upon the art treasures which lay within these ancient walls.

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ed their hearing, but faintly, grew more distinct. This was probably due to the fact that the lamb was advancing, he began to discern the dim outlines of a figure upon the ground.

As he drew closer he saw that it was a girl in a long cloak, and that she had hidden her face in her hands, as though in grief. He advanced, and as he approached she was con- jured up by the gloom.

One thing was very sure—when Artemus, in the earlier stages of their exploration, had been told that about, it had not been the gurgle of the greedy Sheildt gliding underneath the crypts and corridors, as though he had no conscience, but that in all probability, this lost explorer calling for help.

Well, that was all that had found her, she was in a position to render her the assistance she craved. After all, it had not been such a wild-goose chase, but he had believed in yielding to the opportunities of his adventurous comrade.

They advanced closer still. As yet the girl had no idea that she was not aware of his presence, or the biased answer to her prayers.

Her attitude of abandonment was most effective, and the cold, shivering girl, who thought what a charming picture she made there, overhelmed, not by grief, but by the terror of her situation.

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# Real Estate Exchange

Of Whitehead & Mitchell at the Exchange Bank, Birmingham, Mich.

The following is a partial list of farms, city and village lots and real estate generally which we have for sale. As our list is constantly changing, we request that parties who wish to see us do not look what we want in this list:

1. John McCarroll has a nice little farm of 100 acres in the town of Okemuh, Mich. It is well watered, has a good house, a barn, a well, and a good crop of fruit and vegetables. Price \$10,000. Terms easy.

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