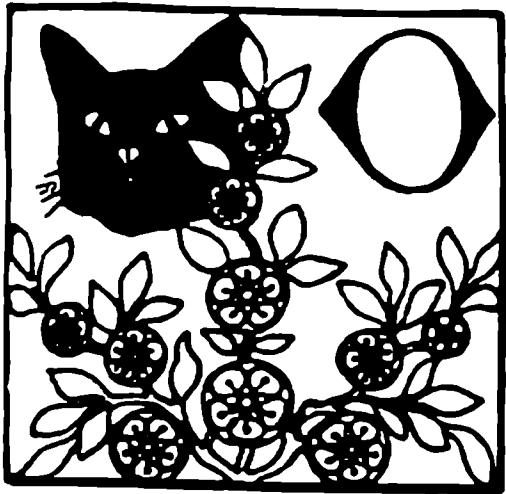


## An Andenken.

BY JULIA MAGRUDER.



ONE summer a party of American tourists was established at a small inn in the little village of Oetz situated in the beautiful Oetzthal, one of the upper valleys of the Tyrolean Alps. The Oetzthal is the deepest valley of the Inn, and the most notable for its wild scenery, its picturesque impressiveness, and its dangerous glaciers and falls.

Most of the party came for recreation, and the novel scenes and people were a sufficient supply for that demand — as was the glorious fresh air of the mountains for those who sought health.

The one member of the party who was a worker was, strange to say, the youngest of them all,—an American girl who had been studying art in Paris with great earnestness, and whose absorbing motive in coming here was to paint. She had dozens of schemes in her head, — landscapes, peasants, interiors, etc., — and so eager was she to begin that when she arrived at the little station after dark she felt herself consciously impatient of the beautiful moonlight through which her drive to Oetz was taken, and eager for morning to come.

She was very tired, however, and slept long, and when at last awakened by her cousin, who was up and dressed before her, her first impulse was to run to the window and look out.

“Stop, Ethel, you shall do nothing of the kind!” exclaimed her cousin Florence. “That is just what I have come to prevent. I am going to stand guard over you while you take your roll and coffee, and then drop the curtains and make you promise not to lift them when I leave you to dress.”

Ethel, keen for anything that would enhance the flavor of the delicious treat in prospect, gave the promise, and had kept it faithfully when Florence returned, later, to take her out on a tour of inspection. The young girl had equipped herself in her walk-

ing costume,— corduroy skirt, flannel blouse, scarlet *beret*, and stout boots,— and was ready for anything when her cousin led her from the room. So eager was her own search for the picturesque that she ignored the fact that the one or two people she encountered in going through the house might have a similar interest, which must have been abundantly gratified at the lovely vision which she made, with her golden hair twisted under the red *beret* and her lovely face aglow with expectation.

Before the front door was opened Florence produced a silk handkerchief, which she tied firmly over her companion's eyes, making her promise not to make any effort to remove it until she should be given leave. Laughing delightedly and showing brilliant teeth between a pair of fresh young lips, Ethel obediently consented to be led by the hand, up a steep hill, to be faced round in a certain position, and then to have the handkerchief whisked off, with a cry from Florence of:

“ *There, now!* ”

For some seconds the girl did not speak as she gazed about her. She was standing in the center of a sort of court, which formed a plateau on the crest of the hill. All around this court were low and rudely constructed houses, whose front surfaces presented a mass of decorations, indescribably brilliant. The plaster, which seemed very smoothly and firmly made, was painted or stained in various colors as a background; and upon these surfaces were painted pictures of sacred subjects, the drawing and coloring of which were crude and fantastic beyond description, though the decorative impression was most picturesque and effective, especially with the added embellishment of the brilliant blooming plants which overflowed the boxes placed across every window. Petunias, pinks, sweet peas, poppies, geraniums, and many other plants were here massed in a riot of colors, and long sprays of vine fell down and fringed the borders of the pictures below. Every available wall space was covered by one of these pictures — the favorite subjects being the “Annunciation,” the “Adoration of the Magi,” the “Birth of Christ,” and constantly repeated representations of the “Holy Family.”

Most of the houses had two stories, and there was also a box containing the blooming plants and vines fastened over every door;

and as every plant seemed at the very height of its bloom and perfection, and every picture seemed as clean and free from weather stains as if just painted, it is no wonder that Ethel received the impression so common with those who first see this brilliant spectacle.

“What is it for?” she said. “I never saw anything so decorative and brilliant, but I did not know it was any great gala day. Why didn’t you tell me? And what day is it?”

“No day at all; or, rather, no gala day,” said Florence.

“Then what have they done this for?”

“For religion’s sake, or beauty’s sake, or a mixture of the two, I suppose.”

“You don’t mean to say that they keep it like this all the time?”

“Yes, I do; until the frost kills the flowers, at least, and even then the pictures remain.”

“And is all this done by these ignorant peasants?” asked Ethel, flushed with the delight of this new and strange impression.

“Of course. I should think you could see that the painting and drawing, at least, were of peasant origin.”

“It is terrific in a way,” said Ethel, scrutinizing with a professional squint, which sat very prettily on her charming face, a picture of the Holy Family which happened to be nearest to her; “and yet,” she went on, “there’s feeling in that — quite wonderful feeling! If that Virgin were not such a fright, she would really be quite beautiful. Do you see what I mean?”

“Well, hardly,” said Florence, with a smile.

“Of course not! but I do mean what I say. The tender feeling of that face and figure are now completely subject to the grotesque form and crude color which the poor ignorant painter must have suffered from acutely — for he had a beautiful ideal in his mind when he did that.”

“Well, you are even more knowing in art than I gave you credit for,” said Florence, “if you can make that out. It seems to me to resemble nothing so much as one of the jointed dolls, made of wood, and painted with three colors, — white, black, and red, — which used to be the delight of my infancy.”

“I see that resemblance,” said Ethel seriously; “but I also see something else — very different. I wonder who does these things.”

“I have inquired,” Florence answered, “and I find that every generation has its own local artist, who makes it a profession to do these decorations, to paint the little wooden head-boards which serve as tombstones here, and also to paint the *andenken* which decorate the surrounding country. You will see them by the dozen.”

“*Andenken!* What is that?”

“It is a little picture-sign, which is set up by the family or friends of a person who is killed by any of the casualties which are so common here, from avalanches or from falling rocks, which, once misplaced and started, tumble down the mountain sides with increasing velocity, and kill anything in their way. The shepherds here, who so often spend the nights with their flocks on the mountain sides, are frequently killed by them, and then, too, the inhabitants of this region are sometimes overwhelmed with torrents of mud, ejected by the mountains — not a very pretty thing to paint! But you will see dozens of these little *andenken* all about here, as they are always erected on the spot of the disaster, and always consist of a pictorial representation of it, and the passers-by are supposed to say a prayer for the repose of the victim’s soul.”

“How strange! I think it seems rather sweet,” said Ethel dreamily.

“The custom may be; the pictures are anything else, as you will soon discover; although, since you admire this Virgin, there’s no telling what you will think.”

“I do admire it!” said Ethel, looking toward it again, “I should like to know something about the man who did it. Oh, to think what it would be to him, to teach him to use his fingers and realize his ideals — for that he has ideals I am certain. But where are all the people who belong to these enchanted houses? And why is it that we see nobody about?”

“They are all at work in the fields at this time of the day.”

“But their houses are open!”

“Of course! They are never closed, except when the weather makes it necessary.”

“But people could go in and steal!”

“Yes, they could, but it seems they don’t! One reason for

such uprightness may be that there is so very little to steal. Come and look into this one ! ”

They advanced to the door, which stood wide open, mounted the low steps, and looked in.

“ How charming ! How delicious ! ” exclaimed Ethel enthusiastically.

Florence answered with a laugh of amiable derision.

“ Where the charm and delightsomeness come in, I must say I do not pretend to see ! An old room, with its low rafters stained black with smoke, and a long earthenware stovepipe running through it and threatening the life of those who pass under it ! — an old stove surrounded by — I will admit — the brightest bits of copper, and brass, and tin that any housewife could boast — and a squatty little table piled up with carrots, and onions, and cabbages ! You, I suppose, will be wanting to paint it next ! ”

“ I want to paint it now, at once, this minute ! ” cried Ethel. “ My fingers fairly itch. I want to paint those copper cans, and brass kettles, and iron pots with exactly this light upon them — and those vegetables, too ! Oh, if I only could, while the impression is so fresh and strong upon me ! ”

“ Well, so you can ! you have only to fetch your easel and box and begin at once. ”

“ But I have not got permission, and there is no one here to ask ! ”

“ No matter at all about that ! These peasants are the most amiable beings on earth. I have come to understand them very well. Go to work and do your picture, and I promise to make everything right when the family returns. ”

Urged by Florence, Ethel, who was really longing to make this picture, ran back to the little inn for her box and easel, and was soon at work, sketching in her picture rapidly, with an absorbed face, while Florence sat by her and watched its progress and prepared herself to explain things on the return of the family.

Ethel sat at her easel in the center of the old, low-roofed room, her scarlet cap flung on the floor beside her and her golden head shining tenderly under the smoky rafters. Her picture seemed to grow by magic, and as she brought out the brilliant polish of metal on the old vessels, and the soft bloom of vegetation upon

the cabbages and carrots, etc., on the table beneath, she was feeling that triumph of achievement which sometimes comes to reward a painstaking artist for much discouragement.

So absorbed was she that she did not notice Florence when she rose, at the end of about two hours, and slipped quietly out of the house. She had seen the family returning, and she went to meet them. Her explanation, graciously and smilingly given, was received in the same spirit, and the two women and several children had soon filed noiselessly into the rear of the room and stood there, silent and delighted, watching the progress of the young artist's work. Florence had given them some coins, which to their frugal minds seemed an inordinate price to pay for the privilege accorded, and they were evidently in high good humor.

Presently Ethel, in a pause of her breathless interest, happened to turn her head and catch sight of them. She had a brush between her white teeth, but she smiled radiantly, and, taking it out, came forward to greet them. She felt, however, a certain hesitation as to how to deal with this strange people, and was glad to accept the word of Florence that she had made everything right, and to express her thanks, merely. At the same time she offered to stop work, in order that the details of her study might be put into more active use. But the women protested, declaring that dinner could wait until the picture was done, and showing such evident desire that she should not interrupt her work, that she consented to go on a little longer.

“But why does she not paint the Holy Mother and the Blessed Child, if she can paint like that?” said one of the women aside to Florence. “My nephew, Anton Wald, is a painter. He made the picture of the Holy Family on the outside of our house, but he would not paint such things as kettles and cabbages! He is the finest painter in the whole valley, though he is angry if I say so, and sometimes he throws down his brush and will not paint again for months, because he says the pictures in his mind are beautiful, but that they are hideous when he puts them down. That is only his strange way, though, for his pictures are most beautiful, as you can see from the one on my house, and all the new head-marks in the churchyard are done by him, and some most beautiful *andenken*. The picture of Frau Muhlau's son,



who was mashed under a great rock, is a lovely thing; the saints have mercy on his soul!" she added, reverently crossing herself.

"Where does this Anton live?" said Florence; "he would perhaps like to see the Fraulein paint. She has learned in the greatest painting-schools in the world, and has had the makers of the most beautiful pictures to show her how they did it."

"He will be here to get his dinner by and by. He has no parents or home, poor boy! he is a good lad, though queer at times, and I am glad to have him to live with me. Ah, here he comes now!" she exclaimed. "Hans ran to fetch him, I see, and has told him about the beautiful lady and the picture."

At the same moment there appeared, through the back doorway of the house, the figure of a tall young peasant, not dressed in rough farming clothes, but in a nearer approach to the holiday attire of the Tyrolean of that vicinity. He wore corduroy knee breeches, gray stockings, and a brown coat which flared over a red waistcoat and broad striped belt. The facings of his coat were also striped with red, as were his sleeves about the hands. On his head was the wide Tyrolean hat of tan-colored felt, faced with bright green, and trimmed with a bright green ribbon, with streamers falling behind.

As he noiselessly entered the room and stood gazing at the beautiful figure whose back was turned to him, he seemed not to see it, or be conscious of the others who were present, for his eyes fixed themselves eagerly on the canvas, and, as he looked, the eagerness deepened and strengthened, until it changed into a radiance of delight that seemed scarcely unmixed with awe.

As if unconscious of himself and his own act, he slowly removed his hat and stood bareheaded and as if spellbound in his place, his gaze fairly devouring the picture.

"The saints preserve us!" whispered the woman. "What a strange lad this Anton is! one would think it was the Holy Virgin herself, in the picture, instead of those old pans!"

"I don't think it is the subject that interests him so," said Florence, "I think it is because he has never seen painting like that done before. The Fraulein is a beautiful painter, and he — being a painter himself — would be quick to see that."

Ethel, meanwhile, painted on unconscious. She was always

wholly absorbed in her work when it was "going," and Florence knew that she had been as oblivious as sleep could have made her of all that had happened around her.

But now, becoming conscious of her cramped position, and also of the fact that she had successfully secured her impression, which was all that she had aimed at, she laid her palette down, and, rising, turned and looked about her. Satisfaction in her work had made her feel very content, and she remembered also her obligation to these good people, and the two things made her always beautiful smile now seem unusually winning, as it rested upon Anton, who had advanced nearer to her than had the others, and who now turned his worshiping gaze from the picture to the painter's lovely face.

So ardent, concentrated, eager was that gaze that Ethel flushed under it, looking lovelier than ever. Turning to the group who stood near Florence across the room, she seemed, by a look, to ask an explanation.

"It is the young painter who did the Virgin that you admired," said Florence in English.

Ethel's face lighted up with pleasure and recognition, and making a step toward him, she held out her hand, and said in her pretty, half-timid German :

"As we are both painters, we must shake hands."

But the young peasant, very white and startled looking, stepped back.

"It is not true," he cried. "Who has told you that I am a painter? I am only a wretched dauber and cheat. I will never touch color or brush again."

Ethel looked at him with a fervent gentleness.

"You are wrong," she said. "You will go to your work again, with a love and earnestness such as you have never known. You think my little picture here is good, and so it is, because I have been taught the way to do a thing; but I, with all my study, have never done and can never do such a picture as the one you have made on this house. The spirit and soul of creation has been born in you, and not in me. You have only to learn how and you will be an artist. I have already learned how, and I am only a workman. Listen," she went on eagerly, "I am going to stay



here all the summer, and I am going to give you a lesson every day. I can teach you all I know, and if you do as well as I expect, you will, after that, go to Munich and study, or to Paris. The time will come when you will offer me your hand, and I shall not dare to take it, as you have not dared now."

The group of peasants, now augmented by the arrival of two men, looked on in astonishment. Florence, comprehending both their wonder and the cause which had produced it, made a hasty explanation, and hurried Ethel away, helping her to gather up her belongings and to express her thanks.

Just as they were ready to go, the young girl, with a quick impulse, held out her little canvas to Anton, saying impulsively :

"I will give it to you. You can take it and study it carefully. It may teach you something. When you are a great painter you shall give me a picture of yours. And, remember, I shall expect you at the hotel to-morrow, to arrange for your first lesson."

That was the way it began,—this intercourse between the two young artists.

That evening, Ethel, looking more lovely than ever in a soft blue gown, with her hair loose about her shoulders, sat alone in her room writing, with a look of joy on her face. She wrote some of these sheets every evening, and sent them off by post, twice a week. She had written several pages with rapidity, and now paused and read them over with a look on her face which showed how much her own subject interested her. She took up her pen and went on :

"Now that I have described to you my wonderful young painter and his really remarkable mural work, I must tell you about his painting on the little wooden head-boards in the church-yard. Such a picturesque little church it is, perched on a steep cliff, overlooking the lovely valley through which the river winds, and beyond which the great mountains rise immeasurably high! There is a cunning priest's house near the church, with a fascinating old sun-dial on its walls (one never sees a clock here). This little house is also founded upon a rock — but, oh, how barren and empty it looks! and how lonely! You would be filled with pity to see it! The church-yard is the tawdriest thing you can imagine, with the graves hung about with bead flowers, faded

immortelles, and as many little images, and medals, and crosses as can be got together; but the awful thing is the head-boards! These are made of wood and every one is decorated with a picture of the departed and his family, the living members of which are kneeling around his dying bed, while the dead ones appear in a bank of clouds above. The horrible distortion of these figures, and the grotesqueness of both the earthly and heavenly garments, is something ghastly — and yet I could single out, every time, those painted by my young Anton, by that truly wonderful feeling and aspiration. Oh, I shall be proud of my pupil yet — and already his feeling for his teacher amounts to veneration. (You, sir, have never looked at me with such worshipful eyes, in your life!) I gave him his first lesson to-day, and it was a thrilling experience! He is going to take to it like a duck to water, and his love for beauty is absolutely touching. I saw him looking, with a sort of hungry delight, at the opal in my ring (my *dear* ring!) Its marvellous color changes were an evident feast to him. Oh, I am so glad Providence guided me to this place. My Anton is such an interest and impulse onward to me, and will help to beguile the long, weary, desolate, empty days — until you come!”

In due time there came an answer to this letter, and, in turn, an answer to that. And meanwhile every day Anton received a painting lesson, and advanced by strides. It was a deliriously happy life into which he had entered, and he seemed to others, and still more to himself, to be new made. The glow of health which came into his cheeks, and of fire into his eyes, made the strong young peasant suddenly develop a radiant beauty, which was so striking and extraordinary that Ethel could not resist such a model, and set to work to paint him.

She made a spirited and beautiful study of him on a small canvas, painting him full length, in his Tyrolean costume, with the black pointed hat, ornamented with its proud group of rare and perilously purchased little feathers, for Anton was a sportsman as well as an artist, and had won these trophies by his own skill and daring, and many was the votive offering, so procured, which he laid at his young teacher's feet. It was but natural that he should wish to make some return for the hours of patient instruction which she daily bestowed upon him.

So thought Ethel, but did her correspondent, perhaps, have, some other idea?

One day she got a letter from him which contained this paragraph:

“You want me to explain why it is that I always refer to your pupil as ‘poor Anton!’ It is truly because I pity him,—you most bewitching of women! My own blessed ownership of you makes my heart gentle to the rest of men—even including lowly Tyrolean peasants, who are, by circumstances, quite removed from you. And I wondered if it were only the dear opal ring which he looked at so hungrily that day. Do not forget that it is far less beautiful than the hand which wears it. In short, my own child, I would wish to put you a little on your guard—for this poor Anton’s sake!”

After this letter it seemed as if the serpent had entered into Eden, for a fear was in Ethel’s heart which she had never known before. Anton had lately been engaged in doing a portrait of her, and while she posed for him she gave him lessons. The ardor which she had thrown into this piece of work and the extraordinary success he was having with it came to Ethel’s mind now with a new and disturbing significance.

Next morning she got Florence to go to Anton with a message to say that she was not well and could not pose for him, so that he would have to work without her that day, in the little studio which they had improvised.

“But how can he work without his model?” asked Florence.

“Oh, he can go on with the hair to-day. I gave him a great lock of mine yesterday to paint from, when I had to leave. I wish I hadn’t!” she added, with a tone of sudden compunction.

Florence returned from her mission to say that Anton had decided not to paint at all that day, and was full of concern for his teacher’s illness. But again the next day Ethel did not go, but remained in her room writing page after page of one of those long letters. Anton passed her window and looked up at her. His face was flushed and eager, and very beautiful. In spite of all this, however, Ethel gave him a more formal bow than he had ever received from her before. He had become “poor Anton”

to her also, now, and she was doing her best to manifest her true sympathy for him.

The next morning when Ethel failed to come again, Anton went hunting. Florence, who saw him just as he was setting out, learned that he was going in search of a certain bird, whose wings Ethel had once expressed a wish to have for a hat. The capture of these birds was a somewhat dangerous enterprise, and when Ethel heard where he had gone she felt a vague alarm.

. . . . .

All this was long ago.

Now, when tourists go to the Oetzthal, as they do in far greater numbers than they did then, one of the sights pointed out is a certain *andenken*, high up the mountain side, done with an exquisite art, which separates it conspicuously from the rest of its class.

It has two sides. One is a fine portrait of a young Tyrolean peasant — a model of fresh and vigorous beauty, — and the other is a representation of the very spot on which it stands — not covered with verdure and flowers, however, but with a great mass of sliding snow, whose terrific rush downward is depicted with the power of a master hand.

Underneath there are a few words in German and in English, asking the passer-by to pray for the repose of the soul of Anton Wald.

It was painted, the tourist is told, by a young American lady, who spent a summer at Oetz, and was married immediately afterward. She had given painting lessons to the young peasant, and had left this *andenken* of him.

No record exists of the additional facts that when Anton's body was found the coveted bird was in his hand, and that in a little silk bag around his neck was a fair tress of shining hair.

This *andenken* Ethel carries in her heart.