

Cornishman, Michael Ossory, an artist of the greatest promise and a friend of Henry Lane's. He knows, although Téphany does not, that her father is out with the fishermen, and when the boat is wrecked and his body washed ashore on the following day, it is Ossory who takes charge of the child, and, accompanying her to St. Malo, sees her safely on the boat for England, where she is to live with an aunt. As the gangplank is being withdrawn Téphany flings her arms about Michael's neck and kisses him, and with that kiss there awakens in the minds of both, more strongly in Michael's, a recognition of what they may ultimately become to each other.

The next scene in the narrative occurs ten years later. Téphany has become a famous singer, but her voice has given out, and, complete rest being prescribed, has come with her companion to Pont Aven, partly because her Breton nature had always been yearned for the scenes of her childhood and partly to try and find out something about Ossory, who had dropped completely out of her life some years before.

After Téphany's departure from France she and Michael had corresponded until in one of his letters he had said, "In my next letter I shall have something very exciting to tell you. I have found what I have been hunting for for years. Between ourselves, my dear Téphany, I believe that I'm going to be prosperous; the broad highway to fortune is certainly in sight. I won't spoil an interesting story by dribbling it out in instalments. Wait for my next." That was the last. In vain Téphany wrote him; her letters were not returned, so she knew he had received them. When she felt sure that Ossory had no intention of answering her letters she wrote to Yvonne, the landlady of the inn at Pont Aven, and learned that he had left the place. Then, with a pang at her heart, she gave up and wrote no more. And now, when rest and quiet have been prescribed, Téphany turns naturally to the scenes of her childhood, with a longing to see the old places, the cemetery where her father and mother lie, and, strongest of all, a desire to find out what has become of Michael Ossory.

V

MR. VACHELL'S "THE FACE OF CLAY"*

Artist life has always been a favourite theme in fiction. Thackeray touches most delightfully upon it in *The Newcomes*; and from that time, through a series of novels culminating, as far as interest and charm go, in *Trilby*, the life of the artist, particularly in France, has seldom failed to hold the reader's interest. The neighbourhood of Concarneau, in Brittany, is the scene of Mr. Horace Vachell's latest novel, *The Face of Clay*, and his characters are taken from the two classes of people for whom the place seems to exist, the artists and the fisher folk.

The introductory chapter describes with great power a storm on the Breton coast. Among the anxious women on the mole is a girl of fifteen, Téphany Lane, daughter of an English artist whose French wife has died after a brief married life. With Téphany is a young

*The Face of Clay. By Horace Vachell. New York: Dodd, Mead and Company.

Pont Aven is little changed, and when Téphany makes herself known she is welcomed by her old friends. She asks Yvonne about Ossory and learns that he is in Pont Aven, that he is no longer poor, that he has money and does not have to paint for a living, but she also learns that he has never fulfilled the promise of his early years—he is a failure. More than this Yvonne will not say, though Téphany plainly sees there is something behind it all.

She meets Michael and finds him very much changed. She goes to his studio; he shows her first his pictures, in which there is no hint of failing skill, and then a plaster mask, the face of a girl, very beautiful, and with an elusive expression that baffles analysis. Téphany is convinced that the story of this mask contains the key to the change in Michael Ossory, but strong as is her desire that he should be frank with her, she respects his silence. It would not be fair to the reader to tell how she learns the secret or what it is, but the interest is well sustained; it is hard to lay down the book until the end is reached.

The story is delightfully written, and the people and places stand clearly before us. The subordinate characters are extremely well done, especially a couple of American artists who are summering at Pont Aven. Mr. Vachell has rendered their American slang with a correctness hitherto unknown among English writers, and which deserves commendation. Extremely vivid is his portrayal of the Breton temperament, its superstition, its love of the supernatural, its belief in the old legends, and all through the book is seen the appreciation and love of beauty which mark the true artist.

Mr. Vachell is best known in this country by his book about Harrow, called *The Hill*. It is only a writer of ability who can make the doings of schoolboys interesting to mature readers, but Mr. Vachell accomplished it. That *The Face of Clay* is as different as possible in theme and treatment only shows the great versatility of this author, who is beginning to take a place among the best writers of English fiction.

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