THE PAINTER OF PARMA;

— OR, —

THE MAGIC OF A MASTERPIECE.

"Yes!" broke in Madelon, who had followed and noted every word. "He dropped dead on the road, between Arganda and Madrid; and his last words were, "Save my papers and tell the King I was faithful to the last!" That was the friend of Father Paul and of the poor dear princess! And you may tell the rest, dear Lady Isabel. I only wanted Signor Zanoni to know that the king's messenger was a man whose word was to be trusted."

"And I thank you kindly for the information, good friend," said the painter, with a look of praise in his wonderful eyes that gave the old dame real happiness.

"Father Paul was greatly troubled and perplexed. He was on the point of returning to Italy, after an absence of between ten and eleven years, and he wished to carry back to the friends of the princess, if she had left any, word of her condition."

"Have you told the signor?" again broke in the duenna—and this time she certainly filled up an important gap in the story—"Have you told the signor that all this time Father Paul thought full sure that Prince Giovanni had been condemned and executed and that the poor, dear princess, believed the same thing to the day of her death?"

Isabel, at the first breath of Madelon's thought, had started guiltily; and she looked at Juan as though to ask him if she could have forgotten so important a fact. He caught her meaning, and shook his head.

"How could I have overlooked it?" she exclaimed, in a tone of self-reproof. "Dear old mamma, I thank you for reminding me of it. I should have thought of it before I had done, I should have spoken of it before. You must have wondered, signor, what could have kept the princess in Spain so long after her husband had been exonerated of all blame at a second trial, and her own son had ascended the throne of Parma."

"I certainly did think it very strange; and now I can only wonder how it happened that the unfortunate wife could have remained in such profound ignorance of a matter so nearly touching her life's chief source of joy and blessing."

"Ah," cried the irrepressible duenna, self-importance beaming in every shade and wrinkle, "there it is! The ugly, good-for-nothing Baron Rizzi—Matteo Rizzi—the bestiaccia—he was one of the chief of those who caused Giovanni's arrest and imprisonment. After the poor prince had died, at home, and in his bed, his heart broken with the belief that his wife and the precious little Steffano had been drowned in the sea—after that Baron Rizzi went to Spain and saw Father Paul and swore to him that Prince Giovanni's head had been cut off, and that his son Antonio had died on the road between Rome and Parma; probably, he said, killed by the deadly enemies of his father. This, of course, the priest told to the poor dear princess, and she believed it, and then it was that she left Toledo and went off to Madrid, being dreadfully afraid that they would be after her other—her youngest darling, to kill him! And neither Father Paul nor the princess ever discovered what a wicked lie had been told to them. Now, signor, do you wonder that the poor, dear mother didn't come back to Parma?"

He told her he could wonder no more, and after a brief pause Isabella spoke again:

"We left Father Paul troubled and perplexed," she said, "Finally he bethought him of the good piest in Madrid with whom Corsiglia had been wont to correspond, and he determined to write to him. He wrote a letter, and the new messenger took it, promising to deliver it and bring back an answer if one should be given him. The answer came. The princess and her son were alive and well, and that was all.

"With that Father Paul left Spain and returned to Italy, going first to Rome and then coming here. On his arrival he was taken sick and lay at death's door for many days; but he finally recovered, and it was during his convalescence that he chanced to overhear friends speaking of the Duke Antonio and of the death if his parents. Upon making enquiry he learned that the duke still believed that his mother and his little brother had been lost at sea on their way to France. As soon as he could do so he called upon the duke, and told him the whole story, as I have told you.

"That was fifteen years ago. As quickly as possible Antonio hired a large vessel at Genoa and fitted her out for Spain, and sent in her faithful agents to find his mother and his brother, and bring them back to his arms and to his heart. Alas! It would almost seem that a dark fate had set itself against the accomplishment of the duke's purpose. He waited and waited; and at the expiration of six months came word that his vessel had been cast away on one of the Balearic islands; but only one of his friends—of whom there were four—had been lost. However, it was almost a year, before the other three reached Spain, where, upon arriving at Madrid, they learned that the princess had died only a month before. With regard to her son, they could obtain no information that was satisfying. They were informed that she had had a son with her a few years before, and he might have been with her later, but he was gone then—had disappeared, leaving not a trace behind. They, searched through Madrid and through the region roundabout, and they also searched in Toledo and at Carthagena, but, alas! without avail. And they came home bootless.

"And now, signor, we come to Steffano. Four years passed after the return of the agents who had been sent on the search to Spain, and the duke had given up his younger brother as dead, when one day a young man presented himself at the palace, giving the page who waited upon him a card bearing the name Steffano Farnese. You can, perhaps, imagine the feelings of the duke when he saw that card. Without a moment's hesitation or delay he hastened to the presence of the new-comer. He had directed the page to conduct him to a private apartment, where the meeting would be secure from intrusion, and there he found him.

"Of course, signor, I can not picture the scene. The duke himself, had never tried to picture it. I can only speak from my own impressions, derived from Antonio's inadvertent remarks on the subject. I think he was disappointed—deeply so. He had evidently expected, or at least had hoped, to find a youth whom he could take to his heart at sight—a youth who should do honor to the illustrious name he bore. But— You need not that I shall tell you the rest. Knowing the duke's fine sense of honor and truth as you do; knowing his keen appreciation of all that is beautiful in art or in nature, together with his honest pride in rank and station worthily maintained—knowing all this, you can readily judge what were his thoughts and feelings at first sight of his new-found brother better than I can tell you. In fact, I could only tell you my impressions, and your own might be truer and more reasonable.

"There can be no question that the duke was disappointed, but he did not doubt—he could not doubt—the young man's story. He presented evidence that was conclusive—a packet of papers which his mother had given to him on her death-bed. They were letters—some of them Father Paul's, and two of them from her husband, written while he was in prison. Also, there was a paper in which she had written down her own sad story—a story he had never known until she was dead. She had been dead, he said, a little more than five years.

"And he had other papers—affidavits—solemnly sworn to under oath, all going to prove that the man holding them was the son of the Princess Farnese. Steffano said he dared not go to Italy, believing, as he did, that his father's whole family had been proscribed. After the death of his mother he had obtained a commission in the Spanish army, and for a little more than three years he had served in Valladolid. At length he had returned to Madrid, where one of the first men to meet him was the good old priest who had been his mother's friend—Father Romanza. The priest was surprised to see him.

"'Why surprised?' Steffano said he had asked.

"'Did not the agents from your elder brother find you? I sent them in quest of you only two or three months after your regiment left Madrid.' So the priest spake. Steffano made answer:

"'If they came to Valladolid they probably were told that I had been killed. I was in a sharp engagement with the bandits of the Espinar mountains, and was left behind, with a score or so more, severely wounded.'

"However, he had arrived at Madrid once more, and had fallen in with the good old priest, who told to him the wonderful story he had heard from the agents of Antonio, Duke of Parma. At first Steffano had not dared to believe, but Father Romanza was convinced, and he soon convinced the young man; and finally he resolved to come to Italy and see for himself if he had a brother living and if that brother were really the Duke of Parma. So the holy father had given him all the information he had to give, and had also made sure that his papers were right, and then he had set forth.

"When Antonio had heard the story and had examined the papers, he could not doubt. He took the new-found brother to his heart, giving him warm, generous love; giving him sumptuous quarters in his own palace, and setting apart a most liberal allowance of money for his support.

There! I believe that is all. Do you think of anything I have forgotten, good mamma?"

"No. I think you have done very well, my lady. Only" the duenna added, pausing for a moment at the end of her first sentence, "you will excuse me if I say that you ought not to have intimated to the signor that our good duke ever, for a single moment, doubted that Steffano was truly Steffano, and his true and lawful brother."

"The signor will understand," said the Princess, with a pleasant nod. "You will yourself admit," she went on, with an appearance of real deference "that the young man had not the features or the personal appearance of the Farnese."

"To be sure not!" the old woman answered quickly, and with kindling eyes. "How should he have, poor, dear boy! brought up from almost an infant among those frog-eating Spaniards!"

"It is the French who are said to eat frogs, dear mamma."

"Well, if the Spaniards don't eat 'em, it's because they're too lazy to catch them, that's all.

As the old lady gave token of subsiding after this retort, the painter ventured a question.

"Just how long ago was it that Steffano arrived here from Spain?"

"Just ten years and two months," was the answer; but not from Isabel's lips. While she had bent her head to think good Madelon had again come to the reseue. She had a wonderful memory for dates, and the family history of the Farnese was as familiar to her as her alphabet.

"Yes," answered the princess, finding Zanoni waiting for her to speak. "Madelon is right. Steffano arrived here in April, ten years ago."

"What was his age at that time?"

"Let me think. He was born in March, was he not, Madelon?"

"Yes, and just nine and twenty years ago on the last day of March that ever was."

"So," added Isabel, with a twinkling smile, "he must have been nineteen at that time."

"Did you ever think that he looked older?"

The princess started, and bent upon the painter's face a searching glance.

"Yes," she replied, after a little reflection. "I have thought so many times; though I noticed it more when he first came than I do now."

"Of course," said Zanoni, "the marks of age are never before, and never again, so apparent as in the years from eighteen to three or four and twenty.

"Signor Zanoni!" spake the duenna, with a look of stern severity on her ancient visage, "when you have lived as long as the Marquis Steffano has you will doubtless look every bit as old as he does. For my part, I think he bears his years wonderfully well."

"How old should you say I was, were the question put to you, dear lady?" our hero asked her, smiling pleasantly.

"Why, I should say, Signor, that you were five-and-twenty. You may be more than that, and you may be less. Such faces as yours are not easy to read. Have I made much mistake?"

"Nothing worth mentioning. I entered upon my thirtieth year two months ago and little more."

"Bless my soul!" the woman ejaculated. "How could I have made such a mistake? Ah! I see. It is these red and pink and sky-blue curtains of yours. They give the flush of youth to your face. But I can see it now, plain as can be. Yes, yes; I should say you were all of thirty."

"There, you dear old mamma," said Isabel, when she and Zanoni had done laughing. "Now do you go and put on your mantle and make ready for the street, and I will join you. Signor Zanoni wishes to confer with me for a few moments about the picture."

The duenna arose from her seat, and as she moved toward the door she passed in front of the easel. She had not looked at the picture since entering the room, but she did so now. She stopped and viewed it critically. Perhaps she thus occupied herself for the space of half a minute; then she turned her eyes toward the painter, and must have seen that he was regarding her anxiously.

What possessed her she could not have told herself—not at that moment—but it may have occurred to her later. As her eyes turned from the painter back to his work they chanced to fall upon the palette, with the arched row of neatly mixed and graduated gouts of color arranged on its outer edge, and not one of them disturbed! She raised her look again to the picture; she changed her position, and twisted her head, as though the light did not suit her, until at length she had gained what she sought—a light that would have exposed fresh paint, had there been any on the canvas.

The look she gave from that position was long and absorbed, but came to an end at last, and then, without a word, without another glance at the princess or the painter, she turned and left the room.

"My love! my life!" whispered Zanoni, grasping the dear one's hand, as soon as the duenna had gone. "What will you do? She suspects—how much? She is acting for others. Oh, I have much to say to you.! Can you put off, for a time at least, any exposure she may think she is able to make?"

"Yes, yes, my own! Do not be uneasy on my account. Look to yourself! Look to yourself! Oh, it is for you I fear. Not only the count may become your deadly enemy, but Steffano is to be feared. He is utterly without conscience, without remorse. Juan, what did you mean by your look when you asked me about his age? Oh, if you knew—"

"Hush! Madelon will be here directly. Come to-morrow. Don't let her prevent that. We may settle something then."

"I will come."

"God and all good angels guard and bless you."

"So from my heart, I pray for you, my own dear love, my true nobleman, my hero!"

Heart to heart, soul to soul—stanch, loyal, and true—their lips met once more in a fervent, repturous kiss as pure as the breath of heaven, and in a moment more the observant, watchful duenna was back in the room.

CHAPTER VII.

The distance from the studio of our painter to the royal palace was but short, and through one of the broadest and pleasantest thoroughfares at that, and when the weather was pleasant and the sun not too warm the princess preferred to walk, as she and her aged companion had now started to. They had taken but a few steps, and Isabel was thinking how she should introduce the subject she wished to speak upon, when she saw the Marquis Steffano on the opposite side of the way, where he appeared to have been standing, and now just starting to cross over and join them. She saw, and caught the duenna's wrist with a quick, strong grip, her whole frame quivering with excitement.

"Madelon! Do you see who is coming?"

"Steffano; yes."

"Do you love me?"

"Mercy! What a—"

"Hush! If you love me, speak not a word to him—breath not a syllable—of anything you saw or heard this afternoon in the painter's studio! I will explain everything—everything. You shall know the reason of whatever may have appeared strange to you. I know—I know that Steffano has asked you to watch me. Now, dear old mamma!—answer me, will you serve me or him?"

"You! you! Oh! my dear—"

"Hush! He is here! Remember, not a word until we have had opportunity for explanation."

Scarcely had the words been spoken when the marquis stepped upon the sidewalk by Isabel's side.

"Well! upon my word!" he burst forth, peering into her face with an evil gleam in his wicked, cruel eyes. "You have made a royal visit to the handsome painter!"

"Signor!" she replied, looking him steadily in the eye, though it cost her a desperate effort, "am I responsible to you for the manner or the place in which I pass my time?"

"To a certain extent, yes," he said, quickly. "As your cousin and a member of the family, whose reputation is at stake, I have a right to speak."

"Reputation!" replied the princess, with a force and power of bitterness that made him start. "If you will look to your own reputation I will look to mine. And now, marquis, will you leave me?"

"My company isn't agreeable, eh?"

"It is not."

"Since when, may I ask?"

"Since you have taken it upon yourself to wantonly offend and insult me."

"Madelon, does she treat the handsome painter in that cool and contemptuous manner?"

"I shall not answer you, marquis," returned the old woman with a burst of indignation. "You have no right to ask such a question."

"Oho! You are going over to the enemy, are you? Well, well," turning again to the princess "go on my beautiful cousin. We shall discover by-and-by how much is comprehended in the painting of the Saint Cecilia. Per Bacco! Such a model must be an inspiration in more ways than one!"

Something that flashed in the face of the princess as he thus spoke—something that flamed out and burned in her golden eyes—startled and impressed him. What possessed him—what should have turned his thoughts in that direction may not be told; but a moment later, with another wicked gleaming of the jet-black eyes, he looked over to the duenna and squarely, plumply asked:

"Good Madelon, did you see the picture of the Saint Cecilia before you left the painter's room?"

"Yes; I did!"

To Be Continued.

BALLOONS IN WAR.

A Naval Battle in Cloudland Nearly Thirty Years Ago.

The announcement that the balloon is destined to play a role in the present war between the United States and Spain recalls the aeronautic experiments made by the French during the great war in 1870 and 1871. As early as 1792 balloons were used for military signalling in France. But, in our times, during the siege of Paris by the German troops frequent attempts were made by Frenchmen to communicate with those inside the beleagured city, and to despatch men and matter from the capital by means of balloons. In Paris itself, under the direction of Postmaster Ramport, a balloon post and transport service was established for carrying persons and Governmental as well as private mail matter from the besieged capital. Among the public men leaving the city in this way, M. Gambetta will ever be remembered. Homing pigeons were also sent by this route to carry back news to Paris. A total of sixty-six balloons, according to Tisandier's "En Balloon Pendant le Siege de Paris," left the besieged city, and 168 persons, 10,194 kilograms of postal matter, including 3,000,000 letters, 363 homers, five dogs and two boxes of dynamite, were dispatched by the aerial route Of the balloons, fifty-two descended in France, five in Belgium, four in Holland, two in Germany, and one in Norway. Only five of them were captured by the Germans and two were never heard of, having been lost in the ocean.

Of all voyages of that time, however, none could compare for exciting and perilous incidents with that of the well-known aeronaut, M. Nadar, who left Tours for Paris with important Government despatches at 6 o'clock one fine December morning. At 11 he was in view of the capital on the Seine. While floating about 3,000 metres above Fort Charenton, Nadar suddenly discovered a second balloon on the horizon. Thinking it to be one leaving Paris, the French aeronaut at once displayed the tricolor of his country, and the other balloon responded by exhibiting the same flag. Gradually the two balloons approached one another, being drawn in the same direction by the same current of air. When they were separated by only a short distance several explosions were heard. The stranger commenced firing shots at Nadar's balloon—the "Intrepide"—which began to descend rapidly. The French flag had by this time been replaced in the other balloon by the Prussian colors. The Parisians, who were watching the affair from the forts below, and who now realized the true character and object of the last arrival, cried out that their plucky compatriot was lost. But they were mistaken.

Nadar had scrambled from the car up the network of his airship after the first shot of the enemy, to stop a hole made in the tissue. Presently he descended to the car as the balloon righted itself, and throwing out a quantity of ballast, caused it to rise higher and higher. Then, seizing his rifle, he fired shots with rapid succession into the Prussian, which suddenly split and sunk to the earth. On reaching the ground a detachment of Uhlans, who had been watching the combat from the plain, picked up the German aeronauts and rode off to the Prussian outposts. Nadar then alighted in safety within the girdle of the Paris forts meeting with an enthusiastic ovation for his victory in the first balloon duel.

AUSTRALIA'S MONTE CARLO.

One of the Most Extraordinary Gambling Schemes in the World.

The Australian race lottery in which Mr. Stodart, captain of the English cricketers, won £1,800 the other day is one of the most extraordinary gambling schemes in the world. It is best known as "Tattersall's Sweeps," and has been in existence for very many years at the Antipodes. The breath of scandal has never touched it, and the "drawings" for the bigger events are supervised by a committee of leading citizens and pressmen of the city in which it is at the time located.

George Adams, the organizer, makes it a business to get up sweeps on all the chief Australian races, and owing to the strong support he receives, is enabled to give prizes that even singly would be taken as modest fortunes by most people. It has been estimated that during a twelve-month £1,500,000 of the public's money passes through Adams' hands.

Take the Melbourne Cup, for instance. On this race the big sweep is 100,000 subscribers at £1 each, and the prize for drawing the horse that wins the cup is £30,000. The holder of the second horse ticket receives £7,500, and £2,500 goes to the third horse ticket. In addition, some thousands of pounds are distributed among those who get horses whether they start in the race or not, and there are hundreds of cash prizes, ranging from £100 to the modest "fiver" each. On this race there will be other sweeps at prices to suit the most humble contributor. Two consultations, as they are termed, of £50,000 at half a sovereign each, and one of 100,000 at five shillings each.

All through the year racing is going on in Australia where the horse is idolized, and nearly every week there is a sweep. As mentioned previously, no doubt has never been cast on the honesty of the organizer, who deducts 10 per cent from all winnings so as to recoup himself for his expenditure and exertion. He employs as many clerks as a large bank, spends thousands of pounds annually in advertising, and now holds in his possession nearly a quarter of a million pounds' worth of unclaimed prizes.

Legislation has time after time been put into force to wipe out "Tattersall's" but without success. The New South Wales government, by act of parliament, drove Adams from Sydney, and he without delay settled in Brisbane. After twelve months' location there the Queensland parliament did the same thing and Hobart was the next site removed to, and where the sweeps are merrily conducted now, under the patronage in person of the prominent citizens. The Australian postal laws compel that all letters containing value must be registered, and it has been stated that Tattersall's brings £10,000 per annum in revenue to the coffers of the colony where its offices are.

ANAEMIA, OR BLOODLESSNESS.

Its Victims are Pale in Color, Subject to Dizziness, Palpitation of the Heart and Other Distressing Symptoms.

From the Echo, Plattsville, Ont.

Anaemia, which literally means bloodlessness, is prevalent to an alarming extent among young girls, and young women of the present day, and is a fruitful source of "decline" and consumption. The symptoms of this trouble are many, but among the most noticeable are pallor of the face, lips and gums, shortness of breath on slight exertion, dizziness, severe headaches, weakness of the vital organs, palpitation of the heart, and dropsical swelling of the limbs. The more of these symptoms shown, the greater the necessity for prompt treatment. Among those who have suffered from anaemia and found a cure is Miss Emily Webb, a young lady residing near Wolverton, Ont. Miss Webb, says: —My illness first came on when I was about sixteen years of age. My complexion was a pale waxy color; I was troubled with general weakness, dizziness and palpitation of the heart. I was placed under medical treatment, but the medicine prescribed by the doctor did not appear to do me the slightest good. As time went by I was slowly but surely growing worse. I was unable to do any work about the house, and my limbs would tremble to such an extent at the slightest exertion that I could scarcely stand upon my feet. Then my stomach became so weak that I vomited almost everything I ate; I grew despondent and feared I would not recover. While in this condition a friend urged me to try Dr. Williams' Pink Pills, and I followed his advice. After I had used two boxes I noticed an improvement and my heart was gladdened with the hope of renewed health. At the end of six boxes my appetite had fully returned, and with it strength, color to my cheeks, and brightness to the eyes. I still continued taking Dr. Williams' Pink Pills until I had taken in all twelve boxes, and I can truthfully assert that I am healthier and stronger than I ever was before. I owe this to Dr. Williams' Pink Pills, and I would urge all girls who suffer as I did to give them a fair trial.

Dr. Williams' Pink Pills have done more to make strong, healthy, rosy-cheeked, bright-eyed girls than any other medicine ever discovered, and mothers should insist upon their daughters taking an occasional course of this medicine. Sold only in boxes, the wrapper around which bears the full name, "Dr. Williams' Pink Pills for Pale People." Offered in any other form the pills are substitutes intended to deceive.