THE PAINTER OF PARMA;

— OR, —

THE MAGIC OF A MASTERPIECE.

CHAPTER XII.

(Continued.)

The departure of Madelon left Zanoni in a state and condition of mind not to be easily described. He wished, after she had gone and the full crash of the possible calamity had fallen, that he had cast aside all reserve and questioned her more closely. As it was he knew next to nothing. Be sure, the princess had sent to him a hopeful, cheering word. He would have sent the same to her, though horrors untold had stared him in the face, and he knew that she was as brave as he was himself, so he could not build upon her show of courage.

He stood for a long time in the selfsame spot where the duenna had left him, gazing into vacancy, the picture of terror and consternation. More than once, when his thoughts had returned to him, was he strongly tempted to rush after the old woman and call her back, but the sober second thought restrained him. She knew nothing as yet of the love between the princess and himself. She suspected it; she may have become morally convinced that such, in truth, was the situation; but, it was very evident that Isabel had said nothing to her on the subject, and he felt that he had no right to do so. No, he could not seek further information at the hands of Madelon.

At that moment he wished the duke would come to him. Anything would be better than this terrible heart-rending, soul-harrowing suspense. Moreover, he was not at heart in fear of the man. There was something, he thought, too generous, too naturally just and noble in the heart and disposition of Antonio Farnese to suffer him to be feared by any honest well-meaning man. Yet he could not put away a certain dread of meeting the duke's benignant face with a look upon it of pained surprise, and, perhaps, of bitter blame.

"Aye!" he said to himself, as these thoughts occupied his mind; "he has the right to blame me, I am the stronger party, and by far the elder. I am a strong, experienced man; she a young, tender-hearted, trustful, inexperienced maiden. It should have been my part to hold my peace. I know the law, and though the extremest penalties of former times have been expunged from the statutes of the realm, yet the prohibition still exists in its old-time force. A patrician may not marry with a plebeian in Parma nor in Milan, nor in Venice, nor in Genoa. In fact, nor anywhere in Italy is the deed legally permissible. Oh, what shall be the end?"

"Isabel! My love! My life! If I could know how it is with thee at this moment! What has the duke said? What has Steffano done?"

As that last name fell from his lips he started as from an electric shock, and straightway began to pace to and fro. He could not stand still with thoughts of that sinister-visaged man in his mind.

"As I live," he said, "I believe the scoundrel has deep in his plotting heart a plan for the winning of Isabel's hand for himself! I am convinced it is so. But can the duke suffer such a thing? It does not seem possible— Yet,"—after a lengthy pause—"it may not be impossible. Antonio is likely to die childless. He can not, at all events, leave a son old enough to assume the scepter at his death. Steffano is his only near relative; and, villain as he is, I verily believe he would command a large following amongst the nobles of Parma. He would pander to their worst vices, and wink at their wickedness. Aye—in all that was low and vile and dissolute he would join with all his heart.

"Oh, heaven help the honest, pure-minded woman who shall fall into his life-long companionship! I would bear the dear one to the uttermost part of the earth before I would see her consigned to such a fate."

At this juncture he stopped in his walk, happening to stand as he did so directly before the canvas on his easel and, as his glance fell upon the picture a change came over him—a new direction to his thoughts.

"Oh, I shall go mad or bring myself into a fever if I go on in this way! I am as helpless at this moment as an infant. I must leave my love to the care of her kind-hearted guardian, and patiently wait for a sign. It will come, I know, when there shall be great need. She can find means of communication. Should Madelon fail her there are others who would gladly serve her. She has told me that."

He turned his face heavenward and breathed a fervent prayer to the Good Father, and then he took up his palette together with two or three light, delicate brushes. Ere long the marks of pain and suspense left his face; the healthful color returned to his cheeks and a wondrous light—a light almost divine—had chased the agony from his eyes. An inspiration had come to him, and while it endured all other things would be forgotten.

He was at work upon the face of St. Cecilia. Minutes passed; and hours; and with each passing period a new beauty sprang to life beneath the magic of his brush. He counted not the lapse of time; he thought not of fatigue. At noon he suspended work long enough to partake of the simple refreshments he had brought with him to the studio—wine, and bread, and fruit—for he well knew—nature told him—that, if he would draw heavily upon the mental powers, he must keep the body in healthful tune.

He disposed of the frugal repast; then gave a brief space to such rest as he could find; and then, refreshed and invigorated he resumed his work and worked until he was very weary. He could paint no more after that.

And while her dear lover is thus busily employed, his agony held in check, by the inspiration that has possessed him, turn we to the princess.

It was near the middle of the forenoon, and Madelon had just returned from her mission to the painter's studio.

"Madelon! Madelon!" she cried, with a sudden burst of strong emotion: "If I would have you serve me to the best of your ability, I must trust you fully and completely; and I know you will give me your sympathy—that you will be true and faithful. Dear old mamma, I love Zanoni, love him with all my heart and all my strength; and he loves me the same. I have never intended to practice deceit, but you yourself know how hard, how trying it is to show one's innermost heart to the world. Are you surprised, mamma?"

"Oh, my dear, dear mistress!" the duenna exclaimed, seeming not to have heard the question, "how I wish you had told me before. The signor had something to say to me which he could not say, because he dared not reveal to me his love."

"Never mind, Madelon. You will know next time. But you saw him, and you gave him my message just as I sent it?"

"Yes, dear lady." And thereupon the good old woman went on and gave a full and very fair account of her late interview. "He said I was to bear to you a blessing from him; and to tell you that he should suffer until he heard from you again."

"Oh, he shall hear. You will go, Madelon?"

"Yes, I will go. But, dear lady, I have not told you all. The signor sent something more. He asked me—so beseechingly!—would I give to you three words from himself; and I was to tell you that he sent them from his heart. I hesitated just a moment. Ah, I didn't know then what I know now. But I told him I would do it."

"Well, Madelon! you have not forgotten them?"

"Goodness mercy! I should think not. They were only these. Don't feel too hopeful, dear child, for they may disappoint you. What he said—his lips quivered, and I saw the gleam of moisture in his eyes—what he said was only this, nothing more: 'Faithful unto death!' I promised him I would give them to you, and then I came away."

"Thanks, dear old mamma! You don't know how much good these three little words will do me." The princess bent her head for a little time after she had thus spoken, her thoughts busy. By-and-by she looked up and laid her hand upon her duenna's arm.

"Madelon," she said, with an earnest, trusting look into the aged face, "I have a question to ask you and I know you will answer me frankly and truthfully. You once had a daughter?"

"Oh, a darling, dear lady! My little Nanette! I can see her now as I saw her in the long, long years ago, when she was a laughing, loving, happy child. She was only ten when she died."

"Madelon, suppose Nanette had lived to grow up, suppose she were now just as I am, and you loved her with all your heart and soul and strength; and suppose you should be told that she had a lover who wished to make her his wife; and, further, you should find that her own love was equal to his, and, in the end, suppose you should find that Juan Zanoni was the man of her choice—tell me, what would you do? What would you say when they came and asked for your blessing on their union?"

The old woman thought seriously, profoundly for several seconds. It was to her a subject of wondrous moment, and she considered it as such. At length she looked up, with a rich moisture in her eyes and a deep pathos in her voice, and made answer:

"As true as heaven! dear mistress, of all the men I ever knew I would choose Signor Zanoni for my daughter's husband; and I should feel it in my heart to praise God for his wonderful mercy!"

"Bless you, Madelon! Bless you! You have made me very happy."

"But, Princess," said the duenna, after a short pause, with a look of trouble in her honest face, "you must remember, Nanette would not have been a patrician. I don't know, my dear child, that I do right in speaking to you in such a manner respecting the painter, who is only a plebeian, and poor at that. I am afraid the duke, if he knew would blame me very much, and he might—ah, hark! It is the step of the duke himself."

A moment later a gentle rap sounded outside, and Madelon went to answer it. It was the duke, as she thought. She moved back and allowed him to pass in, and would then have followed and provided him with a seat, but he touched her gently on the arm and pointed toward the door. She took the hint and left.

The princess knew not what she had to meet, but she was prepared. Ever since she arose from her bed she had been thinking of the ordeal now at hand, and had been mustering strength to bear it patiently and bravely. A firm resolve to be entirely frank and truthful—to keep nothing back that her guardian had a right, or could have a legitimate desire to know—gave her support. She had been prepared to see a dark frown on his brow, and marks of stern disapproval, if not of anger, on his face; but as she now raised her eyes and gazed steadily upon him she found nothing of the kind. She found pain there and unrest, perhaps disapproval; but what there was of emotion in his brave, noble face was kindly and sympathetic.

All this she saw in a moment, and by the time old Madelon had gone and closed the door behind her, she had arisen to her feet and set a chair for her visitor close to her own. He accepted it with a nod of thankfulness; and, having waited until his ward had resumed her own seat, he followed her example.

And then fell a silence—a silence that became painful. The princess broke it. She saw that her guardian was suffering. He wished to speak, but knew not how to clothe the thoughts that struggled for utterance. And she saw, too, that his great love for herself—his kindness and his sympathy—tied his tongue. Seeing this, she felt that she owed it to him to break the ice. If there had been offense she had been the offender, and he only a sufferer. She would help him if she could.

"Dear guardian!" she said, laying a hand on his arm and looking up into his face with a depth of affection not to be mistaken, "you have come to speak with me about the confession I made to you last night. I asked you to give me time in which to rest and think and you kindly did it. I thank you for it."

"My dear child," returned the duke, with a faint smile creeping about the corners of his mouth, "I mustn't let you give me more credit than I deserve. In putting the subject off last evening I pleased myself fully as much as I pleased you, if not more. But we will speak now."

He took one of her hands and gazed upon her lovingly. A little while so, and he spoke. His lips quivered perceptibly in the beginning, and his voice threatened to break more than once, but he gained strength and self-control as he went on, though at no time did his speech become else than kindly and sympathetic.

"Isabel, my beloved child, you must listen to me willingly and patiently, for you should know that I can speak only for your good. You will first let me say, if I could have known what Steffano had planned to do I should not have suffered it. No, not on any account nor under any pretext whatever would I have suffered it to be done. But it is done and—"

"One moment," broke in the princess at this point. "Will you tell me if Count Denaro had any part in it?"

If the duke would have shielded the count, which he was evidently inclined to do, not being positive one way or the other with regard to his culpability, he should have answered promptly and without reserve, but instead he hesitated and took time to think, and when he would have spoken the keen-sighted girl stopped him.

"Never mind, dear guardian. You can answer me no further. You are not sure, but you have your doubts."

"I am sure of one thing, Isabel. If the count gave his consent, he had no hand in originating it."

"Well, well; it does not matter. Go on. I will listen patiently, for I know you love me, and wish me well."

"Oh, my blessed child! I can not tell you how much I love you. I can only say this: You are to me as my own flesh and blood. Were I your father—in fact, as in heart—I could not love you more truly, nor more deeply. But enough of that. You know it all. Tell me, how far has the love between you and Zanoni gone?"

"It has gone into our hearts and into our lives. Woman's love can go no further. If you ask, When will it end? I answer, If there may be a love of earth continued beyond the grave—never. If that is not to be, then our love will end when life or reason fails."

"Isabel! Are you serious? Do you mean all that your words would seem to imply?"

"Dear guardian," she answered, looking up into his face with the light of her great love filling her golden eyes, "I wish I could tell you how much I love my hero. May I ask you a question?"

"Certainly. Ask anything you please."

"You married young. You have told me about your wife. Do you remember how you loved her?"

The duke started, and a deep soul-sent sigh burst from his lips.

"You have told me that she was beautiful," the princess went on, after a little pause; "and I know she must have been pure and good or you would not have taken her for the partner of your life. Was she very noble?"

"Isabel," cried the duke quickly with strong feeling, "she was one of the noblest, truest women I ever knew."

"You did not quite understand me, sir. I meant, was she of very exalted rank by birth?"

Antonio caught his breath, and changed color. The princess had asked more than she dreamed of. She had touched something of which she had never held a suspicion. The father of the girl he had married had been one of the foremost men of his time—a brave and gallant soldier, and an experienced military commander—but he had been born under a cloud—illegitimate; and, though his patrician father had recognized him after he had won fame and station, the stain was upon his birth, and many knew it.

"Dear guardian, have I unintentionally wounded you? Oh, if I have I know you will—"

"Hush! It is nothing my child. My wife was of patrician birth—of ancient lineage. Her father I knew well. There was a misfortune in his life; but he was one of the best men that ever lived, and one of the bravest."

"Guardian, do you think your wife's accident of birth had anything to do with your love for her?"

"Ah! Isabel! Isabel! That will not do. You must not beg the question in that manner. I can tell you this: Had the lady whom I made my wife been of plebeian origin I should not have been permitted to marry her. It would have caused a social and civil revolution. No, no; you must not appeal to my affections. This is a case where calm reason and plain, practical common sense must hold sway. Do you not see—does not your own better judgment tell you—that you can not marry with Zanoni? Stop! Hear me through I implore you. I will not tire you if I can help it.

"Think, my child, of the position you occupy. Not only are you one of the most noble ladies in Italy—sole representative of one of the oldest and wealthiest families, yourself possessing great wealth and influence. Not only are you all this, but you are, furthermore, a representative of the reigning family of the realm. Do you know if I should be taken away and anything should happen to prevent Steffano from following me, your husband, if you were worthily wedded, might be called to the throne of Parma. Think of this, Isabel, and tell me if you will persist in the wild, fanciful scheme of love you have so unfortunately entered upon? Oh, I know you will not. You will pluck it out or you will be brave and true and live it down."

"Sir," she replied, with a sharp pain in her voice and the shadow of deep suffering on her lovely face, "the good Father in heaven has given me life, and the capacity to love, and He has so constituted me that my love is my life. When I love I love with all my heart, and that love is no more the creature of my will than is the breath I breathe, which I could not stop if I would. My love for Zanoni is more than my life—more than the life of my body; it is a part of myself—it has become my heaven on earth. Ask me to give up my life, and I would do it sooner than give up my love. I said my love was more than my life. I meant, in this, Juan's life has become a part of my own, and what would kill one would strike down both. If it were not the death of the body it would be that worse—that more dreadful death—the death of all that makes life worth living—a lifelong agony and lamentation! Oh, do you—can you—bid me do this?"

"Oh! My child! My child! What can I say? What can I do?" So the duke exclaimed, in bitter anguish of spirit. She was his darling; his pride; the one thing in the world he deeply, heartily loved. Marriage with the plebeian meant social death and banishment from Italy. That he could not endure. He must find a way to crush out the evil at once, and forever.

He had reached out to take his ward's hand, and was on the point of speaking further, when a quick, sharp rap sounded upon the door. He recognized it instantly. It was the summons of his page, Filippo, and he was wanted in his place at the head of the council.

"Isabel! I must leave you. The affairs of state will not wait. Before I go I know you will give me a solemn promise that you will not, from this time, see Zanoni, nor write to him, until I have seen and spoken with you again. You will not refuse me that."

"I shall not see him nor write to him?"

"That is what I ask."

"And I give you the promise."

"Ah! I do not promise that I will not send my faithful Madelon to give him cheer and comfort!" the princess said to herself after the duke had gone.

(Continued.)

THE SENSATIONALIST.

"She is one of the women who would be willing to have a murder committed upon her door-step for the sake of the notoriety and commiserating sympathy it would bring to her."

The speaker was a physician, and the subject of his remarks a young and attractive woman, who was merely a type of the sensationalist class.

The sensationalist is a common figure in our midst. She it is who tells of an ordinary incident that has befallen her in such a manner that she shines in the light of a heroine. Her illnesses are a little different and more painful than the ailments from which other people suffer. In speaking of the affection of a friend for her she refers to it as an undying love. Her whole life is surrounded with a halo of romance and coloring that may be delightful for her, but that is certainly both amusing and annoying to the spectator.

The sensationalist craves sympathy, and will have it at any price. Her little annoyances assume gigantic proportions as she narrates them to an often-bored listener. She is positively jealous of an event in which she is not concerned, and resents any attention or sympathy which her friends may bestow upon any other than herself. And when trouble touches her ever so lightly, she has a grief-stricken expression that proclaims to the world at large, "Was there ever sorrow like unto mine?"

One wonders what method of expression the sensationalist will have left with which to show genuine sorrow, when it does come to her with a crushing blow. Perhaps then, all her superlatives exhausted, she will at last be dumb. But it seems hardly possible that any joy or grief can ever affect her to such an extent that she will actually forget herself and cease to pose.

This is not an exaggerated sketch. We may at least draw one lesson from the weaknesses of our sensationalist. It is not to bemoan and wail aloud against fate when comparatively unimportant troubles visit us. This habit of thus complaining is more easily acquired than one guesses. He is strongest who suffers silently. And when one must cry out, let it be at the great grief, not at the petty annoyance. Then he will find ready sympathy, and not the annoyed incredulity that greets him who has cried "Wolf" so often that now his appeal is of no avail.

THE SUMMER HUSBAND.

Now Dolly's home again—dear me!
My rest and peace are o'er;
I cannot dash my garments off
And drop them on the floor.

No more I throw my papers round;
My smoking I restrain;
To neatness I am tightly bound,
Now Dolly's home again.

UNABLE TO WALK.

A Distressing Malady Cured by the Use of Dr. Williams' Pink Pills.

From the Hartland, N.B., Advertiser.

Right in our own village is reported another of the remarkable cures that make Dr. Williams' Pink Pills so popular throughout the land. The case is that of Mrs. E. W. Millar. The Advertiser interviewed her husband, who was glad to relate the circumstances for publication, that others might read and have a remedy put into their hands, as it were. "For five years," said Mr. Millar, my wife was unable to walk without aid. One physician diagnosed her case as coming from a spinal affection. Other doctors called the malady nervous prostration. Whatever the trouble was, she was weak and nervous. Her limbs had no strength and could not support her body. There was also a terrible weakness in her back. Three months ago she could not walk, but as a last resort, after trying many medicines, she began to use Dr. Williams' Pink Pills. Improvement was noted in a few days, and a few weeks has done wonders in restoring her health. To-day she can walk without assistance. You can imagine her delight as well as my own. We owe her recovery to Dr. Williams' Pink Pills and I recommend them for any case of nervous weakness or general debility."

Mr. Millar is part owner and manager of one of our lumber mills and is well known throughout the country.

Dr. Williams' Pink Pills cure by going to the root of the disease. They renew and build up the blood, and strengthen the nerves, thus driving disease from the system. Avoid imitations by insisting that every box you purchase is enclosed in a wrapper bearing the full trade mark, Dr. Williams' Pink Pills for Pale People.

NOT TO BE FOOLED.

Now, jest you go right along; you needn't stop here, said Farmer Hayfork, authoritatively. I don't want no lightnin' rods.

I am not selling lightning rods, responded the sleek-looking peddler, whose sudden appearance at the gate had aroused the ire of Farmer Hayfork.

I don't keer what yer sellin', replied the farmer. I don't want it, an' won't take it, and that's all there is about it. I know the tricks of you city sharpers. I read the papers, I do. You can't catch me on any double-baco-action pumps, or any self-working churns, or patent Egyptian corn fresh from the pyramids—not much; and I don't want to take any mowers on trial, either, and sign a receipt fer it and have it come back as a ninety-day note fer $10,000. No, sirree. And you can't buy my farm, either, and then have me buy it back at a big advance, because some confederate of yours comes along and offers twice what you gave fet it. Nixy! I'm no chicken. Now clear out.

I only want——

Oh, yes; you only want to get my name to anything at all, so you can make a note out of it. I'm up to all such tricks. I read the papers, I do.

I only want to show you our new patent reversible hens' nests.

What on airth is them?

It's an ordinary hen's nest, only it reverses itself every time a hen lays an egg, and drops the egg into a basket below.

What good is that?

Can't you see? The hen turns round to look at the egg, but it ain't there and she concludes she didn't lay any, sits right down and lays another one, and so on. Only $50.

By gum! Gimme a dozen.

WOMEN FACTORY INSPECTORS.

The Home Secretary of England lately reduced the authority of women factory inspectors to initiate prosecutions for breaches of the factory acts, though it was not charged that they had abused the power. He has now refused to appoint a woman inspector for the potteries, though a large proportion of the workers are women and girls, and they often become afflicted with blindness and paralysis in consequence of the lack of proper sanitary precautions. The London Women's Signal says: "Where the physical troubles of female workers are concerned it is fully proved that it is desirable to have a woman inspector, for they will speak to her with a freedom and readiness that they will not use toward a man. Hence, it would seem desirable to give the women potters this aid and protection."

But when a deputation waited on the Home Secretary, to urge the appointment of a woman as inspector, he objected that "anything in the nature of dual control between the woman and the man inspector would be to be deprecated; and that he would not contemplate making the woman subject to the authority of the man." A contingent of workers blinded by the industry were brought up to see the Home Secretary, but he refused to receive them.

PLEASURE, THEN BUSINESS.

My wife is a financier; I told her we hadn't money to go to the seashore.

Well?

When I came home at night, she had sold all our furniture and had the trunks packed.

NOT WHOLLY HATEFUL.

Did you recommend to Marie that country place where you were last summer?

No; I was tempted to but I didn't.

AGREED TO.

Cumso—Snickers is a dry joker.

Cawker—in the sense of always being thirsty, yes.