

THE PAINTER OF PARMA; — OR — THE MAGIC OF A MASTERPIECE.

"And now, my dear Henri, perhaps you begin to see what I am coming at. What is there in Count Denaro's mental or moral qualities to satisfy the intellectual and artistic cravings of such a nature? With all his good qualities—and they are many—he is in the whole, really ignorant. Even in those branches which go to the making up of good plebeian education he is lacking. Of art he has no conception. I heard him, only a few days ago, in conversation with a lady, expressing the wonder that any one could find more beauty in Correggio than was to be found in one-half the studios of Parma. Not long since I heard the princess ask him his opinion on a point which she thought might be open to question. It was this: 'Whether to the people who are to follow in succeeding generations, the conquest of Rome by Atilla was a blessing or otherwise,' and she went on, with fire and fervor in her speech, to paint the condition of Rome as the great conqueror found it, and the condition of the great empire when his influence had done its work. In the midst of one of her glowing sentences Giuseppe stopped her and asked her to tell him who and what this Atilla was that she had been speaking about. 'Think of it! No; if you had seen the look she gave him, as I saw it; so full of pity, almost of contempt. If you had seen you would not ask me why I thought she would never love him—at least, as such a woman must love the man whom she would choose as the sole partner of her life.'"

"I understand, Paulo." After this they moved on a few paces, when Vavalla stopped again with his hand on the other's shoulder. "Paulo!" he said, looking curiously into the handsome, boyish face of his companion. "Were you aware that Denaro had seriously objected to the visits of the princess to Juan Zanolini's studio?"

"Yes, I heard him speaking of it with the Marquis Stefano." "What do you think of it?" "I?" "Yes."

"What have I to do with thinking on such a subject?" "Why, one who has made such a study of the lady's character as you seem to have done, must have thought upon the subject; and, most likely formed an opinion."

Alavado first smiled, and then looked serious. At length, after a little reflection, he said: "Henri, if Juan Zanolini were a patriot, even though he were poor as the poorest, I honestly believe the Princess Isabel di Varona would choose him for her husband in preference to any other man I ever knew."

"But you would not fear for her as the situation is?" "That is beyond me, Henri. I hold it to be forbidden ground. Come, our friends in the general's box will be impatient."

And with this the twain moved on and spent the remainder of the evening until the curtain fell, with those who had called them from their former position.

On the morning of the following day the Marquis Stefano arose none the worse for his slight debauch of the previous afternoon. He was used to excess; and, though creeping toward the middle age, his frame was of that tough and enduring fiber that can bear long-continued infractions of nature's laws without serious reprisal. With such constitutions, when the break comes it falls with a crash, the outrage revenged without waiting or warning.

His chief aim was to keep his brother in ignorance of his manifold shortcomings, and in a measure he succeeded. He had eaten his breakfast, and was upon the point of going in search of old Madelon, the duenna, when, in one of the many halls of the ducal palace, he met his brother face to face; but if he felt a touch of fear it was quickly gone. The duke met him with a kindly smile, extending his hand with a cheerful, "Good-morning!"

Antonio Farnese, Duke of Parma, was more than a good-looking man. His presence was grand and imposing. He was fully six feet in height, of perfect form, and massive; his face, though somewhat stern and uncompromising, was yet kindly and human. Justice was his strong characteristic, and never had there been a prince on the throne of Parma who possessed that virtue more emphatically and entirely. Though only eight-and-thirty his dark-brown hair was freely touched with silver, the cares and trials that had done it having also drawn deep lines of thought upon his broad, full brow and about his firm and resolute lips. His garb was rich, but not a thing put on for show, if we except the brilliantly gemmed star upon the breast of his purple velvet doublet.

"Steffano, you are the very man I was thinking of as you came in sight. I have a curious question to ask you." Now, ordinarily, when the good duke had a question for the consideration of his younger brother it had to do with some act or event of his life which he could wish should not be opened up for inspection; but it was never approached in the spirit which was apparent in the present instance. When his grace wore that warm smile he could have nothing unpleasant in his thoughts, so the marquis smiled back in response, and said he would be happy to answer any question as best he could.

beat interests of our fair cousin, the Princess Isabel."

"My dear brother—if I may speak so familiarly—"

"Yes, call me brother—and Stefano, if you would try to give me a brother's love!"

"Oh, my lord! Can you doubt my love? Heaven grant that you do not mean what your words imply!"

"I did not mean so much as that. I meant that you should let your life show your love—that your presence should be to me a pleasure. But let it pass. I ought not to have introduced it. You were about to answer me."

"I would have said, your grace, that you did me but simple justice when you gave me credit for the deepest interest in all that concerns that dear girl."

"I know it, Stefano. I know I may trust you in that; and, further, I think your judgment will be good. You know what the painter, Zanolini, is doing for me?"

"Yes."

"It has long been a wish of mine—I may admit that it had become a passion—to have a picture of St. Cecilia that should bear the portrait of Isabel; and when I had seen the work of Zanolini, I resolved that he, of all the artists I knew, was the man to do it. The result is, he is doing it; and of course the princess goes to his studio, in company with her old nurse and duenna, to give the necessary sittings. Now what I wish to ask you is this: Can you see anything improper in the arrangement? Can you conceive of any possible evil resulting from it?"

"Good heavens!" cried the marquis, with a tone and look of utter surprise and astonishment. "What do you mean? How improper? What evil? I do not understand you."

"Good! You give me great relief, brother. And not I will tell you why I asked the question. Count Denaro is possessed by a terrible fear—a real bugbear—on account of the affair; and he has the affront to tell me, to my face, that scandal may arise from it."

"Did he say—scandal?—that any human being in Parma would dare to breathe a breath of scandal against Princess Isabel's fair fame?"

"Perhaps," said the duke, after a little thought, "I go too far. I think he denied the scandal, but upon my word his explanation was worse still. He feared, as near as I could understand him, that Isabel would fall in love with the painter! Aye, that was it. He had the impudence to intimate—if he did not say it in so many words—that the dear girl might be losing her heart to the handsome artist!"

Steffano laughed uproariously. He said he could not help it. A more ridiculously insane and monstrous idea could not be thought or conceived of.

"In the first place," he said, when he had got over his mirth, "think what our fair cousin is; think of her pride, her self-respect, her dignity, and, above all else, think of her position as your ward—almost your daughter. Bah! Such a thought of her is an outrage upon common sense. In the next place, think of the painter himself. He is a woman-hater. I believe he was never known to smile upon a female sinner. At any rate, I have heard so. Pshaw! Tell Denaro he is a fool, and if he would ever win Isabel's tender regard tell him not to let her suspect that he is capable of entertaining such a thought."

"Just what I told him. I thank you, Stefano, for your hearty support, and I shall go on as I have begun, until the picture is finished."

And with this the brothers separated, the duke to wend his way to his chamber of audience, there to begin the manifold labors and cares of the day, while the marquis went in search of Madelon Sandoz.

He found her in her own apartment, and alone. He was careful to close the door behind him as he entered, and to draw the duenna to a far part of the room, so that persons passing to and fro in the hall might not overhear.

"My dear old Madelon," he commenced, in a gentle, fondling tone, and with a look of affectionate regard. "I have just left my brother Antonio, after having held with him a long and serious conversation on the subject of the Princess Isabel, and her visits to the studio of the painter. I will tell you the honest truth. Count Denaro has been fretting and fussing until he has made the duke really uneasy. You, of course, would do all in your power to preserve our dear princess from even the appearance of evil."

"Oh, my Lord Marquis! I would give my life for the dear, blessed child!"

"Then tell me—and tell me truly and honestly—have you ever seen anything that would lead you to think or suspect that the handsome painter was exercising an undue or dangerous influence over the dear girl's heart?"

The old woman was startled. She remembered the last scene in the painter's studio as it had presented itself to her gaze on entering suddenly from the waiting-room, and she remembered, too, how long she had been kept waiting after she was sure the painting had been given over for the day. She called to mind her young mistress in tears, and her trying to hide them, and the strange look in the painter's beautiful face, and in his weird, witching eyes. She saw it all again, and she felt it her duty to tell it frankly as it had occurred.

Steffano was watching her—reading correctly every phase of her thoughts and feelings—watching her with an eagerness and intentness well-nigh painful, and his heart had leaped with a triumphant bound as he saw her about to speak—when a change came suddenly over the scene.

A silvery melodious voice, in an old

familiar love ditty, came floating on the morning air—came nearer and nearer—the voice of the Princess Isabel!

CHAPTER IV.

Very fortunately for the Marquis Stefano on that bright and balmy morning, Madelon had thrown the casements of her two windows wide open, being desirous to receive and enjoy every atom of heaven's pure, fresh air, and to inhale the fragrance from a thousand bursting buds and blossoms that were growing to regale life in the well-kept beds and parterres of the garden below. The chamber was on the second floor of the palace, and the two windows overlooking the garden opened out upon broad balconies, as did all the other windows on that floor.

Steffano was well acquainted with the arrangement of these balconies, and most likely, well versed in the use of them for clandestine purposes.

"Madelon!" he said, when he had recognized the voice of the princess and had become assured that she was in search of her old duenna, "she must not see me here! I care not for myself, but only for you. She might blame you for addressing me; and she might report you to the duke! Mercy! I would not have that happen for the world!"

The simple-minded old domestic did not suspect the lie. She believed fully in her own danger, and was troubled accordingly; hence, when the marquis proposed a way of saving her, she embraced it eagerly.

"Madelon! Not a word to the princess of my having been here! Not a whisper, if she should suspect or imagine such a thing, deny it flatly and vehemently. Will you do this?"

She gave her promise.

"Remember, you have something to tell me. I shall see you again. Ah!"

The sweet warbler was very near, and in a few moments more the door would be opened. With a quick, cat-like movement Stefano slipped out upon one of the balconies; then stepping upon the rail of the balustrade, he leaped lightly to the balcony of an adjoining apartment, then to another, where a stout grapevine afforded him easy descent to the earth.

Meantime our fair heroine had entered her duenna's chamber, bright and blithe. She had come to tell her old friend and companion that she would visit the studio of the painter when the sun had reached its meridian height. This she had told, and had then gone to look out into the garden. Something was on her mind, of which she would speak, yet difficult of approach. By-and-by she turned back into the room and laid her hand on the woman's arm.

"Sit down, mamma. I have something to say to you."

Madelon did as she was bidden, and the princess sat close in front of her, holding one of her wrinkled hands in both her own.

"Dear old mamma," the girl said, with a look of earnest, prayerful entreaty, yet full of honest love. "I have wondered what you thought when you came into the painting-room yesterday. Did you notice my face? Tell me the truth. If you love me—if you care for me the least bit in the world—do not, I beseech you, conceal the least of your thoughts from me. Did you particularly notice my face?"

"Be sure I did, my lady. How could I help it? You were as pale as pale could be, and your cheeks were wet with tears. Oh! my precious child, what was the matter? What had Signor Zanolini been saying to you?"

"Ah! Did you see his face, Madelon?"

"Of course I did."

"How did it impress you?"

"I can not tell you. It was weird and strange; and his great, staring eyes had a burning in their far-away depths that was terrible to see."

"Dear old mamma," cooingly and lovingly, "what did you think of it? Tell me truly. I know you must have thought something."

"Isabel, I thought at first that you two must have had a quarrel. Perhaps you had said something, then he had replied, then you had grown impatient and he had scolded you, for I have been told he is very particular—some say notional—with those who sit to him. But—but, dear lady—"

"Well, mamma, but what?"

"When I saw how you spoke to him before we came away, and how he spoke to you, I knew there had been no such thing as I had thought."

"How did I speak, and how did he?"

"Why," replied the truthful old duenna, hesitating a few seconds for want of a fitting simile, "why—just for all the world like a couple of turtle-doves!"

The princess broke into a merry rippling laugh, not more at Madelon's speech than at the sober sincerity of her look.

"Oh, you dear old darling! What put such an idea into your head? It is too funny for your sober tongue. But let it pass. When you had seen and heard us speak, as you have said; what did you then think?"

"Truly, my child, I didn't know what to think. But—perhaps—"

"Yes! But! Perhaps! Go on with the rest. Perhaps what?"

"Why," with a desperate effort, "I thought of what Count Denaro said to me; and that—"

"Madelon!"

"Oh, Holy Mother! What have I done! It is nothing, Isabel, nothing at all, only my foolish tongue running wild."

But the keen-witted princess was not to be put off thus. The poor old duenna had exposed so much that she could not escape the telling of the whole, and, finally, by dint of close questioning and putting leading questions at that, the eager girl drew the truth from her. Count Denaro had sought her privately and asked her to be very watchful while in the painter's studio, and, if she possibly could, she should not suffer the princess to go from her sight.

And when the indignant girl demanded to know the count's reason for this the poor old creature, now driven from her last refuge of subterfuge, blurted out:

"He was afraid the handsome painter might steal your heart away from yourself, so that he could never, never have any more hope of winning your love. Oh, Isabel, my sweet, beautiful child! You will never give up the noble count, so wealthy and honored, for the sake of a poor painter, plebeian and insignificant!"

"Oh! Did the noble and wealthy count hire you to say that to me?"

"No, no, Isabel; indeed he did not. All he said was that I should—should—"

"Go on, Madelon. That you should what?"

"Oh, Isabel, you are cruel to make me repeat that. And yet it was nothing. Really and truly it was nothing at all."

But the princess thought she might herself be the best judge of that, and, finally she succeeded in drawing forth the last item she sought. The count

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To be Continued.

THE RED CROSS AND ITS WORK

Something About the Society that Stained By Every Civilized Nation. The Battle of Solferino, 1859 between the allied French, Sardinians and the Austrians, one of the most sanguinary conflicts of modern times. Twenty thousand Austrians and eighteen thousand allies were killed and wounded. To Henry Dunant, a Geneva philanthropist who witnessed the battle, seemed that the wounded, not the soldiers who met instant death were real unfortunates. The military hospitals, over-burdened, proved inadequate; most of the wounded were saved by timely help, died upon the battle-fields.

Monsieur Dunant and other volunteers did all they could to relieve suffering, but it was a scanty little. The Geneva asked: What can be done to mitigate the horrors of war? He dwelt upon the problem until he was able to suggest a plan of action; and this he set forth in a pamphlet called "A Sovereign Solferino."

He advocated an international society composed of volunteer nurses, should hold themselves in readiness to follow armies and aid the wounded of any nation—protected by all neutrals and non-combatants, engaged in works of mercy.

With this pamphlet the Red Society practically began. Dunant's project was warmly supported by his own Swiss government, when he went to Paris, seeking to organize a convention of the societies found that there also the project was known.

On the very day after its publication, Madame de Staël, sister of the Broglie, caused the Red Cross to be placed in her drawing-room. Visitors who asked their mistress lady made such convincing arguments both Paris society, and the Prussian were soon committed to the Red Cross principle.

The international conference organized the society was held in Geneva in October, 1863. By the following year thirteen governments had officially approved the society's purpose. To-day every nation sustains it. The good done in thirty years may be gauged by the single fact that, during the Prussian war, the German society expended thirteen million dollars. But the story does not end here. Monsieur Dunant had won his fight for the world, he had his own share in the world's business ventures, and fortune, and he learned what a hard task it was to manage.

Happily his misfortune came to an end. The Dowager Empress of Russia and the Federal Council of Switzerland granted him pensions, which were supplemented by a sum of money contributed by citizens of Switzerland.

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