

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

CHAPTER X. (Continued.)

The first person whom the duke met after leaving his ward was the page who had attended at the door of the drawing-room during the evening.

"Filippo, do you know if either Henri Vallia or Paulo Alavado is in the palace?"

"They are both gone, sire."

"All the guests are not gone?"

"All except the Count Denaro. He is with the marquis."

"What in the world sent them off so early? Bless my soul! Refreshments had not been served. What was the matter?"

The boy started to speak and stopped. Finding his master waiting he started again, but broke down as before.

"Filippo, have I ever given you occasion to fear me?"

"Oh, no, my lord! You have given only occasion to love you with all my heart."

"Then why do you fear to answer the question I ask?"

"It was, my lord, because I—" he cast a quick sweeping glance around the hall, and presently went on, with fear and trembling, "because—I was afraid of another."

"You mean Marquis Steffano?"

"Yes, my lord."

"Now, boy, tell me plainly what he had to do with it, and in return I promise you that you shall suffer not one atom from him, either in word or deed."

The page had been present and witness of the passage between the marquis and the two young nobles of whom the duke had spoken; he was, moreover, possessed of a considerable degree of dramatic power; and he told the story so faithfully that, had his hearer been present at the meeting, he could not have seen it more vividly. He had not a question to add. He simply listened to the end, and, having assured him once more that he had nothing to fear, dismissed him.

After that he would have avoided his brother, and he sought to do so. He did not wish to see him until he had slept and had opportunity for thought, and if possible he would have held another interview with his ward before he answered any questions of Steffano's asking.

But he was not to escape. Being in his own mind well assured that if the guests had all departed, his brother would have betaken himself to the smoking-room, he ventured to look into the drawing-room before retiring to his private apartments. He entered, finding the lights mostly extinguished, but enough had been left burning to reveal to him the forms of Steffano and Guiseppe Denaro seated at an open window. Even then he would have passed on, but the marquis had seen him and came forth to speak with him.

"Well, Antonio, was I not right?" he asked, with intense eagerness. Did I make a mistake?"

"Steffano, we will not speak of it to-night. I have more than care for my ward to trouble me, and I would have rest and quiet. I wish to think."

"But you will give me a simple word of answer to my question. Surely that can not tax you heavily."

The duke was not a man who could hide his true feelings. Whatever he felt, especially if he felt it deeply, appeared on the surface. The marquis saw the cloud upon his brother's brow and the pained look in his large, expressive eyes, and he burst forth coarsely:

"Fore heaven! I trust I have done nothing to ruffle the current of your life. If I have I am truly sorry."

"Steffano," returned the duke, sternly, but without anger, "what is your own opinion, now that you are sober and rational, of your treatment of Signor Zanoni last evening?"

"Oh! who has been tattling, I wonder? Will your grace kindly inform me how the story came to your ears? Oh! I have it! The princess told you, and the painter told her. A most noble and reliable source of information, truly! I can imagine that the fellow did not spare me in his pathetic narrative! And did you believe it all?"

"Yes, Steffano, I believed every word of it. You are mistaken, however, if you think the man you so grossly insulted is the only person who was witness, with yourself, of the disgraceful scene."

"Duke," demanded the marquis hotly, "do you say that I—Steffano Farnese—insulted a low-born, plebeian painter?"

"I say the insult was the more gross and unpardonable in that it was given by a Farnese and brother of the reigning duke!"

"Per Bacco! I doubt if the nobles of Parma would be content to accept your dictum," the marquis rejoined, with a grating, bitter laugh.

The duke turned quickly to the count, who still sat in the recess of the window.

"Signor Count," he said, looking at the man squarely in the face, "what is your opinion? I will leave it to you as a man of sense, of judgment, and as one possessing a sense of honor and self-respect. You were witness of the scene. Would you deem Steffano's treatment of Signor Zanoni an insult?"

"Sire," returned the poor fellow, trembling perceptibly, "I wish you would excuse me."

"Which means," retorted the duke, without pausing to reflect, "that you shrink from characterizing the manners of your friend in their true light."

Now this was placing the unfortunate count in a terrible plight. If he

offend and anger a man whom he both feared and hated, and yet whose good offices he very much needed. Or, at all events, he thought he did. If he refused to speak he would not only offend the one man of all the world whose favor he most desired, but he would lower himself in that man's estimation. He could only crave forbearance, as he had done.

And when the retort came, though he felt it to be harsh and unkind, he dared not say so. He only hung his head and was silent.

"Enough!" said Antonio, after a brief, painful silence. "Let us say no more at present. I forgive you, Guiseppe, for your loyalty to your friend, and I ask your pardon for having placed you in such a dilemma—No! not another word to-night!" he added, to his brother, who had started to speak. And with this he turned and left the room.

For a time after the duke had gone the two men regarded one another in silence. The marquis was the first to speak.

"Well, old fellow, what do you think of it?"

"Upon my word, Steffano, I know not what to think."

"You know, I hope, what to think about the princess and the painter?"

"She loves him!" was the reply given with a gasp of pain and anguish.

"Of course she does; and poor Antonio, heaven help him, sees clearly enough what a mess he has made of it. If he had listened to you in the first place this thing wouldn't have happened. But it is too late now to help it, though, thank fortune, we can put an effective stop to it."

"Do you suppose she confessed to the duke that she loves the man?" the count asked eagerly.

"Of course she did. Couldn't you see that for yourself? Good heavens, man, he was completely demoralized by his interview with her. Didn't you mark the pain in his face? He looked as though he'd lost his best friend."

"Aye, but might it not have been his regret at the affair by the river yesterday?"

"Well upon my word! And Steffano laughed uproariously. "Haven't your eyes, my dear Count? Couldn't you see how my question concerning the princess fretted and perplexed him? Bless your simple soul, would the story of the spat with the painter have caused him to refuse us all information touching a matter entirely different. No, I can tell you the whole secret, just as surely as though I had it from himself. Listen and you shall be enlightened; you shall acknowledge that I am right, too."

"The duke was alone with Isabel a long time. I saw the Countess Rizzi coming away from the chamber where she had been carried while in her swoon and she, the countess, told me that they had all, every one of them, been sent away, and she was sure had heard the key turned in the lock after the door had been closed. Mark what I say—the door was locked, and Antonio and the princess were closeted together."

"Now see." Here Steffano laid down each proposition with the fingers of the right hand upon the open palm of the left, speaking sharply and earnestly, as though he meant that each and every word should strike home—should find lodgment in his heart.

"No! the whole scene is as clear to me as though I had been there through it all. The duke asked her, fairly and squarely, if she loved the painter. But, you will understand, she had already betrayed herself, over and over again. Guiseppe! I know the dear girl well enough to know that she'd cut her hand off sooner than tell a lie. She saw plainly enough that her secret had already gone from her keeping; so she had nothing to lose by making a clean breast of it."

"Remember, further, she must have been at the time—when she first recovered consciousness—firm in the belief that her low-born lover was dead, and, so believing, she would speak freely and fearlessly. Yes, my dear Count, be sure she made a clean thing of it, telling her guardian everything."

"And now, you ask me why the duke was so reticent; and you would fain know what he will do about it. He was reticent because he was so terribly wrought upon that he knew not what to say. With regard to what he will do—he will try to save his ward without harm to her plebeian lover. Upon my word, his infatuation for that fellow is beyond my comprehension. Count as I live, I do verily believe—I am serious in this, I mean it—I do verily believe that if he were hard pushed; if the princess should hold out, as we know she is capable of doing, and the painter should go down on his knees and implore, as he is evidently capable of imploring, he would wilt like a bruised flower-bud."

"Hark ye!" Here Steffano grasped the bewildered count by the wrist and whispered into his ear: "I can trust you, I know. By heavens! If you should betray me! But tush! Of what am I thinking? Here, it is, plumply and plainly: My good brother—Duke of Parma—would at this moment throw over the whole body of the nobility, neck and heels, and take into his council—take to his heart—the body of what he calls the people. By St. Paul if the members of our Grand Council of Twenty could but gain suspicion of the real feelings and deep-rooted sentiments of their chief they would depose him off-hand. Haven't you ever thought of this?"

"I have sometimes thought," replied Denaro, cautiously, and after considerable reflection, "that the duke was not here to resign both at once and forever."

"Oh, he would resign his dukedom, every thought and every feeling. She did not know that she had plucked a petal, and cast the sightless stock away. She did not know that the withering petals were beneath her feet, withering her eyes were turned straight upon them. The whole populace might have congregated and passed the iron fence, so that they had made no disturbance, and she would not have seen them."

Denaro saw, and his heart bounded with a throb that well-nigh took away his breath. Her image had filled his thoughts at that moment. Of her, and thoughts of her, he had been thinking ever since he had lifted his head from its pillow. One question—one theme—formed the center around which all his fevered thought and imaginings held their course. The question was this: If the painter were out of the way, removed by his—Denaro's—hand, would she in time listen to his pleadings? Would the duke give him his best influence?

What strange anomaly—with a glaring inconsistency the heart of a man passionately, blindly in love may present! "If I should kill the painter in a fair and honorable combat, could I hope to win the hand of the princess? Could I ever hope to win her heart?"

So he asked himself, and when his common sense answered "No," he straightway flew into a paroxysm of wrath against the man he would slay. The fact was, his exceeding jealousy of Juan Zanoni had made him mad. Never at his best a man of strong mind; never an independent, self-governed man; never a brave, bold and fearless champion of right, he was now, under the influence of blinding passion, in danger of becoming idiotic.

"Oh, if I could see her and speak with her!"

What he would say he never told himself, for, as the last word of the sentence found speech, his startled eyes had rested upon the witching form of the loved one in the garden.

He had been admitted to that blooming bit of paradise more than once, and the way was familiar to him. Without pausing to reflect—with only the one thought of meeting and speaking with the princess in his mind—he turned quickly toward a small postern which he knew he would find open determined to reach her if the thing were possible.

(To Be Continued.)

COLORS BEST SUITED FOR WARFARE

Recent Experiments Show That Scarlet Gives the Worst Mark for the Rifle.

Scarlet, it has always been supposed, was the worst color possible for the purposes of the battlefield. It has been said so with such frequency, indeed, that nobody of late years has cared to dispute the fact. We owe it to some very practical experiments carried out in Germany that the question has now been put on a more satisfactory basis.

A squad of ten men, two dressed in light gray, two in dark gray, two in scarlet, two in blue and two in green were lately ordered to march across an open country. Their movements were closely watched. The first men to disappear from sight were those in light gray, immediately afterward the scarlet, and the green. Here we have all well-worn theories upset. Experiments carried out on the rifle range showed that our national color possesses even distinct merits.

The idea was this time to ascertain which color gave the worst mark for the rifle. Twenty men, all good shots, were used for the purposes of the experiment. After they had fired a given number of rounds it was discovered that scarlet was far the most difficult color to hit. For every miss at the other colors there were three in favor of scarlet. We will not assert that these experiments were conclusive evidence in favor of our national, but they certainly go a long way to justify its retention. There is much to be said in these days of quick-firing guns in favor of a uniform which is difficult to hit, and in this particular scarlet undoubtedly will hold its own against all other colors.

A SHIPWRECKED BABY.

An Incident of the Wreck of the Steamer Maitland in Australian Waters.

Every shipwreck has its story of heroism and gallantry, and the recent wreck of the Maitland was no exception. There's a world of tenderness, too, in the boatswain's narrative of how a helpless baby was succored and saved.

Her mother, Mrs. Howard, had been sent ashore on Friday, and the surf that rolled between her and her baby seemed likely to part them for ever. The little one cried bitterly.

"Biscuits," said the boatswain, "were the only food left. We soaked them in a little port wine. When the tiny mite held out her chubby hands for more we knew that we had found just what was wanted. For hours afterwards I walked up and down the deck singing the child to sleep. Then the captain relieved me, and did the same. Thus the night passed. In the morning we softened a biscuit and spread it with sausage meat. It was good to see the child eat. A few hours later brave boys from the shore breasted the waves—and you know the rest."

Not a family in the district but wanted to see the little shipwrecked stranger; not a woman but wanted to nurse it. And when mother and child left for Sydney the whole population for miles around was at the station to see them off.

It is rumored that Spain will issue a new map of her possessions after the war—that is, if she has any possessions.

MOTHER AND DAUGHTER CURED. Mrs. Lydia A. Fowler, Electric Street, Amherst, N.S., testifies to the good effects of the new specific for all heart and nerve troubles.

MILBURN'S HEART AND NERVE PILLS. Mrs. Lydia A. Fowler, Electric Street, Amherst, N.S., testifies to the good effects of the new specific for all heart and nerve troubles.

POINTED PARAGRAPHS. The gas meter has more feet than any other animated thing. Many a poor man finds it harder to get drunk than to stay sober.

COFFIN AS A PRESENT. Among the Chinese a coffin is considered a neat and appropriate present for an aged person, especially if in health.

PEOPLE GETTING OLD. As age advances, vitality retreats, and people find themselves tired, listless, dyspeptic and lacking in strength.

WISE WORDS. Nothing does a right-thinking man more good than helping his neighbors—the sick and weary. In recommending Dr. Ward's Blood and Nerve Pills, I have tried to bring them before the public.

Dr. Ward's Blood and Nerve Pills. A GOOD SECOND HAND BUGGY. For Sale. A GOOD SECOND HAND BUGGY. Almost as good as new. Will be sold cheap to the right man.

Paints! Paints! Jus' opened! Shipment of Mixed for House and Bu. We have the C and that accounts immense sale of also have a Large of Dry Paints.

We have two G City Bicycles which we will sell The Welland Vale are the best in the Owing to the An mation of the Refin Canada, we have obliged to buy fr United States in o get quality, and have a far sup MACHINE OIL of our neighbors.

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For Sale. A GOOD SECOND HAND BUGGY. Almost as good as new. Will be sold cheap to the right man.

UPPER TOWN IMPLEMENT WARE 100 Our... Summer Goods! Consisting of a large stock of DEERING BINDERS and M ers—The best in the wor MAXWELL Binders, Mo and Horse Rakes. PLOUGHS of various ki Turnip Sowers, Scufflers, all Farm Implements. CARRIAGES, Buggies, Chat and Snow Ball Wagons, STOVES—A large stock of Clary's famous Model Co ing Stoves, Fancy Pa Stoves, Box Stoves, C Stoves, etc., at prices th will surprise you. NEW Williams Sewing Machi BELL PIANOS and Organs. CHAS. MCKINNON'S LOW ROOMS, -- UPPER TOWN