

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

CHAPTER XI. (Continued.)

"Oh! my love! my love! Though the whole world should combine its might and power against us it shall not put us asunder. I am thine and thou art mine. In a foreign clime we will find a new home and will make new friends; and there our love shall be our life—our life our love and joy and gladness!"

The princess had paused in her walk, and these words had found utterance in a waking ecstasy, as though a long train of patient thought had thus culminated. She had spoken, and a divine fervor shone in her golden eyes and lighted up her beautiful face. Her gaze had rested upon a pure white rose, and she had put forth her hand to pluck it when a quick, nervous footfall arrested her attention and she turned to see who had intruded upon her.

"Count Denaro!" Of all men living that she knew she would rather have seen any other at that moment than the man who now stood before her. She was startled, but not frightened; nor did she for one moment lose her strong self-control. She was deeply indignant at the unwarranted intrusion, and the look of scorn and contempt she cast upon the intruder would have caused any other man who knew her to shrink and cover. But this man could not see—could not understand. His mingled passions of love and jealousy had made him blind; and the finding of himself now in the presence of the object of his passions made him well-nigh insane.

"Dear Princess! Oh, if you knew how I love you! If you could know the depth and strength and power of my affection! If you could know what I have suffered, how my heart is racked, and—"

"Hush! Oh, hush! You will drive me mad!"

"By heavens, Princess, you have already driven me mad!"

"Aye, you must have been, or you would not have intruded here. Count, will you leave me? This intrusion is as unseemly and unkind as it is unpleasant to me."

"No, no, Princess!" the count cried, raising his hand toward her and taking a step forward. "Do not banish me from your presence until you have answered me a question. After all that has happened, after all that has been told me—after the months—aye, the years—of warm, devoted love I have given you—and, after the smiles you have in return bestowed upon me, you can not refuse me the simple boon I crave. I have the right to demand it—that you answer me the question I have to ask."

"Count Denaro, I am but a weak woman, and I can not put you by force from my presence. If you will not leave me at my bidding, I will leave you."

"No! No! Not yet, Princess! And he threw himself in her way so that she could not pass him without brushing her robe against the thorns of the thickly growing rose-bushes. "You must answer me! You shall!"

"Well, signor," she said, as he stood before her, fairly quaking with the depth and strength of his emotions. "Princess! with a gasp for breath."

"The question I have to ask may be in two parts. The first I know you will answer; but for the love of mercy and justice! for the love of heaven! I beg of you answer it calmly and rationally, and not in anger. Dear, dear Princess! May I hope—over hope—may I take to my heart a single ray of hope that you will, at some time, give me your love, and with it your hand? Oh, if you could know; if you—"

"Stop! stop!" She raised herself to her extreme height; she looked at him proudly and disdainfully, and her voice had the ring of power and purpose and of truth.

"Giuseppe! Denaro! I never spoke to you a word; I never gave you a sign; nor did I ever give token of a thought that should lead you to think I loved you, or that I cared for your love. And now hear this: I am young; I love life; the world is good and beautiful in my eyes; while death and the grave are cold, chilling, terrible to think of, yet sooner than marry you—sooner than stand before God's holy altar and give my solemn promise that I would love, honor and obey you while life should endure—sooner than do that, I would lay me down and choose the eternal repose of the grave! Does that answer you?"

The count shook as with palsy; and it was several seconds before he could speak. At length he said, struggling with all his might to hold in check the hot wrath that possessed him: "I have the other part of the question to ask. Will you tell me: Is it love for another that prevents your loving me?"

"No! No! Ten thousand times—no! Were there not another man than yourself living I could not love you!"

"Ah, you prevaricate. You do not answer my question. Do you love another?"

"At this her hot indignation burst forth in a flame. The flame enveloped her cheeks and shot forth from her eyes.

"Fool! Fool! Let me pass!"

And she strode by him, pushing him from her path as she went, and was soon gone from his sight.

He stood and gazed after her—held her in view until she had gone from his sight—and then gazed upon the vacant space she had last occupied. He stood like one upon whom a thunder-bolt had fallen, bereft for the time of sense and power. Gradually, how-

ever, he awoke to a realization of the situation, and then he began to reflect. It could hardly be called reason. "Poor girl! By San Marco! She's as mad as mad can be. That man has utterly bewitched her. If she'd not been mad she never could have talked like that—and to me! Oh, the villain! What spell has he wrought. Certainly he has cast a baleful spell upon her. To think—oh, to think how good and kind she has always been to me. No sister could have been more fond of a brother than she has been of me, and it would have grown to love if it had not been for the interference of this demon! Aye, he is a demon!—a very imp of darkness and mischief! Think of the look of her eyes when she spoke to me! My soul! If ever woman was insane, she was insane then! And he—he—has made her so!"

"Now! Now!" he ground out, between his clenched teeth. "I know what to do. It would be a sin to leave such a man alive. I will stand in his way; and he shall fight me. Ha! and he shall find that it is not Stefano Farnese who holds the sword of vengeance! Oh, let me but meet him! I must find the marquis. I must have his countenance. He will stand by me. I know. He had read the man aright from the first. I feared his influence; but I did not know he was what he is."

He bent his gaze once more in the direction which the princess had taken when she left him, then, with the name of the painter on his lips in connection with a muttered curse he turned toward the way by which he had gained the garden and rapidly retraced his steps. He had entered the wing of the palace, through which he was obliged to pass in order to reach the street, when, in a small hall of the quarters occupied by the ducal guard, he came face to face with the man of whom he was at the moment thinking—Marquis Stefano.

"Giuseppe! In the name of all that is wonderful, what brings you here? Were you in search of me?" The count cast a quick, searching glance around, then caught the marquis by the arm and answered with an intensity of emotion that shook him from top to toe.

"I did not come to seek you, but I am I glad I have found you. I couldn't sleep so I started out into the open air. I was passing the little garden yonder, when I saw the princess walking there. I went in and spoke with her."

"Spoke with her? What she alone?"

"Yes, alone."

"Well, what did she say?"

"Steffano she is mad! She's crazy! That double-dyed villain has unseated her reason."

Joy beamed in the dark countenance of the Marquis, and his eyes glowed triumphantly. The game was his own. He had only to fan the flame already kindled to bring his purpose to a finish.

"Have I not always known it would be so?" he said, laying his hand upon the other's shoulder, with a touch of sympathy in tone and manner. "Count, I feel for you. Aye! it is you who are most deeply wronged. As for the princess, the duke can save her, and she will very soon forget this wild, insane infatuation. No! I told old Madelon the painter was bewitching her young mistress. But tell me, how did she meet you? What did she say for herself or for the painter?"

"G! Heaven! Stefano, I can not tell you. She was raving. She talked about death and the grave; about her love of life and her dread of dying; and she said she'd sooner die than marry me! But, mark you, it was not what she said, poor thing! She was not responsible. It was the manner in which she said it—the look she gave me. I tell you, it was terrible! It was perfectly awful! She glared like a tigress. Her eyes fairly blazed hot flames of fire."

"Good heavens! Giuseppe, the dear girl must have been subjected to some demon spell. Did you ever mark Zanoni's eyes, and the strange look of his face? You wouldn't say that my brother was a man easily swayed by the arts of a magician; but it is evident enough to me that such a thing has come to pass. If ever a man was under the influence of an evil eye—of a very demon incarnate—Antonio is in that condition at the present time. Or he was so last night. Do you suppose—can you imagine—that he would have answered us as he did if he had been in his right mind? Did you ever before know him to deliberately insult one of his best friends; and a patrician at that? And yet that is what he did to you and he confessed it, and humbly asked your pardon."

"Aye," cried the count, with new energy—in fresh excitement—"and now I think of it, his manner—the duke's—was much like that of the princess. The spell has had the same effect upon them both."

"Exactly!" echoed the marquis, in haste to fasten upon the mind of his companion the impression that had in a measure, of not entirely, possessed it. "And the effect has been this. And let me say to you, in this connection, that one of the most marked, as well as one of the worst phases of insanity, is that in which the unfortunate subject is bent upon regarding his best friends as his worst enemies. And present instance."

"You are right, Stefano. And I say the sooner our friends are set free from the demonic influence the better it will be for them."

"Count, you never spoke a truer word—never!"

"I know it is true. I feel it in every part of me. I must think it over. I must go home and get some breakfast; and then—"

"Hold on, old fellow! Zounds! You will eat breakfast with me."

"But, dear Marquis, I must go home and change my garb, and I must select me a rapier that may be depended on. Not every blade is equal to the need I have. I have occasion to put upon mine before this day is buried in the past."

But it did not suit the marquis that his friend should leave him. He did not mean to lose sight of him again until the work in hand was finished; he could help it, and he thought he could. Without much urging he succeeded in persuading Denaro to remain and breakfast at the palace, promising that afterward he would accompany him to his home, and there give him good counsel to help in the task he had taken it upon himself to perform.

While Marquis Stefano and his guest—the one calm and calculating in his diabolical plotting; the other well-nigh frantic under a burning sense of his imaginary wrongs—were sitting at their breakfast, our painter, Zanoni, had entered his studio, and was busily engaged in arranging matters for the work of the day. His boy had been and swept the floors, and performed the menial duties of his office and had been dismissed to the lower floor, where were his quarters.

At length the artist went to his easel, threw the screen from the canvas thereon, and stood before it.

"It is strange, very strange," he said to himself, after he had gazed upon his work for a few minutes, "how the two faces run together. With the slightest difference in the world—with only a few shadows where now are strong lights; with a shade of the divine maternity where now is virginal youth with this I have the other face. My soul! what a hold it has taken on me! I must paint it while it is distinct in my mind. If I do not put it here I will make another subject. Ah! I could give it to the blessed mother of our Saviour. Oh, if Murillo could have had that face!"

He had spoken thus, and was still gazing on the picture, when a slight, brilliant tinkle of a small bell in a far corner told him that the outer door opened, and a little later came a slow, nervous rapping on the door of the studio. He went to answer the demand, and was not a little surprised upon beholding the aged face of Madelon, and she alone.

"Good Madelon," he said, when he had led the way into the painting-room and had closed the door, "you come from your mistress?"

She sank into the great easy chair he had put out for her, and regained her breath. At length she answered: "Yes, signor; I have come to tell you that she can not visit you to-day. She could not write; but she will, if there should be need. She hopes that she may see you soon. She bade me to assure you that you need not be under apprehension of evil; only, the duke thinks she had better not come at present. At least, so I understood her. I know that his grace had something to do with it."

Zanoni was stricken with a great fear, but he knew if he would gain information from the duenna he must be tranquil, and not startle her. So he asked her, mildly and kindly, to tell him what she knew about it—what she had heard—what seen.

She wasn't sure, but she believed that Marquis Stefano had had much to do with it, and she told of her interview with him on the previous evening—how he had lain in wait for her, and caught her at the very moment she was thinking her stars that she had escaped him. She meant to be truthful, though one or two things she would have kept back had she been permitted. She had told of the telling of the story of the old ducal family to tell of her acknowledgment of her own part therein; and she had also told how angry the marquis had been because the story of his life had been told to a stranger. Then Zanoni asked her:

"Do I understand that the marquis went away under the impression that you were present with us during the whole of the time occupied by the story?"

"No, signor. But, indeed, I couldn't help it. He drove me into a corner, and I had to tell him."

"Never mind. I can understand how you were situated. He learned, I suppose, how long the princess had been engaged in the narrative before you joined us?"

"Yes, signor, he did."

"And I have no doubt," the artist went on, calling a light smile to his face, though it cost him a bitter effort to do it, "that he possessed himself of the knowledge, or belief, that no work was done on the picture yesterday?"

"Ah, signor, he pretended that he knew it, but he didn't. I wouldn't give him the satisfaction of telling him."

"Madelon," after a pause of several seconds, "I have one more question, and I want you to put on your thinking cap and try to call to mind just what was said, and how it was said. Was the marquis particular to know what I said with regard to the story, after I had heard it?"

She could only remember that he had been very angry. She could think of nothing particular that he had inquired about.

"Had he no curiosity to know if I had offered any remark concerning himself?"

Ah! the duenna did remember one thing. She bent her head and thought hard, and at length she looked up with a new light in her face.

"Yes, signor, there was one thing. He wanted to know what you had asked the princess concerning her own opinion of his appearance on his first arrival. Had she thought him handsome, and so on; and by-and-by he asked me: 'Did he ask the princess if she had thought me younger than the true brother of the duke ought to be?' or something like that. At any rate, he finally learned that the princess

had told you that she thought he looked older than Stefano Farnese ought to look."

"And how did he receive that information?"

"I thought it kind of startled him. At least it appears so."

"Did he ask, or did you tell him, what I had thought of his looks?"

"Ah!" cried the old lady, completely lost in her muddle of recollection. "I think, after all, it was your opinion he was eager to know about. He asked me, in a bantering way, if the painter didn't think he looked too young to be the true brother, and upon that I told him so. You thought he looked too old."

"And that—how did he take it?"

"He looked dreadful dark and ugly, signor."

"Do you know if the duke has been told all this?"

"I do not, signor."

"Have you any idea of what has transpired beyond what you have told me?"

She told him of the duke's party of the previous evening; how she had retired before her mistress came up to her chamber.

"But this morning, signor, I could see that something had happened. She had certainly been crying during the night."

Finally, upon being questioned more closely, the duenna confessed that before leaving the palace she had seen and questioned the page, Filippo, from whom she had learned that a cruel trick had been played upon the princess; by the Marquis Stefano; and she thought, Count Denaro had lent his aid to it. She did not know what it was; but its result had been that the duke had been greatly shocked, and the princess herself had fainted.

"I believe, signor," she added, "that the princess was made to believe that you were dead, or that something dreadful had happened to you, and her fainting gave the duke to know that she loved you. But she knows all about it now. The duke himself must have told her that you were not hurt at all. That is all, signor."

"Madelon!" Zanoni said, after she had arisen—his voice quivered, and he was as pale as death. "Do you say the duke knows that Princess Isabel loves me?"

"Yes, signor. I am sure of it."

"Do you know—have you any idea—what he has said to her on the subject?"

Madelon could only shake her head. She knew nothing more. But the princess had promised that she would come again, and she had bidden him not to fear.

"Surely, Signor, that ought to content you. At all events I pray to heaven, and the blessed virgin, that the sweet princess may not have to suffer."

"Amen!" devoutly responded the painter. Then he added, prayerfully, "You will bear a blessing to the princess from me; and you will tell her that I shall be very anxious till I can hear from her again?"

"Yes, signor, I will tell her."

"And now will you repeat to her three words from my lips and tell her that I send them? You will let no other hear them."

"What are the words, signor?"

"They are these—Faithful unto death! Will you say to her that I send them from my heart?"

The duenna reflected for a moment; and then, earnestly and sincerely, gave her promise.

SHIP DRILLS

That should be Enforced on Board the Ocean Liners.

It is time now that the insurance companies, which are the only power recognized by the steamship companies, should make a law that they will not insure vessels on which three drills, to be specified, do not take place at least twice a month. These are fire drill, collision drill and "abandon ship" drill. On well governed lines these drills—or the first and third at any rate—are practiced, though none too often. Frequent practice of these drills results in every man's being perfectly familiar with his station and duties, so that in the hour when the drill becomes a real performance he is cool and collected. Furthermore, he knows that a correct performance of the duty allotted to him will insure his own safety, and hence he will not feel under the necessity of making a wild fight for his life. These facts are well known in the naval service, and men are kept familiar with the duties of these drills. It must be quite evident to every one that there was no system for abandoning ship on the Bourgoigne, or at any rate a very imperfect one. The insurance companies it seems, are the only authorities to deal with such matters. They work for civilized systems at sea all the time. They compel ship owners to employ masters and mates who have passed certain examinations and been formally licensed. They compel ship owners to submit their vessels to inspection of hull and boiler. They compel ship owners to limit the load of their ships. The laws bearing on these matters originated in the demands of insurance companies. Now let the companies demand the passage of laws requiring the insurance rates. The companies which insure their own vessels would be reached indirectly, because they could not afford to neglect precautions designed to inspire public confidence. This is a matter which should receive immediate attention. Bourgoigne horrors have no business to occur in an age of enlightenment.

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Tailors make it up in truly gorgeous dresses for races, coaching, and wear and for calling. It has all the sheen and body of Duchess satin, and it is usually chosen in white because white is a fad this summer and because when it is laundered by the sun it is glitteringly beautiful.

From London and not Paris, the time does our new fashion come. An impoverished lady of high degree got the damasked linen its vogue. Being herself sorely in need of a new garment and being very short of money, she resorted to her grandmother's linen chest.

Two great cream white lace dresses were sent to the dressmaker and with the aid of some old Irish lace, a splendid gown was made.

The Princess of Wales even asked to examine it, and now the Irish lace is slowly turning out linen of a similar ivory tone, damasked in the prevailing lines and floral patterns popular a few years ago.

In some cases a silver or gold or blue silk thread is wrought in with the flax, and a marvelously beautiful fabric is the result.

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DEAR SIR, I have spent half a fortune in doctors' bills. I have spent half a fortune in doctors' bills. I have spent half a fortune in doctors' bills.

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