

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

"Once, Duke, when the count had made two or three rapid and impetuous lunges, I called upon him again to desist, and I used language like this. Said I: 'Count, if you persist, if you drive me to the verge of danger to myself, I shall kill you.' These words, which in the great anxiety of the moment I meant for a solemn warning, never, so help me heaven! dreaming of doing him mortal harm, the marquis would torture into a deadly threat on my part. I ask you, do you believe me?"

"Yes, Zanon, replied the duke, promptly and frankly, 'I believe you implicitly. I firmly believe every word you have spoken. Oh! I wish it lay in my power to save you! But, alas!—'"

"Say no more, my lord. I understand the situation fully; and I know that the law of the land dooms me. But I could not rest if I thought you believed me capable of the crime your brother would fasten upon me."

"I do not believe it, singor; I have not believed it from the first. I may tell you—no word Stefano could have spoken, had I heard no denial from yourself, would have led me to believe you capable of such a deed. But," the duke went on, after a short pause, trying hard to put on a cheerfulness which he did not feel, "it is not impossible that there may be hope yet. There may be one chance. If you can prove—if you can cause the council to believe—that the killing of Denaro was purely accidental; that he was not once seek his life, but that, in the end, an accident, unforeseen and utterly impossible to prevent, caused the fatal result—if you can show to their satisfaction you may be spared."

"Ah! Duke, Duke, you are drawing upon your own goodness of heart, upon your own sense of justice and right. You know the character and temper of Baron Dodero and his associates. When they have heard the story which Stefano has to tell—"

"Alas!" broke in Antonio with a groan, "he has told it. He told it last night before they made out the order for your detention and preferred their charge."

"Well," pursued the prisoner, with a gloom he could not overcome, "knowing all you know, can you, honestly and understandingly, tell me to hope?"

"Perhaps not. And yet, it is a saying not to be forgotten, and which every man in your situation may honestly repeat to himself. 'While there is life there is hope.' I can say, no more than that; it is not much."

At this point Zanon bent his head in thought, and so remained for a considerable time, the duke meantime waiting patiently, and with true sympathy. He started to think once more of the fate that had set his dear ward free from a great danger, but he put it away as unkind—as treacherous. Aye, he told himself—and he meant it—that if he could save the man, if he could give him back, at that very moment, to life and liberty, he would do it, and risk the saving of his ward afterward. Or perhaps he might make the painter promise never to see the princess again the price of the favor. On the whole that would be the best thing that could happen.

By-and-by Zanon looked up and spoke. There was a deep earnestness in his voice and a new light in his expressive eyes.

"My lord, I have a question to ask of you—a question to me of deepest import."

"Ask what you please. I will answer, if I can."

"It is not much—perhaps to you nothing. I think my trial is to take place this forenoon."

"Yes; ten o'clock was the hour named. It is near at hand."

"Aye, very near. Now, Duke, will you tell me, if I am condemned to die, will you see me again?"

"Certainly, if you desire it."

"What I meant was, if you would be permitted to do so."

"Ah! I now understand you. Yes, there is no power can keep me from any part of my prisons, nor from any prisoner whom I choose to visit."

"Suppose," pursued the painter, "it should be your wish to put off the execution of the sentence of the court for a time, could you do that, or cause it to be done?"

"Yes." The duke had reflected a little before he answered. And he now paused again. Presently he went on: "By a peculiar fiction of the law the Duke of Parma is custodian of the lives of his subjects, and no person, no matter what his office, nor how criminal, can be executed until he shall have signed the warrant for his death, or, I had better say, until he has endorsed it. I believe the privilege of the duke to withhold his name for cause has been exercised but twice since the law was so framed. My grandfather, who preceded me on the throne—my father, alas, did not live to hold the scepter—my grandfather withheld his endorsement from the death warrant of a man who had been convicted of murder, and he did it upon the assurance of a person in whom he had entire faith, that the man supposed to have been murdered was still alive. And it so proved. The members of the council were very indignant with the old duke when he announced his determination; but family troubles had softened his heart, and he was not swayed from his purpose."

"I suppose the council forgave him in the end?"

"Yes; but they were never quite pleased, after all. More than one of them declared that an innocent man had better be executed than that a law of the realm should be set at naught."

Before further remark could be made the keeper appeared with the announce-

ment that the officer had arrived from the council chamber, and that his prisoner was demanded.

"Duke!" said Zanon, speaking quickly and eagerly: "if you should in your heart desire that my execution should be put off to a day in the future—say, one or two weeks—you would not hesitate to do it?"

"No, I would not," replied Antonio, promptly.

"Thank you. If I am condemned and sentenced, as of course I shall be, you will come to me in my prison before the order for my execution is issued?"

"I will do so without fail. And, once more, let us hope—"

"No, no; I know what the decision of the court will be. Signor, I am ready."

This last to the keeper, who thereupon led him to the door, where two armed men, officers of the council, took him in charge.

CHAPTER XVI.

When our hero was led into the spacious chamber of the court he found it comparatively filled with interested spectators. Intelligence of his arrest had spread rapidly, and a speedy trial had been looked for. His appearance was greeted with no marked demonstration on the part of the assembly, though a close observer might have detected various shades and various directions of feelings. Fully a third of the assemblage were of the patrician class, and it was plainly to be seen that their sympathies—such as they had—were with the man who had been slain. A few of them regarded the prisoner with signs of regret; and another few—a very few—looked upon him kindly. Evidently they had heard the truth from the old sergeant, or had conversed with some one who had been witness of the deed.

The others of the audience, by far the majority, were of the plebeian class, and, as was natural, sympathized with the accused; and, further, they were not backward in showing it. But their sympathy could not serve the man to whom they so readily gave it, though the kindly looks he met upon many an honest and intelligent face served to lighten his heart for the moment and call up a grateful emotion.

The court had not waited to enter with a flourish. The chief justice was in his seat when the prisoner entered, with six of his companions of the council as associates, and that may account for the quietness of the assembled spectators.

There is no need that we should present in detail the proceedings of the court. The prisoner, Juan Zanon, painter, was duly arraigned, the charge and the specifications read by a clerk, after which he was asked if he was guilty. He pleaded in a clear, firm and resonant tone, "Not Guilty!" And then the trial proceeded.

Zanon, through the keeper of the prison, had called upon a legal friend to conduct his cause, and his counsel was present by his side. The duke was not in the room, or he was not visible. The attorney who conducted the prosecution, member of the council and a man possessing an abundant flow of language, presented his side of the case. According to his views of the matter they were there impartially—without fear or favor—sembled to examine, candidly and into the facts attending one of the most foul, wicked, base, cowardly, brutal, cruel, cold-blooded, dastardly and fiendish murders that it had ever been his misfortune to contemplate.

The Marquis Stefano Franesse, brother of the Duke Antonio, was the first witness called; and the court consented that he should be allowed to go on and tell his story of the facts, as he had been eyewitness from first to last. His story can be imagined. We will say however, he was wise in the telling. More than once he really forced tears into his eyes. He was a finished actor; and he simulated grief and anguish to perfection. He more than interested his audience; he thrilled and electrified; and when he came to his peroration, where he pictured the loving, trusting count, beaten down by the dastard betrayer of his life's holiest joy, then pictured his death, and there for a brief space paused, fully a third of his hearers were in tears. Then came the final word—a picture of the murderer. "God have mercy on him! I can not!" At that point, as he resumed his seat, a groan burst from the assembled people as from one bosom. The counsel for the prisoner cross-questioned the marquis sharply; but in no part—at no point—could he shake him. His lies had been fully committed, and no falsehood was too glaring, no untruth too bold or absurd, to cause him a moment's hesitation.

The prisoner was not allowed to speak for himself; it being a natural supposition of the court that a man who could commit a murder would fabricate any number of falsehoods to conceal his guilt. His counsel, however, told his story, as far as he was allowed to go, simply and truly, and it had a marked effect on a portion of the audience.

Three of the city guard, who had been engaged in the prisoner's arrest were called to testify. They clearly swore to the killing—or, two of them did—because they had seen it; but when their answers began to tell unmistakably in the prisoner's favor they were incontinently dismissed. There were no arguments beyond that; no charge by the judge; nothing but the decision of the court, which was arrived at as follows: Each of the seven judges—the chief and his six associates—were given a small slip of blank paper by the clerk, upon which they wrote. Then an offi-

cer in waiting, brought a small black box, with an opening in the cover and through this aperture each justice, in turn, beginning with the chief, dropped his slip of paper.

Then the clerk takes the box, and, with it in his hand, mounts a platform which lifts him into the view of all in the chamber. The officer who brought the box now commands silence! and for the next twenty seconds a pin might have been heard to fall in the spacious room.

Pretty soon the chief justice makes a signal to the clerk, and he proceeds to the final scene. He lifts the cover of the box and takes out a slip of paper, which he holds up, and reads aloud what he finds written thereon. "Guilty! Death!"

And as he goes on, to the next, and the next, until the seven slips have been drawn forth and their verdict announced; and in the end the chief arises in his place, and the prisoner is called upon to do likewise. Then in a voice which he has trained to reach the uttermost depth of vocalization, he pronounces: "Juan Zanon! You have been duly and impartially tried before this august tribunal on the charge of a willful murder of a noble of Parma. The court unanimously declares you guilty! It also condemns you to death!"

He added no supplication to the amen for mercy on the soul of the unfortunate man. That was all, and with that the prisoner was removed from the chamber, where he was placed, not in the airy apartment he had previously occupied, but in a deeper and more gloomy place. Yet it was not such a dungeon as he had expected. It was of good size, with a large window overlooking the river, a comfortable bed and respectable furniture. He learned later that it was an apartment intended for nobles under charge for political crime, or wealthy men shut up for civil offenses who could afford to pay for comfort. The duke had procured him the favor.

Not long after the trial had closed the clerk of the court waited upon the duke with the warrant for the execution of the prisoner just condemned, requesting his signature. His grace took the document and told the messenger he would give his decision to the council when in session.

A few hours later the president of the Council of Twenty, together with ten of his colleagues, were with the duke in his chamber of audience. They had transacted the business of state on hand, when Baron Dodero asked Antonio when Zanon was to be executed.

"Signors," said the duke frankly, "I have a great favor to ask at your hands. For myself I desire that his execution may be put off for a few days at least."

The baron looked at his colleagues and they looked at him. By-and-by he asked:

"Has this request anything to do with further examination into the guilt of the prisoner? If it has I must—"

"Stop!" interrupted the potentate, something in the president's look and tone struck him on the instant as significant, and it led him to ask so pointedly that a refusal to answer would be next to impossible.

"Has Marquis Stefano given you such an idea? Has he sought to influence in any way with regard to this prisoner's fate?"

He waited a few moments, during which, as before, Baron Dodero looked at his colleagues, while his colleagues looked at him—then he went on, with the weight and force of conscious rectitude in look and tone.

"I see, signors, that he has. Far be it from me to speak against my brother; yet, I am justified in telling you, in the present instance that his inclinations are not good; his desire is purely selfish and unjust. I give you my word that I am firmly convinced that Zanon is guilty; and though I should not wish you to believe that such a thought could influence me in the least degree in wishing harm to the culprit; yet, his death will remove a source of deep concern—a source of danger, in fact, from my part, will you not grant me the favor I ask?"

The baron and his companions conferred together for a little time, and finally, without further question or remark, unanimously granted his request. He thanked them kindly, and shortly thereafter the audience was at an end and the session closed.

On the morning of the next day Marquis Stefano was astir earlier than usual. He procured his breakfast at an hour which the servants thought wonderfully out of season for him, and then proceeded to the prison where he found the keeper just arrived. He had come to ask when Zanon would be hanged; and he asked with an eagerness that appeared well-nigh brutal in the estimation of Luigi Maracchini, whose respect for him, we are already aware, was not of a high order. He looked at the visitor reflectively; and if the latter had been less blinded by his own self-sufficiency, he would have seen the lurking contempt that curled the close lips and shadowed the watchful eye. The officer answered after a pause:

"You must ask the noble duke that question, signor. I can not answer it."

"Has not the order for his execution been issued?"

"In all probability, Signor Marquis, his lordship, the chief justice, attended to his duty. If he did, the order issued from the court yesterday. I can only tell you it has not been sent to me."

"And you know nothing of it?"

"I know nothing of the order, signor."

Stefano saw clearly that the keeper would not trust him with the secrets of his office. He was very angry, but he could do nothing to help the matter, he could only resolve, in his own heart, that if the power should ever be his he would pay the man

back in a manner he should remember ever after.

From the prison our marquis made his way to the office of the Council of Twenty, determined, if possible, to know when the hanging was to be. He found a clerk and two or three minor officers in the place, but no member of the council. The clerk could tell him nothing, for the simple reason that he had nothing to tell.

As a final resort the seeker after knowledge resolved to visit the chief justice at his dwelling. He would not ask the duke. In truth, he dared not. He feared to excite Antonio further while Zanon lived.

To Be Continued.

A TOUCHING INCIDENT.

Pathetic Scene in One of the Cuban Cities.

Hunger in its acute stages is said to destroy natural affection and all the humane instincts, leaving nothing but selfish animal frenzy. This effect of famine is, of course, the same in very young victims as in adults. Occasionally the finer feelings seem to remain unbrutalized. When these are manifested in adults, both admiration and pity are aroused in the observer; but there can be no more appealing sight in all the terrible phenomena of starvation than the altruism of a child. A writer relates what he saw in one of the Cuban cities.

In a recess of the wall between two angles of a public building crouched some twenty or thirty miserable human beings, in all stages of emaciation. They were "reconcentrados."

A lady with a bright smile upon her face came down the steps of a large hotel near-by, and passed along the street. Her smile faded when she caught sight of the hopeless group, and she stood still in pained and silent pity. The poor wretches stretched out their hands, and the little ones ran to her and lifted up their pinched faces, begging for a coin "in God's name."

Centenos and pesetas were bestowed freely from the lady's purse; but what distressed her more than all was the despair stamped upon the face of one little girl, not more than seven years old, who did not move nor speak. She sat near a woman and two smaller children, who lay on the ground, apparently helpless.

Drawn by her great, pleading eyes the lady went to the child and offered a coin. The haggard little creature glared at it a moment, and then, snatching the money with a wild shriek, darted across the street to the nearest store.

Directly she returned with a loaf, smelling it ravenously and almost licking it with her longing tongue; but she did not taste the bread. Running to the wretched woman lying on the ground with her little ones, she thrust the loaf into her hand and then threw herself on her face in the dust, sobbing and shivering with utter grief. The lady was deeply affected, and seeing a soldier, who seemed not wholly unsympathetic, she asked him to bring the generous little daughter and her starved family to the hotel. "They shall be cared for," she said. It was a pitiable sight, but it gave a refreshing view of the supreme power of love even over mortal anguish.

LIKE A SENSIBLE MAN.

How the Prince of Wales Conducts Himself in Private Life.

The prince is not what commercial men would call wealthy, but he has plenty, and his establishment is managed on strict and careful principles. It has been asserted that members of the royal family travel free of expense. The truth is quite the opposite. One of the Prince of Wales' heaviest items of expenditure is the cost of traveling. Wherever they go both the prince and princess are very lavish in "tips."

The idea prevails here and there that the prince has special privileges in regard to his visits to the theater. The only privilege he has is that of being a royal patron, though there is hardly any privilege managers would not grant to so constant, kindly and sympathetic a supporter of the stage. When the prince desires to go to a theater a box is booked for him through an agent in an ordinary way. If what is usually understood to be the royal box is already booked then the previous purchaser is politely asked to waive his right, that is all. Whenever this is done the waiver is always specially thanked in a letter from the prince's secretary. Years ago, when the prince was known to have booked a box, if he did not arrive in time the curtain was kept down, and his appearance was made known by the band playing the national anthem. When this came to the knowledge of the prince he was very much annoyed and requested that both he and the princess should be treated exactly the same as any other playgoers. Their royal highnesses invariably arrive in good time, and where a separate exit is provided always remain until the fall of the curtain. There are theaters without a private entrance; at these houses the prince leaves a few minutes before the fall of the curtain simply that his arrangements at the principal entrance. Nobody, in fact, can be more courteous and considerate than the prince and princess on these and all other occasions.

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Mr. Donald Campbell, the well-known carriage maker of Harrison, Ont., writes: "I have been troubled off and on for many years with weak action of my heart and nervousness. Frequently my heart would palpitate and flutter with great violence, alarming me exceedingly. Often I had sharp pains in my heart and could not sleep well at night. I got a box of Milburn's Heart and Nerve Pills and from them derived almost immediate benefit. They restored vigor to my nervous and strengthened my entire system, removing every symptom of nerve or heart trouble, and enabling me to get restful, healthy sleep."

Milburn's Heart and Nerve Pills cure palpitation, throbbing, dizzy and faint spells, nervousness, sleeplessness, weakness, female troubles, after effects of grippe, etc. Price 50c. a box or \$ for \$1.25, with druggists. T. Milburn & Co., Toronto, Ont.

LAXA-LIVER PILLS cure Constipation, Biliousness, Sick Headaches, Dyspepsia. They do not grip, sicken or weaken. Every pill acts perfectly.

FOR MEDITATION'S HOUR.

Some Gentle Thoughts that Calm and Soothe and Bless.

No cord or cable can draw so forcibly or bind so fast as love can with only a single thread.

It is the unscrupulous and slippery man who suspects roguery in every quarter and ridicules the very idea of disinterestedness.

There are two ways of being happy. We may either diminish our wants or augment our means. Either will do the result is the same, and it is for each to decide for himself and do that which may happen to be the easier.

All sincere and earnest lives, seeking realities, and spurning shams, live within them the elements of true success, while those who waste their powers in seeking shadows where no substance is will fall even in their own poor aim.

It is the habitual thought that frames itself into our life. It affects us more than our intimate social relations do. Our confidential friends have not so much to do with shaping or influencing our lives as thoughts have within our harbour.

By striving to obtain and to cherish clear and true ideas of right, by emphasizing them through our influence, we strike the strongest and most effective blows at every form of wrong-doing.

Every one who values his or her happiness and peace of mind in this world would do well to cultivate patience. Without it man is like a ship without a rudder, at the mercy of his impulses which, if he obeys, may lead him into all sorts of difficulties and dissipation that may even take a lifetime to undo.

PEOPLE GETTING OLD.



As age advances, vitality retreats. Old people find themselves tired, listless, dyspeptic and lacking in strength. They lose interest in the active affairs of life and may either become chronic complainers, burdening their friends, or they may, by using Dr. Ward's Blood and Nerve Pills be made bright, cheerful, happy and healthy, as witness the following interesting example. The words of those who have lived many years carry wisdom with them. Why not profit by them?

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Nothing does a right-thinking man more good than helping his neighbors, especially the sick and weary. In recommending Dr. Ward's Blood and Nerve Pills, I feel that I am truly helping my neighbors. My wife and myself have used these Pills and derived great benefit from them. We are getting along in years, and the many times we feel the need of a tonic and strengthening medicine. My blood was thin and my system impoverished, and my wife was miserably debilitated, brought on by dyspepsia. We used many kinds of medicine, but did so much good as the Dr. Ward's Blood and Nerve Pills. Yours very truly, Signed, MR. & MRS. CLARK, Victoria, B.C.

Dr. Ward's Blood and Nerve Pills are sold at 50 cents per box or \$1.25 for three boxes, or mailed on receipt of price to The Dr. Ward Co., 71 Victoria St., Toronto. Book of information free.

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