

# A FRIENDLY STRANGER

Story of a Young Italian During the Days Following the Expulsion of the Jesuits.

By Sister Mary Campion.

## CHAPTER II.—Continued.

Giullo stopped suddenly, for the figure in the doorway pointed to his mother. She had sunk back in her chair and was clasping her hands convulsively, while her lips moved as in prayer. Giulio rushed to her. "Mother, you are tired; let me take you to your room."

She rose, and clinging to his arm, whispered, "Give up that bad man, my boy; don't ruin your own soul and break your mother's heart!"

"Give up, Cipriani? Mother, you are unreasonable. Never will I do it; I would rather—"

"Rather give up your own mother, Giulio, is that what you mean?"

The words had indeed been on his lips, but ashamed and angry at hearing them from her while that figure still stood reproachfully gazing at him, he burst into a fit of ungovernable "rabbia" of the Italian, and shouting, "I never thought or said such a thing—you torment me! good night," he dashed from the room by the door farthest from the ghost, and his poor mother heard his bedroom door shut with a bang that shook the old palace to its foundation.

He threw himself on the bed and tossed about in his fury. The fire in the stove gradually burned down and the flickering glow grew fainter and fainter. A dead silence prevailed, but he tried in vain to sleep. A sudden noise made him start up. It sounded like a step—tramp, upstairs, through the door, into the very room.

"Mother, mother," he cried, "is that you?"

He peered through the dim light, and straight sprang off the bed, for there by the side stood that mysterious figure. Giulio tried in vain to turn away his gaze; there was a fascination to the keen eyes that met his own and held them.

"Go," he called out, "let me at least sleep in peace!"

"My poor boy, you cannot do that. But why fear me? I am your friend!"

"Friend, indeed! a pretty friend! But for you I should be the gayest of any at this moment! You banet my steps, threaten when I laugh, point at me when I make merry with my true friends! Yours is a pleasant kind of a friendship, truly!" and he laughed bitterly.

"I would be your friend if you would let me. Will you not listen to me this once?"

"Who are you?" gasped the lad.

"Whom do you come from?"

"From your father," said the figure, sadly. "I was his friend, and would be his boy's if I could, but to tell you who I am would do no good. You would be less likely than ever to attend to me, and other souls whom I might consider as well as you might suffer through it in the long run—but my only wish is to show kindness to you."

"From my father?" cried Giulio, shrinking away into the corner of the room as the ghost approached with hand extended to take his hand. "I can show me is to rid me of your presence!"

"Polite boy!" said the figure, drawing back again; "I'll go, then, but this night you must listen to me first; the old year has gone—what have you to show for it? A God neglected and disobeyed, your peace of mind destroyed, your mother's heart well-nigh broken, your money passing daily into the hands of one who only intends to fatter you and make what he can out of your inexperience till you are of age, when he will soon get your whole estate in his power by some clever trick with the cards or dice. The new year is here—what are you going to do with it? Remember the saying, 'Well begun is half done.' Have you begun well by leaving your mother in a rage when she is slowly fading through your neglect? Have you said one prayer to your Creator in this new year? Have you anything left in your pocket to give an alms to one poor person tomorrow? Think of these things, and now I shall leave you for a time to yourself, for I cannot help unwilling souls, but I shall not give you up!"

"How long shall I be free of you?" asked Giulio, anxiously.

"That must depend on many things, but mark my words, the day is not far distant when you will bitterly repent not having listened to

"Go away," cried the lad, furiously, as once more the figure came towards him and offered a hand. "I shall go mad if you come one step nearer!"

The ghost retreated. "Addio! I can commend you to God—would that I could say, 'God bless you, poor fellow.'"

The door closed, the footsteps died away, and Giulio breathed freshly again, and fell into a short but unrefreshing slumber.

## CHAPTER III.

### BEARING THE WHIRLWIND.

Next morning Giulio came down with pale cheeks and weary eyes, and met his mother's loving embraces and wishes for the New Year and his birthday with a careless indifference which pained her.

"You have not slept well, Giulio?" she asked; "stay at home today for a while with me."

His face clouded. "I cannot, I have engagements that I must keep."

"Well, well, please yourself, dear boy, but give me your company for this first night of the New Year."

"Mother, I told you that Cipriani is giving me a grand dinner tonight. Numbers are going; how can I, who am to be the hero of the evening, absent myself?"

"The victim, you should rather say, my poor boy."

Giullo shrugged his shoulders impatiently, but said nothing. He did not observe his mother's extreme pallor, or that she had tasted nothing at breakfast. He was full of one thought, his birthday banquet. Yet he looked anxious, too, and seemed about to speak several times. At last he got up and said awkwardly enough:

"Well, mother, this is the first birthday you have given me nothing but words."

"You have had my prayers, dearest boy, and I had planned to surprise you with your birthday gifts and presents this evening."

Giullo laughed.

"But, mother, I want money. Here am I. Count Fontaine a baker on my birthday."

"Why, only last week I gave you a large sum of money for one so young, thinking you might want to give some presents at the New Year."

"It's all gone! Not a farthing left!" said the boy, carelessly.

His mother almost groaned, but going to her writing table took out a bundle of notes and gave them to him.

"Thank you a thousand times, darling mother," he said, looking more than satisfied, and away he went.

"Alas," said the poor Countess to herself, "this day eighteen years ago he lay on my breast, an innocent babe. Was it only to fall into the hands of Cipriani?"

She went to Mass, and then spent the day in loneliness. What signified the elegance and luxury of her room to her whose heart was bowed down with sorrow? She would gladly have given up rank, riches, health, ease, all she possessed for her son's deliverance from his present associates and return to religious duties. New Year's day passed, the night, and the next day also, and still she sat there in a kind of trance of misery. In vain the servants tried to persuade her to go down, and brought her food. She tasted nothing, but kept repeating mechanically to herself and all who urged her to take some food, "I will watch and pray till he comes."

Later on the second evening she found a step. It was Giulio's! Her heart beats fast. She has not strength to move; her fasting and watching have unnerved her, and she hardly knows why she is still sitting there. But Giulio enters.

"Such a splendid banquet, mother, last night! Music, flowers, lights, all were delightful, and I have never before spent such a glorious evening in all my life. I was coming home this morning, but Cipriani begged me to spend a quiet day with him, as he said he had been so busy with his duties as host to such a large party that he had not been able to enjoy me at all. Only one thing went wrong, though; I lost all my money, but as Cipriani won it, I don't mind. See, I have only these left," and he rattled a few coins in his pocket as he spoke.

His mother laughed. It was a strange, hollow laugh, yet he did not notice it.

"I am tired out, and so are you, mother. You should not have waited up for me."

"Not waited for you!" and she laughed again in that strange, hard, unnatural manner.

Giullo saw her go tottering to her room, and felt much relieved to be

spared all reproaches. Next day he came down late, for it was the Christmas vacation and Cipriani was to be away for a week, so there seemed nothing worth getting up for. He had breakfasted alone, and was not much concerned at his mother's absence, but by and by he began to feel lonely and asked her maid about her.

"Too ill to get up yet!" was the reply.

"Ah, she was overtired last night! She must rest, and she will be all right tomorrow," he answered.

Then he went out and amused himself as usual, came in late and went straight to bed.

"Tomorrow" came, but still no mother, and his solitary breakfast was hardly over when the maid came hurriedly to call him to his mother's room.

"Why what's the matter?" he said.

"Have you never seen my mother ill before?"

"Not as she is now!" was the indignant answer of the faithful old attendant, who had been with the Countess since Giulio's infancy.

"You had better come, and soon too!"

Giullo followed her. The windows of the richly furnished bedroom were darkened. The Countess lay in the bed, pale as death itself. Could that thin, white, sad face be indeed his mother's? He had never noticed the gradual change, and now the sight of the wreck of her former beauty shocked him. And who was that standing by the bed? Why did that tall figure stand in black point to the dying woman? Giulio turned pale as white as his stricken mother. His knees shook, and he clung to a chair to support himself.

"You may well be shocked, sir," said the maid, severely. "Poor lady, she does not know anyone."

The figure on the opposite side of the bed beckoned him to draw nearer.

"Come and see your work," it said, "why should you shrink from gazing on what you have done? It did not seem terrible in the doing. Take her hand; try and rouse her to recognition!"

Giullo obeyed, but as he touched her burning hand and bent over her, she pushed him from her, screaming, "You are not my Giulio, go away!" and fell back in a faint on the pillow.

While the maid was giving her restoratives, the ghost went on speaking. "This is your work, for months past you have broken her heart. I tried in vain to stop you; you would neither see nor listen. For your father's sake and at her earnest request I often followed you with warning voice and gesture, but you would not heed. I left you at your own urgent request, and it seems you have made good use of your time! You have made shipwreck of your own soul and her happiness."

"I may have injured myself, but this is not my work. She liked me to be happy, I thought, and was pleased to hear me laugh."

"That is false reasoning," answered his mentor, "and you know it."

"I would have given up everyone but Cipriani," persisted the boy, defiantly, "but she was unjustly prejudiced against him."

"That, too, is false," pursued the relentless ghost. "Cipriani cares for you for your money's worth, and will ruin you if he can. You know that he has won at cards much more than he ever spent on you, and he flatters you in order to win more."

Giullo could bear no more and flung himself on his knees by his mother's bed.

"Mother, only speak to me, tell me it is not true. I have not killed you, have I?"

"But remember," continued the figure sternly. "It is not only against her that you have sinned, it is against yourself, and God, to Whom you belong. Think of your mispent time, wasted energy and health. You are throwing away youth, talents, even life, and you have no more right to injure yourself than your mother."

"Spare me," cried Giulio, "if only she recovers I will do everything she wishes; I will make up for every thing!"

"Ah! my poor boy, if only you have the opportunity, but I fear such is not to be yours!"

## CHAPTER IV.

### "HE, PARDONING, WEARIES NOT."

The next day the Countess recovered consciousness, but to all appearance she was fast sinking. Giulio was all love and tenderness now. The ghost's words were not without fruit, and when, towards evening, his mother began to speak some words of loving counsel for his fu-

ture, he was ready to promise whatever she wished.

"My own boy," she said, slowly and with difficulty. "I am rightly punished for my mistaken love to keeping you with me instead of sending you to some college still under the care of the Fathers. I could not bear to part with you, for you seemed to be my all, and I trusted my affection and influence would counteract the evils of a secularized college. But I see my mistake, and, thank God, it is not too late for you. By your father's will, in the event of my death, Father Zampini, his old friend, is charged with the care of you, and our family lawyer with that of the estate. As I told you, Father Zampini has been giving missions and preaching to the neighborhood, and for some time past has been living with two other Fathers in some of the rooms which, as you know, are rented and occupied at the back and upper floors of the palazzo. I could not tell you this, for if Cipriani had known that he was here he would easily have found some pretext for getting the municipality to order them out of the town. He has been a great comfort to me in my loneliness and failing health, and now—"

Here Giulio broke in as a sudden light flashed upon him.

"Mother, is he tall, with piercing eyes, and does he wear a large cloak wrapped about him?"

"Yes, Giulio," answered his mother, much surprised at his excitement, "he wraps up at night or in bad weather, for he is getting old and is very delicate. You have often seen him and spoken to him, but would never let him make friends with you, so it was not safe to tell you who he was."

"What a fool I have been," said the poor boy, "I thought he was a ghost haunting me, and he said he came in my father's name. I hated and avoided him and would never let him shake hands, or I might have found out that he was a man. Was he in your room last night, mother?"

"Very likely, but I was unconscious. He has been at it—on a mission all day, and left word that he would come to me on his return."

"Ah, mother, I will make up for all if only you will live."

"God bless you, my boy, and whether I live or die, promise me that you will go where the faith is taught and practiced!"

"I will, mother, now rest till the Father comes to you, and tell him that I want to see him afterwards."

Giullo waited in heartrending grief in the next room. Were his eyes opened too late to save his mother? He prayed as he had never prayed before, and was only roused by the Father's entrance. Well did he recognize in the tall form, dark eyes and commanding appearance of the priest, the object of his late terror! The old Father came up to the softened lad, and laid his hand on the bowed head with a kindly blessing that consoled him, and as Giulio looked up, the rays of the setting sun fell on the priest's white hair, giving him an aureole of sanctity and lighting up his eyes with tenderness, and the boy recognized the truth of the words of Father Honconini, his old master, that it was conscience that made him a coward, but that enlightened by counsel he would find peace and guidance in the friend who had hitherto only caused him fear and rebellion.

"Heer up my son," said the Father, "I think your mother much better this evening. She is at rest about you and I hope her mind and nerves will recover their tone, and that she may be spared to you at any rate for a time."

"If I could but keep her for a while to prove my sorrow, Father, I would make any sacrifice for her sake."

"Even of Cipriani?" asked the old Father, smiling.

"Yes," said Giulio, shuddering; "I see it all now. It was no real friendship, but my vanity was flattered by his notice. He was both older and my teacher."

"Spare me," cried Giulio, "if only she recovers I will do everything she wishes; I will make up for every thing!"

"Ah! my poor boy, if only you have the opportunity, but I fear such is not to be yours!"

Days passed by, and slowly the Countess recovered a degree of health. Giulio hung over her now, and loaded her with loving cares. But the tempter had to be resisted once more, for on Cipriani's return he called, and after offering tenderest sympathy to the lad in his anxiety, told him he looked pale and worn, and begged him to come round with him for half an hour's chat, as there was no danger now in leaving his mother.

Giullo flushed. It was difficult to refuse without rudeness, but with a mighty effort he said boldly: "I am much occupied, besides that my

mother's state makes me most anxious. As soon as she is strong enough for me to leave her, I am going to the Roman College (it was still in the hands of the Jesuit Fathers) and have much to do first."

"Why, are you frightened into being a Jesuit?" said Cipriani, with a sneer.

Giullo turned pale, but, with the haughty courtesy of an Indian nobleman, only said in reply, "Excuse me for accompanying you to the door—I cannot continue this conversation!"

"Be a man, and come this once!"

"I am more of a man in refusing—good-bye!"

So the scene ended, and the close of the year so sadly begun saw the Palazzo Pont. Alto let for some years, Giulio at his studies at Rome, his mother living for some months, but then passing peacefully away under the shadow of St. Peter's and ministered to by her old confessor, Father Zampini. On Giulio's next birthday she was laid to rest in the Campo Santo of the City of Saints.

## CONVENTRY PATMORE.

Conventry Patmore, the poet, who died a short time ago in England at the age of seventy-three, was a Catholic, a convert to the Faith. He was one of the many mentioned in connection with the Laureateship after the death of Tennyson; and it is faint praise to say of him that he was a thousand times fitter for the office than the man who was eventually chosen to fill it. Patmore was not a great poet, but he was one of the best of the minor poets. His love poems are pure and elevating, though too much tinged with sentimentalism for a robust taste. He has written some exquisite religious poetry. One of the best of all his poems is this, from the "Unknown Eros," called "The Toys," which for fidelity to life, for pathos and exquisite expression cannot easily be surpassed in our language:

My little son who looked from thoughtful eyes  
And moved and spoke in quiet grown-up wise.

Having my law the seventh time disobeyed,  
I struck him, and dismissed  
With hard words and unkindness.

His mother, who was patient, below  
Then, fearing lest his grief should hinder sleep,  
I visited his bed,  
But found him slumbering deep.

With darkened eyelids and their lashes yet  
From his late sobbing wet,  
And I, with moan,  
Kissing away his tears, left others of my own;

For, on a table drawn beside his head  
He had put within the reach  
A box of counters and a red veined stone,  
A piece of glass abraded by the beach,  
And six or seven shells,  
A bottle with blue-bells  
And two French copper coins ranged there with careful art,  
To comfort his sad heart.

So when that night I prayed  
To God, I wept, and said:  
Ah, when at last we lie with tranced breath,  
Not vexing Thee in death,  
And Thou rememberest of what toys  
We made our joys,  
How weakly understood  
Thy great commanded good,  
Then, fatherly not less,  
Than I whom Thou has moulded from the clay,  
Thou'lt leave Thy wrath, and say,  
"I will be sorry for their childishness."

Conventry Patmore's published works include "The Angel in the House," "The Betrothal," "The Espousals," "The Unknown Eros," and "Amella."

Worldlings regard sin as an amusement. Alas! what an amusement is that by which one loses heaven and gains hell!—Tiberga.

Those who are quite satisfied sit still and do nothing; those who are not quite satisfied are the sole benefactors of the world—W. S. Landor.

The power to do great things generally arises from the willingness to do small things.—Imitation of Christ.

Let the child always appear to us as a living pledge of the presence, of the goodness and of the love of God.

The true servants of God endure life and desire death.—St. Hilipp Nerl.

No man is so worthless that a candidate will not treat him with great respect.

People are never too old to fall in love or to fight over politics.

## ITALY'S POOR POLICY.

A Roman Paper on the Treaty of Peace Between King Menelik and the Italians.

## The Abyssinian Ruler Obtains What He Desires.

### ROME, ITALY.

The winter, regarded from a social and ecclesiastical point of view, may be said to begin with the feast of St. Clement. This is one of the feasts which attracts great crowds of visitors, Roman and foreign. This year it resembled those that have gone before it. The crowds came; the old decorations were in their place; and the festive Roman music rejoiced the feast just as if each year had brought its changes in person, but not in things. Among the changes was one which recalled the universal regret of a few months ago when Father Hickey was elected to be Provincial of the Order of St. Dominic in Ireland. He sang the High Mass and was present at all the festivities; but it was a reminder that he was to be no longer numbered among the residents of the Eternal City. His successor, Very Rev. Prior Donegan, was also present.

In speaking of the loss and gain resulting from the treaty which has brought peace between Italy and Abyssinia, the Roman Post says:—"It was not to be expected that Menelik would suffer himself to be deprived of all the fruits of the victory he had gained. The treaty is a neat and complete summary of the desires of his royal heart: the cessation of war, perpetual peace, the abrogation of the treaty of Ucciali, the recognition of his absolute sovereignty, the putting back of the Italian frontier to the Italian engagement to hold lands for Menelik, the progress of Abyssinia in commerce and industry, the dealing with the great European powers for the ratification of the Treaty between the two contracting parties."

Enumerated successively and taken in connection with all that is known of Menelik, his ambitions, his fears, his foibles, and his characteristics as a man and as a ruler, these concessions agreed to by Italy must be considered as the fulfilment of the desires of Menelik and the best possible boon which he could have gained.

"His particular ideal is to assume as much as possible of European sovereign state, and his particular desideratum is to be confirmed as much as possible in his position as ruler over Abyssinia. He has secured both. The Treaty of Ucciali, which Count Antonelli drew up, but which never had existence, except on paper, is torn to shreds, and better than that, annihilated. By one of its clauses Menelik was obliged to deal with the European Powers through the medium of Italy. That was the Italian interpretation. The Abyssinian interpretation put able for obliged. Hence the war. Now that Treaty is no more, and Menelik is a truly sovereign ruler. He could afford to be generous, but we may well ask ourselves if it would not have been a better bargain for Italy had she accepted the prisoners from the hands of the Pope? Then she would have been secure of her great necessity. Over the other prizes she might have used diplomacy. Now she has lost these. Evidently it was not the March Belesa-Muna line on which her attention has been rivetted during all these months of weary negotiations, but the line, say, of the Vatican enclosure. She voluntarily retrenched her frontiers there, lest they should be retrenched here."

Another devout Feast, but one of a series, finds mention in the organs of the Catholic press of Rome. The celebrations for the first centenary of what is described as the Prodiges of Our Lady, and which took the form of a movement of the eyelids in many pictures of the Blessed Virgin and in crucifixes still draw crowds of the Romans to each of the churches where the festivals are held. They are strictly Roman feasts, as the foreign visitors, for the most part, do not know of their existence. The enthusiasm and simple faith of the people are displayed anew at each of these festivals.

### PATRICK RYAN.

Lady Mary Ann Gibson, wife of the Hon. William Gibson, was recently received into the Church at St. Moritz, Engadine, Switzerland. Her husband, who is the eldest son of the Lord Chancellor of Ireland, is a convert of four years' standing.