

Raphael Macaroni's Masterpiece

By Nini Belmaine

RAPHAEL MACARONI was an artist; he was also hard up. The little studio at the top of Excelsior Mansions, Maida Vale, was seldom visited by a sitter with ulterior motives and a purse. Then the brilliant idea of advertising in the *Morning Boast* occurred to him. He knew one of the numerous ladies who contribute puffs and society paragraphs to the paper. A really nice little notice appeared one day about Raphael Macaroni, stating, among other things, that he was a genius. So he was, to think of advertising.

Mrs. Saponatus-Smith read the advertisement and the corollary encomium in another column. A vision of the Royal Academy lit up her cunning, small brown eyes. She would have her daughter, Hildegard, painted by this fashionable artist, and fill her friends in Snobville with envy, malice and consummate uncharitableness.

The girl had the fashion-plate comeliness and lack of individuality common to her class. Her round, pink-and-white face was without intellectual charm and void of any distinguishing feature.

Mrs. Saponatus-Smith was a portly person addicted to cheap perfumes, and had a desire for smart society, in which she did not shine. She told Hildegard of her plan for improving Burlington House. Then they thoroughly overdid themselves and set out for Maida Vale.

Raphael Macaroni was defying pessimism with a flask of Chianti and a tube of Teutonised meat, when the studio bell rang as if all the readers of the *Morning Boast* were making calls on him. His heart bounded with hope when Mrs. Saponatus-Smith swept in, and, cackling some incoherent apology, settled herself on a chair like a gigantic hen. Hildegard tripped in after her with a confused smile, and bowed timidly in response to the courtly obeisance of Raphael Macaroni.

"You must excuse me," said the elder lady, fighting for breath, "but four flights of stairs take it out of me."

"Ah, yes, I am much delighted," said he, beaming impartially on both. "I can't bear lifts. I always feel they'll drop me when I'm going up, and I have a horrible sinking sensation when I go down. The men who work them appear to have no nerves; they just press a button here and there, and all the time I feel that there is only a piece of cocoanut matting between me and eternity."

"Oh, mamma!" Hildegard exclaimed in a shocked voice.

"I understand you perfectly, Madame," said Macaroni gallantly. "The lifts give me also sensations as if I have escaped from something. You see?"—and he smiled like a seraph with a new set of teeth.

"That's exactly it, Mr. Macaroni; you put it beautifully."

"Ah, yes, I know," and he gave a picturesque shrug to indicate his dire dread of lifts.

Hildegard whispered to her mother to call him Signor Macaroni.

"I want you to paint my daughter's portrait, Signor. She is my only child."

"It will give me very great pleasure to paint the young lady."

"If it is a good likeness I will give you permission to hang it in the Royal Academy," she said graciously, believing that the subject had more to do with influencing the judges than the ability of the artist.

An Englishman would have enlightened her on the lottery method peculiar to Piccadilly; but Raphael Macaroni was a courtier, and made his visitor feel that she was conferring a priceless favor. "I ought to paint the best picture of my life," and he bowed to Hildegard, who smiled feebly and took the compliment as if it had been a caramel.

"When can you begin the portrait?"

"Any time that is convenient to you, Madame."

"What day shall we say, Hildegard?"

"Any day you like, mamma," she replied, languidly inspecting a picture of Poseidon spearing dolphins. The girl congratulated herself on a high school education, which enabled her to see that the canvas was an allegory of Father Thames, in the years when his pellucid stream kept its sediment in its bed instead of careering on its surface, as at present.

"In what costume do you wish Miss Smith to be painted?"

"Oh, in the latest style of evening dress."

"Ah, yes; that will be charming for me," said Macaroni, with guileless enthusiasm.

"I am coming with her," she said, eyeing him keenly, and adding to nobody in particular, "Evening gowns are rather décolleté just now."

"I shall be so pleased if you will come always, Madame. You shall have tea, coffee, chocolate, or anything you like."

"Is it to be a full-length portrait, mamma? You have not told Signor Macaroni."

"I want Hildegard to pose standing straight up—just as if she could

walk out of the frame, you know," yet, I cannot claim five thousand guineas," and he laughed.

"Good gracious!" she replied, bridling. "Well, they would not get it out of me."

"No?" he said in that musical voice of his.

"What is it for?" she asked, with a snort.

"For their genius, Madame," he replied, with a touch of the true artist's pride in his manner.

"Ho, I dare say; but people in the suburbs are not taken in by genius. We don't believe in it, you know, Signor."

"Ah, yes, I have heard that often."

"Well, what is genius?" she asked sharply, resenting something in his tone that approached contempt.

"It cannot be explained; that is its chief charm."

"Humph! I suppose it is only a question of superior brains, after all."

"No, Madame, that is the talent; a man of genius is different; his heart beats in sympathy with his brain. He is what twilight is to the day. You do not know why it comes; it is mysterious, sad, and sometimes profoundly beautiful."

"You artists are much too sentimental," she said with a shake of her feathered and spangled head. In the recesses of her own mind she thought he was run down through want of roast beef and port wine. The ultra-gentle always associate genius with hunger and an uncanny knowledge of the dead languages.

Her style put his sensitive nature on edge, and he said carelessly, "I only charge one hundred and fifty guineas for a portrait."

"What—a lot?" she screamed.

"I am not going to ask you for so much," he said, taking in the situation.

"Oh," she quavered, "what will you charge me?" And she blinked nervously as he mentally calculated her means.

"I will accept one hundred guineas from you, Madame."

"One hundred guineas!" she gasped in amazement.

"Had you no idea of what an artist is entitled to charge for a portrait?" he asked, somewhat nettled.

"I thought twenty, or thirty, or fifty pounds at the outside."

"My dear Madame, the man who would work for such prices could not paint at all."

"I think you ought to have given me some hint of your high charges. I simply won't pay it, Signor."

"If you don't, I shall consider—"

"Now, for goodness' sake, don't put me out of temper; I'm all of a tremble already."

"I am sorry," he replied courteously; "you had better write to me. I, too, do not like scenes. It is a pity we did not have an understanding at first. I fear I am to blame."

"Well, that is kind of you. I will give you fifty guineas, you are so nice."

"No, no," he said, throwing up his hands. "It is useless. I am an artist. I cannot take less."

"I am not going to throw my money away simply because you are an artist," she retorted tartly.

He shrugged his shoulders in a way she took for a menace. "The picture is nearly finished. Miss Smith need not trouble to pose any more."

"It is a nuisance that you are so proud," she said, taking a last look at the portrait, which was a splendid likeness. "Do be sensible, and I'll post a cheque to-night."

"I regret, Madame, that I cannot accept less than the reduced fee I have mentioned."

When they returned home Hildegard was given a graphic account of the affair, and to her mother's intense mortification, she said she would be ashamed to go to the studio again.

"Why, may I ask?" blustered the mother truculently.

"We have treated him shabbily, and he is a gentleman as well as an artist. Besides, you can well afford it, ma'am."

"He knows that. I simply won't pay, on principle."

"I can't see any principle in being mean."

"Don't you see that he will give us the portrait in the end? It is of no use to him."

"You commissioned him to paint me, and he naturally expects you to pay his fee. I should like to go and apologize to him. He is the nicest man I ever met."

"Ho, indeed! Well, let me tell you that you are not going there without me."

"No, mamma, of course not," Hildegard replied dutifully.

The old lady was doubly incensed at Macaroni's attempted extortion and her daughter's imputation that she herself had not acted as a lady. "They are in love with each other," she thought; "but I am not going to leave my money to foreigners."

She wrote to Raphael, making a final offer of seventy pounds for the portrait. He replied, courteously refusing to discuss the matter on any other basis than the terms he mentioned when he last had the pleasure of seeing her.

Weeks passed swiftly, and the Royal Academy opened its doors for the May exhibition without any communication from Raphael Macaroni. Mrs. Saponatus-Smith saw his name in the *Morning Boast*, but did not understand the jargon in which art critics write notices of pictures. There was a good deal about light and shade and values, which was less intelligible to her than Chaldean. She determined to go quietly and see his picture for herself. It was plain that it was not a portrait from the title, "April," which conveyed nothing to her mind more poetical than umbrellas.

Now, Hildegard had never seen her mother the worse for wine, and she nearly fell into the ornamental lake-let in the garden when she saw her majestic parent coming up the path swaying like an intoxicated cat. Had she gone mad? She gesticulated ferociously for the girl to come to her, and wildly brandished an open railway time-table.

"Mamma, whatever is the matter?"

"Don't talk to me, Miss. Change your dress at once; Perkins is packing a small bag. I want you to catch the 5 o'clock express for Parkstone."

"But what for, mamma?" asked the girl, more mystified than ever.

"Don't cross-question me, Miss, but do as you are told. Your uncle will meet you at the station, and you will stay at the Rectory till I have settled matters elsewhere."

The girl was quite bewildered, but of such an obedient disposition that

she did as she was bid; and constant attendance on a domineering mother made any change welcome. She smiled blandly to that irate person when the train moved out of the station. This fairly made the old lady's indignation boil over.

"I never thought it was in her," she said to herself as she revenged herself watching the steam dragon coil round a curve and disappear with a sardonic flip of its rocking tail.

A couple of hours later Raphael Macaroni thought he was entertaining a vociferous maniac when Mrs. Saponatus-Smith stormed up his stairs and invaded the studio with the force of a blizzard.

She carried her umbrella as if it were Excalibur, and exclaimed, "You villain!" Then, just like a woman, she burst into a torrent of tears.

Raphael Macaroni was savage at first, then a mixture of humor and disgust made him silent. She looked so ludicrous, glaring at him through her wet eyes, that he could hardly control his features. He managed, however, to indicate by raising his eyebrows and shrugging his shoulders that he was intensely surprised at her sudden eruption.

"If it wasn't for the exposure in the Sunday papers I would put you in prison," she blubbered.

He was dumfounded, and looked guilty of anything.

"You have been seeing my daughter clandestinely, and now you have disgraced her."

Raphael thrust his long white fingers through his abundant hair and shouted: "Do tell me what it is you think I have done, Madame."

"Think, indeed!" she snorted. "I have had the evidence of my own eyes. My daughter has been here without my knowledge."

"I have not seen Miss Hildegard since she came with you."

"Please don't lie to me, Signor."

"I won't, if you will be good enough to explain what it is you have in your mind."

"Well, I declare! You are as cool as she is; but you won't see her again in a hurry. I packed her off this afternoon to my brother, who is a clergyman in Dorset."

"Ah, that will be nice for Miss Smith; the country is so beautiful in May."

"Look here, Signor Macaroni, I have been to the Royal Academy. Now do you understand how ashamed I feel as a mother? My daughter has been to see you, and, what is worse, she took off her shoes and stockings here."

Raphael Macaroni stared hard at the heavy scarlet face before him, and then burst into peal after peal of laughter.

"You excuse me? I am most sorry to laugh," he jerked out hysterically, and went off again.

"Perhaps there is some mistake," she said, in a mollified tone, "but I must know everything. Be perfectly frank with me, and I'll give you a hundred pounds for the picture called 'April,' and then I'll burn it."

"Burn it, Madame? It is my masterpiece. I have already an offer of double that sum for it."

"What possessed you to paint my daughter as April, of all things?" she inquired testily.

"I thought it a charming idea. Don't you think her dress is very pretty? A plain white muslin fastened with flowers at the neck. Oh, it is lovely!"

"It might be in Italy, but ladies in English suburbs do not have their portraits painted with no boots on."

"My dear Madame, I could not symbolize April in boots!"

"Oh, bother April; that's no excuse!"—and she favored him with a glance of matronly indignation that sent him into convulsions again till she was forced to smile decorously in sympathy.

"Allow me to explain, Madame," he said, drying his eyes. "You refused to pay me for the portrait. An inspiration came to me. I altered the face

He Banked on Promises

"IT'S a pretty good world, after all," remarked the retired merchant. "I have been casting about recently for some enterprise to embark in, and my friends have promised to support me. If I had some money, no matter what I may decide upon."

"Oh, yes, they're always lavish with their promises," replied the hotelkeeper with a snort of disgust, "but when it comes to delivering the goods they have important engagements elsewhere. I wouldn't give a counterfeit nickel for all the promises in the United States, not if they were done up in muslin wrappers and tied with pink ribbons. If I had some money to spare I might buy a few ready-made post-holes or a couple of cans of fried moonlight, or a photograph of Dr. Cook, but I wouldn't invest a cent in promises. I got enough of promises when I ran for Mayor of this town four years ago."

"I had no more idea of running for Mayor than you have of eloping with your grandmother, when a committee of prominent citizens, headed by Judge Chamberlain, came around and said the town was up against a crisis and the taxpayers who were tired of municipal corruption insisted that I should be their standard bearer."

It Was a Moral Duty.

"They put it up to me as a moral duty to be a candidate. Judge Chamberlain made a speech that moved the whole bunch to tears, in which he spoke of pibrochs and slogans and clarion notes, and referred to the gathering of the clans, and said that I had been chosen to remove a blot from the escutcheon of our fair city."

"What is an escutcheon?" asked the retired merchant.

"It's hanged if I know, but there was a blot on it, and I was tagged to wipe it out. Of course I consented to run."

"The announcement that I would run was made in the morning paper, and it seemed that everybody in town was rallying to my support."

"People stopped me on the street to promise that they would vote for me as often as possible on election day, and would endeavor to hypnotize their friends into doing the same. They said their faith in our institutions and the sacred palladiums was renewed and restored by my candidacy. When a man of my character and attainments consented to sacrifice his own personal interests in order to wipe out the blot on the town's escutcheon the world was given a lesson in patriotism."

"I tell you, my friend, after I had listened to this sort of conversation for a couple of days I began to get quite chesty, and I made up my mind that the rest of my life would be devoted to the great work of removing blots from escutcheons. I had in my mind some sort of cleaning establishment where people might bring their escutcheons and have them cleaned and pressed while they waited."

No End to the Promises.

"The opposing candidate was a tool of the interests, or so he was described by Judge Chamberlain. He stood for all that was base and corrupt in politics, and it was evident that he was going to receive a crushing rebuke at the polls. I almost felt sorry for him when I saw him going around town in his beautiful ignorance of the humiliating defeat that was in store for him."

"Nearly every man in town had promised to vote for me. All the pibrochs and clarion notes were in my favor, and you couldn't pick up a newspaper without seeing something about the job of dry-cleaning that I was going to do. The town's escutcheon, and the clans were gathered in the saloons and elsewhere— and I naturally felt sympathetic for an opponent who was going to be stamped into the ground."

"There was no end to the promises. People used to call me up by telephone at all hours of the night to tell me that they could hardly wait until election day, they were so anxious to vote for me, and I received a bushel of letters."

"Well, sir, election day came, and you remember the outcome. The tool of the interests got there with both feet, and I didn't have a look-in. They landed me with a soggy election loss. Even as an also-ran I didn't stack up knee high. The thing that jarred me most was the fact that Judge Chamberlain voted for the tool of the interests and was appointed city attorney for life."



It is a desecration of a kiss to see these hideous monkey lips pressed together.

Did you ever see anything more hideous than this? These animals have been trained to imitate the kiss, the token of affection between human beings. Of all animal creation, human beings are the only ones who kiss. These monkeys are not kissing because they love each other; the kiss means nothing to them; it has simply been taught them by some clever trainer. A number of earnest, energetic women are trying to suppress the kiss, but, as its popularity is of some millions of years' standing, I don't believe the ladies will make much headway. That kissing is a much abused privilege, there is no doubt. Some girls think nothing of allowing a man whom they barely know to kiss them. There is no more value in a kiss of that sort than there is in the perfunctory little peck which some men give their wives at parting and meeting. The man kisses the girl partly because he wants to, partly because he thinks she expects him to, and partly because—or, well, she's a girl, and she's there, and why not? Any girl who cares for that kind of kiss can get it. She isn't the first by dozens he has kissed; nor will she be the last. A man will kiss any girl who gives him sufficient encouragement; but when he falls in love he does not care to think of his sweetheart as being one of the "many monkeys" type of girl. Why don't you keep the sanctity of your lips for the man you love, girls? A kiss does not mean very much to a friend and the man who some day will marry you, but it should mean a great deal to earn your love and the right to kiss you.

A Fair Foe

By GEORGE SIGERSON.

THERE'S a shade on my soul,
And my heart is in dole
From nearly day-dawning till soft even
air.

With love for the white
Fresh Flower of Delight—
With love for the Maid of the fair-
folding hair.

Her mind is a dove,
And the wit of my love
Is more supple and swift than a bird
on the wing;

More sweet is her mouth
Than wine of the South
Or all the hill honey that Greek poets
sing.

To the dewdrops below
Her golden curls flow—
See the flame of the berry her smooth
check upon!

In each little ear,
That no picture could peer,
There sparkles a jewel as bright as
the sun.

Over earth far and wide
Could I choose me a bride
And wed a rich daughter of royalty's
line;

Through life she could be
But a sorrow to me—
For the Flower of the World has this
poor heart of mine!