

Magic Touch of the Restorer Reveals Pictures Hidden Under Dust of Centuries and Even Painted Over by Other Artists.



PROFESSOR PASQUALE FARINA AT WORK in his STUDIO



- 1.—Restorer Suspected That the Fruits and Flowers Had Been Painted Over an Old Picture.
- 2.—Their Elimination Disclosed Carlo Dolci's 'Salome with the Head of John the Baptist.'
- 3.—Picture as It Was When First Seen by Professor Farina.
- 4.—Discovery of Another Picture Under It.
- 5.—Full Disclosure of a Fifteenth Century Florentine Painting.

BY GUSTAV KOBBE.

NOW you see it and now you don't but you see something else. This might well be applied to Professor Pasquale Farina's "dry" method of restoring old masters. For on several notable occasions, while restoring a canvas that supposedly had but one picture on it, he has discovered, under the painting he was working on, an old painting—an older master. Professor Farina's studio is at No. 1314 Arch street, Philadelphia. He has carried out work of restoration for several of the great collectors in the city of his residence, notably for Mr. John G. Johnson, one of the great art collectors of America; the Wilstach Gallery, in Fairmount Park, and for several other widely known public galleries, including the historical paintings in Independence Hall.

Specially interesting cases of discovery by this restorer of older paintings under old ones, or of partial over-painting that has destroyed the entire meaning of the original subject, include the revelation through his method of restoring, in which no chemicals are used, of the head of John the Baptist under a basket of fruits and flowers that, painted over the head, had entirely altered the significance of the picture. There was thus revealed a canvas by Carlo Dolci, in its original state. "Salome with the Head of John the Baptist," for which some subsequent painter had substituted the basket of fruits and flowers. Probably this painter, or the owner of the picture, did not like the grim story told by the original, and so made the change or ordered it.

This picture, in the Wilstach collection, showed a dish of fruit conspicuous on a table. Two women were standing at the table and a cherub held a garland draped along a staff.

A deeper study of the subject, a closer examination of the general physical condition of the painting, followed by an analysis of some of the pigments and a deeper study of the probable meaning the painting was intended to convey, convinced the restorer that there was no relation between the different details of the composition, and that, somehow, the unity of the con-

ception had been disturbed by the introduction of the fruits and flowers in a composition to which they were not appropriate. The elimination of this detail proceeded gradually. As it slowly disappeared under his hand the result was that in place of the fruit and flowers he found portrayed the head of John the Baptist in a wonderfully good state of preservation—not a scratch on it, not the slightest indication of the color fading, the tint cracking or peeling.

"Superbly drawn, delicately painted, highly finished, psychologically expressing the calmness of a martyr who died with a good conscience and was in life a devoted, faithful Christian," said Professor Farina the other day, "this head is the best part of the whole composition, viewing it from the technical, artistic and psychological standpoint. The picture, thus restored to the completeness and unity of the original conception, has reacquired its dramatic effect, its historical importance, its reason for being. The garland of flowers along the staff was also removed and there appeared in the angel's hands a white scroll with the inscription, 'Parate Viam Domini.' This explained the reason for the angel's presence in the composition. It turned out to be a 'Salome with the Head of John the Baptist,' by Carlo Dolci."

This restorer's achievements number among them his discovery of a "Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane," over which there had been painted another picture which completely hid it. The picture painted over the "Gethsemane" was a "Madonna" by Carucci. This artist, called also Il Pontorno, because of the suburb where he lived, lavished all his skill on this Madonna. The restorer states that the painting was critically regarded as one of the finest examples of Florentine pictorial art.

But traces of a dim figure in the inner angle of the left elbow of the "Madonna" caught the artist's eye, and, carefully delving beneath Il Pontorno's heavy impasto, he found an old man's head painted with miniature-like care, the head of St. Peter. This was, for Professor Farina, the last of Carucci's work. For he surmised that the painting beneath it was even rarer and a

century older. With the zeal of an antiquary he proceeded at once to eliminate the Pontorno picture in order to reveal an unknown artist's conception that amazing movement in Italian art of "Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane," which culminated in the immortal masterpiece of the Venetian, Umbrian and Neapolitan schools in the 16th century. He first saw the panel in Naples in 1910. Not only was there an old picture painted over one from 75 to 100 years older, but the later picture itself had taken on layer after layer of grime and had become dark, dirty and muddy brown.

As to the "Gethsemane" beneath it, Pontorno himself evidently had thought nothing of making use of it for a painting of his own over it. And to think that the "Madonna" he did paint over it remained untouched for 400 years, until Professor Farina discovered traces of the old picture under it and proceeded to reveal the original. This earlier painting was done in distemper, which is now as hard as enamel. In the restorer's opinion it is an extremely rare example of art in the earlier period of the Italian renaissance.

His view is that Pontorno, at the moment the inspiration to paint the "Madonna" came over him, looked about his studio for a suitable canvas. Probably, however, he failed to discover any

fragile barrier of glass between him and the outer world. And by the time Enoch Golden reached the spot his enemy had vanished.

Yet in almost the same breath the Laughing Mask had leaped in the opposite direction, in pursuit of the fleeing Da Espares. But that flight, wherever it led or might have led, was interrupted by a sudden detonation that shook the great house to its foundation. There was a roar of falling girders, the splintering of wood, the rumble of a great avalanche, as the seven-ton steel vault, deprived of its supports, crashed down through the filmy flooring, carrying dust and debris and tumbling pieces of household furniture as it went. Nor did that massive thing of metal stop until it bedded itself in the broken cement flooring of the cellar below. Then above the rattle of fall-

ing plaster and echoing showers of scattering brick-and-brace rose the quick cry of human voices calling for help. Golden, staring dazed at the great room through which sudden ruin had erupted, was scarcely conscious of the frightened girl clinging so forlornly to his arm.

"Is anybody hurt?" asked the white-faced girl.

The ever-dependable old butler looked at Manley, who in turn looked away.

"I'm sorry, Miss Margery," Wilson hesitatingly explained, "but it is the Count Da Espares!"

"You mean he is—"

"I'm afraid so, Miss Margery. They have just found his body, crushed under the vault!"

(To be continued next week.)

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was startling. The directors of the National Museum and many other connoisseurs who were present simply were astounded at what I was accomplishing."

What Professor Farina's method is he naturally does not reveal. But as it does not involve the use of chemicals or even of soap and water I have concluded that it must consist in the careful erasure, by light friction of the strata which, in the course of time, have been formed by the accumulation of dust and dirt or by deliberate over-painting and ignorant retouching upon the original surface of the picture. It is Professor Farina's firm conviction that the paint on genuine old masters still is nearly as fresh and bright as on the day it was applied.

"The pigments used by the old masters," he said in speaking of his work, "were permanent. They do not fade. Present-day colors are made of animal, vegetable and mineral products, whereas the pigments made by the old masters were made entirely of mineral. They were made in fewer colors than now and artists mixed their own colors far more than they do today. For this reason when a picture by an old master is gradually and properly revealed, the dirt deposits having been removed, the original colors will be seen almost in their first vividness. Pictures painted by the old masters need not look old. The much-vaunted golden tone looked for and prized by collectors is not a sign of age and originality. It is a sign of dirt and bad care. There can be no real appreciation of the paintings of the old masters until they are seen in their true colors. All chemicals injure these colors. Even water, instead of flowing off a picture gets into and under the minute inequalities of surface and adds to the process of slow disintegration. Substances accumulated through ages or even purposely added to paintings do not combine with the old pigments chemically, but adhere to the painted surface in strata and, therefore, must be gradually eliminated and without the use of any chemicals whatsoever. For chemicals, instead of aiding in the restoration of paintings, are absolutely injurious to them."

THE IRON CLAW BY ARTHUR STRINGER

(Continued From Page 3.)

quicker as possible! Every one," repeated that authoritative-voiced intruder as Da Espares and the tall man in the Arabian burruse rose to their feet, "except these two gentlemen here."

"Get back, both of you," the clear voice behind the yellow mask had called out, "or before God I'll shoot you down where you stand!"

That sudden threat of violence was the spring which released the tension. There were mingled shouts of resentment and fear, followed by a quick and unreasoning rush for the door, apertures and pannels and peasants and courtiers and Geisha girls in contending flurry and fiery and frightened faces.

For a minute or two the master of the house struggled in vain to stop them. Then his attention was directed toward the Laughing Mask, for the latter, ad-

Inverse Ratio.
Judge.
Mrs. Featherby—I simply can't dress on \$500 a year!
Mrs. Featherby—Why, wear less.
Mrs. Featherby—The less I wear the more it costs!