

## **THE PROFESSOR'S STORY OF THE YELLOW MASK.**

### **PART FIRST.**

#### **CHAPTER I.**

About a century ago, there lived in the ancient city of Pisa a famous Italian milliner, who, by way of vindicating to all customers her familiarity with Paris fashions, adopted a French title, and called herself the Demoiselle Grifoni. She was a wizen little woman with a mischievous face, a quick tongue, a nimble foot, a talent for business, and an uncertain disposition. Rumor hinted that she was immensely rich, and scandal suggested that she would do anything for money.

The one undeniable good quality which raised Demoiselle Grifoni above all her rivals in the trade was her inexhaustible fortitude. She was never known to yield an inch under any pressure of adverse circumstances. Thus the memorable occasion of her life on which she was threatened with ruin was also the occasion on which she most triumphantly asserted the energy and decision of her character. At the height of the demoiselle's prosperity her skilled forewoman and cutter-out basely married and started in business as her rival. Such a calamity as this would have ruined an ordinary milliner; but the invincible Grifoni rose superior to it almost without an effort, and proved incontestably that it was impossible for hostile Fortune to catch her at the end of her resources. While the minor milliners were prophesying that she would shut up shop, she was quietly carrying on a private correspondence with an agent in Paris. Nobody knew what these letters were about until a few weeks had elapsed, and then circulars were received by all the ladies in Pisa, announcing that the best French forewoman who could be got for money was engaged to superintend the great Grifoni establishment. This master-stroke decided the victory. All the demoiselle's customers declined giving orders elsewhere until the forewoman from Paris had exhibited to the natives of Pisa the latest fashions from the metropolis of the world of dress.

The Frenchwoman arrived punctual to the appointed day--glib and curt,