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THE ROMANCE OF GIOVANNI CALVOTTI.

By David Christie Murray

From Coals Of Fire And Other Stories
By David Christie Murray
In Three Volumes Vol. II.

Chatto & Windus, Piccadilly 1882

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CHAPTER I.—IN THE ATTIC.

I live in an attic. I am in the immediate neighbourhood of a great tavern and a famous place of amusement. The thoroughfare on which I can look whilst I sit at my window is noisy with perpetual traffic. In the midst of

London I am more of a hermit than is that pretentious humbug who waves his flag at passing steamers from his rock in the Ægean. I am not a hermit from any choice of mine, or from any dislike of men and women. I am not a hermit because of any dislike which men and women may entertain for me. In my time I have been popular, and have had many friends. If I could find it in my heart at this moment to face some one of those friends, the necessity for a continued hermitage might pass. If I could find it in my heart to write to one of them I might close this lonely vigil to-morrow. Let me confess the truth. I am ashamed of myself, and I can appeal to nobody for assistance. I have gamed away the whole of my substance, and I am a broken man. It would be possible to do something better for myself if I could venture into the streets. But my sole possessions in the way of outer clothing are one pair of too-ancient trousers, one pair of tattered slippers, one fez, and one poor old dressing-gown.

My estimable Uncle round the corner has the rest. Perhaps I am less a hermit than a prisoner—a prisoner over whom that sternest of janitors, Poverty, holds the key.

I am a little proud of my English, and I do not think you can have yet discovered from my style of expression that I am not a native of this country. Permit me to describe myself.

I am an Italian and a gentleman, and my age is thirty. My main fault is, that I am able to do much in too many directions. I play admirably upon several instruments, and my little original compositions are admitted to show great undeveloped talent. My verses in four languages are also admitted to show great undeveloped talent. As a painter or a sculptor I might have made fame certain. I am merry and generous, and slow to offence, an unmeasured braggart, careless about money matters, without dignity, but the soul of honour. I am also your obedient servant. Permit me so to subscribe myself—Your obedient servant, Giovanni Calvotti.

My attic is uncarpeted, and its general aspect is sordid. It contains a bed, a table, a chair, a chest of drawers, a grand piano, a violin, a violoncello, my pipes, my tobacco, my writing materials, and—me. Stay! Hidden for the moment from my glance beneath the grand piano are the tools by which I live: my easel, my porte-couleur, my palette, canvas, and brushes. My estimable uncle round the corner is not a judge of art. It is my weakness that I cannot paint bad pictures. I linger sometimes for a whole day hungry—sometimes even without tobacco—touching and again touching the ripened beauties of my canvas child, before I can dare to leave it. I am a hungry amateur, but that is no reason why I should be false to the principles of art. Like my playing upon four instruments, and like my verses in four languages, my painting is admitted to show great talent—as yet only partially developed. Upon each of my works my estimable uncle advances me the sum of twelve shillings and sixpence. I paint one picture per week. In consideration of the restricted character of my wardrobe, my landlady is so obliging as to send my works to the only dealer with whom I can at present do business. I had never known until this morning who it was that acted as my ambassador. I have told you already that I am of a merry temperament. I snap my fingers at evil fortune. I despise the goddess Circumstance. Seeking to do me an evil turn this morning she has benefited me, and I am contented in spite of her. Good gracious! Is a man to lose everything because his stomach is empty? The goddess Circumstance shall not keep my heart empty, let her keep my shelves as bare as she will. My Lady of Circumstance, Giovanni Calvotti proffers to you a polite but irrevocable defiance!

This morning my canvas child was a landscape. This afternoon it was an inglorious smudge. It is now on its way back to the landscape condition, and will have revived all its glories by to-morrow. It was noon when I rang my bell.

'Madame,' I said to my landlady, in my cheerful Italian manner, 'will you again extend to me your courtesy?'

My landlady is not an educated woman, but she is a good creature, and has a delicate and refined susceptibility. She recognises in me a gentleman. She reveres in my person a genius to which I make no pretension. I am not a man of genius. A man of genius does one thing supremely well. Some men of exceptional talent do many things admirably, but nothing supremely well. I am a man of exceptional talent. Pardon the modest candour which is compelled to assume the garb of egotism.

My landlady looked at my canvas child, and then at me, and laughed.

'To Mr. Aaron's, sir?' Asking this, she put her hands upon the edges of the framework of the canvas.

'Yes, madame,' I answered, for we have always the same formula on Fridays at noon. 'To my estimable uncle round the corner.'

'Anything more than usual?' my landlady asked me.

'No, madame,' I answered. 'A loaf, a pound of coffee, half a pound of bird's-eye tobacco, the ticket from my estimable uncle, a receipt for the week's rent, and the change.'

My landlady laughed again and said, 'Very good, sir.' Then she went downstairs with the picture, and I felt unhappy when my canvas child was gone, and was fain (an idiom employed by your best writers) to solace myself with my violin. So far there was nothing to mark this Friday morning from any other Friday morning for the last nine weeks. It is now nine weeks that I have been a hermit. I was very hungry, and was glad to think of the coffee and the loaf. I should have told you that my habits are very abstemious, and that I am admirably healthy on a low diet. My native cheerfulness, my piano, my violin, my violoncello, my canvas children, and my pipes, all nourish me like meat and wine. I played upon my violin a little impromptu good-bye to my landscape—a melodious farewell to a sweet creation. The time seemed long before my landlady returned, and when I put back my violin in its case, I heard a sound of crying on the stairs. I opened the door and looked out, and there was a little English angel, whom I had never before seen, sitting upon the topmost step, close to my attic door, crying as if her heart had broken.

'What is the matter, my poor little maid?' I asked very tenderly, for I know that young girls are easily frightened by strangers.

She looked up with eyes like the skies I was born under. The pretty pale cheeks were all wet, and the pretty red lips were trembling, and those beautiful blue heavens were raining as no blue skies ought to rain.

'Ah, come, my child,' I said to her; 'how can I help you if you do not tell me what is the matter?'

'Oh, signor,' she said, with many sobs and tears, 'I have spoiled your beautiful picture.'

She held it up—my canvas child—all besmeared with mud. I could not resist one exclamation of sorrow. The

news was too sudden for my self-possession to remain. But when I saw that the little English angel began to weep afresh at this exclamation, I longed for one moment to be able to get out of my own body, that I might chastise a poltroon so un-philosophical. I took her by the hand instead, and led her into this room and made her sit down, and, whilst I sponged the picture with cold water, made her tell me how the accident had happened. For I thought, in my Machiavellian Italian way, 'If she should go away without having quite familiarised herself with this unhappy incident, she will always be afraid of me.' Therefore I lured her on.

'Mrs. Hopkins asked me to take the picture to Mr. Aaron's,' she began, still sobbing. 'I was just passing the corner when a gentleman leaped out of a cab. The cab was moving at the time, and I did not expect to see anybody jump from it. The gentleman missed his footing and stumbled against me. I fell down and the picture fell face downwards on the pavement, and a man who was passing by trod upon it.'

Now, I invite you to observe that these sentences are in no way remarkable. Yet I felt compelled to say—

'Most admirably and succinctly put!'

For the little girl was very pleasing, and she looked very pretty and innocent and distressed. And if you had employed a professional orator to make the statement, he would have been a thousand miles behind her in grace and straightforwardness, and in everything that makes human speech beautiful and admirable. When I had removed the mud from my canvas child I found that its countenance was badly scratched. So I busied myself in putting up my easel and in setting my palette.

'Oh, signor,' said the poor child, 'I am so sorry.'

Then she cried again.

'Mademoiselle,' I replied, with charming gaiety, 'it is not your fault at all. It is the doing of another lady, an old enemy of mine. The other lady has been trying to spite me, mademoiselle, for several years. She is powerful; she has hosts of servants. She plunges me into all manner of terrible scrapes, and for all this I laugh at her and snap my fingers—So.'

By the time I had said 'So' and snapped my fingers she had done crying, and being very intelligent she understood my parable, and when I laughed she smiled. I will tell you exactly what her smile was like. I was painting: in the Welsh hills three years ago, with plenty of money in my pocket, and a very great enthusiasm for art in my soul. I strayed out from the hotel I was staying in one beautiful moonlight night. I had rambled far, when it began to rain and grew very dark with clouds. I sat under a rock upon a big stone by the side of a little lake, and lit my pipe and waited for the rain to cease. And while it was still raining a little, the clouds divided for one second, and the moonlight swam down the lake from one end to the other. That was her smile; and when I saw it I seemed to see the lake again, and to hear the rain and the rustling of the trees, and smell the scent of the dead leaves. The moonlight stayed on her face only a second. She grew grave and sad again, and came timidly to me where I was at work. 'Will it be much trouble to you to mend it?' she asked. 'Will it take long?'

'Not long, mademoiselle,' I answered; 'I shall finish it to-day.'

I am gifted by nature with a delicate organisation. It is not possible for a man to be a gentleman without something of the quality I desire to indicate. I observe intuitively. I saw that my distressed companion desired to say something, and I saw also that what she desired to say would be embarrassing to me. It was also plain to my refined observation that she would be happier if she could only go gracefully. I relieved her of this trouble—

'We will challenge Madame Fortune again in the morning, mademoiselle. You and I will beat her this time. We will co-operate again.'

'Oh yes,' she said, 'do let me take it in the morning. I *will* be careful.'

'And now,' I said, 'you will think me an ogre, and will fancy that I am going to imprison you unless I let you go.'

I opened the door, but she lingered, struggling with that embarrassment which feared to embarrass me. For she is a lady just as certainly as I am a gentleman, and fine natures understand each other. I could see her make up her mind, and I resolved therefore not to be embarrassed.

'But, signor,' she said, with more firmness than I had expected, 'the tobacco and the coffee and the loaf?'

'Mademoiselle,' I said, 'the coffee and the tobacco and the loaf loom dimly from the future. They will come in good time.'

But, oh, the little girl was brave and tender-hearted and honourable. She was a little Englishwoman, with beliefs in duty. And yet she would sooner have faced ten lions than me, with my Italian courtesy and my uncomplaining good temper.

'Mrs. Hopkins,' she said, 'will lend me a—a shilling, and I——'

From that moment I respected her.

'Mademoiselle,' I answered, 'you are a lady, I am a gentleman. We have both the misfortune to be poor. We have both the admirable good fortune to be proud and honourable. You are brave and good, and your instincts are delicate. You will permit me to ask you not to humiliate yourself.'

'But, signor,' she urged, 'it is very hard for you to go——'

'My good-hearted, dutiful little English lady,' I took the liberty to say, for I was very much in earnest,' it is not at all hard for me to go without the coffee and the tobacco and the loaf. Above all, I do not lose my self-respect or touch my pride when I go without the coffee and the tobacco and the loaf. And now, mademoiselle, since it is our scheme to rout my lady enemy in the morning, we will despoil her of her triumph now by not caring for her or it, and by snapping our fingers at her—So.'

Whilst we had talked I had closed the door, and now I crossed over to my picture and began to work again. She still lingered, watching me whilst I painted.

'Are you fond of pictures?' I asked her, to divert her thoughts.

'I have not seen many, but I am very fond of some of them.'

'Would you like to look at those?' I said, pointing with my brush to a portfolio on the piano.

She opened the portfolio and looked through my sketches. I saw with pleasure that she did not race over them, but that she stopped and looked long at some. I could see from where I stood that they were the best, and I said, 'The young lady has taste and discernment.'

Suddenly she clapped her two hands together, and said—

'Oh!'

Then she came to me with a sketch in her hands, and her face was beautiful.

'Did you paint this, signor?'

'Yes, mademoiselle, I painted that. Why do you ask?'

'Poor old place!' she said very softly, without knowing that she said it at all.

It was a picturesque old house in Surrey. The house stood in a hollow, and the road wound up past it on to a long rolling wold. (That is the beautiful word your poet Tennyson uses. The country-people, the peasantry, use it also.) She had cried so much that her eyes were ready for tears again at almost anything. When she looked at me they were brim-full, but they did not run over.

'We lived here with papa,' she said, 'till he died.'

Then two big tears brimmed over and ran down. I committed an indiscretion: I was sorry for her, and I kissed her. She drew away with much dignity and said—

'I have stayed too long. Good morning, signor.'

I blushed. She was so much a child, and I feel myself so old, that I had not thought it any indiscretion. And now I remember that I have been writing of her as a child. She is quite a grown girl—a young lady. She is perhaps more than seventeen years of age. I was a brute beast—an insensate—to frighten her. Before I could say anything she was gone.

I abused myself in my vehement Continental way, and then I began to work. The picture was but little hurt, and before daylight was over it was almost repaired. But I had heard the clock strike seven, and my estimable uncle round the corner retires at that hour into the country, and will have no business again until nine o'clock in the morning. So, to prevent myself from thinking too much of the coffee and the tobacco and the loaf, I sat down to my piano and played. One would have thought that my sitting down to play was a signal, for I had scarcely begun when my landlady tapped at my door and brought a note. She looked shyly at the picture, and hoped it had not suffered much. I told her gaily that it was all the better for the accident, as in reality it was. Then I read my note.

> *'Miss Grammont presents her compliments to Signor Calvotti, and requests that he will oblige her by his company at tea this evening. Miss Grammont begs that Signor Calvotti will forgive this intrusion, and will forget that no formal introduction has taken place between them.'*

I read this over twice, and then asked the landlady—

'Who is Miss Grammont?'

'She's the sister of the young lady who had the accident with your picture, sir,' said the landlady. 'She's a middle-aged lady, sir, and very badly lame. But she's got an angel temper, and ways that sweet as I never saw anybody like her. I do hope you'll go, sir. She's on the floor below.'

'Present my most distinguished compliments, madame, and say that I will do myself the honour to be there. At what hour?'

'Tea's getting ready now, sir,' said the landlady.

When she had gone, I washed myself and put on a clean shirt, and went downstairs. At a door at the foot of the stains stood the young lady who had by misfortune brought about this adventure. She led me into the room and to a lady who sat upon a sofa. The room was absolutely bare of ornament, and I knew that they were very poor. But it was not possible to think for a moment that Miss Grammont was anything but a lady. She was old-fashioned and precise in her attire, and she is perhaps forty years of age, but her face is as beautiful as a seraph's. She is calm and sweet and quiet. She is like a Venetian night—sweet and venerable, and moving to touches of soft music. I took tea with them both—a simple meal. We talked of art and of Italy. I brought down my sketches and my violin at their request. I played to them—all manner of things—and they did me the honour to be delighted.

I am now in my own room again, and have expended my last candle whilst I have given myself the charming task to set down this day's adventures. My candle is so nearly burned out that it will not last another minute. I foresee that I shall go to bed in the——

CHAPTER II.—ON THE SECOND FLOOR.

I have just found this manuscript among my music, and to charm a lonely evening I will continue it. I remember that the candle went out so suddenly that I lost the place of my pen, or I would have completed the sentence. In the morning I had other things to think of. My landlady came up for the picture and took it away. In five minutes I heard a step upon the stairs, and opening my door I saw Cecilia—I have not told you my little English angel's name until now—with the picture in her hands. For a moment I thought that my inestimable uncle had refused to accept it, but I saw by her smiling face that it was no misfortune which had brought her back.

'There is a gentleman downstairs, signor, who wishes to buy your picture. He is waiting in the hall. Shall I

send him up? It is the gentleman who jumped from the cab yesterday and caused the accident.'

I besought her not to take so much trouble, and myself ran downstairs. There was an Englishman, broad-shouldered, ruddy, and iron-grey, with bushy eyebrows and blue eyes and a square chin.

'Do you wish to see me, sir?' I asked him.

'If you're the painter of the picture I saw just now—yes.'

'It is something of a climb upstairs,' I warned him.

He took the warning as an invitation, and went upstairs, stepping firmly and solidly in his heavy boots. When he reached my room, he took his hat off and I saw he was bald. He had a good face, and a high forehead, and he was evidently of the prosperous middle classes. Mademoiselle had left the room, and had placed the picture upon the easel. He looked round the room, and then faced the picture, square and business-like—like an Englishman.

'Ah!' he said, 'that's the picture, is it? H'm. What do you want for it?'

I told him I had never yet sold a picture, and did not know what price to set upon it.

'What have you done with the rest?' he said, looking round the room again. 'This isn't the first you've painted.'

His bluntness amused me, and I laughed. He saw my circumstances, and there could be no service in disguise. I told him of my estimable Uncle.

'H'm?' he said, lifting his eyebrows. Then suddenly, 'What do you get on 'em?'

'Twelve and sixpence each.'

'How many has he got?'

'Nine,' I answered.

'Got the tickets?' he said, examining the picture on the easel.

I produced them from a drawer.

'Five pounds fourteen,' he said to himself. 'A pound 'll pay the interest. Call it six ten, roughly. Got anybody you can send out for 'em?'

I rang the bell, and by-and-by my landlady appeared.

'Look here,' said the stranger, taking out a purse. 'Take this six pounds ten and that lot of pawn tickets, and send somebody to the pawnbroker's to bring the pictures out.'

My landlady took the money and went downstairs. In ten minutes she came back again with a boy behind her, carrying all my canvas children home again. During this time the stranger said nothing. Now he took the change in silver and copper from my landlady, said 'Eight,' and nothing more, and then set the pictures one by one on the easel and looked at them all in turn. When he had satisfied himself, he turned on me again.

'Now, Signor——'

'Calvotti'—I helped him with my name.

'Now, Signor Calvotti, what do you want for the lot?'

I entered into his business humour as well as I could.

'Permit me to ask what you are prepared to give?'

'Oh,' he said emphatically, 'I can't be buyer *and* seller. How much for the lot?'

I thought it over. I knew the pictures were good—that they were better than many I had seen sold for high prices. I spoke quietly, but with inward desperation.

'A hundred pounds.'

My landlady clasped her hands.

'What?' said the stranger sharply. 'Say seventy-five.'

My landlady absolutely curtsied, with her hands clasped.

'If you think that is a fair price,' I said.

The stranger looked at me for a minute, then turned to my landlady.

'Pardon me a minute,' he said, waving a backward hand to me. Then to the landlady; 'What sort of gentleman is this? Dissipated dog, eh?'

'Lord bless you, no, sir,' said the landlady; 'the steadiest gentleman I ever had in the house.'

'H'm,' said the stranger, facing round on me. 'Want a hundred pounds for 'em, eh? Very well. If I can't get 'em for less. Pen and ink anywhere? Ah, I see.'

He wrote a cheque standing at the table. Then he produced a card.

'That's my address. Glad to see you, if you'll call. Any Friday evening after eight. I've got a cab at the door, and I'll take these away at once.'

I was embarrassed by a terrible suspicion. I had read and heard much of London fraud.

'You will pardon me, sir. You are too much a man of the world not to forgive a little caution in a man who is selling all he has.' Then I stumbled and could not go on.

'Ah!' he said, 'quite right. Stupid of me, to be sure. Wait a minute.'

He seized the cheque and his hat, and went heavily downstairs. When he was at the bottom of the first flight he shouted, 'Back directly,' and so went down the other three flights, and out-of-doors.

My landlady opened the window, and looked out.

'He's gone into the bank, sir,' she said; then ran to the head of the stairs and screamed for somebody to open the door.

'He's coming out of the bank, sir,' said the landlady after an interval of renewed observation. He came upstairs, solidly, and into the room.

'Count that,' he said, and placed a small bag on the table.

I counted the contents of the bag, but my fingers trembled, and I was confused. I made out one hundred and six pounds.

'No,' he said, 'make no mistakes at the bank?

He counted the money rapidly.

'One hundred and five.'

'We agreed for one hundred, sir,' I said pushing five pounds across the table.

'Guineas,' he said brusquely. 'Always guineas in art. Don't know why, but always is. Oblige me, ma'am, by carrying these downstairs.'

My landlady took the pictures in her arms.

They were defended from each other by strips of thin cork at the corners, and they made a clumsy bundle. I had not looked at my client's card until now. Whilst he gave his directions to the landlady I took it up, and learned that his name was John Gregory; and that he lived in Westbourne Terrace. When my landlady had gone, he spoke to me, with another glance round the room.

'Been hard up?' he asked.

'I have been totally without money,' I answered him frankly, for I began to understand him.

'These things belong to you?' he asked again, waving his hand at the piano and the violin and the violoncello.

'Yes,' I answered.

'Why didn't you sell 'em? Better than starving.'

'I would sooner starve than part with any of them,' I told him.

He turned sharply upon me.

'Why?'

'My mother played them.' There seemed no reason, for all his brusquerie, why I should not tell him this.

'Didn't play the fiddle, did she?' 'Divinely,' I told him.

'And the 'cello?' 'Yes.'

'Singular,' he said. 'Oh, ah, foreign lady. Yes, of course. Not at all remarkable. Good morning. Don't forget the Fridays. Glad to see you.'

As he was going out he caught sight of the portfolio of sketches. He stopped and turned them over without remark or apology until he came to one which pleased him. It was a large sketch, sixteen inches by twelve, in water-colour, and had some little finish. He held it up and took it to the light.

'I meant to say just now, but I forgot it, he said, turning the picture upside down and looking at it so—'I meant to tell you that you're making a mistake in painting so small. A larger canvas would suit your style. Let me have this, now, in oil. Say eighty by sixty. Give you fifty pounds for it. What do you say?'

What was I likely to say? I told him I would do my best.

'*I* know that,' he answered. 'Couldn't help it. Good morning.'

This time he really went away. I was confounded by my good fortune. I scarcely knew what had happened, until my landlady came upstairs again and asked me if she should get me something to eat. Then I remembered that I was ravenous. She brought me eggs and ham and coffee; and when I had finished breakfast I despatched her for a portmanteau which lay in the care of my estimable uncle, and for certain parcels of clothing and boots and jewellery. Twenty-three pounds went in this way. I spread my clothing about the room to freshen it after its long confinement. Then I dressed, and was delighted to feel once more like a gentleman. I clapped my hands, and sang, and rattled gay things on the pianoforte. Then I put on my hat—newly recovered from my estimable uncle—and went out to buy canvas and materials for my new picture. I brought these things back in a cab, and carried them upstairs. When I got them there, I found that I had no room for so large a canvas. I had managed to get the small canvases and the little field-easel on which I painted into a good light, but with this it was impossible. I spoke about it to the landlady.

'If you'll excuse me, sir,' she said, 'I think I could propose an arrangement as would suit. The ladies below give warning last week, because the rooms they've got is too expensive.

Now, this little room would do nicely for 'em, with the next, which I shall be glad and thankful for a chance of giving Mr. Jinks his warning,' (Jinks was a drunken tailor, my next-room neighbour.) 'Now, sir, if the rooms below will suit you——'

I told her I was sure they would, and asked her if she would broach the question with the ladies. She went down at once, and came back shortly to ask when it would be convenient for me to remove my things. I said 'at any moment,' There was so little property between us all three, that it was transferred without much trouble in a few minutes. The landlady agreed that Mr. Jinks should have other accommodation secured for him in the house until the end of the next week; and for a single day the ladies were to make themselves at home in this one old room of mine. Miss Grammont came up the stairs with difficulty, and asked—

'When shall you wish to remove your piano, signor?'

Now, I had already proposed to myself a great pleasure.

'Permit me, madame,' I answered, 'to leave it here for a little time, until I can arrange my rooms.'

'Certainly,' the lady answered.

'And if madame or her sister play, it will improve the piano to be played upon, and I shall be vastly gratified.'

Cecilia thanked me with so much energy that I was assured that she was a devotee to music.

'Would she play?' I asked; and she consented.

She was shy before me, but so eager to put her fingers on the keys that she conquered all diffidence and

went at once to the piano.

When she had played a Sonata of Haydn's, I turned in my enthusiastic way to her sister and said how I rejoiced to have been able to gratify genius.

'Genius is a very large word,' said Miss Grammont. Cecilia was playing something else, and had not heard me.

'Genius *is* a large word, madame,' I replied. 'But is not that a large style? Is it not a noble style?'

Cecilia, she allowed, played very finely.

'Finely, madame? 'I respectfully protested—'she should play among the seraphs. You shall allow me, madame. I am no mean musician. As a critic I am exact and exacting. Permit me, madame, that I bring my violin, and play once with Mademoiselle Cecilia.'

She consented. I brought my violin and we played. Cecilia's musical memory is prodigious. Mine is also retentive and precise. But she had too much inventive genius for precision, unless the notes were before her, and sometimes I corrected her. Next, this delicious interlude over, I begged that the ladies would do me the honour to dine with me.

'You must not be extravagant in your good fortune, signor,' Miss Grammont said.

'Trust me, madame,' I answered. 'If the day has dawned, I will hasten no new night and make no artificial curtains.'

Then I went down to paint, and at seven o'clock they joined me at dinner. The meal was sent in from the famous tavern hard by, and I think I may say we all enjoyed it. And then came music, and for an hour we were happy.

CHAPTER III.—AT POSILIPO.

Ay me, for one hour we were happy, and for many hours thereafter. But when your heart is glad, when you drink the wine of joy, there is Madame Circumstance keeping the score, and she brings in the bill at the end of the banquet, and you pay it in coin of sorrow. She is my old enemy, this Madame Circumstance, as I have told you. It is not always that I can defy her. Who is it that is always brave? Not I. But I shall be brave again in the morning, and the battle will begin again, and I shall win. Pah! I have won already. I have smoked my pipe, and the incense of victory curls about my head just now, at this moment. There is no friend like your pipe. None.

Ten minutes ago I was despondent when; I sat down to write. I broke off and smoked, and I am my own man again. (Regard once more the beautiful English idiom, and the smiling soul which so soon after battle can take delight in verbal felicities.)

Now I will go on with my story. It takes a long time to write. It will be twelve months to-morrow since I last looked at the pages of this narrative. I may not touch it again after to-day for a year. Who knows?

I went to Mr. Gregory's house in West-bourne Terrace on Friday, and I continued to go there on Friday evenings until the close of the season. Mr. Gregory is no more my patron, only: he is now my friend, and his friendship is firm and true. I shall be honest in saying that to me those Friday evenings were very beautiful. It was so great a change from the hungry and lonely nights in my attic, to find myself back again with ladies and gentlemen, myself well dressed and at home, and no longer hungry. There I was admired and *fêted*, and all people made much of me. I played and sang, and the people talked of my pictures, and everywhere I was asked out, until I could have spent my every hour in those calm social dissipations which make up so large a share of life in all refined societies. For my friend Gregory is a man of refinement—within himself—and his friends are all artistic and literary.. But why should I talk about him? Everybody knows him. Gregory the millionaire; Gregory the connoisseur in wines, in pictures, in old violins, in pottery; the Connoisseur in humanity at whose gatherings the wisest and the most charming meet each other. Gregory the ship-builder, iron-master, coal-owner; architect of himself—a splendid edifice. That such a man should have bought my pictures was of itself a fortune to me. I am on my way to get riches, and my balance at-the bank is already respectable. Why, then, should I be at battle with Madame Circumstance? You shall see.

One day at the beginning of this year he called to see me. I was hard at work making the best of the few hours of light. He sat and watched for a full hour, talking very little. At last he said—

'I can trust you, Calvotti. I want you to do me a service.'

'I am very heartily glad to hear it,' I answered.

'You won't understand what I want you to do unless I tell you the whole story,' he said, after a pause. Then he remained silent for some time.

'Put down your brushes and listen,' he went on.

I obeyed him. He lit a cigar, poured out a glass of claret, crossed his legs, and talked easily, though at times I could see that he felt strongly.

'I have had a good many friendly acquaintances in my life, and one friend: he died five years ago. I was abroad at the time, in Russia, laying down a railway. My friend, whom everybody supposed to be fairly well-to-do, died poor. There was one lump sum of money in my hands, placed there by him for investment, and that was almost all he had. By some terrible mischance, the acknowledgment I had given for this lump sum was lost, and his relatives were in ignorance of it. Six months after his death I came home, and finding that nothing had been said of the money he had entrusted to my care, I went to his lawyer and spoke to him about it. My friend had been a widower for the last dozen years. He had three children, and no other relatives in the world. After the sale of his effects, poor fellow, the two girls disappeared utterly. The son, who was a

reckless, good-for-nothing scamp, was my poor friend's favourite, and whatever the old man died possessed of went by will to him with a mere injunction to look after his sisters. He had not been heard of for more than a year, but was believed to be somewhere in Italy. The scoundrel professed to be a painter, and might have made a decent sign-writer, if he hadn't been a drunkard. I could not find even him, and the girls have been advertised for, vainly. Now, the lawyer has just received a letter from this young ne'er-do-weel, who wants to borrow money. I will tell you what I want you to do. If this scamp learns that ten thousand pounds belong to him, he will take every penny, though he left the girls to starve. But I want things so managed that he shall share with his sisters—a thing he will be very reluctant to do. Now, will you go to Naples, find this man out, get to know from him the whereabouts of his sisters, manoeuvre him, and, if possible, induce him to accept half? Will you remember that there is absolutely no receipt in existence for the money which lies in my hand—that I am not legally bound to pay a penny of it? That is my only power over this fellow. Keep my name dark. Let him know there is a certain sum of money—never mind telling him how much—in the hands of a certain person in London, who is willing, on his written undertaking to divide with his sisters whatever his father may have left, to pay over to him his moiety. Let him understand distinctly that the person in whose hands the money lies will not pay him one farthing without this bond unless he produces the receipt given to his father. When you have secured his written undertaking, will you bring him to me? I will be answerable for all your charges in the matter.'

I had listened attentively to this story, and I said Yes, at once. I added, that it seemed to me a very easy task and an honourable one.

'I want it done at once,' he said, 'because I know the girls must be in a very poor position wherever they are. When can you start? There is a tidal train at eight o'clock this evening, and the man is now in Naples. I have the papers here all ready: you can study them on the way.'

'I will start to-night,' I answered.

'Thank you, Calvotti, thank you,' he said heartily. 'Do you remember how I excused myself for overturning that little girl who was carrying the first picture I ever saw of yours to your estimable uncle round the corner, as you called him?'

'Yes. There was a man in the street you were anxious to speak to, and you jumped from a cab to catch him, and lost sight of him through the accident.'

'That was the man I want you to see—Charles Grammont.'

I had only time to catch at the name and weave Cecilia and her sister into this romance with one throw of the shuttle, when there came a knock at the door.

'Come in,' I said. The door opened, and a man entered. Seeing my patron and myself, he drew back.

'I have made a mistake,' he murmured awkwardly. 'I wish to find Miss Grammont. I was told she lived here.'

'Talk of the devil!' cried my patron. 'Charles Grammont!'

'That is my name,' said the new-comer, standing awkwardly in the doorway. 'You have the advantage of me, sir.'

'H'm!' said my patron, returning to the manner he had first worn in my presence. 'Likely to keep it too. Good-day, Calvotti. You'll remember that little commission. Things may perhaps be easier than I thought they would be.' He muttered this to himself so that the new-comer did not hear him. He pushed uncourteously past the young man and went out.

'You will find Miss Grammont upstairs, sir,' I said. 'If you are Mr. Charles Grammont, the brother of the ladies upstairs, I shall be glad to speak to you in an hour's time, on a matter of much advantage to you.'

The young man had a disagreeable swagger and a bloated face. His swagger was intended to hide the discomfiture in the midst of which that sort of man's soul lives always.

'If you have any thing to say to me,' he answered, still holding the handle of the door, 'you can say it now, or save yourself the trouble of saying it at all.'

'Sir,' I replied with some asperity, 'it is not a matter which concerns me at all, but you.

Your late father left some money in which you are interested, that is all.'

He looked bewildered.

'My father left no money,' he stammered.

'Your father left a considerable sum,' I answered, 'and if you will call upon me in one hour from now I will inform you of the conditions attached to your receipt of it. Meantime, the stairs are dark, and I will give you a light.'

'No, thank you,' he said. 'I won't trouble my sisters until I've heard what you have to say, I'll call again in an hour's time.'

He went away, closing the door behind him. I, sitting there, and listening to his footsteps, heard him speak to somebody on the stairs, and heard two sets of footsteps blunder down the ill-lighted staircase together. I took the papers Mr. Gregory had left behind him and looked them through. They were short and simple, and I mastered them in five minutes. Then I went back to my painting and worked until I heard a knock at the door and admitted my new acquaintance. He had a companion with him, and, since I must do him justice, I must say that his companion was sevenfold worse than he. He was a countryman of my own, as I knew by his face and voice. They had both been drinking.

'You know my name, it seems,' said young Grammont, 'and I shall be glad to know yours.'

I was decided that nobody but our two selves should be present when I spoke to him, lest any slip of mine before a witness should blunder the matter I had in charge.

'My business with you, Mr. Grammont, is of a private nature, and I cannot discuss it in the presence of a third party.' I was plain and outspoken, because this kind of man does not comprehend innuendo.

'This is a chum of mine,' he answered. 'He's quite welcome to hear anything about *me*.'

'Pardon me, sir,' I told him quietly; 'but I can only discuss this matter in private.'

'All right,' he hiccoughed. 'You'd better slide, Jack. Evado, you blackguard! Hidi! git! chabouk!'

'You are merry, my friend,' said my unwholesome countryman, who was very drunk indeed. 'But I am not a Hamal that you speak to me so.'

'There's half-a-crown,' said young Grammont, throwing a coin on the carpet. 'Wait at the Red Lion. It's all right.'

My unwholesome countryman took himself out of the room with the half-crown, and went downstairs in a series of dangerous slides and tumbles.

'Now, then,' said my client, throwing himself insolently upon the sofa and lighting a pipe. 'You can say what you have; to say, and get it over as soon as you like.'

One is not angry with this kind of person. 'If you are in a fit condition to listen, sir, you may know all about the matter in five minutes. Your father just before his death invested a large sum of money. The receipt for that sum of money was lost, but the gentleman with whom he invested it is honourable and is ready to pay it. He will only pay it on one condition, and that is that it be divided into equal portions between your two sisters and yourself.'

He sat up with the pipe between his finger and thumb.

'Whatever my father left,' he said, 'belongs to me.'

'Then,' I answered, 'claim it!'

He lay down again as suddenly as if I had shot him.

'You will remember,' I said, 'that the receipt is lost, and that you have no legal claim upon the gentleman who now holds the money. He is willing to pay it over at once, provided you divide it with your sisters.'

'Who is he?'

I made no answer.

'What right has he, whoever he is, to dictate terms to me? What right has he to suppose that I shouldn't make fair terms with my sisters, and make them a decent allowance, and all that sort of thing, if I had the money?'

'I know nothing of the matter, sir,' I answered, 'except that on your written undertaking to divide whatever property your father may have left, you can take half of it, and that without such an undertaking you can get nothing.'

'I'll sign no such undertaking!' he cried angrily. 'Why should I be juggled out of money which belongs to me? If I choose to make my sisters a present, why, I'll do it, and if I don't, I won't.'

'Very good, sir,' I said; 'when you have changed your mind, and wish to draw the money, you can apply to me again.'

'What's the amount?' he asked sulkily, after a time.

'I am requested not to mention the amount,' I answered, 'but it is considerable.'

'How do *you* come to be mixed up with my affairs?' he asked. 'I don't even know your name. You're not a lawyer. How do I know that the whole thing isn't a stupid joke? How do I know there's not a trap of some sort in it?'

'All these things are for your own consideration, sir,' I answered, as coolly as I could. 'I am acting to oblige a friend, and if it were not for my desire to oblige a friend——'

There I stayed. He glared at me, and rose-to his feet.. 'Well!' he said, 'what then?'.

'I should take no trouble at all in the matter, and should be glad to be rid of you.'

'Oh!' he said jeeringly, and then sat down again. By-and-by he looked up and shook a forefinger at me with an air of drunken perspicacity and resolution which was amusing.

'Don't think,' he said, 'that I can't see through *your* little game. You're living in the same house, are you? You've got my sister's affairs into your own dirty fingers, eh, my boy? She's getting to a nice manageable age, isn't she? And you've found out that some money is coming to me after all, and you think me idiot enough to sign away half of it for you and that young——'

'Stop, sir, if you please. You shall commit what folly you like in respect to the business in hand, but I have no time or taste for a drunken brawl. You may call upon me in the morning. You will forgive me if I suggest that you are not quite fit for business at present. I have the honour to bid you a good afternoon.'

'Oh!' said he, 'I'm quite fit for business, if there is any business to be done. Have you any objection to my consulting a lawyer before I sign?'

I disregarded the sneer, and said that I could have no objection to such a course.

'Will you come with me?' he asked.

'No,' I told him. There was the case already in his hands. I was powerless to alter its conditions. He could tell the story to his lawyer for himself.

'I will give you a reply to-morrow, he said.

I gave him my card, and he went away. I had no doubt of his final acceptance of the terms offered to him, and when on the morrow he returned, he proclaimed himself willing to accept one-half of the sum left in Mr. Gregory's hands. The lawyer he had consulted was the man who had acted professionally for his father during the latter's lifetime, and it was he also to whom my directions ordered me. I telegraphed to Mr. Gregory at his offices in the city, and then drove to Russell Square with young Grammont. At the lawyer's we were detained for a few minutes, and before wo could get to business Mr. Gregory arrived. The matter was then gone into, and everything was over in half-an-hour. Mr. Gregory gave young Grammont a cheque for five thousand pounds, and took the receipt for it. Then we bade the lawyer good-day and went out together. Young Grammont took a cab and went away in high feather, whilst Mr. Gregory and I went to my rooms, and sent a message to Miss Grammont. In a few minutes we were admitted, and it was my felicity to make the announcement of the pleasant change in their fortunes. Miss Grammont recognised Mr. Gregory at once, and

both she and Cecilia accepted this stroke of good fortune with a calm gladness.

'Why did you hide yourself in this way?' asked Mr. Gregory.

'What could we do?' Miss Grammont answered him. 'We have never been in actual want, and you know that we were always very foolishly proud—we Grammonts.'

'Very foolishly proud, the lot of you,' said Mr. Gregory. 'You knew very well how much I owed to your father's help and advice when I was a young man. You know that Lizzie would have given you a home, and have thought herself more than paid by your society and friendship.' (Lizzie was the late Mrs. Gregory.) 'Forgive me,' he said a minute later. 'Had I been in your place, I should probably have done as you have done. But now to business. Fifteen thousand pounds remain in my hands. Of this sum only ten thousand honestly belongs to you two.'

'How is this?' asked Miss Grammont.

'Mr. Calvotti told me just now that my father had left but ten thousand pounds in all.'

'For investment, madam—for investment. I am a business man and I have invested it and doubled it. That graceless brother of yours who has gone away with his five thousand now will be back in a year's time to borrow. He will still have five thousand to draw upon, but I hold his discharge in full, and I shall cheat him for his own good and button him down tightly to a weekly allowance. Money is cheap just now, Miss Grammont—dirt cheap—and you can't do better than leave this in my hands at five per cent, interest. That's five hundred a year. But all that we'll talk about, in future. Meantime, that's the first half-year's allowance'—laying a cheque upon the table—'and the first thing to be done is to leave this place and come straightway to my house until you can look about you and settle where to live.'

'You are just as generous and just as imperious as you always were,' said Miss Grammont. 'We will come this day week.'

'Come now,' said Mr. Gregory. 'My sister will make you comfortable. Poor Jane's an old maid still, and lives with me.'

'Not now,' she said. 'There are many things to be seen to before we can leave here.'

I saw her glance at her own shabby dress, and he saw that also.

'When you like,' he said cheerfully. 'But this day week is a bargain. At what time? Say two o'clock. I'll be there to meet you. Good-day, Calvotti; good-day, Miriam.' Then he turned and kissed Cecilia. 'Good-day, Baby. God bless my soul! it seems only the other day since you *were* a baby. And now I suppose you'll be getting married in a week or two.'

Cecilia blushed and laughed, and Mr. Gregory turned round with a droll look to me, and then took his hat and went in his own solid and determined way out of the room. Even in his walk the determination of his character declared itself. He was strong and square and firm, but within very gentle. Oh, you English! you English! you are a great people! Great in your stolidity and solidity, before which I, who know what lives beneath them, can only bow in a fluttering, butterfly respect! Great in your passions, which you repress so splendidly that to the superficial eye they look only like affections! Solid, stolid, much-enduring people, with corners all over you, accept my profoundest veneration!

Now it befalls me that I am impelled to tell why, with a reputation already considerable and fast increasing, and with a balance at the banker's in the same beautiful conditions, I yet remained in that poor studio of mine, and in those unfashionable apartments. It was not that I am penurious, although I have changed my old harum-scarum habits with regard to money.

It was not—but why should I go on saying what it was not to pave the way to saying what it was? It was, then, that in that house had lived that little English angel who is a woman, and Cecilia. I will set it down in one line. She is all the joy I have and all the sorrow. And now I will set down one thing more that I may see it in plain black and white, and study it there until I drive its meaning into my thick head and my sore heart, and can at last smoke calm pipes over it, and be once more contented. There is no hope for me—there is no hope for me: none in the world. For my little Cecilia is in love already, and I would not for twenty thousand times my own sake have her in one thought untrue.

I was walking upstairs one night a month before the events I have just related, when I met a man coming down in the dark. I did not at all know who he was, but I knew that he had been to Miss Grammont's rooms, because I was already near my own door, and nobody but Miss Grammont lived above me. The stranger said Good-night as he passed me, and I returned his salutation. He stopped short.

'Have I the honour to address Mr. Calvotti?' he asked.

'That is my name,' I answered, in some astonishment.

'Ah, then,' he said, turning back again, 'if you can spare me just a minute, I will deliver a letter I have for you.'

We went upstairs together, and into my studio. I lighted the gas and took the letter. It came from Miss Grammont, and introduced Mr. Arthur Clyde, an old friend who had found them out by accident, and who had an especial desire to know me.

'This is not a good time at night to make a call,' he said, with a frank and winning smile; 'but I'm an artist myself. I've seen your work, and I've heard so much about you, that when I found that Miss Grammont knew you I couldn't deny myself the pleasure of making your acquaintance.'

He was very frank and pleasant in his manner, very fresh and English in his look, very handsome and self-possessed. Not self-possessed in the sense that he had assurance, but in the sense that he did not seem to think about himself at all, which is the most agreeable kind of self-possession, both for those who have it and for those who meet them.

We talked about indifferent things for a minute or two, and then he lit a cigar and rose to go.

'I have heard of your kindness to Miss Grammont and little Cecilia,' he said, turning at the door. 'You'll forgive me for saying a word about it, but they're such dear old friends of mine, that I can't help thanking anybody who has been good to them. Good-night, I'll run in to-morrow, if I may. Good-night.'

He came again next evening, and we dined together. He is a fine young fellow, and I got to like him greatly. He is fiery and enthusiastic and impulsive, and all his adjectives are superlatives, after the manner of earnest youth. But he is good-hearted and honourable to the core. We took to each other naturally, and he used to run up to my studio every evening at dusk. Very frequently we used to go upstairs and spend an evening with the ladies. Then we had music, and sometimes young Clyde would sing, and we would all laugh at him, for he knew no more of music than a crow. And yet I could see that it was to him Cecilia played and sang, and to her he listened as though she had been an angel out of heaven. When I played he had no great joy in the music, but when she played—— ah! it was plain enough—then Love gave him ears, and the music she created had power over him. This was hard for me, but I have my consolations.

I can stand up and say one or two things which it is well for a man to say. It is one of them that I do not whine like a baby because I cannot have my own way. It is another that I have strangled jealous hate and buried deep the baseness which would have led me to endeavour to estrange these hearts for my own purpose. I tell myself at times, 'You have done well, my friend, and some day you will have your reward. And if the reward should not come, or if it should not be worth having, why—you have still done well.' For it came to pass one night when I was quite convinced, that I came downstairs to my own room, and sat down and pulled a certain dream-house to pieces and beat the sawdust out of the foolish dolls who had had their abiding place in it. But, oh me, my friends, it is hard to pull down dream-houses; and Madame Circumstance exults over the bare rafters and the dismantled walls. And, ah! I loved her, and I love her still, and I shall love her till the day I die. But I am going to be an Italian old bachelor, with no wife but my pipe and no family but my canvas children. Do you triumph, madame? Do you triumph? Over my subdued heart? No! Over my broken life? No! Over any cowardly complaint of mine? Over any envy of this good young Englishman? No! no! no! No! madame, I was not born a cad, and you shall not remould me. Accept, once more, my defiance!

Young Clyde came on the evening of the day on which the good fortune of the ladies' had been declared. He received the news very joyfully, but after a while he sobered down greatly, and when we took our leave together he was very depressed, and had grown unlike himself, I asked no questions, but he turned into my room and sat down and lit a cigar and held silence for a few minutes. Then he said—

'I say, Calvotti, old man, have you noticed that I have never once asked you to my rooms?'

I had never thought about it, and I told him so.

'Will you come up to-morrow, in the daytime? Don't say No. I do particularly want you to come. Say twelve o'clock. Will you?'

He seemed strangely eager about this simple matter, and I promised to go. He went away a minute later, and next morning I walked to the address he had given me. He met me at the door, and I saw that he was pale and perturbed. I learned afterwards that he had not been to bed, but had sat up all night harassing himself with groundless misgivings. He led me to his studio, a fine spacious room, with a high north light. He had a chair set in the middle of the room, and on the easel a large veiled picture.

'Now, Calvotti,' he said, speaking with a nervous haste which was altogether foreign to him, 'I have asked you here to settle a question which I cannot settle for myself. Sometimes I'm brimfull of faith and hope, and sometimes I'm in a perfect abyss of despair. You know I've been painting all my life, but I've never sold anything. Everything I paint goes to the governor. Some of the things he hangs about his own place, you know, and some of them—more than half, I suppose—he has cut into strips and sent back to me. He's a very singular man, and has extraordinary ideas about pictures. But I've been working on one subject now for some months past, and now I've finished it, and—— Look here, Calvotti, I'll tell you everything. When I got here last night, I found a letter from my governor telling me that my allowance is stopped after next quarter-day, and that I must get a living by painting. He always said he would give me the chance to make a living, and then leave me to make it. Well, I'm not afraid of that, but I want a candid judgment, because—because—Well, I'm engaged to be married, old man, and I can't live on my wife, you know. And I want you to tell me candidly whether there's any good stuff in me, and whether I can ever do anything, you know.'

'You are engaged to Cecilia?' I asked him.

'Yes,' he said simply, 'I am engaged to Cecilia, and I want to begin work in earnest now.'

'Let me look at your picture,' I said, and took my seat in the chair he had placed ready for me.

He paused a minute as though he would have spoken, but checking himself, he turned to the picture, drew away the cloth by which it was covered, and passed behind me. The picture represented a garret room, through the window of which could be seen the far-reaching roofs of a great city. Against the window rose the figure of a girl who was seated at an old grand piano. Her fingers rested on the keys, and her eyes were looking a great way off. The face and figure were Cecilia's, the garret was that in which I myself had lived, and the piano was mine. The outer light of the picture was so subdued and calm that the face was allowed to reveal itself quite clearly. I looked long and carefully, guarding myself from a too rapid judgment. Arthur, as by this time I had begun to call him, stood at the back of my chair. At last he laid a hand upon my shoulder—

'What do think about it?'

'Do you want my candid opinion?' I asked him.

'Yes, your candid opinion.'

'You will not be offended at anything I shall say?'

'No. I want an honest judgment, and I can trust yours.'

I used the common slang of criticism.

'Suppose, then, I were to say that the: composition is bad, the colour crude, the whole work amateurish, the modelling thin and in places, false, the——'

'Don't say any more, Calvotti. I've been a fool, and the governor has been right all the time.'

'If I said these things, you would believe them?'

'*If* you said them?' he cried, coming from-behind my chair. 'But do you say them?'

'Stand off!' I said, laughing. A man can rarely endure praise and blame with equal fortitude. My young

friend, you will some day paint great pictures. In four or five hundred years' time great painters will look at this and will reverently point out in it the faults of early manner; but they will read the soul in it—as I do now. You are a creature of a hundred years—a painter, an artist. This is not paint, but a face—a face of flesh and blood, with soul behind. And this is not paint, but a faded brown silk. And this is not paint, but solid mahogany. You have done more than paint a picture. You have made concrete an inspiration. Your technique is all masterly, but it does not overpower. It gives only fitting body to a beautiful idea—its soul!'

He blushed and trembled whilst I spoke. Englishmen do not often talk poetry—off the stage. He answered—

'No, really, Calvotti, old man, that's rot, you know. But do you like it?'

I spoke gravely then.

'My dear young friend, so surely as that is your work, so surely will you be a great artist if you choose.'

'You bet I choose,' this young genius answered. He would sooner have died, I suppose, than have put his emotions at that moment into words. This is another characteristic of you English. You will sooner look like fools than have it appear that you feel. You wear the rags of cynicism over the pure gold of nature. This is a foolish pride, but it is useless to crusade against national characteristics.

I was a little chilled, and I said in a business tone—

'Well, we will see about selling this at once.'

'No,' he answered. 'I will not sell this.'

'No?' I asked.

'No,' he said again; 'not this picture,' And for one minute he regarded it, and then shook his head and once more said 'No.'

'Well,' I answered, not trying to persuade him, 'I will ask Mr. Gregory to look at it, and he will give you a commission for a work, and then you will be fairly afloat.'

'Oh, thank you, Calvotti. What a good fellow you are!'

I was unsettled for work. My praise was hysterical and hyperbolical. I could have wept whilst I uttered it. For though I had given up all hope, and though I was glad to find that in art he was worthy as in manhood he was worthy, yet it was still hard to endorse a rival's triumph and to cut out all envy and stifle all pain. And now I had to go home and to live beneath the same roof with Cecilia, and to see her sometimes, and to talk and look like a friend. If you resist the Devil, will he always fly from you? Is it not sometimes safer to fly from him? And is there anywhere a baser fiend than that which prompted me to throw myself upon my knees before her and tell her everything, and so barter honour for an impulse? Brave or not, I know that I was wise when that afternoon I packed up everything and went to say good-bye.

'I am ill,' so I excused myself, 'and I am a child of impulse. Impulse says to me “Go back to Italy—to the air of your childhood—to the scenes you love best.” And I obey.'

'But you do not leave England in this way?' asked Cecilia.

'No, mademoiselle, I shall return. But, for a time, good-bye.'

They both bade me good-bye sorrowfully, and I went away. And whatever disturbance my soul made within its own private residence, it was too well-bred to let the outside people know of it.

And so it came to pass that I continue this narrative at Posilipo, in my native air, within sight of smoking Vesuvius and the glittering city and the gleaming bay—old friends, who bear comfort to the soul.

CHAPTER IV.—*NELLE CARCERI MUNICIPALE*

How do I come to be writing in a prison? How do I come to be living in a prison? How is it that I, who never lifted a hand in anger against even a dog, lie here under a charge of murder, execrated by the populace of my native town?

I can remember that I wrote, when I took up my story, that it might, for anything I knew, be a year before I should go on with it. It is twelve months to-day since I set those words upon paper. I take it up again, here and now, in dogged and determined defiance to that Circumstance which has pursued me through my life, and which shall not subdue me even with this last stroke—no, nor with any other.

Let me premise, before I go on with my own narrative, that Charles Grammont, with whose murder I lie charged, developed a remarkable and unexpected characteristic. A reckless spendthrift whilst penniless, he became a miser when he found himself possessor of five thousand pounds. He had returned to Naples, and had for some time engaged himself in drinking, to the exclusion of all other pursuits. But he drank sullenly and alone, and had dismissed from his society that disreputable compatriot of mine, Giovanni Fornajo, who had accompanied him to my room on the evening of our first meeting. When I reached Naples I had some trouble with this personage, who, with the peculiar faculty which belongs to the race of hangers-on and spongers, had somehow found me out, and came to borrow money. It was enough for his limitless impudence to remember that he had once been within my walls in London. I knew that to yield once would be to make myself a tributary to his necessities for ever. I refused him, therefore, and dismissed him without ceremony. He retired unabashed, and came to the charge again. I was strolling along the Chiaja, when I saw him and turned into the Caffè d'Italia to avoid him. He had seen me and followed. I professed to be absorbed in the contents of an English journal, but he sat down at the same table, and entered into conversation, or rather into talk, for I let him have it all to himself. He talked in English, which he really spoke very well, though with a marked accent. I paid but little heed to him, and only just made out that he complained of the conduct of his late associate, who had, so he said, borrowed money of him when they were poor together, and had thrown him over now without repaying him.

'It comes to this,' he said, after a long and rambling discursion on his wrong; 'when I was the only man in Naples who could speak English and would have to do with him, he used me; and now that he is at home here, and can speak the language, and has plenty of money, he will have no more to do.'

'My good friend,' I said, breaking in, 'I will have no more to do, since you prefer to put it so, I am tired of you. I do not desire to know you. Oblige me by not knowing me in future.'

'Maledizione!' he said. 'But you are impolite, Signor Calvotti.'

'And you, Signor Fornajo, are only unbearable. I have the pleasure to wish you goodbye.'

He rose and retreated, but returned.

'Signor Calvotti,' he said, reseating himself, 'I shall ask you to do me a favour. You know Grammont and you know his friends. He will listen to you where he will not look at me. Will you do me the favour to speak for me to ask him to pay me?'

I thought I saw a way to be rid of him.

'How much does he owe you?' I asked him.

'Cento franchi,' he answered.

'Very good. Bring me pen, ink, and paper.'

He called one of the camerieri and ordered these, and I read quietly until they came.

'Now,' I said, 'write to my dictation.'

He took the pen and wrote—

'I have this day informed Signor Calvotti that Mr. Charles Grammont owes me the sum of One Hundred Francs, and in consideration of this receipt Signor Calvotti has discharged Mr. Grammont's debt.'

This he signed, and I gave him a bank-note for the amount.

'Now,' I told him, 'I do not in the least believe that Mr. Grammont owed you anything, and if you come near me again I will use this document. I have a great mind to try it now.' 'Ah, signor, sapete cosa vuol dire la fame?' I own that touched me. I *have* known what hunger is, and I could guess what it would do with a creature of this kind. 'Go your way,' I said, 'and trouble me no more'—he bowed his head and spread out his hands in assent—'but remember!'

'Signor Calvotti,' he said, 'I thank you, and I will trouble you no more.'

Young Clyde had written to me saying that he was tired and overworked, and that he needed a month's holiday, and meant to take it. He had never been in Italy, and naturally proposed to join me in Naples. During the whole ten months which had gone between my farewell to England and my receipt of this letter from Arthur, I had striven, and not unsuccessfully, to banish from my mind all painful and regretful thoughts of Cecilia. Love is a great passion, but, like everything else but fate, it is capable of subjection by a resolute will. That soul, believe me, is of a barren soil indeed, wherein the flower of love has once been planted, if the flower wither or can be rooted up. But a man who gardens his soul with resolute and lofty hopes can train the first poor weed of passion to a glorious bloom, whose perfume is not pain but comfort. This is a base thing, that a man shall say he loves a woman too well to be happy whilst she can be happy with another. For me, my divine Cecilia looks down upon me in my waking hours and in the dreams of sleep, a thing so far away that I can but worship without a hope of ownership, or any longer a desire. I am content, I have loved, and I have not been unworthy. O mia santissima, mio amore no longer—my saint for ever, my love no more—so you were happy, I were happy. But there are clouds about you, though you know them not.

Arthur had come to Naples by one of the boats of the Messagerie Impériale, and had come to share my little house at Posilipo. He brought with him kindest remembrances from Cecilia and from her sister. I had mentioned them both freely in my letters, and had sent little things through his hand to both of them now and then. My old patron, Mr. Gregory, had given Arthur two or three commissions, and one of his works had been hung on the line at Burlirgton House, side by side with mine. In his old, frank, charming way he said—

'If those old buffers on the committee had laid their heads together to please me, they couldn't have done it more successfully than by hanging me next to you, old man. When I went in and saw it there, I was better pleased at being next to you than I was at being on the line. I'm painting Gregory's portrait for next' year—a splendid subject, isn't it?'

I took him to walk that morning to the scene I had painted in the work he spoke of,' He recognised it with enthusiasm, and we walked back together full of friendship and enjoyment. He had one or two commissions for Charles Grammont from his sisters, and asked me to help in finding him. When I learned that the young Englishman was living in the Basso Porto I was amazed, and when Clyde saw the place he was amazed also.

'Has he got through all his money already,' Arthur asked me, 'that he lives in a hole like this?'

'I am told,' I said, 'that he has become a miser, spending money on nothing but drink, and living in a continuous sullen debauchery.'

Clyde faced round upon me as we stood in the doorway of the house together.

'I haven't seen the fellow for years,' he exclaimed, 'but can you fancy such an animal being a brother of Cecilia's?'

'Odd, isn't it?' said an English voice from the darkness of the stairs. 'Infernally odd!'

And Charles Grammont, bearded, bloated, unclean, unwholesome, stepped into the sunlight and poisoned it.

'Who is this fellow?' asked Arthur quietly.

'Charles Grammont,' I answered.

'Charles Grammont?' he repeated; and then, hastening to obliterate the memory of his unlucky speech, he plunged into an explanation of his concerns with Grammont, and I withdrew a little. But in a moment I heard Grammont's voice raised in high anger.

'And what brings Arthur Clyde acting as my sister's messenger? Could they find nobody but a ———'

If I should repeat here on paper the epithets the man used, I should be almost as great a blackguard as he was to use them. They were words abominable and horrible. I know by my anger at them now—then I had no time to feel for myself—that if a man had used them to me, and I had held a weapon in my hand, I should have killed him. Arthur raised his cane, and, but that I seized his wrist, he would have struck the insulter across the face. It was an impulse only, and when I felt his wrist relaxing I released it, and it fell down by his side.

'Come away, Calvotti,' he said, 'or I shall disgrace myself and do this man a mischief.'

But if I could share at the moment in the feeling of anger which Grammont's hideous insults had inspired, I could not and I cannot understand the bitter and passionate resentment with which Arthur nourished the memory of them. For days after, not a waking hour passed by without a break of sudden anger from him when he recalled the words to mind. I did my best to calm him, and in each case succeeded in persuading him that it was less than useless to retain the memory of insult so conveyed by such a man. But in a little while he broke out again, and after a time I allowed him to rage himself out.

'Why did you restrain me?' he cried one day as we walked together. 'The ruffian deserved a thrashing. I care nothing for what he said of me, but a man who could speak of his sister in that way is not fit to live. For God's sake, Calvotti, let us go away somewhere out of reach of this man. I am not safe. I hardly know myself. If I met him I should kill him then and there.'

'My dear Arthur,' I said at last, 'this is childish, and unworthy of you. The man is a ruffian by nature, and was mad with drink. Forget him, and any mad and drunken thing he may have said.'

'Well,' said Arthur, with a visible effort, 'the blackguard disappears from my scheme of things. I have done with him. There! It's all over. What shall we do to-night? Let us go out together and look at Giovanna's Palace by moonlight. A blow on the bay would do me good, and you might find an inspiration for a picture. Who knows? Will you go?'

I consented, and we walked back to the town at once to make arrangements. We secured a boat, and a bottle or two of wine and a handful of cigars having been laid in as store, we started. On the way to the boat, by bitter misfortune, we met Grammont. This wretched man's drunkenness had three phases—the genial, the morose, and the violent. He was at the first when we were so unhappy as to meet him. He insisted upon accompanying us, and I could see the passion gathering in Arthur's face, until I knew that if some check were not put upon him there would be an outbreak.

I took upon myself to get rid of the intruder.

'Well, Clyde,' I said, 'at the Caffe d' Italia at six. Till then I leave you to your appointment. Good afternoon. Will you walk with me a minute, Grammont?'

Arthur took my hint and went away. Grammont lurched after him, but I took him by the sleeve and said I had something to say to him. He stood with drunken gravity to listen, and whilst I beat about in my own mind for some trifle which could be made to assume a moment's importance, he forgot everything that had passed, and himself began to talk.

'You thought I should be through my five thou, before now, didn't you, old Stick-in-the-Mud? Well, I've got the best part of it now, my boy. They can't suck me in Naples, I can tell you. Not much they can't. Look here! English notes. I don't care who sees 'em. There you are. There's more than four thousand in that thundering book. Look here.'

He took from his pocket-book a number of English bank-notes for one hundred pounds, and flourished them about and thumbed them over, and laughed above them with drunken cunning and triumph. A man lounged by us this minute, and took such special notice of us both that I was compelled to notice him. He was a swarthy bearded fellow in a blouse, like that of a French ouvrier. He did not look so particularly honest that I had any pleasure in knowing that he saw the great bundle of notes in Grammont's hands, and I said to Grammont hurriedly—

'It is not wise to exhibit so much money in this public place. Put it up.'

The man still regarded us, until at last he attracted the attention of my unwelcome companion, who turned round upon him, and cursed him volubly in Italian.

The man, speaking with a very un-Italian accent, though fluently enough, answered that he had as much right there as Grammont, and then moved away, still turning his eyes curiously upon us at intervals.

'Look here,' said my unwelcome companion, 'I am going to have a sleep on this bench,' He pointed to a stone seat on the quay, and rolled towards it.

'You are not so mad as to sleep in the open air with all that money about you,' I urged. Heaven knows I disliked the man, but one did not want even him to be robbed.

'Oh,' he answered drunkenly, 'I'm all right,' and so lay down at full length with his felt hat under his head, and fell asleep.

The man in the blouse still lingered, and I, knowing that he had seen the notes, felt it impossible to leave Grammont alone in his company. The Chiaja was very lonely just there.

At last an idea occurred to me, and I called the man. It was growing so near to six o'clock that I was afraid of missing Clyde. I tore a leaf from my pocket-book, scrawled a line to Clyde asking him to wait for me, took a franc from my purse, and asked the man to take a 'message to the Caffè d' Italia, and there give it to the person to whom it was addressed. Regarding the man's dress and the foreign accent with which he had spoken just now, I addressed him in French.

'Pas du tout!' he responded. 'Je ne suis pas un blooming idiot. C'est impossible. Allez-vous donc.'

'Ah!' I said, 'you are English. I beg your pardon. I suppose you did not understand. I wish you to be so good as to take this note to the Caffè d' Italia for Mr. Arthur Clyde. I will give you——'

'I am not anybody's messenger,' the man answered, and walked away again.

There was nobody else within call, and I was compelled, therefore, to resign myself as best I could. My efforts to awaken Grammont had proved quite fruitless. I lit a cigar, and walked to and fro. The man in the blouse also lit a. cigar, and paced to and fro, passing in every journey the bench on which Grammont lay

asleep. Suspecting him as I did, I never took my eyes from him for a moment when he was near Grammont, and he, in his catlike watch of me, was equally vigilant. At last, growing tired of this watchful promenade, I addressed him—

'It is of no use for you to linger here. You will not tire me out. I shall stay until my friend awakes.'

'Oh!' he said, removing his cigar, and taking a steady look at me. 'You'll stay until your friend awakes, will you? Then—so will I.'

He began his walk again, and I, regarding the man more closely, had formed a new idea.

This man suspected me of designs upon those bank-notes, I began to think, and was possibly lingering here to guard a stranger, from some such motive as my own. Still, it was scarcely safe to trust him alone, and I was not disposed to do so. The idea of his suspecting me amused me for a minute and then amazed me, but I continued my promenade as if no such thought had occurred to me. So we went on until my watch marked half past seven o'clock, when Grammont awoke. We were not far from the cabstand, and I led him thither, assisted him to enter the vehicle, gave the driver his half-franc, and bade him drive to the Basso Porto. The man in the blouse followed, and watched closely all the time, and my later belief concerning him was quite confirmed. Dismissing him from my mind, I entered a biroccio and drove to the Caffè. Arthur had left long since, with a message for me to the effect that he would be at home at Posilipo at eleven o'clock. Perhaps he had gone to the Opera, I thought, and with the intention of discovering him I wandered from the Caffè. The evening was very beautiful, and I changed my mind. I would roam along by the bay and enjoy the sunset, and give myself up to the delights of the country. As I wandered on, my thoughts ran back to Cecilia, and I had another inward battle with myself. I found myself, in the excitement of my thoughts, walking faster and faster until I was far from the city, and alone in a country lane with the moonlight. The moon was up, and up at the full, before the sun was down; and so soon as the gathering twilight gave her power, she bathed the landscape in so lovely a light that even my sore and troubled heart grew tranquil to behold it. I stood near an abrupt turning in the lane, and watched the tremor in the soft lustre of the bay, which looked as though innumerable great jewels rose slowly to its surface and there melted and were lost, whilst all the time innumerable others took the place of these dissolving gems, themselves dissolving in their turn, whilst countless others slowly rose. Here and there was a light upon the water, and here and there the shadow of a boat. And, far away, like the audible soul of the sea, was the soft, soft sound of music, where some boating party sang together.

To say that the cry came suddenly would be to say nothing. There came a shriek of appalling fear close by, which tore the air with terror. I took one step and listened. For a second I heard the rumbling of carriage wheels at a distance, and not another sound, but that of the faint music far away. Then came a foot-step at racing pace nearer and nearer, then a trip and a long stagger, as though the runner had nearly fallen, and then the headlong pace again. And then, with the soft broad moon-light full upon his face, a man came darting round the corner of the lane. I strove to move aside, but before I could lift a foot he was upon me like an avalanche. I knew that we fell together, and that the man arose and resumed his headlong course. I tried to call after him, but found no voice. I tried to rise, but could not move a limb. Then a sickly shudder ran through me, and I fainted.

Out of a sort of vaporous dream came the slow sound of carriage wheels bumping along the ruts of the road; then a light which was not of the moon; then a sudden pause in the noise of wheels and the sound of a coarse, strong voice speaking in tones of great excitement.

'Body of Bacchus! What a night for adventures! Here is another of them!'

The light came nearer, and another voice burst out in English, 'By the Lord! That's the man!'

The voices both grew dim, and though they still talked, they sounded like the noise of running water, wordless and indistinct. Then I felt myself lifted into a carriage, and until I awoke here I knew nothing. It was the jar of bolts, and the rattling fall of a chain, and the grating noise of a key in a lock which awoke me. I turned and recognised the man who entered—an officer, by name Ratuzzi, to whom I had done some service in old days. I asked him feebly where I was and how I came there.

'In the town gaol,' he answered gravely, and the solemnity of his face and tone chilled me.

'In the town gaol?' I repeated. 'Why was I brought here?'

'I am very sorry, signor,' he said in the same tone. 'In whatsoever I can serve you, you may command me. Shall I give orders to send for a doctor?'

'Why was I brought here?' I asked again.

He made no reply, and weak and shaken as I was, I sat up and reiterated my question.

'You are charged with the murder of Carlo Grammont.'

'Charles Grammont? Murder?' I repeated.

'Would you wish to see a doctor or an avvocato?'

I could only moan in answer.

'Charles Grammont murdered! Oh, my poor Cecilia! My angel and my love!'

For the face of the man in the lane was the face of Arthur Clyde, and the moonlight had shown to me, oh! too, too clearly, the blood that smeared his brow.

CHAPTER V.—*LA TEMPESTA VA CRESCENDO.*

I am remanded for trial.

There is a depth below all possibilities of pain and grief, even before one reaches the grave. I am in that depth already, and I do not believe that there is anything in the world which could touch me with sympathy or with sorrow. I am not even annoyed at myself and my own mental condition, as I surely have a right to be. My bodily health is tolerable. I sleep well at night, and during the day I eat with fair appetite. Some of my belongings have been brought from Posilipo here; amongst them a small mirror. I am so much a stranger to myself in this new-found calm and indifference, that I am almost surprised to find myself unaltered outwardly. I am a little paler than common—that is all. My mind finds natural employment in the most trivial speculations and fancies, and it is chiefly to save myself from this vanity of thought that I write now of myself and my own concernings.

I have written at this little story of my own in poverty and in success, in happiness and in sorrow, and it has come at last to seem that the plain white paper before me is my only fitting confidant. Will there ever come a day when I shall be able to read all its record gladly? Past joys are a grief—griefs gone by are a joy to us. Who knows what may come?

And so, poor Hope, you would spread your peacock wings even here? Ah, go your way! You forget. Our companionship is dissolved. We are not on speaking terms any longer.

I have not been plagued with any official severities, for Ratuzzi is mindful of old favours. He has told me only this morning that my father extended some such kindness to his father as that for which he bears such grateful memory to me. It was a small affair; a mere matter of money. Against my wish he brought to me a doctor and an advocate. I submitted myself to the first, but to the advocate I declined to listen.

He is a pale young man of five-and-twenty or thereabouts, this advocate. He has a cleanshaven face of rare mobility, a mouth of remarkable decision and sweetness, and eyes of black fire. The most noticeable thing about him is his voice, which is not easily to be characterised. You know the sub-acid flavour in a generous Burgundy—so nicely proportioned that it does but give the wine a grip on the tongue and palate. That is the nearest thing I can think of to the singular quality of this man's voice. The voice is rich and full; but there is a tart flavour in it which emphasises all it says just as the acid emphasises the riper flavours of wine. It takes the kind of grip upon the ear that a file takes upon steel. Or, better than all, it takes just that hold upon the ear which the violin bow takes upon the strings. Ecco. There is my meaning at last. It is not possible that you should escape from listening to this young man when he speaks. He is, further, a young man whom nothing can abash. It is not singular, then, since I am indifferent to all things now that although I declined to listen to him, he stayed and talked, and after much trouble brought me to talk with him.

He was right, after all.

'You are innocent, signor, and you decline to do anything to help yourself? Permit me. No man ever did God's work in the world by refusing to help himself. You have some reason for your refusal? What possible reasons exist? Guilt? We will dismiss that at once.

Despair of establishing innocence? No. When the salt mines of Sardinia are on one side a man and liberty is on the other, he does not yield to despair. Ha! The impossibility, signor, of defending oneself unless one criminates another? And that other a friend—a lover? I am right, signor. No gestures of denial can throw down a conclusion so obviously firm. And now, suppose that it should not be necessary to criminate another. Would you then consent to be defended? No? Well, signor, I am not the accusatore pubblico, and it is no business of mine to hunt down criminals. But, whether you will or not, I will get to the bottom of this matter.'

'Are you so eager for a case, signor?' I asked him. 'I will pay you more to leave me alone than you can ask if you defend me.'

I had meant to sting him into leaving me. But his pale face did not even flush at the insult.

'I am engaged by my friend Ratuzzi, signor. Ratuzzi tells me it is beyond dreaming that you should be guilty of murder and theft. He came to me and besought me to make him grateful for all eternity by taking up this case and clearing you from the suspicions which rest upon you. I have promised him that I will do all in my power, and I will. You will observe, therefore, signor, that whatsoever is done in this matter is independent of your will, if you choose to have it so. I shall know who committed this murder in a fortnight from now, and I shall only retire from your defence if I prove you guilty in my own mind.'

'Signor,' I said in answer, 'I apologise for the insult I offered you just now. But in this matter I am resolute. If it be the will of God that I suffer innocently, I suffer. I am not anxious on that score. It is not at all a matter for my consideration. I do not care whether I am acquitted or found guilty.'

'Is it your wish that I should consult the other prisoner's interest at all?'

I looked at him blankly, whilst my heart stood still.

'The other prisoner?' I asked.

'The other prisoner,' he answered calmly. 'Is it he whom you desire to shield?'

'Who is he?'

The advocate drew forth a bundle of memoranda, and turned them over carefully and at his leisure. I did not dare to question him further, and waited in an agony of suspense.

'That is the name,' he said—'an English name.'

He placed his thumb and leisurely turned round the paper to me on the table which stood before us. I tried to read, but all my pulses seemed throbbing round my eyes, and I was dazzled and blind. He took the paper up again, but I reached out my hand for it.

'I did not read the name,' I said. 'Permit me once more.'

He passed the paper again towards me, and I read—

'John Baker. Claims to be an Englishman, and speaks in English only. Is believed to be by birth an Italian, but a naturalised British subject. A person of notoriously evil character.'

This at least was not Arthur. I breathed again, and for a moment a wild hope sprang up in my heart. It died

again directly. Ah, if I could have believed that he was innocent! But the evidence of which I was the sole repository was beyond all doubt, beyond all hope.

'No,' I said. 'I know nothing of this man. What is the evidence against him?'

'The evidence against him is the knowledge that he was poor until the night of the murder, and has since suddenly become rich. Further, that a pocket-book found in his possession was smeared with blood. The book contains a large sum of money in English notes, and is believed to have belonged to the murdered man.'

I had never supposed that Arthur had robbed the body of his dead enemy.

'If this be proved, Signor l'Avvocato,' I said, after some time of silence, 'what punishment will fall upon this man?'

'The salt mines will not be enough for him,' the advocate answered. 'He will probably be shot. You see, signor, he has denied his nationality, and that of itself will embitter the national feeling against him.'

'Then,' I answered, 'these suspicions must not be bolstered by false proofs. This man has, perhaps, robbed a dead body, but he has not committed murder.'

'Signor Calvotti,' said the advocate, the black fire burning slowly in his eyes, and a slow flush creeping to his pale forehead whilst he spoke, 'what mystery surrounds your share of this matter I can only faintly guess. But I know that it is not a mystery to you. I have found out this, at least, since I have been here—that you know the murderer, and that you determine to shield him, even at your own expense. Now, I warn you that if you deny me your confidence, I will convict the real man, whosoever he may be.'

He fixed those slow-burning eyes upon me as he said this, and waited for an answer. I responded to his words and to the fixity of his gaze by silence.

'Give me your confidence, and I will serve your turn,' he said again. 'Are you the guilty man?'

'I? No.'

'Signor Calvotti,' he began again, after another pause, during which his eyes were shadowed by his drooping brows, 'you shall trust me yet. Any secret suspicion given to me is buried in the grave. Any secret certainty of knowledge is buried equally. A confession of your own guilt, the declaration of a friend's, shall be entombed here'—he laid his hand upon his breast—'and know no resurrection.'

I answered nothing, and he rose to go.

'That which you hide,' he said as a last word,' I will discover for myself. Given freely, it would be used for your own cause. Wrested from mystery, it shall be used for mine.'

'Come here again,' I answered, 'three hours later, and I will answer you in one way or the other.'

'Good,' he responded, and signalled for the door to be opened. Ratuzzi himself answered the loud knock he gave, and my friendly gaoler asked me how I fared, and if I stood in need of anything.

'Nothing just now but time to think a little.'

He closed the door, and locked and chained and bolted it, and then I heard the footsteps of the two grow fainter and fainter until silence came. Then I lit my pipe and poured out a glass of wine—for in these respects I am allowed what I choose—and sat down to think. But I found it hard to give my thoughts to anything. There was a hollow somewhere in my mind into which all serious thoughts fell jumbled. I felt neither pained nor confused, but only vacuous. I battled with this feeling until I subdued it. Then I grasped the situation firmly. What object have I, here and now, and everywhere and always, next to the rectitude of my own soul? There is only one answer to that question: Cecilia's happiness! How to secure that here?—how to save it from the horrible perils which everywhere surround it? Is it to be done by securing her union for life with her brother's murderer? If I know one thing of Arthur Clyde—whom I know well—it is this: that such a crime as that I charge him with, committed under whatsoever provocation, will weigh him down for ever, and make life a perpetual hell to him. The hideous injustice of a union with such a man she must not suffer, whatsoever else she suffer. And that she, like the rest of us, *must* suffer, is too clear. But of this I am assured: To learn that her lover is her brother's murderer, and not only that, but that by his silence he accuses a friend who is innocent, would break her heart beyond all the remedy of hope and years. That shall not be.

It seemed little more than an hour when I heard footsteps again approaching my door. They paused on reaching it, and the jar of bolt and chain and lock succeeded. The door opened and closed again. I did not turn or look round until a hand was laid on me, and a voice, strange to me for a year, called me by my name. Then I was indeed amazed.

'Mr. Gregory! You here?'

'My poor fellow! I reached Naples last night, and found the town ringing with the news of an arrest for murder. But what I can't understand is, that now they've got the real fellow, they don't let you go.'

'Never mind me,' I answered. 'Do they know in England—Miss Grammont and Cecilia?'

'They are with me here,' he answered quickly. 'They know that you are arrested for murder, and scout the idea, of course. But they don't know of their brother's death yet. I want to run them both away and let them learn the news more tenderly than they will do here, but I must see you through this miserable business. How did the fools come to suspect *you*, of all men in the world?'

'Suspicion was natural,' I answered. 'I was found near the spot directly after the discovery of the body.'

'What brought you there?'

'I was on my way home to Posilipo. The night was fine, and I was in a mood for walking.'

'But you were found insensible, or something of the sort, weren't you?'

'I was standing still in the road, looking at the moonlight on the bay, when I heard a terrible cry. Before I could move, a man came racing down the road as if he were flying for his life. He ran against me, and we fell together. I fainted, and never fully recovered consciousness until I found myself here.'

'Who do you suppose the man to be? No clue to him, I suppose, in your own mind? What do the authorities say to this?'

'I have offered no defence, and made no statement.'

'God bless my soul, what folly! When you might have been out of custody the next day! How very absurd!'

'I was stunned, remember. There were good reasons for silence. The trial takes place in a fortnight.'

'A fortnight! But you can't stop here a fortnight!'

'I must!' I answered, smiling even then at his impetuosity. 'I am remanded for trial.'

'You bear it well, Calvotti,' he said, taking me by both shoulders, and looking kindly at me.

'I do not feel my own share much,' I told him truly. 'I am most aggrieved for the others. It is a terrible business.'

'Give me young Clyde's address. I must bring him to comfort Cecilia when she learns the truth. She was fond of that poor scapegrace, with all his faults and follies. He paid bitterly for em'—poor ne'er-do-weel!—very bitterly.'

'Bitterly, indeed,' I answered absently, looking for a way to escape from a renewed mention of Clyde's name, and finding none.

'I shall come to see you as often as they'll let me, and stay as long as I can. But now I must go for the present. Let me see—Clyde's living at your place, isn't he?'

'Yes,' I answered, 'he was living at the address from which I always dated.' 'Has he been here to-day?' Oh! It was all too bitter, and I could endure no longer. I turned my face away. My old patron laid a gentle hand upon my shoulder, and strove to turn me round. I cast myself upon the bed, and broke into tears. Gran Dio! I am not ashamed. But that outbreak cost me bodily agony, and I wept and sobbed whilst I cursed myself for weeping. Sacred Heaven! how I wrestled with this devil of weakness, which held me so strongly. When I had fought him down, he leapt upon me afresh, and subdued me by sheer torture until I let nature take her way, and cried like a woman! Then, when it was all over, I stood up and spoke with a new resolve.

'Sir, you are a just man and a wise man, and you shall know the whole truth. But first you shall swear to me that what I tell you is for ever buried in your own heart!'

He looked at me with stern inquiry.

'I am not an informer,' he said, 'and you may speak safely.'

I stepped towards him, but he waved me back, and himself took a backward step.

'There is a reason for my silence, but with you that reason dies. I have your promise, and I trust it. The man who overthrew me in the lane, whose hands and face were red with Grammont's blood, was——'

'Go on,' he said, standing there still in rough-hewn dignity, though his lips trembled and his face was pale.

'That man,' I said, 'was Arthur Clyde.'

'Ah!' The sound escaped him without his knowing it. A minute later he asked, 'What was the ground of quarrel?'

I told him then the story of Clyde's meeting with Grammont, and of Arthur's passion afterwards, and of our next encounter with Grammont at the end of the Chiaja on the day of the murder.

'And you are sacrificing yourself that Clyde may escape, trusting to chances to clear yourself?'

I answered nothing.

'What is your motive in all this?' he asked me.

What right had I to withhold it, then? what right to be ashamed of the truth? Yet I paused.

'It is not friendship for Clyde. What *is* the motive?'

'I was silent because I waited here for events to decide what I could not decide for myself.'

'And what was that?'

'How to give Cecilia least pain.'

'Are you in love with Cecilia?' he asked me.

'No,' I answered honestly, 'I am not in love with Cecilia, but she is dearer to me than anybody in the world. I could not love my sister or my mother more tenderly.'

'H'm!' he said in his old way, when thinking. 'And what have events led you to?'

'They lead me nowhere,' I cried; 'I am helpless.'

'And so Clyde has never been here, of course. Has he escaped?'

'I cannot say.'

'It is a terrible business, Calvotti, but it is better so. You have done right. You have done well. You have done nobly. There is no evidence against you which is not so flimsy that a fly could break through it. Clyde will disappear. If he should come back again, I will warn him off—trust me. Time will console Cecilia, and you will have averted a tragedy. Here is somebody at the door.'

Chain and lock creaked and jangled. The door swung inwards, and Ratuzzi appeared with the advocate.

'Signor l'Avvocato,' I said, 'this gentleman will tell you everything it concerns you to know. Or—stay. Do you speak English?'

'I speak no language but my own,' said the young advocate.

'My dear Calvotti,' said my old patron, in Italian smoother and more choicely worded than his English, one language is pretty much the same to me as another, so long as it *is* a language, and is spoken in Europe. I have been a mercantile adventurer in Europe for more than thirty years, and have found a knowledge of languages a necessity.'

'Then, sir,' I said in English, 'deal with this gentleman according to your discretion. If you think it wise, let him know all.'

'Trust to me,' he answered, and bade me a cheery adieu.

In another hour the advocate was back, again.

'Signor Calvotti,' he exclaimed, holding out his hand for mine, 'I did not know that I had a hero to defend. But I know it now. You are in no danger. It is weary waiting, but two weeks do not make up eternity; and we shall march out of the court with the drums beating.'

I could not share his joy. The weight which is upon me now oppressed me then; and when the door closed upon the advocate, I could only sit upon my bed and think, with a heart that ached and burned, of the terror which waited on Cecilia.

CHAPTER VI.—THE END.

Whilst I lay waiting for the day of trial, I learned from my counsel that my fellow-prisoner was identified as one Giovanni Fornajo, an old companion of Charles Grammont. This man was known to have rifled his dead friend's clothing, and the popular impression appeared to be that I had either committed the murder from some other motive than cupidity, or had been disturbed, and that this poor scoundrel had striven to profit by my crime. Against us both the popular feeling was intense. It was noted by the crowd that both Fornajo and myself were naturalised British subjects, and that fact alone might have created considerable prejudice against us, because to the ignorant mind it bespoke the repudiation of our native land—a thing from which I am utterly afar in my own mind. I am proud of Italy, and I am proud of Naples, and I have no idea of pretending to be other than a Neapolitan. One can be cosmopolitan without losing one's patriotism, I venture respectfully to hope. But I would not have cared then to set myself right with the populace of my native city, either on that or any other point, though I could have done it with a word. It was natural and illogical to scorn the people for believing in my guilt, whilst I allowed them to believe it. Yet I felt against them a sort of lofty anger, and felt myself affronted to think that anybody could regard me as being even likely to commit a murder. Ratuzzi was kind throughout, even when he believed me guilty; and Mr. Gregory after his first visit never failed me. I asked him news of Clyde, but he had no news to bring me until two days before my trial, when he came into my cell with a grave but not uncheerful countenance.

'Calvotti,' he said, 'can you tell me with any precision the hour at which you saw Arthur on that fatal night?'

'I can only guess the time,' I answered. 'But why do you ask?' I questioned in my turn.

'Because,' he replied, 'I believe it possible that you may have mistaken somebody else for Arthur, and because I have evidence that he could not be near the place at the time at which we know that the murder must have been committed.'

For one moment hope beamed within my heart, but in a second, like a scene beheld by the light of heaven's fire, the sight of that horror-stricken, blood-stained face was with me. I could read again every line and tint of it, and I knew it too well to be mistaken.

'My friend,' I said sorrowfully—'my best friend—do not comfort yourself with any false hope on that matter. I saw him, and there is no hope of a doubt in all my mind.'

'Arthur,' he replied, 'is lying ill of fever at this moment in your house at Posilipo. Your housekeeper tells me that she saw him enter his room. He made her understand that he was unwell, and that he wished to lie down. She gave him a cup of coffee, and he retired to his room. Next morning she found him there raving with fever and lying on the floor. Only one point in her narrative accords with your belief, and that is, when she raised him she found him badly cut across the forehead, and found that his arms were bruised as if by a fall. The doctor who attends him tells me that the crisis is over, but sternly forbids that any questions should be asked him at present. The patient must see nobody for a week to come, but I have hopes that we shall yet clear up a terrible mystery, and shall find that Arthur is as innocent as I believe you to be.'

I told him I would give all in my world to share his hopes. How could I doubt my own eyes? A vision, moreover, does not dash against a man and knock him down and stun him for hours. In all that Mr. Gregory could tell me I found no hope, but only vague suspicions of a plan to divert suspicion. Yet I found some comfort in one belief which would intrude itself upon me. He was yet guilty though this story of the fever were all true, but if it were true he was less base than I had feared, and had not willingly left one who loved him to suffer for his crime. Mr. Gregory went away sensibly subdued by my fixed refusal to accept the hope he offered.

'There is a mystery in all this, Calvotti,' he said at parting, 'and it must be cleared.'

'There is no mystery to my eyes,' I answered, 'and you will find before long that I am right, though I would give the world to know that I am wrong.'

Then came the day. I had little fear of being found guilty, and I had, indeed, but very little care to be acquitted. When I thought of myself, it was as though I reflected on the affairs of some troublesome stranger, of whose interest I was weary. I am not learned in law forms, and I cannot tell you the precise forms of the several indictments against me. These things are managed in Italy pretty much as they are in England, except that here you have no accusatore pubblico. The place of that functionary would, in an English Court, be filled by a temporarily appointed counsel for the Crown. When I was placed in the dock, I looked about with an interest no more vivid than that of any spectator there. Mr. Gregory sat beside my counsel, and nodded to me gravely. There was no one else whom I knew, although the place was crowded. There was a murmur on my entrance, and I heard many words of hatred and loathing muttered here and there. For a moment no one spoke or moved, and the Court seemed to await something. I saw what that something was when Giovanni Fornajo was placed in the dock by my side, and we were jointly and severally arraigned. The accustore pubblico arose, and, gathering his gown about him, spoke.

Had I been one of the crowd who listened, I should have believed myself guilty. The evidence against me, as he set it forth, seemed a web closely woven enough to hold anything. I had been seen by two or more people engaged in a quarrel with the deceased in the Basso Porto. I had been seen on the Chiaja with him at a time

when he was the worse for drink, and when my conduct and appearance were so suspicious that a perfect stranger was impelled to watch me for two hours lest I should do the man a mischief in his drunken sleep. Two or three hours later, this perfect stranger to us both had found the dead body of Charles Grammont in the road with all the pockets of his garments turned inside out, and had put the body into a cart he was then driving from Posilipo to Naples. A hundred yards nearer the city he found me lying bruised as if in a struggle, and with the marks of a hand wet with blood upon my white shirt-front. The marks of the hand had been found to correspond in size with the hand of the deceased. My companion in the dock was probably, so the accusatore said, an accessory before the fact, and it was probable that, whilst I had committed the crime to gratify my own evil passion for revenge, I had engaged this desperate and notorious character to pillage the body in order to give the murder the appearance of having been committed from a purely sordid motive. He set forth all his facts and all his theories about them with great calmness, but when he came to the close of his indictment he burst into an impassioned protest against certain articles which had appeared in a French journal on the question of Italian Brigandage, citing this case as an argument to show that crimes of violence were committed by born Neapolitans within the city radius, and expressing a sarcastic wonder that the authorities should have troubled themselves to arrest the criminals though the proofs against them both were overwhelming.

'Thus it is,' said the accusatore, speaking with a stern passion of emphasis, 'that these traitors to their country first cast off their natal ties in order to lead lives of unrestricted profligacy abroad, and having, in other lands, done all within them to disgrace the land of their birth, return to it to inflict a wound still deeper upon the national reputation; and thus it is that these villains, though they once did their country the honour to repudiate it, return to lay a final disgrace upon it.'

He pressed with a passionate insistence for the extremest rigour of the law against us both, and it was plain from the angry murmurs of the court that this appeal to the national sentiment had told heavily against me. Then he called his witnesses. The first three were from the Basso Porto—fit inhabitants of the place. They told substantially the same story, and all swore that I was engaged in an angry broil with Grammont and another Englishman whom they did not know. They admitted that the conversation was carried on in English, but my advocate's half-contemptuous cross-examination could not set aside the fact that a quarrel, in which I had taken some part, had taken place. After these three, Matthew Hollis was called, and the man whom I had watched upon the quay presented himself. He told, in fair though foreign-sounding Italian, a plain story. He had been an engine-fitter, and had worked in France and Italy. He was settled down in business on his own account in Naples, and on the day to which his story related had work to do at Posilipo. On his way thither he observed Grammont and myself, and suspected me of evil designs and watched me. He told how I tried to get rid of him by sending him upon a message to the Caffe d' Italia, and how he declined to leave the place. He related how, having seen us part, he had gone his way to Posilipo, and how, returning thence in the evening with a workman of his own, he had found the dead body of Grammont on the road, and had found me lying insensible at a little distance from it. A close cross-examination only served to prove the absolute solidity of this man's story. Then an officer produced a bundle, and, untying it, displayed the shirt I had worn, with the rust-coloured mark of a hand distinct upon the front. 'Did that mark correspond with the size of the hand of the murdered man?' So asked the accusatore pubblico. 'Yes,' answered the official, 'accurately.' 'Did it correspond with the hand of the prisoner Giovanni Câlvotti?' 'No,' he responded, and stated truly that I was a man of much larger build than Grammont, and my hand at least an inch longer. So far as I was-concerned the case closed with his evidence, and the case against Fornajo was then gone into. There is no need to go over that ground: again. All that was proved against him was; the possession of Grammont's money. He failed totally to establish an alibi, and so far as participation in the crime went the evidence; seemed clear enough against him.

Then arose my advocate, with pale face and coal-black eyes.

'This world,' he said, 'is full of strange and curious contrasts, but I do not think that any contrast so strange as this has been seen by any man who now hears my voice. Side by side, companions in your thoughts of them, stand two men so utterly unlike each other in; appearance and character, that to see them thus commonly arraigned is in itself an amazement. The one a gentleman and descended from gentlemen, the other a person of the lowest class—the one famous in the annals of contemporary art, the other known for nothing but his love for vulgar dissipation. As they stand there before you they present a spectacle tragic and unique. As I know them—and as you will see them when I have called the one witness I have to call—they present a spectacle yet more amazing. One man stands there a monument of honour, a glory to his country, and a lesson to mankind. The other stands there a murderer in fact already, and in his heart a murderer again; since, knowing the innocence of the man beside him, he seeks at the expense of innocence to shield his own guilt from the sword of justice. It is my pride and my delight to-day to heal one broken and heroic heart, and it is my duty to bring one miserable criminal to justice.'

Whilst the young advocate spoke thus, I stood in amazed agony. Was he about to denounce Clyde in order to free me? It would be a professional tour de force, and the melodramatic power of the situation would have made him notorious for life. He looked round upon me slowly when he had ceased to speak, and I saw that his dark eyes were burning with triumphant fire. He sat down, and for a moment there was a dead hush in the crowded place, and then a buzz of excited speech, and then a clamour. In the midst of it an officer placed a chair before the judge, immediately between the judicial seat and the railed space in which I stood. If I had been amazed at the speech of the young advocate, you may guess how I felt when Arthur Clyde came forward and took the seat. His eyes met mine once, and I saw that they were brimmed with tears, and there was such a smile upon his face as I never saw before. Was I mad, or lost in some fantastic dream? This man voluntarily here, of all men—and smiling upon *me!* It was at once incredible and true. I waited, dizzy and breathless, to hear and see the end.

The customary oath administered, my advocate arose, and, in the midst of a deathlike silence, questioned Arthur Clyde. He first drew from him the story of the Basso Porto, and at its close begged to recall the three witnesses who had deposed to my participation in the quarrel. They came, and each identified Arthur as the third party in the fracas. Arthur gave his evidence in English, through the sworn interpreter of the court, and

Mr. Gregory once or twice gave hints to the advocate when question or answer missed precise translation. He told of our second meeting with Grammont, and of his own departure. Then came a story which amazed me, and riveted the ears of every creature there. That story I reproduce from the columns of the 'Giorno.'

Advocate: Where did you go next?

Witness: To the Caffe d' Italia to await my friend.

Advocate: How long did you stay?

Witness: Only half-an-hour. I felt suddenly unwell, and walked again on the Chiaja.

Advocate: Did you see your friend again?

Witness: Yes. He was still engaged in talk with Mr. Grammont; and since I had no wish to meet him then, I walked along the road to Posilipo.

Advocate: Did anything happen upon the road?

Witness: I was violently sick, and, feeling very faint afterwards, lay down upon a slope at the side of the road under the shade of a tree, and rested there.

Advocate: What happened next?

Witness: I heard voices in the lane below me.

Advocate: Relate now what happened.

Witness: I saw two men—Mr. Grammont and another—talking together. They spoke in English. The man asked for money, and said he knew perfectly well that Mr. Grammont had more than four thousand pounds in English notes about him at that moment.

The Judge: What was Grammont's condition at this time?

Witness: He was partially sobered, as I should judge, but not altogether.

Advocate: Pray proceed with your story.

Witness: There was a good deal of angry talk between the two and Grammont's companion threatened that, if he were not allowed a part of the money, he would try to take all.

Advocate: Did Grammont take any notice of that threat?

Witness: He laughed, and the two walked on together.

Advocate: Did you see them again?

Witness: I passed them on my way to Posilipo, when they were laughing and chatting together quite amicably.

Advocate: Did you then see Mr. Grammont's companion clearly?

Witness: I did.

Advocate: Can you point him out?

Witness: That is the man (rising and pointing to the prisoner Fornajo).

Advocate: Continue your narrative.

Witness: I went on to Posilipo, and there took a cup of coffee and retired to my bedroom. Feeling then a little better, and thinking that my friend Calvotti would wonder at my absence, I walked back towards the city, hoping to meet him. It was then broad moonlight. Where I had last seen Grammont and the prisoner Fornajo I saw them both again. Grammont was lying motionless upon the ground, and Fornajo was bending above him. I suspected foul play, and ran forward. Fornajo arose and turned upon me. I don't know who first attacked the other. We struggled together, and he broke away. I then turned to Grammont.

The Witness here gave signs of deep emotion.

Advocate: Had any suspicion of murder up to this time occurred to you?

Witness: None.

Advocate: I must trouble you by reviving a painful memory. You had a brother who died in your childhood?

Witness (speaking with a great effort): I had.

Advocate: How did he die?

Witness: By his own hand.

Advocate: I must ask the indulgence of the court for this gentleman, who is recovering now from the effects of recent fever, and who acts against the advice of his doctor by coming to do his duty here. (To the Witness): Who first discovered the body of your brother?

Witness: I did.

Advocate: I will try you as little as I can. Compose yourself. That discovery naturally shocked you terribly?

Witness: Terribly.

Advocate: And left upon your mind an indelible impression?

Witness: An indelible impression.

Advocate: When you first turned to Mr. Grammont, what did you do?

Witness: I stooped down and took his head in my hands.

Advocate: And what did you see?

Witness: That his head was nearly severed from his body.

Advocate: And what effect had this spectacle upon you?

The Witness returned no answer to the interpreter, and on the question being repeated: fainted, and was removed from court.

The Judge: Is it necessary to prolong this painful scene?

Advocate: With all submission to the Court—for one moment only. (After a pause, the Witness returned.) Are you strong enough to go on, Mr. Clyde?

Witness: I think so.

Advocate: We are then to understand that at this terrible sight the shock given you in your childhood by the discovery of your brother was revived?

Witness: Yes.

Advocate: What did you do?

Witness: I am not quite clear, but I remember running from the place.

Advocate: Did you see any living man near there?

Witness: Yes. I ran against a man close by. We fell together.

Advocate: In what condition were your hands?

Witness: They were covered with blood.

The Advocate here asked for the shirt of the prisoner Giovanni Calvotti. It was produced.

Advocate: You observe upon the breast of that shirt the mark of a hand?

Witness: Yes.

Advocate: Lay your hand upon it, and see if it corresponds in size?

Witness: Exactly.

Advocate: One question more. Was Mr. Grammont dead when you saw him?

Witness: I believe that he was not quite dead. I believe that I saw his hand move upon his breast.

Advocate: One word more. Could you identify the man against whom you ran?

Witness: I was too agitated at the time to recognise him.

In this wise the story came out. Ah me! how I accused myself in my heart for my suspicions. The tears of joy were in my eyes so thickly that I could scarcely see. I had my friend back again, and my love was saved this overwhelming horror which had seemed to threaten her.

The Public Accuser rose and cross-examined Arthur Clyde, for form's sake, I suppose. But the jury professed themselves satisfied with the evidence before them, and before I quite knew what had happened I was in a chariot in the street—a chariot with no horses at all, but a thousand men, to draw it. The story was abroad. The city rang with it. I had risked my life to save a friend from suspicion, and those who cursed me in the morning cheered me in the afternoon, until they were too hoarse to cheer me longer. Happily, Cecilia's name was kept out of this noisy chorus of applause which roared so in my ears. I was glad and excited, and had no objection to be made a hero. As soon as I could be rescued, Mr. Gregory bore me away to Posilipo, where I found Arthur quite worn out with the fatigue and excitement of the day. Those influences retarded his recovery for a week or two, but before the autumn came he was well and strong again. I begged hard of Mr. Gregory and the Advocate, and at last they came to agree with me, and to this day Arthur does not know of my suspicions of him. He regards my reception by the populace as a curious illustration of the excitability of an Italian mob—as no doubt it was.

Giovanni Fornajo, otherwise John Baker, went to the Sardinian salt mines for the term of his natural life, and is serving there now.

I am godfather to Cecilia's boy, and I am an Italian old bachelor. I shall never marry, but I am contented. My last news is that my old patron, at the age of fifty-five, has proposed to Miss Grammont, and that she has not refused him.

If you will look into the little churchyard at Posilipo you will find a flat marble slab with a name on it, and no more. The name it bears is that of Alberto Lezzi, who but for his early death would have been one of the great legal orators of Europe. The case which first brought him into note was mine. I have not told you his name before, but my advocate was the great Alberto Lezzi. It was his hand which averted the tragedy of my life, and it is to his memory that I dedicate this story.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE ROMANCE OF GIOVANNI CALVOTTI ***

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