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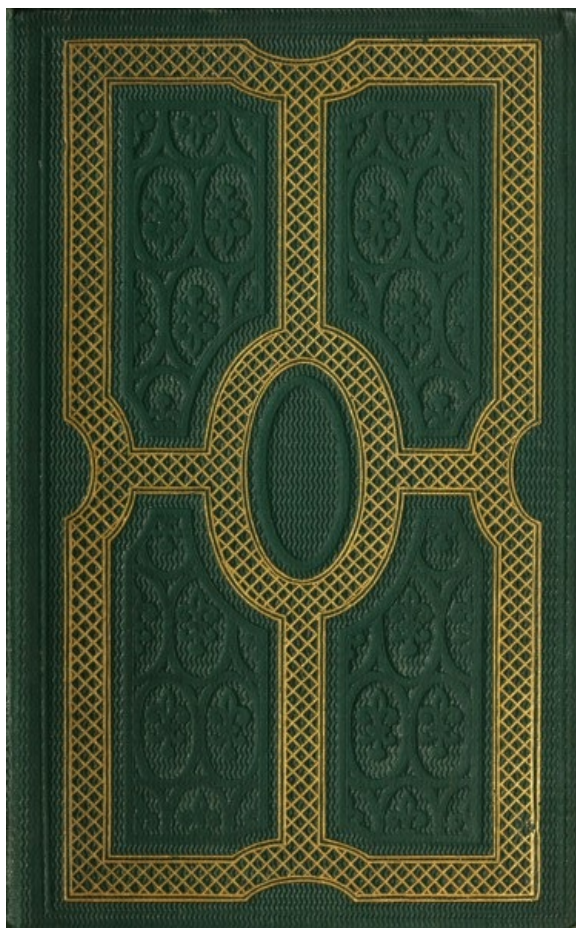
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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE DUCHESS OF TRAJETTO ***



THE
DUCHESS OF TRAJETTO.

BY
THE AUTHOR OF "MARY POWELL."

Giulia Gonzaga, che, dovunque il piede
Volge, e dovunque i sereni occhi gira,
Non pur ogn' altra di beltà le cede,
Ma, come scesa dal ciel, Dea l'ammira.

ARIOSTO.

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THE DUCHESS OF TRAJETTO.

CHAPTER I.

THE DUCHESS IN DANGER.

It was night—the Duchess was in bed. Her hand shaded her wakeful eyes from the light of a silver lamp fed with perfumed oil, which shone only on what was calculated to please the taste, minister to the luxury, and display the wealth of the owner. Rare paintings of Scriptural and mythological subjects decorated the walls, the ceiling was richly moulded and gilt, the floor of polished marble was only partially covered with fine matting, a few choice statuettes and vases occupied brackets and niches; the massive toilette service and mirror-frame of precious metal were shaded by some texture of light silvery tissue; while half-open cabinets and caskets revealed priceless jewels and fragrant perfumes. On a velvet cushion lay an illuminated missal and a rosary.

Here was every outward appliance, one might think, to make a favourite of fortune happy; but the good and honest face of the Duchess, which spoke her every thought, did not look so. The night was sultry; she had tried to sleep, but could not; and now she was feverishly endeavouring to think of something pleasant, without success.

The deep stone windows of her apartment, which were open, commanded a small garden

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sleeping in the moonlight, where terraces were cut on a declivity; and where Cupid and Psyche, Diana with her hounds, and Apollo with his bow, gleamed white among orange, lemon, and myrtle. This little pleasaunce was shut in within the walls of a strong baronial castle; and beyond them lay the little town of Fondi, consisting of a single street built on the Appian Way. Beyond it, a lake, a forest, a marsh, stretching down to the blue brimming Mediterranean. The little town seemed steeped in sleep: the silence was intense.

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All at once, a low, regular sound jarred on the Duchess's quickened ear.

"That's a very unaccountable noise," thought she to herself. "I wonder what it is. People are about, who ought to be in their beds. If it continues, I shall ring up the Mother-of-the-maids. Now it has stopped. I wish I were not so wakeful—how tiresome it is!

"What could induce Isabella to write me that disagreeable letter? I fancy the Prince of Sulmona had a hand in it. It is very hard, after the Pope's substantiating my rights as he has done, and bringing me through with a high hand, that I should be assailed in a fresh quarter. How sorry Rodomonte would have been! Poor fellow, he loved us both so dearly! And if ever a step-mother did her duty by a step-daughter, I did mine by Isabella. But there was too little difference in our ages. She presumed on my forbearance, and tried to domineer over me. I dare say many people fancy the life of a rich young widow must needs be very happy. Some were even stupid enough to think my dear Duke and I could not be as happy as we seemed. Oh, yes, we were!—though he was forty and I but thirteen.

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"Supposing I had been over-persuaded to have Ippolito, how different would have been the story of our lives! Happier for him, possibly, but he may be very well content to be a cardinal. At the same time I have somehow suspected that if ever any one really valued me for myself, he did. They all flatter too much. A flattered person is the tool of the flatterer. It hurts one's mind—

"That noise again! Can it be Caterina snoring? She says she never does: just as if she could hear herself! Whatever it is, I'll have it inquired into. Caterina! Caterina! Cynthia! Cynthia!"

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At the sound of the Duchess's voice, two of her attendants came running in from the antechamber. One of them was a withered old woman with a very benevolent face and thin grey hair fastened at the top of her head in a little knot about as big as an egg, with a bodkin: the other a Moorish girl, with large, startled, lustrous eyes, and symmetrical as one of Calypso's nymphs moulded in bronze. She was in a single white garment, but had caught up a striped goat's hair haik, which by day formed the upper part of her attire.

"Did Leila call?" "What will your Vossignoria?"

"I called because I could bear your snoring no longer, Caterina."

"I snore?" repeated Caterina, with a look of injured innocence. "Vossignoria must surely be mistaken; for I was lying wide awake, with Cynthia sleeping beside me, as quiet as a lamb."

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"You were dreaming that you were awake," said the Duchess. "I have not once closed my eyes, nor has it been possible—Hark! there is the noise again!" cried she, excitedly. "What on earth can it be?"

They remained transfixed, with suspended breath, in various attitudes of surprise and affright; each of them intently listening.

"I hear nothing, Eccellenza," began Caterina.

"There! there!" exclaimed the Duchess.

Cynthia suddenly sprang to one of the open windows, and looked out—then, clapped her hands to her head, and gave an unearthly yell.

"What is it?" cried Caterina, hastening towards her, and peering forth into the darkness. Then, shrieking, she exclaimed,— "The pirates are upon us!"

"*Balzo dal letto.*"^[1]—The Duchess sprang from her bed, and took one hasty glance from the window. She could discern a string of turbaned figures with gleaming scimitars swarming up the walls, and leaping down on the inner side.

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[1] "Come lupi famelici entrarono in Fondi que' barbari, destandovi tra gli ululati degli abitanti un tumulto indicibile. Il fremito de' ribaldi assalitori, le grida degli assaliti che assordavano l' aria, ruppero a Giulia il sonno, e mentre palpitando e incerta iva pensando qual potesse essere la cagione di tanto rumore, eccole i pallidi famigliari col tristo annunzio che i Turchi scorrevano l' occupata città, e che non vi era tempo a perdere se bramava salvarsi dalle indegne loro mani. Balzo dal letto," &c., &c.—IRENEO AFFO, *Memorie di tre Principesse, &c.*

"We are undone!" exclaimed she, desperately. "Caterina! arouse the men! Cynthia, help me to dress."

Wild sounds were already heard on every side, both in the town and the castle—alarm-bells ringing, hoarse war-cries, piercing screams—Hayraddin Barbarossa was upon them!

What a plunder! There was the town, to begin with; then, there was the castle; and within the castle, the most beautiful and beloved lady in all Italy! the friend and favourite of popes and princes; a princess herself, enormously rich! What a ransom!

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But no ransom was the object of Hayraddin Barbarossa, the scourge of the seas. He meant to carry her away captive to Solyman the Magnificent, Emperor of the Turks. With this purpose, and no less, had Hayraddin been hovering off the coast with a hundred galleys and two thousand

Turks on board,^[2] terrifying the Neapolitans out of their wits at the very thought of his red beard and red flag—he, who avowed himself "the friend of the sea, and the foe of all who sailed upon it"—whose very name was a word of fear from the Straits of Gibraltar to the Dardanelles!^[3]

[2] "Piena l' Italia e l' Europa fosse di quanto iva spargendo la fama intorno le singolare bellezze di Giulia; erane passato anche il grido ai molli regni dell' Asia. Solimano II., Imperadore de' Turchi, non ignorava quanto ella fosse avvenente; onde giacchè avea guerra coll' Imperador Carlo V., fornito Ariadene Barbarossa di cento galere, con ciu potesse trascorrere i mari nostri, e battere le coste de paesi Christiani, gl' ingiunse che tra le spoglie più riebe, onde carico lo attendeva, dovesse aver luogo la vagha Signora di Fondi. Fece plauso al comando il baldanzoso corsaro, che, avido di riportar gloria, al mare affidosi pien di si audace pensiero," &c.—*Idem*.

[3] Robertson's "Charles the Fifth."

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"They will be upon us directly, Signora," said her trembling, grey-haired seneschal, who had hastened to her at the first alarm. "Lose no time in escaping. The pirates will never content themselves with the town—rely on it, *you* are their object. We will lower you from the window—you must then cross the draw-bridge, and pass through the gallery cut in the rock. It will bring you out on the hill-side, where Tiberio shall join you with horses—"

"Come, then, Caterina—"

"Alas, Madama, I am too old for jumping out of windows—I will remain to secrete the jewels, and look after the maids. We will lock ourselves in the cellars."

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"Come then, Cynthia. Be quick."

Cynthia, who was wrapping herself in her haik, looked unwilling, and said:

"May I not remain with Caterina, Leila?"

"Certainly not. Jump out of window this instant, and then you can help me down."

The Duchess accelerated her by a slight push, on which she sprang lightly as a chamois to the ground, which was not far below; and the Duchess, seeing she came to no harm, called on the saints, and did the same. Caterina lowered them a lamp, which they covered, and soon they were in the rocky passage, while the Turks in the distance were howling like hungry wolves or mad dogs.^[4]

[4] "Lupi famelici," "colla rabbia d' affamati cani."

"How cold it is!" complained the Duchess, shivering and drawing closer the richly furred velvet mantle in which she was enveloped.

"And you gave me no stockings, Cynthia, only slippers. How *could* you be so foolish?"

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"You must not mind that, Leila, since you are safe," said Cynthia, bluntly. "Think what horrors are going on in the town. Holy prophet! it reminds me of the night when my parents fled from the Spaniards!"

"Cynthia, it is very wicked of you to use those heathenish imprecations, now that I have taken the trouble to have you baptised. Your prophet was not holy, nor a prophet at all, but a very bad man, as I have told you several times, and you must not be so benighted any more."

Cynthia's eyes flashed fire, but she held her peace.

"If you call any one holy," continued the Duchess, "it should be the blessed Virgin and holy saints. You ought to consider it a great mercy that you have been led to the service of a Christian mistress who cares for your soul. Don't you feel this?"

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"No," said Cynthia, stoutly; "I do not feel grateful that I was torn from my home and country, and that my father was cut down on his own doorstep, and my mother dragged along the ground by the hair of her head. Could *you* feel grateful, Leila?"

"Not for those things, certainly; but misfortunes are often blessings in disguise, and the Moors are very wicked people, and—"

"They are doing those very things, just now, to *your* people," said Cynthia, expressively, and stretching out her arm towards the town.

"Ah! Heaven forbid!" said the Duchess.

"Heaven does not forbid, though," said Cynthia, sorrowfully, "and I cannot think why Heaven only looks on."

"Cynthia!" cried the Duchess, suddenly stopping short, and fixing a piercing look on her, "did *you* bring these people on us?"

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"What people, Leila?"

"These pirates!—these Moors!"

"Take the lamp!" cried Cynthia, thrusting it into her hand, and stamping passionately. "Kill me if you will, since you can suspect me! Here's a dagger—I brought it to defend you and myself."

"Nay, but I do not want to suspect you. Put up your dagger, foolish girl. Who talks about killing?" said the Duchess, shrinking from the gleaming steel. "Speak but the word and I will believe you; only, as they are countrymen of yours, and as you so hate the Christians, the thought just crossed me."

"I'll *never* speak the word," said Cynthia, stubbornly. "You may kill me if you will, but I'll *never* say!"

And with dilated nostrils, quivering lips, and flaming eyes, she strode on before her mistress. It was not a time or place for the Duchess to take notice of it—to a woman with a dagger! [Pg 14]

CHAPTER II.

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THE DUCHESS IN SAFETY.

Emerging from the gallery, the Duchess uttered a faint cry, and would have shrunk back again on seeing some dark figures stealthily approaching; but they proved to be only two of her own servants, each with a led horse, on which she and Cynthia were speedily mounted, and on their way to Vallecorsa.

Meantime a desperate conflict was raging in the town and castle, led on by the fiery Barbarossa himself, his lieutenant Dragut, and the renegade Sinan, the most relentless of his corsairs. Again and again resounds the cry "Where is the Duchess, ye Christian dogs?"—"Out of your reach!" they shout back; and a volley of stones descends from the battlements. Defence is vain; the gates are forced in, the assailants pour through the rooms, and, disappointed of their prey, hack and spoil the rich furniture, and carry off what comes ready to hand. Faithful retainers are cut down; others have their hands tied and are carried off to be sold into slavery; among them, a youth called Tebaldo Adimari, the pride and hope of Fondi. [Pg 16]

Day was breaking when the corsairs, laden with booty, drew off from the town in good order and formidable numbers, leaving very few of their party behind them. The little town was sick and gasping. Here and there were low wails and continuous sobbings in-doors. Here and there a hollow groan from some ditch. Here and there a broken scimitar, an unrolled turban, a pool of blood. Monks now began to steal forth in couples from the Dominican convent in which St. Thomas Aquinas had taught theology. They went to shrieve the dying, bury the dead, and console the bereaved. A Jewish physician, with a couple of Hebrew servants, was also engaged in offices of benevolence; causing some to be carefully removed; binding up the wounds of others on the spot. The peril of the Duchess—though she escaped unscathed—caused great commiseration and excitement at the time. The death and captivity of the nobodies elicited a slight shudder or a shrug, and was passed over. [Pg 17]

Cautiously the withered face of the Mother-of-the-maids peered forth from the cellar-door when all was quiet; and fearfully issued forth the train of scared, bewildered females who had taken shelter under her wing. They were relieved to find themselves alive and safe; but lamentations soon succeeded congratulations. Isaura's betrothed had been carried away captive; Tonina's father lay stark and stiff. As for the *cameriera*, she was weeping herself blind to find the Duchess's room ransacked, the mirror smashed, the gowns tossed like hay, the pictures stabbed, and many of the properties made booty of. She smote her breast and wrung her hands to that degree that it was dreadful to see her. [Pg 18]

The news of the attack reaching Rome, Cardinal Ippolito de' Medici, who was much more of a warrior than a churchman, hastened to the rescue with a troop of horse.

Meanwhile, a messenger from Vallecorsa brought a billet from the Duchess.

"Are the wretches gone? Have they done much harm? I have nothing to put on. Is anybody hurt? I suppose I may come back?"

As everybody was at sixes and sevens without the Duchess, a council was held, the Dominican prior was consulted, evidence was heard, and it was finally reported that the Paynims had made off, *viâ* Itri, and put to sea.

On this, back came the Duchess, in very miscellaneous toilette; and she was met by a general turn-out of the people of Fondi—a rough, wild-looking set at their best, poor creatures! furnishing more than their due quota, then as now, to the briganti. In the midst were two biers, supporting the corpses of men who had been slain in the late attack, and borne by monks, while the populace confusedly pressed around them, beating their breasts, tearing their hair, and filling the air with their lamentations. These were redoubled at sight of the Duchess, whose tender heart melted at the scene. The sight of their liege-lady in tears redoubled their woe; they closed round her, kissing her dress, hands, and feet, recounting their losses, and each doing his possible to prove himself more in want of solace than the rest. She condoled with all, promised monetary restitution to the living and masses for the dead; and, to crown all, proceeded straight to church to give thanks for her deliverance and pray for the souls of the slain. Then she re-entered her castle in a chastened frame of mind. [Pg 19]

"Caterina," said she to her old nurse, "how little we know what a few hours may bring forth! It seems an age since yesterday. What a turn it gave me when Cynthia first shrieked out! By the way, do you think she was really frightened?" [Pg 20]

"Really frightened, Eccellenza?"

"Yes. Do you not think it possible she might be glad the Moors were landing and might carry her off?"

"Barbarossa, Signora?"

"Well, I know it was Barbarossa; but still he was her own countryman, and—"

"I do not think she would acknowledge Barbarossa for a countryman, Illustrissima. She claims descent from the old Moors of Grenada—from the Abencerrages."

"Oh, yes, she may claim descent, and call herself a princess and all that. They all do, I believe. You should have seen her look when I told her Mahound was a false prophet—" [Pg 21]

"She's very touchy about that, I well know," said Caterina.

"Touchy? Why, I believe she prays to him still—swears by him at any rate. There is no sounding the depths of these Paynims."

"I believe you would find great love for yourself in the depths of Cynthia's heart,—poor, darkened young thing—if you could sound it, Signora."

"Ah, but unfortunately, I cannot; and she behaved very improperly to me in the cavern."

"You shock me, Illustrissima!"

"She thrust the lamp into my hand, saying: 'Hold the light!' and stamped!"

"Inconceivable! Abominable!" ejaculated Caterina. "What could she have been thinking of?"

"And she brandished a dagger! Not to kill me, but telling me to kill *her*. So uncalled for!" [Pg 22]

"I fear I must give her up," said Caterina, "though Perez lent her the dagger to defend you, and she has returned it. I was beginning to grow fond of her. She must be corrected, Signora."

"Well, truly, I think she must. Let me speak to her first. I dare say she is as hard as a stone. Call her."

To the Duchess's surprise, when Cynthia was brought to the bar of justice, and accused of *lèse-majesté*, she at once pleaded guilty, saying her proud heart sometimes got the better of her; and kneeling down, kissed the hem of her mistress's garment, in token of submission. This appeased the placable Giulia, who contented herself with asking what business she had with pride.

"You doubted my fidelity, Leila," said Cynthia. "No one must doubt the fidelity of an Abencerrage." [Pg 23]

"Tut! how do I know that you are an Abencerrage?" said the Duchess lightly. "And what are the Abencerrages, or any other Moors, in the eyes of Christians?"

"They may be nothing now, but they were something once," said Cynthia proudly; without rising, however, from her knees; or rather, sitting upon her heels. "While the western Caliphate lasted, the Christians were few and straggling in the land; and the mountains of Spain echoed back the cry of the muezzins: 'There is no God but God, and Mahomet is his prophet!'"

"Ah, profanity!" exclaimed the Duchess, in disgust; and at the same instant, her seneschal, bowing low, announced to her the arrival of Cardinal Ippolito de' Medici. The Cardinal was already standing in the doorway, noting at his leisure, and with admiration, the contrast between Giulia's high-born beauty and that of the dusky Moorish girl at her feet. [Pg 24]

He then advanced, with the mien of a prince and the tread of a soldier, and said:

"Your peril compelled me to fly to your succour. I have brought a troop of horse, and will not leave you till danger and alarm be past."

"How very good of you!" said the Duchess. "I was, indeed, sorely scared—"

"Fear no more," said he. "No harm shall reach you but through myself."

"How very good of you," repeated the Duchess. "I was, indeed, as I said, sorely scared; but all danger, and even the fear of it, is now over—"

"That is more than you can tell," interrupted the Cardinal, "and since you, the noblest and fairest lady in Italy, are so utterly unprotected, I shall make your safety my care as long as Barbarossa is off the coast." [Pg 25]

"Though I hope to have no need of you as a guard, you are most welcome as a guest," said the Duchess. Then, addressing her seneschal, she said, "Let suitable apartments be instantly prepared for his Eminence and also for his suite, and provide good quarters for his Eminence's troops and good stabling for their horses—"

"I lodge with the Dominicans," interrupted the Cardinal, "and the Prior will tell me where to bestow my men—"

"Nay, then," said the Duchess, "direct immediate refectory to be served for his Eminence, and bid the Prior and a few select friends to supper; to wit, Sertorio Pepe and his sister, Madonna Bianca, the Abate Siffredi and the Abate Vincenzo."

The seneschal bowed low and withdrew.

"Giulia," said the Cardinal, reproachfully, "I am unwelcome." [Pg 26]

"On the contrary, you are most welcome," said she; "but I seek to grace my guest, and distrust my own powers of entertainment. You find us in sad disorder, but I will send a line to the Bishop —"

"Pray do nothing so unnecessary, so unwished for— Ah, Giulia! it was not thus I hoped you would welcome me! You will never understand that I am your true friend, and prefer your conversation to that of any one else. Your welfare, your safety, are dear to me; and yet you always distrust

me."

"How can you say so?" said she, dropping her eyes.

"How, indeed, save that you always betray it! Come, cannot we be friends?" said he, pleasantly. "Once we might have been more, and now need we be less?"

"By no means, Cardinal, and—"

"I am always Ippolito, to *you*—"

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"By no means, Cardinal; I enjoy using your title, it is so noble, so imposing, it becomes you so well. You have taken a decided part at last, and I esteem you all the more for it. Your learning and genius will adorn your high vocation. What influence you now possess! how many look up to you! Surely your position must be an enviable one?"

A complex expression crossed his face, as he said, with emphasis,

"Very! And yours?"

"Oh, mine is what it has long been. It has its lights and its shadows."

"Shadows?"

"Not very dark ones, certainly; but three-fourths of my life are spent in a sort of dull twilight, that is—ininitely melancholy!"

"Whence proceeds that melancholy?"

"I know not. My natural disposition, perhaps. I have everything I can want or wish, yet it sometimes seems to me that there is only one thing to reconcile us to life—"

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"What is that?"

"The fear of death."

"Just so," said he, abruptly.

"Can you, a churchman, tell me how to overcome that fear?"

"There is no fear of your dying—"

"Die I must, soon or late! Death comes to all. Can you, a churchman, tell me how to meet it?"

"Surely, surely! The Church has provided supports. There are the sacraments. There is absolution. There is extreme unction."

"I do not know how these may support me when the time comes. Meanwhile they do not remove the fear of death."

He looked at her earnestly for a moment, and was about to speak, but refrained. At the same time, the customary refecation of wine and comfits was brought in by two of the Duchess's damsels, while a third brought a golden ewer of rose-water, and a fourth a basin and gold-fringed napkin. The duenna and Moorish girl were embroidering at one of the windows.

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When the girls had withdrawn, the Cardinal and Duchess resumed their conversation, like two old and familiar friends, who had at some former period seen a good deal more of one another than of late.

He spoke of Hayraddin Barbarossa's descent upon Fondi, and minutely inquired into the particulars, and the amount of damage done. He ended with "Well, a wilful woman must have her way. All this may happen again, and with a worse end."

"Please do not frighten me," said the Duchess. "It is very unkind."

"I mean it for kindness, for I want to put you on your guard."

"I shall be on my guard now. My poor people have suffered sufficiently to be on the alert. And I have long thought I should like to winter at Naples. Now I have a sufficient reason for going."

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"The sooner the better. Giulia, how you surprised me just now by what you said! How can one so good, so blameless as you are, be afraid of death? You have never done anything wrong. I cannot conceive you ever to have offended God, even in thought. Can *you*, then, be afraid to meet Him?"

"Ah! I am always shy of strangers; and, to me, God is such a stranger!—"

"But you *believe* in Him, do not you? You believe that He *is*?"

"Of course! But that is so little!"

The Cardinal looked as if he thought it a good deal.

"Your nerves are weak," said he, after a pause. "Your organisation is too delicate. I should advise you to dwell as little as you can on these things."

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"Oh, I speak of them to *no* one. I don't know how I came to do so now. Only, I suppose, because you are a friend and a churchman."

"I *like* you so to speak. Say on."

"Why, then, I will add that, apart from this fear of death, which sometimes thrills me, and especially did so last night, is a far more permanent feeling—a desire for some higher good. An intense dissatisfaction with myself and with all the things of this life."

"Do you really suppose that that feeling is peculiar to yourself? Everybody has it!—everybody

who thinks and feels. I myself suffer martyrdom from it."

"Can you—a churchman—prescribe its remedy?"

"There are two ways," said the Cardinal, after a pause, "in which you may overcome it. In the first case, you must fast, you must pray, you must keep painful vigils, you must perform pilgrimages barefoot, you must deny yourself every innocent enjoyment, you must bestow all your possessions on the Church—"

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"Hold, hold, I can never do all that," interrupted the Duchess. "Tell me some other way, I beseech you, of remedying the weariness of life and the fear of death."

"The only other way," said he, hurriedly, "is to take the world as you find it; enjoy the passing hour, indulge every innocent desire, and—let come what may."

"Is there no other course?"

"None, Giulia, none! There is no middle path.^[5] You must choose for yourself."

[5] Non c'è mezzo termine.

"Of course I know which I ought to choose," said she, sorrowfully. "But to give up *all*—and to the Church!—ah! this Church must have charms for you that she has not for me!"

"I am not very deeply in love with her," said the Cardinal, attentively regarding his nails. "But my part is taken and I will play it out. Come, shall we talk of something pleasanter?"

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"Yes, and, some of these days, I will try this better way you point out—this watching, this fasting; only I know beforehand, I shall not carry it out."

"No good in trying then."

"I am afraid you are right. I so dread the world's laugh! And I so dislike doing what is disagreeable!"

"Why on earth should you, then?" said he briskly.

"Ay, why indeed?" said she, laughing and changing the subject. Afterwards she thought, "What an answer for a priest! I was a goose to say so much to him. I will not do so again."

CHAPTER III.

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THE DUCHESS'S STORY.

Giulia di Gonzaga, daughter of the Duke of Sabbionetta, was born somewhere about the beginning of the sixteenth century. She was one of a numerous and beautiful family, and, from her earliest infancy, the darling of all hearts. There must have been something charming about the dear little girl whose "vezzi e grazie," even from her cradle, were so extolled by dry annalists,^[6] and whose riper graces were sung by Ariosto, Bernardo Tasso, Molza, Gandolfo Porrino, Claudio Tolomei, and all the noted poets of the day. A child who, from the nursery, kisses, sugar-plums, and petting could not spoil, her sweetness equally bore the test when promoted to the school-room, where, without any apparent trouble to herself, she outstripped her elder sisters, Paola, Ippolita, and Eleanora, in their studies, though they were none of them considered deficient. Enough, if not too much, praise was bestowed on the skill with which her pretty hands touched the lute and guided the embroidery needle. Children are quick to hear their own encomiums, though uttered under the breath.

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[6] "Imperrochè le fu natura tanto de' suoi doni benefice, e così di vezzi e di grazie la ricolmo, che gli atti suoi e le sue parole, accompagnate ognora da modesta vivacità e condite di un lepor soavissimo, legavano dolcemente a lei gli animi di ciascuno."—IRENEO AFFO.

She had scarcely grown to her full height, and left off being sent early to bed, when she was given in marriage to Vespasiano Colonna, Duke of Trajetto. He was forty, and crippled with the rheumatism, yet her parents thought it a suitable match. They told her he was good, generous, and indulgent, and so he proved. She liked him. She liked pleasing him, and tending him, and receiving his pleasant praises and smiles. He had a daughter by a former marriage, rather younger than herself, and he wished them to be friends; but Isabella was of a colder nature than Giulia. The Duke had a singular feeling towards his little bride. She was so good, so pure, that he shrank from her being contaminated by the pernicious influence of Italian society, such as it was in the sixteenth century, and resolved to seclude her from it as much as he could in the retirement which his infirm health rendered so grateful. But he did more than this, for he resolved that her mind should receive the highest culture, and thus possess resources in itself which should make retirement happy. And as he was a man of good parts and delightful conversation, affectionate, indulgent, and quietly humorous, it is not at all surprising, I think, that he captivated this young girl, and made her really love him.

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This rendered more than tolerable her attendance on him as a nurse. He would not let her do anything really painful or wearisome, took care that she should have plenty of open-air exercise, and won her admiration of his patience and cheerfulness during his tedious decline.

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When he died, in the year 1528, he left Giulia mistress of all his possessions in the Campagna, the Abruzzi, and the kingdom of Naples, and guardian of Isabella, whom he designed for the wife

of Ippolito de' Medici, nephew of Pope Clement the Seventh.

Giulia soon felt the want of a male protector, for two of the Duke's kinsmen, Ascanio di Colonna and Napoleone Orsini, laid claim to the estates. The Pope substantiated her right to them, and the Emperor Charles the Fifth, then a young man of eight-and-twenty, commissioned her brother, Don Luigi, to put her in possession. Luigi, who was a brilliant soldier, paid his sister a hasty visit at Fondi; and before he left it, he and Isabella exchanged secret vows of affection.

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When Ippolito de' Medici, with youth, good looks, and noble bearing to recommend him, was sent by the Pope to woo and win Isabella, he found the Duchess much more attractive; and when she remarked one day on something strange in his conduct, he spoke out at once, and said—

"Giulia, I care nothing for *her*—and I cannot but care for *you!*"

Thereon the Duchess was much offended, and said she should write to the Pope. Ippolito very stoutly refused to own himself at all wrong. Giulia's widowhood, he averred, had been long enough for the world to suppose that her hand might be sued for. The Pope would be well pleased to see him win the daughter, but infinitely more so at his obtaining the mother. Giulia very indignantly replied that no Pope on earth had, or should have, power to make her marry again, against her will. She was a free agent; she respected and cherished the memory of her dear Duke too much ever to give him a successor. The amaranth was her chosen emblem, and "*Non moritura*" her motto.

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Ippolito here ventured to murmur something about disparity of years, which she instantly checked as the height of disrespect; and he then said all that could be said by a very clever man, really and deeply, and honestly in love; but the more he said, the less Giulia minded him, for the idea had possessed itself of her mind that he might not have found her so pre-eminently attractive but for the thirteen thousand ducats which her good Duke had added to her dowry of four thousand immediately after their marriage. Besides, she was extremely sensitive to the opinion of "everybody," and she pictured what "everybody" could say, if, after inviting Ippolito to her castle as the suitor of her step-daughter, she were to marry him herself. Moreover, she did not like the Medici; they were wonderfully clever, but they were not good. *Volti sciolti, pensieri stretti*—she would rather not trust her happiness to any one of them. Or to *any* one. Why should not she continue, free and happy as she was?

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So Ippolito found her impenetrable to the most insinuating words and melting tones; and as she found him equally impracticable on the subject of being faithful, as she called it, to Isabella, though he denied having pledged any faith to her at all, Giulia told him very plainly she wished he would end his visit; which he, much hurt, said he would do. And his farewell bow was as stiff and stately as if he were an unsuccessful envoy to a warlike sovereign; and he went away without any leave-taking of Isabella.

Thereon, the Duchess, much fluttered and embarrassed, went to tell Isabella that Ippolito was gone; and Isabella, in her cold, dry way, said:

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"Why?"

Then the Duchess said he had been talking very uncomfortably and unintelligibly: he seemed hardly inclined to fulfil his engagement. Then Isabella said:

"He need not trouble himself. I made no engagement with *him*."

Then the Duchess said:

"My dear Isabella! what *can* you be thinking of?"

"I am thinking," says Isabella, after a pause, "of Rodomonte."

"*Possibile? che gioja!*" cried the Duchess, embracing her.

Rodomonte was the pet name of Giulia's younger brother Luigi, already spoken of. If Isabella were inclined to marry him, her portion would be a famous thing for him. The only question was, would the Pope consent?

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The Pope consented when he found Isabella would not have Ippolito at any rate, and when he learnt that Ippolito had good hope of securing the Duchess. So Luigi and Isabella were married, and Luigi was mortally wounded the following year in endeavouring to recover one of his sister's castles; and died recommending his widow and infant son to her care. Isabella afterwards married the Prince of Sulmona.

Ippolito now changed his tactics. When the Duchess had received him as the future husband of her step-daughter, she, not imagining their positions could be misunderstood, addressed him by his Christian name. Whereon he, not to be behindhand, and seeing that they were nearly of an age, immediately called her Giulia, and persisted in doing so in spite of hints and rebuking looks. Now that he had been charged with "disrespect," he resolved to try what the utmost deference could do; so he sent her a translation he had made (extremely well, too), of the second book of the *Æneid*, with the following dedication prefixed:

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"Because that it often happens that one's woes are soothed by matching them with those that are greater, I, not finding for my pain any other remedy, have turned my mind to the burning of Troy; and, measuring my own wretchedness with that, have satisfied myself beyond doubt that no evil happened within its walls which I myself have not felt in the depths of my heart; the which, seeking in some degree to ease by thinking on Troy, I have thereby been enabled to understand. I therefore send you this, that it may give you a truer picture of my grief than my sighs, my tears, my pallid cheeks could ever impart."

The obdurate Giulia was not to be melted. She was more impenetrable than ever; and with good reason; having heard of a street fight in Rome, in which Ippolito had killed a man. It is true Ippolito said he had not meant it—he only meant to hurt him, and teach a lesson to a troublesome fellow. However that may be, the man *was dead*, and Ippolito was under a cloud for a while, till it blew over, according to the fashion of the times, and he could come out again with only the taint of justifiable homicide. He was a good deal quieted. He did not know what to do with himself, nor did the Pope (a very bad old man) know what to do with him or for him, since he would not or could not make his fortune by marriage. There was the mixture of fame and infamy in his lineage which pertained to but too many of the Medici, and he had not a penny that the Pope did not give him; so the only opening for him was in the Church. He gave him the Cardinal's hat.

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A handsome, comfortable-looking cardinal was Ippolito, with very little token of care feeding on his damask cheek. You may see him, any time you like, in the National Gallery—there he is, pen in hand, at a table covered with a Persian carpet, having just signed a deed, apparently, to which Sebastian, the famous Venetian painter, has affixed the leaden seals, in virtue of his office as keeper of the Papal signet—whence his cognomen, *Del Piombo*. Note them: they are noteworthy men. Sebastian has put himself foremost; the Cardinal in the background. But the Cardinal takes it easily; he has a jolly, good-tempered face, black eyes, an aquiline nose, and black hair.

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His relations with Giulia were a good deal altered by the cardinalate. She need no longer fear him as a suitor; she hoped his entering the Church was a sign of a changed heart; she revered his holy office, and gradually identified him with it. Once or twice, when affairs drew her to the Eternal City, she saw him take part in the grand pageantry; and when she heard Kyrie Eleison rolling and swelling through nave and aisle, and Veni Creator breathed like the whispers of angels in soul-subduing softness, and the Pope himself intoning the Te Deum,—her unsophisticated mind was deeply impressed; for Giulia was still, and all her life, as guileless as a little child; and herein, no doubt, lay the unexplained and unexplainable attraction about her. She was glad Ippolito had put an insuperable barrier between her and himself, because now she could enjoy his really delightful society, when they met, without alloy.

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But they did not meet very often; and it was a good thing they did not, for Ippolito loved her as dearly as ever. It was a good thing they did not meet often, and yet it was a good thing they met sometimes, and that her influence continued to be felt by him, for it was the only good influence he had! Poor Ippolito, with all his sins, was much better than those who constantly surrounded him. The nearer from church, the farther from God, was awfully true of the Papal court; and if he sought refuge from men in books, as he continually did, they were the books of heathens, none the less anti-Christian and poisonous for being in Greek.

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While the very ground seemed sinking under him, and all trust and hope in himself and others perishing, there came the news that Giulia was in danger, and had fled to the mountains to escape Barbarossa. Instantly his better nature awoke, and he flew to her succour.

CHAPTER IV.

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MOORISH SLAVES.

A clatter of horses' feet in the court-yard announced the arrival of new guests; and when these proved to be noble kinsmen and friends of the Duchess, who had hastened to rally round her in her danger, the Cardinal inly congratulated himself on having been the first comer and the recipient of her first thanks.

The old feudal castle, lately the nest of a few defenceless women, now resounded with the clank of arms. Nothing could be more graceful than the Duchess's reception of her guests. There was just enough of danger past, and possibly impending, to give zest to present safety and sociality. The feast was spread in the old ancestral hall, where the family plate shone in beaufets ten feet high, music breathed from the gallery amid the pauses in conversation, and the cobwebbed banners waved heavily overhead in the cool evening air from the Mediterranean, that stole through the open windows. Giulia's little cloud had entirely disappeared: it was simple and even needful that she should just now only seek to embellish the passing hour; and the Cardinal, as the noblest dignitary present, fully seconded her as leader of the feast, or rather took the initiative in entertaining and pledging the rest, while she had only to sit by, smile, and enjoy it all. The Moorish girl, with splendid jewels in her ears, stood behind the Duchess with a feather fly-flapper.

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Barbarossa's enormities were the favourite theme; there was plenty of red put in the brush. The streams of blood he had shed would float a squadron; his beard was bright scarlet. He was even worse than his brother Horuc had been; and now that he was Dey of Tunis, as well as of Algiers, and the ally of Solyman the Magnificent, the world would not hold him! He would swallow Italy, some of these nights, at a snap.

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Yet it was astonishing what some of the company were ready to do, single-handed, against him! Only let him come on! *They'd* show him something. The Duchess need not be afraid. Not a hair of her head should he touch.

The next day or two these bold spirits scoured the neighbourhood, and—as Barbarossa was out of sight—they did not spare their bragging. They only wished he would come back, that they might give him his deserts. The Cardinal grudged these vapourers their share of Giulia's ear. True, he

sat at her right hand; and none of them were younger, braver, handsomer, or wittier than himself. And it was sweet, with all its mixture of bitter, to be here at all; but then, how soon it would end! How soon pass into that hungry, never-satisfied abyss of vanished, irreclaimable joys! And then his old feeling of blank, gnawing dissatisfaction returned.

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"That Mauritanian slave of yours," he said one day to Giulia, as they returned from a reconnoitering party, "is singularly beautiful. She would make a good study for Sebastiano. How I wish you knew that remarkable man! You would delight in his musical attainments. He touches the lute and viol with rare perfection, and has composed some exquisite motets. As a portrait painter he is unrivalled. The Pope is so pleased with the likeness he has painted of him, that he has conferred on him the office of keeper of the papal signet. His verses are charming, and he is a most excellent companion."

"You excite my curiosity," said the Duchess. "Cannot you invent some excuse to bring him here?"

"Certainly," said the Cardinal, who was aiming at this very point. "There could be no better method than for me to tell him you had promised me your picture. This would draw him hither quite easily, after such representations as I should make to him; for you must know, Sebastiano is becoming exceeding coy and difficult, and will only on much importunity be prevailed on, now, to paint a portrait. It is really the branch in which he excels, and by which he will be known to posterity; but he is slow and irresolute in his execution, and his taste chiefly inclines him to large historical pieces, in which he is excelled by Michael Angelo and Raffaello. I beseech you, let me send him to paint your portrait. You will be repaid for your complaisance by becoming acquainted with a really great artist."

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"So let it be, then," said the Duchess. "With regard to my Moorish girl, he may introduce her in the background if he will. Beautiful she is, but therossest patch at times! I pity her, and humour, and perhaps spoil her a little, yet I shrink from her sometimes, for we hardly seem of the same flesh and blood."

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"Is she converted?" inquired the Cardinal.

"Baptized," said the Duchess, "but she seems utterly unimpressible as to Christian doctrine. Confess she will not, and when we endeavour to enforce its obligation on her, she answers us in her Arabic jargon, 'I do not understand.'"

"Is it safe to have her about you?" said the Cardinal.

"I know not that there is any harm in her," said the Duchess, "and she can be very ingratiating when she likes; but I own, a horrible thought crossed my mind when she and I were escaping through the caverns. 'What if she should have brought Barbarossa on us?'"

"That is quite possible," said the Cardinal, gravely. "Has she any confederates hereabouts, think you, among her own people?"

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"The only other Moor in my establishment is a poor boy whose tongue has been cut out. His own people thus punished him, when he fell into their hands, for having come over to us; he escaped from them, and knows too well his own interest to betray us. He is in my stables."

"I do not altogether like this," said De Medici, meditatively; "it would be well to induce the girl to confess, even by a little wholesome torture; for as long as she is unshackled by Christian obligations, you have no hold on her."

"Torture, however," said Giulia, "is a course I particularly dislike."

They were now riding into the castle court-yard; and, as the day was very warm, she was thirsty, and called for a glass of iced water. It was brought her by Cynthia; and at the moment she appeared with the goblet on a salver, a large Spanish bloodhound, belonging to Alfonso Gonzaga, sprang at her throat.

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The poor girl screamed piercingly, and so did the Duchess, who sprang from her horse. Gonzaga, brutally laughing and swearing, called the dog off without success; but the Moorish stable-boy, seizing it by the tail, bit it till his teeth met. The unfortunate Cynthia was released, and she fell swooning into the arms of her compassionate mistress, whose dress was stained with her blood. She was instantly relieved of her burthen, however, by her *maestro di casa*, Perez, who bore her off to her women, while the hunting-party pressed round Giulia to extol her humanity to the skies. Turning to the Cardinal she said, expressively—

"She *is* of the same flesh and blood, after all!" And then went to visit her poor wounded maiden, and change her dress.

Cynthia, more dead than alive, was laid on a pallet bed, and Caterina was in anxious attendance on her, while a Jewish physician dressed the wound.

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"Do you think she will die?" said the Duchess in a low voice.

"It is impossible, at present," returned he, "to pronounce an opinion."

Cynthia opened her languid eyes, and seeing the Duchess's dress stained with her blood, mutely drew it to her lips. Giulia kindly patted her hand, saying—

"My poor girl! Keep quiet; be patient, and you will soon be well," and then withdrew.

When she re-entered the *sala di compagnia*, her cousin was telling stories in a loud over-bearing voice, of the feats of his dog in hunting up and pulling down Moors, Jews, and heretics. The brute's ancestors had distinguished themselves in this line during the repeated massacres in Spain.

"Pray desist, Alfonso," said the Duchess, "or I shall be unable to eat my dinner."

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He laughed, and continued his narrations in a lower voice. This was the Cardinal's last day, and he grudged every moment of Giulia's time that was devoted to any but himself.

"Is the girl going on well?" said he to her.

"The wound is dressed, but her recovery is considered doubtful by Bar Hhasdai. Do you disapprove of my employing a Jewish leech?"

"By no means; there are none equal to them. The Spaniards did very foolishly, I think, to expel the whole race. There are no such physicians, astronomers, or metaphysicians."

"They are sad infidels, however, and Bar Hhasdai is unconverted."

"All the better," said the Cardinal lightly. "I distrust renegades. Better be a good Jew than a bad Christian. In medicine especially, I believe a baptised Jew loses half his virtue; the charm is broken."

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"That never occurred to me," said the Duchess. "But I dare say it is so, since you say it."

"Your Jew," observed Ippolito, "will deal kindly by your Moorish girl, for, under the western caliphs, his people were fostered by her people. The prime minister of Abderrahman the Second was a Jew of the same name as your physician, who probably claims descent from him. The two peoples promoted each other's prosperity, for the Jews extended their commerce with the East, and supplied them with the sinews of war. The Moors let them peaceably accumulate wealth, occupy high offices, build synagogues, and cultivate learning, insomuch that there was not a Jewish family without a copy of the law; and they all could read it. So that 'the Moor's last sigh' was nearly the last sigh of the Hebrew too. We are profiting by the short-sightedness of Spain and Portugal. Clement the Seventh permits even the Jews who have been forcibly baptised, to come and settle in his dominions, without any inquiry into their past lives; and owing to their industry Ancona is becoming a flourishing sea-port. But, Giulia, if this girl is about to die, she had better receive the last offices of the Church. I should like to receive her confession. Tell her, if she will confess to me, she shall receive a cardinal's absolution."

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"Are you in earnest?"

"Quite."

This was so high an honour, that the Duchess did not fail to acquaint Cynthia with it. But Cynthia had no mind for confession, nor any respect for a cardinal's absolution. She feigned lethargy, and could not be induced to admit that she heard or understood anything that was said to her while the Cardinal remained.

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"This looks bad," said he. "Can anything be made of the Moorish boy, think you?"

"He is dumb."

"True; but not deaf, I suppose?"

"No."

"Let us have him in, then. I should like to speak to him."

The boy was sent for. He was a sad object, poor lad.

The Cardinal, without any preface, said to him in the *lingua Franca*, which was commonly understood among the Moors—

"Did you send for Barbarossa?" The boy's eyes flashed fire.

"If I have any reason to think you did so, you shall be flayed alive; and I shall be sure to find out."

The boy looked unmoved.

"Your only chance of escaping punishment is your being henceforth inviolably faithful to your mistress. There, go; and be a good boy."

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The boy made a salaam and retired.

"There can be no harm," said the Cardinal to Giulia, "in giving him a little reminder."

Next day the boy was found drowned. Whether he had tried to escape by swimming, or had intentionally ended his life, nobody knew. He could no longer be a traitor at any rate. But this is anticipating.

CHAPTER V.

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THE CARDINAL AND THE JEW.

"I should like," said Ippolito, "to speak with that Jew before I leave you. He may help me to some curious manuscripts."

The Medici were very clever in hunting up curiosities of literature; for their encouragement of the arts sprang less from the love of that renown which rewards liberal patronage, than from real, genuine interest in arts and letters *for their own sake*. Hence the worship of their very names among poor *litterati*, to whom sympathy and appreciation are dearer than gold, though they like that too. Pity that they loved Plato better than Christ! The spirit of poetical and

philosophical emulation which they kindled was accompanied by utter obtuseness to spiritual things. A keen sense of purity of language fostered no love of purity of life; there was, in fact, complete antagonism between the elegant disciples of Lorenzo and the severe followers of Savonarola and Bernardino Ochino; and if the very light that was in them was darkness, how great was that darkness! The Medici retarded rather than advanced the spirituality of their age; and in like manner, though in different proportion, their elegant biographer has thrown a false shadow on good, and a false light on evil. Of course I shall be covered with obloquy for saying this.

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Cardinal Ippolito received Bar Hhasdai in a cabinet adjoining the *sala di compagnia*, in which music and society-games were beguiling the tedium of the other guests. The Jew was a grand specimen of the Sephardim—he was a great deal older than he looked, his hair unbleached, and his head unbent by age.

"Your name is that of a great man," said the Cardinal to him.

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"My descent is from him likewise," said the physician. "I am son, or, as your people would say, descendant of that Hhasdai ben Isaac who was Hagib to the second Abderrahman, and wrote the famous epistle—of which you doubtless have heard—to Joseph, King of Cozar."

"No, I never heard anything about it," said Ippolito with interest. "Who was the king of Cozar?"

"The Cozarim," replied Bar Hhasdai, "were Jews dwelling on the Caspian Sea. My ancestor had long heard of them without being able to communicate with them, till, from the Spanish embassy at Constantinople, he learned that some of them frequently brought furs for sale to the bazaars there. On this, he addressed an epistle to them, beginning: 'I, Bar Hhasdai ben Isaac, ben Ezra, one of the dispersed of Jerusalem, dwelling in Spain,' and so on—'Be it known to the king that the name of the land we inhabit is, in the holy language, Sepharad, but in that of the Ishmaelites, el Andalus,' &c. Bar Hhasdai despatched this epistle to the East by an envoy, who returned six months afterwards, saying he had hunted high and low for the Cozarim, without being able to find them. Their kingdom undoubtedly existed, but was quite inaccessible. Bar Hhasdai transmitted his letter afterwards, however, through two ambassadors of the Asiatic people called Gablim, who visited Cordova."

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"And were these Cozarim the lost tribes?"

"I know not."

"Where are they now?"

"They are not found."

"How came you Jews to settle in Spain?"

"I believe in Abarbanel. He tells us that two families of the house of David settled in Spain during the first captivity. One of them settled at Lucena; the other, the Abarbanel, took root at Seville. Hence all their descendants were of the royal stock—of the tribe of Judah."

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"You yourself, then, are of the royal stock?"

"I trace up to David."

Ippolito did not know whether to believe him; but he evidently believed in himself.

"I thought," said De' Medici, "your genealogies were lost?"

"Not when we came to Spain. But it is believed that many Jews were in Spain even *prior* to the first captivity—Jews who came over with the merchant ships of Hiram in the days of David and Solomon, and who remitted large sums of money towards the erection of the Temple. You may see a tombstone that confirms this, without the walls of Saguntum, to this day. It bears the following inscription in Hebrew—'The sepulchre of Adoniram, the servant of King Solomon, who came hither to collect tribute.' The tomb was opened about fifty years ago, and found to contain an embalmed corpse of unusual stature."

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"This is curious," said the Cardinal, reflectively,— "and merely a matter of curiosity."

"It ought not to be so in your eyes—nor in the eyes of any thoughtful Christian," said Bar Hhasdai.

"Why not?"

"Because we Sephardim were not consenting unto the death of him whom you term the Christ."

"Ha!—But you would have done so, most probably, if you had been on the spot."

"That is a gratuitous supposition. On the contrary, we wrote an epistle to Caiaphas the High Priest, pleading for the life of Jesus, whose good report had been brought us."

"Can this be so?"

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"Prince Cardinal! when I and my brethren were banished from Spain forty years ago, we appealed to an ancient monument in the open square of Toledo, bearing the inscription of some very early bishop, to the effect that we Sephardim had not quitted Spain during the whole time of the second Temple; and, therefore, could not have shared in the guilt of crucifying Jesus!"

"Singular!"

"When Taric the Moor took Toledo, in the year 710 of your era, he found, at Segoncia, among other treasures, the actual table of shew-bread which had belonged to Solomon's Temple! and

which our nation had secretly brought to Spain. It was composed of one huge emerald, surrounded by three rows of the choicest pearls, and it stood upon three hundred and sixty feet of pure gold."

"Are you fabling?" exclaimed the Cardinal, whom this tradition interested more than all the rest. [Pg 69]

"Nay," said Bar Hhasdai, "the fable is not mine, at any rate. That such a relic was really found there, is proved by their changing the name of the place from Segoncia to Medinat al Meida, *the place of the table*."

"Why, man, such a relic as that would redeem your whole race! Hist, the Duchess is singing——"

A lute, rarely touched, preluded a sweet, plaintive air, sung by a balmy voice in the saloon. The Cardinal listened with pleasure and a little provocation; for the Duchess had twice refused to sing to him, and it was very bad of her to do so at the request of some one else. The little snatch of song ended abruptly in the minor.

"Could not you enter into that?" said Ippolito, noticing a strange mixture of sadness and sarcasm on the physician's face. He replied with a distich— [Pg 70]

"What saith the art of music among the Christians?—
'I was assuredly stolen from the land of the Hebrews!'"

"Do you mean that that is a Hebrew melody?"

"O, yes!"

"Jew! *why* will you not convert, and be healed?"

"It cannot be. I have seen whole families of slain Jews with gaping gashes in their bodies, heaped at their own thresholds—and those gashes were made by the swords of Christians!"

"But that was in Spain."

"Bear with me, Cardinal, while I repeat a parable to you. Pedro the Great of Arragon inquired of a learned Jew which was the best religion. He replied: 'Ours is best for us, and yours for you.' The king was not satisfied with this answer, and the Jew, after three days, returned to him seemingly in great perturbation, and said: 'A neighbour of mine journeyed to a far country lately, and gave each of his two sons a rich jewel to console them for his absence. The young men came to me to inquire which jewel was the most valuable. I assured them I was unable to decide, and said their father must be the best judge, on which they overwhelmed me with reproaches.' 'That was ill done of them,' said the king. 'O, king!' rejoined the Jew, 'beware how thou condemnest thyself. A jewel has been given unto the Hebrew and likewise to the Christian, and thou hast demanded that I should decide which is the most precious. I refer thee to our great Father, the Giver of all good gifts, who alone can exactly determine their comparative and absolute values.'" [Pg 71]

This apologue pleased the Cardinal, though, in fact, it was very superficial. He inquired whether Bar Hhasdai could help him to any rare manuscripts. [Pg 72]

"The few which I possess," said the physician, after a pause, "are not such as would be of any value in your eyes: being either on our own law, or on the science of medicine—"

"Nay, but," said the Cardinal, "the latter are such as I should greatly prize."

"They are altogether obsolete and unworthy of your notice," said Bar Hhasdai, "but I have a little treatise on Chess, which really is a curiosity in its way; and also a treatise on Aristotle's Ethics, by Rabbi Joseph ben Caspi, of Barcelona, which is at your service."

"Let me have them both," said the Cardinal, "and in return I beg you to accept this ruby of small value."

"This is a rare gem!" said the physician, with delight, "and cut with Hebrew characters. May I really have it?"

"Certainly. And pray tell me before you go, do you think the Moorish girl will recover?" [Pg 73]

"I have some hope of it."

"Could not you, as you have a key to her confidence, which we have not, ascertain whether she is really faithful to the Duchess?"

"There can be no question of her fidelity. She has spoken of her mistress with gratitude."

"That is well. Farewell, then."

CHAPTER VI.

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THE SORROWS OF THE JEW.

When Cardinal Ippolito had taken leave, and the last glimpse of his scarlet tippet had been seen as his little cavalcade wound out of sight, Giulia found her remaining guests very stale, flat, and unprofitable; and when they too had departed, she became exceedingly listless and peevish; very much in the mood of little children in the nursery, when they weary their nurses with "I don't know what to do!"

To do Giulia justice, it must be admitted that this mood was not habitual to her. Naturally sweet-tempered, and highly cultivated, she had too many resources within herself to be accustomed to find her time hang heavy on her hands. She could sing, play, and paint; she was skilful at her needle; she wrote very tolerable sonnets, and corresponded with many of the most celebrated people of the day. She was praised without insincerity by men whose names are still honoured among us. And yet she was just now in that vapid frame when one exclaims—"Man delighteth me not, nor woman either;" in that longing for some unknown, unattainable good which made St. Anselm say—"Libera me, Domine, a isto misero homine *meipso!*"

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So she leant her head on her hand and shed a few tears: then, fancying she must be sickening of marsh miasma, she sent for Bar Hhasdai.

The physician, perceiving that there was nothing the matter with her, began to tell her, incidentally as it were, while he felt her pulse, of the grief of the Adimari family, whose son had been carried off by Barbarossa. The Duchess became interested in their sorrows, and forgot her imaginary ailments. She consulted with him how she might console them and relieve other bereaved persons.

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"Surely," said she, looking at his hand, "I have seen that ruby worn by Cardinal Ippolito?"

"He gave it me but yesterday," said Bar Hhasdai, "in return for two manuscripts of not half the value; whereon I sent him another really rare, and worthy of a place in the Vatican library."

"You were determined not to be outdone by him in generosity, it seems," said Giulia. "He told me he had held a very interesting conversation with you about your own people. Tell me, Bar Hhasdai, is it really true that you Jews mingle the blood of a Christian child with your unleavened bread at Passover time?"

"It is false, most scandalously false," replied Bar Hhasdai, "and only invented by the Christians to colour their own outrages upon us. You might as well ask, if there were any truth in the old story of there being a magical brazen head in the castle of Tavora, which, on the approach of any one of our race, would exclaim, 'A Jew is in Tavora!' and, on his departure, 'The Jew is now out of Tavora!' O lady! revolting are the accusations that have been raised against us!—of our crucifying children, drinking their blood, and burning their hearts to ashes. Sometimes our people have been tortured till their agonies have wrung from them false confessions, which afterwards have been disproved; as in the case of the brothers Onkoa, who, in the reign of one of the Alonsos, were accused of stealing two of the king's golden vessels, and by torture were induced to confess it, in consequence of which they were hanged. Yet, three days after, the vessels were found in the possession of one of the king's own servants."

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"I have always held torture," said Giulia, "to be a very uncertain as well as cruel test."

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"Alonso quoted what I have related, as a case in point," said Bar Hhasdai, "when certain Jews were accused of secreting the dead body of a Christian, which, after all, turned out to have been cast into the house of one of them by his Christian debtor, who owed him a sum of money he had no mind to repay. Thus have obloquy and contumely been heaped upon us, without our having the power to avenge ourselves; for the Lord hath forgotten His footstool in the day of His wrath."

"Who or what do you call His footstool?"

"In a general sense, the whole earth; but in a more particular one, Jerusalem."

"Since you admit that God has forgotten you, you must submit to your judicial punishment."

"Lady, it is hard! Easy to say, but hard to do. The only consolation is in knowing that a good time is coming, when we shall—when the Gentiles themselves shall speed us to our city, even carrying us on their shoulders."

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"Do you really believe that?"

"*Literally!*" said Bar Hhasdai. "But I do not expect to live to see it."

"You are yet young——"

"Ah, no! I am very old, and worn out with a life of trouble."

"Tell me the story of your life," said the Duchess, with interest. "Tell me how you came to leave Spain."

"Will you listen to me?" said Bar Hhasdai. "Then you shall hear. In the month Abib, or, as you would say, in March, in the year 5052, or according to your reckoning 1492, a decree was passed that every Jew should quit Arragon, Castile, and Granada, on pain of death and confiscation. By a refinement in injustice, we were forbidden to take out of the country plate, jewels, or coin: we must convert all our possessions into bills of exchange. As our enemies would not buy of us till the last moment, and then at a prodigious discount, you may conceive the way in which we were pillaged, often reduced to exchange a good house for an ass, or a field or vineyard for a few yards of cloth."

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"When the royal proclamation was announced, Abarbanel the Jew happened to be at court. He entered the king's presence, and cast himself before him on his face, exclaiming, 'Regard us, O king! Use not thy faithful servants with so much cruelty! Exact from us everything we possess, rather than banish us from what has now become our country!' But it was all in vain. At the king's right hand sat the queen, who was the Jews' enemy, and who urged him with an angry voice to carry through what he had so happily commenced. We left no effort untried to obtain a reversal of the king's sentence; but without effect. Baptism was the only alternative. I am sorry to say,

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there were some who submitted to it, rather than forsake their homes. Home is dear; but it may be purchased too dearly. More noble were those *eight hundred thousand* Sephardim who forsook house and hearth, garden, field, and vineyard, the synagogues and the burial-places of their fathers, and, on foot and unarmed, collected together from every province, young and old, infants and women, noble examples of passive endurance, to go whither the Lord should lead them! Of that number was I; and with God for our guide we set out—

"Do I tire you?"

"O no!—Go on."

"About twenty thousand of us took refuge in Portugal, where they were admitted, *pro tempore*, on payment of eight golden ducats per head: but, if they remained beyond a certain day, they were sentenced to slavery. The frontiers were lined with tax-gatherers, to exact the poll-tax.

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"The majority of us embarked at the different ports, where brutal ship-masters exacted enormous sums for their passage, and, in many cases, burned or wrecked their vessels when at sea, escaping themselves in their boats, and leaving the unhappy Jews to perish.

"The crew of the ship in which I, a young child, was, rose to murder us, for the sake, as they averred, of avenging the death of Christ; but a Christian merchant on board told them that Christ died to save men, not to destroy them. So they altered their purpose, stripped us, and set us on a barren coast, under a blazing sun, where they left us to perish. We found a spring of fresh water, at which we slaked our thirst; but food we had none. At night, some of our party were devoured by lions. Five days we remained in this wretched state: we were then picked up by the crew of a passing ship, who tore up old sails to clothe us, gave us food, and carried us to a port. The people of that place inquired whether they had brought us for sale. The ship-master nobly answered 'No!' and delivered us to our brethren in the city, who gladly reimbursed him for our expenses, and united with us in praying that he might live to a good old age."

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"You see there are some good Christians among us," interrupted the Duchess.

"Certainly," said the Jew. "But the majority of them were against us: nor did we experience any better treatment from the Moors. At Fez the gates were closed against the Jews, who, beneath a burning sun, could find nothing but grass to eat, and miserably perished. Many hundred children were sold into slavery. One mother was known to strike her expiring child on the head with a stone, and then breathe her last on his dead body. Two hundred widows dwelt together in Barbary, labouring diligently with their hands, and sharing all things in common. Many of these women had been separated from their husbands by cruel circumstances, but knew not whether they were dead or alive. A pestilence broke out among the Jews, who filled nine caravels bound for Naples. On landing there the disease communicated itself to the inhabitants, and swept off twenty thousand of them. At Genoa, the citizens met our people with bread in one hand and the crucifix in the other. Their choice lay between baptism and starvation."

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"I cannot wonder," said the Duchess, after a pause, "that you are prejudiced against our religion, for you have seen it under false colours, but I hope the time will come when those prejudices may wear off."

"I hope it may," said the physician, equivocally; and he changed the subject.

The little Vespasiano Gonzaga, who, on the death of the Duke of Sabbionetta, came into Giulia's guardianship at eight years old, in after times was very liberal to the Jews. He granted them a licence to establish a Hebrew press at Sabbionetta, from which issued several editions of the Pentateuch, Psalter, and Hebrew commentaries.^[7]

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[7] Benj. Wiffen, *Introduction to Alfabeto Christiano*.

CHAPTER VII.

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SEBASTIAN DEL PIOMBO.

Giulia remembered, the next morning, as her cameriera was warping some pearls into her hair, that she had meant and half engaged to try a course of mortification on the Cardinal's departure. She therefore put on an old green gown, with bouffonnée sleeves, which was almost too worn for a duchess; and, in a very easy pair of slippers, sat down to her morning refection. Some sweetmeats allured her, but she took a piece of plain bread and a glass of lemonade; after which, she thought "Well done, resolution!" and tasted the sweetmeats after all. Moderately, however.

After this, she sat for a good while in a waking dream; and then, rousing herself, determined to go to church, but found it was too late. She thought she would send for the poor widow of whom Bar Hhasdai had spoken to her; but just then, Caterina came to tell her that her lapdog had run a thorn into its foot; and as one act of mercy would do for another, she superintended the dressing of the little animal's paw, and did not send for the widow. After this, she inspected the embroidery of her maids of honour, and thought of fourteen rhymes as the skeleton of a sonnet.

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She had advanced thus far in this well-spent day, when the sound of horses' feet made her suddenly aware of the approach of a visitor. Now, our Duchess did not like being caught; it was very seldom, indeed, that she *could* be caught in *déshabille*; for she enjoyed the consciousness of being at all times a perfectly well-dressed woman. It was hard, therefore, to be found in half-toilette the only time in all the season that such a misfortune could have occurred; especially as it

would not be known to partake of the meritorious nature of a penance. However, the mortification would be all the more complete. Who could the visitor be? The Bishop of Fondi? [Pg 88]

She looked into the court-yard, and saw a grave, elderly person in ecclesiastical habit, with four mounted attendants, descending somewhat stiffly from his horse. His face was rather plain; his figure tall and imposing. He had a snub nose, high, broad forehead, small, penetrating eyes, and auburn hair and beard a little silvered.

In a few minutes the maggior-domo announced "Messer Sebastiano Veneziano."

The Duchess uttered an exclamation of joy, and advanced, beaming with smiles, to meet him. Never had she looked more lovely: the painter started, and paused for a moment, as she approached. The next instant, her white hand was in his.

"Welcome, Messer Sebastiano, welcome! How good of you to grace my poor house!" [Pg 89]

"Illustrious Lady, his Holiness the Pope desired me to give you his paternal greeting."

"I gratefully thank his Holiness."

"—And his Eminence, Cardinal Ippolito de' Medici kisses your hands, and supplicates of your condescension that you will remember your promise to let my poor pencil limn your features."

"I have not forgotten it. I shall esteem it an honour to sit to so great a master. How would you have me dressed, Messer Sebastian? What pose shall you choose?"

"Vossignoria will allow me to study you a little before I decide?"

"Certainly, certainly. Rather formidable, though, to think I am always being studied!"

"I should recommend Vossignoria not to think at all about it."

"Well, I will try. You are fatigued with your journey, Messer Sebastian." [Pg 90]

"It will soon pass off. My hand is not steady enough to paint to-day. The journey has interested me. I have made acquaintance with the promontory of Circe, the shining rock of Anxur, and the towering Volscian mountains—all renowned in song, as I need not tell you, Signora! I observed Cora and Sezza shining like aerial palaces against the brown rugged rock that supports them. I viewed with interest the woods and thickets that once sheltered Camilla. Piperno is, you know, the *antiqua urbs* of Virgil. I am speaking to a princess who is a classical scholar—"

"Little enough of one," replied the Duchess. "Cardinal Ippolito took compassion on my ignorance, and translated the second book of the Eneid for me. But how go things at Rome?"

And the great painter found that the great lady was more interested in the chit-chat of the capital, than in classical allusion and learned quotation. [Pg 91]

The Duchess could always summon at short notice a little circle of deferential friends to her evening meal. She appeared in velvet and jewels. The next morning she wore white. This was not out of coquetry, but as a simple matter of business, that the famous master might make up his mind what suited her best, as a sitter, and proceed to work.

"Lady," said he, "I prefer the dress in which I saw you first."

"Oh, but that is so old! so shabby!—"

"*Non importa*—it harmonises with your complexion—"

"Two shades of olive," said she, laughing a little; and she went to change her dress.

When she returned, Sebastian had concentrated the light by excluding it altogether from one window, and placing a screen before the lower half of the other. His easel and panel had been brought in by his attendant, who was now busy laying his palette, and the artist was selecting chalks and cartridge paper for a preparatory sketch. [Pg 92]

"You look charming," said he, as Giulia entered and seated herself in a raised chair. She was in the olive-green dress, cut square on the bust, with velvet bars on the corsage; and full, puffed, long sleeves, a white lace neckerchief, and long transparent veil, added to the modest and noble simplicity of her dress; while her rich auburn hair, dark in the shade and golden in the sun,^[8] was braided behind with a few pearls, and gathered into rich coils.

[8] "As through the meadow-lands clear rivers run,
Blue in the shadow, silver in the sun."

HON. MRS. NORTON. *Lady of La Garaye*.

Poor Cynthia, with her throat swathed up, stood behind with her feather-fan; but the painter looked distastefully at her, and did not repeat his glance: he had no mind to introduce her, even as a foil.

"I must make a saint or an angel of you, since you are for a Cardinal," said he, with a grave smile; "and it will not be difficult." [Pg 93]

"Surely, this old gown is not very angelical?" said the Duchess.

"No matter. A nimbus and pincers will identify you with St. Agatha or St. Apollonia, quite sufficiently for the purpose."

He began to draw with great diligence, and was terribly silent. The Duchess felt inclined to yawn.

"More to the right," he said, abruptly, as she inclined her head a little to the left. "Perdona,

illustrissima."

"Pray do not stand on ceremony," said she. Her countenance had become vacant, and he felt he must call up its expression.

"Do you take any interest in art, Signora?"

"O yes, a great deal. I only wish I knew more about it."

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"Do you know what is its great object?"

"To address the eye?"

"To address the mind."

"Certainly. Of course. I ought to have said so."

"The painter who only aims to deceive the eye is ignorant of the true dignity of art."

"To deceive the eye, and to please it, however, are different things."

"I grant it; but the eye of an intelligent, a refined person, is not pleased by that which offends the mind."

"I thought you Venetians cared more for colour than for drawing or expression."

"I did so as long as I was a pupil of Giorgione's. But when I came to Rome, Michael Angelo showed me where I was wrong. He said, 'It is a pity you Venetians do not learn to draw better in your youth, and adopt a better manner of study.' I took the hint, and drew diligently from the living model. But even this did not content him. 'You neglect the ideal beauty of form,' said he, 'and propriety of expression,' I treasured this hint, too. I said to him, 'If you would condescend to unite our colouring to your drawing, you would be—what, after all, you are already—such a master as the world ne'er saw,' 'That may not be,' said he, half-smiling; 'you might as well try to graft a rose on an oak: but if *you*, my son, would unite good drawing to your colouring, you might distance Raffaele.' And, taking up a piece of pipeclay, he sketched out a Lazarus, and splashed in the colour. I do not altogether like it, the action is too violent, and he has made him as black as your Moorish girl; but still it is a grand thing—a very grand thing—the action of the toe, trying to disentangle the bandage of the left leg, is wonderfully original. I have tried to paint all the rest of my picture up to it. A little more to the right, Signora!"

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"Cardinal Ippolito told me that picture of yours was very grand," said the Duchess. "He especially admired the different expressions of the two sisters. But he thought the figure of the Saviour too small."

"—Well," said Sebastian, after drawing for a few minutes in silence, "perfect proportion always gives the idea of smallness. The figure was on the same scale with the rest, till Michael Angelo put in his great Lazarus: and you know I could not re-touch the master's work."

"Michael Angelo writes to me sometimes," observed the Duchess, "but he is a better correspondent of my cousin, Vittoria Colonna."

Sebastian worked a little while in silence, and then said:

"Is not the Marchioness somewhat tinctured with the new opinions?"

"Yes," said Giulia, "I am afraid she is. That's the worst of being too clever."

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"Is it a proof of being so?"

"Well, clever people are apt to run after new things."

"Perhaps they see more in them than the less clever do."

"They think they do, at any rate."

"Has your ladyship looked yet into the works of the Prince of Carpi?"

"Do you mean the great heavy books you brought me from the Cardinal? No."

"They contain a masterly refutation of the heresies of Erasmus. The Cardinal thought they might confirm you in the faith."

"I am happy to say my faith wants no confirming. I would rather have had some novels. You may tell him so, if he says anything to you about it.... Have you read the books yourself?"

"I have looked into them."

"Have you read Erasmus's books?"

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"No."

"Well, when I attack controversy, I will read both sides."

"That will be rather dangerous."

"How can that be? Only one side can be right."

"Your excellency is of course above danger," said Sebastian, with a little cough, "but, for common minds, there is the danger of not distinguishing which *is* the right. For myself, being but a moderate logician, and still slighter theologian, I prefer taking my religion as I have been taught it, to meddling with edged tools. The Church is irrefutable: the Church has foundations that will never be shaken. And I am content to abide by its decisions.—A little more to the right."

THE DUCHESS AND THE PAINTER.

After the steed is stolen, we shut the stable-door; and the Duchess, who now felt very cowardly after dark, set a regular watch on the battlements, whose orders were that he should wind his horn every hour, as he paced his rounds, that she might be certified he was on the alert. The prolonged, wailing note of this horn, piercing the solemn stillness of night, had something infinitely melancholy in it, and often woke her with a start; but then she had the satisfaction of thinking all was safe, and soon yielded herself again to soft repose. Her maids, of whom she had as many as the Duchess in Don Quixote, were much more timorous than she was, and yielded a good deal to their fears, thinking it rather pretty and interesting to start and shriek on the smallest alarm, till they were scolded out of it by the Mother of the maids. This important functionary, whose name, like that of Giulia's nurse, was Caterina, but who bore the dignified prefix of Donna, was of Spanish birth, starched and stiff as Leslie's duenna. In the feudal times, when the sons of knights and nobles took service in the household of some brother noble or knight, and performed the various duties of page and squire, their sisters in like manner attended on the said noble's lady, somewhat in the capacity of maids of honour, under the strict surveillance of the Mother of the maids, who initiated them into all feminine crafts and handiworks, as well as into the decorums and duties of life. That the Duchess's household comprised many of these girls, we know from her will, leaving them marriage portions, generally with the addition of a bed and bedding. Doubtless there was some Altesidora among them, accustomed to wear the old Duenna's heart out with her mischief and fun; but, on the whole, Donna Caterina's rule was popular. Obedience, the grand principle of peace and order, once enforced, she exercised no vexatious petty tyrannies.

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On the first rumour of Barbarossa's invasion, Donna Caterina had swept off all these young people into the cellar, and there locked them and herself in, while Caterina, the nurse, devoted herself to securing the jewels and plate, which she did with complete success.

Sebastian del Piombo made many studies of the Duchess before he could please himself; and the irresolution with which captious cavillers have chosen to charge him was indicated in the deliberation with which he poised and valued the merits of each before his final decision was made. But deliberation is a very different thing from vacillation; and even irresolution is as often an evidence of a great mind before the ultimate choice, as it is of a little one after it. Plenty of illustrations will occur to you, without any impertinent suggestions.

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After sketching her, then, as a nymph, an angel, a goddess, he chose the simplest of his studies: one that represented her as

"A creature not too bright or good
For human nature's daily food;
But yet an angel, too, and bright
With something of celestial light:"

and then, to it he set *con furore*, grasping palette and brushes as Jove might his thunder-bolts, and painting up his study with consummate art and science, often in dead silence only broken by "A little more to the right."

As for the Duchess, when she was off duty, that is, when Sebastian was getting his picture together, and bringing the separate parts well up at the same time—as nature creates her works—she would dabble a little in the arts herself, and pore over a few inches of paper, working as if for her bread; with now and then a modest appeal,—"Is this altogether ill-done? Is this a trifle better? Just put in a touch or two."

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O, delightful art of painting! Who can pursue you and not be happy? Those artists who have known envy, jealousy, and malice, have not loved you for yourself, but for ends far below you; for you are infinitely calming! The true painter knows no rivalry but with nature, no master but truth, no mistress but purity, no reward but success. As Garibaldi, king of men, said last year, "When God puts you in the way of doing a good thing, *do it*, and hold your tongue."

"Do you think," said Giulia, one day, "I might become a good painter, if I gave my mind to it?"

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"Certainly, if you gave your mind to it. But you never will! You are too rich to be a good painter. A certain degree of excellence you may attain, that will embellish your life and charm your leisure; but, to become really *great*, one must attack painting like any mechanical trade, and apply to it like an apprentice, not merely when the fancy inclines, but at all times, willing or unwilling."

"Ah, that would never suit me," said the Duchess. "But, supposing I could leap over the apprenticeship, and become at once a great artist like Michael Angelo, I might have underlings to do all the rough work for me, and only do what was pleasant."

"That is not Michael Angelo's way at all," said Sebastian. "He grinds his own colours, I promise you, and lays his own palette, as I myself do when at leisure. One thinks out many profitable thoughts at such times. And no one can prepare our colours to please us as we can ourselves. Though many of the early stages of sculpture are executed from the clay model by rule and plummet, yet I assure you Michael Angelo trusts it to no inferior workman, but does it himself. He is a great man! a truly great man! And one of his great achievements has been to sweep away

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the gold and purple backgrounds and other puerilities of the dark ages."

Sebastian little thought art would ever make a *retrograde progress* to pre-Raffaellism. *Do* we then, after all, move in a circle?

In a month, the picture was finished. It was curious that Giulia should have sat for it, at Ippolito's request, and for Ippolito; but we know that she did. Affo supposes that she could not in courtesy refuse him, after his coming so chivalrously to her succour. You may see the picture now, at the National Gallery. The Duchess and the painter had quite a friendly parting; and she engaged him, at his earliest leisure, to paint her a portrait of himself.

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When the Cardinal saw the picture, it gave him a strange mixture of pleasure and pain.

"You have doubtless had a pleasant month," said he, moodily. "I wish you had been Ippolito and I Sebastian."

And when he found that Sebastian had promised Giulia his own picture, he begged him to introduce *his* portrait into it—which he did.

"Ippolito had, at all events," says one of his chroniclers, "some loveable and estimable qualities, and most of the historians have a good word for him."^[9] Doubtless this was owing to the genuine love of letters which made the Medici the idols of the literati. Endowed by Clement the Seventh with immense wealth, he was, says Roscoe, "the patron, the companion, and the rival of all the poets, musicians, and wits of his time. Without territories and without subjects, Ippolito maintained at Bologna a court far more splendid than that of any Italian potentate. His associates and attendants, all of whom could boast of some peculiar merit or distinction which had entitled them to his notice, generally formed a body of about three hundred persons. Shocked at his profusion, which only the revenues of the church were competent to supply, Clement the Seventh is said to have engaged the *maestro di casa* of Ippolito to remonstrate with him on his conduct, and to request that he would dismiss some of his attendants as unnecessary to him. 'No,' replied Ippolito, 'I do not retain them at my court because I have occasion for their services, but because they have occasion for mine.'" An answer worthy of a Medici, "His translation of the Eneid into Italian blank verse is considered one of the happiest efforts of the language, and has been frequently reprinted. Amongst the collections of Italian poetry, also, may be found some pieces of his composition, which do credit to his talents."^[10]

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[9] T. A. Trollope.

[10] Roscoe's Lorenzo de' Medici. Some of his pieces may be found in Crescembini, Della volgare Poesia, ii. 11.

One morning, when it was discovered that many valuable statues in Rome had been broken and defaced during the night, the Pope was so incensed at it that he gave orders that whoever had committed the outrage, unless it should prove to be Cardinal Ippolito, should be hanged. This looks as if he were not quite sure that Ippolito might not be the culprit. However, the offender proved to be Lorenzino de' Medici; and it required all Ippolito's influence with the Pope to get him off.

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A Cardinal who could even be suspected by a Pope of playing such a prank must have been a sorry sort of a churchman; and though we read of "his frank, chivalrous nature," it would be vain indeed to look for anything like spirituality in a Medici. When Giulia asked him for something to supply the vague longings of her heart for a higher happiness than this world could give, he was quite at sea, and could direct her to nothing but ascetic observances and the sacrifice of all her possessions to the church, whose coffers he so recklessly emptied. Yet he had a nature capable of better things; but it could not shake itself free from the trammels of earth. When he looked at Giulia's picture he thought, "There, is a woman who might have made me happy." Perhaps he even thought, "There is a woman who might have made me good;" but when a man thinks this and makes no effort to become one whit better than he is, he might just as well spare himself the reflection.

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Of course there were many versions of the story of Barbarossa's attempt to capture the Duchess. Affo, the family annalist, summons all his sesquipedalian vocabulary to dignify the occurrence with such eloquence as this—"Quali fosseri gli affetti del suo delicatissimo animo in cotal fuga, degno argomento di poema! e di storia, gioverà per interrompimento di questo basso mio stile, di alzarsi a tanto incapace," &c., &c. And Muzio Giustinapolitano indited an eclogue on the subject, beginning—

"Muse! quali antri o qual riposte selve
Vi teneano in quel punto? e tu, Minerva!
Qual sacri studj? E qual nuova vaghezza
Il dolce Amor?" &c., &c.

"What were you all about, ye muses, goddesses, and you, you little god of love," &c., that you did not fly to the rescue of this adorable lady? and so forth.

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It was not only declared that Barbarossa had been despatched by the Sultan, who desired to enumerate her among the beauties of his harem, but that she had flung herself out of window, in her chemise, and fled barefooted to the mountains, where she fell into the hands of some condottieri, who, recognising her, respectfully conducted her back to her castle. Giulia was very angry when these stories reached her, which she was the last, however, to hear of; and when it was learnt that she was contradicting them with warmth, another and worse story was

circulated, that she had had a Moorish slave assassinated for having told the truth; in proof of which, his dead body had been cast ashore with his tongue cut out. When Giulia begged her kinsmen to refute these calumnies, they only pooh-poohed them, which greatly enraged her; and she was heard to exclaim, "What a world this is!" which, after all, was not a very original observation.

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Extremely weary of herself and of things in general, she one morning languidly opened a letter from her cousin, the Marchioness of Pescara, with very little expectation of its affording her much interest or amusement.

"Vittoria is always a flight above me," she mentally said. "I never was, and never shall be, one of your grand intellectual ladies."

This was said with that species of contempt with which too many of us imply, "Your grand intellectual ladies are great stupid, after all"—but are they so? Have they not often the best of it, even in this world? Appreciation and applause that we real stupid would be very glad of, fall to the share of the working bees that make the honey, and have not some of them, at any rate, as fair a hope as any of us, of a good place in the world to come?

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Thus wrote "the divine Vittoria," as she was frequently called—not in the sense of her being a doctor of divinity, but addicted to divine things:—

"There is now among us a man who is producing an extraordinary sensation—Fra Bernardino Ochino, a Capuchin, who comes in the spirit and with the power of Savonarola. Another valuable addition to our Christian circle is Signor Juan de Valdés, the new Governor of San Giacomo, and twin-brother of the Emperor's Latin secretary. How I wish you were among us! We have a very pleasant little society here, quite apart from those worldlings whose company you and I have forsworn, our chief delight being to interchange thoughts and feelings, cultivate our minds, and elevate our souls. When the hot weather comes, I shall return to Ischia. Farewell.

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"THY VITTORIA."

"Truly," exclaimed the Duchess, "to be at Naples would be ten thousand times better than to remain here, where the malaria certainly affects me; and I am sure my dear Duke would have said so, were it only for fear of Barbarossa."

So she gave the word of command, to the immense joy of her ladies, and, after a prodigious bustle of preparation, she started with quite a little army of retainers—six ladies of honour in sky-blue damask, six grooms in chocolate and blue, her maggior-domo in starched ruff and black velvet, and a competent number of men armed to the teeth. She performed the journey, no very long one, in a horse-litter, curtained with blue and silver, and piled with blue satin mattresses; and when she wished to change her position she mounted her white palfrey.

CHAPTER IX.

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DAWN OF A PURE LIGHT.

Even in the darkest period of the middle ages, God had not left Himself without witnesses of the Truth among the Alps. It was in the year 1370 that these pure-minded people, finding themselves straitened for room, sent emissaries into Italy in quest of a convenient settlement. These deputies travelled as far south as Calabria, where they treated with the proprietors of the soil for a waste, uncultivated district. Thither emigrated a chosen body of the Vaudois, under whose industrious hands the desert soon blossomed as the rose, the thorn and the thistle gave place to clustering vines and waving corn; and the blessing of God evidently rested on a praying people, who fed on His unadulterated word, and addressed Him without superstition.

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This little light in a dark place could not shine unobserved. The prosperity of the new settlers excited the envy of the neighbouring villagers, who, seeing that they neither came to their churches nor observed their ceremonies, got up the cry of heresy against them. The land-proprietors, however, protected their valuable tenants; and the priests, finding the increasing amount of their regularly paid tithes, winked at their non-conformity. Thus, the little band continued to flourish and increase till the dawn of the short-lived Italian reformation.

From a Calabrian monk of this district, PETRARCH acquired a knowledge of the then totally neglected Greek language; and BOCCACCIO learnt it of this monk's disciple. These two distinguished Italians, of whom it is poor praise to say that they would still have been great men, though the one had never written sonnets, nor the other novels, gave an impulse to the benighted minds of their countrymen which eventually led to the glorious restoration of learning. The light went on shining more and more unto the perfect day, till Greek became the one thing needful; and Greek was the casket which enshrined the New Testament.

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It is sorrowful to know, however, that a love of letters does not imply a love of religion, and too often accompanies a total disrelish of it. Lorenzo the Magnificent lavished all his patronage on the disciples of pagan Greece, and Leo the Tenth reserved preferment for the exponents of a refined heathenism. Erasmus heard a sermon preached before Julius the Second, in which the Saviour was likened to Phocion and Epaminondas. Of Cardinal Bembo, the apostolical secretary, it was thought the highest praise to say that he rivalled Cicero and Virgil.

A doubtful convert from Judaism, detesting the brethren who now regarded him as a renegade, obtained a decree from the Imperial chamber that all Hebrew books but the Old Testament should be destroyed. Reuchlin, the restorer of Hebrew literature among Christians, rose up to prevent the execution of this barbarous decree, which would, indeed, have got rid of the Mishna and Gemara,^[11] but at the expense (perhaps not too great) of annihilating many a profound and valuable work.

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[11] The Mishna, or Duplicate, purports to embody laws given to Moses on the Mount, and delivered by him, not in writing, but by word of mouth, to the elders of Israel. Though a bold imposture, the Jews have accepted it as a divine tradition. The Gemara, or Accomplishment, consists of a mass of Rabbinical expositions, proverbs, and allegories. The two, united, form the Talmud, or Doctrine; and to it the Jews referred all their decisions, "making the Word of God of none effect."—*Finn's Sepharim*.

Reuchlin's successful opposition aroused the anger of the clergy, and a hot controversy ensued, in which Luther and Erasmus warmly took part. Thereby many a chink was made in the strong prison-walls that shut in the undying lamp of Truth; and through these crannies the pure light streamed forth.

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The works of Luther and Erasmus, Zwingli and Melancthon, were eagerly read in Italy, but speedily suppressed. Some of them, under feigned names, even found their way into the Vatican.

"We have had a most laughable business before us to-day," wrote the elder Scaliger. "The Commonplaces of Philip Melancthon were printed at Venice with this title, 'Per Messer Ippofilo da Terra Negra.' Being sent to Rome they were speedily bought up and read with great applause, so that an order was sent to Venice for a fresh supply. Meantime, a Franciscan friar, who possessed a copy of the original edition, discovered the trick, and denounced the book as a Lutheran production of Melancthon's. It was proposed, at first, to punish the poor printer, who probably had not read a word of the original; but, on second thoughts, it was decided to burn the copies and hush up the whole affair."

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Almost as bad as Elizabeth Barrett Browning's having her Greek books bound like novels from the Minerva press!

It is one thing, however, to perceive the scandals and abuses of the Romish church, and another to appreciate the spirituality of the Saviour's pure doctrine. But there were Italians who could do this.

"It is now fourteen years," wrote Egidio da Porta, "since I, under the impulse of a certain religious feeling, but not according to knowledge, forsook my parents and assumed the black cowl. If I did not become learned and devout, at any rate I appeared so, and for seven years was a preacher of God's word, though, alas, in deep ignorance. I ascribed nothing to faith, all to works. But God would not permit His servant to perish for ever. He brought me to the dust. I was made to cry 'Lord! what wilt thou have me to do?' And then the delightful answer was borne in upon my heart, 'Arise, and go to Zwingli,' and he will tell thee what thou must do!'"

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The Jews contributed their share towards the intelligent study of Biblical literature. Already the world owed to them that prodigious effort of patient industry, the Masora—a verification of every jot and tittle of the Hebrew Scriptures, for the purpose of giving a full and exact text of the Holy Word. The newly invented art of printing now gave it extension and perpetuity. In 1477, the Hebrew Psalter, and various books of the Old Testament, issued from the press; and in 1488, a Jewish family at Soncino, in the Cremonese, brought out a complete Hebrew Bible. For thirty years afterwards, this department of typography was almost entirely engrossed by the Jews; and I have already mentioned how Giulia Gonzaga's nephew, Vespasiano Colonna, subsequently allowed the Jews to establish a printing-press in his duchy of Sabbionetta.

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Erasmus published his Greek edition of the New Testament in 1516. In 1527, Pagnini of Lucca published his Latin translation of the whole Bible. Thus, the minds of the learned were attracted to the Scriptures as literary curiosities; and happily there were some among them who thereby became wise unto salvation. While, however, the Old and New Testament were still confined to the dead languages, they were only accessible to scholars. But, as early as in 1471, an Italian translation of the Bible was printed at Venice, and it went through many editions. A better translation, by Brucioli, was published in 1530.

Travelling and letter-writing contributed to enlarge the minds of the Italians and spread the reformed doctrines. There were also many Reformers in the service of the Emperor Charles the Fifth, who freely broached their opinions while in Italy. Thus, like fire set to the dry prairie grass, the flame ran across the country, soon dying out where it found no combustible matter; in other quarters, smouldering unseen, when it seemed trodden out. The Pope reproached the Emperor; the Emperor recriminated, and bade the Pope reform his clergy. The sack of Rome under the Constable de Bourbon was looked on by many of the Italians as a judgment on the Pope for his impiety, and the names of heretic and Lutheran were no longer heard with horror. Sermons were delivered in private houses against the abuses of Romanism; and the number of evangelical Christians increased every day.

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About this time, there might be seen, pacing along the high-roads of Italy, a venerable man of most charming aspect. His beard was white as snow, and descended to his girdle: his profile was finely cut, his skin transparent and pale even to delicacy; his large, lustrous, dark brown eyes were deep set beneath overhanging brows whose shadow gave them wonderful intensity of expression. He carried a staff, but his figure was erect and vigorous, his tread firm. When he came to the palace of a prince or bishop, he was always received with the honours due to one of

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superior rank: when he departed, it was with the same distinction. The lead in conversation was by common consent yielded to him; people, whether rich or poor, hung on his words, and tried to remember them. He ate of such things as were set before him, but sparingly, and as if he did not care what he ate. He drank water from the spring, or wine tempered with water.

This was Bernardino Ochino, the Capuchin friar. He was a native of Sienna, and of obscure parentage. Impelled by religious motives, he had early in life joined the Franciscan Observantines, but he afterwards became a member of the Capuchin brotherhood, and adopted the most rigid ascetic practices. These altogether failed to give him the peace of mind which he sought. At his wit's end, he exclaimed:—

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"Lord, if I am not saved now, I know not what else I *can* do!"

At length he found the very guide he wanted in the Bible, by the attentive perusal of which he became convinced that Christ by his death had made a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the whole world,—that religious vows of human invention were not only useless but wicked,—and that the Romish church, with all her appeals to the senses, was unscriptural and abominable in the sight of God.

Ochino's natural powers of oratory, improved as they were by cultivation, led to his being chosen for one of the Lent preachers in the principal cities of Italy. He drew crowds to hear him. The Emperor, when in Italy, attended his sermons. For the time, at any rate, he effected in his hearers a change of heart and life—made them give largely of their abundance to the poor, and reconciled their differences. His adoption of the reformed doctrines was not discovered; he seemed aiming at a reformation within the church, while Luther and Calvin were effecting one out of it. The lower orders were becoming imbued with new principles. An Observantine monk, preaching one day at Imola, told his congregation that they must purchase heaven by their good works. A young boy who was present exclaimed:—

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"That's blasphemy! for the Bible tells us that Christ purchased heaven for us by his sufferings and death, and bestows it freely on us by his mercy!"

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"Get you gone, you young rascal," retorted the monk, "you are but just come from the cradle; and do you take upon you to understand sacred things which even the learned cannot explain?"

"Did you never read these words," then rejoined the boy—"Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast ordained praise?"

On this, the monk, furious with anger, quitted the pulpit, and delivered the poor boy over to the secular arm, by which he was marched off to jail; an awful warning to youngsters of his age and degree.

When Giulia Gonzaga arrived at Naples, it was already beginning to ferment with the leaven of the new opinions, without having yet drawn on itself the displeasure of the Sacred College. She established herself in a good house in the Borgo delle Vergini, (sleeping every night in the nunnery of Santa Clara,) and immediately sought the society of Vittoria Colonna, whose extraordinary interest in the reformed doctrines she was at first quite at a loss to comprehend.

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CHAPTER X.

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VITTORIA DI COLONNA.

"Vittoria è 'l nome; e ben conviensi a nata
Fra le vittorie, ed a chi, o vada o stanzi,
Di trofei sempre e di trionfi ornata,
La Vittoria abbia seco, o dietro o innanzi.
Questa e un' altra Artemisia, che lodata.
Fu di pietà verso il suo Mausolo; anzi
Tanto maggior, quanto è più assai bel opra
Che por *sotterra* un nom, trarlo *di sopra*."

ARIOSTO. *Orlando*, xxxvii., 18.

Costanza, the young and beautiful Duchess of Francavilla, had, at the beginning of the century, the fortress of the little island of Ischia committed to her charge. This young widow had sense, goodness, courage, rare prudence, energy, and fidelity; or Ischia, the key of the kingdom, and more than once a royal asylum, would never have been entrusted to her keeping.

She was not only guardian of the castle and island, but of her infant brother, Ferdinand, Marquis of Pescara. In his fifth year, the little fellow was betrothed to the baby Vittoria Colonna, of the same age, who was thenceforth consigned to the Duchess Costanza, to be educated with her future husband; and the little *promessi sposi* might be seen straying about together, hand in hand, sharing their sweetmeats and play-things, and now and then having a little fight.

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"Let dogs delight," however, was so strenuously inculcated by the Duchess, that reciprocal forbearance soon cemented their affections. The Marquis was taught that he must reserve kicks and blows for his future enemies, and Vittoria that she must learn to bind up wounds rather than inflict them. And so they chased butterflies, gathered flowers, and hunted for strawberries together, themselves the prettiest blossoms that ever floated on summer air.

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"Ah, lovely sight! behold them,—creatures twain,
Hand in hand wandering thro' some verdant alley,
Or sunny lawn of their serene domain,
Their wind-caught laughter echoing musically;
Or skimming, in pursuit of bird-cast shadows,
With feet immaculate the enamelled meadows.

"Tiptoe now stand they by some towering lily,
And fain would peer into its snowy cave;
Now, the boy bending o'er some current chilly,
She feebler backward draws him from the wave,
But he persists, and gains for her at last
Some bright flowers, from the dull weeds hurrying past."^[12]

[12] Aubrey de Vere. "A Tale of the Olden Time."

And thus the little betrothed led charmed lives, sporting and caressing, in the intervals of learning hymns and legends and listening to the Duchess's fairy tales.

She also taught them a good deal of history by word of mouth, so that they came to be quite as conversant with Romulus and Remus, Curtius and Horatius Cocles, as with giants and dwarfs. Then came the conning of the criss-cross row, duly followed by the Latin accidence, each rivalling and yet helping the other. Learned tutors and gifted artists gave the Duchess their aid; and thus the tranquil days glided on till they were nineteen; the bloodshed and anarchy which distracted unhappy Italy never troubling this charmed islet.

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Bishop Berkeley said of Ischia, in a letter to Pope: "'Tis an epitome of the whole earth! containing within the compass of eighteen miles a wonderful variety of hills, vales, rugged rocks, fruitful plains, and barren mountains, all thrown together in most romantic confusion. The air is, in the hottest season, constantly refreshed by cool breezes from the sea; the vales produce excellent wheat and Indian corn, but are mostly covered with vineyards, interspersed with fruit trees. Besides the common kinds, as cherries, apricots, peaches, &c., they produce oranges, limes, almonds, pomegranates, figs, water-melons, and many other fruits unknown in our climate, which lie everywhere open to the passenger. The hills are the greater part covered to the top with vines; some with chesnut groves, and others with thickets of myrtle and lentiscus."

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During this interval, Pescara had grown up into a strikingly handsome and interesting youth. His hair, says Giovio, was auburn, his nose aquiline, his eyes large and expressive; alternately flashing with spirit and melting with softness. Vittoria worshipped him; and this was so artlessly manifest that Pescara grew a little arrogant upon it. She was a lovely blonde, with regular features, blue eyes, and hair of that tint which Petrarch described as "chioma aurata," and which Galeazzo da Tarsia, one of her poet-lovers, called "trecce d'oro." The Spanish painter, Francesco d'Olanda, spoke of her rare beauty; and Michael Angelo felt its powerful though innocent spell when, after their tender leave-taking on her death-bed, he regretted that he had not kissed her cheek instead of her hand.

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Vittoria's father, in spite of his grand, historic name, was but a condottiere or captain of free lances, whose business and pleasure consisted in bloodshed and rapine. He dwelt perched up in an old ancestral castle overlooking a gloomy little walled town on a steep hill-side, from whence he and his men would now and then sweep down to devastate the property of his neighbours, much in the style of our own border chiefs. It was his son Ascanio, Vittoria's brother, who made war on Giulia, and seized her castles.

Thus, Vittoria, the daughter and sister of fighting men, was ready to admire and sympathize in the martial ardour of Pescara, which would have had something respectable in it, had any one fought in those days for any grand principle.

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At nineteen, the betrothed were married. Of course there was much rejoicing, much feasting; chroniclers record the homages Vittoria received from rich relations, in the shape of diamond crosses, diamond rings, "twelve golden bracelets," &c., and recount the crimson velvet gowns fringed with gold, the flesh-coloured silk petticoats trimmed with black velvet, the purple brocaded mantles and so forth, composing her wardrobe, which doubtless exemplified the height of the fashion of the time.

After the great stir was a great calm: two years ensued of perfect married happiness. Then the young Marquis was summoned to the field; nor did Vittoria seek to withhold him from the call to arms. The King of Spain was also King of Naples, so of course Pescara fought on the Spanish side: but the French were victorious at Ravenna, where he was taken prisoner, after receiving some wounds in the face, which, the Duchess of Milan told him, only made him the better-looking.

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He charmed his captivity by addressing to his wife a Dialogue on Love, full of the studied conceits of the time. Vittoria sent him a poetical epistle, full of tenderness and classicality. Playing on her own name, she said:—"Se Vittoria volevi, io t'era appresso. Ma tu, lasciando me, lasciasti lei."

"If victory was what you wanted, *I* was by your side. But, leaving *me*, you lost *her*."

One day, when she was with tearful eyes, inditing a sonnet to him, lo, Pescara himself suddenly stood before her! He had been released on paying a heavy ransom: she looked on him as "un gran capitano."

Before their happiness could pall, he was off again, to win new laurels. He had, indeed, bravery worthy of some good cause; but he was a stern, inflexible commander: and in doing justice, he sometimes lost sight of mercy.

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Pescara supplied his wife with an occupation during his absence, by sending her a young boy to educate; a little cousin of his own, the Marquis del Vasto; beautiful as a Cupid, but the naughtiest little Turk!

In a little while, Vittoria could guide him with a rein of silk. It is excellent woman's work to train boys. It is well to talk to them and listen to them a good deal; tell them your own plans and air-castles; hear all about theirs; help them in little matters and get them to help you in yours; ask their opinion sometimes, and suggest rather than intrude your own. Long walks together inevitably lead to long talks: little things occur in which the boy may aid the woman as if he were a man; though it be but to help her across a brook or over a stile.

Del Vasto soon adored Vittoria, and as she was a good classic, he feared her detection of false quantities, and yet would often come to her for help, sure of obtaining it. He burned to be a hero like Pescara: they both thought him quite up to Achilles. But Vittoria was to learn her idol was made of clay.

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They met once more—they spent three days together, without knowing they were not to see each other again. He hurried back to take the lead in a brilliant but cruel campaign. It included the battle of Pavia. Robertson calls Pescara the ablest and most enterprising of the Imperial generals; and certainly he divided with Lannoy the merit of this victory, which caused the captivity of two kings, and changed the fate of Europe.

Pescara thought himself injured, in having Francis the First taken out of his hands; and his known pique on the subject made a certain political party, with the Pope for its real, and a man named Morone for its ostensible head, think they might perhaps detach him from the Spanish interest—in other words, make a traitor of him.

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In an evil hour, Pescara listened. Where was the pure, lofty influence of his wife at that moment? She was far away, believing in his unstained honour. A fatal letter was written by him, yielding to the tempter's snares, and entrusted to a messenger named Gismondo Santi.

This man, lodging at a low hostelry on his journey, was murdered by the landlord, and buried under his staircase. As no tidings, consequently, were heard of the unfortunate emissary, Pescara concluded he had turned traitor (like his master) and carried his despatches to the Emperor. Fancy his feelings.

Oh, for Vittoria! Oh that she had been with him at first!—oh! that she were with him now! As he clasped his strong hands over his burning eyes, and strove to think, he seemed to see her, sitting at her writing-table, pensively gazing at his miniature, and then at the crucifix above it, with a prayer for him on her lips—a prayer that he might be surrounded by an atmosphere of sanctity and safety.

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After crowning such a brilliant campaign by winning the battle of Pavia, should he end by dying a disgraced man?—a convicted traitor, like De Bourbon, with, perhaps, the felon death that De Bourbon had escaped? And all for what? What dust and ashes the Evil One gives us to drink!

Just then, a courier, hot with haste, brought him a letter—it was from Vittoria. Too agitated to disentangle gently the tress of her fair hair knotted round it, he cut it with his dagger, and devoured rather than read it.

Some bird of the air had carried the matter!—she had heard of the plot! No Lady Macbeth was Vittoria, to urge her husband on to guilt—she was his guardian angel, and wrote, with infinite trouble and anxiety, to implore him to think of his hitherto unstained character, and to weigh well what he was about, declaring to him that she had no desire to be the wife of a king, but only of a loyal and upright man.

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This letter decided Pescara as to his course. He wrote a full confession to the Emperor, who certainly owed him small thanks for it, seeing he believed him to know all already; and the confederates he compromised owed him still less. Pescara was too deep in the mire now, to come out unstained. He returned to his allegiance to the Emperor, but he betrayed his friends, his tempters, accomplices, or whatever name we may give them. The Pope, of course, was above danger; but Morone fell into a regular trap laid for him.

Vittoria, far away in her little island, would only hear as much as Pescara chose to tell her, and in his own way. She would suppose his character unscathed, his possession of imperial favour undiminished, since he was shortly afterwards made generalissimo of the forces. Suddenly his health broke down. No one could say why, unless the slight wounds he had received at Pavia had injured him more than was supposed. A troubled mind, probably, was at the root of his mortal sickness.

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And so, in the prime of life, and loaded with honours, he found all earthly things receding from his grasp, and death hovering in view. In great anguish he sent for Vittoria, begging her to come quickly. She started instantly with all speed, and had travelled as far northwards as Viterbo, when she was met by the news of his death.

Thus closed their life's romance. And if she had breathed her last on his grave, she would only be known to us, if known at all, as a constant, affectionate woman. Instead of which, she lived to immortalise his memory in noble verse, to exemplify by her life a rare purity, constancy, intelligence, and devotion, and then to dedicate her pen to the loftiest themes that an evangelical

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faith could consecrate. No mere idyls or love-verses: her poems are full of deep thought and profound piety.

This was the Vittoria, perhaps the most distinguished lady in Italy, whom Giulia Gonzaga, her cousin by marriage, found at Naples, listening to the preaching of Bernardino Ochino.

Del Vasto, her boy pupil, was now arrived at man's estate, and her dearest friend. He was married to Maria d'Aragona, the greatest beauty of the day. Like Pescara, he was destined to die early.

CHAPTER XI.

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VALDÉS AND OCHINO.

Evening was closing on Naples and Pausilippo—bright, serene, odoriferous. The sea spread its azure surface as smooth as glass—many a lateen sail was extended to the grateful breeze. The universal hum of a talkative city was continually broken by whoop and halloo, scream and laughter, snatch of song or the sound of some stringed or wind instrument. Now and then a church bell fell musically and mournfully on the ear.

A grave signor sat pensively at a table, with an open book before him. He was the true type of a Castilian hidalgo; tall, spare, with long, narrow face, classically cut features, the eyes almond-shaped and very dark, lighted as if from within: the face oval, the beard pointed, the skin clear olive, the brow high and pale.

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His habit was of black velvet, slashed with satin and with buttons of jet: a small starched cambric ruff, edged with lace, was closed at the throat with white silken cords and tassels. A rapier at his side; a diamond of the purest water on his long, thin white hand.

"It must needs be so"—such was the tenor of his meditation. "The very image of God must be stamped on our souls like the cameo in soft wax, if we are to be His. Oh, my God, mould me with thine own impress! stamp me with thine own seal! keep my thoughts—I cannot keep them!—efface even the memories of sin. Make me a weapon for thine own armoury, whether to be used in actual service or to hang on the wall ready for use!"

He covered his face with his hand, and remained lost in thought, till some one tapped at the door. It was Fra Bernardino Ochino, the Capuchin.

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I know not why Ochino should have had so white a beard; for his age, at most, was scarcely fifty: but so it was.

"Brother," said Valdés gladly, "you come at the right moment; for I am in a singular frame of mind."

"Strange!" cried Ochino; "I, too, found myself in a singular mood, and it was on that account that I sought you. There are times when I am oppressed by vain questionings; and nobody quiets them better than you do."

"I wonder whether your questionings relate to the same subject as my own," said Valdés, with his peculiarly sweet smile. "Come! let us talk it out. It wants half-an-hour yet to the time when Donna Isabella expects me."

"You know," said Ochino, "I am not book-learned—"

"My chief book is my mind," rejoined Valdés. "Therein I read a nature totally corrupt, and find an unutterable want of God. My other book is His word. Herein I find a solution to every question, a remedy for every want, in the blood of Christ. And that is my peace."

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"Such is the substance of all my preaching. I aim not so much at pulling down rotten opinions as sowing good seed."

"You are right, you are right: that will carry us through. The rotten walls will fall of themselves. They already totter and crumble."

"But oh, what a God is ours!" cried Ochino, stretching his two arms straight upward. "His judgments are past finding out. How easy it would be to Him to make all straight!—I find myself ready to pray there may be no hell: that it may be a depopulated country—a burnt-out volcano: that all, *all* may be saved."

"Surely you may do that," said Valdés. "The Lord's hand is not shortened, that He cannot save. He stands at the door of our hard hearts and knocks. He cries 'turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?' Could a *man* say more? Excuse the bathos of the expression. It is man who says 'I will not.'"

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"But what vindictive expressions—"

"Hush, hush, my brother. David's vindictive expressions were those of a Jew, not a Christian: and, after all, what a loving heart he had! If he stormed at his enemies one instant, he forgave them the next. Otherwise, he could never have been the man after God's own heart. His inner being is subjected to a test that none of us could stand—the Psalms are literally his heart-sighings—the thoughts and feelings that chased one another like cloud-shadows over waving corn. Oh! believe me, the fault is not in God, but in ourselves. Since we admit that He is not only round about us but within us, how is it that we have so little perception of Him? Because His grace does not operate in us. And why does not His grace operate in us? Because, in reality, we do not humbly,

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devoutly, and earnestly desire it.^[13] Why do not we both desire it and seek it? Because we do not love God with the whole heart and with all the senses. Why not? Because we do not know Him. Why do not we know Him? Because we do not even know ourselves."

[13] Valdés. "Chain of Virtues and Vices." *Vide* Wiffen's "Alfabeto Christiano."

"All this is true and logical enough," said Ochino; "and brings us back to your starting-point, that your first book was your own mind. But that book cannot be read *in the dark*. Nor without the light of the Holy Spirit."

"Unquestionably not," said Valdés. "That light enables me to read my own book. It makes plain and full of interest what was arid, forbidding, and deeply disappointing. You know that the Scriptures have helped me to understand my own book. David and St. Paul are nothing to us, in comparison with God and Christ. In the Old Testament we read of a God of vengeance, and a Lord of hosts; for to the Jews he exhibited himself but through a glass darkly. But *we* know him through Christ, and, in seeing one, we see the other. Oh, then, how is it we are insensible to such love? A man would give the whole world, if he had it, to save the life of an only son: God gave His own Son to save an ungrateful world."

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"That is a strong figure," said Ochino, with emotion.

"And since He and His Son are one, in a mystical manner which we cannot comprehend," pursued Valdés, "what is His giving His Son for us, but, in other words, giving himself? His *alter ego*. 'Greater love than this hath no man, that he lay down his life for his friends.' 'For scarcely for a *righteous* man (even) will one *die*:—but God commendeth His love towards us, in that, while we were yet *sinner*s, Christ died for us.' Can you conceive a nobler antithesis?"

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"Ah!" said Ochino, gladly extending his arms. "I see it! I embrace it!"

"Hold it fast, my brother. For on this rock is built the church. He was delivered (delivered up by *man*) for our sins, but was raised, by God, for our justification. Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Continue to hammer upon that, as you have done, and are still doing. Did you note an honourable woman who sate immediately before you, this morning, with Vittoria Colonna?"

"Yes. She was very attentive."

"She is Giulia, Duchess of Trajetto: one on whom the pure gospel light has not yet shined. I believe she is much under the influence of Cardinal Ippolito: as much as the Marchioness of Pescara is under that of Cardinal Pole. Pernicious directors, both! You must do them all the good you can, while they are under your ministry. There is much that is hopeful in the little circle of distinguished women who are now drawn together here. Isabella Manricha is far advanced in the spiritual life, and will faithfully guide her younger sisters along the narrow way. Speak the truth to them boldly: the word of God is not bound. And now the time is come for our evening reading at Donna Isabella's, and here comes Giulio Terenziano to join us."

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As he spoke, a slender, intellectual-looking young man, with eyes full of spiritual light, entered, whom he embraced as a younger brother. This youth was afterwards a sufferer for the truth.

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Nothing was more remarkable in the foregoing dialogue than the manner in which Valdés took the lead, though Ochino was a churchman and he was not, and he was Ochino's junior by twelve or fourteen years. It is currently believed that Valdés was at this time secretary to the Spanish Viceroy of Naples, Don Pedro de Toledo: he was certainly governor of the Hospital of Incurables. His remarkable personal influence was exercised both in conversation and by letters on special subjects; by meetings for the purpose of reading and exposition, either at his friends' houses or in his own in Naples, or at Pausilippo. Mr. Wiffen tells us that some interesting allusions in the "Dialogo de la Lengua" give an insight into his manner of reading and discoursing with his friends.

"He held frequent intercourse with them at his own residence in the city. His less divided leisure was given to them at his country house, situated in a garden, on the shore of the Bay of Naples, near Chiaja. At this country house, Valdés received on the Sunday a select number of his most intimate friends; and they passed the day together in this manner. After breakfasting and taking a few turns round the garden, enjoying its beauty and the pleasant prospect of the shores and purple ripples of the bay, where the isle of Capri on one side drew the eye to the luxurious mansion of Tiberius, and Ischia and Procida rose in sight on the other, they returned into the house, when Valdés read some selected portion of the Scriptures, and commented upon it, or some divine 'Consideration' which had occupied his thoughts during the week.... After this, they discussed the subject together, or discoursed on some other points which Valdés himself brought forward, until the hour for dinner. After dinner, in the afternoon, when the servants were dismissed to their own amusements, his friends and not himself proposed the subjects and led the conversation, and he had to discuss them agreeably to their desire. As they had been pleased to consecrate the morning according to his wishes, in reading 'The Book of the Soul,' or upon subjects like his 'Divine Considerations,' he in return devoted his acquirements to their gratification on themes of their selection. Such was the origin of the 'Dialogo de la Lengua,' a dialogue on the Spanish language, which occupied seven or more sittings, and was in all probability much more copious than the text which has come down to us, and which furnishes us with these particulars. At nightfall, Valdés and his friends returned to the city.

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"The Sunday meetings may have continued four or five years. These Sabbaths of studious Christians, this exchange of subjects, this interchange of thought between the proposers, the day, the pure elevation of mind they brought as it were with them, the situation, the beauty of the

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country, the transparent skies of a southern climate, the low murmurs of the bay, would all be favourable to the purpose of Valdés."^[14]

[14] Introduction to Wiffen's translation of the "Alfabeto Christiano."

The extreme beauty of this extract will preclude the need of apology for its length, especially as the general reader could not otherwise have access to it; for I believe only a hundred copies for private circulation have been printed of the work to which Mr. Wiffen has affixed his delightful introduction.

"O, evenings worthy of the gods!" exclaimed
The Sabine bard. "O, evenings," I reply,
"More to be prized and coveted than yours,
As more illumined, and with nobler truths."

COWPER, "The Task," book iv.

Verini has described the charms of Lorenzo's farm at Poggio Cajano, and Politian has left us a delightful description of his summer evenings at Fiesole. [Pg 157]

"When you are incommoded," says he, "with the heat of the season in your retreat at Careggi, you will perhaps think the shelter of Fiesole not unworthy your notice. Seated between the slopes of the mountain, we have here water in abundance, and being constantly refreshed with moderate winds, find little inconvenience from the glare of the sun. As you approach the house, it seems embosomed in the wood; but when you reach it, you find it commands a full view of the city. But I shall tempt you with other allurements. Wandering beyond the limits of his own plantation, Pico sometimes steals unexpectedly on my retirement, and draws me from my shades to partake of his supper. What kind of supper that is, you well know; sparing, indeed, but neat, and rendered grateful by the charms of his conversation." [Pg 158]

Pico and Politian would doubtless be very good company; but not equal to Valdés and Ochino.

CHAPTER XII.

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GOING TO LAW.

Giulia was in Naples, but she was neither enjoying herself nor benefiting herself, as much as she ought to have done. The Princess of Sulmona, who stood in the double relation to her of daughter-in-law and sister-in-law, and who had once been her chosen companion and bosom friend, had, since her second marriage, been gradually estranged from her: and, from time to time, the Duchess had received letters from her in so altered a tone, that she might have exclaimed—

"Is all the friendship that we two have shared,
When we have chid the hasty-footed time
For parting us,—oh! and is all forgot?"

Firstly, a demand for a certain ewer and chalice of silver, richly chased by Benvenuto, which were heirlooms, and held by Giulia in charge for her nephew and Isabella's son, the little Vespasiano. On reading this missive, the Duchess took the trouble to write her a long, explanatory, and reproachful letter, reminding her of things whereof Isabella ought not to have needed reminding. [Pg 160]

Letter the second, after a considerable pause, took no notice of Giulia's answer, but enforced attention to letter the first, making additional claim to a large ruby ring and a string of oriental pearls.

On reading this, the Duchess said: "She's mad!"—burnt the letter, and did not answer it.

Letter the third was filled with the most aggravating things that one woman could say to another.

Giulia replied by desiring her instantly to return a service of plate and several family jewels which had been lent her on her marriage.

In answer to this, Giulia received a lawyer's letter, telling her that her husband's will was null and void, and threatening her with proceedings. [Pg 161]

Fancy the state of the poor Duchess! She received this letter just before she went, for the first time, with Vittoria, to hear Ochino preach; and however attentive he might have thought her, she was in fact thinking of the lawyer's letter all the while, and writing imaginary letters to the Pope and the Emperor. For, Giulia had overpowering allies; and if her sweet nature were sufficiently stirred to call them to her succour, woe unto those who attacked her! This had been exemplified immediately after the Duke's death, when his kinsmen, Ascanio Colonna and Napoleone Orsini, taking advantage of her supposed helplessness, laid claim to his estates. Up in arms were the Pope and the Emperor directly. The Pope pronounced the will valid, and the Emperor put her in possession of her estates. Yet, now, here was the whole matter to go over again, and with some one much nearer and dearer! Giulia had a fit of crying; and the humid eyes and dejected mien which Ochino and Valdés attributed to her convictions of sin were traceable to a much lower [Pg 162]

source.

"How well dear Ochino laboured the point of justification by faith!" exclaimed Vittoria, after their return from church. "Did you ever hear it better demonstrated?"

"To say the truth, dear Vittoria," replied the Duchess, "I scarcely heard two words of it, and do not remember one."

The Marchioness looked shocked; but Giulia continued—

"Isabella threatens me with a lawsuit, and I am determined to write to the Pope about it."

"Oh, pray do not," cried Vittoria, "you are always a great deal too violent. You use such extraordinarily strong measures when mild ones would do."

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"I, violent? Why, that is the last thing I am! It is because I am unprotected that people trample on me!"

"Trample! O, my dear Giulia!"

"Why, only remember how Ascanio and Napoleone came down upon me directly my poor Duke was dead!"

"Yes, and only remember how *you* came down upon them. You raised the whole country about it. No one less than the Pope and the Emperor would serve your turn."

"Well, and did not they say I was right? and did not they take my part?"

"Truly they did!—but it does not follow that they would do so again. Men are apt to fly to the rescue, directly they think a helpless woman is oppressed; but if they find out she is able and willing to fight her own battles, they let her! And indeed, dear Giulia, it does not become a woman to be pugnacious."

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"Pugnacious!" The word was highly offensive, and the Duchess was deeply hurt. She threw herself on a pile of cushions and began to tear a nosegay to pieces, without saying a word.

"Hear what St. Paul says," pursued Vittoria, sitting down beside her, and turning over the leaves of a little book.

"St. Paul knows nothing about it," muttered the Duchess.

"There you are quite mistaken," said Vittoria, still eagerly hunting up the passage, "St. Paul knew something about everything, for he was a great genius and an eminently practical man, besides being a holy apostle. This is what he says—'Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?... I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? No? Not one, that shall be able to judge between his brethren? But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers! Now, therefore, there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? Why do not ye rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?'"

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"That is very fine for St. Paul to say," said Giulia. "I wonder how he would have liked it himself."

"Giulia! you must not say such things as that. It is wicked."

"Why, to hear you talk, one would think it was I who wanted to go to law with Isabella; whereas, it is Isabella who wants to go to law with *me*!"

And Giulia began to cry.

"Nobody is so unfortunate as I," said she.

"I pity you," said Vittoria, "but I own I think you are blameworthy."

"In what?"

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"In your spirit."

"Why, what would you do in my place?"

"I would not write to the Pope."

"That's what you would *not* do. What would you do?"

"Settle it by amicable agreement."

"But Isabella will not be amicable!"

"If she will not, that is *her* fault."

"Certainly! And so it is her fault."

"Well, my dear Giulia, I would not trouble myself so for all the pearls and diamonds in the world. What are they, but so much dust? If you throw them into a crucible, they will lose all their beauty, and—"

"So should I, if you put *me* into a crucible," said Giulia, beginning to laugh; and her own little joke did more to make her see the bright side of things than all her cousin's wise saws.

"I know what I'll do," said she. "I'll write to Ferrante."

Ferrante was her only surviving brother.

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"Ah, that is a good thought," said Vittoria. "He will be sure to help you."

So the Duchess wrote to Don Ferrante; and when Don Ferrante's answer came, which was not

within a fortnight, he told her he was sorry to find she was embroiling herself again with her husband's relations; a contentious spirit was worse than a continual dropping: he feared she had had a little too much prosperity and petting: misfortunes were the lot of all, and it was vain to repine because a rose-leaf was doubled on our couch, &c., &c., &c. Think how many people were a great deal worse off, &c., &c., &c.

Clearly, there was no comfort to be had from Don Ferrante. So Giulia, getting another aggravating letter from Isabella, consulted the best lawyers in Naples; who advised her not to answer her, but to leave them to conduct the correspondence (for a consideration).

Then came so much parry and thrust, and tergiversation, and objurgation, and recrimination, that poor Giulia became seriously ill. Then the Marchioness of Pescara was very kind to her, and sat by her all day, and would have done so all night, but she fidgeted her to death, by what Giulia called preaching, though Vittoria only spoke what she meant for a word in season; and Giulia longed to tell her she would rather be nursed by her own maids.

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"Ah, Leila!" said Cynthia, as she knelt, fanning her mistress, "I wish we were all back at Fondi."

"Why do you wish that, Cynthia?"

"You would be better there, Leila. You would be under the care of Bar Hhasdai."

"Bar Hhasdai has no cure for worry, Cynthia."

"I think you would be better there, Leila."

"Cynthia! do *you* care for me? do you love me?"

Cynthia replied by repeatedly kissing the hem of the Duchess's garment.

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"Ah, it is all very well to make that dumb show; but do you really love me?"

"Yes, Leila, I love you. When the hound flew at me, you were bathed in my blood, and did not mind."

"Of course, poor girl, I could not help pitying you. By the bye, Cynthia—would you do anything that would make me better?"

"Try me, Leila."

"Well then, Cynthia—do tell me—frankly, as a friend—I'll forget I am your mistress—I will not punish you. *Did* you have any communication with Barbarossa?"

Cynthia's face changed. "Oh, Leila! how can you ask?"

"Well then, say no! It is so easily spoken."

"It is not easy."

"Easy or difficult, you *must* say."

Cynthia's obstinate look came on, which showed the case to be hopeless.

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"Oh, very well, Cynthia; then you do not love me, that is all." And the Duchess turned her face away.

"I *do* love you, Leila."

"No, I don't believe you."

Cynthia took her hand and wetted it with tears. The Duchess drew it away.

"I wish you would kill me, Leila."

"Don't tell such stories, Cynthia. You know it is not my nature to kill people; though there were persons wicked enough to say I had killed poor Muza, after cutting out his tongue, which you know he had lost before he ever came to me."

"I know it, Leila."

"Muza was perhaps sent back as a spy; though he pretended he had escaped. There are so many wicked people in the world that I do not know who to trust—I believe I shall end by distrusting everybody."

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"Oh no, Leila. Do not!"

"Why, how can I trust *you*? You have eaten of my bread and drank of my cup these two years, and you are no more *of* us than if you were a stone."

"I love my own people, I own," said Cynthia. "And so would you love yours, if you were exiled from them."

"I love mine without being exiled from them."

"But you would find you loved them still more if you were sold into slavery."

"If Barbarossa had taken me to Constantinople! Well, I believe I should. There is no making anything of you, Cynthia. You are a riddle. I believe I could love you if you were not so close. But you shut yourself up like a hedgehog. Sing me one of your Moorish songs—that one about Zelinda and Ganzul. Perhaps you may quiet my poor nerves."

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So Cynthia immediately began a long, wailing ballad, the Spanish version of which begins:—

"En el tiempo que Zelinda
Cerro ayrada la ventana
A la disculpa, a los zelos
Que il Moro Ganzul le dava."

Before she reached the happy reconciliation of Ganzul and Zelinda, the Duchess was asleep.

CHAPTER XIII.

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THE CARDINAL TEMPTED.

How fared it with Cardinal Ippolito, after he left Fondi? In a general way we may be pretty sure that he fared sumptuously every day, clothed in purple and fine linen; that he entertained a constant succession of noble, learned, witty, and intellectual guests; that a certain portion of broken victuals from his table was daily given to beggars full of sores at his gate; that he read the Greek and Latin poets a good deal more than the Old and New Testament; that he bought whatever pleased him in the way of intaglios, cameos, mosaics, ivory carvings, rare manuscripts, and paintings,—out of the revenues of the Church; that he now and then gave a ring, chain, or purse of gold to some poor author or artist,—out of the revenues of the Church; that he took part in high solemnities, and looked and acted his part well when relics were to be exhibited, or pontifical mass performed, or martyrs to be canonised.

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Did he believe in them, think you? Did he believe in "the most holy cross," "the most holy visage," the "sacred spear"? I very much doubt the poor Cardinal's faith in much holier things than these. He would have been very glad to possess the faith of that barefooted little contadina with the silver dagger in her hair, whom he saw pressing her lips so undoubtingly and affectionately to a dirty little box held by a still dirtier friar. To him it was all an extremely well got-up scene; interesting in an artistic point of view; painfully unreal whenever he came to think of it. He liked the thrilling music, the air heavy with incense, the various costumes and draperies, the heaps of church plate, the shrines encrusted with gems, the portraits of famous beauties with haloes and palms; but oh! they did not even touch his feelings; and as for his thoughts, his thoughts!—

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It seemed to him quite as hard to believe that the bread and wine on the altar were what they purported to be, as that the imprint of the Redeemer's face was stamped on the kerchief of St. Veronica. Sometimes he was ready to persuade himself he blindly believed all; at other times, he was too sadly sure he believed in nothing. Nothing but death!—and it was almost death to think of it. "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die!"

Well, but there was his old uncle, the Pope, who had a good deal more on his conscience than he had, and must be a good deal nearer that catastrophe than he was, he was so much older!—and how comfortably he took it all!—washing the pilgrims' feet, blessing the horses, borne aloft in that tottering seat between the two great fans of ostrich feathers, stretching out his fingers in continual benediction—the king—the vice-God of the hour—forgiving the sins of all the world—*he* seemed to get through it all very well—

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But, just as the Cardinal had reached this point, Pope Clement *died*—and how did the people show their sense of his holiness? He died on the 26th of September, 1534; just two months after the sack of Fondi; and during the period between his decease and the election of a successor, the contempt and hatred of the Romans showed themselves by the most outrageous insults to his memory. Night after night, his bier was broken and defaced. On one occasion his body was actually torn from its grave-clothes, and found in the morning transfixed with a sword. And there were those who scrupled not to say it would have been dragged through the streets with a hook, but for respect for Cardinal Ippolito.

All this was very terrible for Ippolito. Death, in all its grisly horrors, and without any of its holy and softening associations, was brought before him whether he would or no; with no sacrament of tears and blessings, no cherished memories of the last look, the last sigh; no death-bed sanctities.

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And then the new Pope, Paul the Third, was a Farnese. The Medici party had gone out, the Farnese party had come in; and Ippolito was looked on as an enviable pluralist, whose benefices the new Pope's friends would gladly share. Ippolito knew it was so, because it must be so: it would not be Roman human nature if it had been otherwise. And in the night, he would lie awake and think, "What a juggle, and a struggle, and a farce it all is!—What a seeming, and a sham!—Why did I ever accept this detestable hat? Why should I have been put off with it? Why should not I have been Grand Duke of Florence instead of Alessandro? I am of the elder branch, and any way I would have played my part better. O, Giulia, why would not you have me? It would have been better for both of us!" And he got into the way of fancying that all his faults were *her* fault.

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He was just in that state that he lay open to any temptation. And temptation is never long coming, when we are in that case. He was ready for anything that seemed to promise to put him in Alessandro's place; and there was a large body of banished Florentines, or *fuorusciti* as they were commonly called, who burned to dethrone the tyrant and abolish tyranny. Their views were larger and more patriotic than Ippolito's, for he only wished to transfer his cousin's power to himself: however, Filippo Strozzi, the richest and most crafty citizen in Florence, knew enough of both parties to think he could make them serve his own purposes.

Felippo Strozzi therefore opened his mind to Ippolito on the subject of getting rid of Alessandro, and found it easier to do than it might have been, because Ippolito was already a guilty man concerning his cousin—he had already been trying to induce the Archbishop of Marseilles to assassinate him. What churchmen!—That scheme had not answered, but his part was taken now; with a colour of patriotism in it; for he must keep his selfish views out of sight of the *fuorusciti*, or they would have nothing to say to him.

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The simplest way appeared to be to get Charles the Fifth to change the government of Florence by an act of his sovereign will; and then, no assassination need be in question.

This appeared so bright an idea to the Cardinal, that, without troubling himself to take counsel with his confederates, he sent a trusty messenger on his own account to the Emperor, to lay such a statement before him as would, he hoped, convince him of the justice and expediency of subverting Alessandro's government. But alas, the messenger brought back word that the Emperor would have nothing to say to it; the Cardinal had nothing to expect from him.

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On this, Ippolito had recourse to his bad adviser, Strozzi, and put it to him—

"What say you? Shall I, under these circumstances, please the Emperor by making up matters with Alessandro, and accept the ecclesiastical preferments which have, in that case, been offered me?"

"Please yourself," says Felippo, with his cynical smile. "I wouldn't, if I were you, but that's not my affair. Such a peace-making would doubtless be very acceptable to the Duke, as relieving him of a dangerous enemy; but it would be both injurious and disgraceful to yourself. At least, that's the way *I* take it."

"Here am I all at sea again, then," said the Cardinal.

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"You talk of a reconciliation as if it could really be made," pursued Strozzi; "whereas it would assuredly come to nothing: because such matters have already passed between you as that Alessandro would never really trust you; and this feeling on his part would make you, or ought to make you, equally distrustful of him. So that you never could live safely in Florence as long as he was in power there. And as to the appanages he has promised you, depend upon it, that as soon as his alliance with the Emperor was secured he would snap his fingers at you, and you might go whistle for them!"

"If you think *that*—" said Ippolito.

"I do think that, I promise you," said Felippo Strozzi. "I don't want to make differences between relations, not I; but if you ask me for my plain opinion, there you have it. He would take care to gain the ear of the Emperor so as that you should never have one of those benefices, for his cue will be to keep you down as much as he can."

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"Nay then—" said the Cardinal.

"Besides," continued Strozzi, "such a reconciliation would make you despicable in the sight of all the world; for every one knows your opinion of Alessandro, and would be quite aware that nothing but mere hope of profit could have brought you to make it up with him—they would never believe in any more honourable motive."

"Then again—" resumed he, seeing that Ippolito was in a painful state of vacillation, "by adopting a more spirited line of action, and uniting yourself with the *fuorusciti*, you would gain immortal honour and glory as the deliverer and true father of your country, *and would see your arms put up all over the city!*"

This last bait was too much for Ippolito to resist. His eye kindled, and he half started from his seat.

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"And this would even be your wisest course of action," pursued his cunning tempter, "should you feel inclined to make yourself absolute master of the state instead of liberating it, inasmuch as it would obtain such popularity for you in the first instance. All the old friends of your house are so disgusted and alienated by the conduct of Alessandro, that they would gladly transfer their allegiance to you. And *I* will undertake, if you will only be prudent, to make the *fuorusciti* espouse your cause. With the French money and favour which my influence can secure to you, you may be certain of success!"

Ippolito's breast heaved. It seemed "a good plot—an excellent plot"—though a voice in his heart made its stifled accents heard against it. And so, in evil hour, the decision was made; and he became the tool of this wicked man, who designed, through him, to wreak his own vengeance on Alessandro.

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But a bird of the air carried the matter to the Grand Duke; else how should he have heard of it? He, ready enough to fight conspirators with their own weapons, communicated secretly with Ippolito's steward, Giovan Andrea di Borgho San Sepolcro, and covenanted with him to do a certain deed for a certain sum of money.

Meantime, Strozzi negotiated with the leaders of the *fuorusciti*, who, knowing his character for craft and treachery, were not at all ready to meet him half way, and sometimes drove him to such desperation with their answers to his advances that he was almost minded to throw up conspiracy altogether, and retire upon his enormous fortune to Venice, and live quietly like an honest man. Well if he had!

The Cardinal, meantime, hearing that the Emperor was fitting out an expedition to Tunis, resolved to follow him thither, accompanied by certain of the *fuorusciti*, and lay his complaints

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before him in person.

No sooner had he decided on this step than he hastened his preparations for departure. He loved action and the bruit of arms: he would have made a pretty good soldier: probably a noted commander. To supply himself with the necessary funds, he broke up and sold all his plate, and borrowed ten thousand ducats of Felippo Strozzi. Having hired twenty horses for his personal attendants and four Florentines who were to accompany him, he started from Rome at the latter end of July, 1535, *en route* for the little town of Itri, near Fondi, where he purposed awaiting the vessel in which he was to embark at Gaeta.

The reason he meant to wait at Itri rather than Gaeta was that he believed Giulia to be at Fondi— in which he was mistaken. [Pg 186]

As he was in the act of mounting his beautiful mare, she fell beneath him, without any apparent reason; which was afterwards looked back on as an evil omen.

CHAPTER XIV.

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WHAT BEFEL BARBAROSSA.

The Emperor Charles the Fifth had been very indignant when he heard of the sack of Fondi, and the attempt to seize the Duchess. Some months afterwards, when Muley Hassan, whom Barbarossa had driven from Tunis, appealed to him for assistance, Charles, who was ambitious of military renown, resolved at once to rid the coast of a dangerous invader, and avenge an injured prince, by heading an expedition against Hayraddin.

The united strength of his dominions was therefore called out upon this enterprise, which he intended to increase his already brilliant reputation. As the redresser of wrongs, his cause was popular, and drew on him the applause of Christendom. A Flemish fleet conveyed his troops from the Low Countries; the galleys of Naples were loaded with the Italian auxiliaries, and the Emperor himself embarked at Barcelona with the flower of his Spanish nobility, and considerable reinforcements from Portugal. Andrea Doria commanded the Genoese galleys, and the Knights of Malta equipped a small but powerful squadron, and hastened to the rendezvous at Cagliari. [Pg 188]

All this mighty armament to hunt down a Lesbian pirate, the son of an obscure potter!

Hayraddin was, however, no contemptible foe. Ambitious and relentless, a skilful and a generous chief, his lavish bounties among his partizans made them his blind adherents: while his wondrous versatility had enabled him to ingratiate himself with the Sultan and his Vizier. It was therefore to be war to the knife between the Crescent and the Cross.

As soon as Barbarossa heard of the Emperor's formidable preparations, he called in all his corsairs from their different stations, drew from Algiers what forces could be spared, summoned Moors and Arabs from all quarters to his standard, and inflamed their fanaticism by assuring them he was embarking in a holy war. [Pg 189]

Twenty thousand horse and a considerable body of foot answered his summons, and drew together before Tunis. Hayraddin knew, however, that his greatest dependence must be on his Turkish troops, who were armed and disciplined in the European manner. He therefore threw six thousand of them, under Sinan, the renegade Jew, into the fortress of Goletta commanding the bay of Tunis; which the Emperor immediately invested.

Three separate storming parties attacked the fort; Sinan raged like a lion at bay: frequent sallies were made by his garrison, while the Moors and Arabs made diversions. But nothing could withstand the fury of the assailants; and a breach soon appeared in the walls of the fortress, which the Emperor pointed out to Muley Hassan. [Pg 190]

"Behold," said he, "the gate through which you may re-enter your kingdom!"

With the Goletta, Barbarossa's fleet fell into the Emperor's hands; and he was driven to extremities. Having strongly entrenched himself within the city, he called his chiefs to a council of war, and proposed to them, that before sallying out to decide their fate in battle, they should massacre ten thousand Christians whom he had shut up in the citadel.

Even his pirate chiefs were staggered at this proposal; and Barbarossa, seeing they would not support him in it, yielded the point with a gesture of disgust at their want of hardihood. Charles and his chivalry were meanwhile painfully toiling, under a blazing African sun, across the burning sands which encompass Tunis, without so much as a drop of water to cool their tongues: [Pg 191]

"Non e gente Pagana insieme accolta,
Non muro cinto di profonda fossa,
Non gran torrente o monte alpestre e folta
Selva, che 'l loro viaggio arrestar possa."

Hayraddin, sallying out upon them with his best troops, made a desperate onset, but was so vigorously repulsed that his forces surged back to the city, and he himself was irresistibly borne along with them like a straw on the tide.

Meanwhile, a pale girl, a Christian slave, who had been within earshot of the council, carried the report of Barbarossa's ferocious proposal to the keepers of the citadel. They were revolted at his cruelty, and her entreaties, backed by the clamours of the despairing wretches in their charge, prevailed on them to release the Christian prisoners and strike off their fetters. Forth came Tebaldo Adimari, the pride of Fondi; forth came many a grey-haired senator, illustrious cavalier, and venerable hidalgo, some in their full strength, others wasted with long captivity, but nerved at this moment to strike a blow for freedom. Unarmed as they were, they flung themselves on the surprised guard, and turned the artillery of the fort against Barbarossa himself as he and his discomfited troops poured back in disorderly retreat. O, fell rage and despair of the defeated pirate, late the sovereign of two kingdoms, as he now heard Christian war-cries defying him from his own battlements! gnashing his teeth, and cursing the comrades whose humanity compelled him to spare those who were now manning the walls, he sought safety in ignominious and precipitate flight.

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Then what a cheer arose, as the Christians saw the turbans in retreat, and themselves masters of the city! The Emperor was first made aware of the turn affairs had taken, by the arrival of deputies from Tunis, who brought him the keys, and piteously besought him to check the violence of his troops. In vain! They were already sacking the city, killing and plundering without mercy; and thirty thousand defenceless people were the victims of that day, while ten thousand more were carried away as slaves.

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It is said that Charles lamented this dreadful slaughter, and that he declared the only result of his victory which gave him any satisfaction was his reception by the ten thousand Christian captives, who fell at his feet, blessing him as their deliverer. In all, he freed twenty thousand slaves, whom he sent, clothed at his own expense, to their own homes; and they, as may well be supposed, made Europe ring with their praises of his goodness and munificence. It was a bright day for Fondi when Tebaldo Adimari returned! Though the Duchess was at Naples, and though Isaura was in her train, he had seen them both on his way home, and ratified his vows of love and constancy. The Duchess had promised to smile on their espousals, which were shortly to take place; and meanwhile his friends and relations got up a festa to welcome him, and there was church-going and bell-ringing, and eating and drinking, and dancing and singing, without any drunkenness, stabbing, or even quarrelling.

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If such was the public joy in a little town of four thousand people at the return of a young fellow of no mark or likelihood whatever, except that he was comely, merry, brave, ingenuous, with a good word for everybody and with everybody's good word,—it may be supposed what a stir the Emperor's arrival at Naples made, and how that pleasure-loving capital nearly exhausted itself in demonstrations of welcome. The mole, when he landed, was so crowded, that you may be sure a grain of millet thrown upon it would not have found room to reach the ground. Nothing was to be heard but bell-ringing, acclamations, and the thundering of cannon; nothing to be seen but gold, velvet, silk, and brocade, festoons of flowers, triumphal arches, processions, deputations, triumphal cars, prancing steeds, waving plumes, and bronzed cavaliers looking up at the balconies of fair women waving their handkerchiefs, among whom, rely on it, were Vittoria Colonna and Giulia Gonzaga.

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Charles, with his Spanish gravity ever uppermost, took it all very soberly; heard what people had to say, enjoyed it in his way, said very little himself, and in the proverb style; went to the cathedral, heard Fra Bernardino Ochino preach, and afterwards observed, composedly, "That man would make the stones weep!"—his own eyes being quite dry all the while. Also if anything inexpressibly funny were said, he remarked, "How very diverting!" but did not smile. He was best at business, and he entered upon Giulia's affairs.

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CHAPTER XV.

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MORE ABOUT THE CARDINAL.

Itri, the birthplace of the notorious Fra Diavolo, is a regular robber's-nest, picturesquely placed on the side of a lofty hill, and crested by a ruined castle.

In Ippolito de' Medici's time the castle was not ruined; and there was also a monastery, where he and his attendants were suitably entertained.

On the afternoon of the 2nd of August, after a meal which we should call luncheon, but which the early habits of those days distinguished as dinner,—succeeded by a moderate siesta,—the courtyard was all alive with preparations for a gallant riding-party, in the full heat and glare of the day. Groups of cowed and bare-headed monks stood curiously about, admiring the Cardinal's beautiful mare; and groups, too, of robber-like, shaggy-looking men, and bright-eyed women and girls with golden bodkins in their hair, hung about the gates and passed their comments on the cortége. The Cardinal came forth, talking to the Prior, whose pale, attenuated face and hollow eyes formed a notable contrast to the vivid colouring of his own healthy, well-fed countenance. He was within an ace of losing his good looks from too much eating and drinking. In dress, the Cardinal was superb, with a touch of the church militant. A smile was on his lip as he patted his mare and examined her trappings, saying,

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"She will not serve me that sorry trick again, I hope."

"Fear not, my Lord Cardinal," said his groom; and he threw himself into the saddle. The

Florentines also mounted their horses.

At this moment, Piero Strozzi stepped forward, saying, "This, from my father," with a meaning smile; and gave him a billet. [Pg 199]

This Piero was son of Felippo, and had something of the same cold, sly look.

The billet only contained these words: "All goes well." The Cardinal read it with a gay smile, and tossed it back to Strozzi.

"Good news to start with," said he to his companions, as they rode out of the yard.

"The sun can scarce be hotter in Africa than it is here to-day, I think," said Donati, one of the *fuorusciti*.

"Not a whit too hot for me; I enjoy it," said the Cardinal. "And the road is in our favour, for it is all down-hill."

"*Facile descensus*," said Capponi. "What a vibrating haze!"

"We shall enjoy the shade and the coolness at Fondi," said Ippolito. "You know I have undertaken to show you the fairest lady in Italy."

"And I maintain, beforehand, that she cannot be so fair as the Marchesana del Vasto," said Donati. [Pg 200]

"Allowing for difference of years, you mean," said Capponi. "The Duchess is a little past her prime."

"No such thing," said Ippolito quickly; and he used the spur, though there was no need. The mare sprang forward; the others were obliged to quicken their pace, and they had ridden a mile or two before another word was spoken.

Then the Cardinal slackened his speed, and began to talk of matters quite different; of the brilliant African campaign; of the likelihood of Muley Hassan holding his own, now he was reinstated; of the probable movements of Barbarossa; of the glut of Moorish slaves in the market, and so forth.

Arrived at Fondi, the Cardinal was preparing to alight, when the Duchess's grey-haired seneschal came forward and announced the mortifying intelligence that his lady was from home. [Pg 201]

It may be matter of surprise that the Cardinal should not have been apprised of her absence at Itri; but, in fact, he had learnt from what he had considered good authority, that she was to return to Fondi a little before this time, so that he had made sure of finding her at her castle.

His chagrin was extreme; not only because he had counted much on this visit, and had now no hope of seeing her before he sailed, but because he had given out to his companions that he possessed such perfect knowledge of her movements and such security of a cordial reception, that he was now open to their raillery, whether or no they spared it.

The seneschal, who knew him well, respectfully besought him to partake of such poor refreshment as the castle afforded; but the Cardinal was vexed, and rode off again, without compassion for man or beast. [Pg 202]

The Florentines looked at one another and shrugged their shoulders, but were too wise to remonstrate. They followed him, panting, across the steaming plain, where groups of cream-coloured oxen, cropping the rank herbage, looked up at them with dreamy, wondering eyes. When they reached the covert of cypress, poplar, and gnarled old olives, they loitered dangerously in the shade; and then, when well chilled, spurred on again, making themselves and their horses hotter than ever. And of course, as there was a descent all the way going, there was an ascent all the way back.

Arrived at Itri, the Cardinal, throwing himself from his horse, called loudly for iced water.

"My lord, you are very hot," said Giovanni Andrea, with seeming kindness. "Let me prevail on your Eminence to take this broth instead. It will be safer, and will repair your strength." [Pg 203]

The Cardinal took the broth, which was temptingly seasoned, and turned away with a sigh of relief. It was the early supper-hour, and the tables were already spread in the vaulted refectory, with abundance of better cheer than the Prior's larder usually afforded, some of which had been brought by his illustrious guest. And soon the hungry visitors took their places, and a long Latin grace was said, and the first course of confetti was served; and then the trencher of each man was filled with a large piece of meat that had been stewed with almonds and sugar.

And while this was being disposed of, the Cardinal's servants and rubicund lay-brothers covered the table with dishes of boiled meat, fowls, small birds, kids, wild boar, and other viands. And after this course, another was to succeed, of tarts and cakes covered with spun sugar. [Pg 204]

But before the banquet reached this stage, the Cardinal, who had scarcely spoken since he sat down to table, and who had frequently changed colour, suddenly exclaimed—

"Take me hence—I am strangely ill!"—

Every eye was upon him in a moment—many started from their seats—one or two noted gourmands feigned deafness, and helped themselves to the best. Bernardino Salviati, the Cardinal's personal attendant, caught him in his arms.

"Lean on me, my Lord Cardinal," said he. "We will bear you to your chamber."

"Treachery, treachery, Salviati!" murmured the Cardinal, almost inarticulately. "I am poisoned."

Giovanni Andrea, his other supporter, making believe to wipe the clammy dew from his face, held the handkerchief over his mouth, so as to muffle his voice. Above it glared the Cardinal at him fiercely. [Pg 205]

"Stand back!" said Salviati to him, roughly.

"My Lord Cardinal is delirious, he raves," said Giovanni Andrea, shrinking away.

"Prior! don't let that man come near me," said Ippolito, faintly.

The Prior, with solicitude, bent his ear to his lips, but only saw them move. The next instant they were contorted with a spasm.

By this time, they had carried him to his bed-room, which, though the best guest-chamber of the monastery, was furnished with ascetic plainness; a crucifix, a bénitier, and a wooden pallet, comprising most of its moveables, the meagreness of which contrasted strangely enough with the crimson satin cushions and mattresses the Cardinal had brought with him, and which belonged to his horse-litter.

"Air! air!" he said, feebly, as his friends pressed round him. [Pg 206]

"It will be well, I think, for all of you to leave the chamber," said the Prior, "except Salviati, Brother Marco, and myself. The Cardinal is in a high fever—I will open a vein for him."

"Not on your life," gasped Ippolito.

Meanwhile, all retired from the room except those whom the Prior had named.

"Marsh miasma, no doubt," said Donati, as he returned to the refectory. "There was a pestiferous vapour on the marshes to-day."

"And he would ride so fast," said Capponi, resuming his seat at table. "For my part, I wonder we are not ill too. I feel quite spent, and want something solid. I dare say a good night's rest will set him up again. He is of a full habit, like many of the Medici: it does not do for them to over-heat themselves. He takes everything too violently. What excellent beccaficoes! I prefer, however, thrushes stuffed with bergamots." [Pg 207]

While these two were composedly resuming their repast, there were others who did not even sit down to table, but stood apart in a little knot, anxiously debating whether the Cardinal had or had not exclaimed,

"Ahí! tradimento!"—

Anxious looks were cast towards the door; and once or twice an envoy was despatched to the sick room. The first of these came back with disturbed aspect, saying,

"His Eminence positively refuses to be bled, and the Prior is at his wit's end."

"What a pity!" said Strozzi. "There is no finer remedy."

"If it were any one else," pursued the first, "the Prior might take the matter into his own hands; but 'tis ticklish meddling with a Cardinal."

"Especially when that Cardinal's a Medici," said young Strozzi, with his father's unpleasant smile. "I'll go and see to it myself." [Pg 208]

Presently Strozzi returned, saying mysteriously,

"A courier is instantly to be despatched to the Pope, to beg of him a certain oil he possesses, known to be a sure antidote to all poison."

"Poison!" repeated they all.

"Can it be so?" said Capponi, wiping his lips, and rising from table. "This ought to be looked to."

"Nay, I say not that it *is* so, I only say that he thinks so," replied Strozzi. "At all events, I'm going instantly to despatch a messenger."

"Sad, sirs, sad!" said Capponi, looking his companions in the face, as Strozzi passed out.

"Nay, I expect not that it will turn out anything serious," said Donati.

"The Strozzi are tender on the subject of poison," observed Messer Giunigi, the fourth Florentine, under his breath, "since the death of Madonna Luisa." [Pg 209]

"Hush, sir, that touches me nearly too," gravely said Capponi, who was of kin to Madonna Luisa's husband.

Here the Prior came forth, very irate.

"The Cardinal will none of my assistance," said he, "and yet I have been held to know something. He is out of his head, and yet exacts obedience as if he were himself. Not content with obstinately refusing to lose blood, which would reduce the fever at once, and leave him as cool as a cucumber, he insists that a courier on a fleet horse shall instantly be despatched to Fondi for a certain Jew physician, named Bar Hhasdai, in whom he has more faith than in all the Christian leeches in Italy. The Jew hath never been baptised, therefore I cannot consent to send for him." [Pg 210]

"Nay, but," said Donati, solicitously, "if the Cardinal himself desires him, I see not how you are exonerated from having him, baptised, or otherwise."

"Send for him yourself, then," said the Prior; "you have plenty of your own people."

"That will I readily," said Donati, and he left the refectory for that purpose.

Those who remained behind, discussed the chances of the Pope's sovereign remedy arriving in time to be of use, and talked over the present political aspect of affairs in Rome, Florence, and Bologna; and of the various deaths of the Medici—which was almost as dreary a subject as their lives.

Meanwhile, there lay the poor Cardinal on his crimson satin mattresses, with his once ruddy, handsome face, now pale as ashes, pressed against a crimson satin pillow fringed with gold—nothing white, nothing cool and comfortable about him—there he lay, alternately flushing and chilling, torn with pain and languishing with sickness and faintness—and all the while ideas were rushing through his distracted head like clouds across a racking sky; and the one predominant thought was, "Treachery! treachery!" *Now*, he who had conspired, knew what it was to be conspired against. Oh! what a long, long night! He scarcely knew or cared that people from time to time looked in on him, stooped over him to hear if he breathed, touched his heart, his wrist, drew the coverlet closer over him, and went away. He scarcely knew or cared whether many were around him or only the faithful Salviati. His thoughts were following a fleet horse tearing along the road to Fondi, and striking sparks as it clattered down the lava paved street. Then he seemed to see the yellow-faced Jew, in a red night-cap, peering forth from one of the high, unglazed windows, as the courier shouted out his name—and behind him that Hebrew youth, whether son or acolyte, whom the Cardinal had seen at his door in passing, only a few hours before, with his pale, delicate face, and long, spiral curls, and look of sadness and submission. How singular that that face, only once seen, and seen for a moment, should have stereotyped itself on his mind as the type of Isaac about to be sacrificed!—and now he seemed to see him collecting medicines, while the old Jew hastily threw on his furred gaberdine and came down to the door.

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A din of wild church music seemed to come through the air, and to wax insufferably loud, and then die wailing away like a requiem over the Pontine marshes. And then, wild shouts of "Palle! palle!" and citizens, half-dressed and half-armed, rushing through streets, and some of them crying "Liberty! liberty at last!" And then there was an awful, crushing struggle at a cathedral door; and partisans were rallying round some one who was being borne into the sacristy; and blood was flowing and swords were clashing, and all the while an old pontiff at the altar, who seemed charmed into stone, was holding aloft the consecrated wafer, and the little tinkling bell was perpetually ringing till its shrillness seemed as if it would crack the tympanum of his ears; and sweet childish voices were singing:—

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"Et in terra pax! hominibus bonæ voluntatis!"

Then all melted away, and he was aware of a long, long suite of marble halls, their silk and gilding covered with dust; and of an old, old man with hoary hair borne through them in the arms of his servants, and saying with a sigh, as he wistfully looked around them:

"This is too large a house for so small a family!"

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After this stalked the dread pageant of his sins—sins of omission and sins of commission—sins that seemed so little once, and that seemed so crushing now—and as he moved his weary head, gibing faces seemed grinning and skinny fingers pointing at him round the bed; and when he closed his burning eyelids, he seemed to see them still, and to hear a voice say, "Son, thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things."

Oh! where were the sacraments of the Church? Where were they? Why did not some one think of them and bring them? Why had he not voice enough to ask for them? or strength enough to sign for them? And if he had, could they do him any good?

He knew not how time went. It seemed one long, long night, but in fact it covered a few days. Bar Hhasdai arrived at last—he had been absent when sent for. The Christian hangers-on scowled and spat on him as he passed. He looked loftily down on them, and he passed on; following the pale-faced Giovan Andrea. Pausing at the door, the Jew looked full at him.

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"I want a dog," said he.

"A dog?" repeated the steward, aghast.

"Yes: a four-footed one; not a Christian. And a roll of bread."

He passed into the sick room, where the faithful Salviati rose from the Cardinal's bedside. The Prior, who was telling his beads, drew his robe closer round him and retired as far from the Jew as possible.

Bar Hhasdai took up a lamp, and held it full in the Cardinal's unwinking eyes.

"He does not see it," said he.

He laid the palm of his hand against his heart: then taking some crumb of the roll the steward had brought him, he rubbed it against his own face and offered it to the lapdog Giovan Andrea held under his arm. The little dog immediately ate it.

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"What next?" thought the steward, in wonder. The Prior stood transfixed, curiously on the watch. Salviati's eyes had something imploring in them: the faithful fellow had not once left his master, and was now haggard with his long vigil.

The Jew silently took another piece of bread and rubbed the Cardinal's clammy face with it: then offered it to the little dog. The little dog smelt it, and resolutely refused to taste it.

"You see," said Bar Hhasdai, fixing the steward with his eye, "the Cardinal is poisoned." Then, to the Prior, "Let him have the sacraments of your Church."

Giovan Andrea reeled back, but recovered himself in time to escape falling.

"Wretch!" exclaimed Salviati, springing towards him in rage and despair; but Giovan Andrea glided like a serpent from beneath his grasp, and clapped the door after him. [Pg 217]

"He will not escape justice," said the Prior. "I have given orders that he shall be watched."

Salviati cast himself on his expiring master in a paroxysm of grief. At the sound of his wild cry, others rushed in: and the Jew quietly passed out. Extreme unction was administered.

Thus perished the brilliant Ippolito de' Medici, who would deserve more pity if he had not designed some very similar end for his cousin Alessandro. He was abundantly regretted; for his companionable qualities and lavish bounties had endeared him to a very large circle of friends, who did not scan his faults too closely; while his death was hailed with intense satisfaction by his enemies. Paul the Third made a frivolous excuse for not sending him the specific he so urgently requested. Probably it would not have saved him; but the animus of his Holiness was not shown to his advantage on the occasion. [Pg 218]

As for the wretched Giovan Andrea, he made straight for the outer gates when he quitted the Cardinal's chamber; but was there collared by a stalwart lay-brother, who, with the assistance of two of Ippolito's retainers, conveyed him to the lock-up room. Here he remained a short time, in full anticipation of being put to the torture; which too surely came to pass. At first he denied any guilt; but that most odious process being persisted in, his agony at length wrung from him the admission that he had administered poison to the Cardinal, having ground it between two stones, which he had afterwards thrown away.

Where had he thrown those stones?

Upon a rubbish-heap outside the buttery-window.

Search was made for the stones. They were found, with marks of some foreign substance upon them. They were shown him: he said they were the same. [Pg 219]

The Cardinal's retainers were so enraged with the wretch, that they were with difficulty restrained from falling upon him and putting him to death. Felippo Strozzi had strongly charged his son to deliver him out of their hands, that a regular judicial examination might take place at Rome, and Alessandro's guilt, as the prompter of the crime, be established.

The younger Strozzi, therefore, sent Giovan Andrea, under a sufficient guard, to Rome, where his examination took place; and in the first instance he confirmed his former confession, and stated that he had received the poison from one Otto di Montacuto, a servant of Duke Alessandro's, to be employed as he had used it.

Yet, after this, he denied *both* his former confessions, and, in spite of all that Strozzi could say or do, was actually let off! He thereupon went straight to Florence, and remained some days in the Duke's palace, openly under his protection. He then retired to his native place, Borgo di San Sepolcro, a little town under the Apennines, some forty miles from Florence. And here, after remaining in safety a few months, whether or no on account of any fresh proof of his crime, he was stoned to death in a sudden outburst of popular indignation. [Pg 220]

As for the wicked Duke, his employer, I shall only say that his murder was most horrible: so that Ippolito's death was amply avenged. We may all be very glad to have done with the subject.

CHAPTER XVI.

[Pg 221]

THE DUCHESS AND THE MARCHIONESS.

It was given out to the world that Ippolito had been carried off by fever, caught on the marshes during his hot ride to and from Fondi; and this filled the tender-hearted Duchess with grief, as she knew not but that, had she been at home, he might yet be alive. She dwelt with mournfulness on his long-cherished attachment, wept over his poems, recalled his brightest points, and even questioned herself whether she ought to have accepted him; but the answer always was no. And surely she was right; for whatever Ippolito's society-attractions might have been, and however his character might have been purified by household association with a better nature, his worse qualities would undoubtedly have cropped out as long as he remained an unconverted man. Might not she have converted him? Why, Vittoria, who knew her best, would have told you that, at this time, Giulia was not even converted herself. She was very sweet, very amiable and charming; but she had not the faith which saves. Vittoria, with her higher views and deeper nature, was almost out of patience with her sometimes. [Pg 222]

"What is it you want? What is it you need?" she would say to her; trying to rouse her to a nobler life. "I can tell you: you want the Holy Spirit; and He will come to you if you seek Him: but unsought, He is unfound."

"O Vittoria! why *will* you torment me so?" said Giulia, fretfully. "I want rest; I want peace."

"Rest and peace? Why, you have a great deal too much of both to be good for you; and as for your lawsuit, that is a mere mosquito-sting, that draws neither blood nor tears. Fie on you, Giulia! with all your advantages, you ought not to sit and wail about nothing. I think you loved Ippolito more [Pg 223]

than you say you did, or you would not give way so."

"I did not love Ippolito at all," said Giulia, nettled. "I suppose one may be sorry for a friend, without having been in love with him. You do injustice to the memory of my dear Duke, to suppose I could ever forget him."

"As to that," said Vittoria, "considering your good Duke's years and infirmities, it is difficult for any one to see why you should be inconsolable. I am sure I am quite ready to do justice to all his qualities of head and heart; but, if I am to speak sincerely, I must own that your deploring him in the way you have done has always seemed to me a little exaggerated."

"I never asked you to speak sincerely," returned Giulia; "and people generally make that a pretext for saying things that are disagreeable. As for exaggeration, nobody possessed of any feeling could consistently accuse me of having too much of it." [Pg 224]

"I am the last person to make an inconsistent accusation," observed Vittoria, "and my own irreparable and immense loss is too world-known for any one to say I want feeling. I think, cousin, there is no one in Italy, unless yourself, who has not compassionated me in having been bereaved of my beloved, adored Pescara, a man of infinite virtues, graces, and attractions; in war a hero, in wisdom a sage; in love and constancy a perfect phoenix,—reft from me, me wretched! in the very prime and flower of his life."

"Well, and I was very sorry for it," said Giulia, "as sorry as it was possible to be for a man I had never seen, because I could feel for *you*, cousin; and I went into the deepest mourning—"

"The outward garb has little to do with inward woe, Duchess," said Vittoria, severely, "else I had worn weeds for ever"—and she plunged into her pocket for her handkerchief. [Pg 225]

"Well, and so should I have done, Marchioness," said Giulia. And then they both burst into tears.

"Oh, Giulia," said Vittoria, in a stifled voice, after crying some time, "why *will* you try me so?"

"Why, you began," said Giulia. And then they embraced, like Brutus and Cassius; and Vittoria's good and kindly nature recovering its ascendancy, she said with her charming smile:

"I really thank you, Giulia, for upsetting me, for I have wanted the relief of a good cry for some time."

"You dear thing," said Giulia, kissing her—"that was just my feeling too."

So, after this little squall, there was bright sunshine. And as this was only a day or two before the 17th of August, when the Emperor was expected to land on his return from Africa, Vittoria proposed to Giulia that they should witness the procession together from the balcony of a friend's palace in the best situation. [Pg 226]

Giulia said half reluctantly, "I don't affect such worldly scenes much—"

"Nor do I, certainly," said Vittoria. "But yet I should like to show my loyalty to the Emperor; and the scene will not be a mere show, but will have a kind of historic interest; and will doubtless figure hereafter on the historic page. So that, if I go, surely you may."

"Ah, well, we will go together," said Giulia, who really liked the idea. So these two illustrious ladies were among the fairest of the fair whose eyes "rained influence" on the gay pageant; and, the same evening, the staid, sober Emperor left the banquet early, and sought out the widow of his brave though not blameless general, Pescara; and he liked her so well, that the following year, when he and she were in Rome, she was almost the only lady whom he condescended to visit. [Pg 227]

On the present occasion, Giulia was with her; and something happening to be said by the Viceroy, Don Pedro di Toledo, who accompanied the Emperor, about her roses having paled in consequence of her vexatious lawsuit, Charles inquired into it, and in his dry, succinct way, desired Don Pedro to see to it, and let the affair be adjusted. So, when the Emperor was gone, the Viceroy undertook the investigation of the rival ladies' claims; and the result was, that he advised the Duchess to be satisfied with her ample dowry, and the addition made to it by her husband.

This did not content Isabella, who laid claim to thirteen thousand ducats for pin-money, and required that a judicial disposition she herself had made should be declared void! She offered, as a set-off, to give up five hundred ducats per annum to Giulia; but again changed her mind. So that Giulia, nearly worried out of her life by this unreasonable woman, again appealed to the Emperor, who deputed a commission of three members of his council to give judgment as the case required. This unpleasant affair extended through great part of another year. [Pg 228]

Nothing brings out the unromantic features of human nature so unpleasantly as a lawsuit. Giulia was in a constant turmoil; and she lacked those leadings to a better life, which Ochino might have afforded her; for he had been summoned to Venice by Cardinal Bembo, who was anxious to hear him.

This cardinal was not a good man, though I suppose there are good cardinals now and then; however, he was at least a distinguished man and a great scholar. And being an epicure in pulpit eloquence, he wrote to Vittoria Colonna, begging her to use her known influence with Fra Bernardino, to induce him to preach at Venice during the ensuing Lent. Vittoria complied with his behest; and Ochino consequently went to Venice, where the impression that he made may be judged-of from the following passage in a letter from the Cardinal to the Marchioness: [Pg 229]

"I send Vossignoria notes of Fra Bernardino's sermons, to which I have listened with a pleasure I cannot express. Certainly, I never heard so capital a preacher, and I cannot wonder at your

estimation of him. He discourses in quite another manner from any one I have ever heard; and in a more Christian spirit; bringing forward truths of the utmost weight, and enforcing them with loving earnestness. Every one is charmed with him: he will carry away all our hearts."

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And again:

"I write to you, Marchioness, as freely as I talk to Fra Bernardino, to whom I this morning opened my whole heart. Never have I had the pleasure of speaking to a holier man. I ought to be now at Padua, on account of a business which has engaged me all the year, and also to get out of the way of the constant applications with which I am assailed on account of this blessed cardinalate; but I could not bear to lose the opportunity of hearing some more of his excellent sermons."

And again:

"Our Fra Bernardino, whom I must call mine as well as yours, is at present adored in this city. There is not a man or woman who does not cry him up to the skies. Oh, what pleasure! oh, what delight, oh, what joy has he not given! But I will reserve his praises till I see Vossignoria, and meantime pray God to prolong his life for the glory of the Lord and the good of man."

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What a pity that this enthusiasm was so short-lived! Ochino was soon afterwards chosen Director of the Capuchins. His influence over his brother friars was then great; and many of them, before they were well aware of it, became imbued with the reformed opinions. Purgatory, penance, and papal pardons crumbled and fell before his powerfully wielded hammer, the doctrine of justification by faith.

Side by side with him laboured Pietro Martire Vermigli, who possessed more scholarship, and who, while Ochino filled the pulpit, furthered the same cause by delivering lectures on the Epistles of St. Paul. Many monks, many students, many nobles attended these lectures. At length their tone became so different from that of the Church, that the Viceroy interdicted him from preaching and lecturing. But Pietro Martire appealed to Rome, and obtained the removal of the interdict.

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CHAPTER XVII.

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ISCHIA.

Giulia was recruiting her health, meantime, at Vittoria's charming island-home of Ischia,

"Where nothing met the eye but sights of bliss."

—where a graceful simplicity, indeed, reigned, but under the regulation of the purest taste,—where duties, softened into pleasures, filled up every hour; and where leisure, never degenerating into laziness, was alternately dedicated to poetry, music, and painting, to the enjoyment of the most exquisite beauties of nature, to the cultivation of the mind, and to offices of charity and devotion. Among the poets and eminent men who here "invoked the muses and improved their vein," and who helped to make this remote rock famous, were Musefilo, Filocalo, Giovio, Bernardo Tasso, and many others. Bernardo Tasso thus sang the praises of this charmed islet—

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"Superbo scoglio, altero e bel ricetta
Di tanti chiari eroi, d'imperadori,
Onde raggi di gloria escono fuori,
Ch' ogni altro lume fan scuro e negletto,
Se per vera virtute al ben perfetto
Salir si puote ed agli eterni onori
Queste più d'altre degne alme e migliori
V'andran che chiudi nel petroso petto.
Il lume è in te dell' armi; in te s'asconde
Casta beltà, valore e cortesia,
Quanta mai vide il tempo, o diede il cielo.
Ti sian secondi i fati, e il vento e l'onde
Rendanti onore, e l'aria tua natia
Abbia sempre temprato il caldo e il gelo!"

Nor did younger and gayer poets want younger and gayer beauties to inspire them than the two noble widows; for Vittoria's household comprised six or eight nobly-born girls who were being trained under her eye, and whom her conscientiousness prevented from turning over to the sole superintendence of the Mother of the maids.

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"You might take more interest than you do, Giulia," said she, "in the education of your damsels. It would do them good, and you, too."

"Ah, nothing could be more tiresome to me," said Giulia. "I am most happy to leave them to Donna Caterina!"

"I doubt, however," said Vittoria, "whether we have even the right to keep fellow-creatures about us, of like affections and passions with ourselves, without providing some legitimate outlet for them, or supplying them with sufficient motives for their restraint."

"My girls seldom go into passions," said Giulia; "and I should think it impertinent to inquire into their affections."

"Why now, you incorrigible Giulia, did not you tell me of your fits of suppressed laughter while you were overhearing (actually eaves-dropping) that love dialogue between Tebaldo and Isaura? and of your laughing at her to her face, afterwards, in the presence of the other girls?" [Pg 236]

"I gave her a pearl necklace," said the Duchess.

"Not till she married, months afterwards."

"Well, I own I let myself down on that occasion."

"As to letting yourself down, it is your keeping yourself up that I complain of—"

"O, what a beautiful butterfly!—"

"My dear Giulia, *don't* run after it and put yourself in a fever. You are not quite a child now!"

"No, but I was a child once; and when I was a child-Duchess of thirteen, I thought that if I did not keep my maids at a distance, they would not respect me. And my mother's word had always been, 'Never associate, child, with servants.'"

"Servants and slaves, that may apply to very well," said Vittoria, who had not surmounted class-prejudices, "but your maids-of-honour are well-born, and though for a time they occupy subordinate positions, eventually they will marry respectably, it is to be hoped." [Pg 237]

"And that hope is enough to enliven them, I suppose," said Giulia. "My dear Duke said to me, very soon after our marriage: 'Pargoletta!'—you know he loved to call me 'pargoletta,' or 'animetta,' or 'dolce alma mia,'—he said, 'Pargoletta, don't have much to say to your maids; they are light and frivolous, and will do you no good.' And I loved to obey him; and I love to obey him still, for he was a wise man."

"They might do you no good, but you might do them great good now," said Vittoria.

"O, my dear, that set have long married off, and had their portions—so many ducats, a bed, bedding, and ewer and basin."

"The new set, then—"

"Here's a strawberry, I declare," said Giulia, diving into the leaves on the bank upon which they were sitting. "Do have it!" [Pg 238]

"No, thank you. The—"

"I could no more preach and pray with my maids as you do, Vittoria, than I could fly!"

"Why not?"

"I should die of shame."

"Nonsense," said the Marchioness, laughing.

"I really should. It would be so ridiculous."

"Quite otherwise, I think, if you undertook it in the right spirit."

"But I never could. It is not in me. They would all begin to laugh—"

"They must be under very poor control, then," said Vittoria.

"Besides, it would be so uncalled for—it would take their thoughts off their proper work."

"What is their proper work?"

"To do vast quantities of embroidery and fine needlework." [Pg 239]

"Well, I think *your* proper work is to care for their souls."

"That's Fra Silvano's office."

"Does he fulfil it?"

"Not very well, I'm afraid. He chatters and laughs with them too much."

"I should like to see him chatter and laugh with *my* maids," said Vittoria, kindling. "He should not do so twice."

"Ah," said Giulia, after a pause—"I wish I were as good as you, Vittoria—"

"My dear soul, I am not good."

"You are a great deal better than I am. Such as I am, I am and ever shall be."

"Hush, we can none of us say that!"

"At any rate, there is no good thing in me, to impart to others. And the girls do very well as they are—they stick to their needles."

"What do they think of the while?"

"Of their needles, I suppose." [Pg 240]

"If they do, they are better than I am," said Vittoria, almost with a groan. "Oh, Giulia, don't believe it!"

"Well, I suppose nonsense of some sort may pass through their heads," said Giulia, rather

uneasily. "How am I to keep it out?"

"By putting something better in. Not merely by preaching and praying, but by supplying proper, innocent food for their imaginations and fancies. You know I read my girls pleasant tales and dialogues sometimes, and lend them books of poetry and history."

"Well, your girls are certainly better conducted than mine," said Giulia. "They giggle less."

"A canister with very little in it always rattles," said Vittoria. "I hate giggling."

"So do I; and, do you know, my dear Vittoria, that is one reason why I have so little to say to my maids." [Pg 241]

"It is the very reason why you should say the more. You should fill the canisters."

"I will try then," said the ingenuous Giulia, "when I return to Fondi."

She returned there very soon: and Vittoria Colonna went to Lucca; "in an unostentatious manner," says the old chronicler, "attended by only six gentlewomen."

Why she went to Lucca, except that it was just then rife with the Reformed opinions, and ready to throw off the yoke of Rome, the chronicler sayeth not. From Lucca she proceeded by easy stages to Ferrara, mounted on her black and white jennet, with housings of crimson velvet fringed with gold, and attended by six grooms on foot, in cloaks and jerkins of blue and yellow satin. She herself wore a robe of brocaded crimson velvet, with a girdle of beaten gold; and on her head a travelling-cap of crimson satin, well becoming her "trecce d'oro," and large, mild blue eyes. [Pg 242]

Arrived at Ferrara, she was delightedly welcomed by Duke Ercole and Duchess Renée. Here was a house divided against itself. The poor Duchess—highly intelligent and a little crooked—now in her twenty-ninth year, had been harshly dealt with by her husband, only a twelvemonth back, for harbouring and comforting those arch-heretics Calvin and Clement Marot; and was now kept very much in check by the terrors of the Church, though in heart as much a Reformer as ever.

To grace "the divine Vittoria," whose poetical fame was known all over Italy, and whose eulogist, Bernardo Tasso, was secretary to the Duchess of Ferrara, Duke Ercole invited the most distinguished literati of Venice and Lombardy to meet her. Oh, what a feast of reason and flow of soul! What reciprocations of compliments and couplets! What ransacking of heathen mythologies for metaphors and allusions! And then, in the retirement of the Duchess's closet, poor Renée could, with a full heart, ask Vittoria how things were going at Naples, whether Fra Bernardino were really as moving a preacher as was reported, and whether Juan di Valdés were sound on the doctrine of justification. [Pg 243]

And perhaps they had a snatch of serious reading together, and Vittoria might recite to her a few of her sacred sonnets, copies of which were coveted even by cardinals; and if the Duke came in and constrained them to change the subject, there was the clever little Princess Anne to exhibit, who was being educated, for the sake of emulation, with Olympia Morata. Certes, Vittoria was made much of! But the air of Ferrara did not agree with her health, and she was soon obliged to move southwards. Among the dreams and schemes of the hour, which were never to be realised, was a projected visit to the Holy Land. She would so like to see the holy places! [Pg 244]

"The wildest scheme!" young Del Vasto pronounced it, when a rumour of it reached him at Rome. He lost no time in hastening to his beloved friend, to dissuade her from what she had perhaps never seriously contemplated, and to induce her to be content with the Eternal City. And when she reached it, she was received with almost public honours—so proud was Italy of its "divine Vittoria Colonna!"

Here she found a circle of the most eminent men in Italy, hopefully awaiting the issue of Cardinal Contarini's conciliatory mission to the German Reformers; and it was trusted that, by wise concessions on the part of Rome, a fearful schism might be avoided. But when did Rome ever make wise concessions?

It was at this time that the friendship commenced between Vittoria and Michael Angelo, which was equally honourable to both; and we have his own word for it, that through her he was made a devout Christian. It was the crowning beauty of her life. [Pg 245]

Meanwhile Giulia was the prey of intense melancholy at Fondi. It expressed itself in joyless looks, in mournful tones, in neglected dress, in small austerities, in rising at out-of-the-way hours to tell her rosary, &c.

Her ladies united in declaring that she must be ill, and that the marsh miasma was answerable for it. So then Bar Hhasdai was sent for; and he advised change of air and *quantum sufficit* of generous red wine well spiced. She acquiesced in both prescriptions; and then indulged in a little doctors' gossip, that most healing balm. They talked over the Cardinal's death, and Bar Hhasdai said that, even if he had been sooner sent for, he did not believe he could have saved him.

"One cardinal the less, one saint the more," said Giulia. [Pg 246]

Bar Hhasdai looked sceptical. "Was he of the stuff that saints are made of?" said he.

"He was very generally liked," said Giulia.

"And so long as thou doest good unto thyself, men will speak well of thee," said the Jew, equivocally.

So she returned to her old quarters at Naples, where she had the satisfaction of hearing from Valdés, who immediately waited on her, that Ochino was again preaching with great acceptance. She had tried ascetic mortifications, on a small scale, without any beneficial result; and she now,

with a heart aching for a better life, and sick of the world's pleasures, which, after all, she had never much indulged in, resolved to prove whether enduring comfort might not be derived from the cross of Christ.

CHAPTER XVIII.

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A BETTER LIFE.

You may have seen an old print of Titus's Arch, in the foreground of which is an Italian lady of quality, with hoop, lappets, and fan, sailing to church, attended by her gentleman-usher. A stately man-servant in advance clears the way, two ladies-in-waiting follow their mistress at a respectful distance, and two or three more menials close the procession.

Something in this style did Giulia go to the cathedral. As she was returning from it one evening, accompanied by Valdés, her heart was full, and, after one or two ineffectual beginnings she said

[15] Vide "Alfabeto Cristiano."

"I have so much confidence in our friendship, Signor Valdés, that I feel as if I could speak to you on some subjects even more freely than to a confessor. If you are not pre-engaged, therefore, I would gladly tell you what is on my mind. Do I importune you?"

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"On the contrary, Signora," said Valdés, "I am honoured by your commands, and you well know there is no one I love better to serve."

"A truce, then, with compliments of every kind. I want to open to you my whole heart, for I am sure you will pity me. I am a prey to such constant dissatisfaction with myself and with everything around me, as cannot be described. I neither know what I wish, nor with what I should be contented. Hence, I cannot conceive anything that could be offered me capable of appeasing this inquietude and removing my confusion of mind. Many years have I felt thus: and of late you have given me reason to hope that if I would give ear to the preaching of Ochino I should be tranquillised. Alas, I find it quite otherwise! And though I admit that the fault may be mine rather than his, yet the disappointment is so bitter, that tears frequently come into my eyes through not knowing what to do with myself, nor what to lean upon."

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Saying which, her tone was so sad, and she looked so troubled, that the humane Valdés was filled with compassion.

"Say freely, Signora," said he, "whatever you wish to ask of me; and be assured that I will always expend in your service all that I know and am able to do."

"Tell me, then," said Giulia, "from what cause you believe this state of mind to spring, and how, if possible, it can be remedied, or whether it must be borne."

"You must first make me one promise," said Valdés.

"What can that be?" inquired the Duchess.

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"If I show you the way by which you may be relieved from your disquietude, you must promise to walk in it."

"Of course. Gladly!"

"Be very attentive, then, Signora, to what I am about to say. You know it is written that man is made 'in the image and likeness of God.' And you will also remember that St. Paul counsels the Corinthians to put off the old man with his deeds, that is, the sinful nature we have all inherited since the fall, and be clothed with the new man, who is created 'in the image and likeness of God.' From this it appears, that in such a degree as man retains in himself the image and likeness of God, in the same degree he apprehends and appreciates spiritual things in a spiritual life and conversation. Recognise this, and you will all at once perceive whence your disorder and disquietude of mind arise; because you will see that your soul is striving for restitution to the image of God, of which at present it is deprived. The remedy is in your own hands."

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"In my hands?"

"Yes! Because as soon as you determine to renew and restore within yourself the image and likeness of God, you will find peace, quiet, and repose."

Giulia drew a deep breath, and then said—

"How must I do this?"

"By withdrawing your affections from vain and transitory things, and fixing them on those which are spiritual and eternal. Your spirit thus finding its proper aliment, will always be content and cheerful, and here in this present life will begin to taste of that felicity which it expects to enjoy for ever in the life eternal. To this happiness only the real Christian can attain."

"As for that," said the Duchess, "I know many persons who have as much, and perhaps more, cancelled the image of God than I have, who are yet perfectly content and happy."

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"Such persons," returned Valdés, "have low and vulgar minds, and can therefore suffice themselves with mean and frivolous objects that could never satisfy a refined and generous nature like yours.... I am not at all sorry that you should be troubled in the way you have

described, because it shows that the preaching of the Gospel is producing its first effect on you.... There is nothing in this world that could give me so much pleasure as to see you walking in the path of life, for I hold it for certain that, once in complete union with God, you would outstrip many who are now saints in heaven."

"I desire to do so," said she, softly.

"Then why don't you do what you desire?" rejoined Valdés.

"Because I don't know how."

"Force, force, Signora! force is the one thing wanting. 'The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.'"

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"Lead me by the hand, then," said she, "instructing me in those footsteps by which I believe you have walked."

"You want me," said Valdés, "to show you some royal and ladylike road by which you may get to God without turning away from the world. But, lady, no such compromise can be made. Have you ever crossed a running stream?"

"Yes, many times."

"Do you not remember how your head swam if you looked at the flowing water, but how steady it was if you fixed your eyes on the opposite shore? Thus, with God and the world, endeavour to keep the view of your soul fixed and nailed with Christ on the cross. And if at any time, through want of care, your eyes are diverted to the things of this world, return, return, Signora, as quickly as possible, to fix them on Christ crucified; and all will be well. You know the human heart is naturally inclined to love. It must either love God and all things for God, or it must love itself and all things for itself. He who loves God, performs everything he does for Him. And thus, if he loves anything besides God, he loves it for the sake of God, and because God wills it so. And then his good works please and are acceptable to God, because they spring from love. Agreeable to this is what St. Augustine says—'Good works follow in them who are already justified, and do not go before in him who has to be justified.' You know how you yourself estimate what a person does in your affairs when you know you owe not his good services to the affection he bears you, but to some other motive."

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This dialogue, which had been begun in the open air, was now being carried on in the Duchess's parlour. She sat in a high-backed, richly carved chair, looking out through the balconied window, on the bay of Naples, with streaks of summer lightning now and then illumining the sky, and the lurid fires of Vesuvius glowing in the distance. Valdés sat on a stool a little apart.

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"Since you wish me," said she, after a pause, "to make the love of God my prime motive, and, next to it, the love of my neighbour,—well then, I will do so!—but mention, if it please you, some rule by which I may know and understand what it is I ought to do; because I wish to give myself up to the love of God, even so much so as to deprive myself of your favour, and that of a hundred others like you."

"No, Signora, no! you can never do that!" said Valdés, fervently: and he then sketched out for her the outline of a Christian life, not circumscribed within slavish bounds, but capable of adaptation to time and place, sex and degree, based only on the immutable principle of loving God above and in all things, and one's neighbour even as one's self. It was a memorable evening for Giulia. Her cheeks were wet with tears, but they were the sweetest she had ever shed. They took no note of time, but prolonged the interview till night.

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When they parted, she said to him:

"I shall never forget this conversation!"

"And I," said he, deeply moved, "shall remember it always."

"Oh, that I could preserve every word you have spoken! Do you think you could commit the substance to writing?"

"Undoubtedly, if you wish it."

"I do wish it, most earnestly. And pray for me, pray for me, dear friend, that your words may not only sink into my heart, but take root in it, and bring forth fruit abundantly."

"I will, indeed, Signora; but, above all, fail not to pray for yourself, that the love of God may abound in you yet more and more."

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"Never knew I till now what that love was! I have heard tell a thousand times of this going out of a person's self to enter into God, but never, in all I have heard, was it made comprehensible."

"You are so much the more under obligation to love God, since He has preserved you so long in this world as to come to know this which till now you have not understood."

"You are right. May it please God that I know how to profit by it."

She gave him her hand. He kissed it with the utmost reverence: then, raising his eyes heavenwards, uttered a short, fervent prayer for her confirmation in the knowledge and love of God.

When he was gone, she covered her eyes with her hand, and tears slowly trickled down her cheeks. Almost unconsciously, she sank on her knees and murmured—

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"O, my God! teach me to be what Thou wouldst have me to be, and then enable me to do what

Thou wouldst have me to do! Form in me Thine own image and likeness, for Christ's sake!"

A strange calm and sweet peace took possession of her soul.

When Valdés presented himself to her, a few days afterwards, he brought her his manuscript version of the substance of their dialogue, written in his native Spanish, which was nearly as familiar to her as Italian, seeing that it was continually spoken by Vittoria Colonna and others of her familiar acquaintance. The faithfulness with which he had recalled the vivacity of her rejoinders showed how deeply they had interested him, and if his own speeches were less closely reported, it was chiefly because he had taken the opportunity of extending them even at the price of weakening their spirit.

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"Here," said he, "you have what you required of me; and I have called it the Christian Alphabet, because, in fact, it contains but the A B C of Christian doctrine. Believe in nothing I have here set down that you cannot bring to the test of Scripture. And do not content yourself with this Alphabet, or with any mere writings of men, but drink of the pure water of life at its source. May Christ become the peaceful possessor of your heart, in such a manner as that He may absolutely and without contradiction rule and regulate all your purposes. When this is the case, you will not feel the want of anything whatsoever in this life to give you contentment and repose."

She took the book with solemnity, and promised compliance with his wishes. This singular little work, of which, till lately, it was not known that there was a copy extant, does not profess to be more than what Valdés called it, and confines itself to inculcating the formation of the Divine image in the soul, if haply it might find Him, without attempting to attack the prevailing corruptions of the Church. In fact, this remarkable layman, who set so many Reformers forward on the path of martyrdom, did so by inculcating a few great truths, rather than by pulling down strongholds of error; and a certain class of his disciples eventually brought discredit on him by veiling Reformed opinions under the punctilious observance of Romish practices. But not of these temporising spirits were Carnesecchi, Flaminio, or Vergerio; all of whom were of the school of Valdés.

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CHAPTER XIX.

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REST AND PEACE.

When the structure is built, the scaffolding is removed: when we are raised up to Christ, our earthly props are often knocked away.

Ochino was soon to leave Naples—Valdés was soon to leave this earthly world. For a little while the Church had rest: and then burst out a furious, fiery persecution. Its burning annals have no place in my story; but I will annex a chapter about it as an Appendix, for those who will not or cannot refer to the original sources.

An advance had taken place in Ochino's opinions, which, for a time, was felt rather than understood by his hearers. He appealed directly to the Scriptures in support of his doctrine, and bade them search for themselves. In spite of his boldness, he not only was allowed to continue to preach in the Cathedral, but, in a chapter held at Naples in 1541, was re-elected General of the Capuchins.

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His departure from the Church of Rome was detected, however, by the jealous eye of Cardinal Pole, who wrote to Vittoria Colonna, urging her to beware of his influence, and even exacting from her a promise, which no woman of independent spirit would have given, that she would not read any letter addressed to her by Ochino, without consulting him or Cardinal Cervini. Vittoria gave this promise, and afterwards redeemed it by transmitting to Cardinal Cervini, not one letter, but a packet of letters written to her by Ochino; observing on them, in an accompanying note, "I am grieved to see that the more he attempts to excuse himself, he condemns himself the more; and the more he believes he shall save others from shipwreck, the more he exposes himself to the deluge; being out of the ark which alone can save."

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Vittoria was at Rome, the head-quarters of intolerance, attending Fra Ambrogio's lectures in the church of San Silvestro, and sending her servant, after the sermon, to Michael Angelo, saying, "Tell him that I and Messer Lattanzio are here in this cool chapel, that the church is shut and very pleasant, and ask him if he will come and spend the morning with us." And when he came, their talk was not of polemics, but of painting, and of her building a convent on the slope of Monte Cavallo.

Vittoria, having put her hand to the plough, had drawn back; but Giulia had chosen the better part, and has attained the honour of being stigmatised in Romish records as "suspected of heretical pravity."

Oh! how she wept when Valdés died! They were tears of sweet and pure affection, unmixed with bitterness or gloomy foreboding, for he had been called, at the second watch, to his rest: and she had now a good assurance of following in the same luminous track, upheld by the same right hand, straight up to heaven, without the intervention of a fearful purgatory.

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He was called away in the strength of his manhood, for he was little more than forty, and his twin brother is lost sight of about the same time. Lovely in their lives, in death they were not long divided. Peaceful, natural decline removed them from the persecutions that awaited their followers.

It is not hard to divine his last admonitions to Giulia. "Search the Scriptures, for in them we know that we have eternal life. Pray, dear Signora! pray! As our Lord prayed on the mount, the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment became white and glistening! Doubtless, whenever *we* pray, the expression of our countenance is altered in the sight of God, if not of man; and our raiment, the righteousness of Christ, becomes white and glistening. Oh, what an incentive to prayer! St. Matthew and St. Luke, you will find, in narrating the transfiguration, do not give us the preface—'*and as he prayed.*' But how important an addition it is! What a blessing that prayer drew down! It drew prophets and saints from heaven!"

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"Valdés, dear friend! Would that my prayers might hereafter draw *you* down from heaven to comfort me! Yet no; I recall the selfish wish. Rather let me fancy you calling, 'Come up hither!'"

"Fancy our Lord so calling you, dear Signora, and it will be mere fancy no longer. All my teaching will have been in vain, if you covet human rather than divine sympathy and help."

"But you have been to me as a brother."

"There is a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother, Signora. Come, give me a text, ere you leave me, to dwell upon when you are gone."

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"Ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace."

"God grant it! And here is one for you, whose time has not yet come to be led forth. 'Behold! I have refined thee, but not with silver'—(not in the same way, that is; not with mere physical heat)—'I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.' See! there is something that escapes us at first. God not only says He has tested us, but that He has *chosen* us. O, blessed to be the chosen of the Lord——"

"Valdés, I seek Him, but I know not that I have yet found Him——"

"Signora! 'let the heart of them rejoice that *seek* the Lord.'"

While masses were being sung and said for the soul of Cardinal Ippolito, the spirit of Valdés departed without a sigh. "For so He giveth His beloved sleep." But were Giulia's affections, which had been gradually refining, then left without a human object? No. By the will of his paternal grandfather, her nephew, Vespasiano, the little Duke of Sabionetta, came into her charge; and the education of the dear little boy, now eight years old, became her care. She procured the best and most enlightened tutors for him, in Tuscan, Latin, and Greek; and despatched an envoy to Charles the Fifth, to secure for him the investiture of the state of Lombardy, and to supersede its administrators by Don Ferrante and Cardinal Ercole Gonzaga.

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This young boy was trained up by her in the paths of virtue and godliness; and lovingly did he repay her pains. He grew up a fine character, distinguished for liberality and intelligence; and to him the Jews owed the licence for their printing press at Sabionetta. When he died, in 1591, the line became extinct.

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Besides superintending Vespasiano's education, the Duchess devoted herself to visiting the sick in the hospitals, and relieving the poor with her own hands. She shunned the company of the idle and frivolous, and cultivated the friendship of the wise and good. She lived to a ripe old age, shining more and more unto the perfect day—a light in a dark place, during an age of gross corruption—unsullied by the breath of slander, and respected, in spite of her averred 'heretical pravity,' by the Romish Church.

The faithful old maggior-domo, Perez, wrote thus to Vespasiano, on the 19th of April, 1566:

"It appears to me that I should fail in my duty, as a servant for twenty-one years together, towards the deserving memory of the illustrious lady, my Lady Donna Giulia di Gonzaga, your aunt, if I did not offer to condole with your Excellency on her death.

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... "Her illustrious ladyship died, as you will have heard by letter from Magnifico Modignano, and from M. Federigo Zanichelli to-day, between twenty-one and twenty-two o'clock. She made an end conforming with her most holy life, continuing sensible to the moment when her sainted spirit left the body. Her will has been opened, and you will have learnt from the before-mentioned Modignano and Zanichelli, that your Excellency is left absolute heir of her property, deducting certain legacies; the will being very different from one executed seven years ago."

To the aforesaid Perez she left an annuity of a hundred ducats: to Caterina, her maid, two hundred ducats down, and a bed and bedding. To Petrillo, whom she had brought up in her house, a thousand ducats; or, in case of his death before he were of age, half that sum to his father and mother. To Metello, her page, a hundred ducats down. To the brother of her former maid, Caterina Rosso, and to his two children, a hundred ducats each, in remembrance of her services. To her chaplain, twenty ducats. To Madonna Antonia, her lady's-maid, twenty ducats and her salary. To two little girls assisting in the kitchen, ten ducats each, besides their wages. To all the house-servants, their expenses for a month.

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Also, remembrances to the nuns of Santa Clara, and to certain officers of the Hospital for Incurables.

Also marriage portions to sundry young women, and legacies to her physicians.

Also legacies to four hospitals.

This remarkable entry was made——

"I leave Cynthia, my slave, to the said Vespasiano my heir, whom I direct to take her to his state of Lombardy; and, when he has come to the truth of what I wished to know from her, to give her in marriage in that province, with two hundred ducats currency as dowry, and to make her free and set her at liberty."

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And, on re-consideration, towards the close of the will,—after leaving a legacy to her undutiful daughter-in-law, and to her sister, a nun,—

"If ever any person be found who may have given me offence in any manner whatsoever, I freely pardon them, and beg my heir not to bear any resentment. I also order and bind my said heir that he use no constraint or severity towards the said Cynthia;—nor am I careful that he should learn from her what I said before that I wished to know; but that he shall make her free and set her at liberty, and give her in marriage in the province of Lombardy, as I before said."

If looks could kill, would not the stubborn, impenetrable Cynthia have been annihilated by the glances that were given her by the rest of the Duchess's women, when this testamentary disposition transpired? Had they the concentrated power of burning-glasses, she would have borne them just as stoutly. All her life she had been sinning and inly repenting; but, to draw from her one word she did not choose to speak—no! that they should not! *She*, an Abencerrage, to be treated like a slave? She had no feelings in common with her captors: she hated their race, and despised their creed. She only made an exception in favour of the Duchess; but the Duchess did not understand her: nobody understood her. Oh! how hackneyed a complaint it is, that we are not understood!

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So, although Cynthia had shed sincere tears for her mistress, she felt a gloomy glory, when she heard the first clause relating to herself, in thinking that the more the young Duke insisted on her telling, the more she would never mind. But when she found her gentle mistress had retracted that command, and left her mentally and bodily at liberty—she stole away to a solitary place, and there shed big tears, beating her breast, and saying,

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"O Leila, Leila! You loved me!—and indeed I loved you!"



APPENDIX.

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My story is ended—but, as it is based on Truth, I hope few who have read the foregoing pages with any pleasure, will be without some interest in the subsequent progress of the Italian Reformation.

Stifled in its infancy, it is now re-awakening into life; and though it as yet only numbers its open converts by hundreds, yet, where the Bible is now freely read, it cannot be but that Truth, which is great, shall eventually prevail.

The following sketch, chiefly abridged from McCrie may be acceptable to those who cannot refer to his History of the Reformation in Italy. I have, however, likewise drawn from other sources.

It was in 1542 that the court of Rome first became seriously alarmed at the progress of the new opinions in Italy. Cardinal Caraffa, who afterwards became Pope Paul the Fourth, laid before the sacred college the discoveries he had made of their spread in Naples and many other parts. It was resolved to proceed against some of the leaders, especially Ochino and Peter Martyr Vermigli. Ochino, learning that his death was determined on at Rome, hastily fled to Ferrara, whence, being assisted by the good Duchess Renée, he escaped the hands of the armed men despatched to apprehend him, and reached Geneva in safety.

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This flight was considered very cowardly by the resolute disciples he had left behind; and, indeed, Ochino's story would read much better if he had remained to share their fate, for there is a great falling off in his subsequent history.

As for Martyr, who had parted with him at Florence, he took refuge in Zurich, whence he wrote back to those whom he had left to weather the storm, advising *them* by all means to stand by the sinking ship! Seeing the wolf coming, he and Ochino left the sheep, and fled; no wonder that the wolf scattered the sheep.

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The result was this. Many of Ochino's friends were apprehended, and some of them driven to recant: and eighteen monks of Peter Martyr's monastery were thrown into prison. Before the year was out, eighteen more of them escaped to Switzerland. Yet the little church that was in Lucca kept its lamp burning twelve more years.

Celio Curio was another leading Reformer. Receiving private information that he had better consult his safety, he sought refuge in Lausanne. A few months afterwards, he stole back to fetch his beloved wife and children; but was tracked by the familiars of the Inquisition. He was dining at an inn, when a captain of the Papal Band entered, and commanded him to surrender. Celio rose from table, the carving-knife still in his hand; the captain involuntarily drew back—seeing which, Celio, still grasping the knife, and assuming a look of great determination, walked deliberately out of the room, passed through the armed men at the door, took his horse from the stable, and made off.

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The Inquisition had been introduced into Italy at its first establishment in the twelfth century, but was so repugnant to the free states, that it was confined to the Order of St. Francis. Bishops might take part with the inquisitors in the examination of heretics, but had no power to inflict punishments. In 1543, however, Paul the Third granted the title and rights of inquisitors to six cardinals, with full power to apprehend and imprison suspected persons of whatever rank: and the operations of this court gradually extended over Italy, in spite of great resistance. This was decisive of the unfortunate issue of the movements in favour of religious reform. Numbers of Reformers fled from the country: others remained to abjure or die for their faith. A formulary was drawn up, to which academicians were expected to subscribe, and this produced a great excitement.

In 1545, proceedings were commenced against Felippo Valentino, a young man of great promise, at Modena, suspected of heresy. Hearing that an armed force was coming to apprehend him, he escaped by night, leaving his books and papers behind, which, being examined by the Inquisitors, brought many of his friends into trouble. Next day, an edict was published, forbidding any to have heretical or suspected books, or to dispute publicly or privately on any point of religion, under the penalty, for the first offence, of a hundred crowns of gold, or, if unable to pay that sum, of the strappado. For the second offence, two thousand golden crowns, or banishment. For the third, death.

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Valentino and Castelvetro were cited to appear at Rome. The popular feeling was so strong for them, that the Duke of Modena was petitioned to intercede with the Pope, that the trial should be suspended; which he declined. Valentino and Castelvetro, not answering the citation, were excommunicated. The latter escaped to Ferrara, thence to Geneva, and finally settled at Chiavenna. What became of Valentino we are not told. He was gifted with an extraordinary memory, and could correctly repeat a sermon or lecture after hearing it once.

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Another distinguished sufferer for the Truth was Olympia Morata, who did not indeed seal her testimony with her blood, but who was driven from home and country. Celio Curio had found refuge in her father's house in Ferrara, about the time that Olympia went to reside at the Ducal Palace, in order to inspire the little Princess Anne with emulation in her classical studies. Here, her life was too gay and worldly to be good for her.

"Had I remained longer at court," she afterwards wrote to Celio Curio, "it would have been all over with me and my salvation. For never, while I remained there, did I attain the knowledge of ought high or heavenly, or read the Old or New Testament."

Yet she had two female friends of more than average merit—Francesca Bucyronia and the Princess Lavinia della Rovere. Gifted and pure-minded as they were, these interesting girls as yet only cared for the things of this present life, and philosophy, falsely so called.

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Olympia was summoned from court by the mortal illness of her beloved father; and, in the wholesome discipline of the sick-room, received lessons of invaluable worth. He died, reposing on her promise to supply a parent's place, as far as possible, to her little brother and her three young sisters, and to minister with filial devotion to her sickly mother.

It was a great charge, but she struggled bravely with her difficulties. The great questions at issue between the Reformers and their foes addressed themselves, also, to her attention, more forcibly than heretofore; connected as they were with the fate of one in whom her friend, the Princess Lavinia, took deep interest. A young man, named Fannio, was consigned to the dungeons of Ferrara, for adhering to the reformed opinions. To his wife and sister, who came to see him in prison, he said, "Let it suffice you that, for your sake, I *once* denied my Saviour! Had I then had the knowledge which, by the grace of God, I have acquired since my fall, I would not have yielded to your entreaties. Go home in peace!" Weeping, they went. He lay two years in prison, "to the furtherance of the Gospel," inasmuch as "his bonds in Christ were manifest in all the palace." Faithful friends resorted to him thither; among them were Lavinia and Olympia. The peril of their visits perhaps added a little zest to the impression of his teaching. In that gloomy cell, he and they and a little handful of the faithful, prayed, and read the Scriptures, and broke bread, and sang hymns, just as in the early times.

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When it was found that many persons of rank, besides Lavinia, stole to these meetings, while his fellow-prisoners were so wrought upon by his heavenly-mindedness that they declared they had never known what true liberty and happiness were till they found them in a prison—Fannio was put into solitary confinement.

Though visitors were rigorously excluded, he reached them with his letters; notwithstanding the repeated change of his gaolers. With what intense interest must Lavinia and Olympia have pored over these letters! In 1550, Fannio was brought to the stake, and, being first strangled, was committed to the flames. He was the first of the Reformers who laid down his life for his faith.

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Olympia, meanwhile, bereft of court favour, led a troubled and painful life. She wrote to Celio Curio—"After my father's death, I remained alone; abandoned by those who ought to have

supported me. My sisters were involved in my misfortune, and only reaped ingratitude for the devotion and services of years. How deeply I felt it, you may readily conceive. Not one of those who had been our friends in former times had now the courage to show the least interest in us." She knew and he knew, indeed, that the Princess Lavinia was a noteworthy exception.

This cheerless loneliness was broken by the constancy of a young Bavarian student of medicine, named Grünthler, who had already offered his hand to her and been refused. He now renewed his addresses: his devotedness touched her heart, and she accepted him. They were married very quietly in 1550. "Neither the resentment of the Duke," she wrote to Curio, "nor all the miserable circumstances which surrounded me, could induce him to abandon his desire to make me his wife. So great and true a love has never been surpassed."

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Leaving her under the protection of Lavinia, Grünthler repaired to Germany to find a home for her, where they might at least enjoy freedom of conscience.

"Your departure," Olympia wrote to him, "was a great grief to me, and your long absence is the greatest misfortune that could befall me. I am always fancying you have had a fall, have broken your limbs, or been frozen by the extreme cold. You know what the poet says—

"Res est solliciti plena timoris amor."

"If you would alleviate this tormenting anxiety, let me know what you are about; for my whole heart is yours, as you know full well."

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Grünthler was so long finding what he wanted, that his good friend, George Hermann, advised him to fetch his wife and live with him at Augsburg, till something should turn up—which he did. Olympia's grief was great at parting with her mother and sisters, whom she had little hope of ever seeing again: her brother Emilio, eight years of age, she took with her. Thus Italy lost one of its most distinguished women.

Once settled in Germany, she was very happy. "We are still," she wrote, "with our excellent friend, and I am delighted with my home here. I pass my entire day in literary pursuits—*me cum Musis delecto*—and have no cares to draw me away from them. I also apply myself to the study of Holy Writ, which is so productive of peace and contentment."

The occupation she chiefly found for her pen was translating the Psalms of David into Greek verse. These her husband used to set to music, and the singing of them formed the evening amusement of their little circle.

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After residing some months with George Hermann, they removed to another friend, John Sinapi, a good physician who had married Olympia's early companion, Francesca Bucyronia. At length they obtained a humble home of their own at Schweinfurth on the Maine. And here they dwelt usefully and happily till war and pestilence raged around them. Schweinfurth was sacked: Olympia fled from it barefoot, in worse plight than Giulia Gonzaga, for she had no horse to carry her to the nearest refuge, ten miles off. "I might have been taken," she said, "for the queen of the beggars."

At length they reached Erbach, where the good Countess received her like a mother, and nursed her through her sickness. But Olympia never recovered from the effects of that fearful flight; and an early death crowned her beautiful and exemplary life.

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The persecution which raged against the humbler confessors in Ferrara, failed not to attack the Duchess herself, though the daughter of a King of France. It was not till she had endured a short imprisonment that she was intimidated into concealing her convictions. On the death of the Duke, she returned to France, where she made open profession of the reformed faith, and afforded shelter to its confessors.

In the Venetian states, the persecution raged with great violence. Francesco Spira, a lawyer of Padua, died in such agonies of mind at having been induced, by the terrors of the Inquisition, to recant, that Vergerio, the converted bishop of Capo d' Istria, who was present at his death, was greatly affected by it. "To tell the truth," says he, "I felt such a flame in my breast, that I could hardly help going to the legate at Venice, and crying out, "Here I am! where are your prisons and your fires?" Instead of this, he sought refuge among the Grisons.

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The way of putting the Venetian martyrs to death was not by fire but by water. At dead of night, the prisoner was taken from his cell, and put into a gondola, attended by a priest. He was rowed out to sea, beyond "The two Castles," where another boat was waiting. A plank was then laid across the two gondolas, upon which the prisoner, heavily chained to a stone, was placed. On a given signal, the two boats paddled different ways.

The first martyr who thus suffered was Giulio Giurlanda. When set on the plank, he calmly bade the gondoliers farewell, and, calling on the Lord, sank into the deep.

Antonio Bicetto, of Vicenza, followed his example, though urged to recant by the most tempting bribes. Space would fail if I undertook to recount all who in their turn were faithful unto death. Others escaped; and there was not a city of note in Italy that did not swell the list of fugitives. This shows how widely the reformed opinions must have spread.

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Nowhere was greater cruelty shown than to the Milanese. Galeazzo Trezio, a man of noble birth, was sentenced to be burnt alive, which he bore with the utmost fortitude. A young priest, after being half-strangled, was literally roasted alive, and then thrown to the dogs.

At Naples, so great was the rigour of the Inquisition as seriously to affect trade. Whole streets were deserted by their inhabitants. Terrified by the severities exercised upon their brethren, a

considerable body of Neapolitans agreed to quit Italy together. But, when they reached the Alps, and stopped to take a last view of their beloved country, they burst into tears and resolved to return home. They no sooner reached it than they were cast into prison.

But, of all the barbarities of which Rome was guilty at this time, none were more horrible than those which were inflicted on the Waldenses who had settled in Calabria. I have already related how these peaceable people had founded a little colony, and, by their exemplary lives, had won the good opinion of even the priests. They now amounted to about four thousand persons, and they possessed several towns in the neighbourhood of Coscenza, two of which were Santo Xisto and La Guardia.

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Cut off from all intercourse with their Waldensian brethren, these colonists had habituated themselves to attend mass, without which they found it difficult to maintain friendly relations with their neighbours. Hearing of the spread of the reformed opinions in Italy, similar to those for which their ancestors had bled, these Waldenses became convinced they had sinned in conforming to Popish observances, and they applied to their friends and ministers at Pragela and Geneva, for teachers who should reform and restore their discipline.

No sooner was this known at Rome, than two monks were sent to reduce these Waldenses to obedience to the holy see. They began very gently with the inhabitants of Santo Xisto, saying they had only come to prevent them from lapsing into error; and they appointed a time for the celebration of mass, which they enjoined every person to attend.

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Instead of this, the Waldenses, in a body, retreated into the woods, only leaving behind them a few old people and children. The monks, concealing their chagrin, repaired to La Guardia, and, having caused the gates to be shut, assembled the inhabitants and told them their brethren of Santo Xisto had renounced their errors, and they had better follow their good example.

The poor simple people were talked over, and complied; but great was their indignation when they found the deceit that had been practised on them. They were eager immediately to join their brethren in the woods, but were dissuaded by their feudal lord.

Meanwhile, the monks directed two companies of foot-soldiers to beat the woods, and hunt down the fugitives in them like wild beasts, which they did, with cries of "Ammazzi! ammazzi!" "Slay them! slay them!"

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Some of the Waldenses, securing themselves among the rocks, demanded a parley with the captain of their assailants. They pleaded for their wives and children, said they were willing peaceably to leave the country, and implored him to withdraw his men. Instead of this, the captain commanded an instant attack, most of the parleyers were cut down, and the rest took to flight. San Xisto was given up to fire and sword; and the fugitives still lurking in the woods, either were put to death or perished with hunger.

The people of La Guardia were then given up to the tender mercies of the Inquisition. My pen refuses to copy the account of the horrible cruelties to which they were subjected. Sixty women were tortured, most of whom died in prison, in consequence of their wounds remaining undressed. Yet this was nothing to what afterwards ensued. One of the Catholic historians says, "Some had their throats cut, others were sawn asunder, others thrown from a high cliff: all were cruelly, but deservedly put to death. It was strange to hear of their obstinacy; for while the father saw his son put to death, and the son his father, they not only exhibited no symptoms of grief, but said joyfully that they should be angels of God! So much had the devil, to whom they had given themselves up as prey, deceived them!" [16]

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[16] Tommaso Costa.

Martyrs of whom the world was not worthy! It is less sad, after all, to read of the martyrdoms of Carnesecchi, and Di Monti, and Paleario, and many others, than to find heresies and schisms creeping into the little flock itself, and drawing many of them away from the purity of that faith for which others died.

Unitarianism was the canker that ate into the bud of the Italian Reformation. The opinions of Servetus and Socinus, and various modifications of them, insinuated themselves into the minds of the hapless exiles, who were scattered as sheep having no shepherd. Camillo Renato was one of the leading schismatics; and though he did not avow his own disbelief in the Trinity, his followers made no scruple of doing so. Many were tossed in a wild sea of doubt; others were swayed to and fro by every wind of doctrine; but we must not forget that a great many were consistent and faithful to the end of their course. Even Ochino's orthodoxy was suspected; though Calvin saw no reason to doubt it. There was a cloud, however, over his latter days.

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Pius the Fourth was of a mild disposition, but he was not powerful enough to overrule the inquisitors. A house beyond the Tiber was appropriated to them, to which cells were added for criminals, or those who were accounted such. This was called "the Lutheran prison," and it was said to be built on the site of the ancient Circus of Nero, in which so many Christians were delivered to the wild beasts.

The persecution raged with redoubled fury under Pius the Fifth: especially at Bologna, where "persons of all ranks were indiscriminately subjected to the same imprisonment, tortures, and death. In Rome, some were every day burnt, hanged, or beheaded; all the prisons were filled, and they were obliged to seek new ones." Think of the constancy of these confessors! Rome had no need to go to Japan for martyrs. If she should hereafter have a Protestant martyrology, many of her own sons and daughters may be enrolled in it. "We know not what becomes of people here," wrote Muretus to De Thou; "I am terrified every morning when I rise, lest I should be told that

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such and such a one is no more: and if it should be so, we should not dare to say a word."

And thus the Italian Reformation was crushed out! But its motto is "RESURGAM!"

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II.

"The 'Alfabeto Christiano' is a book unknown even to bibliographers for the last three centuries. It had its origin in an actual conversation between Juan de Valdés, twin brother to the Latin secretary of the Emperor Charles the Fifth, and Giulia Gonzaga, Duchess of Trajetto and Countess of Fondi, at Naples, about the close of 1535, or the beginning of the following year. At her request it was immediately afterwards written down by him in Spanish, to promote her instruction and refresh her memory. It now essentially conveys to us the spirit and substance of the conversation in the precise form and manner in which it took place between them."—*Introduction by Benjamin B. Wiffen, Esq., to his translation of the "Alfabeto Christiano."*

"It was printed at a time when for a few years the press of Venice was comparatively free; and when, taking advantage of this liberty, then existing nowhere else in Italy, it multiplied the tracts of the Reformation by thousands. When the friends of Valdés were afterwards persecuted at Naples, and his name condemned by the authority of Rome, implicating by connection with him, one of the most distinguished members of the noble family of the Gonzagas,—all parties, friends equally with opponents, would of course be concerned to observe silence on the subject; while all the friends of the family would be urged alike by religious sentiment and by family considerations to destroy silently and irrecoverably every copy of a book that appeared to cast, by its association with her name, the shadow of its principles upon those who were allied to her."—*Ibid.*

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The passage describing the manner in which a stray copy fell into his hands, and the circumstances under which he perused it, is one of the pleasantest in Mr. Wiffen's Introduction. McCrie quotes a passage from Fontaine, who tells us that "on taking down an old house at Urbino, in 1728, the workmen disinterred a copy of Bruccioli's 'Paraphrase of St. Paul's Epistles,' with some books of Ochino, Valdés, and others of the same kind, which had remained in concealment for more than a century and a half."

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III.

"Carnesecchi was secretary to Clement the Seventh, and afterwards prothonotary to the Apostolic See. One of his preferments was an abbey at Naples.... After the death of Clement, he retired from the Roman court to Naples, where he became intimate with Juan de Valdés. He was in that city in December, 1540, when Valdés died; and if he did not himself receive his last confession, which is very probable, he at least knew what it was, for his commendation of it formed part of the accusation against him on his trial in 1567, before the Inquisition at Rome; and after the death of Valdés he succeeded to the confidence of Giulia Gonzaga. This correspondence brought her also under the suspicion of the Inquisition on two occasions; once in 1545, and again, a short time before her death, in 1566."—*Wiffen's Introd., &c.*

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IV.

"Few were the years of the life of Valdés after the conversation of the 'Alfabeto Christiano,' yet during four, or at the most, five of them, he presented to Giulia his translation from the Greek of the Gospel according to Matthew, of the Psalms translated from the Hebrew, of the Epistle to the Romans, from the Greek, with a commentary; nor could she be unacquainted with his 'Considerations' and other writings, while they were yet in manuscript."—*Ibid.*

V.

"Ippolito's translation of the second book of the Æneid was published at Rome, in 1538, 4to., and in Venice, 1540. The latter is entitled, 'I sei primi libri del Eneide de Vergilio, &c. Il secondo di Vergilio de Hipolito de Medici Cardinale, a la Signora Giulia Gonzaga, MDXXX.' It contains twenty-three leaves."—*Ibid.*

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The lengthy title of Ireneo Affo's work, which a friend transcribed for me at the British Museum, is:—"Memorie di tre Principesse della famiglia Gonzaga; offerte a sua ecc: il Signor Conte Stefano Sanvitale Parmigiano, gentiluomo di camera con esercito ed essente delle reali guardie del corpo di S. A. R., in occasione delle sue felicissime nozze con sua eccel: la Signora Principessa Donna Luigia Gonzaga Mantovana. Parma, 1787. 4to."

The title is not more wordy than the memoir itself, though a short one.

THE END.

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- XI. A Search for a Mare's Nest
- XII. We "Bite the Biters," but are Overhauled by a Dutch Cruiser.
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- XVII. We are Hoodwinked by the Chinese, who Robs us of our All.
- XVIII. Wherein a Chief proves his Invulnerability by killing Himself.
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- XX. We return to the Coast and hear of an Old Enemy.
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- XXII. We join a Tiger Hunt, but narrowly escape being Poisoned by a Chief.
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Page 180 convince is now convince.

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