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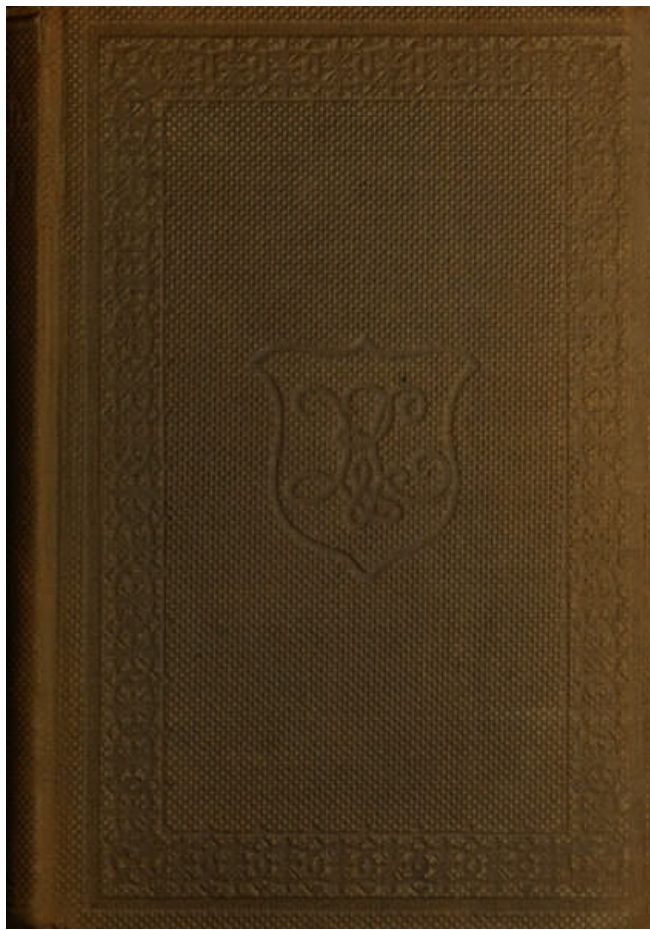
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ISABELLA ORSINI.



Engraved by F. Halpin from a pencil Drawing by Frasdieri

Isabella Orsini

RUDD & CARLETON. NEW YORK

Engraved by F. Halpin from a pencil Drawing by Frasdieri.

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ISABELLA ORSINI:

A Historical Novel of the Fifteenth Century.

BY

F. D. GUERRAZZI,

Author of "Beatrice Cenci."

TRANSLATED FROM THE ITALIAN,

BY

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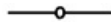
CORNELIUS C. FELTON, LL.D.,

ELIOT PROFESSOR OF GREEK LITERATURE
AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY,

As a mark of gratitude for his kind advice,
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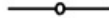
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CONTENTS.



	PAGE
<u>CHAPTER I.</u>	
Guilt,	15
<u>CHAPTER II.</u>	
Love,	26
<u>CHAPTER III.</u>	
The Knight Lionardo Salviati,	49
<u>CHAPTER IV.</u>	
Homicide,	84
<u>CHAPTER V.</u>	
Pasquino,	106
<u>CHAPTER VI.</u>	
The Son,	147
<u>CHAPTER VII.</u>	
Jealousy,	172
<u>CHAPTER VIII.</u>	
The Confession,	206
<u>CHAPTER IX.</u>	
Death,	253

LETTER.



GENOA, June 30th, 1858.

MY DEAR SIR,

In reply to your letter dated May 27th, I send you a portrait of ISABELLA ORSINI. You could not have been successful in obtaining it from any one except myself, for notwithstanding the many researches made for it, I procured it only after great difficulty. I went to the very palace wherein she was murdered by the wretched hands of Orsini; I was even on the point of having the coffin wherein she was buried opened, but several reasons deterred me, the principal one being that the body, after so long a time, must have become ashes. At last, while I was in prison, the Marquis * * * died: his heirs (three Marquises) immediately sold books, pictures, furniture, and every family relic. Among these, a friend of mine found a bronze medal of ISABELLA ORSINI, a copy of which I send you. On the reverse of the medal is a bush with flowers, fruits, and the inscription FLORES. SIMUL. ET. FRUCTUS.

xii

A photograph of it did not succeed well. I would willingly send you the medal itself, but fear that it may be lost, and thus the *only* portrait of that unfortunate woman be for ever destroyed, deters me. I have, however, caused a drawing to be executed by one of our best artists, CHEVALIER FRASCHERI, Professor of Painting in the Ligurian Academy, which I think will please you.

Yours very affectionately,

F. D. GUERRAZZI.

TO SIG. LUIGI MONTI,
Boston, Mass.

ISABELLA ORSINI.

CHAPTER I.

GUILT.

But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not.

So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself and said unto them: 'He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.' * * * *

And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee; go and sin no more.

—ST. JOHN viii.

"*AVE MARIA!* O being, at whose sight the Eternal One was persuaded to offer himself as an expiatory victim to the irrevocable justice of his laws, for the race of which thou wast born; O Virgin! into whose bosom God penetrated like the purest ray into clear water; O Mother! who in thy bosom, better than in the Holy Ark, barest Divinity, have mercy upon me.

"*Ave Maria!* Queen of Heaven: God has surrounded thee with the most loving angels that he ever created in the exultation of his glory. God has chosen from the fields of the firmament the most brilliant stars to form thy crown; beneath thy feet has he placed the sun and moon. Christ reposes on thy arm as on a high throne to govern creation. Thou that canst do all things, have mercy upon me.

"*Ave Maria!* God shed his own blood in observance of the decrees of his law. Thou conquerest even those decrees, for when loving appeals failed, thou didst remove the eternal from thy holy arm, and didst kneel before him, to win by thy prayers what thy request had failed to obtain; for what man or God could see his mother prostrate at his feet and disdainfully spurn her? God is above, not against nature. Mercy then, oh, have mercy upon me!

16

"*Ave Maria!* If thou but turnest one look of kindness upon the soul of the parricide, lo, it will become as pure as that of the babe newly baptized. Thou that hast a tear for every sorrow, thou that from misery hast learned to relieve the unfortunate, thou that bringest a balm for every wound, good counsel for every fallen one, help for every fault, protection from every crime, wilt thou be deaf to me alone?

"Does the contemplation of thy heavenly glories dissuade thee from casting down thine eyes upon this vale of tears? Have the praises of the angels caused the groans of thy servants to become wearisome? Mother of thy Creator, hast thou forgotten thy earthly origin? Is it in heaven above, as in this world below!

"Ah, unhappy me! Most miserable! My mind reels and staggers like a drunken man. I am beyond measure inebriated with grief, and my rash words flow from my mouth like the wind of a tempest.

"Holy Mary, pardon! Thou knowest that even when a child, leaving my warm bed to bathe my feet in the dewy grass, I went to gather the flowers that drank the first rays of the morning sun for thee. Thou knowest that I have watched like a vestal, so that the light consecrated to thee on the domestic altar should not be extinguished; and if I committed any act not worthy of thy holy sight, I first veiled thy face, and afterwards implored thy pardon. In thee alone I trust.

"My blood is inflamed, and the very marrow of my bones consumed by a love....

17

"Who called it love? Did I say love? Ah, in pity let no one know it—let no one hear it—let my ears not listen to the words from my own lips! Madness! Ah, what matter if I have hell in my heart? Yes, an infamous love burns within me; a love to make even the angels weep. O holy Mary, do not look into my soul! All the saints in Paradise, even thou, immaculate Virgin! would'st blush for shame to behold my secret heart.

"And yet this passion burns so secretly, that no one, looking on my pale face, could say: 'Behold an adulteress!' Who among the living can tell whether guilt or grief consumes me? As a sepulchral lamp burns, lighting up human skeletons without diffusing its rays abroad, so my love lives within my soul, shining upon the miserable relics of my contaminated virtue.

"But in this fierce battle every vital spark has failed. Already the hour approaches when the abyss will open, within which will fall the woman's shame, the husband's honor, family pride, the mother's love,—all in short, and the soul's safety with them!

"The soul's safety! Everlasting perdition! And should I, hopeless of overcoming the current, allow myself to be subdued by the waters? Should I, with a soul borne down by grief, dare to fly from the sad prison of the body? Should I, unsummoned, give wings to my life, and take shelter under the cloak of God's pardon? Will the arms of God open to receive or to repulse me? And am I not indeed wholly wicked? O God, dost thou not penetrate into our hearts, and see how sin has corroded them? In this bitter contest I defend that part of me which will turn to dust; the other, which has immortal life, is forever lost. Whether I remain or fly, whether I give up or resist,

18

Isabella, thou art lost—lost forever!

"Where or who is he that has decreed this most wicked law? If I cannot break, I can at least rail at this iron decree. Have I not struggled, and struggled incessantly? Where is my guilt, if I cannot overcome? In what have I sinned, if a serpent while I slept has crept into my heart, has made there its nest, and has there revealed itself more fearful than the Medusa's head? How have I sinned, if my strength is insufficient to bear this cross? The fallen should not be laughed at nor condemned, but aided. Well, since the guilt contemplated is equal to the guilt consummated, and both incur the same punishment, let me descend wholly into the abyss of crime and die."

These and other words were partly spoken, partly murmured by a young and handsome woman, before a painting of the Madonna, the divine work of Fra Angelico. And this face, symbol of celestial modesty and chaste thoughts, seemed as if frightened at such prayers, for, less even by the words than by the manner in which they were spoken, they seemed almost impious. The woman was not in a reverential posture, but standing erect, with haughty aspect, her eyes sparkling, her breast heaving, her lips trembling, her nostrils dilated, her hands clenched, her feet restless—in short, a lioness rather than a woman, much less a suppliant woman.

Was she right?

The Greeks, investigating diligently the nature of our hearts, discovered vice to be so inherent in human beings, that neither strength united with will, nor laws, nor customs, nor religion itself, could overcome it; but with that wonderful talent which the heavens granted to them alone, they rendered vice amiable, and made it contribute to the good of the republic. Instead of awaiting what they could not prevent, they went to meet it, like Mithridates, who, having to drink poison, took away its power of doing him harm, by habituating himself to its use. They dared even more; they made the gods the accomplices of the errors of men; powerless to raise their dust to heaven, they brought heaven down to the dust, and the guilty became objects, not of hate but of compassion, for they had yielded to the omnipotent power of fate, to which even Jupiter was subject—fate which guides the willing and drags the reluctant.

19

This idea, extended to every action, they applied especially to the affairs of love. Anacreon, whose hair, so often crowned with leaves of the merry ivy and vine, was becoming grey, was seated one gloomy winter's night alone before the fire. Boreas raged over land and sea, and a hurricane of hailstones rattled upon the poet's house. He remembers no more the rays which the sun of spring sheds upon the flowers and the tresses of lovely women; nor the soft grass scarcely pressed by the flying feet of the dancers, nor the breezes pregnant with life, that seem to murmur in his ears, "love—love;" his thoughts turn upon the transitory nature of our lives here below; he sees life rolling on more swiftly than the wheels of the conqueror's car in the Olympic games, our days dissolving more speedily than the shadow on the wall; the roses of his fancy withered at the thought of death. Suddenly a knock is heard at the poet's door, accompanied by a tearful voice. How can the poet help feeling pity, since pity is one of the most harmonious chords of his heavenly lyre? Anacreon opens the door, and a child appears, wet with the rain and pale with sorrow: poor child! his fine hair hangs dripping round his cheeks, his lips are livid, his limbs stiffened with cold. "What evil fortune, my pretty child, forces thee to wander on such a night, sacred to the infernal deities?" And without awaiting a reply, he presses the ice from his hair, removes his dress, dries him, and revives him by the heat of the fire; nor is that enough, he puts the child's hands into his own breast to warm them gently with the mild heat of his own blood. When the color returns to his lip, and the tremulous light to his eyes, the child smilingly says: "Now let me see if the rain has spoiled my bow;" and fitting an arrow, he draws the string. Anacreon is suddenly wounded, before he can perceive that Love, mocking, has left his house. It was the vengeance of Apollo which caused Myrrha to burn with unholy passion for Cinyras; of Venus, which caused the love of Pasiphaë for the bull; of Phædra for Hippolytus; and the will of Juno and Minerva which caused the cruel affection of Medea for Jason. Few or no crimes were committed which were not attributed to the influence of some god; and in this way, tragedians, availing themselves of the universal faith in fate, represented upon the stage the horrible deeds that under different aspects would not have been tolerated. And there certainly lives, or rather there sometimes seems to live in us, something more powerful than ourselves; nor does our belief, generally so different from the doctrine of the ancients, entirely oppose it. Do we not believe that our first mother was tempted by the serpent? And since that time, the ears of women have been readily open to the flatteries of the tempter. Perhaps the tempter does not stand without, but within the woman, and dwells in her pure blood, in the fine texture of her veins, in the pores of her delicate skin, in her imaginative brain, and in her more imaginative heart: and when thus, the tempter appears strongest and most inevitable. But do women alone yield to the persuasions of a devil, that comes tempting them, now with hate, now with pleasure, now with love, now with the abundance of wealth, and (for we will not stop to enumerate them all) with as many

20

21

passions as are powerful to stir the human heart? Alas! with few is there fortitude enough to withstand pleasure and gold, the most cruel of all the tyrants of our souls. Renowned heroes of ancient and modern history, men august and venerated, while life lasted, either resisted such passions, or too often yielded to them; and if repentance was raised to the dignity of a sacrament among us, it seems the most evident proof that God himself never expected that we should keep ourselves innocent; no, he did not expect it, since he commanded Simon Peter to forgive, not only seven times, but even seventy times seven.—Poor Isabella! Let him who is without sin first cast a stone at her....

Was she wrong?

The first draught never intoxicates, and whoever wishes, can put down the cup and say, "Enough!" For that Love, hardly born, shaking his head and his great bow, enthrones himself king of the spirit, and cries, "I will it, and I wish to reign alone,"—so sing the fanciful poets,—but this is not the truth. Love every moment makes his wings of sweet thoughts and ardent desires, and his darts grow harder, as the heart at which he aims becomes softened. Delia did not become blind merely by once looking at the sun; and whosoever wishes to escape the Sirens must imitate the example of Ulysses, and stop his ears with wax. We trust too much or too little to ourselves. When the flame of a glance, or the allurements of a voice fascinates us, and Providence with an innate conscience admonishes us, we take no heed of the warning, but say: "Not even this love shall trespass; when it would go beyond bounds, we shall be sufficient for the defence." When afterwards we feel it conquering, we defer the remedy from day to day; at last, overcome, we accuse the destiny which we have woven with our own hands. Thus, having the power, the will fails, and having the will, the power fails. We are caught in our own nets. Among the laws of fate, man can be subjected to those that are outside; the others that are within him have no power; the body can be subdued, not the soul. And if God gives us a mind able to use its power even against His immortal throne, why or how can we accuse Him, if, like cowards, we throw down the shield at the beginning of the battle, or if we refuse to use the sword which He has put into our hands? Querulous and unjust atoms, we wish the Creator to break through the eternal order of things, and to bend down every moment from the heavens to repair our faults, and to quiet the tempest of the heart which we have excited. He, the Creator, who whirls through infinite space the fragments of shattered orbs, and wakes in its dreadful sublimity the tempest of the ocean! Even guilt knows a kind of dignity; let us dare to possess it. Lucifer, exiled from celestial thrones, accused no one, nor did he reproach himself with his want of success; and Lucifer, in his dark grandeur, appears such, that although we cannot wish him a better destiny, yet we cannot abstain from cursing the ill-omened moment in which he drew down upon his head the wrath of God. But we are far inferior either in good or evil to angelic natures. In order to persuade ourselves that we are worth something, we presume to do ourselves the honor of believing that Satan has tempted us. If Satan could turn upon us his fiery glances, he would not tempt, but laugh at us. Can there be a worse tempter than our own evil inclinations, and the full power of our will in nursing and fostering them? I certainly do not wish to take away or to diminish the compassion of men, or the mercy of God for the poor soul of Isabella, but only to prove that the miserable death to which she was brought was the just recompense of her merits, or rather her demerits.

While Isabella was uttering the strange prayer which is partly given above, a knight of haughty aspect and bold presence advanced from the other end of the hall, and stood listening to her words; then softly approaching, said, "Isabella!"

The woman started at this sudden voice, her face grew paler, her lips moved without making a sound, her heavy eyelids fell, whilst the swelling of the veins produced a dark shade around her eyes. She would have fallen had not the knight hastened to support her. After a short silence he spoke:

"Isabella, you have something on your heart which you desire to conceal from me. Why is this, Isabella? Am I then so poor a friend that you do not deem me worthy to share your innocent secrets? Or do you believe me so eager for my own happiness, that I know not how to prefer, although with intense anguish, your peace and wishes to my own? Speak: I am ready to do anything for your love—give me but a word. Ah, miserable me! What need is there, Isabella, for you to speak? I have heard too much. Do you not believe in my courage? Let me prove it to you. You pray for my death, and I can, yes, I will unite my petition to yours; I will recall to my lips the sweetest prayer that my mother ever taught me. Isabella, kneel; I, you see, am kneeling."

And she, hardly knowing what she did, knelt; and both prayed.

These were no pure and peaceful prayers, such as ascend to Heaven like incense from innocent hearts, which the angels love to bear on their shining wings to the throne of the Eternal, received by God as celestial guests, and consoled, as if they were the troubled sons of His love. These prayers mounted from panting bosoms, disconnected and hurried, like delirious thrills of pleasure; they were wafted through the air, thick, like clouds arising from dark earthly sources; nor did they reach the

threshold of Heaven, but fell repulsed, like the smoke from the offering of the first murderer, to increase the passion of the guilty ones.

It was right; for these prayers did not come sincerely from the heart, for he who offered them feared lest they might be heard, and scarcely were they spoken, ere he would have wished to revoke them. Oh, mortal mind, how unstable in the desire of good! Then the glowing cheeks touched, the convulsed hands sought and clasped each other, and the prayers ended in oaths to love each other for ever, in spite of sacred bonds, of family honor, of death, or hell. Indeed, so regardless of them were they, that they called as a witness to the wicked vow, our divine Mother, to whom they had intended to pray for safety; and the Mother of Mercy did not turn aside her face, convinced that if their prayers were then false, in the day of repentance she must listen, when they would be only too sincere.

25

Meanwhile justice registered the guilt in that book, where nothing is cancelled, except by blood.

26

CHAPTER II.

LOVE.

E bevea da' suoi lumi
Un' estranea dolcezza,
Che lasciava nel fine
Un non so che di amaro.
Sospirava sovente, e non sapeva
La cagion dei sospiri.
Così fui prima amante, che intendessi
Che cosa fosse amore:
Ben me ne accorsi alfin....

Tasso

And from his eyes I drank
A sweetness strange and new,
But in the end, alas! I found
That draught was bitter too.
I sighed, and knew not why;—
I loved, and knew it not:—
But ah! too soon that knowledge came
By sad experience brought....

Sir Anton Francesco Torelli was of one of the best families of the territory of Fermo;—endowed with the gifts of fortune, honored by his relations, respected by strangers, blessed with a lovely wife, and a son, in whom centred all the hopes of his declining years.

Happy would he have been if he had believed what is only too true, that the best instruction that children can receive, must be derived from the good examples of their parents: happy, if he had never sent from his home, his dear son Lelio! for his last steps towards the tomb would not have been embittered by sorrow. But, complying with the fashion of the times, he desired his son to be skilled in chivalric exercises, and the father's heart exulted in the hope that the noble ladies of Fermo might salute his son as the most accomplished and courteous nobleman of the land. With this idea, Sir Anton Francesco, having himself served a long time with the Cardinal dei Medici in Rome, thought he might easily instal his son Lelio as page in the court of the Grand Duke Cosimo. But Cosimo having died prematurely, worn out by the excessive love of pleasure, Lelio, a youth of elegant manners and fine figure, so pleased the Lady Isabella, Duchess of Bracciano, and daughter of Cosimo, that she obtained the handsome page for her own service.

27

In those times, noblemen serving at court, were required to learn the skilful management of all knightly weapons, to fight with the sword and dagger, and even to defend themselves unarmed from unexpected attacks with the stiletto or poniard; and there were some excellent books written about this art, which served also as a model to other nations. Nor did they neglect the practice of fire-arms, although that was not esteemed so noble an accomplishment; the management of horses they deemed indispensable, either in racing, tilting, or (more difficult still) curvetting before the ladies, then nice judges of such arts. Next in importance came dexterity in field-sports, among which stood foremost that of hawking, now fallen into disuse, or only kept up in Holland. To tell the truth, the knights made a show of admiring belles-lettres, but not the severer productions of the pen, nor those which spring new and vivid from the imagination warmed by the heart, but rather those arranged according to accepted formulas, and mutilated *in usum Delphini*; which composed the delights of the courtiers whom experience or fear had taught to touch carefully such dangerous matters. Justice, however, forbids us to let pass unnoticed some writer, who, kindled by the last panting breath of the Republic, dared to write, if not powerfully, at least conscientiously; but the last breath soon expires, the writer became silent, and bowed his head to fate. There were others, who wrote the truth, but dared not publish it, as if they had wished to constitute their remote descendants the heirs of their revenge; and, as it seems, the descendants opened the will, but reading what the inheritance was, thought best to refuse the legacy. The arts and sciences, however, were better received, particularly chemistry, for the purpose of making poisons, of which the men of those times, and the Medicis in particular, became very skilful manufacturers, and by what we read about it, we see that modern researches fall far short of ancient toxicology. Michael Angelo, immortal monument of human dignity, and eternal witness to the truth, that man was created in the image of God, when he no longer had a country, consecrated himself entirely to Heaven, and was replaced by Benvenuto Cellini, a man of great genius, but wholly without heart, who wasted his talents in working girdles, jewels, vases, plates, and similar superfluities of luxury; so that when he undertook the statue of Perseus, he was no longer able to raise to lofty conceptions his mind so long accustomed to female ornaments, whereupon Alfonzo dei Pazzi stung him with the bitter epigram:—

28

29

"With the trunk of a giant, the limbs of a lady,

I rate your fair Perseus at one maravedi."^[1]

But to return to Lelio Torelli; he had succeeded wonderfully in all the exercises that require strength and suppleness of limb. As to that discipline which is requisite to enlighten the intellect, either he had not given his mind to it, or had not been able to attain it; nor did he take pleasure in music, singing, or dancing; his glances rested upon a group of pretty women with less interest than upon a bunch of roses, and infinitely less than that with which he hunted the wild boar over hill and dale. No one more ready than he to leap with one bound into the saddle; no one more unerring in hurling a dart or firing a shot; and not to describe too minutely, he not only easily surpassed in prowess all his companions, but scarcely could there be found among the elder knights one to excel him.

Therefore he was more eager for affrays and disputes than was becoming in a noble youth, thus exhibiting a fierceness of disposition; and whenever by superior force or adroitness he overcame his opponent, deaf to the gentle tones of pity or pardon, he was not easily restrained from striking, until weariness or the interposition of bystanders arrested his hand. Then rancor took possession of him; and woe if he should one day have a chance to give vent to the vengeance treasured up in the depths of his soul! His enemies would certainly have done well to put, as the saying goes, the extreme unction in their pockets. As to the rest of his character, he was as strong in love as in hate, and always foremost in exposing himself to danger, even desiring to meet it alone, so that his friends had to restrain him. This he did neither to win praise nor to excite gratitude, for he despised and even spurned both, but through a natural generosity and even a certain feeling of superiority over his companions, and this superiority it was easier for them to envy than to counteract. Feared rather than loved, respected rather than followed, he seemed most worthy of authority.

30

It one day happened that Lady Isabella having summoned him in great haste, he had scarcely time to free himself from the hands of his antagonist, and appeared before her stained with blood. The noble lady seeing him in this condition, exclaimed in an angry voice:

"Go from my sight, you make me shudder!"

From that day, Lelio seemed no longer the same; instead of wreaking vengeance on any one who taunted him, as he would once have done, he now bit his lips, colored to the very roots of his hair, checked himself by violent effort, and met the sarcasm with a pleasant smile. He was more orderly in his person than before, and paid more attention to his luxuriant fair hair, and the neatness of his dress; but his once florid complexion had now become pale, his air pensive, his blue eyes sunken. And this was not all. Lelio would often stand apart from his companions, sad and silent, looking either at a flower, a falcon circling through the air, or a little cloud that undulated through the blue ether as if the loving zephyrs were contending for it; but he was oftenest to be seen in the evening, upon the brow of a hill, with both hands clasped upon his knees, gazing intently at the setting sun, and the gold, purple, and rich colors of mother-of-pearl, and the rainbow hues with which the glorious Father of Life surrounds his temporary tomb. He scarcely heeded his Spanish jennet, which strove in vain to rouse his inert master with his neighs; vainly, too, did his greyhound run before him, crouch for an instant, turn back to him, fly on again, bark, gaze, lick his hands and leap upon him; Lelio by voice and signs would gently endeavor to quiet him, so that the poor animal, seeing all his attempts useless, with drooping ears and tail would quietly crouch at his master's feet; nor did his weapons meet with any better fate, although sometimes he would seize them as if moved by a sudden impulse, and would exercise so violently with them as to bathe himself in perspiration, and exhaust his strength for several days.

31

Lady Isabella possessed a little volume of Petrarch's poems which always accompanied her in her solitary walks; this book disappeared, for Lelio had appropriated it to himself and was never tired of reading in it.

How had the youth become so changed? One day while absorbed in this book, and straying at random through the woody paths of Cerreto, some laughing country girls waited for him at the extremity of one of the walks, hidden behind some oaks, and threw handfuls of violets in his face, saying in jesting tones; "Such eyes were not made to be dimmed by poring over books, but to laugh and make love." And a gay old farmer, who passed by carrying upon his head a basket of grapes, laughing still louder, cried: "Ah, indeed! you do not know much about it; do you not see how dead in love he is? The end of the world must be coming, if our young girls do not know what love is."

32

And when, on calm evenings, the windows of the hall being open, the Lady Isabella poured forth a flood of harmony through the dark air, singing and playing songs and melodies, perhaps already composed, or, abandoning herself to the inspiration that moved her, improvising the verses and setting them to music; Lelio would stand

motionless, leaning against a tree or the pedestal of a statue in the garden, inhaling a fatal enchantment, rendered more intoxicating by the atmosphere, the hour, the odorous emanations which the dewy herbs and flowers sent forth, and the sweet light which fell from the starry heavens; and when the windows were closed, the lamps lighted, and all animate creation resigned itself to that repose to which nature invites it, this solitary youth was still so absorbed in ecstasy, that he alone remained forgetful of everything, standing in the same place, until the first rays of the rising sun shining in his eyes recalled him to the accustomed duties of life.

Before continuing the recital of this love, I must explain what I have alluded to above. I wish to have it understood that I have made use of no poet's license, but that it is an historical fact, that Isabella, Duchess of Bracciano, was not only an authoress, a poetess, and a composer, but also an *improvisatrice*. Nor was this the only talent of this celebrated woman, for besides her native tongue, she spoke and wrote fluently in Latin, French, and Spanish; in the art of drawing she rivalled the most celebrated masters, and in every accomplishment that belonged to her high station, and in every lady-like elegance and refinement, she was so perfect as to be rightly esteemed rather wonderful than rare. All the chronicles which I have seen, which speak of this unfortunate Princess, agree in using the following words: "It is sufficient to say that she was esteemed by all, both far and near, as a perfect ark of learning and science, and the people loved her for those great qualities, and her father felt for her a most passionate tenderness." Blessed might she have been, could she have used such rich gifts of nature and high cultivation to render her life happy and her memory immortal!

33

Lelio, whenever it was possible, would enter the room of the Lady Isabella, and there, sure that he was unobserved, would take the instrument over which the fingers of his mistress had swiftly flown, and would kiss it madly, press it to his heart and brow, and bathe it with tears; and if he could find some paper upon which the Lady Isabella had been writing, he would read the lines over and over again, and try to compose some himself; but although his soul overflowed with poetry, the power adequately to express such overwhelming emotion was wanting; nor, perhaps, could even long study have enabled him to do justice to it. He would then be enraged with himself, rave, and finally end by blotting out with his tears what he had written with the ink. At last even this comfort, if we may call it one, was denied him. The Lady Isabella finding her spotless papers soiled, and being unable to discover the culprit, from that time forward carefully removed them.

34

But in truth, except for this waste of paper, Lady Isabella could not wish for a more assiduous and diligent page than Lelio. By the expression of her face, so much had he gazed upon it, he had learned to read the inmost secrets of her soul, nor did he need any further indication of her wishes to execute them. This assiduity increased to such a degree as to be somewhat troublesome, especially when Lady Isabella was conversing with Sir Troilo—for then he would invent a thousand excuses to enter unsummoned into her room, or not to leave it when there. As it rarely happens that two beings who hate, or wish to injure each other, however much they may endeavor to conceal their feelings, do not by some means or other finally reveal them, so the glances of Troilo and Lelio met, clashing like two enemies' swords, and the more Troilo persisted in looking sternly at Lelio, to make him, either through respect or fear, cast down his eyes, the more steadily would Lelio fix them upon him with an indescribable expression of rage. The few words which they exchanged always contained some biting sarcasm; bitter were the tones of their voices; bitter their actions, their bearing, their gestures.

Lelio, one day stealing, according to his custom, into Lady Isabella's room, took her lute in his hand, and making a pretence of playing it, began to sing a ballad that was a favorite of his mistress. He did not attempt to pour forth the full power of his clear voice, withheld by respect for the place, and because, ignorant of music, he had learned the song by ear only, repeating it who knows how many times; but growing excited by degrees, he yielded to the impulse that prompted him, and rarely or never had those halls resounded with the echoes of so rich a melody. Lady Isabella drew near unobserved, and touched by so much harmony, approached him gently, and when Lelio ceased singing, she placed her hand upon his head, and patting it playfully, said—

35

"Who taught you this, my fine boy?"

"Love—a very great love that I have for music."

"And you should follow the dictates of this love, since the cultivation of the fine arts ennobles the intellect and softens the heart."

And as the Duchess still kept her hand upon his head, Lelio, in an imploring voice, said to her—

"My Lady, for heaven's sake I beseech you to take your hand from my head."

"Should I not put it there?" asked the Duchess in tones slightly resentful, and

withdrawing it quickly.

"Oh! my Lady, pity me, it burns my brain."

"I do not see why my hand should perform the office of the tunic of Nessus."

"I do not know, but I feel it." And the boy uttered these words in so tremulous and mournful a voice, that the Duchess put her hand to his forehead and exclaimed in a frightened tone—

"*Dio mio!* how it burns! Poor Lelio! I fear you are ill. Ah! you are fainting, and there is no one here to help him. Lelio! Lelio! Ah! he will die in my arms. Holy Virgin, help him!"

Lelio, his face as white as a waxen image, bathed in a cold perspiration, closed his eyes and leaned his head upon Lady Isabella's bosom, while she supported him with both arms. Recovering himself presently, he opened his eyes with a sigh, perceived where he was, and remembering how it had happened, and the reason of his fainting, he said sadly,

"I thought that I was dying. Oh, why did I not really die?"

The Duchess took some scented spirits and bathed his temples with it, although the youth tried respectfully to prevent her.

"Let me, let me," said the Duchess. "I will be a mother to you. I might already be so in age—almost—and in affection. You have a claim upon my tenderness, for your own mother is far distant, and cannot help you, poor child. But what follies are these? Whence comes this despair? Speak to me; open your whole heart to me. I have seen you change countenance, have seen your inward struggles; and I have observed how your arm trembles when you assist me to mount my horse. Are you in love? Thoughtless boy, you should not hide it from me! For I too have known love's trials, and know also how to pity them. You, so noble, cannot have placed your affections on an unworthy object; and if upon one above you, there is no inequality which love cannot level; and you, by your high birth, your wealth, and more than all by your goodness, are deserving of an illustrious connexion. If I have any influence, I promise to exert it all to see you happy."

Meanwhile Lelio had regained his former composure; he even, all sorrow laid aside, appeared smiling, and his cheeks were rosy with the hue of youth, the springtime of life.

"Oh, indeed," he replied with feigned bashfulness, "do children know anything about such things? Are such the thoughts of eighteen years? What is love? Is it a fruit, a sword, or a falcon? I have always heard it said that youths grow thin, but that afterwards they become more vigorous than before. My lady, I feel so happy, so joyful, that I can ask for nothing more; and offering you passionately all the gratitude in my power for your pity, I entreat you to continue the maternal kindness which you have promised me, giving you my word of honor, that I, for my part, will ever strive to deserve it."

"I will do so, Lelio," said the Lady Isabella, adding, almost in spite of herself, "for I need, more than you can believe, people to love me truly. I, you see, Lelio, am miserable, miserable enough, for no one on this earth loves me. My father loved me dearly, but he has left me. O my father, why did you leave me alone—without a guide—abandoned by all?" While she was thus speaking, Lelio knelt on the ground, and kissing the hem of her dress, uttered these words:

"I make a sacred vow to be yours till death."

The Duchess, who through necessity and custom had learned to control her emotions, perceiving that she had gone further than she had intended, said, in order to distract her own thoughts and Lelio's from these events.

"Rise, Lelio, I do not wish the gift of voice which I have discovered in you to be lost: I do not want you to sing by ear, and am ready to teach you music. If you continue to improve as rapidly as you have begun, it will not be long before you will have no equal in the court of my illustrious brother Francesco. Let us take the music of the song that you were singing just now; I will show you the notes, and the places where the voice must be elevated and lowered. Signor Giulio Caccini, a Roman musician, composed it expressly for me. The melody is soft and sweet."

"If I had known before, honored lady, whose composition it was, I should have taken care not to learn it by heart, much less to sing it."

"Why so, Lelio? Have you unfriendly feelings towards Signor Giulio?"

"I have never exchanged a word with him; but his face has such a bad expression; he looks to me as if he had the whole sect of the Pharisees in his heart."

"It seems just the contrary to me. He is gracious and kind to all, speaks gently, and

smiles sweetly. I could confess——"

"And I regard him as the most consummate traitor that has ever been since Judas. Mark but his smile; it does not seem to be his own; I believe he begged it from some second-hand dealer. In his small velvety hands, do you not see the cat's paw in which the claws are sheathed? He preaches charity and neighborly love to all, it is true, but he does it for his own sake; for he does not find it for his interest to encourage people to scrutinize too closely, and to discover by rigid examination the characters of others."

Lady Isabella said, smilingly, "Beware, Lelio; judge not, that you be not judged."

"Those are holy words, that must be understood literally, since otherwise it would be necessary to renounce both experience and life. And, therefore, I may judge, since I do not fear to be judged."

Lelio was right, and a deed of blood is proof of it.

39

The chronicles relate that Captain degli Antinori having to carry to Eleonora di Toledo, wife of Piero dei Medici, a love-letter from the knight Antonio, his brother, then imprisoned on account of that very love at Porto Ferrai, took advantage of the opportunity of Don Piero's going out with his retinue, entered quickly the Palazzo Vecchio, went up to the apartments of the Lady Eleonora, who then occupied the frescoed rooms that look out upon the Piazza del Grano, and immediately asked an audience of the porter; but he had absolute orders not to let a single person pass, for his lady was dressing. In vain did the Captain insist that his business was most urgent—that those orders were not to be regarded—that he should let him pass, or at least apprise the lady of his presence. The porter, born and educated at Innspruck, would not listen to his arguments; his lady had given orders that for an hour he should give ingress to no one, and until the sixty minutes were expired, no one should pass. There was no remedy; the Captain began to walk up and down the antechamber in a passion, but soon becoming weary of oscillating backwards and forwards like the pendulum of a clock, he saw that the amiable Caccini was also waiting for an audience. Exchanging a few words of courtesy with him, and finding him apparently all kindness, particularly towards the Lady Eleonora, whom, with an air of tenderness, and with eyes full of tears, he called his adored and virtuous patron, he incautiously intrusted him with the letter, begging him, for the love of Heaven, to take care and let no one see it, and to give it with his own hands to the Lady Eleonora. Scarcely had the Captain turned his back, when the musician
concealed himself in the embrasure of a window, and treacherously opening the letter, learned from it the truth of what was generally suspected—that is to say, the intrigue of the knight with the Princess; wherefore, in the hope of a great reward, he went directly to the Grand Duke, and first, humbly craving pardon for having opened the letter, excusing himself by affirming that he had done so out of the great love he bore to the dignity of his gracious and noble lord and master, he placed it in his hands. The Grand Duke changed countenance while reading it, but having finished, with apparent tranquillity, he refolded it leisurely, and putting it into his bosom, said, in a serious voice, as was his custom—for rumor says he spoke briefly:

40

"Musician, I see here four guilty persons—the knight Antinori, who wrote this letter, Captain Antinori, who brought it, Eleonora, who was to receive it, and you, who opened it; go—each one shall be rewarded according to his deserts."

Isabella, a woman of singular excellence of disposition, rendered, by the unfortunate circumstances of her life, unhappy, but not suspicious, added quickly:

"Any one who loves me, must dismiss such wrong and unreasonable prejudices; in my opinion they are unworthy and unjust, and generally give evidence of an ill-natured disposition. All have the right of being judged according to their works. Be careful, my dear Lelio, always to have a clear conscience, and life will seem less burdensome to you than to the other children of Adam. Come, now, and learn the song of this brave Roman. How can you believe that a man capable of composing so sweet a melody, could have a bad heart?"

41

Thus does man judge!

The Duchess, taking the sheet of music in her hand, commanded Lelio, who obeyed not unwillingly, to sit by her side, and began to teach him where the voice should rest, and how and where it should glide at length, or quaver in melodious trills; in short, all the tastes of an accomplished musician. But Lelio paid more attention to the white hands than to the notes, and still more to the lovely face that grew animated over the music; wrapt in a kind of ecstasy, he not only ceased accompanying Lady Isabella, but could hardly draw his breath. Lady Isabella said:—"But keep on." And he, uttering with difficulty a faint note, was silent the next moment. The Lady Isabella, again, "Why do you stop?" And thus alternated reproofs and silence. Lelio, prompted by love, drew nearer to the Duchess; hence, it so chanced that some of her raven ringlets, stirred by the motion of her head, touched his cheek; the boy trembled in every limb, his eyes, suffused with tears, shone with a wild light, his dry

lips burned; it seemed joy, but it was really pain. The cheek touched by the hair became red, as if burning metal had been applied to it, and the page could scarcely bear the keen and tremulous passion that agitated him; but recovering himself, he would again return to the trial, as we see the moth, led by fatal instinct, flutter round the flame that consumes him. Thus, not heeding the minutes that sped, the personages of our history remained a long time, until the Duchess, casually raising her eyes, saw standing before her Sir Troilo Orsini.

Troilo of the pallid brow! His eyes sparkled beneath his black and bushy eyebrows like the jackal's, eager for prey. He held his right hand within his black velvet mantle; his left hand, on his side, was holding his hat ornamented with black plumes; and so motionless was he, that one might have believed him a statue. Isabella encountered his malignant gaze without the slightest embarrassment, and paying no attention to it, said frankly:

"Welcome, Sir Troilo, and share my happiness, for I have discovered a new virtue in my page; he sings like an angel, and I intend to cultivate his voice till he is perfect; then, when he returns home, it will please his mother, and he will be the favorite of the ladies of Fermo."

Sir Troilo replied:

"You would repeat the injustice of Americus Vespuccius, since I discovered before you did, that this youth, with proper instruction, might become a wonderful musician."

Lelio felt the keen satire, and his face burned, but he was silent.

"Your Ladyship," continued Sir Troilo, "I must now speak to you of something more important; please to listen to me.—Page, take these, and put them in my room, and be careful not to come back again until you are called."

"Save your honor, Sir Troilo, I am here in the service of her Ladyship the Duchess; and unless she be pleased to command otherwise, I beg of you to take it in courtesy, if I do not go."

This time it was Troilo who colored; and already some cutting reply quivered on his lip, when the Lady Isabella hastily interposed, saying:

"Lelio, obey Sir Troilo."

Lelio took the sword, gloves, and hat, and bowing low, walked slowly towards the door.

"Page!" cried Orsini after him, "carry my sword with both hands; it is heavy, and you may drop it."

Lelio drew the gleaming sword like lightning from its scabbard, and brandishing it swiftly around his head, replied with a bold voice, and without stopping:

"Never fear, Sir Troilo, for my heart and hand are strong enough to wield it as a gentleman against any honorable knight. You understand; against any knight."

If he added any other words, they were not heard, as he was so distant.

"See," said Sir Troilo, spitefully, closing the door of the hall, "see how your indiscreet mildness raises around you a troop of insolent fellows."

"I have not observed any insolent ones, although I have an ungrateful one, Sir Troilo."

And, seated side by side, they began to converse in low, but excited tones, and, to judge by their gestures and manner, it could be neither pleasure, kindness, nor any other tender feeling, that influenced this conversation, but reproofs, suspicions, and fears; the Omnipotent having ordained, in His eternal decrees, that man, for his sins, should never be perfectly happy.

Now my readers, especially my lady readers, must understand that three full years had elapsed since the day that Isabella and Troilo had sworn the eternity of an affection that never should have commenced; and three years is a long eternity in love affairs. Eternity! Fancy a word so unsuitable to the lips of man, still less to those of woman. Love engagements usually begin on two sides and end on one. It is the best plan, though one but rarely put into execution, to annul them at a fixed time by mutual consent. Contracts of love have not the same advantages as those of business. In the latter, before making such a contract, the person interested wishes to understand the exchanges, the purchases, the location, and the like, and the advantages accruing to him in the value, the expenses, and the accessories, like one accustomed to be mindful of his own interests in such affairs; but in the former he bargains and binds himself blindfold, awaiting the consummation before he reckons and judges how much he has gained by it. And this sad day of reckoning had come and passed for Isabella and Troilo, and by this time who knows how often they had summed it up! The truth of this history obliges us to confess that the lady had found

herself at a great disadvantage, which fact contributed in no small degree to alienate the lovers. Indeed Isabella possessed an ardent love for true art, and for the pleasures of science; an apt and happy talent, and a very great enthusiasm; great kindness of disposition, sympathetic feelings, noble manners, lady-like elegance, and a courtesy truly regal. The sentiment of love remains. I cannot say that the power of loving was wanting in her, for it would not be true; but she was deceived, believing that that was an unconquerable necessity of the heart, which was merely an impulse of the imagination; and as there is nothing more ethereal than the fancy, or more ready to evaporate, she often not only wondered, but was terrified, to find herself cold towards persons and things for whom and which she had shortly before felt an ardent fondness. Happy would it have been for her if nature or art had balanced more equally her heart and her brain. Grave masters and solemn teachings had not been wanting; but if, when obliged to choose between severe precepts and easy ones, between strict teachings and mild ones, the second seem the pleasanter to follow, it need not be asked why they obtain the preference. In her father's house she was surrounded by the worst examples, and alas! miserable girl! they punished in her, the most innocent of them all, the crimes or consequences of crimes, of which her brothers should more justly have borne the penalties. Indeed, the various chronicles that I have examined concur in the same judgment, expressed in the following manner by one of them:—"Every one said that a remedy should have been adopted before Prince Francesco and her other brothers had made use of her to draw to their wishes other ladies of the city, carrying her out with them every night dressed as a man, and then pretending that she should remain a saint." Isabella, moreover, possessed, or better to express it, was possessed by what is called a poetic temperament—a warm heart in the power of an ardent imagination—like a bold knight on an unbridled horse, a situation replete with the saddest consequences.

45

And how did Troilo appear on the day of reckoning? Troilo of the pallid brow, the heavy eyebrow, and the falcon eye. If we consider his figure, few were the knights in Italy who could sustain any comparison with him. He was well formed in person, and of so handsome a face that artists of note had begged him to sit to them as a model, and he had consequently grown very vain. His hair was short and his face smooth, with the exception of a dark imperial and moustache. Having heard that Alexander the Great leaned his head upon his right shoulder, Troilo, not to be inferior to him, imitated the habit. He always dressed in black velvet; was usually sad and pensive, speaking rarely, not because he imagined himself a poor conversationalist, for he ranked himself on the contrary far above Cicero, but it was natural to him. When he said but little, people were persuaded that he was a man of remarkable talents and a keen observer of human affairs; but if he conversed at greater length the vanity of his mind was clearly manifested, as our ancestors aver the solidity of the vase to be proved by sounding it. How the Fates had placed such a head on such a body is a question not easily answered. It is very certain that he would have driven to despair those who undertake to discover by external signs the passions and imaginations of the soul. He surpassed all the noblemen of that age in prowess and courage. In the bloody quarrels of the barons, for which the streets of Rome were then notorious, he was always the first to commence and the last to retreat. Naturally strong, he fought with strength, although treason was the height of his ambition; and his favorite hero, the famous Alphonso Piccolomini, a celebrated highwayman whom Ferdinand dei Medici, as Cardinal, once saved from the gallows, but afterwards, as Grand Duke, hung. But in the battles where skill rather than strength is requisite, or where the one should be tempered by the other, he showed himself so incompetent that he could not be trusted with the rank even of a colonel of infantry; nor did he succeed any better in business transactions, for sometimes by his obstinate silence he inspired suspicion, and sometimes by his vain eloquence, even more obstinate, contempt. Hence the Medicis abstained from employing him, and kept him at home, like the Bucentaur, the ornamented and useless galley which the Venetians used to bring out on the occasion of the marriage of the Doge with the Adriatic; so his commissions consisted of congratulations, as his three embassies to France bear witness, where he was sent the first time to congratulate the Duke d'Anjou upon the victory which he had gained at Moncontour over the Admiral Coligny; the second was when Charles IX. espoused Elizabeth, the second daughter of the Emperor Maximilian; the third and last when the Duke d'Anjou, afterwards Henry III., was chosen King of Poland. And yet so vainglorious was he, that he never ceased reminding Isabella of the many and great sacrifices which he had made for her, in not fighting battles which he never would have fought, and constantly longed for the victories which he never could have achieved. His love for Isabella was idleness, the impulse of youthful blood, pride in conquering a woman so handsome and so deservedly celebrated. He soon grew weary of it, since forms, however beautiful, please by their variety; and the lady's talent, by humiliating him, was to him rather a cause of dislike than of admiration. I will not affirm that he hated Isabella, but he chafed impatiently under the tie, and even more impatiently when he found that he could not free himself from it, and strengthened it irrevocably by a fatal knot. His mind was closed against the noble, the decorous, the right, and the beautiful. If Isabella recited her own or another's poetry, he would fall asleep—a terrible slight to a poet, but to a poetess culpable beyond measure. Music gave him the headache.

46

47

48

With all this he was tormented by a cold and apathetic jealousy, not because he loved Isabella, but because he wished Isabella to love him;—he wished that all might read around her neck these words, which used to be engraved upon the collars of slaves: "The property of Troilo Orsini." In short, the time had arrived when the joyous rosy garland woven by love was changed to a chain of remorse and hate, forged by the hands of the infernal Furies.

CHAPTER III.

THE KNIGHT LIONARDO SALVIATI.

Essendo di fortuna e d'ingegno meno che mediocre, mi sento non dimanco avere dalla natura un bene particolare ed egregio, nel quale io mi sento tanto superiore a molti, quanto quasi di ogni uomo in tutte le altre cose mi conosco più basso. Questa è una cotal mirabile inclinazione, ed una come natural conoscenza ch'io ho nella amicizia.... Io sono a questa parte quasi rapito dallo Dio del mio ingegno.

SALVIATI, *Dialogo dell' Amicizia.*

Although I am less than mediocre both in fortune and talents, yet I feel that nature has gifted me with a particular and lofty blessing, in which I feel myself so much superior to others, as I know myself in almost everything else inferior to all other men. This is a wonderful inclination, and natural knowledge which I have in friendship.... I feel in this respect almost exalted by the god of my genius....

SALVIATI, *Dialogue on Friendship.*

As poets sometimes describe a pensive maiden straying by the margin of a brook, plucking the leaves from a rose, scattering them to the mercy of the current, and watching the wave that carries them away, so Isabella, with her cheek resting on her hand, her eyes closed, mused upon the dear remembrances borne down upon the stream of time. Where was her innocence? Where her youthful affections? Where the serene purity of her mind? The tree of life, that once appeared so fresh with perpetual verdure, now how horribly bare! And the few leaves that remain, rustle drily, and are ready to fall with the slightest wind that blows. Of Cosimo's daughters, she alone is left; Mary died at seventeen for love; Lucretia, perhaps through the same cause, disappeared from the world at twenty-one. Love had been a star of evil auspice for the women of the Medici family! The dear boy, Don Garcia, had abandoned her, and she could never think of him without her imagination depicting the angelic face, that wished to speak to her but could not, and tried to sign to her with his head, while his hair, dripping with blood, stained his beautiful face. God knows how this thought pierced her heart! For the report of the domestic tragedy had reached her ears, but her frightened soul shrank in horror at believing it true. Her father, Cosimo, whom, however severe or cruel towards his other children, she had found kind, was still young when he left this world, and although in dying he left her, as manifest tokens of his love, seven thousand dollars, a palace, three thousand dollars upon the Pisan estates, gardens and houses in Florence, and jewels worth a treasure, all this abundance of wealth had not served to procure her one friend in whom to confide, or from whom to seek counsel.

50

She could not depend upon Cardinal Ferdinando, as he had left his home at an early age, and, obliged to live in Rome, had there placed his heart and thoughts; or if his mind ever turned towards his home, it was through pride, or through desire of royalty, for which he was so eager that, in process of time, being exalted to the Tuscan throne, he took for coat of arms the King of the bees, with the motto: *Majestate tantum*. Besides which, she had but little reason to consider him kindly-disposed towards her, as she had, in times past, rather favored than opposed the intrigue of Don Francesco with Bianca; but perceiving that this passion was taking deep root, and might become a source of great trouble, she had endeavored to repair her fault, by thwarting it to the utmost of her power, which only excited against her the bitter hatred of Francesco and the vengeance of Bianca, and did not succeed, on the other hand, in restoring to her the friendship of Cardinal Ferdinando, much less that of Queen Giovanna, her sister-in-law.

51

Giovanna, a very pious woman, was still a woman wounded in her dearest affections as wife and mother, and in the pride of her noble lineage, seeing a Venetian adventuress preferred to her, the daughter of an Emperor, and by birth the Queen of Hungary and Bohemia. This grief, which continually tormented her mind and preyed upon her health, at last rendered her so eager for revenge in any form, that, happening one evening, in crossing the bridge of the Santa Trinità, to meet Bianca, she ordered the carriage to stop, and commanded her guards to throw her enemy into the Arno; and if it had not been for Count Eliodoro Bastigli, a very worthy nobleman, who begged her to consider how unbecoming such an act would be to a Queen and a Christian, adding also that she should leave her cause to God, and offer her sorrows as an expiation for her sins, that would have been the last day of Bianca's life, since the guards, not very scrupulous about such matters, were on the point of laying violent hands upon her. Still this poor Giovanna could not so entirely conquer herself as not to hate mortally every one who had contributed to alienate her husband from her; among these, she suspected, and not unjustly, that Isabella stood first; and for this reason, and also that they were of natures, of desires, habits, and pursuits, not only different, but entirely incompatible with each other, there was no evil that she did not wish her; and although she repented and confessed her ill-will, nevertheless, weak human nature prevailing in her, she hated her worse than before.

52

As to Don Pietro, hardened to every kind of vice, forgetful not only of princely dignity, but even of what belonged to a man, Isabella could place as little reliance upon him. Alas! in so much sorrow, she found herself alone! No one could aid her

with counsel or help. Bitter thoughts now took possession of her, and these thoughts left their trace in a furrow upon her brow and a wound in her heart, such as God alone could heal, or death steep in oblivion.

Lelio, opening the door of the saloon, announced:

"The illustrious knight, Lionardo Salviati, desires to see your Ladyship."

"Lionardo Salviati!" she exclaimed, and then added to herself, "God surely sends him to me."

And Salviati entered, introduced with due ceremony.

There is no help for it:—according to established rule I should immediately make these two persons speak, and endeavor to invent a vivid, strong, and pointed dialogue, that the interest of the narrative might not flag. In narratives or dramas, all that prevents the action from progressing freely towards its end, is to be reprehended; the different parts ought all to converge towards the *denouement*, like so many straight lines, for a straight line, as we all know, is the shortest distance between two points. And the good Guizot reminds those who may have forgotten it, of this maxim, when, being ambassador in London, he allowed no other device to be engraved on his plate than a straight line, with the motto: *Linea recta brevissima*; whence he derived in France the title of Cato, and in Paris they made illuminations and bonfires about it. Does it not seem as if in France it is very easy to acquire the title of Cato? Whoever holds the above opinion is right, but I cannot abstain from infringing on the rule. How many times has it happened to you, my amiable lady-readers, to "Know the right, and yet the wrong pursue?" And then, I am beginning to grow old, and old age is garrulous. Moreover, when I took a fancy to narrate these and other events in the form of dramatic narratives, I designed, following the dictates of such rules, to let you know all the particulars I could give in regard to the persons and the times of which my story might treat. In fact (I do not say it to all, but to the greater number of you, my beloved lady-readers), who would give you such information, if I did not? Now that we are, as it were, *en famille*, confess whether you would ever have had the time and patience requisite to gather it from the folio and quarto volumes in which I found it? Heavy and worm-eaten books, which would contaminate the fairness of your white kid gloves, with a trace of dust not less horrible to behold than the blood upon the side of Adonis. Allow me then to speak in my own way; be a little gracious to me, for I profess myself entirely yours, and *kneeling with the knees of my mind*,^[2] honor you as much as I possibly can. Perhaps I shall not weary you; but should I be disappointed in this hope, the remedy lies in your own power; you can do what, in a similar case, Ludovico Ariosto advises:—

"Let him who will, pass pages three or four,
Not reading,"^[3]

for the history would not be marred by your so doing, nor would it proceed less intelligibly.

Who then was, and whence came this illustrious Sir Lionardo Salviati?

Sir Lionardo was the child of Giovanbattista di Lionardo Salviati, and Ginevra di Carlo Antonio Corbinelli. His family had often been at enmity with the family of the Medici. Cardinal Salviati conspired with the Pazzi to destroy it root and branch. The attempt failed, and they hung him from the window of the Palazzo della Signoria, just as they found him, in his episcopal robes. This circumstance by no means interrupted the good friendship, much less the good relationship of the two families; and one Salviati was father-in-law of Lorenzo the Magnificent, brother-in-law of Pope Leo X., and great-grandfather of the Grand Duke Cosimo, who was the son of Maria di Jacopo Salviati, so that Lionardo might be considered a relation of Isabella. Lionardo (although it could not well be said at that time, but can with perfect propriety be mentioned now) was scarcely two years older than Isabella, and they had been educated together, so that he had always loved her tenderly, as though she had been a sister. Of a delicate constitution, and gifted by nature with an amiable disposition, he was ill adapted for the violent knightly exercises of the times, and gave himself up entirely to the study of belles lettres and philosophy. His countenance was pale, his beard thin, his expression sad; his lungs were delicate, yet he had a strong voice; his pronunciation was so clear and sweet as to attract attention; and modulating his speech more like that of a petitioner than a commander, he easily drew to himself the ears and minds of those who listened to him. The Grand Duke Cosimo had conferred upon him the Order of St. Stefano, and he, accustomed to view matters superficially, wore the red cross devoutly upon his breast, fully convinced that the founder had no other aim than that of freeing the sepulchre of Christ from the hands of the dogs (for so were called the Turks in those times, and they paid us in turn in the same coin). Lionardo was born when the destinies of the Republic were buried; educated at court, a relative of the Prince, and well treated by him, he had never listened to the fiery words of the liberals, of whom some were wandering in miserable exile, while others had been cut off either by a natural death, the judicial axe, or the dagger of the assassin. Having heard them even from his childhood branded as grumbling,

mischievous men, who loved to fish in muddy streams, and who were the worst enemies of Florence, he had formed the opinion that Cosimo I. was the true liberator of the country, a faithful defender and supporter of the public safety,—a man, in short, of great worth, to be preferred to the ancients, rather than compared to the moderns. Add to this, that his vanity as writer was fully satisfied by Cosimo, who "made a pretence of patronizing men of letters, and showed it sometimes by words rather than by deeds; for no one of these was helped, honored, or supported by him, except in a slight degree."^[4] And in truth, when Lionardo recited the oration in honor of his coronation, Cosimo said to him, without the slightest approach to a smile, "that among his other reasons for prizing the dignity which he had received, was this most worthy and lofty oration which had followed it,"^[5] as if Cosimo, who had no more faith in white than in black, was a man to pay attention to such nonsense; but he did so to acquire renown at a cheap rate, or because he knew how much literary men love flattery, for if they often make vapory speeches, they oftener still are fed on wind. And certainly it was not Lionardo's fault if, through his writings, Cosimo was not famous in the memory of posterity, since he let no opportunity escape of exalting him to the skies with all manner of praises.

56

But with what reason or justice can we reproach Lionardo Salviati, when other famous writers spoke even more openly and unblushingly? We shall mention only Bernardo Davanzati, whom the translation of Tacitus ought to have inspired with the example, if not of his boldness, at least of his modesty, but who did not hesitate to declare from the pulpit, that "Cosimo's elevation was indeed a Divine dispensation, he having acquired rule, which is the most desirable and supreme of all blessings, called to it by his fellow-citizens' love, the means of all others the most just and holy, who, recognising the virtue of his heart and mind, unanimously elected him Prince in an heroic and natural manner. Siena, under his mild and lenient government, might say, like Themistocles, flying to Persia: "Woe to me if I had not lost, for then I should have been lost!" He recalled all the exiles to their homes, and restored to them their property; mild, benign, pious, most merciful, diligent in providing food that the people might not suffer famine, always eager to diminish the public taxes, and so solicitous for justice, that he loved it better than himself, of which he gave a manifest proof, when, while the war against Pietro Strozzi was raging, he prayed "God to give victory not to himself, but to him whose intentions were the best, and whose cause was the most just."^[6] If then, I say, writers who were neither relatives nor friends did not shrink from such and similar enormities, we cannot well reproach Lionardo if he ignored, or wished to ignore, the arms prepared by Cardinal Cibo, the perfidy of Francesco Vettori, of Roberto Acciaiuoli, of Matteo Strozzi, of the worst of all of them Francesco Guicciardini, the terrors spread, the violences committed, and the night of January 8, 1537, when, Cosimo being present, it was decided between the above mentioned persons, and Alessandro Vitelli, to elect Cosimo Duke, and if it were necessary, even to use force; and the morning of the 9th, when amidst the shouts of the soldiers who cried: "Hurra for the Duke and the Medici!"—and the threats of Vitelli, who swore "that if the Senators did not hasten to elect Cosimo, they would be all dead men," he was *unanimously* elected Duke.

57

Cosimo had promised Guicciardini that he would allow himself to be guided by him entirely; but for this once the intriguer was over-reached, and, strange as it may seem, by a youth of eighteen, who had promised also to marry Guicciardini's daughter, but the latter had not even the courage to remind him of it, and died overwhelmed with self-reproaches and the contempt of others.

58

It is the duty of an historian (but I am a poor novelist), it is the duty of every honest man to relate the good deeds of which human nature is justly proud. Benedetto Varchi, in the fifteenth book of his Histories, fearlessly narrates a noble act; first of all, he mentions that on the night preceding the *unanimous* election of Cosimo, it was resolved in a very secret conclave, that he should be elected Duke *by any means, even if it involved the necessity of using force*; and then relates an anecdote of the good Palla Rucellai, who boldly said that he no longer wished in the Republic either Princes or Dukes, and to prove that his deeds were consistent with his words, he took the black ball, and showing it to all, threw it into the ballot-box, exclaiming: "*This is my vote.*" Then when Guicciardini and Vettori reproved him for this, observing that his ball could count only for one, he replied: "*If you had decided beforehand what you intended to do, there was no need of calling me;*" and he rose to depart; but Cardinal Cybo detained him with cunning mildness, and endeavored to frighten him with the show of the surrounding arms, and representing the danger which he might incur; but the brave man, not at all startled, replied: "*Sir Cardinal, I am already more than sixty-two years old, so that now they can do me but very little harm.*" These are magnanimous examples, which can never be remembered or praised enough; and as many times as I consider that Benedetto Varchi wrote these histories by order of Cosimo, and read them to him, and that he listened to them without showing any resentment, I feel forced to conclude, that men capable of telling the truth seem to me even more rare than Princes capable of listening to it, and that *adulation is oftener the cowardice of courtiers than the requisition of Princes.*

59

Behold how joyful Siena was! Of the thirty thousand souls which it contained before

the war, hardly ten thousand remained; what with the misery, the battles, and painful massacres which he who wishes can find described in the Diary of Sozzini, or the narratives of Roffia, fifty thousand peasants perished, without enumerating those who took refuge in foreign lands. The country was deserted, the cultivation of the fields entirely neglected, and manufactures destroyed, so that Siena feels the consequences of it, even to this day. And as Tacitus says: "They make a desert and they call it peace."

Scipione Ammirato, either through conscientious scruples or horror unwilling to betray the truth, and equally unwilling to displease the Medicis, by whose orders he was writing, bethought himself of the expedient of leaving a hiatus in his history, which resembles the veil painted by Timanthes before the face of Agamemnon, in the sacrifice of Iphigenia. Bernardo Segni, on the contrary, in the histories which were published after his death, described this infamy of Siena, saying in conclusion: "They surrendered to the Duke, after having lost all their dominions, destroyed all their property, and the lives of almost all the men of that city and province."

60

As regards provisions, ten times there was a scarcity, and three times it was so great that people starved to death; nor in small numbers, for in the famine of 1554, over sixty thousand people died in Florence and throughout the state.^[7]

That he was mild and merciful, let certain extracts from manuscripts in the Magliabecchian and Riccardian libraries testify, from which we learn that in a very few years one hundred and thirty of the principal citizens of Florence were declared rebels; most of those who fell into his hands were either hung or beheaded; some were sent to the prisons or galleys; several assassinated; the property of all of them was confiscated, and even the dowries of the women. On most of the petitions imploring the life of some rebel, Cosimo inscribed with his own hand: "*Let him be hung.*"^[8] I have read somewhere, that he retained one thousand assassins in his employ; nor were they all plebeians, but some of them people of good standing; he himself was personally the executioner of several, since, not to mention his son, Don Garcia, no historian denies that he killed with his own hand Sforza Almeni of Perugia, "allowing, however," adds Aldo Manuzio, "the property of the murdered man to go to his heirs, and fulfilling his will as expressed in a certain document which was found in his pocket." Does not this seem to you the act of a most benign Prince!

As to the prayer made to God in the war with Strozzi, that He would give the victory to the righteous cause, we find testimonies respecting it in his commission to the Bishop of Cortona, who was sent to France under the pretext of paying his respects to the Queen, but in reality to corrupt the servants of Piero Strozzi, so that they might administer to their master the poison which he himself took to them in a vial, whereby he acquired the nickname of Bishop of the Vial,^[9] and also in the letter written to Captain Giovanni Orandini, preserved in the Annal XII. of the Colombaria, in which we read the following words, in regard to the order to assassinate Piero Strozzi: "Hence going to Siena, either by a gunshot, or in whatever other way may seem best to you, rid us of the arrogance of this man; in return for which, we can promise ten thousand crowns in cash, and our protection, besides honors and emoluments."^[10] Consequently it behoves us to confess that if he trusted much in God, he trusted even more in gunshots, or rather, that if it is true that he invoked the name of God, it was because he who is accustomed to deceive men, rises at last to such a degree of folly as to believe that he can even deceive God. And in reference also to his moderation in imposing taxes upon the people, let the following extract from an impartial historian suffice: "He oppressed the citizens and subjects with unheard of taxes, doubling the old, and adding new ones; in managing the state, he has in a great measure ruined the honor and property of his native place, and Tuscany."^[11]

61

He was indeed pious too, for after Scarperia had been destroyed, and Florence threatened by an earthquake, and the Palazzo della Signoria had been seven times struck by lightning in one day, he issued several decrees against blasphemy and other sins; and in addition to this, with a praiseworthy readiness, no sooner had he received the letter of Pius V., requesting him to consign Monsignor Pietro Carnesecchi to the Master of the Inquisition, accompanied by a recommendation from the Cardinal Pacheco (who mentioned to Cosimo that he had praised him before the Pope for two things, viz. that there was no prince in all Christendom more zealous for the Inquisition than he, and that there was nothing that the Pontiff's pleasure desired that he would not be willing to do), than without any delay, for Carnesecchi was in his own house, nay, even seated at his own dinner-table, he had him arrested and consigned to the Master. This violation of the duties of hospitality and the ties of friendship, for Carnesecchi had always been well disposed towards the house of the Medicis, and had long served Clement VII. as prothonotary, and Cosimo as secretary in Venice—this sacrifice of a man celebrated for his goodness and learning by Sadoletto, by Bembo, by Mureto, and by Manuzio, although Ammirato, eager to depreciate the importance of the man, calls him *not an ignorant person*—this sacrifice, I say, deserved a proportionate reward, which, if we do not find openly promised, is clearly enough hinted at in the following words from the

62

letter of June 19th, 1566, from Cardinal Pacheco to Cosimo: "Be then assured, that the good relation which your Excellency will hold with the Pope during this pontificate, will in a great measure depend upon this." In fact, Pietro Carnesecchi was decapitated and burned as an heretic on the 3d of October, 1567; and Cosimo was, by sanction of the Pope, crowned Grand Duke, with the privilege of wearing the royal crown, on the 4th of March, 1569. Carnesecchi suffered death with wonderful constancy, even with some ostentation of fortitude, for he dressed himself in his choicest garments and white gloves; but was Cosimo equally tranquil, when he closed his eyes in "that sleep which knows no waking?"

63

Notwithstanding these facts, known then by what has been before mentioned, and at the present day by being printed in history, I, for my part, would forgive the magnificent Knight Salviati for praising Cosimo and lauding to the skies his mercy, his valor, his prowess, and clemency, placing him before Augustus, since the latter had to use proscription, while the former had not; although Cosimo himself was contented to resemble Augustus, under whose constellation, which was Capricornus, his astrologer Don Basilio assured him that he was born; but a fault for which neither I nor any one else can pardon Salviati is the following sentence, which, since I shudder to put my hands upon it, I shall report as it is written:

"They who refuse the government of their country or republic, when offered to them, have given manifest proof, not only of the cowardice of their minds, but of impiety and arrogance. Of cowardice, I say, failing in courage, and refusing honors and governments, which are very desirable; of impiety, if, knowing themselves capable, they have denied their services to their country; of arrogance, if, thinking themselves incompetent, they have preferred their own opinion of themselves to the judgment of their country."

64

Ah! Sir Lionardo, what sad reasoning is this! How sophistical, cunning, and entirely unworthy of a grave man does it sound! How far did the evil genius of lying flattery carry you! Would it seem honest to you if any one should accept the gifts of a crazy man? Much more if they are gifts which ought not to be made, and such is the liberty of one's own country, which cannot be alienated, for it is derived from God, and belongs to Him; it is not peculiar to any, but appertains to all generations; and the present generation, disinheriting posterity of it, as an enemy of its own race commits an unlawful act. Is a physician arrogant when he does not neglect the disease of a sick man, but mercifully cures him? The people, when wearied of their own dignity, crouch on the ground like the camel, entreating some one to ride them (even if they are not driven to it, as is generally the case, by treachery or fraud); in this condition they can either be cured or not. In the first case they ought to be cured, and then, if the example of Lycurgus seems too hard to follow, one ought to adopt that of Solon, or Andrea Doria, or choose voluntary exile, for a man can ill live as a citizen where he has ruled as a prince; in the second case, all efforts being of no avail, let him, like Sylla, throw away the battle-axe, and abandon them to the wrath of God. Such at least ought to be the rule of those men whom the world calls great, and who, after having departed from this world, furnish themes for the tongues of orators and the fancy of poets, and remind us of our divine origin. To no citizen is it permitted, either by force or by genius, offered or usurped, to take away the liberty of his country; morality, affection, religion, especially the Christian religion, all forbid it. Yes, indeed, the Christian religion, because, rejecting the distinction of St. Thomas as scholastic, and proposed rather as an abstract disquisition, than as true in practice, between a tyrant imposed upon us by force, and a tyrant imposed voluntarily by ourselves, that act is right, which we can always choose, as Aristotle teaches. Now how can the usurpation of one's country ever be eligible? As to the usurper, can he or will he consult from time to time the will of the people? Will he know, or will he wish to know, if the movement that so exalted him was truly spontaneous and universal? When it will decline or when cease? As to the people, may it not be a transient hallucination and infirmity of the country, since the country consists in the faithful association of the citizens, to which we consecrate our affection and reverence, and if needed, our property and our lives; and this removed, the place in which we live cannot be called our country, nor deserve such sacrifices. If our country is more than a mother to us, who is there that could enslave his own mother? If a mother were to propose it, she should be treated as an insane person, and not be listened to; and if the son were to accept it, he should be abhorred as impious. And mark, that such usurpations are usually surrounded with appearances of free elections; Julius Cæsar himself ordered that in the Lupercalia he should be presented with a crown. Moreover, liberty, next to life, is our most precious possession; now the dearer anything is to us, the less we can presume to make a gift of it; and if even it could be alienated, can we look upon liberty as legitimately yielded, if surrendered in a moment of passion, fury, or error? Finally, let us imagine that the country, when in trouble, should call upon a citizen to restore it to peace; certainly his rule is needed until the object be accomplished. Now, either the citizen is capable of accomplishing the wish of his country or he is not; if capable, let him fulfil the duty to which he is called, and then retire; if not capable, he fails in his object, and must retire. But I, perchance, am endeavoring to demonstrate what does not need demonstration: what presumption, what folly it is, to prove by means of arguments what nature and God

65

66

have engraven in our hearts! Lionardo Salviati, writing the above-mentioned sentences, did not perhaps believe them himself; he did it for a show of eloquence, or rather for rhetorical paradox, and he perceived his error, though too late to repair it, and was never happy afterwards, but cursed the hour in which he learned to write prose; dismayed when the truth was presented to his mind, awe-struck by memories of blood, he begged God, who mercifully listened to his prayer, to shorten a life so ill employed in behalf of the truth and of mankind, whom, nevertheless, he ardently loved.

It remains to be seen how high in literature our Salviati ought to be ranked, but the nature of this book not allowing it as I could wish, I will do my best to contract the whole into a short space. He was a very profound scholar, both in the Greek and Latin languages, and an excellent master of the Italian; he acquired and treasured up a much larger amount of learning than he taught or published; according to the custom of those literati, whom we can compare to nothing better than a miser's chests; he composed a great deal of poetry, both grave and gay, which, thank heaven, is at the present day neither known nor published. At the age of twenty he wrote the *Dialogue on Friendship*, in which he introduces Girolamo Benivieni to speak the praises of friendship to Jacopo Salviati and Piero Ridolfi. The subject might indeed have been an affecting one, as he feigned that, on account of the loss of his best friend, Pico della Mirandola, a wonderful youth, called the Phoenix of talents, Girolamo had determined to starve himself to death; but he afterwards came to a wiser decision; he changed his grief into joy, imagining that God had called Pico before his time, as most deserving to share the rewards of the saints in heaven; but the soulless words, the pedantic distinctions, the want of imagination and heart excite in us neither pleasure nor pity, and weariness overcomes us before we reach the end. His comedies, "*La Spina*" and "*Il Granchio*," are a mixture made from the fragments left by Plautus and Terence, so that it is easy to imagine what they are. The usual old match-making nurses, the usual cheats and blacklegs, credulous old men, impossible incidents, improbable recognitions, Florentine jests, and heavy language, so that we wonder how people could take delight in such representations, which at the present day we should hardly dare to impose upon them as a penance. As to his five essays upon a sonnet of Petrarch, we have only to say that they prove rather the extent of our forefathers' wonderful patience, than the great genius of the author. His orations, the funeral ones particularly, are really flowers for the dead. Under the *nom de plume of Infarinato*^[12] he wounded with bitter writings the sorrowful spirit of Torquato Tasso; but the *Jerusalem* remains, and the writings of Salviati are read by no one; and this act injures Salviati both as a writer and as a man, if indeed even in this, his blind devotion to the house of the Medicis does not excuse him. He abridged the Decameron of Boccaccio, but posterity laugh at his abridgment, and wish Boccaccio entire. However, he had a great veneration for this eminent author, and wrote three volumes of *Advices* in regard to the beauty of the language drawn from the Decameron: these volumes may, even in our own day, and perhaps now more than ever, be consulted by the students of our most glorious tongue. The language used by Salviati is pure, but says nothing; it seems an ornament of a corpse; no ideas, no thought, no imagination; obliged to avoid the great, which is the truth, he was compelled to have recourse to the false, and we can already perceive in him the sad dawn of the sixteenth century. In proof of what I say, let the following extract from his Oration for the Coronation of Cosimo I. bear witness:—"These walls, most blessed father, and these houses, and these temples, seem to burn with the desire to present themselves before the feet of your Holiness, and this river, and these shores, and these mountains seem to desire feet in order to come to you, and these seas, and this heaven, a tongue to speak, and, if unable to tell all that is in their hearts, at least to thank you, and personally to acknowledge themselves your debtors for so great a benefit." Abundant words, no eloquence, epithets, adjectives, expletives without number, one period intermingled by so many other periods intermingling again among themselves, that the elocution is confused, difficult, entangled, and, above all, painful. Parini thought that he might be read with advantage; I, except the *Advices* already mentioned, do not think so; and Annibale Caro, although somewhat inclined to the same opinion regarding Salviati, let it be clearly understood that he did not consider his style commendable, for it was exceedingly verbose, wandered uncertainly, was full of meaningless epithets, of long periods, and of many more sentences than were necessary for clearness of expression, which engenders confusion, and wearies the listeners.

In short, Sir Lionardo was neither a good citizen nor a powerful writer, and yet a man of excellent natural disposition, affectionate to his friends, and most eager for their welfare. Some will think it impossible that one individual could be the best of men and yet a bad citizen; but if there is any contradiction we see it in nature, and I could mention modern examples if propriety allowed.

Lionardo, entering the room, first took good care to ascertain that the page had closed the door, then drew a screen before it, and advanced smilingly towards

67

68

69

Isabella, extending his hand. But Isabella rushed impulsively towards him, and placing her hand on his shoulder, and leaning her head upon his breast, exclaimed:

"O my good and noble Lionardo, you at least have not forgotten your Isabella."

Lionardo, confused and deeply moved by such an exhibition of feeling, replied:

"My dear lady Isabella, how or why should I have forgotten you?"

70

They stood thus for a little while, and then seating themselves upon the couch, Isabella, looking in his face, continued:

"It is so long since we have seen each other; and you look ill. Lionardo, such excess of study injures you."

"O Isabella," said Lionardo, "my trouble is here," and he struck his heart, "and I pray God daily that He will call me to His holy peace, and it seems as if He most mercifully was beginning to listen to me. But let us not talk of myself—I do not come here on my own account, your ladyship. Now I pray you to hear what I have to say, as if I were a brother. So long as I knew you to be, if not happy, at least safe, I kept far from you. I might have wished you to remain happy, because," and here he lowered his voice, "true happiness consists in a life of virtue; but my endeavors have been useless, as well as the admonitions of Cosimo, your father, who often warned you, saying 'Isabella, I shall not live for ever.'"

Isabella, calling up all her womanly pride, interrupted him:

"Sir Lionardo, what are you saying? If I am not mistaken you mean to offend me."

"Isabella, surely I did not come here for that. Do you believe that I take pleasure in saying what I do? Do you think that I have spent my years so uselessly as to hazard imprudent words or worse? Why do you repulse me? Why dissemble with me? But no matter; I do not ask the secrets of your heart. If you do not believe me worthy of sharing them, I consent to remain ignorant. But hear what is said of you; hear the danger and let us provide a remedy."

71

"I have done no wrong; who can accuse me? What trace"—

Salviati murmured in her ear, "The trace is outside the gate of Prato."

"Ah!" cried Isabella frightened, and starting up after a few moments as if to go away, added, "At least let him be saved."

Lionardo, detaining her by her dress, said, "Stay, we can see to it better here."

Isabella, shaking her head, tossed her hair with both hands from her forehead, as if grown bold by despair, she wished all her shame to be read there, and murmured—

"Well, I am guilty."

"Isabella, your life is in danger."

"Mine? And by whom? Has Giordano returned from Rome?"

"No. But what has Giordano to do with it?"

"And who but he could with justice attempt my life? Francesco? Would he punish in another his own sin? Piero? So plunged in every kind of vice that the waters of the Arno would not suffice to purify him."

"Justice? And do you, a daughter of Cosimo, seek for justice here below? Francesco hates in others what he indulges in himself. A doubtful rumor has reached his ears that his enemies, rejoicing as the wicked do, despise his family, publishing accusations that are not true, or which, if true, proceed mostly from himself; and in his dark soul he suspects his Bianca, and wishes to frighten her, that she may never have a single affection except for him."

"Lionardo, you speak dreadful words, which, though I cannot disprove, I yet cannot entirely believe. In fact they seem mostly suspicions; but there is a great difference between thinking a thing and wishing it, and between wishing and doing it."

72

"Yes, truly; your relations are accustomed to submit their fierce passions to reason; but I must undertake the thankless office of speaking ill of persons whose reputation is dear to you. Isabella, believe me, upon my soul your life is in danger."

"Lionardo, you who are so wise must understand only too well how in such important matters man cannot easily be convinced by the belief of others. You have done much, too much perhaps, to permit you to deny me the lesser"—

"It is true; and I have come here ready to hazard my life. I do not ask discretion for myself, I ask it for you, and for one whom I know you love better than yourself."

"It is well. Speak."

"Yesterday morning early I went to see Don Francesco, who had sent to ask me about some correction of Boccaccio, which I had undertaken by his orders. He was in his laboratory. I nevertheless caused myself to be announced by a valet, who returned shortly, telling me to go in there, for his Highness would receive me as one of the family unceremoniously in his study. I found Don Francesco very busy over a furnace, examining some substance in a glass vial. As soon as he saw me, he said, 'Good morning and a happy year, cousin Lionardo. I am in the midst of an experiment which does not seem to succeed very well. Now I will read your work on the Decameron, which you have corrected to your own liking, letting the beauties remain and taking away whatever offends good taste and religion. What a pity that Giovanni Boccaccio had not good taste! But is there no danger, Lionardo, that he is utterly lost? Or is it true that before dying he repented and left the world in the odor of sanctity?' To which question I replied that the holy Giovanni Colombini, in the life of the holy Pietro dei Petroni, assures us that the holy Pietro, a little while before his departure to a better life, sent Giovacchini Ciani to reprove Boccaccio for his writings and for his bad taste, and at the same time to reveal certain secrets, so buried in his own memory that he was very sure that no one but himself knew of them, which so affected Boccaccio that he bitterly mourned his past errors, and confessing himself before God made a wonderful repentance. 'Thanks,' replied Francesco, 'you have given me great consolation in assuring me that our Giovanni is in a place of safety. Now be kind enough to wait for me a few minutes while I despatch this business. Go into the library, you will find a goodly number of books, besides several new ones.' I entered the library and pretended to read the first book that I took up, but in reality watched the doings of Francesco. He kept blowing the fire and looking at the vial; then turning to a little vase upon the table and taking from it a pinch of powder, he examined it attentively and said, 'I must confess our ancestors knew more than we do, or that they pretended to. The color is there; the appearance is the same; but the taste—the taste—and without doubt there must be arsenic in it. Yet in the notes of my Poggio, and in the Trivigiana Chronicle, I find that the Count de Virtù (by my faith that title seems to fit him well!) poisoned his uncle Bernabo with a poison that seemed precisely like salt, putting it very naturally upon French beans; but I have not been able to find it. I would give a thousand ducats.' Just then a valet entered and announced the High Sheriff. I know not why, but I began to tremble. I looked around the room to see if there were any outlet, and perceived a door opening upon the court-yard. Just as I was on the point of going out, God inspired me to turn back. I followed the inspiration, as I have always found it best to do, and began to listen carefully. The Sheriff had entered and was saying, 'The Knight Antinori, as your Serene Highness knows, arrived yesterday from Porto Ferraio.'"

73

"How!" interrupted Isabella, "the Knight Bernardo in Florence without our knowledge?"

"The Knight Antinori is at this moment in his grave, God have mercy upon his soul!"

"Holy Mother of God! What do I hear? Are you sure of it, Lionardo?"

"Let me finish. The Sheriff continued: 'We brought him immediately to the Knight Serguidi, who threatened him terribly for the shame brought upon his Prince, warning him, should he find him guilty, that he would leave him to your mercy. But the Knight denied all steadfastly, until Serguidi produced a letter, saying in a menacing tone: "Can you deny this?" The Knight, as soon as he saw the paper, became as white as a sheet; perfectly overwhelmed, he raised his hands in entreaty, without uttering a word. "Go," added Serguidi, "you do not deserve pardon." The Knight departed trembling, and went mechanically towards his house. I followed him with some guards, and amused myself with watching him.' 'Your usual habit!' interrupted Francesco; 'give me the bellows; go on, I am listening; tell all, for I take pleasure in it.' And the Sheriff continued: 'He went as if by inspiration, for he went towards the palace. When he had reached the gate of Lions, I advanced and said to him: "Sir, be pleased to allow me to serve you as major-domo; our most noble master has ordered lodgings suitable for you to be prepared here." The Knight looked at me as if in a dream, but let me lead him like a lamb: this morning, before daybreak, I entered his prison with the chaplain, and he was sleeping like one enchanted—' 'Was sleeping?' asked Francesco, lifting up his face, which seemed as if stained with blood, from the burning coals. 'He was sleeping.' 'He should not have slept.' 'Yet he did sleep.' 'You let him pass his last night in peace. So it may be said that he suffered nothing. And I cannot begin over again. Is it not so?' The Sheriff gave an affirmative nod with his head, and continued: 'I shook him, and he awoke, and raising himself up into a sitting posture on the bed, asked: "What is it?" "Rouse yourself for a moment," I replied to him, "and afterwards you may sleep at your ease; here is a priest; you have but one hour to live."' 'And what did he say?' said Francesco. 'He replied: "May God's will be done." 'What! did he say that?' 'He did.' 'But have they no fear of death?' 'It seems that you have accustomed them to it.' 'In this case, death seems too small a thing; we will take care in future.' 'He confessed in due form, and then asked me for writing materials. I brought him paper, pen, and ink, but he trembled so that he could not write a word. Look, your Highness,' and he showed a paper. Francesco,

74

75

76

putting down the bellows, took it, and after examining it, said: 'What an odd thing, I can read nothing here.' 'I told you he could not write a word. Then I thought it well to observe: "Sir Knight, since I perceive that you are unable to do your duty, allow me to do mine;" I then handcuffed him, and putting a rope round his neck, hung him according to your command.' 'It is well—and the Captain Francesco!' 'Oh, the Captain had got wind of it and escaped; he cannot be found in Florence.' Don Francesco burst into a great passion, his mouth quivered and his eyes sparkled. 'Go, pursue him!' he exclaimed, 'send special couriers, despatch horses—to the confines—to the confines.' But the Sheriff knew not what to do. Meantime the glass vial, from some unknown cause, burst, and some of the fragments of the broken glass struck the Sheriff on the face, penetrating into the flesh; he uttered a cry of pain. Don Francesco then, in a moment, grew thoughtful and silent, except that turning towards the Sheriff, he said coldly: 'Hasten to cure yourself, for the glass is poisoned.' The Sheriff fled hastily, groaning: 'Oh, my poor wife and children!' If any one at that moment had tried to bleed me, not a drop of blood would have followed the lancet. I felt as if nailed to the spot. I began to commend my soul to God, but by good chance Francesco sank into a seat, leaning his head down, as if buried in profound thought; and I distinctly heard him mutter more than once to himself: 'Now, we will look after the women, and quickly too; but Giordano is in Rome, and without his consent it would not be right; I might take the liberty—but no—let him think to render an account—to whom? To God—to God! Oh, this God lays claim to so many accounts!' I meantime, having regained my courage, went softly out by the door that opened into the court-yard, and took refuge under the open vault of heaven, for while in that house I feared every moment that the walls of the accursed place would fall upon us!"

77

Isabella seemed petrified by this atrocious recital; and the unhappy Lionardo, burying his face in his hands, said in a mournful voice:

"O my God! I have used my speech, the noblest gift with which Thou hast endowed man, to praise these Medicis! What will posterity think of me? May my works be scattered! May my descendants soon forget them! And thou, O Lord, who seest my sorrow by my wishing oblivion for the creations of my mind, for which I have spent my health and talents, Thou knowest how truly this prayer comes from my heart."

Great indeed must have been the grief that saddened the heart of Lionardo Salviati!

But soon recalling himself to the present emergency, Salviati turned to Isabella and said:

"Come, Isabella, courage!"

"It is not fear that affects me—it is horror, it is shuddering dread. Unhappy Eleonora! so young, so happy, so attached to pleasures and to life! We must save her, we must warn her."

"My Lady, remember, it is not your secret; we will think of saving her afterwards."

"Well, my only friend, my father, my all; I intrust myself soul and body in your hands."

"It is well, time presses; you must write a letter to her Majesty Catherine of France; she has a noble heart; bred to misfortunes, she must have learned to help the unfortunate; and a Medici herself by birth, she will shrink from having her family disgraced by domestic tragedies. Relationship also may do something, and each of these considerations separately, or all combined, seem to me more than enough to excite her royal heart to grant you an asylum, and provide means for your flight. I will undertake the responsibility of a letter reaching her at Paris; this evening a relation of mine, one of the Corbinelli family, a discreet and prudent young man, sets out for Lyons, and he can either consign it to the Lieutenant of the city, or if he does not consider it safe to do so, will for my sake carry it himself to Paris. As soon as we receive a reply, it will not be difficult to convey you to Leghorn, and when there, you can embark for Genoa, or, better still, for Marseilles; reaching which you may think yourself safe—"

78

"But Eleonora?"

"Then we will warn her, and she can either join you, or go to Spain to the Duke d'Alba, or to her brother the Viceroy of Naples. But now you must write the letter, for time flies." Isabella began to write; but although she had a wonderful facility in composition, words now seemed to fail her; she hesitated and kept beginning anew: many and deep feelings, as may be easily imagined, disturbed her mind. At last the letter was written, and she said:

"See, Lionardo, if it reads well; I never in my life composed anything with more difficulty than this letter. Forget that you are the *Infarinato*, I beg of you—"

"Let us begin."

"Most honored Queen: one related to you by ties of blood, the only surviving

79

daughter of Cosimo dei Medici, entreats you to save her life. Permit me to be silent as to whether I am innocent or guilty of the crime which my death is intended to expiate; but if guilty, let my youth, the absence of my husband, opportunity, the examples set before me, and a woman's heart overflowing with love, plead for me, as one not entirely unworthy of pardon. I have much to fear from the Duke of Bracciano, my husband, and more from my brother Francesco. I confide implicitly in you; give me that assistance which the urgency of the case demands, that it may not be too late. To me, you will preserve life, to your house, fame, and you will perform an act worthy of such a magnanimous Queen, and one for which God will amply reward you. I will follow whatever course your prudence may dictate, hoping and wishing to spend in some holy convent, devoted to God's service, the remainder of my miserable life, and to obtain through His mercy, remission of my sins."

"To Catherine, Queen of France."

"It seems right to me; copy it, and add that an answer should be directed to me."

"But," added Isabella, looking down and blushing, "shall I abandon Troilo?"

"Troilo," answered Lionardo gravely, "knows that the Turks are threatening Christendom; he must go to Hungary to fight the enemies of the faith, and by an honorable death gain God's pardon. But be careful that he knows nothing of all this; he will certainly ruin you and himself too."

Isabella uttered a deep sigh, and with trembling hand began to copy the letter. As soon as it was finished, Lionardo burned the first copy and made an envelope with great care; he sealed the letter with the Medici arms, and just as he was about to write the direction, he heard a noise as of a body thrown with violence against the wall, and then falling upon the pavement; the door was suddenly opened, and Troilo appeared, drawing aside the screen; standing in the door-way, he exclaimed with anger:

"One would think that you were weary of life!"

Lionardo concealed the letter in his bosom as quickly as possible; but not so expeditiously but that Troilo perceived the movement, and advancing a few steps into the room, stopped, and fixing his sinister eyes with an ironical smile upon the Duchess, said:

"Since you choose to place guards at your door, I advise your ladyship to select, if not more impertinent—that is impossible—at least more valiant ones."

"I thought that, in my own house, the declaration of my will would be sufficient——"

"But you thought wrong, for you see that I have entered." And then laying aside his ironical tone, he added angrily: "What subterfuges, what treasons are these? You would betray me, Lady Isabella! But if death is to be met, remember there are two of us. If you are of the Medici race, I am of the Orsini; and I swear by Heaven that no dog ever bit me, without my being revenged on him. What are you doing, Sir Knight? What paper is that which you have hidden in your bosom? Take it out quickly, I must see it."

"Sir Knight," replied Salviati, in an unruffled voice, "it is something which does not in the least concern you, and you cannot honorably demand——"

"We can decide upon that after reading the letter."

"Permit me to decline satisfying you, Sir Knight."

"Signor Salviati, I am little used to opposition; give me the letter, it will be better for you."

"Troilo, if you esteem my favor dear to you, I command you to be silent and depart ——"

"Isabella, it is now time for you to cease commanding and begin to obey."

"Sir Troilo, I assure you upon the faith of an honorable Knight, that this does not concern you."

"Faith! Perhaps the same with which you sounded the praises of his Highness, Sir Cosimo! An honorable Knight never enters by stealth the house of another, nor meddles in affairs that do not concern him, nor hatches plots, for if they were not plots, you would not refuse to give an account of them."

"And who are you, then, Sir Troilo, I pray you——"

"I?—I am he to whom the Duke of Bracciano gave the charge of his wife——"

"And dare you make a right of this charge? Ah! Sir Troilo."

"What do you mean, Salviati? Beware! I am a man capable of cutting out your tongue—you know——"

"Troilo, how can you so far forget yourself? You owe him as much respect as if he were my brother."

"Your brothers are worthy of respect, truly! The letter, Salviati—the letter!"

"I will never give it to you."

"Beware, or I will use force——"

"Would you act the ruffian? Do you not see that I am unarmed?"

"So much the better; I can the more easily accomplish my wishes. But had you a sword, it would make no difference; he who wields the pen, can ill wield the sword." 82

"The letter is next my heart," said Salviati, crossing his arms over his breast, "and you shall not have it unless you tear forth both."

"And I will do it——"

"Madman! Before touching him, you must pass over my body!" cried Isabella, rushing between Troilo and Lionardo.

"Back!" exclaimed Troilo, and with one dash of the hand he pushed the Duchess upon the couch.

"Ah miserable, miserable Isabella! For what a man have you sacrificed your life!"

"The letter!"

"I have told you the only way to obtain it."

"Your blood be upon your own head."—And drawing his dagger with his left hand, Troilo sought to stab him. Lionardo did not move a step: intrepid, his arms still folded on his breast, he stood ready to suffer a violence to which, by his personal weakness, as well as by his being unarmed, he could oppose no resistance. Troilo had almost reached him, when the door was hastily thrown open, and Lelio Torelli appeared, much excited, and exclaimed with a loud voice:

"His Lordship, Duke of Bracciano!"

This name had the effect of a Medusa's head upon Troilo; he recoiled, quickly replacing his dagger in its sheath, and endeavoring to compose his ruffled countenance; but these two contrary sentiments, anger and self-control, instead of inducing composure, so disordered him that he was fearful to look upon.

Isabella, who was lying terrified upon the couch, raised herself as if by electricity, and stood looking intently at the door. 83

The Knight, Salviati, thinking that not being a member of the family, he might go out as if nothing had happened, saluting the Duke as he passed, and reserving his compliments for another time, departed without any appearance of haste, and with his usual composure. Passing through the halls and down the staircase, he wondered greatly at neither meeting the Duke, nor seeing in the court-yard nor at the door, any indications of his arrival; he did not understand what it meant, but did not deem it prudent to go back to discover, thinking that it could be explained at some other time.

Isabella and Troilo kept their eyes intently fixed upon the door for some moments, expecting to see Sir Paolo Giordano appear; but finding that they looked in vain, Troilo, overcoming his astonishment the first, asked Lelio.

"Well, where is the Duke?"

Lelio, sure by this time of Salviati's safety, turned with an ingenuous, yet at the same time mocking look towards Isabella, saying:

"His Lordship, Duke of Bracciano, sends greeting to your Ladyship, and notifies you, that after despatching a few other affairs at Rome, he depends upon joining your Ladyship towards the middle of the coming month of June."

And making a low bow, and looking somewhat askance at Troilo, he retired. Troilo, perceiving the trick, clenched his hands and muttered between his teeth:

"Traitorous dog, you shall pay me for this!"

CHAPTER IV.

HOMICIDE.

FRANZ. Voi volete farmi morire di languore. Io morirò di disperazione nella età della speranza, e voi ne avrete la colpa ... Dio mio! io che non ho goccia di sangue che non sia vostro! io, che respiro soltanto per amarvi, e per obbedirvi in tutto....

ADELAIDE. Esci dai mio cospetto....

FRANZ. Signora!

ADELAIDE. Va, accusami dunque al tuo signore:

GOETHE. *Goetz di Berlichingen.*

FRANZ. You wish me to die of anguish. I shall die with despair in the springtime of my hope, and it will be your fault.... Ye gods! I have not a drop of blood which is not yours! I exist only to love and obey you in everything....

ADELAIDE. Leave my presence....

FRANZ. My Lady!

ADELAIDE. Go then, accuse me to your Lord....

Mistrust had insinuated itself into Isabella's heart, like an asp into a nest. Troilo's cruel words rang incessantly in her ears; she saw his cowardly suspicion, she felt that she might even be betrayed and accused by him; and gazing into this abyss of crime, she was overpowered by a moral tremor, not unlike the physical shudder which one experiences while looking down an Alpine precipice; she therefore took every means to avoid meeting Troilo, or if she did meet him, was always accompanied by some one. On the other hand, the necessity of keeping Lelio Torelli near her increased, and the attention of the youth, his devotion, and diligence in pleasing her, could not but make Isabella regard him with singular affection. Destined, as it were, always to be imprudent, she did not consider that the boy was fast approaching manhood, and that at his age the passions overwhelm the soul like a hurricane: she did not fear, she did not even perceive the fatal passion that consumed Lelio. Only instead of kissing him on the forehead as she used when he was a boy, she sometimes smoothed his beautiful hair, and patted him kindly on the cheek, as a mother might caress a dear son; and let him who now feels the ardor of a first love, or has once felt it, judge if this was not adding fuel to the flame. Almost always absorbed in her own imminent danger, Isabella did not care for, or perhaps notice certain acts of Lelio, that in a more peaceful frame of mind she would easily have understood. When she walked in the garden, for she now rarely left the house, she often became so lost in thought, that in order to avoid the trees or statues, she took Lelio's arm, and as her feelings prompted, would press it more or less, so that her soul was, by these means, transfused into the youth more vividly than by an electric shock, and he gazed upon her with long, passionate looks, and drank deep draughts of the poison that had already irremediably darkened his very life.

85

How changed was Torelli's face! One could hardly have told his age; his lips were parted and burning like a man consumed with tormenting thirst, his cheeks thin and hollow, and often bathed with perspiration. The fatal passion, planted like a dagger in his heart, had given birth to so many disorders of his nervous system, that the slightest emotion would cause him to tremble from head to foot, for many minutes; his veins were swollen, and at every slight movement his breast would heave as if about to burst; a continual anxiety tortured him: when any sudden light burst upon him, myriads of sparks or a dizzy mist would veil his eyesight; he had a painful beating in his temples, his food was distasteful to him, his nights were sleepless, or full of frightful dreams. Such misery could not, and did not last.

86

It was the evening of a most beautiful day in June: the last rays of the setting sun bathed half the globe in a clear golden light, and when this light died away five brilliant rays were diffused over the blue canopy of heaven, representing to the awakened fancy the hand of the Creator, peacefully extended to bless all nature: the triumphal leaves of the laurel, the pointed myrtle, the dented oak, and all the multiform family of trees seemed so distinctly outlined on this glorious field, that one might almost have counted them: the evening wind stirred the topmost branches, which, swaying to and fro, seemed as if interchanging mysterious words; the birds, before closing their eyes to sleep, sang, with the sweetest notes that nature teaches, and that nature alone can teach, a hymn to the Lord; the rivulet, breaking over the stones, did not seem to weep, but to murmur joyfully in its noisy babbling; sweet odors arose from the open chalices of the flowers; with all the powers granted by heaven to created things, the sky, the earth, and the waters seemed vieing with each other in testifying their gratitude towards the Great Father of the universe, and an enchantment sprang from all, and a voice arose, which seemed to say,—We are born to love!

Isabella had come out upon the terrace, and sitting there, leaned her arm upon Lelio's shoulder, and supported her face upon her hand; her eyes uplifted, she

87

seemed a Niobe, or rather a penitent Magdalen, as the noble imagination of Guido afterwards conceived her. This attitude of prayer, of mute sorrow, and of weary peace was almost unearthly to look upon: misfortune had indeed faded her beauty; the slow fever that consumed her life veiled it in a sad cloud, but still her brow appeared, as ever, of wonderful loveliness—beautiful as that of a fallen angel!

She gazed upon the heavens, and Lelio upon her, for in the lady's face he saw his heaven; and thus he remained absorbed and motionless as a statue; his eyes were filled with tears, that flowed abundantly down his cheeks without anguish or any other sensation; as I have sometimes seen the dew gathered in the hollow of some statue's eyes, so that it seemed to be weeping; then his tears ceased to flow, his eyes became dry and dilated, glittering with an evil light, a tremor like the chill of a fever spread through him; suddenly, scarce knowing what he did, overcome by a power stronger than himself, he threw his arms round Isabella, and covered her face, neck, and bosom with kisses, with such convulsive madness, such great passion, that in truth it was deserving of pity, for one would have said,—This youth pours out his soul in these kisses.

Isabella, taken for a moment by surprise, resumed the haughtiness of her offended dignity, and more than dignity, her royal pride, and trembling herself, but from intense scorn, pushed the young page violently from her, and unlocked her arm from his; then without a word, her eyes sparkling, she walked to her room that opened upon the terrace: Lelio, trance-like, followed her, as if unconscious of what he had done. Isabella quickly approached a table, and took a little silver bell resolutely in her hand; then paused suddenly, as if "at war 'twixt will and will not;" already a milder thought seemed to bloom amid this storm of passion, although anger predominated; as we sometimes see the fury of the winds striving with the fury of the waves; but when the wind is calmed, and the glorious light of the sun again shining forth, the roaring of the angry and turbulent billows still continues. After some hesitation, the first impulse conquered, and she rang the bell twice, once was not enough; a valet appeared, to whom the Duchess said:—"Send the major-domo."

88

The major-domo, after some delay, entered to receive the commands of the Duchess. Don Inigo was a Spaniard by birth, as faithful and discreet as a good Toledo blade; he never laughed, beyond what was absolutely necessary; one hardly heard him speak three words in a month; robust in form, haughty in aspect, bilious in temperament,—who knows what ever passed in the mind of such a man? He was as secret as the grave.

"My Lady," he said, bowing.

"Don Inigo, our page, Lelio, has expressed a wish to return to the home of his aged parents, and it does not seem right in us to oppose so natural a desire. His mother, poor woman! who knows with how many prayers she recalls him, and it would seem cruelty to refuse her this consolation. She will see her son improved in every kind of accomplishment that is required in a gentleman; she will see him honorable, honest, and, above all, innocent, and may he be the pride of her life. Don Inigo, you will accompany Lelio to Fermo, and say to his parents that he has always been a good and honest page, that he leaves with us the loving memory of a son, that in anything wherein my influence can aid him, it shall be my pleasure to exert it: assure his mother especially that depraved habits have no power over him, that I complain of nothing in the youth, except certain boyish faults, too bold, but which time will surely remedy, because they are boyish ones; nevertheless, I advise her to select from among the young ladies of Fermo, one who, by her beauty, her sweet manners, and tender love, may subdue a spirit of too much ardor, a heart that is not without some passion. You will take with you, Inigo, his white jennet, with all its crimson-velvet trappings, his clothes, and everything that belongs to him, so that nothing of his may remain with us, that we have given him or intend to give. From the wardrobe of the Duke, our husband, select a chain, and a medallion to be affixed to his cap, and put it in his valise; also a hundred gold sequins, and an ample certificate showing his valued services, which you will sign and seal with our ducal signet. If the youth should not be well, take one of our coaches, and in our name take the post-horses, which will be given you, and set out at any rate. Tomorrow's sun must not see you in Florence. Adieu!"

89

She then raised her right hand, and gave the signal with which pride waves humility to depart. But, as if anxious to soften the harshness of the act, she added:

"Go, Lelio, we shall ever wish you happiness, and be most glad to hear of your prosperity."

Don Inigo could not understand the necessity of wasting so many words upon so small a matter, deeming the word—"Go," sufficient; except what was requisite concerning the horse, the sequins, the medallion and chain; but, before troubling himself with all this conversation, he had resolved not to pay any attention to it. Lelio, with downcast face, his body bent, as if broken by the weight of sorrow that was laid upon him, followed the major-domo like a criminal following the executioner who leads him to death.

90

Isabella gazed after him, until the door closed and hid him from her sight, then striking both hands upon her head, exclaimed:

"Ah, unfortunate woman that I am! How many are made unhappy for me!"

Isabella remained alone in the room, which was her bridal chamber. The room was divided into two parts; one had three windows looking upon a spacious terrace, and hung with green damask curtains, embroidered with the Medici and Orsini arms; around the room, at equal distances, were some medallions in bas-relief of marble in large gilded frames, representing portraits of different members of the family; two doors opposite each other, at the further extremity of the room, had large pilasters of marble, and over each door a triangular cornice, in the centre of which stood a bust made of different kinds of marble, the head being white, the remainder variegated, while the door beneath was hung with two curtains fringed with gold; in the corners were two large blue Chinese, or rather Japanese, vases, with large carved heads for handles, and other ornaments of silver, most skilfully worked; placed against the walls were two ebony cabinets beautifully inlaid with mother of pearl; the chairs and benches were also of ebony, covered with green damask; in the centre of the room stood a table of ebony and silver of the same workmanship as the cabinets. The first section terminated in an arch, which sprung from a cornice supported by columns, the bases and capitals of which were of gilded bronze of the Corinthian order, but the twisted shafts were fluted and girded round with wreaths of bronze myrtle leaves; the entrance of the alcove was covered by curtains of damask. In this alcove was the bed, of immense size, and loaded, rather than ornamented, with carvings of little cupids, leaves, fruits, and feathers enough to bewilder one who lay beneath them; to describe the quantity of furniture, ornaments, and articles of all kinds, would be wearisome; it is sufficient for us to know, that by the bedside stood a table upon a pedestal two feet high, with the crucifix and the Madonna upon it on one side, and St. John on the other; this table, by means of certain springs, turned upon hinges fixed in the wall, disclosing a secret door, which led by a winding staircase to some rooms on the ground floor, little frequented by the servants.

91

The shadows of night had rested long upon the earth, before Isabella called her maid and ordered her to light the lamp upon the table, and then to retire. Having asked if she should not assist her in undressing, Isabella answered shortly, "I will do it myself;"—and again dismissing her, went to the door and drew the bolt, so that no one could enter.

A prey to her own thoughts, she began to pace the room, with steps now slow, now rapid: she stopped for a moment and gazed at the lamp. Of singular workmanship, it recalled ornaments, men, and times of which we have but an uncertain account; it was of bronze, and presented in front an elephant's head, from whose uplifted trunk issued the flame; seen in profile, it was a swan, whose neck leaning on the breast, formed the handle; the foot was a Medusa's head with the mouth open, through which the oil was poured in; beneath was another large head, which, with the other parts of the lamp, formed an ingenious whole. Isabella, looking intently at it, thought less of the ruin of the people to whom it had belonged, than of her mother, who had given it to her, together with many other Etruscan antiquities found at the excavations made at Castiglione della Pescaia. Eleonora of Toledo was indeed a woman of cruel temperament, proud spirit, and by nature little disposed to pardon; yet the mother's heart must have been touched to have seen her deserted daughter, now, by the departure of Lelio, entirely deprived of any friend on whom to rely. Isabella endeavored to collect her wandering thoughts, in order to lead them to solve the present difficulty, but, like unbridled horses, they overcame her reasoning powers, and roved hither and thither in a thousand different directions, as her varying emotions agitated her brain; she wearied herself with seeking, but her mind lay extended before her, barren of any means of safety, as an African desert appears destitute of any tree or shelter to a caravan.

92

Tired of this state of mind she finally moved towards the bed; she raised the drapery of the alcove, and passed within, letting it fall behind her: the bed, neat beyond all comparison, had white sheets from the looms of Holland, trimmed with Malines lace, and a dimity counterpane embroidered with exquisite skill; her careful maid had scattered fresh roses and orange blossoms upon it, so that it seemed indeed a nuptial couch. Isabella folded down the sheet, as one does when opening a bed to lie down; she went no further, however, but stood motionless near it.

93

"Behold," she said, after gazing at it for some time, "my nuptial bed is as pure and fresh as on my bridal night; it is as white, as soft as the breast of a swan; yet is not the miserable pallet of a beggar less contaminated in the eyes of God than this? Upon my pillow are two sharp points, and whether I turn to the right or to the left, they pierce my temples;—they are adultery and murder; for these two thoughts are twin-born, and I know it. Here at the head of the bed, stands a demon, against whom holy water is of no avail; he flaps his wings, and showers down upon the sleeper feverish dreams and fearful fancies. Yet here I once had nights of heavenly rest; here I was first honored with the title of mother; here taking my rest, I have thought that should

my sleep be eternal, my soul might hope to be received as a guest in the celestial mansions. I remember the moment when Giordano led me here from the altar, and pointing to the bed, said:—'My wife, I intrust this bed to you, and with it my honor, and the good name of my house. I, often employed on distant embassies, or in the army, cannot always be by your side to counsel and assist you: assume a manly spirit for the time, and learn to depend upon yourself; know that there is nothing so necessary for yourself, so acceptable to God, so grateful to me, and so honorable to the children that may be born to us, as your chastity, for the virtue of the wife is a crown of glory to the husband; the mother's virtue is the best dowry she can give her daughters, for a gentleman always asks, and with good reason, whose daughter is the woman whom he seeks for wife; virtue in all women is more precious than beauty, for without virtue and without modesty, there can be no beauty,—or it quickly passes away. A lovely face may be praised, but lascivious eyes make it odious with shame and dishonor, pale with grief and wickedness of mind. A beautiful form, a handsome face pleases; but a bold gesture, a dishonorable act of incontinence, quickly renders it ugly and vile. Dishonor is hateful to God, and He is a severe judge of unchastity in women: it renders them infamous, scorned, and ill-satisfied throughout their lives. Nevertheless would you fly every appearance of dishonor, my wife, show yourself virtuous to all, do nothing displeasing to God, to yourself, to me, and to our children, and you shall have praise and gratitude from all.' Should Giordano now come to me, and ask:—'How have you followed my counsels? How kept your vows?' Would not my blushes speak for me? These walls, this furniture, and above all, these holy images would cry with one voice:—We are polluted! We are polluted! Should I or could I, putting aside all shame, ask him in my turn: 'How have you kept yours?' The guilt of others, though it may take away their right of accusing, does not therefore excuse one's own guilt; and when a woman flies to the arms of another than her husband, hate for her husband then arises, she cares no longer for her children, and she dissolves her family ties, which in the husband, compared to the wife, are far less palpable. Besides that, children of shame in a house are an everlasting mark of disgrace, and they cannot be expelled, at least not without difficulty, by law, although they are banished from the heart by hate, give rise in the mind to the wish to put them out of the way, or are regarded as enemies, and persecuted by the other children, looked upon as robbers of their substance, punished, degraded, so that the troubled spirit of the mother knows not whether to wish that they should preserve a life so wretched, or whether they had better die. This rarely or never happens in men's faults, which are committed out of the house. The unfaithful wife contaminates the minds of all; already she has sown the seeds of discord; guilt has engendered crime, and she will reap the penalty of it. Oh! That I had died before I lost my innocence! Or rather, would that I had never been born! Isabella, thou art alone; throw aside thy family pride, put off the haughty look that thy royal birth imposes upon thee in the presence of thy people, and, since misery and tears belong to the wretched, weep now, as thou canst, for thy innocence, thy safety, thy children, and thy family, weep a deluge, for perchance this necessity thou feelest for tears is the first token that God in His mercy sends, to show that his anger is softened towards thee!"

94

95

And weeping bitterly she sank on her face upon the bed, uttering the saddest lament that ever woman made in this world. She had lain thus for some time when she thought that she heard a noise of footsteps outside of the alcove. She arose quickly, and lifting the curtain saw, not without some wonder mingled with fear, Lelio Torelli standing before her. Although a fatal foreboding oppressed her, yet rendered bold by the pressing danger, she drew herself up before him, saying—

96

"Wherefore are you come? What do you seek?"

"I come to demand of you my heart which you have broken, my life which you have destroyed, my soul which you have lost."

"Ah! Lelio, have pity upon me; do not wish to increase my sorrows, for they are already too heavy for me to bear."

"Have you felt pity for me? You have broken me like a flower that, carelessly plucked from its stalk in the garden, you scarcely smell and then throw away. Should a Christian's soul be cast aside like a withered rose? Should a heart that beats but for you be trampled upon like a stone? No, no; your cruelty has aroused mine, and I come"—

"For what, madman?"

"I come to ask your love and to redeem my former promise. I come to seek the reward of past sufferings."

"You rave, boy. Of what promise do you speak? And who has caused you suffering?"

"And the kisses, the smiles, the sweet words, the pressure of hands, the soft glances—have you forgotten them? I could not forget them; they have kindled in my bosom the flame that consumes me. But what are words? What necessity is there of speaking? The lip is more powerless than any other part of the body to testify love; it

says one thing alone; but the face, the eyes, reveal a thousand affections at once; and it is with all these caresses that you have promised me. How could you, a woman of such great wisdom, believe my weak soul strong enough to resist so much? Have pity on me. You ought to feel compassion for a misery that is your own fault. Isabella, for God's sake, a little love, one ray of love to this desperate"—

97

"What do I hear, Lelio? Do you not see that I am old enough to be your mother."

"What is that to me? Your face is beautiful. When did man ever love with a calendar in his hand? Of what consequence is time? All our life is but the twinkling of an eye. Who knows whether the heavens will cover the earth to-morrow? At least the present moment this fleeting breath may be comforted with a little love. Have I not deserved it?"

"Lelio, do you not know, do you not see that I am a wife?"

"Did that prevent you from giving yourself to another? Why make an impediment with me of what did not exist for another? Will you be chary of your affection to me when you have lavished it in such abundance upon a man unworthy of it?"

"Hear me, Lelio. See, I will not be angry with you, but if this is not enough, think of my eternal salvation."

"And if I should kill myself with my own hands; if I should be lost through you, do you think that your soul could be saved if it were the cause of my losing mine?"

"I have sinned, and I bear the penalty of my sin, and what you now inflict upon me is no less bitter. You see me humbled before you. Where is my pride? Behold I am a contrite sinner at the feet of my servant. Leave me the virtue of repentance. Our souls, by penitence, can become as pure as baptism makes them."

"You may repent afterwards; but now love me."

"I cannot love you."

98

"Then let yourself be loved."

"What shameless words, what importunities are these? Go, or I will call the servants."

"Beware of attempting to do so, Isabella! I am determined to kill myself and to kill"—

"Holy Mother of God, Lelio, have pity on your mother; think of your own mother who is expecting you."

"My mother! Yes, cruel woman, you feel pity for my mother. You have taken a son from her, and give her back a corpse. I know neither mother, father, nor myself, none; you alone are my life, my blood. Isabella, have mercy on Lelio; I am in your hands. Do you wish me to be a hero? I will be one. A murderer? I will. Do you ask me to throw myself down from the balcony which I scaled with such difficulty, to come to you? I swear to do it; but intoxicate me once with your love; say that you love me; one drop, only one drop to this burning lip."

"Oh! vengeance of God! How heavily it strikes me. My heart will break with agony."

"Hear, whether or not I deserve your regard. When I saw your love for Troilo I loved and was silent. That was not all. Not to wound you I did not tell you how low you had placed your affections, nor how the unworthy man was entangled with vulgar intrigues. For your sake I concealed from the eyes of all his vain boasts. I endeavored no less to veil your own indiscretion. You owe it to me that the report of your intrigue has not reached the Duke's ears. I surrounded you with mystery, I watched over you by night and by day. When Troilo came creeping in the dead of night to your chamber, I followed him with noiseless steps. I could have killed him without difficulty, and God knows how often the temptation assailed me; yet I did not do it, thinking of the grief that you would have felt. Therefore I went with him; I guarded him; I frightened the servants with tales of a midnight ghost, so that none dared to pass through the rooms before daylight; and I posted myself to watch outside the door, heedless of sleep or cold, to save you from surprise, to which your own imprudence often laid you open. Imagine what I felt when I heard, after a long interview, the tender adieus, sweet kisses, and promises to meet again the next night! All this I did, and all this I bore for your love; and I would have suffered still in silence if you had loved him still. But now you know him—you know him to be your enemy; you have more to fear from him than from any one, and you do fear him; and when I pray you now to love me, to accept me as what you most need, a protector, a slave—in short, everything for your—"

99

"Lelio, my son, be calm; I, with deep blushes, understand the depth of your love; even after death, I will preserve a memory of you; you love more than men usually do; but listen to the prayer of one fallen into a gulf of misery; listen as if your mother was speaking; have pity upon me, hear the prayer a dying woman makes you from her

inmost heart, for I know that I have not long to live, nor does the knowledge grieve me. Some day you will be glad that you showed me mercy: on your death-bed, when the mind's eye sees life passing away, when the soul pants in doubt whether, in its search, it can discern a hope of salvation, the holy deed you now do me, will then shine forth, like the pillar of fire and cloud before the Israelites, to unveil to you the path to Heaven. Time will heal this wound; perhaps God tempts your virtue, to see if it will not come forth victorious, and already prepares a reward equal to your merits; the angels themselves now guard you. Do not be unworthy of what Heaven promises you. A good and virtuous wife and honored children in this life; and lasting fame and immortal glory after death."

100

"Siren! Enchantress! Sorceress! Who can deny you the gift of imagining or improvising vanities? Go, your heart is more bronze than is this lamp. Now that you fear falling into the power of others, you speak flattering words; before, in the presence of Inigo, you threatened and scorned, nor do I know whether you are more humble now than you were then insolent. For then you railed at me like a child; how presumptuously you chid me, as if you had not likewise derived your origin from Adam; nothing that ever belonged to me, would you consent to keep near you; you desired to erase me from your memory, and if you could safely, from life; with the greatest insults you threw the necklace of your husband about my neck, like the rope of a criminal, and a handful of money to heal the bleeding wounds of a broken heart. Ah! Let me silence for once the love that I feel for so mean, so base, so unfeeling a woman. The sight of others' cruelty makes me cruel. Why do I wait longer? Why not fly to declare your infamy to the Duke? Why not give myself at least the pleasure of seeing you hurled into the tomb by a dishonored and bloody death?"

"Go, accuse me."

101

"No, I will not go and accuse you; I will kill you."

"Kill me then."

"Accuse you! kill you! And what good will that do me? Ah no, Isabella! Your love, give me your love——"

"Back!"

"It is impossible! Impossible! You must be mine—one moment—then let death come—and hell——"

Thus speaking, he advanced towards Isabella to seize her; she retreated, and he followed. Isabella, breathless, saw no means of escape; she tried to commend herself to God, but doubted whether one so unworthy could be heard: she gave herself up for lost. Suddenly, over the shoulder of the Duchess appears a long, glittering blade; it comes quick as the lightning, and with one cruel thrust penetrates the bosom of Lelio and passes through. He takes one step back, clutching with upraised hands, like a drowning man, but cannot utter a single word; only a few indistinct mutterings escape him; the blood, gushing freely and foamingly from the wound, covers the lamp, and extinguishes the light; in the darkness could be heard the fall of the table, overturned by the force with which Torelli struck it, and the tottering, the sinking; and rolling on the floor of the unhappy man.

A cry burst from Isabella, so full of despairing agony, that it would have drowned any which Lelio could have uttered, if his heart, so horribly cleft in twain, had not deprived him at the same moment both of speech and life; and she then fell senseless to the floor, so that the spirit seemed to have left her also.

Isabella remained insensible for a long time; afterwards, when partially recovered, a voice seemed to reach her ears, a woman's voice, that of a weeping woman, which said: "Give me back my son:" and, as she could not reply, for her tongue refused its utterance, she seemed to hear the same voice add: "Be accursed! The blood of her who has caused blood to be shed shall be shed." Then Lelio seemed to appear before her with a vacant stare, a frightful wound, his face stained, and his hair matted with blood and dust, and fixed himself before her, but spoke not a word; for although she saw that he tried to move as if to articulate, he only succeeded in giving vent to a labored groan, and gathering within the hollow of his hand the dark blood oozing from his wound he cast it at her like a curse! Then Isabella recovered, and tried to sit up: at first, she did not dare to uncloset her eyes; but at last, stimulated by courage or fear, she succeeded in opening them. What was this! She was lying in her own bed; the table was in the middle of the room, and the bronze lamp was burning, but with a pallid light. She sprang from her bed, took the lamp and fixed her eyes anxiously upon it, but saw no trace of blood in any of its cavities, nor even any trace that it had been washed off and dried, nor did it even seem as if it had been refilled with oil. With the lamp in her hand, although hesitatingly, she approached the mirror to see if her face were stained with blood, but it was the same as usual; she examined the table, the floor, but behold, all was as neat and dry as was wont. She knew not what to think; she floated in a tempest of fancies, and said to herself: "I have certainly dreamed:"—and as we are ever inclined to believe what is most agreeable and

102

103

advantageous, so Isabella said again, "It was a dream; a fearful dream indeed! Who knows how many miles distant poor Lelio is by this time!" She had almost persuaded her mind to doubt the atrocious event.

She opened the windows, and knew by the glimmering dawn that the *Ave Maria* of the morning drew near, and soon after, the chapel bell confirmed this thought; and when the *Ave Maria* was ended, and the bell still continued to call to mass, she thought that she would go and pray to God and His Saints that a little comfort might be granted to her, so guilty, it is true, but so immeasurably unhappy. The wretched feel the need of prayer. She arranged her hair with her own hands, dressed herself in a dark dress, and went alone to the neighboring chapel.

Formerly it was the custom to bury in churches; we therefore find the pavement covered with tombstones, in the centre of which are round locks, often formed of bronze rings. Upon these tombstones are sculptured the coats of arms in bas-relief (an impediment to the feet), and the statues of the deceased, with arms crossed on their breasts, wrapped in large cloaks, as if they were sleeping, and the inscriptions which record the virtues of those lying beneath; although they testify oftener to the piety or pride of the living than to the virtues of the dead.

Isabella had reached one of these tombstones, and there stood motionless, just where the lock opens, to assist at the divine rites, till the moment when the priest utters the mysterious words which have power to bring the God of Heaven down to earth; then following the example of the rest, and more her own impulse, she fell upon her knees, bending low in a reverent posture of humility; but the ground suddenly shook beneath her, and the fear of falling into the tomb caused her to stretch forth her hands to support herself by some person or object. She felt an arm, and grasped it tightly; somewhat reassured, she looked up through the darkness, and recognised Troilo as her supporter, and in a low tone said to him:

104

"Alas! God makes the very earth tremble beneath our sacrilegious feet!"

"It is nothing; the tomb was opened to-night. See, the mortar is not yet dry."

Isabella thrust her hands into her hair, and bit her lips hard to restrain a cry of anguish. Wild with horror, she fled precipitately from the church; the deep shadows in the chapel sheltering her movements from observation, prevented them from being detected.

It is said that this dreadful adventure caused part of Isabella's hair to turn white; which, though I do not find it confirmed in the Chronicles, I will not deny, as it is by no means incredible, for it has happened from much less terrible causes.

Indeed, when the sentence of death was read to Marie Antoinette, Queen of France, her hair became white; and this was a greater reason.^[13] When Ludovico Sforza il Moro fell into the power of Louis XII., thinking of the heavy offences done to that king, his hair grew white in the course of a single night;^[14] the Lord of Andelot was seated, leaning his head upon his hand when he received the news of the punishment of his brother commanded by the Duke of Alba, as an accomplice of the Counts Egmont and Horn; and all that part of the beard and eyebrow which was touched by his hand, changed color, and looked as if flour had been sprinkled upon it;^[15] and this seems perhaps an equal reason. Lastly, Guarino, learning that one of the chests of Grecian manuscripts had been lost, which he had collected with such great trouble in Constantinople, to be carried into Italy, was so disheartened, that his hair, from black, turned instantly white,^[16] and this was a lesser motive. But souls are diverse, and mortal events affect differently different minds.^[17]

105

106

CHAPTER V.

PASQUINO.

DON LOPEZ.

Valgame el cielo! que es esto
Por que pasan mis sentidos?
Alma, que habeis escuchado?
Ojos, que es lo que habeis visto?
Tan pública es ya mi afrenta
Que ha llegado a los oidos
Del Rey, que mucho si es fuerza
Ser los postreros los mios?
Hay hombre mas infelice!

CALDERON DE LA BARCA.

A Secreto Agravio Secreta Vengansa.

Help me, Heaven! What can it be
That my maddened senses see?
Soul, what sounds thy powers affright?
Eyes, what scene hath cursed your sight?
Published now is my disgrace,
Known and read in every place;
E'en the king hath heard I my name
Blasted by the breath of shame,
Last of all the damning word,
Wretched man! by me is heard.

Ernando, or Ferdinando dei Medici, was an excellent Prince, and of noble mind; as the fourth son of Cosimo, he was far from the hopes of the throne. He knew not what destiny lay before him, hidden in the future, but he was certain that it was not so distinguished a lot as his great ambition craved, since Francesco was to succeed his father in the dukedom, Giovanni wore a Cardinal's hat, and Garzia held the Admiralty. This state of inactivity oppressed him so deeply, that he grew sick. When afterwards the accident happened to Cardinal Giovanni and Don Garzia,^[18] the father, Cosimo, very eager to provide for the establishment of his family, exerted his influence in the Court of Rome and obtained the transfer of Giovanni's hat to the head of Ferdinando. He was lying sick in bed when, with solemn ceremony, the red hat was presented to him, and so powerful was the action of gratified ambition upon the heart of this youth of fourteen, that from that very day he became convalescent, and very soon regained his usual health.^[19] Being sent to Rome with paternal instructions and assisted by men skilful in the management of affairs, not only did he maintain, but succeeded in increasing at that Court, the influence of his house, which was already great. And in truth, the histories of the times relate that Pasquino often published satires, in which was written: *Cosmus Medices Pontifex Maximus.*^[20] Besides the great political skill of Cosimo, his good fortune, in this as in everything else, availed him no little, for Giovanni Angiolo dei Medici being chosen Pope, although he was in no way related to the family of the Medici of Florence, yet, to please his own vanity, he wished to have it supposed so; hence, with this object, he lavished incredible favors upon the family of Cosimo, electing Giovanni a Cardinal, yielding to him his own hat, giving him his palace and garden, and promising to regard him as a son; and so ardent was he in carrying out this idea that he even wrote to Cosimo: "Your concerns we hold as our own, desiring that ours should be also yours, and that we should always give and receive help from each other, and there will always be between us one heart and one mind."^[21]

Ferdinando increased this ascendancy, partly through the sagacity and good fortune of his father, partly by his own generous patronage of the fine arts and letters, although these were then somewhat on the decline, and partly by the bold readiness which he manifested on difficult occasions. Of this a remarkable instance occurs in the manuscript memoirs, which I ought not to pass over in silence, namely: going on a certain day, when he was Cardinal, to pay his homage to Pope Pius V., in the act of bowing before him, he showed a strong iron cuirass which he wore under the red dress. The Pope noticing it, said pleasantly to him: "Richard Plantagenet, while warring against his barons, took prisoner a bishop, who, armed with mail, had fought against him more than any of his enemies. The Pope interfering, begged Richard to restore this son of his to liberty; but Plantagenet sent back to the Pope the bishop's cuirass, with the words spoken by the sons of Jacob when they showed him the bloody garment of Joseph: 'Know now whether this be thy son's coat or no.' Cardinal dei Medici, what dress is that you wear under your cardinal's robe?" And Ferdinando, striking his breast and making his armor resound, replied proudly: "Most blessed Father, this is the garment suitable to a great prince."

But more than for all these things is the Cardinal to be praised for the wonderful constancy with which, in spite of the great bitterness which his brother Francesco caused him, he strove always to promote the welfare of his family; and indeed Francesco gave him daily and strong reasons to be dissatisfied with him, by avariciously refusing to advance him money on his pensions, of which, on account of

107

108

109

his excessive liberality, he was often in need, and by entangling himself more and more with the love of the Venetian courtesan. When the ill-humor of the people reached its climax, on account of the insane conduct of Francesco, who did not blush, while accompanying the funeral of his wife Giovanna, to take off his hat and salute Bianca, as she was looking on from a balcony in the Conti palace,^[22] and who, while the ashes of the royal lady were yet scarcely cold, secretly married the woman who had certainly shortened her days, Ferdinando retired to Rome, there to labor for the prosperity and honor of his house.

When afterwards destiny willed that he should ascend the throne of Tuscany, he dismissed the evil counsellors of his brother, and set himself earnestly to the task of rendering his subjects happy. We meet with no public building, nor hospital, nor charitable institution, with which there is not associated the name of Ferdinando, either as the founder or promoter; but since it is easier to build a city than to create a sentiment of nationality, so he was not able to raise the fallen spirits of his people, nor perhaps did he wish to do so, or rather it was an end impossible to be attained by one holding, as he did, the rank of prince, which he would not and could not relinquish. He endeavored, notwithstanding, to relieve Italy from the Spanish yoke, and wrote boldly to the several Italian states, that, laying aside all petty rivalry, they should join him, and vindicate their liberties, but such was the degradation into which they had fallen, that he could not succeed, even in this; and perhaps all attempts would have been vain, since there happen to nations, as well as to individuals, certain moments of agony in which neither motion nor quiet avails, and whilst the latter does not prevent death, the former hastens it. It is true, however, as I thought once, and still believe, that neither a God nor a nation can remain in the sepulchre; Christ remained in it only three days, but perchance the days of nations are composed of centuries. And the Italian princes, in Ferdinando's time, consented to live, act, and breathe at the will of Spain; to her they extended their hands in supplication, on her lips and her looks they hung. Great Heaven! what miserable beings were those princes, who, like the mendicant asking a penny, begged the liberty to do evil of others, of shaving, as a most witty genius used to say, at second-hand! How contemptible did they seem, the agents, as one might say, of the right of life and death! Or rather, negro slave-drivers, with whips in their hands. But enough of this; Ferdinando was not able to accomplish his noble object, which was to contract an alliance with France; for Henri IV. did not act in any degree differently from the nature of the French, who, "when a favor is asked of them, think first what advantage they themselves may derive from it; when they cannot do you good, they promise it, and when they can, they do it reluctantly or never;^[23] a people instinctively greedy of others' possessions, and to whom theft comes as naturally as breathing."^[24] And strangest of all, the French, fickle in everything, have always shown a singular persistency in this habit, of which even Julius Cæsar gives a proof in his histories. The marriage of Maria dei Medici, daughter of Francesco, to Henri IV., brought about at such an enormous cost, and at the expense of so many sacrifices on the part of Ferdinando, was to strengthen the ties of friendship and blood between France and the Medicis, first formed by the marriage of Catherine; but banished from France, expelled from the house and presence of her son, deprived of everything, she perished miserably at Cologne, and the pity of the painter Rubens gave her burial. Mark what human judgment is, in the power of fortune, which governs it at will!

Such was Ferdinando dei Medici, and it will not displease my readers, I hope, that I have described him somewhat at length. Besides, I have noticed that most novel writers expatiate upon the appearance, and so much more upon the dress of their personages, as to seem a race of tailors; if you desire to know how Ferdinando dressed and looked, I refer you to the Arsenal at Leghorn, where you will see his marble statue upon a pedestal around which are bound four bronze slaves; to Pisa in the Lungarno at the head of the via Santa Maria, where his marble effigy seems desirous to raise fallen Pisa, which being of marble cannot entirely rise, and remains thus, half-erect, half-falling; and to the square of the Santissima Annunziata, in Florence, where towers pompously his equestrian statue cast of the bronze *plundered from the fierce Thracian*, as it is written under the strap of the saddle. I thought best at this time to describe his nature and habits; if I was mistaken, or have displeased you, I entreat pardon, and continue my history.

It was Easter morning. A magnificent cavalcade issued from the Medici palace, and rode in state through the streets of Rome. Cardinal Ferdinando was going to pay his respects to the Pope, Gregory XIII. He rode on a white horse, ornamented with crimson velvet, with large tassels of red silk, while the flanks of his steed were almost covered by his cardinal's cloak; by his side rode Paolo Giordano Orsini, Duke of Bracciano, dressed in Spanish costume, upon a fiery Roman horse, and conversing familiarly with him of matters of little importance, as far as could be judged, for the Cardinal seemed to pay slight attention to him, and only from time to time nodded his head. Behind them came the gay and noisy suite of the Duke, and that of the Cardinal, which was far more splendid; for he, following the promptings of his most generous nature, was accustomed to maintain in state not less than three hundred gentlemen, courtiers, and men renowned for some talent. To tell the truth, rather

than the grave retinue of a Cardinal, it resembled the troops of masqueraders, who in carnival time run merry-making through the town; they were either talking, or vieing with each other in managing their horses, making them change their pace every moment, caracol, curvet, or trot, and exchanging soft glances, smiles, and sometimes even salutes with the ladies who stood on the balconies. A rose descended through the air, and the ringing laughter of women was heard, as it fell upon the white mane of the Cardinal's horse; but although people raised their eyes quickly, no one could discern whence it came, for the windows of the houses on both sides of the street were apparently shut. Such license was in some measure attributable to the times, and a little to the easy disposition of the Cardinal, who, young, powerful, and bound by no sacred order, was more lenient in love affairs than was becoming to his dignity; and the courtiers, as we see happening every day, took excessive advantage of the laxity of their master, sure that if ever the Cardinal took it into his head to reprove them, he would begin with a severe countenance and end with a pleasant smile.

After the cavalcade, followed a crowd of the lower classes, who applaud and disapprove equally without reason, and who are always destined, whether cheering or hooting, to be stricken down, until some day, wearied of hurraing or hissing, they in their turn take the notion of striking, and then, may God guard us in His holy keeping! However, they take this notion but seldom, and the passage of the powerful through the midst of them, is like that of the swallow among the insects of the air—it eats and flies.

114

Thus passing from street to street, the *cortège* arrived at the corner of the palace Caracciolo Santo-buono, upon the ruins of which, in modern times, the palace Braschi has been built. There stood at that time Marforio and Pasquino.

What is Marforio? and what is Pasquino?

Marforio is a recumbent colossal statue of the ocean, found in the Forum of Mars, whence it derives its name. Clement XII. had it transported to the capitol, and here it shows itself proudly to the passers-by. Pasquino is a plebeian statue. A worthy artisan, before whose shop it was found, gave it the name; it is mutilated and of doubtful identity; yet all seem to have agreed in baptizing it a *torso* of Ajax: at any rate, it represents a human being, neither a God nor a demigod; and although its merits far surpass those of Marforio, fortune has treated it very differently, for instead of the honors of the Capitol it came very near being thrown into the Tiber. It was Adrian VI. who raised so bitter a persecution against it; and that he did not succeed we must thank the witty courtier who persuaded him, that from that trunk buried in the mud there would arise more voices than from a whole nation of frogs. And behold how the injustice of man is manifested even in the very busts and marbles; Marforio in the Capitol, like a triumphant captain, Pasquino, hardly escaped the Tiber, and having survived so fearful a danger, happy if he be allowed to remain walled in the corner of the Braschi palace. Marforio, according to the custom of the fortunate, "*for whomsoever fortune exalts she first plunges into Lethe,*"^[25] no longer remembers past times; having been made a lord, and splendidly lodged, he has become a courtier and is silent, or if he sometimes speaks, he does it cautiously, and although a colossus of marble, he treads as lightly as if he were walking on eggs; he almost flatters; but Pasquino, without head, arms, or legs, exposed to the winds and rain, has retained his sympathy with the people, and always talks, satirizes, and never loses his jest happen what may; after all, worse cannot happen to him than losing his head, arms, and legs. The fair fame of Marforio, however, has been diminished, while Pasquino, on the contrary, has never known any decline of popularity. Marforio is a deserter, but Pasquino threw away his legs so as not to fly; hence the people have forgotten Marforio and increased their love for Pasquino ten-fold. Marforio in the Capitol, at the extremity of the court of the Capitoline Museum, accompanied by the bronze satyrs found in the Theatre of Pompey, king of the fountain over which he is placed, grows tired, and if an ocean of marble could gape, he would. Pasquino, on the other hand, breathes and lives and sympathizes with the people; and although headless, speaks, reasons, and reviews accounts better than those who have heads. Indeed, it is not certain that to live in this world there is much need of a head; witness Pliny, who asserts that there are headless people, called by him *Blemmii*, which, if it appeared a marvellous thing at the time of that writer, has long since ceased to astonish us. Pasquino often is a persecuted Nemesis, who hurls a blow in the dark against the man who drinks the tears of the people, and this blow strikes upon his brow more directly than the stone from David's sling;—he is a Nemesis, who, collecting the bitter water that springs in the countries of oppression, pours it into the foaming wine of pride;—he is a Nemesis, who hides worms among the flowers of vicious pleasures;—he is a Nemesis, who makes the cruel fall into the open sepulchre while menaces yet burn upon his lips;—he mingles darkness with terror, peoples dreams with phantoms, fills pillows with remorse, gives a voice to the clod which conceals the unknown crime, and persecutes life with affliction, death with despair. But Pasquino's satires spring too often from human perfidy; since there are people to whom nature has said, hate! as she has said to the eagle, fly! and the man hates as the eagle flies. O Lord God, why didst thou create the serpent that

115

116

poisons, the wild beast that devours, the upas that kills, and the man that hates? Behold, the serene heaven is a torment for him, the splendid sun an offence, the limpid lake a mockery, the tranquil mind an insult; he would wish for the eye of the basilisk, the breath of the pestilence, the bitumen of the asphaltum, the despair of Judas, to sadden the serenity of the azure heaven, of the limpid waters, and of the innocent soul.

Truth is the most brilliant sun in the diadem of God. In the days of creation it should have been suspended as the only luminary in the firmament. Truth ought to issue openly from the lips of men like holy incense from golden censers. The work of darkness ought to be consummated in darkness. Truth ought never to take the form of falsehood. Why should it ever assume the semblance of calumny? The heart of a coward may well become a fit resting-place for a nest of vipers, but never the temple of truth. Truth ought to be preached in the face of day from the lofty places, from the mountain-tops, from the open shores of the sea. Truth ought to be declared before the men who detest it, and before the judges who condemn it as they did the innocent Socrates. Truth has been burned at the stake, and has sprung like a Phoenix from its ashes; Truth has mounted the scaffold, and returned to live in the severed limbs as the polyp lives again in the broken fragments. Truth has never deceived nor flattered any one, for she has said: "My name is martyrdom on earth and glory in Heaven; let him who wishes follow me, I am a stern life-companion."^[26]

117

"He that hath ears to hear let him hear;" I return to my story.

Pasquino, and also Marforio, who had not yet been promoted to the Capitol, appeared on that solemn day in the plenitude of their glory, decked all around with a halo of satires of all colors and dimensions; crowds of people were standing reading them or hearing them read, and the more bitter, satirical, and slanderous the words were, the more fitted to sadden a heart, or to cause despair to an immortal soul, the louder they laughed with every token of joy.

The cavalcade, seeing from afar such a magnificent show, exulted, and had they not been restrained by respect would have rushed ahead of the Cardinal; they closed together, endeavoring to decipher the writings from where they were; some rose on their stirrups, some shaded their eyes with their hands to read.

118

"Oh, he is dressed for a Sunday," said the courtiers; "Pasquino is really celebrating Easter; we shall hear some good jokes; materials are not wanting;" and so on, so that their voices might have been heard a mile distant.

The Cardinal, passing near the dreaded statues, did not turn his head nor even seem to glance at them. Not so the courtiers, who fell upon it like pigeons in a field of grain, neither minding nor caring if they knocked or trampled on the crowd, who sprang to the right and left cursing and yelling like the frogs when a bull approaches the margin of a pond. Why is it that this careless and noisy young crew are suddenly silent? Imagine a flock of sparrows hovering over the broad top of an oak, and chirping incessantly, fluttering through the leaves with restless motions; but if suddenly a falcon appears, soaring in wide circles near the tree, they become so silent and still, that they seem as if struck by sudden death, and shrink and fold their wings, and dare not fly from bough to bough, but seek to hide themselves under the leaves: thus the abashed courtiers continued on their route gravely and in silence.

Pasquino had poured forth a torrent of malignant satires against the Cardinal, because he was reputed the most fortunate of all the Cardinals. One of the pasquinades which was aimed at him ran as follows: Marforio asked Pasquino, "Which is the mule that Medici rides now?" And Pasquino answered, "He rides the mule of Farnese." This alluded to the intrigue which, according to report, Ferdinando had with Clelia, the daughter of Cardinal Farnese. But this could be tolerated; those which appeared really infamous reflected upon Francesco, Bianca, Isabella, her husband, Eleonora of Toledo, and Don Piero de Medici, which, as being too shameful, we will abstain from reporting.

119

The Cardinal had not turned his head; but, looking askance, he perceived and read those vituperations; advancing his horse a step, he kept the Duke of Bracciano so occupied in conversation that the latter was not able to read a word. When it seemed to him the proper time, he called to one of his retinue and gave him some orders in a low voice. Hardly had the cavalcade turned the corner than the officer turned impetuously back, spurring his horse. The crowd had again collected, and were enjoying their brutal pleasure, and praising Pasquino, voting him by acclamation a crown of laurel. Without even saying, "take care," the officer dashed his horse into the midst of the crowd, who again cleared the way, and struck right and left with the butt-end of his halberd upon the head, shoulders, or arms of those who were not quick enough to avoid him, and reaching Pasquino he thrust his hand, armed with the iron gauntlet, with such force against it that it shows the impression to this day; he made a bundle of all the papers, and carried them off, departing with the same fury with which he had come, without taking the least notice of the crowd, who, as soon as they saw him at a sufficient distance, raised their heads, still like frogs, and

vented their anger in screams and curses, like every brutal rabble; it ended, however, as it always does, that he who received a bruise applied a plaster to it, and he whose head was broken had it bound up.

The Cardinal, after having paid his homage to his Holiness, returned home by a shorter road, and there closeting himself within his study he wrote a letter to his brother, Francesco, without availing himself of the assistance of his secretary, in which, saying nothing of the insults that were deservedly aimed at both of them, he related those published to the dishonor of their house, on account of the intrigues of Isabella and Eleonora of Toledo, and advised him to use all means he thought best to cause them to behave more modestly. Having written the letter he gave it to a courier, ordering him to start immediately for Florence, and as he valued his life to put the letter into Francesco's own hands. This epistle reached Francesco only too safely, and the remorse of the Cardinal was inexpressible, when he found that it had caused the mournful events which form the subject of this narrative; and, in truth, he was wrong, for he ought not to have allowed himself to be overcome by hasty passion, knowing as he did the cruel and fierce nature of his brother, his dissimulation, his readiness to imbrue his hands in blood, and his Spanish education, which led him to consider it a point of honor, both in the husband and in the brother, to punish the guilt of the wife or sister; and, moreover, that he had grown up at the Court of Philip II., who, on account of his cruel disposition, had been surnamed, even in his own times, the *Demon of the South*. Enough, fate willed it thus, and perhaps it was not the first time, nor yet the last, that Pasquino had caused blood and tears to be shed.

Francesco, on the receipt of the letter, read it twice, and placed it carefully in his bosom, and no one could have discovered from his pale and austere face, whether it brought good or bad news; then turning to his sister and sister-in-law who were conversing together, he said to them: "His Eminence Cardinal Ferdinando is well, and sends his love to you."

A few days after, he sent back the same courier of the Cardinal to Rome, with a letter, saying: "that he was very grateful for the interest which he took in the welfare of their house, although unfortunately it concerned a very disagreeable subject; begging him to be assured that he would find a remedy for so much scandal, and in such a manner that his Eminence should be satisfied; moreover, as the case deserved grave consideration, he entreated him, as he had done in all his other most important affairs, still to favor him with his most prudent counsels."

Two or three hours after he had despatched this courier, he sent another, ordering him to take off his livery, dress himself as a trader, and thus go *incognito* to Rome; when there to present himself to Lord Paolo Giordano Orsini, Duke of Bracciano, to deliver to him personally the letter which he gave him, and then to return immediately without even stopping in Rome, for he wished his mission there to remain perfectly secret. The letter ran thus:

"Our most beloved brother-in-law, Duke of Bracciano.—On the reception of this, your Excellency will start without delay for Florence, accompanied by only one attendant, or two at the most. You will learn the motive of this summons, which is a most urgent one, from our own lips, it being a matter which cannot be intrusted to writing; in the meantime we inform you that this affair, although somewhat concerning us, regards particularly yourself, and the honor of your family. It would be best that you should acquaint no one of your departure, more especially the most eminent Cardinal Ferdinando, our brother. Travel *incognito*, studiously avoiding recognition; calculate your time so as to reach the Roman gate towards dark, both you and your servants wearing white feathers in your caps. You will find one who will admit both yourself and the attendants without giving names, and we shall await you at the palace.

"May God keep you in His holy peace, etc."

The Duke, having read and well considered this letter, took his handkerchief from his pocket and wiped the perspiration from his forehead: then he began to walk up and down, read the letter once more, and was much disturbed.

"I sold myself as a slave," he thought to himself, "to these *parvenu* merchants! I, a Roman prince! What lineage is theirs? From what did they spring? When honorable barons, knights, and men of great affairs honored my house, their ancestors were not worthy to hold their stirrups.—*On the reception of this—with only one attendant or two—studiously avoiding recognition—try to enter about dark.*—Thank Heaven! I am not your subject—order your own servants. I shall not go; I am determined not to go, and I *will* not."

And he began to walk up and down again. In the meantime an inward voice, as if it came from a secret counsellor, humbled him, saying: "But he is your brother-in-law, a crowned prince, who cannot come to see you; he is very powerful and rich, having great authority at the Court of Rome. Besides it concerns you, so that it seems only just that you should go to him, and even thank him if he shows so much interest in your welfare; add to that, he is educating your son Virginio at his court, and will provide for him, since you can rely very little on your own fortune, and in your poverty, in the universal deluge of your debts, who but he can be an ark of safety to you? O Bracciano! Bracciano! I fear that you will become the prey of some fortunate merchant, who after taking your estates will take your title also—and thus after having expelled your illustrious race from the castle, will erase your name from the memory of men. Hence it seems profitable to go, and keep on good terms with this relation of mine, for the love of my debts. Love! I ought to have said hate; but, blessed Saint Peter, how can I hate debts, since they were my swaddling-clothes when I first came into this world, and will be my winding-sheet when I depart from it! Bernia wrote an essay on debt; he did wrong, he should have written an epic poem! To Florence then—Titta! Saddle three good horses; we must travel. You and Cecchino will go with me; take off your livery; put white feathers in your caps, and do not forget the cloaks. It is but a duty to take this poor Cecchino with me; I brought him away from Florence when he was just married; and he would be glad to see his old mother and wife again. I think that he would be grateful to me, or at least I imagine so, and this thought does me good. These people enjoy more than we do; they believe in love, and they love and see each other with pleasure, and separate with sorrow—but I hardly remember that I have a wife; indeed, Isabella is a most beautiful woman, of lofty mind, and accomplished genius, and I have seemed truly to care a great deal for all her merits! I think that I ought to be very grateful if am not hated at home; it would be sufficient to be forgotten."

124

If I am not mistaken, we may judge in some measure what Paolo Giordano Orsini was by this soliloquy of his: like a pendulum, one side vice, the other virtue, perfectly still and incapable of motion by itself unless caused to oscillate by some external impulse. Careless, prodigal, easily roused to anger, and as easily appeased; but, imbued with the spirit of the times in which he lived, more prone to cruelty than to compassion; and when he was instigated by any one who knew how to incite him, we can imagine no enormity in which he would not be ready to acquiesce. I will not say that he resembled Claudius (who having caused the death of his wife Messalina, sat down to dinner soon after, and inquired, forgetfully, why the Empress did not come^[27]); but after his bloody fits of passion, that swayed him at their will, he would be overcome by such oblivion of the crimes which he had committed, that they did not disturb his sleep, nor did he either defer his banquets or forget his balls, but would be as cheerful as if nothing had happened: he was a dissimulator, not by premeditation, but by habit, and so much the more dangerous, as his easy and frank manners gave one an assurance of a sort of natural candor.

125

He departed, then, from Rome, and arrived at Florence, where he was received in the manner agreed upon, and was introduced soon after into the palace.

Francesco was seated at table in company with Bianca, and no sooner did he perceive the Duke, than he rose, courteously extending his hand, and kissed him on both cheeks. After this greeting, the Duke approached Bianca, who did not move, and bowing very low, obsequiously kissed her hand.

Francesco, sitting down again, said:

"Giordano, you must be tired; but before you go to rest, sit down, I beg of you, and take some refreshment with us; you see, we are *en famille*."

The Duke, not waiting for another invitation, sat down beside Francesco.

Never was a better opportunity presented to poet or romancer to display his descriptive powers. Few courts at that time, or perhaps even now, could boast the possession of such valuable plate as the Medici; even more precious from its workmanship than its materials; silver side-boards, vases, trays, pitchers, basins, cups, flasks, and chandeliers, all wonderful to behold; but I pass them by, and confine myself to that which is better suited to my subject.

The Duke, although accustomed to Roman profusion, was astonished at the enormous abundance of viands, and observing more carefully, his surprise was increased in considering the variety of the dishes: there were sparrows minced very fine, and kneaded with yolks of eggs and powdered sugar—Indian garlic and cresses—raw onions, German radishes, scallions, and so forth; besides these there were, preserved in beautiful bottles of thin glass, for seasoning, ginger, black pepper, nutmeg, cloves, and the like; in the midst stood a pyramid of eggs, and on all sides little stews and dishes of strange appearance; every variety of iced cheeses, in silver plates, etc.

126

As the dishes which he knew were not to his taste, the Duke tried some of those which he did not know, and it was well he did, for they were composed of breasts of

grouse, pheasant, partridge, and the like, but so highly seasoned as to burn his palate, and to bring tears to his eyes; he called to mind Portia, who swallowed live coals; he could not understand how a man could live upon such viands; he asked frequently for drink to moderate the burning, but the drinks which they gave him were so cold, that they made his teeth and head ache; besides that, there were foaming and sparkling wines, such as make one's brain turn after the second glass. It seemed to him an infernal banquet, and that to get accustomed to such meats and drinks, the Grand Duke and Duchess must have endured more trouble than Mithridates, who could eat and drink any kind of poison, however powerful it might be. In short, his natural appetite was appeased, if not satiated, and he remained watching his brother-in-law, who silently kept gorging himself, with a sort of ravenous hunger, with young onions seasoned with ginger; then suddenly leaving the onions, he would take a boiled egg, break it, and pouring into it a spoonful of black pepper, drink it; then at the onions again; from time to time he ordered "drink." The valet brought him a basin in which were a flask full of water and a small glass of wine; Francesco, pouring nearly all the wine into the basin, filled up the glass with water, and drank it at one gulp. This dissipated habit was not a pleasure, but apparently a labor, for drops of perspiration would roll down from his forehead, his eyes looked heavy, he panted and his face changed color, now turning as red as fire, and now as yellow as the wax candles which were burning before him.^[28] This seemed to the Duke, what it really was, a desire to kill himself, and he thought that it would have been better to have thrown himself from the balconies of his palace. With this idea in his mind he glanced towards Bianca, and their eyes meeting, they exchanged a look of intelligence. The Duke had meant: "How is it possible that you, who are so wary a woman, allow him to destroy himself in such a manner?" And Bianca had replied: "I grieve for it, God knows; but you are aware what an obstinate man he is! However, I will try, and you will see."

127

When she thought it a good opportunity, with the sweet manner which she knew so well how to assume, she said:

"Will my lord and husband grant me a favor?"

"Speak."

"Would you, for my sake, be contented with what you have already eaten of this raw food, for I am afraid that it will hurt you?"

"Bianca, I have told you once before, and do not wish to have to tell you a third time, that in my own house and in my own state, as well in the most insignificant as in the most important matters, I wish to be absolute Lord and master——"

128

"Nor do I wish to question your power, for, on the contrary, I consider myself only too much honored in being your servant; but for this once, I beg of you, my love, please to do it for my sake——"

And so saying, she stretched her hand towards the plate to take it away from him. Francesco, maddened, grasped the arm of Bianca so strongly, that he left on it the blue mark of his fingers, and grinding his teeth like a wild beast, looked fiercely at her for some time; then, without uttering a word, he slowly opened his hand. Bianca drew back her arm, not daring even to sigh, and repressed two tears which were ready to start; humbled and confused, she knew not how to hide her shame, spite, and rage, except by crying, "Candia!"

The attentive valet immediately placed before her the silver basin, with a glass of Candia wine and a flask of water. She, not touching the water, took the glass and hastily drank the contents.^[29]

It seemed to the Duke as if he were a guest at the table of Domitian, when he caused the coffins to be carried round the table, with the names of the guests inscribed upon them; he wished himself a thousand miles away; he thought that he had not felt half so distressed at his mother's funeral.

129

Francesco, like a spiteful boy, wanting to show how great his power and independence were, obstinately persisted in filling his mouth with onions covered with ginger, drinking peppered eggs and ice-water, until nature, as if indignant at being thus maltreated, succumbed, and uttering a deep sigh, he fell back heavily in his chair, with his head drooping on his breast, and his arms hanging down, exclaiming:

"I can stand it no longer!"

Bianca and Giordano hastened to his assistance, and supported his head; his mouth was open and distorted, as if he had been struck with apoplexy; his eyes were staring vacantly, his breast heaving.

"Call for Doctor Baccio, or Cappelli," said Bianca in great anxiety; "go—quick—for the love of Heaven!"

But Francesco grumbled:

"Call no one—water—ice—ice—a little air—air!"

They opened all the balcony windows; brought him water and ice, and he, dipping both his hands into it, applied them to his forehead; then he poured some elixir into a glass of ice-water, and drinking it, felt somewhat relieved. Bianca, who until then had assisted him with loving care, without saying a word, now ventured to ask gently:

"Do you wish to go to bed?"

"Yes,—have it cooled,—cool it yourself—let no one else enter here."

130

And Bianca, with her own hands, filled with ice two silver coolers, and the valet having carried them to the bed-room, she placed them between the sheets, drawing them up and down.

In about fifteen minutes Francesco, who had remained sitting in silence, rose suddenly, and said:

"Let us go."

Bianca and Giordano supported him, and reaching the bed, he tore, rather than took off his clothes, and laid himself down. The Duke then said very softly:

"Your Highness, rest yourself; to-morrow we will speak at our leisure——"

"No; he who has time must not wait for time; I feel better. Bianca, retire; I have to speak to Giordano of things which must remain secret between him and me."

As any observation would only have irritated him, Bianca left the room and the Duke remained. He seated himself near the bed, awaiting his brother-in-law's pleasure to speak to him. Francesco, after having mused for some time, like a man who is thinking how to begin, thus spoke:

"Giordano, listen to me carefully: it is useless for me to remind you, that belonging as you do to my family, you are as one of us—nor need I declare how dear your interests are to me——"

"Your goodness——"

"Do not interrupt me, but listen. Now in bitterness of soul, I have to acquaint you with a deed, the mere thought of which makes the blood rush to my face—And would that it had remained private, so that if we could not have pardoned, we might at least have concealed it: but no, it has become public; it forms the subject of mockery for my enemies. Giordano, we have become the laughing-stock of the people!" And pausing a little, he continued: "The laughing-stock of the people! You are outraged in me; I in you. Our house is filled with shame; Giordano, your wife, my sister, has covered us with disgrace——"

131

"What! Isabella!"

"Alas! yes. And pasquinades and satires are rife touching her infidelity——"

"By Heaven! who dared? I will tear his heart out, even if it were in church——"

"And thus confirm, by your revenge, what the insult has not proclaimed publicly. Be a man and curb your passion. The traitor is a relative of yours——"

"Who?"

"Troilo."

"My chosen friend! He to whom I had intrusted the safe keeping of my honor. Ah!"

"This man, trampling on the sacred ties of blood, this man has betrayed his benefactor and friend——"

"But are you sure of it?"

"Are such things ever said without certainty?"

"And how is it possible that I should have been ignorant of it until now—I, a miserable, betrayed man?"

"The ears of husbands are always the last to hear their own shame. A providence of God!"

"Francesco, may you not perhaps have been deceived? A prince, however wary, does not see, does not hear everything for himself."

"I see everything."

132

This was not true; for if a prince ever lived who trusted implicitly to wicked counsellors, it was Francesco; but for this once he was right.

"Come, then, this deed cannot be helped, but it may be avenged——"

"Be it so."

"Can any one hear us?" asked Francesco, raising himself to a sitting posture upon the bed; and lifting the silk curtains, he turned his searching eye around the room. "Go and see, Giordano, if the doors are shut close. Bianca may be listening; I can live no longer with this woman, and yet I cannot do without her. I could swear that this witch has charmed me. Would that I could break the spell—I will try——"

"They are all shut."

"Sit down, come nearer, and let us think of a remedy; having maturely considered the subject, it seems to me, that this is the best thing to do." And here, lowering his voice, he began to whisper mysteriously, as if he were reciting his prayers. From time to time a word louder than the rest could be heard, like a drop of water falling from the roof of a cave to the ground, breaking at measured intervals the frightful silence. The Duke did not seem a living being, except by his opening wide his right hand, and then clenching it tightly. Francesco, ceasing his murmuring, looked intently at his brother-in-law, who stood motionless and horror-stricken; finally he spoke, likewise in a subdued voice:

"You have awakened a hell in my heart. And what shall I say to Virginio, if ever he should ask me: Where is my mother?"

"Virginio will never know it; and even if he did, he would say: He did well. I am educating Virginio."

133

"But do we not believe, Francesco, that after death there is yet to be a judgment?"

"For those who have no judgment. And we should be the reproach of the living and the dead, if we dared not do what honor imposes upon gentlemen. And what? While I, silencing the voice of nature, give up to you the life of my sister, can you not tear from your heart a guilty wife?"

"She is not the mother of your children. At any rate, I ought not to be convinced by your convictions; and even if I were willing, I could not. I wish to see for myself——"

"And if you should happen not to see, would she therefore be any less guilty? Who can save her from suspicion? Cæsar did not suffer his wife to be even suspected."

"But he did not kill her. Leave this affair to me. You must allow me to use whatever means may seem most suitable——"

"Do so, but cautiously, without giving rise to scandal, and let not your revenge bring to light more than has already been made public."^[30]

Here a knock was heard at the door, and Francesco asked in a threatening tone:

"Who is there?"

"Don Pietro."

"My brother! He must not see you, Giordano. Go; take up your abode at the villa San Marco: the key is hanging over that wardrobe; you will find some one there to receive you. I intrust the secret to you. *Go, and when you have discovered the hated truth, keep always in mind that you are a gentleman and a Christian.*"^[31]

134

Giordano was so overwhelmed by his feelings that he could not utter a word; he kissed the hand of his brother-in-law, and left the room by a door opposite to that at which the knocking had been heard.

Francesco, having arranged the sheet which covered him, said mildly:

"Come in, Don Pietro."

"God keep you in His guard, your Highness."

"Thank you."

"I am here at the command of your Highness."

"And it seems to me high time that you should be here, since three or four summons have been disregarded."

"I feared to disturb your grave affairs of state, and your Highness's manufactory of porcelain;^[32] and then, I think that he who comes in time always comes early, as the proverb says."

"You ought to remember oftener, Don Pietro, that you are my subject; and if you cannot pay more regard to the authority of the head of the family, you ought at least to respect the dignity of the prince. What are you doing? Why do you wander about the room in such a manner? Sit down, and listen to me quietly."

135

"Don Francesco, I came here upon your word, and because I know that Lent does not come in July, so do not kill me with a sermon——"

"Sit down; I did not summon you on my account, but on your own, and for the sake of your reputation and prosperity."

"Where did you get so much brotherly love all at once? Did King Sebastian send it to you from Lisbon with the galleys of pepper?^[33] These tenders of your affection ought to be told differently, for they are too old now."

"Do I deserve this? Have I not given, and do I not give, continual proofs of loving my blood?"

"I do not know about your own, but certainly you do love blood."

"And then you complain that we do not hold you in favor, and fill the court with complaints, and write to the Cardinal about it. But how can I bear with you? In truth, flying off, as you are wont, from one thing to another, you have thrown me off the track, and I scarcely remember the reason why I sent for you. And indeed, when you hear it, I expect to see you humbled, and your impertinence changed into miserable dejection."

"My dear brother, I will not deny that you may succeed in tiring me to death, for I feel already half used-up; but as to making my head turn, I do not think that you can do it."

136

"Well, then, you absolve me from all consideration, so that I tell you that you are the most abject, the most degraded, the most infamous knight in all Christendom."

"Poh! These are very big words; go on to deeds."

"Your wife is an adulteress."

"I know it."

"What! You know it, and have not yet revenged yourself?"

"It is fated that we Medici should never be fortunate in our women."

"What? What do you mean?" cried Francesco, starting up in his bed. "Of what fault can you accuse the Grand Duchess Giovanna!"

"May God have her in His peace, she was a saint."

"And Bianca?"

"Oh! Bianca! Since your marriage, I know not of what to accuse her; but before——"

"Before, she did not belong to me, and I have no right to investigate her life before she was mine——"

"Eh! Here is no question about you; others take this right for you."

"When we threw upon her our grand-ducal mantle the woman disappeared and the princess rose; and having elevated her to our seat, we have regenerated her in a baptism of majesty."

"Soap does not wash everything, and sometimes the cloth may wear out, but not the spot; and you must have a certain red stain on your hands which all the water of Arno could not wash away—and this stain comes from the blood of Bonaventuri——"

137

"Who can declare that I caused Bonaventuri to be killed? If my father himself affirmed it, I would say to him: 'You lie in your throat! I did not order, I did not commit the crime'—and I could swear to it."

"What with ordering, insinuating, guessing, hinting, tolerating, feigning, and the like, if this cause had to be tried before worldly judges, the law-gnawing advocates (I mean the bad ones, for to the good ones I bow reverentially, and profess myself their most humble servant) would find so many limitations and distinctions, that certainly no one could condemn you; but before God, one does not appear through lawyers: do you suppose that you can hide this stain with your glove, or pretend that it is a ruby?"

"Ungrateful!—Unkind man! How much did my enemies give you to make me die of rage? Are these the manners to be used before your lord, who, if he willed, could break you in two like a reed? And at the very moment, too, that he is taking your interest to heart, from a desire of saving your reputation. But I ought to have known that it would have been labor lost; it would be as well to try to wash the Pucci's coat-of-arms."^[34]

"I beg pardon, your Highness, I had no idea of irritating you: I said that merely for talk, being *en famille*. If any one dared to speak disrespectfully of your Highness in my presence, I swear to you on the word of a gentleman, that I would run him through with my sword. Be assured of this, Francesco, you will never have better friends than your brothers, and you never seem to care about it; you prefer a Serguidi, a Belisario Vinta to them, and in addition to that you allow such men to ill-

138

treat us. Francesco, you complain of us, but in truth you are not just. Let us throw aside all bitterness."

"Well, then, I discovered the infamous contaminator of your dignity, and have killed him."

"Poor knight! Well, he deserved it, but he was a good fellow"—

"And who told you that he was a knight?"

"Bernardino Antinori, whom you caused to be hung in the prison of the Bargello? Who told me? That is a curious question! Who told me? Certainly, some one who knew. Francesco, allow me to say half-a-dozen words in my own way, openly, freely, and as my heart dictates, although you may consider them, as usual, as emanating from a strange brain. We can do what we like, but with one condition, which is this: that we must let people talk. The persons whom we employ in such affairs are baseborn, and supported by iniquity; if they could find some one who would throw them a larger crust of bread, they would do to us, what, commanded by us, they now do to others. Do you hope for fidelity or secrecy in such degraded men? In taverns and in their disgraceful orgies, they pour in wine, and pour out words of blood, very often true, but oftener a thousand times exaggerated; and among the common mass of the people who know us little, we find accumulated against us such an enormous treasury of hatred, that it is frightful to look at."

"Have you finished?"

139

"I will presently. Add to it the curse of the pen. The pen is an infernal invention. I, for my part, think that the devil, falling down from heaven, lost the feathers from his wings by a thunderbolt of Saint Michael, and these quills fell upon the earth, and men gathered and sharpened them, and now use them as arrows, poisoned by that worst of venom—ink. Who knows how many traders at this moment, under an item for wool, or an account of a transaction in silk, have registered: 'Item, to-day, the — of the month of — A.D. so and so, Francesco dei Medici caused the Knight Bernardo Antinori to be strangled for his intrigues with Donna Eleonora of Toledo, wife of Don Pietro de Medici!'^[35] And besides the merchants, there are the philosophers, the historians, and other literary men, to whom I always show a pleasant face, since there are no means of putting them out of the world. These we cannot silence; the best way is to bear with them patiently, and by giving them sometimes flattery, sometimes bread, induce them to write according to our pleasure.

"There lived no such Augustus as the line
Of Virgil honors, gentle, wise, benign:
His taste in letters bade a veil be spread
Before the blood in vile proscription shed." [B]

^[36] We have a good example of this at home, and, not to mention Lorenzo the Magnificent, let our father teach us, whose tolerance reached so far as to listen to the reading of that most impertinent history of Benedetto Varchi, that would make anybody go to sleep even standing on his feet. But the worthy Varchi was so pleased by it, that from that moment forward he never let pass an opportunity of extolling Cosimo to the skies, and comparing him to Trajan, to Marcus Aurelius, and to Heaven knows how many others. But I notice that I am in danger of putting you to sleep; so that it belongs to you now to speak. We had stopped—where? Ah! yes, that you had caused the Knight Antinori to be hung."

140

Francesco, accustomed by nature and habit to serious conversation, and to go straight to the point, felt his head whirl round in this profusion of words and farrago of thoughts. He was obliged to collect himself somewhat, and pausing a few moments, he continued thus:

"Then, if you know of the infidelity of Donna Eleonora, why does she live?"

"Because if I should recite the *confiteor*, I should find that I had more sins than she; and also because I do not know who could protect me from her uncle the Duke of Alva, and her brother-in-law Toledo, who, between ourselves, are no saints."

"And are we not powerful enough to defend you against a Viceroy and a Duke?"

"What can guard me from the assassin's poniard?"

"A good coat of mail, a strong heart, and a careful vigilance."

"Lorenzino dei Medici took all these and other precautions in Venice——"

"He took them not, and was killed."

141

"May be so; but it is still true, that the best defence consists in never having done wrong to any one."

"However that may be, such infamy is not to be endured: I would not bear it—the

honor of our family does not permit it. We must remove this disgrace from us—and it shall be removed."

"What advantage, then, am I to gain? Is it only for my welfare that you worked, thought, and provided? It is for your own sake, then, that you sent for me? I shall have to become a murderer for you, and expose myself on your account to the hatred of a most powerful and vindictive family?"

"I care so little about their hatred and revenge, that I swear to you on the word of a gentleman, that after having drawn up a process of the guilt of this wicked woman, I will myself send it to King Philip, communicating to him secretly the cause and means of her death.^[37] I take the responsibility upon myself, and promise that, if there should be any necessity, I will declare that this was done by my advice, and even by my express command."

142

"Well, then, you desire that I should give up to you the life of Eleonora, and I will do it; a wife is not worth the trouble of spoiling one's appetite; but you also, as a good brother, must do me a favor, which will cost you but little, and will do me a great deal of good. I ask you to give me, or lend me—never to return—forty thousand ducats: my Pisan estates do not yield me a ducat this year; what with draining, ditching, and the like, it will cost me a fortune——"

"All deep in debt! All bankrupts! You, the Cardinal, and the Duke of Bracciano would sink Peru? Where shall I obtain so much money?"

"Eh! A little pressure on the coffers of the Republic, and all is settled. But you have no need of doing that: public reports tell wonders; it is said that in gold coin, in bullion, and in precious stones, you have accumulated more than ten millions. If this is true, you are acting injudiciously, for if you withdraw so much money from commerce, you will end by becoming the prince of a desert."

"Idle, good-for-nothing people! They do not know what they are talking about!"

"From public taxes you gain, your expenses not included, three hundred thousand ducats."

"Who dares to calculate my accounts?"

143

"Hang arithmetic if you can. And besides that, from your commerce in leather, jewels, grain, and pepper, you gain a fortune——"

"They are all losing concerns. All are injuring my property. I have made up my mind to give up commerce; perhaps—I have not quite decided yet—I may continue in that of pepper; but no more leather, no more grain; who deals in grain, will die on straw."

"You can do as you please; but will you give me forty thousand ducats?"

"Good heavens, how can you squander so much money?"

"Give it to me, for it is well spent; I use it in procuring friends for you. I expend it among the people, in festivals, in banquets, and in pleasures. The young men get accustomed to splendor and luxury; I enervate them; cow them down; enfeeble their souls; take away the dignity of their minds and the strength of their bodies; I prepare for the seed, and you can plant what you wish."

"You are ever the same strange mortal. You shall have the forty thousand ducats; but you must give me a mortgage on your Pisan estates, to restore them by instalments ——"

"Oh! As for that, I will give you as many bonds as you wish."

"Besides that——"

"Oh dear! You will begin now with your restrictions."

"No; I only wish you to be ready to get rid of your guilty wife, when and where I shall order you."

"Well, I agree to that. When shall I have the money?"

144

"To-morrow."

"Good-night, then. I must now go and do a little good. A lady is going to present me to her marriageable daughter, so that I may give her a little dowry. Then we shall have a party of young fellows at the Cock Tavern, that would put the devil to shame. Then we shall, perhaps, go serenading, and who knows what next?"

"Don Pietro! Don Pietro! You will never change your habits; you ought to think that we have to render an account to God of the time wasted so unprofitably. Have on at least a good coat of mail."

"Until now my coat of mail was a good conscience; but I see that after this evening I shall have to wear it. May God keep you in His holy guard." And so saying, he went

away hastily.

"And you also. Bianca!" And after a little while, he repeated in a louder tone: "Bianca!"

Bianca Cappello entered, panting, as if she had come in haste from a distant room.

"What does my Lord desire?"

"Have you heard anything of the conversation that we have had here? I dismissed you, not for my own sake, for you know that I do not keep any, even the slightest secret of my heart from you, but on their account——"

"Whose?"

"Orsini's and Don Pietro's."

"I was not aware that Don Pietro——?"

"Only think! I have been speaking to them in reference to their wives and the very guilty lives which they lead. I entreated them to try a little salutary strangulation, to induce them to reform: did you hear nothing?"

145

"Nothing."

"Truly? come, you must have heard some little thing."

"Upon my word I did not."

"Poh! You are cross now on account of the reproof I gave you this evening. But what can I do? I get angry so easily, and afterwards I repent. What I have in my heart, I have on my tongue. I beg your pardon for it."

"Oh, my Lord!" replied the cunning Venetian, "you statesmen have always so many thoughts, so many disquietudes in your heads; the fault is ours who come to disturb you: but we mean well, and if we mistake, deserve pity. And indeed, it is not worth while to take pains for me. You took me up, I may say, from the street, and placed me on equal footing with the queens and greatest princesses in all Christendom. My life consists in revering and loving you, and strive as I may, it seems to me as if I never could love you enough."

"Good Bianca! Excellent woman! I feel tired and wish to rest. Give me a glass of cinnamon water. Thanks, Bianca. Now let us recite our prayers; the Litanies will be enough for this evening."

Bianca took a book covered with crimson velvet, and clasped with gold; she knelt beside the bed, reciting the Litanies, to which Francesco replied very devoutly: "*Ora pro nobis.*"—These being ended, Francesco uttered these words:

"Behold a day is about to end: we count them when they are past, when they are no longer ours; a day is now falling from the hand of time into the immense ocean of eternity. Before, however, it is lost in this abyss, let us look on its last moment, to judge what a life it has led. Go, go in peace, you also, O day of my life; take your departure boldly, and rejoin your brothers, who have preceded you: you are free from tears, you have passed innocently. The accusing angel will not write you in his eternal register. Rather, I may safely say, that if fortune had woven you into the mortal web of Titus, he would not have exclaimed: 'I have lost a day!'"

146

But who did this man presume to deceive? God? Himself?—O human heart, how dreadful art thou to look upon!

Francesco, with a heap of onions in his body, and two murders on his soul, went to sleep peacefully, "like a laborer in God's vineyard."

147

CHAPTER VI.

THE SON.

Ma il bacio della madre, oh! non ha pari,
E vivon mille affetti in quello affetto.
Oh! figli, figli lagrimati, e cari,
Chi più vi muoverà la bianca cuna?
Chi più vi guiderà nei vostri lari?
Ci apre il labbro la madre, e ad una ad una
Ci scioglie le parole, e il primo accento
È: madre.

Ispirazioni di BISAZZA da Messina.

A mother's kiss! What can with that compare?
In that one word a thousand loves reside.
O children, objects of deep love and care,
Who will rock your cradle? Who will guide
Your tottering footsteps to your home on high?
It is the mother who our lip unseals,
Loosens the lisping accents patiently,
And still the earliest word our tongue reveals
Is "mother!"—

Catherine of France!—wife of a king, mother of a king,—and nevertheless, would the most wretched woman that ever did or ever will live, accept the Empire of France with the sorrows of her life, or her fame after death! Daughter of an abhorred prince, a child, forsaken and alone, she fell into the power of the infuriated republicans, who wished to avenge in her the crimes of her race, and to expose her upon the walls to the artillery of her relations, who certainly would not on that account have abstained from firing! Notwithstanding, bright and cheerful, careless of present danger, she conspired for the grandeur of her house. The heavens bestowed upon her the instinct and capacity for government. The youthful wife of Henry II., she saw herself neglected for Diane de Poitiers, the now elderly mistress of the king her husband; and she was silent, and shut deep in her heart the offence to woman, wife, and queen, and remained like a fire, hidden in order to flash out unexpectedly, to dazzle or to terrify the world. The mother of Francis II., she saw preferred to her experience and gravity, the frivolities of Marie Stuart, the almost infant wife of a child king; and she was silent, and with a smile upon her lips flattered the follies of the royal children, while she saw gathering over their heads the whirlwind fatal to the lilies of France. At last behold her the true Queen,—she rules. Like Niobe, she protects with her own mantle the head of a royal child; doubt not, she will defend it more successfully against the fury of factions than the ancient Niobe could hers, against the arrows of Latona's children. What did the kingdom appear? What the King? Charles IX. was a bird—a bird of ill-omen if you will—for whom a falcon and a vulture both stretched forth their talons. The Guises declared themselves his protectors; but can you imagine a king who needs the protection of his subjects? The Huguenots also wished to protect him—as a master the slave; and each of these parties was more powerful than Catherine. The former called themselves the friends of religion and the throne, and committed acts, to avoid the sight of which religion would have wished herself blind; friends of the throne, they composed a genealogy, which made them the descendants of Charlemagne, to expel the Capetians from the kingdom, as Capet had expelled the Carlovingsians; finally they became demagogues and were extinguished. The latter, hostile to the Catholic rites, consented that Henry IV. should win Paris by a mass,^[38] hostile to the throne, they ended by giving a king to France. It was not then for the king, but for the kingdom that they fought. Catherine had to fear, not only for her crown but for her life; laying aside the royal robes, she and her sons expected the mantle of sod that is assigned to the dead. Cruel inheritance prepared by the snares of Louis XI., the misfortunes of Louis XII., the follies of Francis I., and made more perilous by the doctrines of Luther and the other sectarians who followed him. The equilibrium could not then, as now, be maintained by gold freely spent, and votes thrown into an urn;—there a river of blood was required; there, instead of votes, heads, to be cast into the urn of destiny;—and Catherine accepted that inheritance with all its consequences—all! Truly, these are not such virtues as belong to women, nor yet to men; but the beings appointed by Providence to govern nations in such emergencies hardly belong to human nature; souls of bronze, created where the thunderbolt, the hurricane, and the other scourges of God arise. Catherine saved the kingdom of France from being rent to atoms in the sternest strife that she has ever suffered before or since. Louis XI. is praised, because, by cutting off the heads of the hydra of the feudal system, he laid the foundation for the greatness of the kingdom; and applauding the end, the means are disregarded. The Cardinal Richelieu is praised because he reduced the barons finally to gilded slaves of the Court. The Conventionalists are also praised, because they wrote in the blood of the Girondists that the Republic was one and indivisible.

But leaving out these last, were the first as wise as the world considers them? Carried away by the ardor of the undertaking, they strained every nerve to throw down a wall, ignorant of what it concealed; behind that wall, when broken down, they found a wild beast with sharp teeth, fiery eyes, eager to rend in pieces, greedy of spoil, famished with want, thirsting for blood—in short, the goaded people. The two hostile principles, without any intermediate one, which disjoined or moderated them, rushed upon each other one day and the second devoured the first; but no sooner was it swallowed than it revived in its own bosom, and from that moment the devourer has lain sick, and will lie—how long?^[39] The destinies of the world are held hidden in the hand of God. But it seems to me a strange thing to think that Louis XI. and Richelieu, the most despotic of rulers, should have been the fathers of popular revolutions. Catherine dei Medici, a woman with baby kings in her arms, with power weaker than theirs, indeed without power, did much more for France than they; events did not allow her to be milder, nor was she more cruel than the manners of her times, and I should like to be told if Louis XI., if Richelieu, if Francis, if Henry, if Guise, if Coligny himself were any better than she. And, nevertheless, the memory of Catherine dei Medici is held in perpetual infamy in France; not a generation but curses her in passing, and imprecates heavily upon her head the marble of the tomb and the vengeance of God! It would seem almost incredible if it were not true, that she, a queen, buried in a royal tomb, with the crown and vesture of royalty, had not a single mouth—a mouth however bribed—to pronounce a venal eulogy over her coffin. Three days after her death the preacher, Lincestre, thus spoke of her from the pulpit to his hearers: "The Queen-mother is dead, who, living, did much good and much evil, and, as I believe, more evil than good. And now a difficulty presents itself, which is to know whether the Catholic church ought to pray for one whose life was so wicked, and who so often upheld heresy, although they say that latterly she was on our side, and did not consent to the death of our princes. Therefore, I tell you, that if you would wish to recite a *pater* or an *ave* for her, do it; let it go for what it is worth; I leave it to your own option."

151

It is enough: she appeals from the judgment of men to that of Him who cannot err. Meanwhile, as for this earthly judgment, it is well to think that it is borne by those whose powers of judging may well be doubted, and that Catherine, as an Italian, ought not to expect justice from a presumptuous people, once only great, when a lofty Italian soul^[40] shed over them the influences of his genius.

152

Catherine dei Medici, Queen of France, desirous of saving from shame the family from which she rose, had answered Donna Isabella's letter, appearing very willing to give her shelter, but advising and entreating her, with all speed, to put her design into execution; she wrote, that she had ordered persons to meet her at Genoa, accompany her to Marseilles, and then conduct her with a strong escort to Paris, where she would take care to place her in safety from assassins and daggers. The Knight Lionardo Salviati, immediately upon the receipt of the letter, to avoid suspicion and fatal accidents, sent it as carefully and secretly as possible to Isabella by Don Silvano Razzi, a monk of Camaldole, and a very intimate friend of his. But Isabella had of late lost her natural firmness, and becoming discouraged and feeling a presentiment of her fate, allowed herself to be entirely overcome by dejection. The manuscripts which remain to us concerning those wretched events, speak as follows: "But the scheme did not succeed, for it was not the will of the good God, her affairs being too well known, so that now she could no longer disguise her intentions, and all knew her thoughts." In short, whether she could not or would not, the fact is that some time before the reply of Catherine Queen of France reached her, she had dismissed from her mind all idea of flight.

The Duchess had a foster sister; she had received the same nourishment as a daughter of the people, and happy would she have been, if, with the milk, she had imbibed the domestic virtues of her good nurse! Gifted with an excellent disposition, Isabella always wished to retain near her, her foster sister, whose name was Maria, and loved her passionately. It seemed as if she could not live without her; to her she confided the most hidden secrets of her heart, so long as they were such as she could reveal without shame; but when they ceased to be such, she began to shroud herself in silence and circumlocution; much more, since having once tried to inform Maria of her feelings, which, although not exactly guilty, had begun to deviate from the right path, she was met with such an admonition as took from her all wish to continue. Maria, although an excellent woman, was not very quick at observing, yet she perceived only too well that her lady's heart was withdrawn from her, and also that she could not regain it except by complying with her foolish wishes, and thus, as it were, becoming her accomplice. This, neither her own religion would permit, nor the faith she had always had in her mistress; and since she could devise no means of reuniting herself to her as she had been, she resolved to leave her as she was. The poor girl, in order not to separate from Isabella, had refused advantageous offers of marriage, and to her praise it must be added, had even subdued an affection that she had felt arising in her heart. The first roses of her youth had somewhat faded, but living modestly and "avoiding even the appearance of evil," she still looked young and handsome. While she was in this state of mind, fortune threw in her way a young man named Cecchino del Bandieraio, whose person pleased her, and even more the

153

154

devoted filial affection which he manifested for his aged mother. Maria, the sole survivor of her family, had to ask leave of no one except her mistress, who was then so much under the influence of her passion, that she permitted without sorrow the departure of Maria, who might be considered the last anchor of her salvation; she even saw her go with pleasure, as her presence had become a kind of restraint upon her. But as her truly royal disposition prompted, she was liberal in her gifts; bestowing upon her in abundance clothes, furniture, jewels, money, and kind words, and entreaties that in case of any need, she would come to her. When the moment of parting arrived, however, the old tenderness revived, and she embraced her so closely, that it seemed as if she could not let her go, and wept bitterly; but an ardent kiss of love quickly dried her tears, and Maria was soon forgotten.

But Maria, on her part, could not forget Isabella, and never failed to go daily to the palace; but she did not see her more than once in a hundred times, for she was told at one time that the Duchess could not be seen, at another that she was absent, and poor Maria would turn away sorrowful, her heart swelling, and her eyes filling with tears, but before she had gone half-way down the street, she would find excuses for Isabella, believe the reason for her dismissal, reproach herself for having doubted her, and comfort herself in the hope that she should be more fortunate the following day. But the following day it was the same thing over again, and her grief was sharpened by her constantly receiving applications from persons who wished her to obtain for them some favor from Isabella. In vain she assured them that she no longer possessed any influence over the Duchess; they did not believe her, but thought that she wished to avoid obliging them, and said to her: "We know perfectly well that Isabella and you are one person; one soul in two bodies; whatever pleases you, she does; whatever you wish, you can have; do not reject the prayer of the widow and orphan, intercede for us, and you will obtain; perform this act of charity, remember that you are one of the people; do not grow proud; a day may come when the Lord will visit you too, and then how sweet will it be to think of the good you have done; and you can demand the assistance of the people, who will give it gladly, that you may know that they can feel gratitude."

155

Think what a sharp stab this must have been to the heart of the poor girl; but she tried to do her best, and secretly comforted herself with the thought that even if the Duchess had withdrawn her favor from her, she had not forfeited it by her own fault.

Meanwhile Cecchino had become a man-at-arms of the Duke, who had taken him to Rome. He was doubtful whether Maria could go with him or not, but considering that it would be shameful for him to leave his aged mother entirely alone, he decided that she had better remain, the more easily as he hoped to be able often to visit his home. But fate frustrated his intentions, till, hoping vainly from month to month, three years had passed; and in this interval of time, to the sincerest grief of himself and his wife, his mother had departed to a better world. Then Maria wrote to him, that as there was nothing now remaining to keep her at Florence, and as she had grown tired of it, she wished to join him at Rome immediately; but Cecchino, in reply, begged her to remain, as the Duke could not delay many days longer his return to Florence, and that they should all return with him; and it did not appear safe to him that she, a woman, should venture alone upon the journey, while the roads were so beset with large bands of banditti, and even in Rome itself it was insecure. The good Maria, bearing her disappointment patiently, expected her husband every day.

156

It was the evening of the fourth of July, 1576, and Maria was spinning, alone and in silence, after having sung several verses of the song of Giosafatte and of Barlaam, and the whole episode of the death of Zerbino and Isabella, the pathetic fancy of Lodovico Ariosto,^[41] when she heard a knock at the door. She started, like one whose heart has been watching, sprang to her feet, and lifting the latch of the door, went to the head of the stairs with a light in her hand, hardly daring to hope that she might see her Cecchino appear: she beheld, instead, a man dressed in black, who entering with much caution, closed the door carefully, and then began slowly to ascend the stairs. Maria felt a little alarmed, but she had too much spirit to allow herself to be overcome by fear, and looking more closely at him, she recognised Don Inigo, the taciturn major-domo of the Duchess.

157

"Good evening, Don Inigo, welcome; what strange chance has brought you here?"

Inigo, in words which, though they retained nothing of his native Spanish, were yet far from being good Italian, replied:

"God and the holy Virgin *del Pilar* keep you, Señora Maria," and continued to ascend the stairs; when he reached the room he stopped a moment to rest, and then said:

"My lady sent me to tell you to go as cautiously as possible, towards midnight, to the secret side-door of the palace; knock twice and it will be opened to you. You will learn the rest from my Lady, who begs of you to preserve the utmost secrecy, as it concerns a matter of life and death. Good night."

And rising, Don Inigo departed as he had come.

"Don Inigo, hear me, stop a moment; tell me something more. Oh! what is this? Mother of God! lighten my trouble! If you know anything do not leave me in this perplexity."

Meanwhile, Don Inigo having reached the bottom of the stairs, lifted the latch, and in passing the threshold, turned and bowed to Maria, then, without another word, closed the door and disappeared.

Left alone, Maria began to revolve the matter in her mind; what it could be, what the Duchess could want, whether it was good or evil; at any rate, there was some great secret hidden beneath it; then Isabella was renewing her former confidence in her? She should recover her beloved sister. If she should confide some pleasant news, she would rejoice with her; if some distress, she would console her; it was her guardian angel that had kept her from going to Rome; one ought never to act from impulse; fortune would at last repair its wrongs, the city would again honor her, her friends love and respect her a thousand times more than ever. Gladdened by these pleasant thoughts she could not stay quiet, but wandered about, setting the house in order; then she arranged her hair, dressed herself in her best, and then (I know not whether it is the same with people in other parts of the world, but in Italy, when a great joy takes full possession of us, we must break forth into song) Maria began to sing, no longer Giosafatte, or Barlaam, nor yet the mournful episode of Zerbino and Isabella, but the song—

158

Mountain maidens, bright and fair,
Whence your course? Your dwelling where?
Down from Alpine heights we come—
Near a grove our cottage lies;
There our parents have their home,
Nature there our wants supplies;
Eve recalls us from the mead
Where our flocks securely feed, &c.^[42]

And she had finished all her preparations so quickly that the appointed hour seemed to fly before her, like the butterfly before the child who pursues it so eagerly, while, fluttering from spray to spray of the hedge, it seems to mock at him. Finally the clock struck, and Maria listening intently, with her finger on her lips, counted the strokes, but becoming confused she lost the number, and waited more carefully for the repetition of the sound; but this second time the barking of a dog hindered her from hearing all the strokes, and she remained as uncertain of the hour as before; she went to the window to ask any one who might be passing, but there was no one to be seen; then she tried knocking on the wall to ask her neighbor, who, probably just awakened out of sleep, and provoked at being disturbed, answered crossly: "I don't know." Maria, feeling as if she were enduring the tortures of San Lorenzo on the burning coals, and excited by curiosity, determined to set out, and, if too early, to wait in the open air, walking up and down, for from the intense heat, and her excessive impatience, staying in the house seemed a martyrdom that she could not possibly endure.

159

But Isabella's impatience was no less violent than her own, for when she reached the secret door it was opened to her first knock, and she saw the Lady Isabella seated on the lowest step of the stone staircase, pale as a waxen image, with a light at her feet, which partially illuminated her person. Seeing Maria she rose, and clasping

her right hand pressed it to her heart in silence; then taking the lamp she began to ascend the stairs, lighting the way for her.

160

Reaching her room, Isabella put down the lamp near the cradle of an infant. Marvellously beautiful was the workmanship of the cradle, all inlaid with gold; no less so the velvet counterpane embroidered with beautiful golden leaves, and the silken and gold draperies trimmed with lace of priceless value. Whoever has seen, in the gallery of the Pitti Palace, the portrait of the child Leopoldo dei Medici, who was afterwards a cardinal, may easily form an idea of how this child was adorned; but the most marvellous sight of all was the child itself, which was incredibly beautiful. Maria's glance fell immediately upon the little creature, and seeing how lovely it was, she began to fondle it after the manner of women.

"Why, who are you, my pretty one? *Gesù!* What a little darling! Where did you get such splendid eyes? Could you tell your name? With wings on your shoulders you would seem a little angel of love.^[43] There, there, laugh a little, sweet one, and show your dear little teeth." And putting her forefinger upon the dimple in its chin she played with him, and the little fellow began to laugh merrily, and lifted his tiny hands to Maria's face as if to return her caresses.

Isabella, silent, but partly relieved from the overpowering grief that had oppressed her, stood looking at the touching scene; but at last, as if roused by the urgency of the case, she spoke:—"Do you see? That beautiful head will soon be crushed by a hand of iron, or dashed against the wall, or else trampled under foot; those eyes will

161

be torn from their sockets; those soft, white limbs become a shapeless mass of bleeding flesh——"

"Alas! who would be such a monster as to do so? Who would dare to commit such a crime in the Orsini Palace?"

"Orsini."

"I do not understand. His Grace the Duke has always seemed to me an honorable Knight and a Christian——"

"This child is mine, but not my husband's.—Now do you understand?"

"Good Heavens! But why are we Christians, unless we are able to forgive? Trust in God; trust to the efficacy of repentance, throw yourself at your husband's feet——"

"He would kill us both."

"Your brother's——"

"He would kill us both."

"Who says so? You are too suspicious; it does not seem right to believe Christians capable of such enormities."

"Ah! Maria! Men are wicked and cruel. They wish to love us only so long as it pleases them, but if we cease to love them, they call it a crime, and as a crime punish it most severely. Giordano, who, if I were dying for love of him, would not stir from Rome to say to me: 'Go in peace, O sorrowing one;' would fly like an arrow from the bow to kill me and this child, because I have shown that I did not care for him——"

"The Duke may be as you say, but your brothers——"

162

"My brothers have taken 'the shadow of a shade,' and have called it honor. They, who would wish to rule universally and absolutely, have become the slaves of this shadow; they have made a code of it, which they quote continually; but the pages are blank; every one reads there what passion dictates; one single thing appears there, thanks to the characters of blood in which it is written, and that is death——"

"Well, if there is no longer any pity to be found in the world, fly, hide yourself in some secluded retreat, where you may ask the Lord to pardon your fault, and He will certainly grant——"

"I cannot go away, and I will not; I feel that I am guilty, and will not try to escape the punishment that is destined for me; I no longer know what to do with a life full of remorse and shame; henceforward I shall have to cast down my eyes, unable to meet the gaze of others; and the daughter of a crowned prince must hate life when she is obliged to bow her face, burning with shame.—But what crime has this infant committed? It is innocent; its fate must be separated from mine. This child must be saved——"

"And it shall be."

"O Maria, with those words you have given me the only comfort which my sorrowing soul can now feel. Take him—he is yours—and as yours save him."

So saying, she took the child and put him in Maria's arms. The baby, who had taken a fancy to Maria, raised his little hands towards her face, and seemed to entreat her as well as he knew how; Maria, kissing him with the warmest affection, replied:

"Yes, my pretty angel, do not fear, I will save you. Yes, you shall not die, you must live and be happy; if men are cruel, women are compassionate, and succeed better than men, because God aids piety and hates the wicked——"

163

"Maria, I expected no less from the great love you have always felt for me, and still feel. God and your own conscience will reward you for this good action, better than I ever can either by word or deed. I confess it, in the days of my guilt, I avoided you; you seemed a troublesome restraint upon me. Do not be angry; would man ever sin, if he did not first drive his guardian angel from him? My present wretchedness is sufficient punishment for my sin, and to satisfy you entirely, as I ought, Maria, I entreat your pardon——"

"O my sweet Lady, what words are these? You will make me weep, and we have need of all our firmness and resolution. Up now, tell me what is to be done. Night and silence veil everything in mystery; no one will know it, and you will live."

"Listen: feeling sure of your goodness, I have prepared everything that is necessary. In this chest you will find jewels and money sufficient to establish yourself. If the boy lives, employ it to educate him properly; if it please God to call him to Himself, keep it for your own use. Here is a letter which I confide solemnly to your secrecy. When you reach Paris, give it with your own hands to Catherine, Queen of France——"

"Paris! France! What do you mean? I never dreamed of that!"

"What did you intend to do?"

"Why, to take the child home with me; to move to another street, and live in some little house on the other side of the Arno, where I could let it be understood that the child was my own——".

164

"That would be perfectly useless, for they will seek this little innocent with the ardor of the bloodhound pursuing the wild beast; and while you would fail to save him, you yourself would run extreme danger. This dear head must be defended by very different means; the space of a thousand miles between him and his persecutors would hardly insure safety——"

"Ah, my Lady! I cannot leave Florence!"

"What! You cannot? Do you then repent of your kindness? Will you break your promise to me?"

"Ah, my Lady! You know that I am a wife. My husband is far distant; now how can I, consistently with my duty, go away without his consent? How leave a country which he does not wish to leave? If he were to return, and, finding me gone, his love for me should be changed to hatred, should he say: 'Since she is gone, I shall take no more trouble about her;' were I to become a wanderer over the world without him, should he doubt the great love I feel for him, and the faith that I have always kept to him, and despise me—Ah, wretched me!—I should die,—I should certainly die of grief——"

"You love your husband very much, Maria?"

"How could I help loving him? When, forsaken by every one, my parents dead, without a single relation, banished from your heart, I implored God to call me to Himself, because I had lost every reason for wishing to live, and the Lord not granting my prayer, I felt myself plunged in despair, this beloved youth had pity upon me and said: 'Come, poor forsaken one; rest upon my arm, and we will make the journey of life together; if you wish for love, I offer you a heart capable of loving:'—and I clung to him, as St. Peter did to the robe of Christ, when he felt himself drowning, and I was saved: life became pleasant to me, and has always remained so, because I feel that I give pleasure to him—to my husband—my only comfort on earth——"

165

"How happy you are! But reassure yourself, Maria; I shall know the moment he returns, and then I will contrive either to speak to him myself, or, failing in that, will send a monk of holy demeanor and sweet eloquence, who will be able to make him contented, and willing to appreciate your good and pious action, so that if he love virtue, as he must, loving you, he not only will bear no ill-will against you, but will love you a thousand times more than before——"

"You say well: but if you should not be able either to speak or to send to him; if, in the bitterness of the unexpected calamity, he should be overcome by passion, and destroy himself or fall sick—Alas! I tremble at the mere thought that he might be sick, and not have his Maria by his bedside to care for him——"

"I swear to you by my soul, that he shall know it before he enters the gates of Florence; do not fear, I bind myself by my word as a Princess and a Christian——"

"But even if I could trust you in this, Isabella, how could I endure to banish myself for ever from my country?"

"And what is there now in this country of ours to bind you to it? The spirit of the republic is irrevocably departed, not like a flame extinguished by force, but like a candle which has burned to the socket. Most of her worthiest children wander sadly, either in voluntary or forced exile, so that it may be said of Florence as it was of Pisa after the defeat at Meloria, that to see Pisa it was necessary to go to Genoa. In Lyons and in Paris you will meet the flower of our citizens. The royal buildings and the churches in France equal, if they do not surpass, our own. There, as here, the earth produces pleasant fruits; there, as here, the sun and stars shed their blessed light; there, as here, people love, hate, are born, live and die; and God exalts the humble, casts down the proud, and listens to the prayer of innocent souls like yours——"

166

"Yes, but there is no shrine before which I love to pray so well as that of the *Santissima Annunziata* in the city, and in the country that of the *Impruneta*; the sound of the organ does not exalt me, unless its echoes swell beneath the arches of *Santa Maria del Fiore*; the sweet breeze of evening does not refresh me, unless it blows upon me from between the *Duomo* and *San Giovanni*. O my Lady, when I see the trunk of a tree cut down at the root half buried in the earth, despoiled henceforward of flowers and fruits, and rendered offensive to the sight by the millions of ants which have half-eaten it, I think to myself—'Such it is to be an exile.' And then I love to look at well known faces, I love to say, when a child is born here, —'That is the child of Ginevra or of Laudomine;' if any one dies—'God rest the soul of Giulio, of Lapo, or of Baccio;' but away from one's country, you hear always around you—'Behold the child of the foreigner; behold the companion of the foreigner;' and

167

without really intending it, the people among whom you dwell never cease making you feel that you are nothing there, that you do not belong to their land, that you are privileged in being allowed to breathe their air, to be gladdened by their light and warmed by their sun. Who would speak to me again in the language in which my darling mother chid me when idle, or rewarded me when diligent? And if I wanted nothing else in that foreign land, who could enable me to kneel upon the stone which covers the bones of my parents, and repeat for them the *De profundis*? In my afflictions, when it seemed as if I were utterly abandoned, I went to their grave and grieved with them at my undeserved fate, praying them to receive me into eternal peace; suddenly I seemed to hear a voice, I am sure that I really did hear one, which comforted me, saying: 'Do not despair, continue to walk in the way of the Lord, for you are already near the end of your trials.'

Isabella changed color many times while Maria was speaking; suddenly she threw herself at her feet, and clasping her knees, thus implored her:

"Maria, by the bones of your parents, by the welfare of your soul and mine, I conjure you not to deny me what you have promised. Behold a mother utterly desolate; see if 'ever sorrow was like unto my sorrow;' I will not release your knees until you have given me peace; I will not raise my face from the dust until you have pronounced the word that gives me life. Some future day you may return to this land which is so dear to you, and that day cannot be far distant, for those who wish my death will quickly follow me to the tomb. And you, my child—unfortunate before you could understand what misfortune is—lift up your hands and entreat this woman who alone can preserve your life; I can do nothing for you; to stay by my side would bring certain death upon you. Maria! Maria! May the Virgin show you mercy upon your death-bed as you now show it to me! Have pity upon a mother who must else see her son slaughtered before her eyes—for Christ's sake——!"

168

And seeing that Maria hesitated, undecided what to do, she rose wildly and clutching the child, who began to wail piteously, she advanced with resolute step towards the balcony.

"Since," she muttered convulsively, "since I cannot save you, at least I will not see you die; let us perish together; they must collect the mangled remains of both. Maria, farewell! May this murder, which you might have prevented, not rise up in judgment against you. Come, my baby, let us leave this world where virtue and hatred are equally cruel—all wicked and cruel——"

Like one, who, after a long and terrible struggle, has at last resolved upon what part to take, Maria sprang after Isabella, and clinging to her dress, exclaimed,

"Well—I will go—to France——"

Isabella, throwing her disengaged arm round her neck, sobbed without being able to utter a word. When she had somewhat recovered from her violent excitement, she said,

"We must hasten, for the hour approaches."

She then divested the child of its gay trappings of velvet, and put them with the laces and counterpane into the gilded cradle, then kindling the fire she put them all in it.

169

"Let this finery be destroyed for ever, it would not bring you honor but disgrace; you must forget your origin. Child of shame, be satisfied if the fault of your parents be not visited upon you. Maria, I prophesy that he will be to you a best beloved son, and you certainly will look upon him as one; for we love our fellow beings in proportion to the trouble that they cost us, and to the benefits which we confer upon them; and you are conferring one upon him, which the heart can understand, but which the lips cannot express. Maria, he will be the pride of your life, the comfort of your old age; here I transfer to you all the rights of a mother, which you will exercise much better than I could have done. You will exert them innocently and religiously, for that will be piety in you, which in me would be sin; but whencesoever they arise the rights of a mother are holy and sacred. You will bring him up in the fear of the Lord, make him humble and gentle; proud thoughts are not suitable to him. Watch carefully that cruel feelings do not steal into his heart; do not disclose to him his birth, nor, alas! who was his mother; he would despise me, and the scorn of their children weighs more heavily upon the bones of parents than the marble stone. At some future time, if you should discover him to be compassionate—as I hope and pray he will be—if then he wishes at any rate to know who his mother was, tell him—'an unfortunate one!' Maria, I implore you to impress it upon him never to remove this little pearl cross which I take from my neck and put on his. Mark well what I have said, for it is my last will, and these my last words, that I now say to you. Adieu, my own, pardon me the life which I have given you; adieu, never to see you again—but perhaps in heaven hereafter. But how can I hope that God will pardon my crime? I will weep day and night—I will expiate my sin with blood, and appeased Justice will not forbid Mercy to join in Heaven those whom sin has separated on earth. But—the Mother of Christ pardon me the prayer—if in the life beyond the tomb we may not be united,

170

may you at least, my son, be admitted into Paradise; in eternal torments, it will still be some comfort to your mother to know that you are happy in the abode of the blessed. Maria—take him—I dare not bless him for fear my benediction should bring evil upon his head——"

"My poor Lady! Bless him, bless him, for the Lord will listen to your blessing as to that of a saint——"

"Do you really believe so, Maria?"

"By all my hopes of Heaven, I do believe it——"

"O Lord, cleanse my hands for a moment, that I may bless this innocent head," exclaimed Isabella, raising her eyes to Heaven and praying silently. Then a glorious radiance spread over her face. Reassured, she extended her hands over the child and added:

"Go, my son, I bless you——"

Then, trembling, she took the light and continued:

"Come; before daybreak, they will call for you and will escort you to Livorno, where a vessel is waiting for you. Come; I feel as if we could not be quick enough."

Maria took the baby, and wrapped him in a brown cloak. Isabella preceded her with the light, as she had done on her arrival. Reaching the bottom of the staircase, she raised her hand several times to open the door, but seemed unable; at last, a new thought came suddenly into her mind, restoring her strength and fortitude.

171

"One kiss—another—another still! Maria—my son—farewell for ever——"

Maria kissed her, weeping, and went out quickly, slipping hastily along close to the wall.

Isabella, overwhelmed with anguish, sank down upon the step, and leaned her forehead against the marble—her forehead was colder than the stone.

172

CHAPTER VII.

JEALOUSY.

Che dolce più, che più giocondo stato
Saria di quel di un amoroso core?
Che viver più felice, e più beato,
Che ritrovarsi in servitù di Amore?
Se non fosse l'uom' sempre stimolato
Da quel sospetto rio, da quel timore,
Da quel martir, da quella frenesia,
Da quella rabbia detta gelosia.

* * * * *

Questa è la cruda, e avvelenata piaga
A cui non val liquor, non vale impiastro,
Nè murmure, nè imagine di saga.

ARIOSTO, XXXI.

Man no state more blissful knows
Than what Love on life bestows;
Then our happiest hours we prove
When we are the slaves of love.
But alas! how brief our bliss!
Still suspicion's serpents hiss
Round our heart, and that curs'd fear—
Frenzy—martyrdom—is near,—
Rage—that fires the heart and eye,
Called by mortals Jealousy.

* * * * *

This, that cruel, poisoned wound
For whose cure no herb is found;
If that fatal dart we feel,
Art nor charm nor skill can heal.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." These are the words of Christ, and although I do not doubt that they have been understood according to the deep wisdom with which they were uttered, yet I will discourse a little, not upon them, for they have no need of comment, but after their instruction. Man should avoid those studies which make him doubt. He should love himself first, but in a just manner, then his family, then his country. There have been, and perhaps there still are, men who love their country more than themselves; but an acute observer will easily understand that sacrificing one's life (compared to which, everything else seems but of little value) is generally induced by a great love of praise and an uncontrollable thirst for fame; and that in truth they love renown better than life. The soul should be neither a Menade nor a Bacchante through the fields of knowledge; science has its fatal orgies, more than dissipation; the waters do not always flow clear, fresh, and sweet from its urn; they are sometimes poisoned. The tree of knowledge is not only, not the tree of life, but the Lord said to man:—"But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." The man who has seen too much, like Delia contemplating the sun, has become blind with too much light; his heart has turned to ashes, he is not exalted by anything, has faith in nothing; virtue and crime, morality and vice, sound the same to him, they are like sweet fruits in one country, and poisonous ones in another, the fault of the earth or the climate: the soul is to him a breath which ceases with death, home the place where he shelters his head from the storm: God a name.

173

Man should be satisfied to stop short at the *quia*:^[44] for if he trusts himself to travel thus at random through the regions of knowledge, the evils resulting from this restless wandering would be equal to those which are the consequence of continual travelling throughout the physical world. The latter takes away his family, friends, and home: the former his faith and affections. Job truly compares too much knowledge to a heap of ashes, for it is in truth the most unhappy remains of a fire which will never burn again. I have already said the Creator should have suspended truth as the only luminary from the firmament: for then no one could have doubted its beneficial light and heat, as perhaps some have done of the Sun: and I say *perhaps*, since there have been men who doubted whether the sun was a mass of fire, believing it to be rather a mass of ice causing a rotary motion in the molecules of the air:—which is a German idea. Ahasuerus, the wandering Jew, represents the symbol of this insatiable desire of knowledge: he travels and travels over desert shores, over burning sands, over snowy fields: he has seen the cupola of St. Peter's, the mosques of Constantinople, and the temples of Brahma and Buddha: he has seen dogs, oxen, crocodiles, and serpents worshipped: even onions raised to the dignity of Gods!

174

Porrum et cepe nefas violare, ac frangere morsu. O
sanctas gentes, quibus haec nascuntur in hortis
Numina!—JUVENAL, *Satire* 15.

He has seen bloodless sacrifices, sacrifices of blood and human victims; he has seen everything: he has forgotten all he knew, and all that he has learned is not sufficient to appease the feverish craving of his intellect: all that he wishes to know in order to satisfy his burning thirst, is inclosed within the urn of destiny: he hates to return home, for no one expects him there: his relatives are dead, generations have forgotten his name: he loves no one, and no one loves him: he refuses friends, rejects affections, and avoids binding ties which he MUST unbind to-morrow. Perhaps in that great day when God will reveal his eternal face to the vast multitude of created things, his agony will be appeased, and God will give him rest, not for having loved much, but because he suffered much.^[45]

175

Be contented, race of man, at the quia:—

State contente umane genti al quia, Che se potuto
aveste veder tutto, Mestier non era partorir Maria.
—DANTE.

else you will feel the earth tremble beneath your feet, and the heavens fall upon your heads. You grow up educated in the supreme idea of a Being who animates with the breath of his immortal mouth all that has life in the universe; who breaks the oppressor like a fragile reed, and shelters the oppressed under his mighty wing; but in travelling you will find people who neither know God nor worship Him; but make to themselves a God of dogs, serpents, oxen, elephants, and onions, and often of a monster hideous to look upon, but much more hideous in his bloody rites. It is piety in you to watch over your old infirm father, to comfort him in his last moments with loving cares, and close his eyes in peace; and yet there were and still are people, who esteem it filial piety to drag their parents from their suffering beds, and hanging them to the branches of trees, light beneath them great fires, crying in their giddy dance around them:—"when the fruit is ripe, it must fall,"—until the body falls and is consumed in the fire. And you, fathers in our beloved country, what sufferings would you not undergo, in order not to see your beloved children torn from your arms, or murdered?

176

In China, they offer children as food to dogs, or throw them into the river. In Africa they sell them; and Clapperton tells of a negro woman, who offered her children for sale to him, and because he would not buy them, cursed and beat them because they did not please the white man. We deem it sacred to bury our beloved dead within splendid monuments or tombs; elsewhere it is sacred to feed on their limbs. Remorse and public hate await him who can and does not save a drowning man: in China remorse and reproach are his reward who saves the shipwrecked sailor. We have laws and sentences against robbery, and the more skill and cunning do the thieves show, the more are they punished. The Spartans rewarded thieves, and the more skill they displayed the greater was the reward.

Nor is it to be supposed that the people among whom such horrible customs are practised cannot give a reason, good or bad, for it. They do not believe in God, because they do not understand Him; they are not able to conceive other ideas save those that present themselves to their senses, hence they refuse them. Foolish men! They presume that God should be demonstrated like a problem of Euclid upon a slate: for religion they want algebra, for an altar arithmetic, for a votive offering a well summed up account, for a minister an accountant. Others deem it a pity to cut short a life which has now become an irremediable grief; others deem their own bosoms a more suitable grave than earth or marble; others that it is a bold attempt to oppose the designs of nature; others that citizens early accustomed to subtle cunning are useful to the Republic. Travel and learn; and while you are urged by a strong desire to gather flowers from all the universe and rejoice in their delightful fragrance, behold the evil worm of doubt creeps insidiously into your heart and gnaws it. The sceptical heart is dead, but as the mind lives, we seem like people who have outlived ourselves: keepers almost of our own tombs.

177

Verily I advise you to be satisfied at the *quia*. Love much, read little, and let that be poetry, the purest wine of the soul, a precious ambrosia gushing from celestial fountains. And mark, I speak of lofty poetry, the offspring of the mind inflamed by the heart, for that poetry which comes from the intellect only, engenders doubt. Who would have been more fortunate than Byron? Did Nature ever create more powerful wings to soar to an immeasurable height? Who had a better heart, a clearer mind? But he wished to see and know too much, to scrutinize too minutely the genesis of the affections: a new Acteon, he received the penalty of his bold investigations: his own faithful hounds pursued him and tore him in pieces. As if for sport he wished to add the chord of doubt to his lyre; he thought it would increase the number of its varied sounds, but he deceived himself: this chord cut his fingers worse than a dagger's edge. The advice of Ephorus was most wise; he broke with an axe the new chord added to the Argive lyre. The lyres of Olympos and Terpander, when they

178

accompanied the songs of gods and men, had but three chords: twelve were those of the lyre of Timotheus when he sang at the banquet of Alexander and Thais (from whence he who had acquired the name of Great derived his infamy), and at the burning of the ancient Persepolis: and three should be the chords of any lyre, that intends to lead mankind through all that is honorable and great upon the earth, to the eternal home of heaven; and these chords should be, *Love, Faith, and Hope*.

But what has all this to do with my story? You will see that it has a great deal to do with it, for, continuing, it will be shown how poor people, with the fear of God, and firm in the precepts of Christian charity, can give examples of virtue which might be sought in vain among men gifted with greater talents and more liberal instruction.

Duke Bracciano, in company with Cecchino and Titta, turned with slow steps towards the Casino St. Marco. The two servants now thought they might refresh themselves with food and drink, and give some repose to their wearied limbs: but they were deceived. The Duke, as soon as he entered, fell upon the first seat he saw, and remained there some time with his eyes closed: he lifted his hand to his head, and pressing it as if afraid it might burst, said: "Here everything poisons me! Here I breathe an atmosphere of crime! They have poured a hell into my soul! Arouse, Titta and Cecchino; you must now show your fidelity, courage, and discretion. Go to my palace, present yourselves to my Lady the Duchess: warn her ... but no ... wait. Bring me writing materials."

179

The landlord of the Casino brought promptly what he desired. The Duke tried to write, but his trembling hand denied its office: he could not hasten, but was obliged to wait. At last more calm, he wrote a short note, which he sealed, and gave to Titta, and then continued his interrupted orders:

"Do not warn her of anything: but give her this letter, and say you precede me by one or two days. *Remember I am not in Florence*. Observe attentively every act, note every word, and when it is spoken, or if she say anything, although it may seem of little importance, come cautiously and tell me. I shall not leave here.—Go, be faithful, do not fail in your duty to your master: you may shortly know ... know what you never should have known ... and what ... indeed! What I never should have told you."

And he dismissed them with a motion of his hand. The servants bowed obsequiously and left.

After walking about a dozen steps, Titta began thus: "I hope Fortune will, in the end, give us leave to sup; we have suffered more ill-luck in our supper than ever befell the Emperor Charles in his kingdom."

"I have been thinking, and have just decided, to leave the service of the Duke, and go to my own house near by."

"God help you, have you lost your wits? It sometimes happens when we travel in this season of the year beneath a hot sun."

180

"I have not lost my wits, Titta; no, I have not lost them. You see, when I engaged myself as man-at-arms for my Lord Duke, it was for a reason which I will tell you. My father lived in the time of the Republic, and gave me a bad inheritance, for instead of educating me to the times, he was always talking to me of Signor Giovanni of the black bands, of Giacomino, Ferruccio, and other like men, so that a fever took hold of me to follow in their footsteps, for I felt as if nature had endowed me with something: but I did not see in what way I could follow this inclination: the war with Siena was over, and yet I would have cut my hand off before I would have leagued with the assassins of those noble citizens. I married in order to quiet this wild disposition: it was all nonsense. I did not know how to settle myself to a mechanic's trade; thanks to Lady Isabella, who was foster-sister to my wife, I took service with my Lord Duke, trusting that he being made General by the Pope or Venetians, I might at least bear arms against the enemies of Christ, those ugly Turkish dogs whom God confound. But I have wasted the best years of my life in Rome without drawing even a spider from his hole, and my sword has rusted in its scabbard."

"Ah, yes! Death is so slow that it is really worth while to go and meet it. Is it not so much life found? Have you not got your wages? What can you do in this world better than to eat and sleep?"

"Why so? Were not the men whose fame sounds upon the lips of the people flesh and blood like us? Did they not bask in the same rays of light? Did not winter chill them, and summer warm them? Did they not weep and laugh? Were they not mortals like us?"

181

"Hear me, Cecchino; there are men who grow up like pines, others like grass: the latter is born every year, and every year is cut down with the scythe; it is left to dry upon the fields, and then is given to cattle. We are of the second species. The hay might say: I wish to be a pine! Just so one of us might presume to become duke, prince, or I know not what. When you shall have left one eye in Africa, one arm in America, one leg in Hungary, to the remaining trunk of your body, within which your

immortal soul is sheltered like a garrison in the fortress of a castle, they will give the title of sergeant, and a couple of ducats for pay. Once, in republics, we had a chance to come out something: but nowadays glory is for great lords: it is our duty to be killed; so the best thing is to draw our pay, and preserve our health as well as we can. If life is an evil, death is a worse one. We call this world a valley of tears; but it would seem as if men liked to weep, for no one would ever leave it unless expelled from it."

"And supposing you are right, I never will eat bread gained through baseness and crime; it would break out my teeth, and turn to poison in my stomach. I wish to live in peace with myself."

"God help you! What do you want your master to do with your virtue? You remind me of Diogenes, who cried when brought to the market-place to be sold: 'Who wants to buy a master?' Virtue is a sail with which we make but little progress over the sea of life; in these times virtue is as useful as a warming-pan in August. Watchfulness over our master's safety, obedience to his commands, a German patience to wait in a corner, promptness to give a stab in the dark that despatches without giving time for a Jesu Maria, and a mystery in not having it discovered, will procure us all the fame that is granted us to acquire, and bread for ourselves and families...."

182

"No, never will I do this; no, by St. John the Baptist my protector; I pray him to give me an evil death first. Go, spy and tell. I would rather bite my tongue out than play the spy. Titta, do you not smell blood here? One of these days we must give an account of this bloodshed. And what pretext, what excuse can we give for it? Can we say: 'ask the account of our master?'"

"Indeed, you make me have some scruple; not for the blood, for this is part of our trade. They have really bought us soul and dagger, and to use it in a different way certainly than the Emperor Domitian; but the name of spy sticks in my throat ... besides, the Duke debases us without necessity. What need is there (for I see plain enough that here is the knot) for spies to know if a wife is unfaithful? Do you not think so, Cecchino? Would he be the first husband to find out that all is not gold that glitters? As it has been said: women are all of the same stamp!..."

"That is not true; I would swear now, you are saying what you do not believe, Was not your mother a woman?"

"Ah, yes! my mother was a woman; but I was not speaking, nor thinking of her just then; I said it of the others...."

"And do you not believe a woman can love?" ...

"I believe it, although it sometimes seems the contrary. Place yourself at the mouth of a cave, and utter a cry within it; the echo will repeat it six or seven times. But is the cry yours, or the cave's? Yours. It seems as if other voices replied to you, but you are deceived, for all these voices are one and the same thing as your own voice. So when you say to a woman:—I love you,—she will reply:—I love you, love you, love you;—but woe to you if you believe she said it by herself; it was the echo of your own voice, and woe to you if you fall in love with your own voice as Narcissus did with his own face...."

183

"Listen, Titta, I am young and of little experience; but I can see that your heart bleeds, perhaps from some deserved wound: you have not been loved, or have been betrayed; but have you ever loved?"

"I speak philosophically, without reference to myself. What I tell you is natural, and cannot be otherwise. Inconstancy is a fruit of youth like the fragrant red strawberry of spring; constancy is a fruit of mature age like the medlar of autumn;—therefore in woman virtue may be called the medlar of life! All beautiful things seem splendid in variety. Look at the rainbow, look at the dove's neck in the sunlight, look at the peacock's tail. Why do bees make sweet honey and wax? Because they fly from flower to flower. Women are moved by the same impulse as the bees. We are stupid creatures, to think of taking a soul and shutting it up in a cage like a bird, or nailing it down as a money changer does a ducat on his counter; even more cruel than stupid, after we are dead, we thrust a bony arm from the grave and presume to hold a poor woman by the hair. If she will keep herself a good widow,—the will says,—she shall have so much; if not, nothing;—very bad ideas in bad words; because we are dead, shall not others enjoy life?"

184

"All this would be very well, if life was a book, that we close on coming to the conclusion, and put away to see no more; but as we must think to meet again in the valley of Jehosaphat, if one's wife has had another husband, or even two, which will she have? With which shall she live to all eternity?"

"With the one she likes best; and there is no use to fret about that, since all shall have their turn; all shall be satisfied, if you only think of the length of eternity in women, which I have been assured by people worthy of belief, lasts all one week and sometimes a little over the next Monday."

"Go, go, you will die despairing, since you deny love.—Love, the sweetest union of spirits, two souls joined in one, redoubling strength and help, nourished by mutual sacrifices like the violet on dew."

"Nonsense, my boy, nonsense; love is an instinct of rapine, the agony of power, and the tenacity of possession. The love for a woman is like the love of property. Time was, but a time very, very distant, according to all accounts even before Adam, in which *mine* and *thine* meant nothing on the tongues of men; a traveller seeing a ripe fruit hanging from a tree, plucked and ate it. But one night certain envious men met together, and digging a pit around some land more fertile than the rest, said in the morning: no one shall pass beyond this pit, for the land here is our property.—People did not care though, and did the same as before. Then these envious men planted a stone on the limits, and threatened evil to whomsoever should dare to pass it. 'Twas of no more use than before; the excluded men looked upon it as a joke. Finally they put an axe upon the stone, and said: Whosoever passes beyond now, shall die.—But the excluded men laughed still more at this buffoonery and passed over; the others, however, lay in ambush, took them, and murdered them. Then the women wept, children cried, and property entered into the minds of men because they had cut off the heads of others."

185

"Pardon me, but where did you find all this nonsense? However bad it may be, it is not flour from your bag."

"Indeed it is not: if you could only have been so fortunate as to have heard it as I did from the lips of that great philosopher, that divine...."

"What divine?"

"Pietro Aretino."

"Ah! I do not want to hear any more. All have called him, and still do call him divine; which title, if it does not give testimony of his divinity, certainly bears witness to the extreme cowardice of the men who conferred it on him, or consented to it."

"You slander him; he was firm in his friendship, and had great affection for Sir Giovanni dei Medici of the black band, and followed him through hardship and danger in his most daring exploits...."

"This friendship spoils the fame of that renowned man. I know very well that while Sir Giovanni was fighting, he was dallying with the women of the camp...."

"That is not true, for he received some wounds."

"What of that? When did the receiving of a wound ever signify prowess? Even Achille della Volta stabbed him, and he received the wounds weeping and begging for life? And what reply did he make to Tintoretto when he measured him with a cutlass? He was smooth as oil. And when Piero Strozzi threatened to kill him in his bed, did he not shut himself up in his house, nailing doors and windows for fear of air?"^[46]

186

"What can one do against people who take one unarmed and unawares? And if Piero made Duke Cosimo fear him, what wonder if the divine tried to guard himself from him? But what devotion he showed towards his children Austria and Adria? You should have seen how much he thought of them, and how careful he was to assure them a dowry in the hands of the Duke of Urbino, and how he recommended them to all his friends!"

187

"He loved them to sell them——"

"*Per Dio!* Do not say so——!"

"Do not say so? I will say so while I have breath enough. What, do you think the shameful rumor of the death of this bad, villanous dog, never reached me? Did he not die with bursting into infamous laughter on hearing of some disgraceful stories of his sisters in Venice? Go, you are corrupt to the very bone. Go, eat the bread of blood: I swear to die of hunger first: go, keep your faith, and I mine. When your last hour comes you will see at your pillow the devil, who will erase the baptismal mark from your brow: I hope to see my virtuous and beloved wife, my good children, and the peace of angels. Let us part; you go alone to the Orsini palace."

188

"You see, I should get into a passion with you, and let you know that Titta never suffers an insult; but I also learnt this from the Divine, fortunate are they who proclaim the truth, if they do not get stoned. I will say at the palace, you are ill, or something else; I will frame an excuse to leave you time to give rest to your brain, and return to-morrow to your usual post."

"Thanks; I do not mean to return, and shall not. Titta! come here. Look, that is my house: I was born and brought up in it. Titta! do you not see a light in the window? Tell me; my eyes are full of tears, and do not see clearly. Holy Virgin! Is there not a woman in the balcony? Do I see right or wrong, Titta?"

"You see right; there certainly is a woman there."

"Oh, it is my Mary! Poor woman, she is waiting for me! Who knows how many nights she has passed at that window! Oh, what joy to see my dear kind Mary again!"

Thus exclaiming, he set out at such a rate that a wild goat could not have kept pace with him. Titta tried to recall him in vain, crying, "Cecchino, stop; Cecchino, hear!"

But he ran faster than ever. Weary and hot, Cecchino reached the door of his house, and scarcely had he called in a breathless voice, Mary!—before the woman replied,—Cecchino!—and with a cry of joy disappeared from the balcony and descended the stairs. In a few moments the street door opened, and these two beings rushed into each other's arms, mingling tears, kisses, and sobs, with such unrestrained passion, as to have caused deep emotion to any spectator.

189

Titta came up soon after, but found the door shut and bolted; he thought he would knock, but refrained, saying:

"I might as well knock at the door of a churchyard, and wait until our first father, Adam, came to open to me. *Requiem æternam dona eis, Domine*. Cecchino has certainly shown himself a fool. There is no use in getting anything out of him. God knows if I've not tried to do the best I could for him, as if he were my own son, and even tried to make a scholar of him. See now how a woman has upset the whole. It is useless! until the women are taken out of it, and men are not grafted like plum trees, the world will go on from bad to worse. But he is young; and young blood must have its way; to-morrow he will come back, a little cast down perhaps, but he will soon come back. Now, I must see to everything alone; but I will eat first, and then go to bed, and sleep as long as I please. And will my Lord Paolo Giordano wait? Certainly he must wait! I have no need of him: these masters expect us to be good and bad; amiable and quarrelsome; faithful and traitors; stupid and wise; angels and devils; then, never to eat, never to dress, and never to ask questions: in short, if a servant possessed half the qualities a master asks in him, there never would be so poor a one that did not deserve to have for servant a Marquis at least. Besides, what use is it to watch? Julia must be in the house. In less than five minutes I shall know more than I can remember or repeat; and even without so much loss of breath, if I choose to play the lover to her, who will dispute it? Certainly not she; our bond is lasting and strong; not limited, nor barren; we, instead of the individual, love the whole race: she, all the men; I, all the women; in this way there is no distance, no absence for us; we are always present, always in love; we are like pearls of the same necklace; we make a garland of every flower and crown our life with it. One flower does not make Spring; love is not comprised in one single affection." With these ideas revolving in his mind, Titta turned from Cecchino's house, delaying no longer his arrival at the palace.

190

I return more willingly now to Cecchino and Mary. Embracing each other and happy, they mounted, or rather flew, up the staircase, resembling two doves, hastening with outspread wings to their sweet nest. On reaching the room above they renewed their tender greetings: one questioned the other, and the other in reply questioned in turn; and not waiting for replies they poured forth a torrent of words burning with curiosity and passion. But this singular colloquy at last ceased, and laughing heartily, they exchanged kisses again. Mary, with sparkling eyes and blushing cheeks, first spoke: "Come, you are covered with dust and perspiration; let me bring water to wash your hands and face."

And she brought a basin of water; singing as happily as if it were a sunny noon, and not midnight; she then opened a chest-of-drawers, bringing out a towel of cleanest linen, fragrant with cassia flowers, assisting him in drying his face and hands upon it. Nor did her attention stop here, for a good wife is the dearest joy of a man's heart; but she sat down, and taking Cecchino's head in her lap, combed his hair nicely, freeing it of the dust, and arranging it smoothly around his neck. Then raising his head with both hands, looked smilingly in his face, exulting as a good and virtuous wife should, in a valiant, handsome husband, saying truly from her heart, as she kissed his brow:

191

"You look to me like an angel." ...

"But this angel," replied Cecchino, "not being as yet divested of its earthly clothing, is as hungry as one of Adam's children even can be."

"Indeed? I did not know you wanted anything. Why did you not say so before? Do not think you take me unprovided. You may find but little in your house, but enough to satisfy your wants."

"What could I do? We have travelled more than fifty miles without stopping. We arrived to-night, and never until we got here did we stop long enough to wet our lips."

"But did you not come with the Duke?"

"Yes, but it is not to be known. He did not stop at the palace. But more of this by-and-by."

"Yes, my dear, by-and-by."

She then set the table in the twinkling of an eye, not on account of the few dishes and little food she put upon it, but because of the great haste she made. The Florentines then had the reputation of being beyond measure frugal and parsimonious, well becoming all those who live honestly; and they still have it. Certainly they once were so; but it is not to be believed they suffered from it; and even by the laws called financial, often renewed, and strenuously enforced, we learn that civil parsimony did not spring up spontaneously, but in consequence of continual laws: we learn also that the statute allowed for dinner two viands alone, the roast and boiled, but the Florentines eluded it very easily by using various kinds of boiled and roasted meats, for the only boiled and roasted one prescribed by the statute. As to dress, Franco Sacchetti has recorded in his very pleasing novel, the great cunning shown by the ladies, by which the judges could never catch them transgressing, or even succeed in applying the laws to them. And when persons of high rank came to Florence, the citizens who entertained them paid the fine and displayed royal magnificence. The records of that time describe the manner Lorenzo the Magnificent entertained Franceschetto Cibo and his Court, when he came to marry his daughter; and this description serves to show how old is the fashion in all those who attempt to destroy the liberty of their country, in studiously observing appearances, in order to sharpen the axe to cut the substance. But then the chests were full of golden florins, the commerce great, industry wonderful, enterprises prodigious; and in those times designs were conceived and executed, that nowadays astonish us only to look at. Unjust then is the reputation that now exists of Florentine avarice; a recent testimony to it, we find in the satires of D'Elci, where he says:

192

—a te torno, o mia frugal Firenze,
Dove avarizia ha splendide apparenze.

Many confirm this, but, as is often the case, rather upon the assertion of others than from real observation. The demon of luxury and idleness rules the Florentines at the present time: like all the other nations of Europe, I will not say that they do not believe, but they trust little to a celestial Paradise; they have built a new terrestrial one without the tree of knowledge. It matters little, if they pluck flowers of a day and let them wither; as long as they are renewed, it is enough; whatever endures, wearies; to live and enjoy comprises the extreme limit of their wishes. Once the age doubted between good and evil; and this was surely a great labor for both heart and brain, yet the labor itself gave a proof of life: now the age believes, yes, believes, but its belief is not in the good. We all live as if the physician had given us over; and it would seem as if we feared that to-morrow the heavens might not cover the earth: no more pyramids, no more obelisks; the longest work we dare to undertake is making a garland of flowers: the spider's web seems too secular a thing, we form ourselves into a number of beings born to devour the wheat. Let us then adorn the brows of our heroes with poppies, let sleep be the Epic of our age, yawning its history. Greater life awaits us in the grave than on this earth, at least during the period of putrefaction. No one can give us reasonable reproof: we are for the age, the age for us: the niche and the saint harmonize wonderfully. Why wear ourselves out in procuring a fame we hate? Why attend to studies which make us doubt an existence, which we with all kinds of violence try to steep in oblivion? Our children will grow up worse or better than ourselves: if worse, every argument will be in vain; if better they will be ashamed of our miseries. Better then to sleep, be silent, enjoy, and die. This is truly the triumph of death!

193

194

Two plates were placed opposite each other upon the table. All was ready, and yet Cecchino seemed to have no desire to taste the food he had craved; he kept his face turned towards the head of the table, and all at once a tear trickled down his cheek, and he gave vent to a deep sigh.

His wife, seeing this sudden despondency, said anxiously:

"Holy Virgin! What is the matter? What troubles you, my dear? Tell me quickly, do not keep anything from your poor wife...."

"Ah! Mary, do you not remember when last seated at this table we were three?"

A long silence succeeded these words; Mary was the first to break it:

"Mother Laudomia has certainly gone to heaven. With how much joy did she see her last hour approach? How she talked with saints, who seemed near her, to assist in her soul's transition. This life had become a burden to her; the sweet light of day no longer cheered her loving eyes; and your mother, Cecchino, would never have seen your face again. She died as a bride going to her nuptials, and happy in knowing you so well trained in the way of the Lord, that nothing would ever cause you to forsake it. Her last thought was God's, her last but one yours. Tell him—she enjoined upon me in her last words—tell him I bless him, tell him his children shall honor him, because he was kind to his mother; and at last, when weary of life, his mother shall await him in heaven. Therefore be comforted, and do not give way to sorrow...."

195

"Certainly the good woman was old, and is now a dweller in a heavenly home; but it would have been a great comfort to me if I could have seen her again...."

"And how do we know but while we are talking she is near us? If, as we believe, we are soul and body, and that the soul feels love, may not God grant it to return and visit persons and places that were dear to it in this world? Console yourself, Cecchino; for time passes, and it is not always the worst thing to die, sometimes it is to live...."

Cecchino at last began to eat, but the desire for food had passed, so that the repast was soon finished; perhaps he drank, however, more than he meant. His wife, partly through curiosity, and partly to distract his sad thoughts, turned the conversation upon the Duke.

"The Duke has arrived, then?"

"He has; but I must look out for employment elsewhere?"

"Why; has he sent you away?"

"No, I left on my own account.... But you shall hear: although I know it is best not to trust secrets to women's ears, yet having always found you faithful and discreet, I will hide nothing from you. The Duke has come, and, as I believe, with bad intentions. We entered Florence mysteriously, and silently, by night; he talked a long time with his brother-in-law, and went cautiously afterwards to some rooms in the Casino of St. Marco; he remained there alone, sending me with another follower to tell Lady Isabella that to-morrow, or the day after, he would arrive: meanwhile we were to watch every word and deed, then come and report it carefully to him...."

196

"For what reason?"

"The reason is plain enough," replied Cecchino, lowering his voice; "the rumor of Lady Isabella's way of life has reached as far as Rome; I firmly believe that he has come to avenge his honor in the blood of his wife; and I would not give a ducat for the Duchess's life from this time."

"But is there no way of saving this unfortunate lady?"

"None; for it seems her brothers want to punish her more than her husband; besides, she should receive the penalty due to her crime; and if I, instead of going to spy her actions, thus becoming a participator in her death, staining my hands with her blood, have chosen to take voluntary leave of the Duke, I do not for that feel disposed to run any danger for one who does not deserve it."

"Oh, how can you talk so? Then the fair name of a noble lady may be in the power of the first low fellow who chooses to contaminate it? Do you think that merely the slanderous charge of so grievous a crime must be revenged by so cruel a punishment?"

"Conviction has no need of witnesses or instruments: and when the people speak, God has spoken: if it is not a wolf, it is the shadow of one."

"And supposing I allow, although against my will, that she is guilty, tell me, who has given the Duke a right upon the life of his wife? Has this judge a clear conscience? Is the accuser himself innocent? Has this priest pure hands? And if he is not innocent, why dares he to judge and condemn in others the guilt he has himself committed?"

197

"Oh! it is a far different thing in a man than in a woman. She brings children into the family that should never be there, divides property among persons with whom it should never be shared: the suspected illegitimate child is shunned by all; they scorn him, and he hates them; and we have too often seen that these bad buds bring forth in families bloody fruits."

"That is not so; for do you ever see a man who bringing forth children out of a house, abandons them? And if he does, the world blames him, and his conscience reproves him for it; and if he provides for them, does he not unjustly diminish the property of his legitimate children? No; equal are the duties, equal is the crime, and equal should be the pardon or the punishment."

"Yet it is not so, and I do not believe as you say. There must be a reason for it, although I do not know one...."

"Listen, you cannot find one, because there is none; if there was, it would come into your mind spontaneously. Thinking within myself I have seen that the world rests upon certain principles, called truths: some of them you can see and touch; and great scholars as well as fools agree to them, and say—it is right;—others, though, are not understood, they seem like alchemy, and we must distil our brains over them to make them comprehensible. The first seem to me lawful money, the second spurious; the first comes from nature, the second from artifice."

"Ah! good women should not reason so skilfully, but obey the laws men make for

198

them...."

"A violent law, an unjust judge, a wicked punishment."

"In God's truth, you have become such a reasoner, that I am afraid. Who put such immodest words into your mouth?"

"Reason...."

"Or perhaps the necessity of defending your own evil deeds?" And maddened by anger, Cecchino took a knife from the table, and passing it through the tablecloth, stuck it nearly an inch into the table. Poor Mary, excited in favor of her mistress, took no notice of this; but with obstinate petulance continued:—"What deeds are you imagining? I tell you there should not be two weights and two measures, and there are not...."

"It is well. Although I have no other proof of your own baseness, and the Duchess's also, than your present boldness, it would be enough for me, perhaps too much. Were these the joys, these the greetings and the kisses, I looked for? Alas, miserable man!..."

Mary, struck by the changed aspect of her husband, asked what sudden thought had troubled him; but he paid not attention to her, and, like a man bewildered, he murmured threateningly:

"Ah! Titta, your words were true as gospel.—And I was going with so much joy to meet a beloved wife! Better for me if I had broken my legs; were husbands watch-dogs they never could be able to guard their wives:—the thieves would enter by the roof. I will kill myself: everything in the world is over for me. But you need not rejoice in my death, Mary;—No, I vow to God my curse shall cleave to you like marrow in the bone. You have betrayed me, you shall be betrayed; unhappy days, a dark life and bitter death await you...."

199

In the midst of these laments, which passion drew from him, the noise of a child crying was heard in the next room, and an infantile voice called:—

"Mama!—Mama!"

Cecchino's hair stood upright on his head like the quills of a porcupine, his face was pale as a sheet, and then turned as red as fire; his lips trembled convulsively, his eyes gleamed with evil passion, and overcome by a brutal rage he seized Mary by the arm, and dragged her into the next room. Scarcely had they passed the threshold than a little child on the bed sat up, and stretching its little hands joyfully towards Mary, cried again:

"Mama!—Mama!"

Cecchino, pale with rage, pushed Mary with so much force from him that she fell against the bed, and upon the child.

Overcome by surprise, anger, fear, and by the turn of affairs, she could not utter a word: but her anger soon gave place to pity. Her heart was almost broken by so many conflicting emotions: she glided from the bed, and knelt down, crossing her hands humbly, before her angry husband. But he, becoming more enraged at this act, muttered:

"No ... you must die ... we must all die ... there is no pity ... I want none for myself ... think then if you deserve it ... or this viper...."

Mary sobbed:

"Cecchino!... Cecchino!... hear me,"—but could say no more.

"Prepare to die ... you have one hour ... half an hour; ... no, ... only five minutes of life...."

"Hear me, ... let me speak...."

"Make your peace with God; ... but it is useless; traitors cannot enter heaven...."

"I cannot...."

"Have you finished?"

Mary, in agony, unable to utter a single word, made a sign of denial with her hand; and its expression was indescribable. Ineffable sorrow oppressed her to think that a few words might calm this tempest, soothe the anger, save so many dear lives, and yet she could not utter a word. Cecchino, as if possessed with a devil, impatient of delay, his passions becoming more cruel in the thought of bloodshed, could hardly wait, so anxious was he to stain his hands with her blood. Poor woman!

"If you are not anxious to end this, know that I am eager to begin...."

200

Unsheathing his dagger, he stretched out his hand to grasp her. Mary, uttering a cry, fell senseless to the ground. Cecchino, his heart closed to pity, did not wait; he bent down to plunge his dagger in her bosom, and tearing her clothes aside, saw with wonder a letter drop from them: fancying it might be from the hated betrayer of his happiness, he was glad to think that now his revenge might reach even him. Taking up the letter and drawing nearer to the light, he read on the outside:

"To Her most Christian Majesty, Catherine, Queen of France."

201

He thought he dreamed: he looked again; it was the same as before. He then opened the letter, and read:

"Most Honored as a Mother:—Considering the heinousness of my sins, and the punishment that may befall me on this earth, striving to obtain through God's infinite mercy that pardon which I humbly beg with all my mind, I have decided not to avoid the fate, whatever it may be, which Providence prepares for me. But in following this decision, which my guardian angel seems to have awakened within me, I cannot, nor ought I to include in my ruin an innocent being, and one most worthy of commiseration. I therefore confide this child of my sorrow to your pity: remember that its cradle is girded by serpents, and its life is like the life of a wild beast of the woods, which every man thinks he has a right and a reason to pursue. No less than the prudence and authority of a wise and powerful Queen like yourself is necessary to save this miserable being: except that I have good cause to hope in the woman to whom I trust this child: she leaves country, home, and kindred, to console me with brief comfort, in order to consign him to your Royal Highness's care, as his surest haven of safety. This woman is my foster sister: born and educated in the way of the Lord, I cast her off in my hour of sin, and she returns voluntarily to me in that of misfortune. The urgency of the case not admitting of delay, she sets out alone by my eager request; but I will strive to have her dear husband join her shortly. Both young and faithful, deserving of the kindness of your Royal Highness, I pray you to give them the greatest favors which your royal heart is so ready to bestow on all, and especially to those who in the service of your kindred and royal family assume a responsibility in manifest danger of their own property and lives. I have no more to say, except to beg your Highness, for the love of Jesus Christ our Saviour, to take under your protection this miserable being. God will give you that reward which I cannot. Look upon these words, your Majesty, as on the dying ones of a relative;—this is my testament;—and with this faith to die resigned and contrite, who would else have ended her life despairing and blaspheming. When your Highness shall have received the news of my death, which I foresee is inevitable, be pleased to remember me in your prayers, and aid my soul. I wish you in this world all that happiness which your glorious mind and magnanimous heart knows so well how to create; and kissing your hands I sign myself a most unworthy, but yet affectionate child of your Majesty,

202

"ISABELLA, DUCHESS OF BRACCIANO."

Cecchino perceived his error before coming to the end of this epistle, his anger departed, and his heart, having experienced so many passions, gave way in a burst of tears. He put the letter aside; he had already thrown his dagger away, and turning with tearful eyes towards Mary, raised her head, calling her by a thousand endearing names. But the poor woman gave no sign of life, and in her fall had struck so heavily that she had bruised the skin behind her ear, causing it to bleed. It seemed for a moment as if Cecchino was about to faint: but the thought of providing for his wife's safety sustained him: he carefully bound up the wound, placed her upon the bed, and tried to restore her with water, vinegar, burnt feathers, and all such means; but she did not revive. He then broke forth in laments; sighed and raised his eyes beseechingly towards heaven. Desperate at last he lay down by her side, embracing her, and bathing her with tears, covering her face with kisses, and exclaiming between his sobs:

203

"Oh, God, let me die by her side!"

But God intended him no such misfortune, and scarcely had he proffered these words, before Mary, uttering a deep sigh, opened her eyes, forgetful of what had occurred. Cecchino knelt before her, not daring to open his mouth; and Mary, by degrees, began to recollect past events, sat up, and seeing the letter, guarded so jealously by her, open, turned towards Cecchino, and, smiling languidly, said:

"Of little faith, why did you doubt?"

Then looking towards the window, and seeing the stars, added:

"Cecchino, we have no time to lose. They will come for us in a few moments. While I dress the child you must pack your own clothes, and sew the gold and jewels of the

Duchess among them: all the rest is provided."

Cecchino, having no will of his own, passively obeyed her orders: so many, so various, and so deep had been the passions he had experienced in such a short time, that he felt almost annihilated; but whatever faculty of thinking and wishing still remained to him, would not have been opposed to the desires of his wife, who, animated by the spirit of charity, sacrifice, and love, appeared to him a being more akin to angels than mortals. He loved and worshipped her as something holy. Of such, and so sudden transitions is the mind capable in this world! Miserable intellects in the power of passion, like a fragile skiff agitated by the tempestuous ocean, we weep, we laugh, and, but this is more important, we pass on to deeds, which as they take from us the dignity of men, and peace of mind, also render us in this life deserving of the scorn of men, and in the next of God's disdain.

204

Mary was not deceived; for a short time had scarcely elapsed before two men appeared at the house door, knocking cautiously, and saying in a low voice to Cecchino, who opened the window, to come down, for all was ready. Mary went first with the child; Cecchino followed with a chest containing a few clothes. Taking the first step out of the door he turned back, sighing:

"I leave you, never to see you again!"

When they had all descended, Mary, wondering not to see Cecchino by her side, called him, and was about to go back, when he came hastily, and said in a low tone:

"I remembered my mother's rosary at the head of the bed, and went back for it. If it had belonged to your mother you would not have forgotten it."

Mary pressed his hand, for she knew she had no defence, but the accusation pleased her.

They walked some distance in silence, and found a carriage waiting for them near the corner of the Giglio, behind St. Lorenzo; they entered it, and drove towards the gate San Frediano. As they drew near it, one of the men descended, and calling the gatekeeper, exchanged a few words with him, whereupon he opened the gate. Then, turning back, told his companion to descend, adding:

205

"You can go on now—pleasant journey—God be with you."

Mary had already guessed, and the dawn which began to appear confirmed her supposition, this man was the Knight Lionardo Salviati; she, therefore, took courage to call to him, saying:

"Do me the favor of listening one moment, Sir?"

And the Knight stopped to listen.

"Sir Lionardo," she murmured in his ear, "when you see her, assure her that the child is safe: tell her also my husband is with me, and she need trouble herself no more about it. Save her, if you can, for her death without your aid is certain. The property I have left behind me, please tell your friend Don Silvano to sell, and use it all in masses for the dead and ... for the dead, according to my desire."

"It shall be done."

Sir Lionardo then closing the door, ordered the driver to proceed. Mary, in speaking of the dead, meant Isabella! But there still remaining to her a very faint ray of hope, she did not wish to destroy it with this sad commission: but she believed in her heart that having given it for her beloved dead, she included among them the soul of poor Isabella.

206

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CONFESSION.

Venuta la mattina della Pasqua, la donna si levò in su l'aurora et acconciossi, et andossene alla chiesa.— Il marito dall' altra parte levatosi se ne andò a quella medesima chiesa, e fuvvi prima di lei—e messasi prestamente una delle robe del prete con un cappuccio grande a gote, come noi veggiamo che i preti portano, avendosel tirato un poco innanzi, si mise a sedere in coro.—Ora venendo alla confessione, tra le altre cose che la donna gli disse, avendogli prima detto come maritata era, si fu che ella era innamorata.... Quando il geloso udi questo, gli parve che gli fosse dato di un coltello nel cuore.

BOCCACCIO. *Giornata VII. Novella V.*

When Easter morning came, the woman rose at dawn, dressed herself, and went to church.... The husband also arose, went to the same church, and reached it before her.... He then put on hastily one of the priest's robes with a large hood, such as monks generally wear, which he pulled somewhat down over his face, and sat in the confessional.... Now when the woman came to the confession, among other things she said—that, although she was a married woman, yet she was desperately in love.... When the jealous husband heard this, he felt as if struck by a dagger in the middle of his heart.

Titta finally arrived (since all, living or dead, must come to some end) at the Duke's palace: he pulled the bell-rope four or five times, but no one answered. "It is evident," he said to himself, "that the husband is away, and is not expected home; and if husbands take a notion to arrive suddenly, they must pay the penalty of their rudeness: but I, not being a husband, will not wait, but put a remedy to it at once."

And as well as he could he inserted his arm and part of his shoulder between the bars of the gate, and with his fingers took the latch and opened it. This done, he went softly to the porter's room, who, with elbows stretched upon a table, and head resting on the back of his hands, slept as soundly as a dormouse. The merry fellow taking the horn, approached it so near the porter's ear as to cover it entirely, and gathering all the breath he could in his strong lungs, blew such a powerful blast as to make the whole palace shake from top to bottom. I will not describe the tremendous scream the porter uttered, nor what a leap he gave; these are things that can be better imagined than described: he was neither alive nor dead; he trembled all over, and knew not in what world he was. Not a human creature or animal within the palace, or in the street, could remain quiet in bed, but ran startled to see what was the matter.

207

When Titta had collected nearly all the Duke's domestics, he turned to the major-domo Don Inigo, and said to him:

"I come by the orders of his Excellency the Duke; I have this moment arrived from Rome, and have a letter which I must immediately consign into the hands of my Lady the Duchess."

"You cannot present yourself in such a dress to our lady; you must clothe yourself properly, and then I will announce you."

He then led him to a wardrobe, and dressing him in the Orsini livery, left him to wait until he could be announced to her Ladyship the Duchess.

Isabella slept not: sleep for a long time had not shaken its peaceful wings over those unhappy eyelids; and she would let it pass without even invoking it, for if painful thoughts oppressed her while awake, horrible phantoms afflicted her still more while asleep. She had become now resigned to her imminent destiny, and whatever happened could not disturb her; she would shut her eyes, and murmur in a low tone: *In manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum.*—She heard the door of her room open, it seemed as if some one had asked her whether he could come in, and she replied with a motion, without knowing herself whether it was consent or denial, so she was somewhat amazed when, reopening her eyes, she saw a man with one knee on the ground before her presenting a letter upon a crimson velvet cushion. Educated as she was in the dignified manners of the Court, she took the letter with a certain princely haughtiness, and read it; then handing it to the major-domo, said:

208

"Place it in the archives.—Rise, sir.—Inigo, give this soldier the usual courier's fee; and double it, for the news which he brings is very acceptable to me. Don Inigo, in a few days, after so long an absence, we shall see His Excellency the Duke.—May God keep you in His holy guard. Good night: go."

And when they had departed, Isabella, without heeding if anyone could hear her words, rose from the couch on which she was lying, and thus addressed Lady Lucrezia Frescobaldi, her lady in waiting:

"Lady Lucrezia, we are ready to take our departure, so that it would seem better for us to be prepared by taking the sacrament."

Lady Lucrezia belonged to that race of pale and delicate creatures, who are accustomed to accompany the powerful: they come with fortune, and go with it; not because they are bad or ungrateful, but because it is as innate in their nature as in the heliotrope to turn towards the direction of the sun; they pertain to the family of

209

leaves, that are born in Spring, and fall in Autumn. They possess no will of their own, incapable of assent or denial; their minds, like barometers modified by the impression of air, bend according to the will of their masters. Such people have always been, and are still, very dangerous, for if the great did not meet with people ever ready to serve their wills, they would not dare to act as we see them every day; much the less if they could find souls like that of the simple Mary, who promise obedience, and give it, but do not sell their conscience; and when they reach that point in which they must either displease the worldly master, or the Lord of Heaven, they trust in Him who decks the lily of the valley, and nourishes even the slothful: poor and alone, they will start upon the desert of life, exclaiming like the patriarch, Abraham:—God will provide!

But the great rarely have friends, for if they had, fortune would have granted them too large a share of blessing. Let them take the example of that king of Spain, if they desire to be in company with a friend;—have their portrait painted together with a dog.

Lady Lucrezia, then, with her submissive air, replied:

"Your Highness, do just what your heart dictates."

"Yes, I have decided to confess; but I would like to have some holy man, who would know how to comfort my weary soul, and give rest to my mind, continually assailed by doubts; do you know anyone able to do that?"

210

"I do not."

"Father Marcello, who is so reputed in the city, might be a good counsellor."

"Yes, your Highness, I should think he might be."

"However, it would not be proper to send for him, for perhaps he might not be disposed to come; or coming, it could not be done so secretly, that idle people would not find it out; and I desire above all things secrecy and discretion."

"You speak wisely, my Lady; for sometimes these fathers have more pride under that sackcloth of theirs than a Baron under a mantle of brocade."

"And going myself to church, I might easily be known."

"That is very likely."

"Perhaps ... to-morrow ... no, for it is already too late, and I could not in so short a time collect myself, and truly examine my soul..."

"Of course, in such a short time you would not be able to remember all your sins..."

"What do you know about my sins? And what, and how many they are? Who told you that it would be difficult for me to remember them?"

Lady Lucrezia, with too great a desire of pleasing her mistress, according to the usual habit, assented where she ought to have doubted.

The most wary courtier sometimes falls into this error; but if he grazes the boundary line, he rarely stumbles so as to break his legs.

Lady Lucrezia might have answered:

"Eh! my Lady! If I covered my face with my hands, know that I happened to peep through the fingers, and saw more than enough."

211

But, you may imagine, that even if she had the power to conceive such thoughts, she would have put them aside, as temptations of the devil!

So she replied as from inspiration:

"For a dignified and pure conscience like yours, so scrupulous of everything, making a mountain out of a mole-hill.... I can well understand, that the examination of the conscience must be a very serious thing.... There are some, to be sure, not so particular.... But for your Ladyship, it must indeed be a serious affair...."

Are the fish-hooks as old as the hills? I believe ever since Adam fishes have been caught by them. Thus, although flattery is of very ancient date, and although every man swears that he knows and detests it, yet by means of flattery, men, and particularly women, were always, and ever will be caught. Let him who reads be persuaded, that it is our nature to remember experience and its admonitions, as much as we remember the swallow that flew through the sky, or the smoke that escaped from our chimneys ten years ago.

Isabella, although she had any other inclination than smiling in her thoughts, yet could not help it on hearing herself praised, and God knows with what justice.

"The day after to-morrow, then, we shall rise early, and covered with a black mantilla

go to the church of Santa Croce, perform our devotions, and return unobserved home."

"Yes, my Lady, it is a good idea, and a proof of your good judgment."

"Very well; let it be only between you and me, for no living soul must know it...."

212

"As for that, your Highness knows my fidelity and secresy...."

"Go to rest then, for it is already late, and to-morrow I may cause you to be called early."

"May God keep you in His holy guard."

Never did pilgrim touch more devoutly the holy shrine of his pilgrimage, than Titta finally sat down at table. It had been so well provided with food and drink, that his hunger was soon satisfied; but as to his thirst it was a different thing; for as flames increase with the addition of fuel, so his thirst increased by drinking. However, Titta was no man to allow wine to take away from him the use of his brains: too large a quantity would have been necessary for that; he drowned his wits in wine like ducks in a pond, or rather like skilful swimmers, who, hardly touching the bottom, return again to float on the surface; and in this half watchfulness of his thoughts, he showed himself more than ever acute and malignant. It often happens that the mind, when in the full exercise of its faculties, has no power to imagine or define an object, which on the morrow (the senses not yet returned to their usual offices) is seen wonderfully distinct amidst the light dreams that precede its awakening, as dawn precedes the day. In the like manner we see men half drunk, conceive and act better than if they were entirely sober.

The servants, seeing that he might never stop, had gradually disappeared, and he, remaining alone with Giulia as he desired, thus soliloquized:

"Oh, Giulia! oh, wine! oh, cards! oh, polar stars of my life: what would the world become without you? An extinguished lantern; a candle without a wick, a lamp without oil. If some one should say to me:—You must choose;—I would reply:—I cannot;—because Giulia is nothing without wine, and wine is nothing without cards: and they are like Ser Cecco and the Court of Berni. Ser Cecco cannot live without the Court, nor can the Court live without Ser Cecco.... They live necessarily together; they all form a single substance; they exist united like soul and body. Take away the soul from the body, and you would see the latter destroyed as Giulia would be destroyed without wine, and wine without cards.... Oh, Giulia!..."

213

"I don't understand such nonsense; and who knows to how many women you have said all this before; for indeed your words seem to me like old clothes, that through too much use fall to rags...."

"Oh, Giulia! I swear to you as I am a gentleman, *foi de gentilhomme*, as Francis First of France used to say, that what I have said to you, I have never said before to anyone...."

"Of course, to *no* one...."

"Believe me as you believe in bread. I feel like an Etna in love, but I am firm as the Alps in constancy...."

"You are adding insult to injury in order to flatter a poor woman like me, who has already, I know not for how many months, wept for you, and wished for you in vain, wearying out with my prayers and vows all the saints in heaven...."

"Oh, Giulia!"

214

"And indeed in all this time there has been no want of flatterers, who came around me, and promised me great things; but I cared little for them; though I felt sorry for a poor young man, who tried to make me love him, and seeing that he could not succeed, drowned himself in...."

"A butt of wine!..."

"What, would you do me the wrong of not believing me?..."

"But, Giulia, how can I believe such things, when you yourself do not?—Be not angry, no; come near me: listen, when I embrace you it seems as if I was embracing the human race.—Be not cross, no, my girl; listen, let us talk reasonably. I should like to repose after the storms of life in a port of peace; and you could repose in it with me, because, Blessed Virgin! where can I find rest without you? We must never speak of past things: I celebrating a holy marriage with you, would make of all your past life a great ablution in the waters of the river Lethe.—Years go by, Giulia, and we must look to the future...."

"But it seems to me that between my years and yours there must be a difference of some dozen years."

"Put aside such womanish frivolities, Giulia, and remember that you women are like flowers; you grow fast, and wither fast, and the best that remains of you is memory. I asked you to talk seriously. I have already served the Duke of Bracciano many years: I have received several wounds for him; once, in the battle of Lepanto, had it not been for me, a Turk would have cleaved his head like a reed, and yet I am still a soldier. And would that it had ended here; but I have always seen carriage horses descend to a draw-cart; and some day or other we might find ourselves, before starting for the great voyage, making our last resting-place in the hospital of St. Maria Nuova...."

215

"But how can we help this? You resemble those rats who wished to hang a bell around the cat's neck...."

"Woman, listen to me, for it has been proved that we men possess a much greater understanding than you. It would be necessary, then, to lay aside a little pile of ducats, and try to get a little shop whereby to carry on a good remunerative trade. You would attend it, and I could help you in attending it, and strive to do other business also."

"Didn't I say right, that you were telling the story of the rats? To do all these things there is need of money...."

"Certainly, and with your dowry...."

"I have no dowry...."

"No? Oh, Giulia!"

"Oh, Titta!"

"Then the last word has been said between us.—Good-by.... You towards Jerusalem, I towards Egypt, as Arete said to Argante."

"But what, can't we get married without a dowry?"

"No, we cannot; the dowry, Giulia, is as it were the wedding-dress; without it matrimony would seem naked, and you can imagine how unbecoming it would be to perform such a solemn rite ill-dressed. And if we turn our thoughts to ancient times, we know that the Muses remained spinsters at home because Apollo could not afford any other dowry than laurel leaves...."

216

"But you would not make me believe that you have saved no money; what have you done with it?"

"All gone in pious works, Giulia, in works of charity; and my friends owe me a fortune. How can I help it? When I get money I cannot refuse them, and thus I find myself short oftener than I would wish.... However, they will repay me some time, but for the present we cannot count upon them...."

"Well, I cannot exactly say that I am penniless; but it is only a trifle...."

"Every sprig helps to make a bush; with work and good will we can raise the cupola of the cathedral. Now tell me how much have you saved? A thous ...?"

"A Hund...."

"Oh, Giulia!"

"About one hundred ducats...."

"Alas! they are not enough!"

Giulia shrugged her shoulders. Titta, after remaining thoughtful a while, continued:

"But one must never despair of one's country, as Themistocles said: if you will help me, there is a way to seize fortune by the hair. Listen attentively, woman.... You must know that the lord, my master, is a revengeful man...."

"All the worse for him...."

"A strange notion has got into his head: he thinks the discoveries of Columbus, Americus, Cabot, Pigafetta, and all others, but little compared to the wonderful one he is about to make. And not only that: he intends that all the world should know it, and we must help him in this discovery...."

217

"Oh, power of wine!"

"Woman, listen. This discovery consists in knowing that his wife is unfaithful to him. He has already received flying reports of it, but he wishes to know them certainly, and touch with his own hands, as the proverb says; then he will intrust this most beautiful affair to the seven trumpets of fame, and I rather think that he will have it

published by Torrentino in octave rhymes.... Come nearer, for I wish to speak to you lower.—He, the Duke, has sent me on purpose to see how things stand, and to report them to him; and if I carry to him a certain proof of it, he has promised me three hundred ducats of reward, besides his everlasting protection, and many other favors...."

"Are you in earnest?"

"Tell me who is the Saint in whom you have the most faith; and I will swear by him. So by your telling me all you know, we shall gain this money, which together with your three hundred...."

"I said one hundred."

"One hundred then, with these three hundred, will be enough to accomplish our plan of marriage."

Then the treacherous deceitful woman began to relate all she knew (and she knew too much) in regard to her mistress, who had always been kind to her more than to any other servant; and she added many things of her own to make the matter worse; finally she reported, that listening, as she was accustomed to, at her mistress's door, she had learned that on the next day, early in the morning, she was to go to confess herself to Father Marcello of St. Francesco. Titta thought now that he knew a great deal more than he needed. The woman did not stop chattering; like the blind street-musician, who, as the proverb says:—"For a penny begins, and for two never ends playing."—Titta thinking that now it was of no use for him to watch any longer, abandoned himself to the arms of Morpheus, and the excited woman talked on before noticing that her future husband slept profoundly.

218

"Think what it will be after we are married!" she exclaimed; and spitefully giving him a push on the shoulder, retired to her own room to sleep.

The blast which Titta blew from his horn, awakened another person in the Orsini palace, and this was Troilo. He felt his heart beat with anguish: he rose from his bed into a sitting posture, and stood some time irresolute, and listening attentively to see whether he could guess from the movement of the people what had happened; and as all returned in a short time to its previous silence, he collected courage enough to dress, and descend cautiously to the Duchess's apartment.

"Come in," said Isabella with a firm and secure voice, when she heard the knock at her door: and Troilo entered. She, neither surprised nor fearful, turned her eyes upon him, and tranquilly resumed her former attitude. Troilo was the first to speak:

"Isabella, are you aware that Paolo Giordano is about to return to Florence?" ...

"I know it."

"How do you know it?"

"By letters which he sent me, and in which he said that he would be at home in a few days...."

219

"And did you read nothing else in these letters?"

"Nothing else...."

"Indeed! yet I know that there was written other news, or at least you should have read it there."

"What?"

"That on the arrival of Paolo Giordano you will die by his hand."

"Let God dispose of me as it pleases Him. Troilo, I am prepared to die...."

"What do you say? You have an entire world to travel before you: full of strength, of power, of beauty, how can you consent to leave a scene where you sustain your part so well! When the fruit is green, it should not be shaken from the tree of life. And perhaps you never had a better time than this to enjoy reasonably human gifts, for you are neither too inexperienced to allow yourself to be carried away by the illusions of youth, nor too hesitating, on account of the weakness of declining years. Behold, the season to gather the fruits of experience is just beginning for you...."

"I am old, very old at heart, and love death more than I ever loved a living being...."

"But you outrage Divine Providence, and yourself. Don't give way to such sad dejection; you may repent it, when perhaps too late. Come, courage; cheer up your spirit, for God's sake!..."

Isabella turned her head, and fixing her eyes for some time on Troilo, added:

"Thanks! Keep your courage to yourself; I have enough of it. Troilo, if it was not a firm deliberation of my mind to remain here, do you think that I could not devise some means to go away? No; escaping, I would show to the world my shame; I would make manifest that which is uncertain, or what very few people know; fear would say more than guilt, and would increase the necessity of revenge. And besides, in what place can I hide myself where the poniard, the snare, or the poison of the assassin could not reach me? And when even I could find a place capable of protecting me, who could protect me against the disdainful manner with which men give help, like crusts of bread thrown to a beggar? Who could protect me against the bitter and incessant reproaches which would be hurled against me, not because guilty, but because I made public this guilt? Who could protect me against that pity which gnaws one's bones, and that compassion which poisons the blood? Who could protect me against the proud contempt, the bitter smiles, the respectful sneers? Oh, the thought alone chills my very soul! No, it is better to die with one blow than be thus cruelly murdered under this martyrdom renewed from day to day, or rather from hour to hour, from minute to minute. Prometheus certainly did not choose life on condition that his bowels should be devoured by the insatiable vulture."

"Your despair, Isabella, comes from not having been able to imagine any other remedy but flight: there are other means of escape...."

"I see none...."

"And surer ones...."

"If such ones that could surely save my honour!..."

"Be assured that there can be none more safe.... Paolo Giordano desires our death; this is most certain. Now, as we cannot remain in this world together—since one of us must choose a different abode, let *him* go who wishes to expel us; not ourselves, who would have willingly tolerated him in this world...."

221

"And thus you would add homicide to shame. And to amend one crime commit another, which is more offensive to men and God?"

"The one is the offspring of the other; and necessity excuses us; for what precept or what law imposes on us the duty of respecting a life which has changed into a poniard to take our own? Let us heed the dictates of nature, a most merciful mother, who never fails; and she will say to you that between killing and being killed, it is best to kill...."

"You strike me with horror."

"And why?"

"Because, if I question my heart, a voice cries to me:—What precept or what law ever allows us to punish him who did not commit the crime? What justice ever taught us to make a victim, because we committed a crime? No, laws are never perverted thus, neither in this world nor the next...."

"Of the next world we will think by-and-by; for the present let us think of this. Isabella, you must have learned from your father the secret of concocting some beverage sweet to the taste, which puts one quietly asleep ... never to wake again...."

"Ah, wretched man! Would you renew the horrors of the family of Atreus?..."

"No, I do not intend to begin anything new, I only wish you to continue in the practice of domestic examples...."

222

Isabella bent her head; then raising and tossing it with a scornful look, replied resolutely:

"No, this crime shall not contaminate the pages of history; our family shall not have its Clytemnestra, and if you design such a wretched attempt against the life of your cousin, beware! I will defend him with all my powers, even with my own life...."

"Isabella, you cannot separate your fate from mine: love bound us willingly together for a short time; crime binds us unwillingly with an indissoluble tie...."

"These are the ties of cowards; I am not afraid, and I break them...."

"I know well enough that you are not afraid, but I know too well also in what you trust.... You have hopes in pardon; you put faith in your cunning words, in your art of dissimulating, in the pleasures of your caresses.... Yes, wretched woman, you trust to your arts, and if, in order to secure your peace and safety, a sacrifice and a victim is wanted, behold, my head is destined for the expiation of all...."

"Then fly, save yourself elsewhere. Have you need of means? I can give you all you desire—take all which I have in money and jewels—for the journey which I am about to take, money is of no use."

"If you fear assassins, you, a cousin of Catherine of France, how can I save myself

from them—I, without any protection? If you are saddened by the thought of receiving insufficient, feeble, and even bitter help, how can I hope to have it abundant, efficacious, or agreeable? It is in vain for you to pretend generosity when it is of no avail, and advise plans which are not safe. I see no other way here but poison...."

223

"And I swear to you, upon my word, that Giordano shall live...."

"No, you must poison him...."

"If you did not excite my compassion, you would certainly excite my scorn...."

"Indeed? Then listen. We have a son. I already foresaw your treacherous obstinacy. You had better remove this shadow of repentance, shameless woman! and know that you will not wash out your stains with my blood!—We have a child: I have already sent for him, and if you do not consent to save me—and save yourself also, I will throw it murdered into your arms before morning.—When Giordano is dead we can marry, not because we can ever love each other; for, if you hate me, it is well that you should know also that I hate you no less; but to appease the impudent pride of your haughty brothers, who dare to think there is no nobility in the world equal to their own, who were merchants yesterday, and now threaten our lives.... You may willingly reside far from me, as I, with all my heart, swear that I will go thousands of miles from you...."

While Troilo with fierce passion was proffering these words, Isabella showed from time to time signs of impatience, rage, and intense desire to retort against the villanous knight; but with great effort she repressed her words, and when he finished, feigning in her aspect and voice a calmness which she was certainly far from feeling, replied:

"You are an excellent and affectionate father indeed, who calls to mind his children only to murder them! Troilo, the heart of a woman may err, and be deceived when she is in love, but it is not deceived, nor does it err when she becomes a mother. You rely in vain on your cruel designs: your child is now where he has no fear of your paternal caresses...."

224

"Even my child you have taken from me?"

"And dare you to complain that I have saved him from your parricidal hands?"

"Restore me my child!—Restore me my child! Or I will tear your heart out...."

"Strike!..." And Isabella, pale as death, but yet calm, opened her arms, and offered her breast to him. Troilo stood thoughtful awhile, and then murmured:

"What is her death to me? I wish to live...."

And he replaced his dagger. Then suddenly, as a sail blown by a strong wind falls at its cessation flapping against the mast, so his coward heart, entirely deprived of constancy, was cowed down; a sudden and great change worked within him, and from bold he became humble. Then with downcast eyes and low voice, turning to Isabella a face which he endeavored to render suppliant, but was abject, resumed:

"Ah! Isabella; forget, I beg you, all that passion poured from my lips: when the blood rises to the head, man knows not what he says or does; if you only will it so (the heaven having granted you such great gifts of persuasion, beauty, and grace) Paolo Giordano will not imbrue his hands in your blood. Ah! in obtaining your pardon, obtain mine also; or if, wary as you are, you see that it would be of use to deny, deny; do not doubt of my discretion, for it is a great stake; at a suitable time, with your help, I will take leave of this fatal house, and return to the army, where by this time I might have acquired a distinguished name and rank. Promise me, Isabella. Can I rely on you? Speak, oh, speak! Do not leave me thus upon thorns: my soul is overcome with inexpressible grief; remember that I am the father of your child...."

225

"It would have been better not to remind me of it, Orsini; indeed it would have been better. Nevertheless, in the same manner in which I would have defended Paolo Giordano, I shall defend you. Certainly I will not tell falsehoods, but if the guilt can be excused, I will certainly do it for all our sakes; and if God gives me life, I will endeavor to obtain, if not pardon, mercy. There can never be happiness for me again in this world; yet I shall deem myself less unhappy, knowing you prosperous. Now go, Troilo; I have need of peace...."

And Troilo, bowing his head, with his arms folded upon his breast, departed.

Isabella followed him with her eyes, and held them fixed a long time at the door from whence he had gone out: suddenly, striking the palm of her hand upon her forehead, she exclaimed:

"Alas! alas! for what a man have I lost the honor of a woman, the dignity of a princess, and my own salvation!..."

It was a clear and serene night in July; the stars revolved in their celestial spheres, pouring a dew of light upon this earth, which does not deserve such smiles of love. The times, places, things, and men, which you saw then, ye pure rays of light, have returned dying from whence they had sprung before their birth: many and many more men and centuries shall you see; but will that light which emanated from you last for ever, or, like all other fires, will it be extinguished? It is written, that one day God will shatter into atoms, never again to meet, this mass of bloody clay which we call earth; and it will be well, for we almost wish that it had already happened: but it is also written, that your loving eyes shall be extinguished, and God will close your eyelids like maidens dead in the midst of the joys of life. The voice of the Eternal, like unto the roaring of a thousand oceans in the storm, will return to peal throughout the endless solitude of darkness and abyss. Of so immense a variety of created things there will not remain an echo, nor a memory, nor even a shadow;—as the eye seeks, and finds not the drop fallen into the sea; as the eye seeks, and finds not the star which falls from the firmament in summer nights; so time will be hurled into the depth of eternity;—this terrible mother will smother her child pressed in her arms, and will bury him in her bosom. Oh, Lord! How can man, thinking on the death of the stars, foster evil designs in his heart? Thousands of ages will pass away before the stars will cease to proclaim in the heavens the glories of God;—and thousands of ages before this shall happen, this body of mine, separated into innumerable particles, will be laid waste through the kingdoms of nature. Nevertheless, thinking that one day you must perish also, beautiful lights of love, my spirit is disheartened, and it seems an almost impossible thing to conceive, how men, creatures of a moment, meeting upon this earth which passes away with them, instead of raising their hands in enmity against each other, should not exchange friendly greetings, and disappear into eternity;—a light shadow fleeting away, but at least a happy one.

226

227

On such a night, a man creeping like a snake, his body shrinking, grazing the walls, hiding himself in the thickest darkness, and raising his head sometimes to imprecate the distant ray with which the stars smiled upon this miserable earth, hastened towards a certain place. This place was the convent of Santa Croce. Arriving at the gate of the cloister, he pulled the bell-rope softly, restraining the ardent desire he felt to give it so strong a pull as to awaken the whole convent: he stood listening through the cracks of the door, and as he heard no one moving, he rang again: and he repeated it thus four or six times, and was beginning to lose all patience, when he thought he heard footsteps approaching; he then, assuming a devotional attitude, stood waiting composedly. A bold hand opened the door deliberately: and, considering the times, it was not a little boldness, for they lived in such suspicion then, that to open at such a late hour would have required many signs and explanations, as is the custom in a besieged fortress; at the same time a bold yet pleasing voice said:

"*Deo gratias*: what do you desire in the holy name of God...."

"Reverend Father," replied the unknown, "God at this moment is calling to Himself a great sinner. As all knots come to the comb, thus in this hour return to his mind all his crimes committed, and he despairs of the Divine mercy, curses the day and hour in which he was born, and is running the imminent danger of dying unrepentant...."

228

"Unhappy he, because he has sinned; more unhappy still, because he despairs of the Lord's mercy!..."

"Indeed I tried to persuade him that it was so; but as I am ignorant of divinity, I saw that my words had but little effect: nevertheless, I did not cease praying with him, and strove to console him by saying—that at last all would be settled rightly, and that God, who is old, has seen so many and many crimes, that now He cannot be so very particular about them, and that a good repentance, but of the real kind, would wash out more sins than perhaps his own...."

"Certainly, the power of repentance is very great, and God as a good shepherd labors principally after the lost sheep."

"But the dying man said:—Who would dare to present my soul to God, without fearing that He would cover His eyes with His hands? Who will utter for me one prayer, without fearing the gates of heaven will be closed in his face? Only one ... only one just man I know in the world, who could inspire me with a hope of faith ... but it is too late ... he would not come ... at this hour he is refreshing with a short rest his limbs worn out in the service of God.... Alas, it is too late!—And uttering piteous cries, he tossed raving upon the bed. Finally, I succeeded with pain to extract from his mouth the name of this venerable man, who it cannot be denied is a most holy and learned one, for he is the Reverend Father Marcello, whom may God always keep prosperous and happy.—And although it was a late hour, yet I thought best for me to come for him, hoping the grace may be granted me of contributing towards the salvation of a sinful Christian...."

229

As the monk stood thoughtful, and did not reply, the man continued, making studied

pauses between one word and another:

"Besides, as the dying man is immensely rich, and a great merchant, nor having, that I know, any children, or relatives, except very distant ones, I thought he might leave large sums of money to be expended in pious works, alms, funerals, and so forth...."

The friar, however, had not paid any attention to the final argument of this man: but suddenly, as if recollecting himself, said:

"We can die but once after all; and the best death is certainly that which we meet in the service of God. This life of suspicion seems a continual death. Good man, you in the simplicity of your heart gave advice like the most learned of the Fathers of the Church. God gave equal remuneration to the workmen who came early, as to the others who came towards evening to his vineyard. Charity does not look at the watch; and the brightest hour for her is that in which she is able to bring more aid to the poor afflicted people. Charity done in the dark of night is that which is more clear to the eye of God. The house of the Lord is never empty: knock, and it shall be opened to you: the fountain of heavenly mercy never fails: ask, and it shall be given you to drink;—the blood of our Redeemer pours an everlasting ablution for repentant and humble souls.—Indeed, the times are full of danger, and invisible hands strike at the ministers of the gospel. Religion is now groaning over the blood of the martyrs, which is drenching the earth without bearing fruits. And there are those who wish Religion as a servant, or rather accomplice, and presume to put on her their livery; to substitute on the stole their coat-of-arms instead of the Cross, and enrol her as a man-at-arms. May God avert such infamy! Religion has the mission of interposing between the oppressed and the oppressor, to save the former beneath the folds of her sacred mantle, to look on the face of the latter, to hurl the anathema against him, and drag him by the hair before a tribunal where he is but dust.... But this city has stoned its prophets;—the angels wept when they saw Friar Girolamo Savonarola burned by the people, and a lamentation was heard through the heaven, saying: Oh, Lord, oh, Lord! Has the end of the world come?—Like the services of the Holy Week at the end of each psalm they extinguish a light; and when they are all out, there is darkness, and how horrible!—You might deceive me: Judas betrayed Christ, kissing him; but I had rather be betrayed once, than suspect all my life.... Go on, good man; I will follow you...."

230

"What, is it you?..."

"I am Father Marcello. The others sleep, but to me the Lord said:—Watch, for your life will be short, and you will soon sleep your last sleep in the grave. Prayer is my bride, preaching my sister, tears my pleasure...."

And shutting the door behind him, he followed the steps of the unknown man.

The unknown, who (since I do not wish to keep my readers in suspense) was Titta, walked with his eyes on the ground, and took tottering steps like one strongly excited by some passion; and it was so. He, who had spent so many years of his life in doing evil, now, in a short space of a few hours, saw fortune place before him two generous souls, that of Cecchino, and Father Marcello's; so that when he least expected it, a doubt arose in his mind, which perhaps had continually escaped him all his lifetime: and without understanding it, their dignity seemed to him a wonderful fact. Besides, that ready and spontaneous trusting in him, so little worthy of trust; the honest boldness which springs from feeling ourselves innocent; the forgetfulness or contempt of any danger when there was a case of doing a work of charity, agitated him with such new and deep sentiments, that he could not account for them. What, without seeming at all impossible, will appear wonderful to the subtle scrutinizers of human nature, was, that while he proceeded with the full deliberation of accomplishing his planned snare against the poor friar, he begged his guardian angel that he might prevent him, and sought in the bottom of his heart the trace of some virtue, which would serve him as an anchor, in which he might trust in order to save himself from shipwreck.

231

Father Marcello, although ignorant of the streets of Florence, yet perceived that he had made him cross the same street twice; he therefore touched his conductor lightly upon the shoulders, saying:

"Brother, mind the road."

"Ah! You are right; I had got so absorbed in my own thoughts, that if you had not roused me, I know not when I should have come to my senses again; and in order that it may not happen again, be kind enough to reply to some doubts which I have in my mind. Now, Father, tell me, where do you think we shall be carried with all these contentions about Religion?"

232

"It would be too long a subject to discuss; but I have faith that it will lead to good. For my part I believe Luther is a Cerberus, who barks because they do not throw him the bone: but he bit the leaves, not the root; he tore the fringe, but not the cloth. He is as tiresome as a criticism, and lasts only because the fault lasts: if the Church only purify herself in the mystic waters, Luther and all the renovators would at once fail.

Already they do not agree among themselves in building the new Babel; the ancient miracle of the confusion of tongues is again commencing, they all run through paths where there is no exit. These troubles will pass, but before they pass, I fear a great many other new ones will be added: when the human intellect has rebelled against authority, it must wear itself out in the path of proud reasonings. Imagining that superstitions and errors are the necessary evils of religion, they will all join together to destroy them; and I foresee these to be days full of sorrow: I foresee again renewed the vinegar and gall, the thorns, the blows, the nails, and the spear-wound of Christ; I see doubt as a wind coming from the desert withering the harvest of Faith, Charity, and Hope. But since man cannot reach the celestial seats with the simple light of reason, he will stand appalled in contemplating in the heaven an abyss like hell, and shall feel again the need of a God, who may have had grief, love, and feelings of humanity, and will seek Christ again, who, as it is said He did with St. Francis, will unloose his arms from the cross to embrace him. Thus, religion becoming again the bridesmaid of human souls, after having espoused them in this world with the ties of love, will direct them towards the eternal home to which we all aspire, which is in heaven."

233

"These seem to me things that may happen some time or other at the last judgment. Let us leave heaven, for, as you say, it would be a long discourse; but of this earth, of this which we call our country, this Florence, this Italy, what do you think?"

"My son, she is dead; no, not dead ... the sleep which oppresses her has the appearance of death ... but this sleep is so heavy that it seems to me that without a miracle of God she can never awake again. Know, know, my son, that oppressors cannot tyrannize, if the oppressed do not consent to be tyrannized over; nor does the difficulty consist in taking away the tyrant, but in the virtue of the citizens in maintaining themselves in freedom and honest fellowship. This city, at the time of the death of Alexander, showed how a people can remain slaves, although the tyrant be dead; and this is what regards national independence: as to foreign independence, God is strong, and takes part with the strong. These foolish people think to get rid of Spain by means of France, of France by means of Spain, and they stretch their hands humbly now to the latter, now to the former, those hands which should have been armed to threaten and to strike both of them.—*Out with the barbarians!* cried the glorious Pontiff Julius II.; and the barbarians were all those who were not born in Italy. Oh, foolish people! who believe that the chivalry of Spain or France are going to leave their splendid castles, their wives and children, encounter the perils of the sea, climb over the precipitous summits of the mountains, and come in your country merely to fight a tournament, and give the reward of it to you lazy men, who stand looking on. Oh, fools! the people who know not how to defend the home which nature has given them, are not worthy of possessing it: the world belongs to those who take it; thus has the law of destiny decreed. Louis XI. made France a united and strong kingdom; Charles V. had the same idea with regard to Germany and Spain. The over-rated Lorenzo dei Medici, what did he accomplish? With jugglers' tricks he kept in discordant equilibrium the remnant of a people. It was not a monument, but a pasteboard statue; and the first wind that blew from the Alps overturned it: Charles VIII. rode over Italy with wooden spurs. Now we are broken into fragments. The Italian people stood watching the death of the Florentine Republic like a fighting gladiator: at her glorious death all applauded, no one helped her; and falling, the Republic wrote with its blood upon the arena a cruel sentence, and which shall come to pass: You also will fall, but infamously. Venice believes herself seated upon a throne, but she is sitting instead upon the grave which shall cover her. Genoa, like the swallow having made its nest in a lofty place, imagines itself secure, and does not think of the hunter's arrow, that reaches even to the clouds ... I breathe an air of tombs, I trample an earth of churchyard...."

234

"Then, Father, if it is so, allow me to quote a passage, written some hundred and more years ago by a worthy priest and canon of the Church, who had more brains than a thousand such as I, which said:

O fools and blind, to labor night and day,
In fruitless toil, when soon around our clay
Our mother's cold embraces shall be thrown,
Our deeds forgotten, and our names unknown!^[47]

235

"Mark, however: first, heaven has not granted me the gift of prophecy, and as I may perchance be mistaken, thus it behooves us to do what is right without giving ourselves the thought of what may happen; secondly, that I once heard from my teacher, that a God and a people, although dead, cannot long remain within the sepulchre; and in truth, our Saviour only remained in it three days. The days of the people are indeed centuries; but men pass away like shadows, humanity remains. Every good seed brings forth good fruit before God, and at its proper time will sprout to enliven the earth; if we shall not eat of it, let us save it, for our children shall. Thirdly, I told you that I deemed her not dead, but oppressed by mortal lethargy. It would avail me nothing, and in truth I hate to spend the life which God has granted me in sculpturing a splendid marble tomb, to place within it the corpse of Italy, and

then deck myself in majestic funeral clothes, light candles upon golden candlesticks, fill the censers with perfumes, and chant with divine notes the prayers for the dead. This I hate, although I see it done, with infinite bitterness to my soul, by men of noble talents but feeble hearts.... Have you ever heard about Queen Joanna, the mother of Charles V.? When her husband Philip, whom she loved so much, died, she would not allow him to be buried, but had him embalmed, and placed him upon a rich bed of black velvet, and as long as she lived she sat at his side, watching from time to time if he would not awake: this was charity and insanity. I imitate this charitable example wisely, since I do not consider our country dead, but as if asleep by enchantment; and I watch her day and night, uttering over her the words of love, but oftener still of grief and anger; at times with reviving salts, or other stimulants, I endeavor to recall her to life; at other times I thrust my hands in her hair, or put to her lips a living coal as God gave to Isaiah, or I pierce her flesh near the heart to see if from thence gushes out living blood. Indeed ... indeed, so far my words have been in vain, and entire locks of her hair have remained in my hands.... But if when about to awaken, these words of anger, grief, and love, these deeds of charity or disdain should be able to break this lethargy from her head for one moment, or even a second before the time fixed by fate, would not my life, the lives of a hundred citizens be well spent?"

236

"This friar's brains," thought Titta to himself, "seem to me like a windmill; but even such mills, when the weather is propitious, grind grain, and well too. To get rid of all this talk, there is no other way but to pull the hood over his mouth;—and yet he seems to me a great and noble soul; Aretino was not worthy of tying his shoes. However, there is no longer time to change my mind, and I must leave the moth-eaten beam for fear the house should fall.... Here we are at the place!... Truly, I commit a great treachery; but thrown upon the heap of my other bad deeds, it will not increase the pile much. And besides, woe to him who shall dare to harm a hair of his head.... After all, it is no great thing; a few hours of seclusion, with the best comforts which one can desire.... And then I will ask his pardon, ... and he, as he is so very kind, no doubt will grant it to me."

237

Thus ruminating within himself, Titta perceived that they had reached the appointed place, which was the corner of the street Mandorlo; then, putting two fingers into his mouth, he gave a sharp whistle, and suddenly, without knowing whence they came, as if detaching themselves from the walls of the houses, four men appeared, who surrounded the friar. Father Marcello started, overcome by surprise, stretched his hand, and grasped strongly the arm of Titta, saying with an excited voice:

"You betray me!" But checking himself, he added in a milder tone: "May God forgive you.—*Domine, in manus tuas commendo spiritum meum.*"

"No, my good Father, do not doubt me; I do not wish to do you any harm. I swear it to you by the holy Madonna Nunziata, who being so near, as you may see, I might almost say, she hears me. We have no need of your life, but only of your gown. We only wish to become yourself for a little while, without your ceasing to be what you are. You shall be carried back in due time to the convent, without any harm being done you. Meanwhile, you cannot proceed without you allow us to bandage your eyes."

"Do as you will.... Many more insults did my Divine Master suffer for our sake. I grieve not for myself, but for the poor souls of those for whose ruin I see you are plotting some work of darkness."

238

And he offered his head to be bandaged, desirous of avoiding as much as possible the contact of those vile men. This done, and after they had assured themselves that he could not see, they conducted him to the square of the Nunziata, where they made him turn round many times in order that he might not recognise the way that they intended to take him; then they went along the via Studio, and the square of St. Marco, and entered into the Casino.

Having conducted him into a room prepared for the occasion, which looked upon the gardens where the windows had been strongly barred and nailed on the outside, Titta hesitating, his heart almost failing him for the shameless deed, said in a low voice:

"Father, you must allow me to remove your gown."

"Beware, you would commit a sacrilege, and if God should strike you now with sudden death, your soul would be irreparably lost."

"Father, *in primis*, I protest that I am not doing this for your injury; besides, I solemnly promise to restore it to you within a few hours; and finally, as the weather is so very warm, I cannot understand how a man can commit such a heavy sin in freeing you for a little while of such heavy hair-cloth."

"When I put this garment on, I swore that I would never lay it aside during my lifetime."

"And you do not break your oath, because you suffer violence, and your will does not

consent to it."

"But why do you use violence against me? In what have I offended you? I never saw you before."

239

"Oh, Father, you ought to perceive that I am forced by others to do you violence."

"If you know evil, why do you not abstain from it?"

"It would have been difficult before now: but now impossible."

"Miserable man! I pity you. When you shall have brought me back this garment, it will be stained with blood: perhaps it will not be seen in the eyes of men, but God will see it: a Christian soul shall then stand before His throne, asking for vengeance, ... and he will have it."

"And would that it were the only one!" muttered Titta. "Father, it is getting late; give me your gown."

"No, rather take my life."

"I told you that we needed your garment, and not your life: I beg you with all my strength, and humbly beseech you not to force us to put our hands upon you. Take away the necessity of resorting to this extreme; we also are obeying those who are more powerful than we. And if we did not obey, we should all be killed."

"Well, tear it from my back, then;—and may God reward him who is the cause of it, according to his deserts."

Titta and the others closed around the friar, who resisted; but he was soon overcome, being but weak, and his adversaries too numerous. Having taken his gown, they went off hastily, like wolves having stolen the prey, to hide themselves in their cave; and Father Marcello, noticing from the silence that he was alone, took off his bandage.

240

Turning his eyes around, he saw a room adorned with splendid pictures, and fine works of sculpture both in marble and in bronze; he saw also a magnificent bed, a table loaded with various kinds of food and wines, and chandeliers which shed a brilliant light: but he turned his saddened eyes from all these things, and rested them upon a *prie-Dieu*, where was a crucifix and book, which from the size he soon recognised as a missal. With his heart full he threw himself at the feet of the crucifix, and burst into bitter tears.

He wept, for although he was a pious man, yet he was flesh and blood like all Adam's children; he wept for the atrocious injury which he had suffered, and the sacrilegious attempt; he wept for the offence done to God; he wept for the soul or souls of those against whom he plainly saw some treacherous deed was about to be committed; and he fervently prayed that the Lord might arise, and show his power to the wicked. Certainly never was a miracle begged with more ardent vows, nor expected with greater faith, nor more needed: but He, who might have worked it, decreed otherwise.

The stars began to disappear in the heavens, when from the interior of the church of Santa Croce, near the greater door in front, was heard a jingling of keys, and the tramp of heavy steps. Immediately after, the bolts were suddenly withdrawn. A lay-brother put out his head looking right and left, raising it as if snuffing the pure morning air, and rubbing his hands together, exclaimed:—"A beautiful morning!"—Then saluting again the sky with a look, he re-entered the church to see if the lamps were still burning; and as they shed only a feeble light, as if ready to go out, he hastened towards the vestry to refill them.

241

At this moment, a monk, groping along the walls, introduced himself suspiciously and stealthily into the church through the greater gate, and with hasty steps approached a confessional under the organ, opened it, and shut himself within it. Indeed this apparition might have frightened the boldest man, for in passing behind the columns of the navade it entirely disappeared, and suddenly crossing the rays of lamps hanging from the arches, might have been seen a dark and tall figure, like a phantom, moving swiftly over the pavement, and across the walls.

Not long after penitents began to arrive from different parts, some carrying in their hands lanterns, some lighted candles, whose flames the calm air hardly moved, and all gathered round the confessional beneath the organ, like doves around their grain. The confessions began: but on that day, with no little astonishment to the devotees, it seemed as if Father Marcello had put aside his accustomed mildness. He would listen inattentively, answer but little, and both in his words and manners appeared very different from his usual custom.

To a certain mother, who accused herself of having cursed her son, because he had threatened to strike her, he said:—"He was right, for he now punishes you for not

having punished him enough at the proper time."

To a man, who having received a sum of money in trust from a friend, had invested it for his own use, and now asked for pardon and advice, he replied shortly and bitterly:—"Drown yourself in the Arno."

242

A woman came, who confessed that she was too prone to anger and bad language, and then quarrels arose between herself and her husband, and caused a scandal and trouble in the house: and she begged him some good counsels to reform this bad temper: and the monk, as if impatient, replied: "Ask your mother-in-law!"

Another woman, who after having enumerated a great number of sins, kept on so long that it would seem she never would end, he stopped short by asking:—"How old are you?"—"Sixty-five, Father, next August." "So much the better for you; for, since you are not able to leave sin, sin will soon leave you."

To a man, who with tears in his eyes confessed to having betrayed a relative by accusing him to the justice as a rebel and conspirator against the state, he shut the gate in his face, saying:—"Hell is wide enough!"

And lastly we will add what he said to a lawyer:—"Father,"—said the lawyer,—"in a certain lawsuit in which I knew that I was wrong, I deceived my adversary, and succeeded in getting a sentence in my favor." "My son; forensic defence seems to me sometimes like a game at cards played by two shrewd old gamblers. It is of no use! A sin more, or a sin less, more pulleys would be needed to hoist up a soul like yours into heaven, than to pull up the bells to the top of the belfry: you may go, it is all lost time."

It is not to be said how astonished the penitents went off. Is this,—thought they,—the holy man? This the great theologian and learned divine? Is he the man able to know our moral infirmities, pitiful in hearing them, benign in treating them? He appears more like a man-at-arms than anything else; and he would look better with a helmet and sword than the cowl upon his head, and the breviary in his hand.

243

Suddenly, two women wrapped in ample mantillas of black silk, little heeding the crowd that stood kneeling and crowded around the confessional, passed by; and whilst one entered the confessional, the other knelt on one side in the attitude of prayer. The crowd, knocked on each side, did not dare to murmur, but gave way respectfully, saying to themselves:—"These must be two great ladies; they pass and trample on us!"

"Father!" began the one who went to the confessional. The confessor started visibly; he carried the hem of his garment to his mouth, took it between his teeth, and thus repressing his emotion replied:

"Say on!"

"Father!..." And her words failed again. The confessor, no longer impatient, after a suitable space of time, repeated in a low tone:

"Say on!"

"Father, is it really true that God forgives every great sin?"

"This is the greatest sin of which you might perchance accuse yourself. Have you truly examined your own conscience? Are you disposed not to hide any of your acts, words, deeds, omissions, thoughts, in short everything? Remember that St. Augustine teaches, that confession is the open demonstration of our internal infirmity with the hope of obtaining a cure; and although this is a great deal, yet it is not enough, and a contrite and repentant heart is also required: have you brought with you this repentant heart? If so, as I hope, speak; man may first be weary with sinning, before Divine mercy with forgiving."

244

"*Amen*, Father, *amen*! I will speak confiding in pardon, not because I deserve it, but because, as you say, Divine mercy is great. I have been a sinful daughter, mother, wife, citizen, all in short...."

"Well!"

"As a citizen, I have done no good: many I have injured, and if even I did good to any one, I feel that I was moved less by charity than by a vain pomp of appearing generous. I hid not from my left hand the alms done by my right; I was pleased that the world should know it, and people should talk of it."

"This is not a merit, but not a sin. You have bought worldly fame: these alms you will not find registered in the books of heaven. *Recipisti mercedem tuam*, you have received your reward. It is the charity of the Pharisee; and it is generally what the present world give. Men now give a penny with a sound of trumpets, they notify it with ringing of bells, and large printed notices on all the corners of the street ... *Vanitas vanitatum* ... it is all a vanity! Hence you may consider that you have already received your reward for the charities done."

"As a daughter I paid but little attention to the advices and admonitions of my father. —I cannot live for ever!—he would often say to me: but happy he, and myself also, if he had given me less advice, and, may God have mercy on his soul, a better example!"

"And as a wife?"

245

"Wife!—Nature gave me a fatal gift: a most ardent imagination, restless desires, a wonderful disposition to learn, and a retentive memory. I learned, and exercised with passion all that which is capable of exalting the mind and ennobling the heart. Educated among luxuries, fêted, and constantly flattered with sweet words; surrounded by pleasures, and manners loosened to all sorts of dissipations; given as wife to a man whom I did not know, nor who knew me; we fancied each other but little, and loved less; he a soldier, I a worshipper of the muses. One day, oppressed by insupportable *ennui*, my husband went off; he was to remain away three months, and he stayed three years. I dared to presume too much to myself, and pride overcame me. Then I fancied a destiny, which only my mind conceived, an invincible passion nourished only by my own fancy, and creating, and I may almost say lending to a man worthless in himself, the qualities of perfection, which I dreamed in the ideals of my poetry ... I dug with my own hands the abyss wherein I fell ... and I was lost. When I awoke from that dream, I saw my house full of shame, and before me a most degraded man, and myself more degraded than he. The harvest of guilt was fully reaped by me;—bitter tears, ineffable grief, contempt for myself, repentance, late indeed, but great, deep, and such a one that God may have seen equalled, but never greater."

"And was the time long that you lived in sin?" inquired the confessor, with a harsh, slow voice.

"Oh, Father, enough ... seek no more, if you do not wish to see me die of shame at your feet."

"Well! But was your lover a relative of yours? What is his name?"

246

If Isabella had been less moved at that moment, the name of Troilo would have certainly escaped from her mouth: but unable to speak, being forced to catch her breath, she remembered she was not obliged to reveal the name of the accomplice, but rather charity imposed upon her to keep it religiously secret; hence when the confessor insisted:

"Was your lover a relative of yours? What is his name?"

She resolutely replied:

"I accuse myself, not others. I cannot tell you more, nor ought you to ask, nor I to tell."

"What! This is important! For the sin varies and increases according to the degree of the relationship. And it behooves me to explain to you, that two are the forms of relationship, the first natural, the second religious; that is, for example, to hold a child for baptism, confirmation, and so forth.... Hence by the canonical laws, the cousin of your husband, for example, would be a relative of the second degree, and then the adultery would become incest, a sin which offends God more, and disturbs a great deal more the laws of civil life."

"Alas! you make me shudder with horror!"

"Now then, speak: is the man a relative of yours?"

"Yes, a cousin of my husband."

"Cousin!"

"Nor is that all."

"No?"

"I am an unhappy mother ... a son."

"A son? What is his name? How old is he?"

"Only a few months old."

247

"Not years, eh ... not years?"

"No, months; but what matters this?"

"It matters a great deal."

"And as he is not a brother to his brother, I banished him from my house, not however from my heart."

"And where did you send him? Where is he now?"

"There is no need of my saying this, Father. I have done like the eagle; I have made a nest for him where human malice cannot reach him. As regards property, my legitimate son will not be a sufferer, for I have left him all the property my father left me."

Here she remained a moment in silence: then remembering the time was fast passing, she added:

"And now, Father, keep your promise. I have revealed everything to you; opened my whole heart: now you must console me with hope; proffer the great word, which will restore me my lost innocence, and make me worthy of hoping for pardon;—open to me the gates of heaven; give me, you who have the power, absolution...."

And as the friar did not reply, Isabella entreated eagerly:

"Why are you silent, Father? Is my sin so great that the Lord in his mercy cannot forgive? Did not Peter deny Him? Did not Paul persecute Him? And yet did they not become chosen vessels, and apostles of the people? I ask not so much; a particle of pity would be enough, a drop of consolation and oblivion. Release me from sin, save me from despair. I know that *in articulo mortis* you can absolve cases reserved only to the Pope. Listen, you may consider me on the point of death; believe me, I am in my last agony; only a few hours remain to me to live; near the dreaded departure, you cannot deny me the bread of hope and pardon, through which the soul appears before the tribunal of God, where trembling and trusting it awaits the sentence of the minister, who represents God upon this earth, to be confirmed...."

248

And still the friar answered not.

Isabella again prayed, begged, and wept, but still in vain. The confessional had become as silent as the grave. Then Isabella reached her hand impatiently within the niche occupied by the confessor, striving to meet him in the dark, fearing some sudden accident had befallen him. Let the reader imagine how great was her wonder, her grief, her terror, when she felt assured the friar had disappeared. A cold shudder crept over her heart; and with a sigh she fell senseless upon the ground.

And it was fortunate for her to have Lady Lucrezia by her side; who, little occupied by her own thoughts, paid careful attention to what was passing. She hastened to her assistance, and succeeded in a short time in restoring her.

Isabella, thinking on the one hand of the danger which she had run of raising a great deal of scandal in the church if the people had recognised her, on the other hand seeing that the dawn was beginning to lighten the sky, leant trembling on the arm of Lucrezia, and hastily left the church.

Coming out into the air, she raised her eyes to heaven, where the stars had disappeared one by one, not like lights blown out by a gust of wind, but like sparks that are consumed within a greater fire:—thus human souls, emanations from the Divinity, set free from the flesh which bind them, love to mingle again in the great bosom of God. From the east a delicate veil of vapors tinted with gold surrounded beautiful Florence, like a Madonna of her immortal painters encircled by a radiated halo. Nature with all created things, as a harpist pours from the chords of his lyre a torrent of melody, raised to the Creator a morning hymn; there was no object nor being which either with a prayer, or a vow of the heart, or the happiness of a look, or with perfume, or with a song towards heaven, did not salute the Father of light, and an indistinct murmur was diffused forth and forth in the distance like a trepidation of the old mother Earth rejoicing in feeling her chilled bones warmed by the beneficial heat. Hail, O firstborn of the thought of God; hail, O Sun, for there is nothing dead before you, and everything breathes and revives, and from the very sepulchres where lay my beloved dead you bring out flowers, ornaments for the hair of young lovers, and loving maidens.

249

Isabella raised her eyes to heaven, and her smile returned upon her pale face; then turning her head to the spot where the sun was about rising, she thus spoke:

"How beautiful is life! But in order to enjoy it we must possess the youth of years, the youth of the heart, innocence, and enthusiasm; we must be able to stand the comparison with the odor of the flowers, with the songs of birds, with the varied tints of the wings of the butterfly, with the exultation of the first rays of the morn. O life! since I cannot enjoy thee as I could once, I will not suffer thee as I am: he who has ceased to reign let him throw aside his crown; the royal mantle left upon the shoulders of him who has no longer a kingdom, is a weight and an ignominy. But is death approaching, perhaps welcomed like the shadow of the tree to the traveller, who has walked from dawn over burning sands under the scourge of the sun? Do I approach it with the desire of the wearied laborer, who sees towards evening, by the uncertain gleam of twilight, appear in the distance the belfry of his village? Can I say to the grave: Thou art my bridegroom? Does peace await me beyond the threshold of life? Yes, peace awaits me, for I have loved, hoped, and suffered greatly. I repent of another sin, which is for having desired to put a mediator between myself and God. The priest has repulsed me from the temple: for me it is sufficient that thou, O

250

Creator of all, dost not repulse me from heaven. I confess myself to Thee, O Lord! Thou hast no need of declarations, for with a look Thou hast seen through my heart, and penetrated even to its inmost recesses. I could wish that my spirit might fly towards Thee upon the first ray which is about to pour down from behind that mountain.... But if this cannot be, keep Thine arms open, O Lord, for it will not be long before I shall seek shelter under the mighty wings of Thy pardon."

The penitents around the confessional waited a long time for Father Marcello to return; but he did not appear; they went into the vestry to inquire about him: they sought in his cell, in the library, and through the convent, but they could not find him.

Feeling alarmed, the monks went round inquiring about him; some one said he thought he saw him in the street of Diluvio, with his hood drawn over his eyes, walking hastily, as if called to some death-bed; another said that he thought he saw him passing through Borgo a Pinti, so trembling in his walk, that often getting entangled in his gown, he was on the point of falling. Where, however, he had gone, all were ignorant, and could not even imagine. The astonishment increased, not without also a little fear. The Prior sent some zealous fathers of the order to inquire courteously of the guards of the gates: they went, they sought diligently, but no one was able to give any information about him. Meanwhile between searches, terror, and grief, the day had already passed; to which succeeded a few hours of the evening, and the monks were assembled in the refectory, some praying, some conversing; the boldest ones offered themselves to ascend upon the pulpits, and announce to the people the disappearance, and perhaps martyrdom, of Father Marcello; the timid ones advised waiting to inquire better into the matter, and not to hasten it: there were as many opinions as there were heads, as it always happens in an assemblage of men who meet to decide upon a doubtful event;—when suddenly there was heard a slight ring at the bell. They all rose to a man, for we always see the spirit of corporation to be very strong, and all went to the door. Who can describe the tears, the cries of joy, the hearty welcomes, the embraces, and the demonstrations of affection that broke forth from these brothers, when they saw reappear their beloved Father Marcello? He replied to all, kissed and embraced all of them: sweet tears of gratitude ran down his cheeks; but his face appeared pale, and so deeply impressed with some internal grief, as to excite at the same time pity and fear.

251

252

He spoke briefly, and said:—that he had run a great danger; it was really a miracle that he was alive; he owed his life to the mercy of God, and certainly also to the prayers of his brothers: he thanked them from the bottom of his heart, and begged them to be pleased to accompany him to church to render thanks to the Almighty, that with so visible aid had saved him from so imminent a danger.

They went, and thanked God; afterwards Father Marcello closeted with the Prior, and having discussed the matter, and the consequences, thought best to gain time, in order to avoid scandal, and keep himself aloof, that no evil may happen to him and to the Order. He was sent to Rome, in order to inform the Pope of the manner in which the ministers of the Church were abused, and that he might inquire into it; and then returning with the help of the Pontiff to preach against these false Catholics, who committed such nefarious acts, that the Lutherans themselves would be ashamed of it.

It was Titta, who, conducting the friar unharmed to the convent, had kept faithfully his word.

253

CHAPTER IX.

DEATH.

Pues esta noche ha da ver
El fin de mi desgracio
Medio mas prudente, y sabio
Para acabarlo de hacer.
Leonor (hay de mi), Leonor,
Bella como licenciosa,
Tan infeliz como hermosa,
Ruina fatal de mi honor.
Leonor, que al dolor rendida
Y al sentimiento postrada
Dejó la muerte burlada
En las manos de la vida,
Ha de morir——

CALDERON DE LA BARCA.

This night is destined to reveal,
By prudent means and cunning skill,
My deep revenge for wounded pride
Fulfilled, accomplished, satisfied.

Oh, Leonor, can tears avail?
Most fair, but, ah! most false and frail;
Most loved, but most unhappy name,
My honor's ruin and my shame.

Oh, Leonor, in saddest hour,
O'erwhelmed by grief's intensest power,
Though once released when death was nigh,
Thy doom is written, thou must die!

A servant arrives in haste and reports to the Duchess that the most noble Duke is at the head of the street with his lordly retinue; a few moments later another comes to say that the Duke has entered the court-yard, that he has dismounted, that he has begun to ascend the stairs. At this intelligence the Duchess rises, and surrounded by the gentlemen of the household, her maidens and her women, with Troilo at her side, composing her face to appear calm, and calling, with Heaven knows how terrible an effort, a smile to her lips, advances, neither hastily nor slowly, but with elegant and dignified grace, to welcome her husband.

254

They meet at the head of the stairs; they clasp each other in their arms; they kiss each other again and again, and appear deeply agitated, as indeed they are;—but with what emotions? That is visible to God alone. To the bystanders it seems only a natural agitation, arising from the gratification of their long cherished wish of seeing each other again, from the happiness of reuniting the members of a family, separated with so much sorrow; in short, from domestic joys, which men prize so lightly while they possess them, but for which they mourn, when lost, with inexpressible bitterness, and which are welcomed with such triumphant delight by the fortunate few to whom it is granted to recover them. Released from the embraces of his wife, the Duke, who was pre-eminent for polished and noble manners, advanced to Troilo, pressed his hand, kissed and embraced him; nor did he forget the other members of the household, but speaking kindly to them, and calling them by name, asked after themselves and their families with a minuteness which showed that he had remembered carefully both them and their affairs.

The Duke, the Duchess, and Troilo having retired to a more private apartment, the Duke said:

"I think it would be well, Isabella, to send immediately to inform your gracious brother of my arrival, so that he may kindly allow our Virginio to be sent home; I long exceedingly to see him. I know well that he is becoming strong and valiant, and shows himself fond of all kinds of knightly exercises which are fitting for a great prince; and indeed, not to speak of my blood, descending from yours, which has honored the world with so many men renowned both for military prowess and for wisdom, he could not well be otherwise.—But what joy can messages or letters cause, equal to that which gladdens the heart of a father at the sight of the dear face, and at the sound of the sweet voice of his son——"

255

"I have already anticipated your wishes, Giordano. A mother feels intuitively the desires of a father, even before they can rise from his heart to his lips."

"My best beloved!—What can I say to you? How find words to express my thanks? Oh, what a comfort is this air of home, which I can call truly mine! How soothingly do

these emotions descend upon the soul, like the sweet breath of spring, to disperse every cloud of melancholy, of vexing care, of passion. Yes, yes, the air of the open plains or of the mountain heights, the sea-breeze that swept my face on the day of the battle of Lepanto,—I will not say that these were not most grateful to me,—I enjoyed even the wild tumult of the battle itself, and the dazzling brilliancy of the sun's rays glancing from the armor of the Christians, and glorious above all was the proud shout of victory,—but oh!—the air of my home,—the air of my home,—that I have found nowhere—!"

"But not on downy plumes, nor under shade
Of canopy reposing, fame is won,

256

as Dante says, and you have added a most noble monument of praise to the renowned honor of your house. Certainly it is an arduous undertaking to exalt what is already so high; to the eagle alone is it granted to commence his flight from the summit of the Alps—"

"A mere fable! In my opinion, your poet would have done much better to compare glory to 'smoke in air or foam upon the wave.'^[48] Peace, rest, is what men crave incessantly. The more boldly we arrange our affairs or enterprises, the more sharply our passions sting us, so much the more rapidly does time, exerting all the power of his heavy wing, hurl ruin upon human beings, affairs, renown, and hearts. This power, like the wind, strikes with greatest force the loftiest summits; the raging whirlwind, which rends the oak upon the mountain-top, is gentle to the violet in the vale,—I am old—"

257

"Alas! Do you, then, think that the passions which are most active in corroding the human heart, are those which chiefly haunt the court and camp? Often in gilded halls, beneath draperies of damask, are kindled flames fiercer, not only than any other earthly ones, but than those of the infernal—"

"However it may be with others, see here, my face is full of wrinkles, while as to you, time has hardly dared to touch the corner of your eyes with the downy tip of his wings."

"Is it, then, the face alone that grows old? Do you not know that man sometimes survives himself? Do you not know that the heart often rests within the breast like a corpse in the coffin? Ah, Giordano! I swear to you by the Crucifix, that the sorrows suffered by you, on account of your long and distant separation from your home, are not nearly so severe as those which I have endured, remaining here, forsaken and solitary. I recognise in my pallid face the tokens of the worn out spirit. Do not deny it; do not shake your head as if you did not think so. I possess a stern friend, who, neither by threats, nor by supplications, nor by bribes, can be restrained from speaking the truth; who, if broken into a thousand fragments, would assume a thousand tongues to repeat it to me more persistently than ever; who ought to be banished from Court, since he will not bend to flattery, and nevertheless he is one whom we could not possibly do without. And is called—as you must already have guessed—Looking-glass!"

"No, indeed, I had not a suspicion of it; I was racking my brains to discover who this Anaxarchus could be."^[49]

258

"Messere Virginio!" announced a page, raising the hangings of the door; and immediately after entered a youth, just on the verge of manhood, remarkably handsome, though rather sedate in manner, and dressed in dark colors.

Have you seen a ferocious animal called the jaguar, as, with a terrific spring, he bounds from his hiding-place upon his expected prey? It must have been with a bound little less terrific that the Duke threw himself upon his son Virginio; for in those times the passions were much more demonstrative than was necessary, and, whether tender or fierce, most vehement always, and as the simoom whirls about the sands of the desert, so they subverted the sentiments of the soul. He clasped Virginio convulsively to his heart, kissed his hair and his face, held him long in his arms, and almost suffocated him with embraces, as the boa-constrictor tightens his coils around his enemy;—he dreaded, with passionate jealousy, that others should share in his joy; he drew him to one side, gazed earnestly into his eyes, and then breaking out into actual weeping, he exclaimed, in a voice broken by sobs:

"O my son! O my own child! Hope and pride of the noble house of Orsini!"

259

All marvelled; and Virginio, instead of replying to such extravagant demonstrations of affection, seemed almost bewildered by them, and looked towards his mother, as if longing for her more tender caresses; but the father endeavored to monopolize all the attention of his son, endeavored to interpose his own person between his eager eyes and the beloved parent they sought. Virginio succeeded, at last, in freeing himself from such ardent endearments, and flew to his mother's outstretched arms; they remained long clasped in a rapturous embrace, which can be likened to nothing on earth but itself, the embrace given by a tender mother to a beloved son; nor even

in Heaven can the embraces of the angels before the throne of the Eternal surpass it in affection.

The Duke watched these two beings with a gaze full of sadness; his heart swelled within him, and a half-stifled sigh escaped his lips; his angry, blood-shot eyes turned with a truculent expression upon Troilo, who, overwhelmed with confusion, kept his fixed upon the earth. It is not to be doubted that if Isabella and Troilo had not been wholly preoccupied at that moment, the former with the dear delight of seeing her son again, the latter with the reproaches of his conscience, they would have read their own condemnation in those fearful glances of the Duke, for they revealed the hell in his heart.

As if he could hardly endure to see so closely united, two souls destined so soon to separate, or rather, jealous of an affection which he wished and intended to turn entirely to himself, he called Virginio to him in a somewhat sharp tone, and said:

"It does not belong to me to examine the progress you have made in letters, for of such matters I know but little; but tell me, how well can you manage a horse? How wield your arms? Do swords frighten you?"

260

"Try and see."

"With all my heart;" and the Duke sent a servant for his fencing weapons, without which, he, a most skilful swordsman, never travelled. Then commenced a furious passage of arms, in which if, as might be expected, the Duke was the superior in strength, Virginio on his side showed a skill equal to his father's, and for his years truly wonderful.

"Troilo!" exclaimed the Duke, exultingly; "Troilo, by my faith he is one of the best swordsmen that I have ever encountered. I beg of you, Troilo, to try him yourself; there was a time, Troilo, when our officers considered you an excellent fencer."

"There was a time, yes—but now I feel that I am weaker. Oh, how much better would it have been for me to have won for myself either renown or an honorable death——"

"What? In guarding my honor, Troilo, can you possibly have drawn dishonor upon yourself?"

"No; but I think it would have been more desirable to have been at the Curzolaes."

"Learn, Troilo, that in every station where a man conducts himself as an honorable knight, he may win honor. Come, now, to oblige me, try him."

And Troilo did try; but his arm trembled so that he could hardly hold his sword; he kept merely upon the defensive, and soon, as if wearied, lowered his weapon.

"I am no longer what I was; my strength is half-spent. If God grants me life, I have determined to go and reinvigorate myself by the discipline of the Knights of Malta."

261

"It will be a meritorious work, Troilo; and it will be well to go now, for his Holiness the Pope has promised great indulgences to all who will arouse themselves to fight against the infidels. You are weary of idleness, I of action, and we both seek change of life. It is the way of the world; we are never contented with our present lot; we are like sick men, who, tossing from side to side, seek ease from their pain. I do not know whether the sepulchre can give us fame, but certainly the sepulchre alone can give repose. But why do I speak of sepulchres? And why do you look so sad? This is a day of rejoicing. It is one of those days that smoothe away more than one wrinkle from the brow and from the heart. Enjoy yourselves. I feel that I am the happiest man on the face of the earth. My house must resound with festive shouts. Rejoice! I beg of you, rejoice! I command you——"

"Do you think that joy can be commanded like a regiment of soldiers?" asked Isabella in a languid voice.

"What prevents it from being spontaneous?"

"Our souls readily don the habit of sadness, and cannot lay it aside as we women do a veil or girdle. And then there are modest and hidden joys that vanish in the open air, and must be guarded like the vestal flame in the sanctuary of the heart."

"No, thank God I love free and open joy, I love the noisy mirth that takes pleasure in bonfires, in feasts and banquets, and delights in flowers and sweet sounds. Welcome, cheerfulness! that gilds herself in the first rays of the morning sun, refreshes herself with the dews, traverses fields and meadows, and hunts the wild beasts. To the country, say I, to the country; we cannot breathe at ease in these prisons which they call cities; an oppression weighs upon the breast and vexes the heart. Let us see if there we can still be melancholy. I wish to see you merry; I will make you all cheerful, or I am not Paolo Giordano Orsini, Duke of Bracciano. Listen, Isabella; I have determined to pay a visit to his Highness your brother; Virginio shall go with me; and having, as is proper, rendered my due respects to him, I shall immediately take leave, and we can go, without delaying any longer in town, to our beautiful

262

Cerreto. There are pleasant shades, wild beasts, and leafy groves; there flow deep cool streams; there the eye can rest with delight upon the greater part of this earthly paradise which we salute by the name of Tuscany. No one can hope to taste the pleasures of domestic life better than in the quiet of the fields or under the shade of the forests; there we shall feel ourselves happy. Are you not pleased, Isabella? Certainly you have too much enthusiasm in your soul to deny this. The husband of a poetess, I open my heart to the spirit of poetry."

"I like whatever pleases you, my dear Lord; but think how intensely warm it is, and how much pleasanter it would be to travel by night."

"Yes, truly, we are stifled here. Do you not feel as if it were raining fire? I do not know the sun in Florence. During the winter he creeps from cloud to cloud like a criminal, who by mixing in the crowd seeks to escape the sheriff; then in the summer he stands riveted in the heavens, and seems to wish us the fate he brought upon his son Phaeton. But does a soldier care for the sun? What do you think, Troilo?"

263

"By your leave I should agree with the Duchess."

"Well, well, if the sun hurts you, you can go in the carriage with her; we shall go on horseback."

"I, too, will go on horseback," cried Troilo in an excited tone, and the Duke replied, smiling—

"I did not intend to offend you, Troilo; I thought that you might wish to continue the good and faithful guardianship that you have hitherto——"

And without finishing his sentence, he took Virginio by the hand, and promising that he would return shortly, accompanied by an honorable retinue of gentlemen, he departed to pay a visit of courtesy to his brother-in-law.

As soon as he was gone, Troilo and Isabella, as may readily be imagined, strained every faculty of their minds to weigh the words uttered by the Duke, and to submit to a rigorous examination his gestures, looks, and every little trifle which would have escaped eyes less vigilant than theirs. They were so completely absorbed in their anxious doubts, that if an earthquake had shaken the city, they would not have perceived it, which, as we read in history, actually happened to the Romans and Carthaginians during the battle of Lake Trasymene. What was also very remarkable, was, that their reflections terminated at the same moment, and in entirely opposite conclusions, for while Troilo laid aside all fear, Isabella bade adieu to every gleam of hope.

Without requiring the language of the lips, they had, by means of the many other modes of expression of which the human face is capable, made known to each other the subject of their thoughts, and the decision which they had each formed. When Troilo perceived that they did not agree, an insane desire took possession of him, to learn more exactly Isabella's opinion. But to dismiss the numerous guests did not seem polite, neither was it prudent, in their presence, to hold any secret conversation, and it was dangerous to allow Troilo to continue his nods and signs, unfortunately too evident to every one, that he wished, at all hazards, to speak to her; so, as the best thing that she could do, she went to a table, and taking up Petrarch's Lyric Poems, found a sonnet, read it attentively, and marking lightly with her nail that part of the page to which she wished to draw Troilo's attention, she left it open, making a sign to him to read it; then turning away, she joined with her usual brilliancy in the conversation of those standing near her. Troilo, as soon as he thought that he could do so without attracting observation, approached the table, and read at the place marked:

264

But though it be our hapless lot to lie
In durance vile, of former peace bereft,
Yea, though the fates decree that we should die,
One consolation still to us is left,
He who to us our liberty denies,
Lies willing captive to another's powers;
Pierced by the archer's fatal shafts he lies,
And wears a closer, heavier chain than ours.^[50]

Troilo shrugged his shoulders, saying to himself:—"She really enjoys thinking herself past all hope; but how can she help seeing clearly that the Duke is the happiest man in the world? She wishes, and indeed it would be for her advantage, that I should go away. But we know each other of old; and I have never felt so much disposed as now to stay and see the end of it. That I must give place, is all right and proper; if they wish me to give with one hand, I will give with two; but we must capitulate on honorable conditions; must come to advantageous terms; I intend to depart with military honors, taking my arms and baggage, not to be driven away like an old servant."

265

It was not long before the Duke reappeared, honorably accompanied, but without Virginio. When Isabella saw him enter alone the last ray of hope was extinguished in her heart, the entire renunciation of which is most difficult for the human heart. Then she seemed indeed to read her sentence of death. Death is terrible to all, but especially so to those who, from physical weakness, shrink from suffering it. A cold shudder ran through her bones, her face became deathly pale, her livid lips quivered convulsively. No one can deny that her own sense must have taught her that it would be impossible to use violence against a mother in presence of her son. She went towards the Duke, and with an indescribable expression asked him:

"Where is our Virginio?"

"Your brother insisted upon keeping him; he says that his attention is too easily diverted, and that it is a most difficult thing to bring him back again to his daily routine. In truth, it seems hard that I should not enjoy my son's society, after so many years of separation, but you know it is for our interest to conciliate his Highness. However, he has promised to send him for one day to our country-seat, accompanied by his tutor——"

266

"Country-seat? which country-seat?"

"Cerreto."

"When?"

"Very soon."

"He will certainly send him to the country, but not to Cerreto. To-morrow, perhaps ——"

"He did not say to-morrow?"

"No! but my heart tells me—Alas! Why did I not give him a farewell kiss?"

"Do you fear that you will not have time to kiss him?"

"Do you believe that I shall have time to kiss him?" demanded Isabella, with a look that seemed to penetrate into the inmost recesses of his heart. The Duke, glancing away from her, tried to escape her questionings and pleadings.

"Of course I believe it; what is there to prevent? If he should forget it, we can send for him. Come, then, to horse; what need is there of further delay? To Cerreto—to peace—to rest—to repose after our long labors—to sweet sleep!"

"Stultum est somno delectari, mortem horrere: cum somnus assiduus sit mortis mutatio."^[51]

"What are you murmuring, Isabella?"

"I just happened to think of a sentence in Seneca, about sleep the brother of death."

"How can such a quotation apply to us?"

267

"It does not." And two tears—two only—came to her eyes, but instead of rolling down her cheeks in the usual manner, they sprang from her lids like the last arrow shot from the bow of Grief.^[52]

"To horse!"

The servants, hurried by the impetuosity of Titta, whom they perceived that they must obey as the Duke, or even more than the Duke, prepared with wonderful celerity horses, carriages, and a waggon, with such articles as could not be readily obtained in the country. The major-domo, Don Inigo, had asked with his usual brevity, "Whether it would be necessary to carry much plate and linen?" but Titta replied,

"Why, no, major-domo, for I do not think that we shall stay very long at Cerreto."

They set out. The sun darted down his fiery rays, the winds were silent, there was not a breath of air, and the stifling glare of the tyrant of the skies oppressed all nature. The leaves of the trees hung motionless, for not a breath, not a sigh of wind dared to stir them; the waters ceased their accustomed murmur; in such still silence, in such intense solitude, the locusts alone, as if drunk with the heat, labored in their monotonous song, which ends with their lives; some lizards, gliding across the road with the speed of an arrow, sought shelter from the heat from bush to bush. To increase the distress of the journey, the dust, disturbed by the trampling of the horses' feet, rose in clouds and settled thickly upon the hair and clothes of the riders. The horses, losing their usual spirit, walked panting, with drooping ears, and streaming with perspiration. The Duke, his face in a flame, and tormented also by insupportable fury, disguised his uneasiness, and said in a voice which he endeavored to render cheerful:

268

"This sun-bath revives one's blood. Men born on Italian ground must feel their hearts

refreshed by the rays of the 'day-star;' heat is the father of life, nay, life itself for we are born warm and we die cold."

Meantime, with infinite trouble they had reached the banks of the Arno. A few days before a sudden shower of rain had fallen, which, although it had increased the sultriness, for it seemed as if it had rained fire, had nevertheless raised the level of the Arno, whose swollen waters rolled swiftly by. The ferryman being summoned, hastened at the sight of such a noble and unexpected company, and proposed to take them in two trips, for the river being so high, and the boat so heavily laden, he feared that some disaster might happen. But all were impatient to cross the stream, and the Duke particularly; so the knights dismounted from their steeds, the ladies descended from the carriage, and they all entered the boat, together with the animals and vehicles, without paying the slightest attention to the remonstrances of the boatman, who did not cease to warn them of the danger. The Duke and Isabella advanced to the prow of the boat, which would first touch the shore, without exchanging a word. He gazed intently at the waters as they ran swiftly by, urged on, as it were, by some mysterious agency, and murmuring hoarsely as if complaining of the fleeting destiny granted to them by the fates. Suddenly, as if speaking to himself he said:

269

"These waves, which pass so rapidly before my eyes, will certainly grow quiet in the sea; but where go the human souls which pass away no less swiftly?"

"Wherever it pleases the mercy of God," replied Isabella.

"Mercy! Say rather to whatever place we may deserve by the works and merits which we perform during this passage to the tomb which we call life."

"My dear Giordano, let no human creature presume to save himself by his own merits. What should we be, if God did not assist us?"

"You confide much in the mercy of God?"

"Entirely."

"But if the priests should declare you unpardonable?"

"I should not despair, unless I should myself hear that severe sentence from the immortal lips of the Father of Mercies."

"But God is a judge and avenger: He visits the generations, and 'visits the sins of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth—'"

"We know another law, which is pardon, charity, and love; the blessed Santa Teresa calls the devil unhappy, because he can neither pardon nor love—"

270

"God help us!—We shall upset!"—

These cries suddenly interrupted the conversation. In a moment, all was fear and confusion. The rope attached to the rudder broke, and the force of the current, pushing the boat on one side, nearly submerged it, all control over it being thus lost; the peril was imminent, increased as it was by the uneasy motions of the men and animals; the edge of the boat already touched the water; it was on the point of filling hopelessly.

The Duke appeared not only free from all fear in that tumult, but even enjoyed it, and with a great shout exclaimed:

"Let us all go to the bottom together!"

But the ferryman, with a strong push of his pole, was just in time to support the side towards which the boat careened, and to save it from disappearing beneath the surface. Rescued thus from the immediate danger, the others assisted the ferryman, and by means of their united strength, they succeeded, although with difficulty, in keeping the boat steady; a servant, with a rope in his hand, then sprang into the water, and crossing the stream, reached the opposite shore, where, with the aid of some peasants who were waiting to cross, he drew the rope, one end of which was fastened to the boat, and succeeded in bringing it to a place of safety. They landed, but when the ferryman, cap in hand, tried to recall himself to their memories, which seemed cousins-german to forgetfulness, Isabella, looking back at him, said:

"Why did you save us? Many would have died innocent, who will now be lost."

271

And the Duke:

"Why did you save us? Who told you to? Who asked you to? We should all have sunk to the bottomless pit without noticing it."

Troilo and the others looked askance at him as they passed. The honest man stood confounded. Last of all came Don Inigo, so very dark, with his pallid face and fierce glance. If to the eyes of the ferryman the others had appeared demons, this man seemed Satan himself; in his heart he gave up all hope of the expected *buona mano*; nevertheless, according to his custom, he moved forward to ask it, but his voice died

away on his lips. Don Inigo fixed upon him two such eyes that the frightened boatman retreated two or three steps, and as Don Inigo continued to advance, without changing a muscle of his face, he still retreated. Don Inigo thrust his hand into his doublet, and the other, fearing that he was about to draw his dagger or poniard, gave himself up for lost: but instead, he drew forth two bright pistoles and held them out to him. The ferryman hardly dared to trust himself, but the love of money overcame his fear: he approached tremblingly, and stretched forth his open hand. Don Inigo dropped the pistoles into it without speaking; the other received them holding his breath; then, each turning away from the other, the ferryman set off at a full run, and did not consider himself safe until he was actually in his boat. When there he opened his hand, suspecting that the money had turned to lead, which generally happens, according to popular superstition, with money coined in the infernal mint; but they still seemed of gold, as they had done at first: at any rate, he put them carefully away in his purse, exclaiming:

272

"I will have them blessed, for if it was not the devil and all his imps that I have just ferried over, I am not the ferryman of Petroio!"

At last they have reached Cerreto-Guidi; at last they have reached the foot of the steep flight of steps by which they wearily mount to the country-seat at the top.

Country-seat! Yes, certainly, for thus that block of buildings was then called, and always will be called, which was once the property of Isabella Orsini at Cerreto-Guidi. There nature smiles most brightly, and shows herself most joyful, and notwithstanding, man, placing his fatal hand upon it, has succeeded in rendering it the abode of terror: a hill, which, if left untouched, would have been a most beautiful and charming sight, has been bound with brick and stone, and converted into a fortress. Four very steep staircases, two on each side, lead to the top; the two first form an angle at the foot of the hill, and then part, the one to the right, the other to the left; the two second begin where these end, and reunite in an angle before the lawn in front of the palace. The walls come down perpendicularly, built of brick of so bright a tint that even now they appear as if stained with blood; the bosses, the stairs, and the copings of the parapets are of Gonfalina stone; the two first staircases have forty-two steps, each of which is more than a foot broad; the second, forty-three; the cliff beneath is excavated, with tortuous, subterranean passages winding through it. In the centre of the wall rests an immense escutcheon, also of stone; but the Medicean balls,^[53] either the effect of time or "the work of men's hands," have fallen, as the family of the Medici has fallen, as their power has fallen, as all the great ones of the earth will fall, into the sepulchre. To some sooner, to some later, but to all fatally, will the Autumn come, for we are leaves attached to the tree of time, and time itself is a perishing leaf of eternity. But when men have fallen and their age has passed away, fame remains, which, although it may grow old and infirm, never dies; and even if sometimes late, always reaches posterity, to recount the vices and virtues of those who have passed from earth. Despotical potentates have lived, who have torn out its tongue, and thought thus to silence it, but the tongue of fame springs again like the head of the Hydra, and God does not permit a Hercules to rise against it, for He has sent it upon earth as a precursor of His own delayed but inevitable justice.

273

The palace contains a vast hall on the ground-floor; at the further end of it there is an arch, at the right of which a broad stone staircase leads to the first story.

Just on the right hand of the entrance is a suite of apartments. Enter, cross it, and you will find a corner room; one side looks to the south, that opposite to the door to the west. There is now but one window to the room; at the time of our history there were two; the second opened to the west. There are two doors; one large and in full view, the other small and secret, and formerly covered by tapestry of green damask. The room is ten feet by seven. In the wall is a large press, which is not readily perceived by the careless observer: looking up to the entablature, we find that there are sixteen small joists resting upon one principal beam. But it is not to count beams and joists that I turn your attention to the ceiling: indeed no; look carefully, and there, under the principal beam, by the third cross-beam from the western side, you will observe a small round hole.

274

Remember this room and this hole. Two hundred and seventy-eight years have now passed since that hole appeared there.

Cerreto (an oak grove) received its name from the abundance of green oaks (*Cerri*) that shaded the hill and the surrounding country for a long distance, as Frassineto (an ash grove) from the ash trees (*Frassini*), and Suvereto (a wood of cork trees) from the corks (*Sugheri*), and Rovereto (a male oak grove) from the male oaks (*Roveri*). Where are the oak trees now? The eye of the passer-by seeks in vain for a tree beneath whose shade to shelter his burning head from the sun's scorching glare; and not at Cerreto alone, but throughout all Tuscany, and even upon the lofty peaks of the Apennine range, trees are to the present day but seldom seen. Oh! sad is the necessity which compels us to deprive the earth of so noble an ornament! The forests have disappeared, and with them the Dryads, the Hamadryads, the Fauns, the

Oreads, and the other lovely families with which the fancy of the poets peopled them; the forests have disappeared, and with them the Knights Errant, the tournaments, the chivalrous enterprises, the fairies, the dwarfs, and the Queens of Beauty, with whom the imaginations of the romancers gladdened their sylvan haunts. The nymphs of the woods followed mourning to see the beloved trees, and recommended them to the care of the ocean goddesses, as if they had been best beloved children; and the ocean goddesses cared for them, fashioned them into ships, adorned them with sails as purely white as the wings of the swan, gave them the swiftness of the albatross, and the shining beauty of the halcyon; then with their hands and shining shoulders they pushed the stern, and the favoring winds, vieing with the nymphs, swelled the sails, and took pleasure in spreading to the azure sky the banner of our land.

275

The ship, traversing untried seas, carried arts, customs, and knowledge, to civilize unknown and savage nations, and the banner of our land was hailed even on the remotest shores as a token of safety. Alas! This is a desire which, however earnest, can never more be fulfilled. The woods of our country are shorn of their leaves, as Grecian maidens formerly sacrificed their tresses at the tombs of their dear ones. Our trees have been converted into ships, but not for us; the winds have unfolded the banner, but it was not ours; they have joined in battle, but it was not for the fates of our country; they have sailed laden with merchandise, but not gathered from our fields, nor manufactured by our hands; they have indeed been guided by Italian men over unknown seas, and through terrible storms and fearful perils, but others have received the fruits of these enterprises, and our country has won merely barren renown. Barbarous nations have bought our forests, while the iron dared not touch their oaks, beneath which the Druids celebrated their mysterious rites. Oh! miserable nation, who have sold everything, and had it been possible would have sold even your sun and sky, why, if you yourselves had no thrill of daring or of glory, why did you disinherit your posterity? Why, not contented with your own baseness, did you prepare for your sons an inheritance of shame and tears? What judgment awaits you beyond the grave, since your children will remember their fathers only by the ill which they have received from them?

276

But Cerreto was at that time shaded with an abundance of oaks, elms, holm-oaks, and trees of all kinds; while pheasants, heath-cocks, and infinite varieties of birds flew from bough to bough, and roebucks, deer, stags, hares, and wild-boars bounded through the underbrush; so that the place was remarkably well adapted for the chase, the supreme delight in the lives of Princes.

When Isabella, leaning on her husband's arm, began to ascend the stairs, she stumbled on the first step, so as to cause herself severe pain; smiling sadly, she turned to the Duke and said:

"This is a bad omen: a Roman would have turned back."^[54]

The Duke, not being able to think of a good answer, kept silence, trying in his turn to laugh.

As soon as they reached the palace, every one repaired to his own apartments; the Duke went to those which contained the room already so minutely described, to perform his toilet.

When they had bathed in perfumed water, changed their clothes, and dressed their hair, they all met again on the piazza in front of the palace.

277

The sun, shorn of his rays, resembled a blood-shot eye, and the whole sky near him seemed like a lake of blood. An immense extent of country lay stretched out before the eyes of our personages, for from that height could be seen the greater part of the territories of Florence, Pistoia, Volterra, Pisa, Colle, Samminiato, and even Leghorn. Groups of houses were scattered about on the hills, like flocks of goats in their pastures; from the little cottages rose straight columns of smoke, and the sound of melancholy songs was heard from the plains, to which other voices in the distance replied in strains equally mournful. From a black cloud darted, from time to time, a tongue of flame like the sword of the avenging Archangel hidden behind it. The sun meantime is gradually sinking—now it is merely a streak of light—now it is gone! Isabella, moved by an irresistible impulse, stretched forth her arms with the despairing sorrow with which we see our dearest treasures hidden from our sight beneath the earth, and exclaimed:

"Farewell, O sun, farewell!" and covered her face with her hands.

"Farewell until to-morrow," said the Duke, "and may you rise with a brighter face than that with which you leave us. Beautiful plains, pleasant woods, and delightful ease, at last I return to enjoy you, nor will I again leave you hastily. I am weary of pursuing glory, which is never overtaken; or if overtaken, when man thinks to clasp a supreme good, his arms fall empty on his bosom. I wish to find my pleasure in domestic joys, the only true ones in the world. I reproach myself, and I ask your pardon, Isabella, and bind myself by an oath never to leave you again. I thank you, that on returning home, I have not been received as a stranger; I owe it to the

278

excellent goodness of your disposition, that coming back, after so many years of absence, I can believe that I departed only yesterday. My heart is sick; it is for you to cure it entirely of the fever of ambition, which has wrung it so sorely."

Isabella looked at him, and smiled mournfully without speaking; but Troilo, who thought him sincere, replied consolingly:

"Now how can you say that you have spent your days in vain? In a hundred battles you have gathered laurels enough to crown two Cæsars; not to mention others, at Lepanto alone you have, by your bravery and prowess, acquired a name that history will record with pride in her eternal pages. Ah! be good enough to satisfy my long desire; narrate to me the events of this 'battle of the giants.'"

"At another time, Troilo, at another time; but, I repeat it, all is vanity. Look and see what good has arisen from so many deaths, from so much misery, from so many wounds! The Christians, envious of each other, did not follow up their victory; the Turks rose again, more troublesome than ever; and Don John, unacceptable conqueror, received as the recompense of his wonderful valor, nothing but oblivion, and happy he if nothing worse happen to him! That great soldier heart, which expands in the dangers of the conflict, will quickly cease to beat if condemned to fret itself away at Court,^[55] for glory was his breath, danger his blood, war his very life. The fate of this illustrious but unfortunate man, teaches me to be wise, and furl the sails worn by the long voyage. True, it is late, but 'better late than never;'—the sun of my life is declining—God grant that its setting at least may be peaceful!"

279

The servants had prepared two tables in the lower hall, and they were overloaded with the gifts of Ceres and Bacchus; many chandeliers shone with brilliant light, which was reflected in infinite rays from the sparkling silver plate, white porcelain vases, and large mirrors. All the doors which looked upon the piazza had been opened, and also the opposite ones opening into the gardens; and yet the air was so still that not even a light flickered, and the folds of the window curtains and awnings were as immovable as if made of marble or bronze. Through so many openings there did not penetrate a single refreshing breath of air.

They sat at the banquet. The Duke strove his best to make the guests give themselves up to joy and merriment; he had need of excitement; he endeavored to stupefy himself; he meant to drown his internal passion in the madness of false hilarity: in short, he sought mainly two things, courage to persist, and power to dissimulate. He succeeded finally; for the guests, having no motive to doubt the sincerity of the Duke's gaiety, abandoned themselves to a free and open demonstration of enjoyment, and thus was tempered the artificial and icy happiness which he pretended. Troilo, who, as all ignorant men are wont, presumed a great deal on himself, thought there was no danger; yet he was not entirely at his ease, and, at any rate, he thought best to drown all sadness in wine. The conversation began to be more excited and lively; witty sayings flew from mouth to mouth. The banquet was at its climax; the valets and pages hastened around, carrying wines of all kinds and warm viands; the noise which arises from gay voices speaking all together, a sure indication of a merry feast, filled the whole room, and from time to time was broken by loud laughter.

280

But Isabella participated in this hilarity as much as was necessary not to show the perturbation which agitated her; and it did not escape her notice that the Duke, whilst he urged the others and herself to drink often, never did himself, or, hardly touching the glass to his lips, set it down again. Her eyes often sought those of the Duke, but he studiously avoided hers, or if by chance they met he turned them away quickly. Not that she was sorry at this, prepared as she was for everything, but, through an innate vanity in our nature, she wished to show him that she might be murdered, but not deceived.

And since there never are motives wanting among men either to do an injury or to drink, so it is useless to relate in how many ways, and for how many reasons, they all drank.

Troilo, partly to correspond to the general exultation, partly to acquire more and more the good will of his cousin, rose suddenly, and holding in his hand a full goblet, toasted the Duke thus:

"The health of the valorous knight of Christ, the victorious warrior of Lepanto."

281

There is nothing in the world so insupportable as praise in the mouth of an enemy; no insult can offend as much as this eulogium; and it seemed excessively insulting to the Duke, for he knew too well that it was derived from stupidity, but mingled with malice; and it is also no little offence to human vanity to allow the fool to suppose that he has been able to deceive us. Yet he dissimulated; for when he undertook a task, although weak by nature, he was capable by art of dissimulating as well as the

most dexterous.

At the toast of Troilo all replied applauding, and, although the power of the wine had a great deal to do with these vociferous approvals, yet they poured so sincerely from their hearts, that the warrior felt proud of them, and they tempered the bitterness caused by the thought of the source from whence the toast came, and the reason of it.

The Duke rose also, and taking a glass, replied in an attitude of acknowledgment:

"It is too much for me! But human tongue can never extol enough the illustrious souls of those who perished fighting on that memorable day."

"My Lord Duke, pray do not deny to us the honor and pleasure of hearing you relate the events of that battle: we beg you, by the love you bear to your lady."

"No; what is the use? You have all read it in the histories of the times."

And all the guests insisted, speaking at once:

"Yes, but in generalities;—without details of facts and incidents. And then, to read a relation of a battle is a very different thing from hearing it from one who fought in it, shed his blood, and conquered. Please narrate it to us."

282

And Titta, who had accompanied the Duke, and had fought at his side and saved his life, desired that his prowess might be shown also as well as his master's, so that he insisted more than the others that the Duke, who was a good speaker, should relate the events and dangers of that famous battle. Indeed the refusal of the Duke, to tell the truth, was not sincere; not that he was a *miles gloriosus*, but every soldier loves to record the battles he fought, the wounds received, and to show himself a generous bestower of praise on the enemy, whether conquerors or conquered;—if conquerors, to excuse the defeat;—if conquered, to render his triumph more glorious.

Titta then, in a certain manner which was neither a request nor a command, but participated of both, added:

"May it please your Excellency, although modesty may deter you from narrating the battle, you must not deprive me of my share of praises; for I also fought by your side, and as fortune, rather than my own bravery, gave me the chance of saving the life of a valorous warrior, I cannot renounce the reward accruing from this act, although an accidental one."

"You are right, and I could not honestly be silent, when silence might be imputed to me as ingratitude. Please then to listen; I will speak briefly and plainly, as becomes a soldier. And you, Isabella, remember all that I am about to say, and make it a noble theme for your muse ... since now nothing is left to the warrior for reward but the smile of beauty, and the honor of a poem."

"Is not that enough?" asked Isabella.

283

"It is even too much.—All Christendom was in arms: knights of high lineage, plebeians, adventurers assembled from all sides to fight the enemies of Christ, in order to obtain remission for their sins, and the great indulgences promised by Pope Pius V. But although the desire of the warriors was great to meet the enemy in mortal combat, yet the secret intentions of the allied Princes were not in accordance with them. The Venetians craved the battle, the Pope more than they; but Philip II. of Spain was unwilling to risk an enterprise on which depended all the forces of his kingdom, and where victory would have been rather to the advantage of his allies than to himself; nor in his crafty and cunning mind did he desire the Italians to acquire fame; fearing lest they might be induced, as it is customary with human natures, to feel the want of acquiring a greater one.^[56] The great *Comendador* of Castille Requesens had been sent to Don John of Austria as a check, and he never ceased whispering in his ears, to curb his fiery spirit; that his supreme glory and religion ought to be the welfare and advancement of the king his brother; so that the great soul of this magnanimous man sadly wavered with painful uncertainty. But every day there arrived new forces ready to fight, seeking for no other reward or glory than that of shedding their own blood for the Faith. Don John would sigh from the depth of his heart, and with his eyes fixed upon the ground tremble with rage, or grow pale and disheartened. The advices of Gabrio Serbelloni, general of artillery, of Ascanio della Cornia, grand-master of the field, and of Sforza, Count of Santafiore, general of the Italians for king Philip, were of no little help to add spurs to his valorous soul. Yet, it seemed that the battle would not take place, for fortune hindered the enterprise with all her might; and indeed a vague report was spread, that, on account of the lateness of the season, and the stormy weather, this year they would only attempt to gain possession of Castelnuovo, or Nelona, or Durazzo, or Santa Maura. Add to this, that Don John, being greatly exasperated against the Venetians, was on the point of losing the occasion through which his name will descend immortal even to remote posterity. The Venetian galleys were somewhat ill supplied with soldiers, and accordingly Don John thought it best to replenish them

284

with his Italian and Spanish troops; it was a remedy worse than the disease, since a day did not pass without tumults, quarrels, and bloody fights arising. Captain Muzio da Cortona, stationed on the galley of Andrea Calergi, a nobleman of Crete, having a quarrel with some Venetians, drew his sword, and wounded several of them; a *melée* ensued, they called to arms, and all the Venetians that happened to be around assailed and abused him badly; but Veniero, the Venetian general, as if this had not been enough, had him arrested, and hung without mercy. Don John, considering his authority offended, was resolved to take a solemn revenge against the Venetians, refusing to listen to all the arguments with which Marcantonio Colonna, and the Venetian Admiral Barbarigo, tried to pacify him.—But God, who watched over our safety, caused the arrival of the unhappy news of the loss of Famagosta; and that Marcantonio Bragadino and Astorre Baglioni, after having defended it valorously for ten months, were forced through want of ammunition, and the impatience of the citizens, to surrender it with honorable conditions. But the barbarian conqueror, violating his oath, ordered Bragadino's ears to be cut off, and then, having dragged him ignominiously to the market-place, after unheard of barbarities had him skinned alive; nor being yet satisfied with this, he caused the skin to be filled with straw, and hung to the mast of a galley, exhibiting through Soria and the other Turkish countries this infamous trophy.—It was on this occasion that Don John, shutting his eyes, and becoming pale as death, seemed like a man who had received a powerful blow upon the head; and he remained thus for a little while; then with regal dignity he turned appeased to Veniero, and extending his hand to him said: 'Peace! We have no enemies but the Turks.'—His aspect, the words, and the manner in which they were proffered, made all who stood around him shudder: imagine what effect they would have had upon the enemies! Marcantonio Colonna, who stood by him, related to me that in the fierce sparkling of the eyes of this magnanimous Prince he seemed to read the death sentence of twenty thousand infidels. Veniero pressed the invincible hand, kissed it, and could not help exclaiming with sobs: 'Unfortunate Bragadino! Unhappy blood!' Both Spaniards, Germans, and Italians, laying aside all animosity, threw their arms weeping around each other's necks, kissed each other's cheeks, and cried:—'Peace!'—Then with a sudden change they thrust their hands in their hair, stamped the pavement with their feet, and with loud voices cried:—'To arms, to arms!'—Be it so!—replied Don John, unsheathing his sword, which, glittering in the rays of the Sun, seemed to send forth sparks of divine fire; and ordered to be unfolded upon his galley the banner of the League sent by the Pope, whereon was painted the Crucifix, and beneath it the escutcheons of the Allies, in the middle that of the Pope, on the right that of the King of Spain, and on the left that of the Venetians. The wind, and it was no small omen of victory, unfolded through the air the glorious banner, so that it seemed as if invisible hands held it spread by the four corners; and Don John, fixing his eyes upon it with pious enthusiasm, exclaimed:—*In hoc signo vinces!*—*In hoc signo vinces!* exclaimed those near him, and these sacred words spread like lightning, and were in a moment repeated from the most distant ships. The great Comendador, who had had a secret order from the king to hinder the enterprise, whether he thought it too dangerous to oppose it, or that he was carried along by the universal consent, changing his conduct and bearing, showed more enthusiasm than the others, and murmured often:—They may order us from Madrid to remain quiet, but before the enemy one cannot obey such mandates!—

285

286

"Another circumstance in which we saw the hand of God openly manifested was this, that the enemy being distant, and able to avoid a battle—and in fact some of their captains had advised it—there suddenly arrived some spies who notified them that the greater part of the Christian fleet had remained behind. This information was partly true, but had been a thousand fold exaggerated by report; for the only truth was, that the twenty-six galleys commanded by Don Cæsar Davalo of Arragon, who was then in great grief mourning the death of his brother the Marquis of Pescara, and who together with Don John had been appointed as commander-in-chief of the whole enterprise, had set sail late, and did not arrive in time. Upon these ships were the German infantry commanded by the Counts Alberigo Lodrone, and Vinciguerra d'Arco, so that, the battle having been won principally by the efforts of the Italians, we lost no glory on their account. Our spies also led us into the same error, for they, badly informed, reported to us that in the Turkish fleet Aluch Ali, Dey of Algiers, with his eighty galleys was wanting. Thus the desire of fighting on both sides was very great, each thinking to have the advantage over the other. Ali Pasha, Grand Admiral of the sea, finding the wind in his favor, without any longer delay moved all his fleet with much haste, but little order, from the Gulf of Lepanto. The knight Gildandrada, sent out to reconnoitre, returned the sixth of October, which was Saturday, in the dead of night, to notify us of the approach of the enemy: we sailed all night, and the next morning at dawn the seventh of October, the day of the Virgin St. Giustina, we came abreast of the Curzolaes Islands, anciently called Echinades, about thirty-five miles distant from Lepanto. At this moment Giovanni Andrea Doria returned, notifying us to prepare for battle, for the Turkish fleet, favored by the wind, was coming upon us. Then Don John with great calmness ordered the fleet to be formed in battle array, which was this: the galleys were divided into a centre, two wings, an advanced guard, and a rear guard, so that it represented the form of an eagle.—Giovanni Andrea Doria commanded the right wing with fifty-three galleys, and

287

288

hoisted a green flag on the mainmast of his ship. Agostino Barbarigo led the left wing with as many galleys, hoisting a yellow flag. Don Alvaro di Baxan, Marquis of Santacroce, was appointed to the command of the rear-guard with thirty galleys, and displayed a white flag on his ship, ready to come to assistance wherever the need required. Don John of Cardona, also carrying a white flag, led the advanced-guard with eight galleys. The centre, or as they call it, the *battle*, consisting of sixty-one galleys, was under the command of Don John, with a blue flag at the mast-head; and as they expected that the greatest efforts of the enemy would be turned in this direction, they placed in defence of the *Real* galley, on the right the *Capitana*^[57] of the Pope with General Marcantonio Colonna, Romagasso, and other Knights; on the left the Venetian *Capitana*, with General Sebastiano Veniero, after which was the *Capitana* of Genoa with Alessandro Farnese, Prince of Parma, and on the other side the *Capitana* of Savoy with Francesco Maria della Rovere, Duke of Urbino: the sides of this battle were closed on the right by the *Capitana* of Malta, on the left by the *Capitana* Lomellina, where I was;—aside the stern of the *Real* stood the *Capitana* and *Padrona* of Spain with the great *Comendador* Requesens. It was a very wise plan, as the effect showed, that of towing the six Venetian *galeazzas*, each armed with four hundred chosen arquebusiers, sixty brass cannons, bombs and rockets of all kinds, about half a mile ahead of the fleet; two of them commanded by Andrea Pesaro and Pietro Pisani in front of the right wing; the other two of Agostino and Antonio Bragadino, before the left; and the last two of Giacomo Guoro and Francesco Duodo in front of the *battle*.—Alas! why have I not a poetic genius, and why does not all Christendom listen, that I may extol with song, which makes even mortals eternal, those magnanimous men who came voluntarily to take a part in this memorable day? I would pray the Mother of God to recall to my memory the names of all the brave who conquered living, and the martyrs who conquered dying, and particularly the last, for although I believe that they are rejoicing now in the celestial abodes, yet the sound of deserved praise arises more welcome than incense, even to the blessed ones in heaven. But let us not pluck the laurel; for perhaps the poet will be born who with better voice will be able to dispense the deserved reward to these valorous men: it behoves us at least to hope so!—From the opposite side, borne by a north-east wind which blew favorably to it, the enemy's fleet advanced, occupying a larger space of water, hastily and in disorder, as if to exterminate us, and fearing to lose the opportunity of a certain victory. It was in the form of a crescent, and consisted of three hundred or more ships. Ali Pasha, Grand Admiral, and Pertau, general of the troops, commanded the *battle*: Siroco, Governor of Alexandria, and Mehemet Bey, Governor of Negropont, led the right wing; Uluch Ali, Dey of Algiers, the left. The Turkish *Real* was no less strongly defended than ours, having at its sides six of the principal galleys, three on one side, and three on the other, upon which on the right were Pertau, Mamud Rais, captain of the janissaries, Lader Bey, governor of Metelin, and on the left Mustapha, treasurer, Caracoza, governor of Velona, and Carajali, captain of the Corsairs. Don John, as soon as he saw his fleet in order, went in a light barge flying from galley to galley, encouraging the men with very short but vigorous words to fight bravely, for the time, the place, and his nature did not allow of a long speech. It is said that when he came under the *Capitana* of Venice, in seeing Sebastiano Veniero, an old man of three score years and ten, all armed with a sparkling and splendid armor, with his head uncovered showing his white locks, his face burning with martial fire inciting his men to act valorously, admiring the bravery of the man, he cried to him:—Father! Bless us all....—And Veniero, raising his eyes to heaven, as if begging from on high the power of blessing, stretched his arm, and making the sign of the Cross exclaimed:—Be all blessed in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.—From all the galleys there then issued forth a shout foreboding approaching slaughter."

289

290

"I remember," interrupted Titta, "that when he arrived under our Lomellina, he kissed his hand to us, and cried:—Brave men, I say nothing to you!—and disappeared."

"The Capuchin friars and the Jesuits with crucifixes in their hands, fearless of the imminent danger, ran up and down the galleys, cheering all spirits, granting to all the remission of their sins, innumerable indulgences, and a certain hope of conquering, and immense booty.

"When Don John returned on board his galley, he noticed at a little distance a small vessel full of powerful rowers as if waiting: he inquired about it of the captain, who replied:—he had it prepared for any emergency that might happen, in order that he could retreat;—and Don John replied fiercely:—Sink it to the bottom; for I swear to God that I had rather die fighting for Christ, than escape with shame.—And to the *Comendador*, who by duty of his office warned him to think better before adventuring on a decisive battle, he replied:—Now the time for counsel is past; it is the time for combat.

291

"The Turkish *Real* begins to fire: the sound of the artillery is spread; the signal is given, our *Real* replies; the battle is engaged. It was the design of the enemy to push forward with the wind in their favor in the shape of a crescent, surround our wings, pass behind, and enclose us in a circle of death. They took little notice of the six

galeazzas, and those valorous Venetians did not stir until the enemy was within half an arquebuse-shot; then, suddenly, and at the same moment, they fired three hundred and sixty cannons, and two thousand four hundred arquebuses! The terrible noise astounded even those who had caused it; the sea shook as if by a storm, and the galleys, hurled by a most violent shock, began to roll in disorder; but our men very soon regained their spirits on discovering the great damage done to the enemy, and loading their arquebuses with wonderful readiness continued to fire desperately upon them. And I desire you to know that on this occasion the arquebuse with a lock was of great service to us, for being small, and easy to manage, it enabled our men to fire three times before the enemy could fire once with their heavy ones: and this was the first moment of our victory. Skill conquered fury, and the Moslems, unaccustomed to such encounter, had to keep their distance all torn and bloody, change the order of battle, and form themselves into three divisions like us.

292

"Although the valor of our men was very great, yet the Lord wished to show with a more visible sign that he was fighting for us, for just then happened a memorable changing of the wind; the north-east, which had so far been favorable to the Turks, ceased, and there arose a south-west propitious to the Christians, carrying the smoke against them, and preventing them from seeing. Siroco, in the mean while, not at all daunted, ordered his galleys to avoid the *galeazzas*, and, grazing the shore where the river Acheloo falls into the sea, to rush between the land and the galleys of Barbarigo, and strive to assail him in the rear. Barbarigo, however, not a less skilful captain, ordered his extreme galleys to approach the land, and describe with the others a diagonal line, forming an acute angle of which one side was formed by the land, the other by his galleys; and taking Siroco in the flank, with the aid of the propitious wind pushed him towards the island. The fight was carried on desperately on both sides; but the Turkish galleys continually losing sea, struck against the shore, the Christians followed and reached them, and as many Mussulmans as fell into their hands they put to death; of the galleys some fell into our hands, others were sunk by the artillery, others burnt. We did not, however, gain the victory without blood, for, to say nothing of many others, in the very heat of the *melee* between Siroco and Barbarigo, almost at the same moment the former fell dead, and the latter mortally wounded with an arrow in his eye, in the act of removing the shield from before his face, in order to spur the combatants to do their utmost. Barbarigo, feeling himself mortally struck, whilst staggering back, appointed in his place Mario Quirini, who, seconded by Antonio Canale and by Cicogna, followed the course of victory, destroying the remains of this fleet commanded by Mehemet Bey, Pasha of Negropont, and by Ali, the redoubtable Corsair. It was in this action that Cicogna, wounded in the hands and face by a grenade, bearing manfully the most intense pain, would not retire until he had taken the enemy's galley, which now is preserved as a noble trophy in the Arsenal of Venice; and the valiant Antonio Casale dressed with a long and white garment thickly lined with cotton, a hat of the same material and shoes of ropes in order not to slip, swinging a double-handed sword, filled with terror and slaughter the enemy's galleys upon which he leaped with wonderful dexterity and nimbleness. Giovanni Contarini had the glory of taking the galley of Siroco, and finding on it this enemy of the Christian name dead, had his head cut off and fixing it upon a spear cried out three times:—Behold the head of Siroco!—in order to encourage his men, and terrify the enemy.

293

"The dying Barbarigo was lying near the wheel, and from time to time asked those around him:—Have we conquered yet? When Quirino, tearing the flag from the enemy's mast, ran to where Barbarigo was, crying:—Victory!—the dying man wiped the blood from his eyes heavy with death's sleep, and saw the hated flag, and smiled; then he begged them to hand it to him, and grasping it convulsively, he rolled himself in it as in a winding sheet, and expired. We, daring not to separate him from the trophy upon which his glorious soul breathed its last, wrapped in the same flag buried him with great honors in consecrated ground.

294

"But the greatest struggle took place around the *battle*. Ali Pasha had come forward boldly, and as the Turks are accustomed to, with a deafening noise of drums, trumpets, and similar warlike instruments; and they even presumed to frighten us more with threats, cries, and striking of weapons against each other. Don John, armed with mail, holding a heavy battle-axe in his hand, placed himself with all his person exposed in a lofty place on the poop, and ordered Lopez di Figheroa, leader of the arquebusiers, that whatever the enemies might say or do, no one should dare to open the fire until he had given a signal by lifting his battle-axe. The Moslems advancing nearer and nearer, fired their arquebuses and arrows, with no small loss on our side; and we were also greatly damaged by two cannon in the enemy's prow, which would have cleared our decks if they had been quicker in loading and firing them. It seemed hard to us to be forced to remain inactive during so great a slaughter, so much the more as from time to time we saw some friend or relative fall at our side, removed all bleeding, and carried below. We should have accused Don John of cowardice, if we had not known what a man he was; and looking at him, he seemed to us a statue of bronze amid bullets and arrows which hissed around him, and of which he took no more notice than of the wind which lifted his hair. When the Turkish *Real* arrived within less than half an arquebuse shot from us, Don John

raised his battle-axe, and whirled it impetuously around his head: our fire seemed one single shot; the smoke moving towards the enemy prevented us from seeing the damage which they had received; when it cleared off, the enemy's deck looked almost deserted. But before the smoke had entirely passed away Don John ordered the oarsmen to pull with their whole might, and the galley, pushed also by the wind, flew like a bird. Don John had also prepared another stratagem, which was this, to have the beak of his galley suddenly cut, so that, approaching nearer to the enemies, there would be a better opportunity of boarding them: this example was immediately followed by us all, and was another cause of victory.

295

"The smoke disappeared, and Ali's galley seemed almost deserted. Don John, seizing the opportunity, cried:—Forward, cavaliers, let us go to victory ... we cannot but conquer, for dying, there awaits us a palm in heaven; living, a laurel on the earth.—And cutting short his speech, being more eager to act, he ran impetuously forward, followed by his valiant knights, and behold in an instant they boarded and entered the Turkish *Real*. Ali, meanwhile, a wary captain, had called aid from the surrounding ships, who, approaching quickly, by means of ladders and ropes, ascended from abaft, whilst ours entered from the prow: thence the battle was renewed more bitterly, and all concentrated about the mainmast; the Turks were not able to expel the Christians, nor the Christians to master entirely the half conquered galley. The crowd was so great, and the ranks so close, that they could not use any other weapon than the poniard, and the combatants, crazy with fury, used their teeth as if they had been wild beasts; and one could have seen that forest of heads bending to and fro, like a field of ripe grain agitated by contrary winds. They asked for no quarter, nor desired it: it was a war of extermination. But whatever might have been the cause, behold the Christians began to waver, drew back, and the adversaries where ours raised their feet, placed theirs, and grew bold in proportion as ours lost courage: already many of the retreating, pressed by the irresistible impetus, fell headlong into the water, others more fortunate leaped upon the *Real* of Spain.... What more? Don John himself is carried along in the shameful flight. Our commanders, though, not less wary than the enemy, had already reinforced the *Real* with fresh troops, who coming to the rescue not only prevented the Turks from boarding our galley, not only held them steadfast upon the extreme edge of the prow, but pushed them back forcibly, and gave a chance to ours to board again the Turkish *Real*. A new struggle was engaged upon the galley's deck, and already for more than an hour blood had been shed, nor could it be told where victory would lean; the deck was covered with blood, all along the gangways, down in the sides the galley drips blood, the sea raising its foam horribly red seemed to boil with blood. Alas! what cruel wine war pours in her banquets!—Four times were we repulsed, four times we boarded the Turkish *Real*: torn on both sides, on both sides many illustrious dead, and the surviving ones partly wounded, partly so exhausted, as not to be able to raise their swords. In one of these struggles the valorous knight Bernardino Cardine was killed without any wound: a cannon ball struck his shield, which, being covered with excellent steel plate, did not break, but hit so violently against his breast, that he fell dead on the deck. And the last time Don John was repulsed, another noteworthy accident happened; he was retreating without ever turning his head from the enemy, when either his foot slipped upon the gory deck, or by some other accident he fell, and was on the point of falling headlong into the water, had it not been for a Spanish soldier, who had never departed from his side, and who seizing him by the waist with his right hand, held himself fast with his left in the rigging. Suddenly the soldier uttered a cry; his left arm hung down severed, he and Don John would have fallen overboard, had not the Spaniard happened to seize a rope with his teeth, and hold fast to it until, with ready aid, they were both saved.

296

297

"Don John unhurt prepared himself for the last struggle.—Valiant men, he cried, yet one last effort, and we have conquered.—Whilst he was about reorganizing his Spanish knights, who on that day showed really a Roman valor, two events happened which gave us the victory. The galley commanded by Alfonzo d'Appiano thundered with its artillery on the Turkish *Real*, and being of low deck, sent its shots into the hull of the enemy, destroying everything they met, and this was one of the chief things to which we owed our victory. A shot hit a large beam, and hurled it with so much violence against Ali, that he, hurt in many places, struck violently against the mainmast, and gushing blood from many wounds, fell down dying upon the deck.—Now what was Marcantonio Colonna doing? Had his valor, the memory of past deeds, the warmth with which he had undertaken this enterprise, failed him all at once, and in this great moment of need? How could he, a general of the Pontiff, see unmoved so much Christian blood shed?—He was sailing over the waters as if he was taking a pleasure trip to enjoy the evening breeze; he even disappeared from the deck, and no one knew what had become of him.—This most singular man had had the constancy to remain in the midst of the fire of artillery, the breaking of beams, the falling of masts and ropes, amidst the horrible and various aspects of death, without moving an inch, awaiting the opportune time of exterminating the enemy: when he perceived the chance before him, he rushed below deck, and addressing the galley-slaves at the oars, thus spoke: Men! God had redeemed you, and you have rendered yourselves unworthy of the redemption; the water of baptism was poured on your heads in vain,

298

for you have so contaminated them with wicked deeds, that there is no more room for a blessing. You despair of your eternal safety. Your mothers, your wives, your children, whenever in this world they proffer your name, bow down their faces for shame; the citizens look upon you as wild beasts. Heaven repulses you, and the earth abhors you. No matter, I will reconcile you both to God and men: I can so do that your names shall be recalled with pride by your relatives; I can so do that the hand of the most noble knight of Christendom shall be stretched towards yours without esteeming it dishonored...."—And those poor men cried with one voice:—"Alas! our Lord, have mercy upon us! Give us at least the chance of dying in battle."—"Be it so," replied Marcantonio, "I give you your liberty: do not move from your posts: I return on deck: when you hear the sound of a trumpet, be ready, and at the second blast, bend to your oars with the greatest strength that nature has given you. When you shall perceive that we have struck the enemy's galley, then come out, and fight as your souls may inspire you.—He returned on deck, and seizing the helm directed the prow against the vessel of Ali. The trumpet sounded the first blast, then the second. The galley leaped like a wounded seal through the water, which, struck violently by the oars, surged and gurgled, foaming impetuously; then darting over a short space struck with an irresistible impetus the designed place. The Turkish *Real* was almost upset: on one side the deck was plunged into the sea, on the other it even showed its keel; the greater part of its defenders was hurled with great force far into the water, and it would have been even so with the Admiral, had he not grappled the mainmast with both arms. When the galley righted, Colonna, taking advantage of the enemy's confusion, jumped on board accompanied by his men, and made himself master of it. This deed rekindled the ire of the commanders of the galleys ordered to the defence of the *Real*, and seven of them moved at once to the rescue, and threatened Don John. Veniero alone moved to meet them all, sustaining their attacks with wonderful valor. But that fierce old man, overcome by the number, saw every moment his men diminish; an arrow had pierced his foot, and partly on account of the intensity of the pain, partly by the loss of blood, he felt that he could withstand it no longer: there was urgent need of help, but he would not bend to ask it. Giovanni Loredano and Caterino Malipiero saw the danger of the illustrious old man, and rushed to his assistance; these two chivalrous youths could have remained behind the bulwarks, which were to us a great shelter through that battle, but their bold nature did not allow it; they stood both exposed from their waist upwards, and fighting like true champions of Christ, they fell both dead on the deck, hit by several shots. The Marquis of Santa Croce, who had already moved to their aid, arrived, if not in time to save their lives, at least opportunely to avenge their deaths: the Turks were all cut to pieces, and the galleys fell into our hands. The report tells that Veniero made himself master of the *Capitana* of Pertau Pasha, but it is not true, for it was the Lomellina that conquered Pertau...."

299

300

"Ah! my Lord Duke," interrupted Titta, "it ill becomes you to relate this part of the battle. It was indeed so; we conquered the *Capitana* of the Pasha, and in truth, if we used all our utmost efforts to conquer, the enemies also used no less desperate resistance to oppose us. I remember that the valiant Marino Contarino died in this affray; and, with immortal example, the four brothers Cornaro; alas! the flower of the most magnanimous knights was dying; but, although beset on all sides by the enemy's galleys, we did not abandon our prize, and rushed on, determined to conquer or to die. It is true that every footstep we advanced cost us blood, but they were footsteps to victory: already panting and fighting with our daggers, we reached the middle of the galley. My Lord the Duke at the head of all seemed an angel who led us to triumph...."

"And if you, Titta, had loved your master less, by this time there would only be left of him the bare bones, and the name. I recall with grief to my mind Orazio and Virginio Orsini, my relatives, who fell mortally wounded at my feet; and my nephew Fabio, who, hit by a shot on his shoulder, rolled on the deck, and died without lamenting the flower of his lost youth, happy at being called so soon to the peace of God; and I, whilst I bent down to help him, felt my left leg transfixed by an arrow, and as I lifted my head, a hand grasping a poniard was about striking me unprepared for defence; the poniard escaped from the hand, and fell harmless upon my body, the hand also fell upon my head, but severed from the arm, and with it a torrent of blood poured on my face...."

301

"So it was; it came in my way without my thinking of it, and I cut it off like a reed...."

"And I profess myself indebted to you for my life, and as long as Paolo Giordano Orsini shall have a heart and a home, Titta Carbonana will occupy a place in them....—Let us drink!—To the memory of the dead in the battle of Lepanto!"

"May God keep them all in His glory!"—was answered from all sides.

"Come now," continued the Duke, "let us finish the story. Our Lomellina, aided by Vincenzo Querini, took five out of the seven galleys that fought against it. Pertau, throwing himself into a skiff, using his oars vigorously, went off; and we saw the back of this cruel man turned in bitter flight. Many boast of having killed Caracozza; but the truth is that Giovanbattista Benedetti, of Cyprus, a man of great valor, having

overcome the Corcut galley, noticed Caracozza near by, and rushed desperately upon him. With no less fury Caracozza fell upon Benedetti, whether driven to it by a desire for glory, or, as it was supposed, by an old enmity: they met:—a discharge of arquebuses fired from both sides enveloped them in smoke, and when it cleared off, they were both dead, shot with many bullets in the breast. The command of Benedetti devolved on Onorato Gaetano, nephew of the Pope, who, as we have heard from persons worthy of belief, seconded by Alessandro Negroni and by Pattaro Buzzacherino, with no great difficulty, brought this honorable fight to a happy end. The Christian slaves upon the Turkish galleys, noticing by the confusion that fortune was abandoning their hated masters, break their chains, and seizing those arms which despair or chance places in their hands, take a bitter revenge for their long sufferings, and insure the victory. Whilst these events were taking place in the *battle*, and on the left wing of the Christian armada, the right wing was meeting with an adverse fate. Giovanni Andrea Doria, who was to detach himself only four lengths of a galley from the *battle*, transgressed his orders, and extended his line too far. They say that he did this with a good intention, both in order to give more freedom of action to the *battle*, and to the left wing to place themselves in good order, and also for fear of being surrounded by Uluch Ali, who came against him with a greater number of galleys than his own; or perhaps in order to take the wind aft, so as to fall with greater force upon the enemy. But Uluch Ali, a most expert sea captain, when he saw that the galleys of the right wing, so scattered and distant, could not easily help each other, without minding that he was on the lee, beset on all sides the scattered ships with a superior force, and after killing the principal captains, took twelve of them. On this occasion the great valor of Benedetto Soranzo was manifest; a man rather to be compared to the ancient than to modern heroes; for seeing the greater part of his companions around him dead or wounded, and he himself being wounded in several places, he had not the heart to allow his galley to be trodden by the foot of a Moslem, nor that one day the enemy, refitting it, should use it against his most beloved country; therefore, rushing below where the ammunition of powder was stored, he set fire to it, and hurled, with terrible explosion, himself, the galley, and all the enemies that stood on it, torn and mutilated into the air. One alone by a lucky chance escaped, and it was Giacomo Giustiniani, who, thrown uninjured far distant into the water, succeeded miraculously in saving himself by swimming. Nor ought I to be silent about the fierce encounter of the *Capitana* of Malta, which, assailed by three Turkish galleys, fought intrepidly; but Uluch Ali, recognising the flag of St. John, and as he professed himself a mortal enemy to the Order of Malta, did not shame to send against it three other galleys in order to have it at all cost. Pietro Giustignano, general of the Order, seeing that there was no chance left for himself and his knights, exhorted them to die chivalrously, since there was no hope of conquering, and as to surrendering, not one even thought of it. This combat of six galleys against one, glorious for the Christians, infamous for the Turks, lasted three hours; two thirds of the rowers lay dead, the other third were bleeding; the general killed with three ghastly wounds; fifty most noble knights dead; the galley occupied even to the main castle; the banner fallen into the enemy's hands; and yet the survivors strove to defend themselves. Agnolo Martellini, a Florentine knight, who was less wounded than the others, sustained the honorable and hopeless defence. Uluch Ali, mad with rage, ordered the galley to be set on fire, but Doria, spurring his oarsmen to their utmost, reached it in time for revenge, and accomplished it; for falling upon the enemy, wearied by the bitter struggle, he made a horrible slaughter, killing Carag Ali, Captain of Algiers, with many other Turkish officers.—And glorious with fame and misfortune were the Tuscan galleys, which unfortunately were under the orders of Doria. The Florentina, assailed by seven small galleys, was empty both of soldiers and crew; Tommaso dei Medici, badly wounded, alone survived; but the greater part of the knights of St. Stephen died fighting till their last breath. The galley of St. John, commanded by the knight Agnolo Biffali, suffered a struggle no less fatal; for the captain was wounded by two arquebuse shots on the neck; and besides the knights Simone Tornabuoni and Luigi Ciacchi, there perished sixty most valiant soldiers; and worse would the galley upon which Asciano della Cornia was fighting have fared, surrounded by four of the enemy, if Alfonzo di Appiano, admiral of the Florentine galleys, had come less quickly to his aid. But now there rang from every side the cry of victory, and Uluch Ali, seeing all the enemy's armada move against him to surround and overcome him, resolved to draw off. Don Giovanni di Cardona endeavored to oppose his retreat with eight Sicilian galleys, but thrust aside by superior force, with no little damage, he was obliged to yield the way. The Admirals Canale and Querini endeavored to give chase to him, but, their oarsmen being too much exhausted by the fatigues endured, with infinite bitterness, they had to allow him to save himself with his forty ships, our galley of Corfu, and the banner of St. John. In this flight two incidents worthy of note happened. Giovanbattista Mastrillo of Nota and Giulio Caraffa, a Neapolitan, whilst they were, with several companions, prisoners on two separate brigs, showing at the same moment the same boldness, as if they had agreed upon it before, rose against the Turks, killed the Rays and all those who attempted to resist, and having become, from slaves and conquered, free and conquerors, they returned to us with the enemy's brigs full of slaves and very rich booty.

"The sun was setting, surrounded by black clouds, throwing across the waves an oblique ray, so that it happened that the part enlightened shone with a vivid glare, while the rest of the sea was covered with darkness: to the roar of the sea were added cries, imprecations, prayers, sobs, which afar seemed like a single wail, the weeping of Nature over the slaughter of her children, certainly not created by her to thus tear each other to pieces! Within that streak of light, deeds were seen to make even angels weep; and some, but few, really worthy of the celestial origin of man. We could see some people regardless of danger, ascend the burning galleys, rush amidst the flames, without fear that, the powder taking fire, plunder and plunderers might be shattered to atoms; others not yet satisfied with fighting, urged by implacable hatred, grasping each other by the hair or beard, and, in the lack of weapons, striking with their fists, tearing each other with their teeth, and now one head, now another, disappearing under the water, until the latter, as if disdainful that so much anger should yet last in creatures so weak and perishable, whirled them into its immense bosom, to rise no more. A little further on, two, three, or four men would contend for a mast, board, or beam, in order to cling to it, and remain until some aid could arrive; but while with more charity and better wisdom, that plank of safety might have been enough for all, wasting their last strength to possess it, each one exclusively, a common fate overpowered them all; others, stupid with fear, hating to drown, would get hold of a burning fragment, and escaping the water, perish by the flames; and an infinite number of skiffs rowed on this side and on that, full of people drunk with victory, who used the heads of Turks swimming on the water for targets, as the hunter does the ducks in a pond; and to those who approached begging for their lives, they would allow that they should catch hold of the edge of the skiffs, or extend an oar as if to help them, then with the axe would cut their hands or cleave their heads with shocking and cruel wounds. A few of these skiffs went in search of some beloved relative or companion, whether alive or dead: sacred but vain undertaking! not entirely vain, however; for some succeeded in finding what they sought, and saved a dear friend from a watery grave: if yet alive, they would strive with all manner of remedies to bandage his wounds, and preserve his life; but if dead, they would clothe him, arm him with his best armor, place a sword in his hand, and honor him with praise and worship as if a martyr.

306

"This battle, in which more than five hundred ships were engaged, lasted from midday till after four o'clock: of the enemy there died, some say twenty thousand, some thirty thousand, and some, even more; no one counted them.^[58] On our side, seven thousand six hundred and fifty-six failed to answer the roll; we liberated twelve thousand Christian slaves; took two hundred ships; lost only the galley of Corfu: of all the other ships of the enemy, except the forty escaped with Uluch Ali, some were sunk, some burned; we took one hundred and seventeen cannons, two hundred and fifty-eight smaller pieces of artillery, and seventeen mortars; the prisoners falling into our hands were four thousand, among whom were the two sons of Ali Pasha, the oldest of whom died at Naples of a broken heart; and the other was kindly treated by the Pope, and then, at the instance of Don John, restored without ransom. The booty was immense. In the galley of Ali were found twenty-two thousand crowns of gold, in the other of Caracozza, forty thousand; and in all the others a great quantity of money, weapons, cloth, and rich garments; since the Turks, thinking by merely showing themselves to put the Christians to flight, and that they were going on an excursion rather than to a fight, came provided with their best habiliments and draperies, and surrounded by all those luxuries which they were accustomed to enjoy in the security of cities; besides they brought with them the noble spoils of Cyprus and the Christian shores, which in their long voyage they had plundered.

307

"But General Veniero, who, having passed the greater part of his life at sea, was a cautious mariner, advised Don John to put into some neighboring port without loss of time, and selected Petala on the coast of Matalia, since the weather threatened a storm. The armada followed the command, and forcing their sails and oars, rode safely at anchor about nine o'clock in the evening at Petala, only six miles from the scene of battle.

"Don John, urged by his generous nature, ordered first of all that the wounded should be provided for, and we obeyed as well as we could; and he himself, without indulging in rest or food, visited the sick. Indeed he could be of little aid to these unfortunate people, but his friendly presence, the chivalry of his aspect, a word of comfort spoken to some one of them, rendered the pains of the wounds less bitter, and death more tolerable. Now it happened, that while Don John was passing near a wounded man lying on a heap of straw, the latter saluted him familiarly, saying:

308

"*Buenas noches, Don Juan.*'

"And the former, to whom the voice was not new, but who, in that moment, could not remember whose it was, replied in his native tongue, in which the wounded man had spoken:

"God and the Holy Virgin keep you in their guard, brave man: you, as it seems, are wounded; suffer patiently; I pray God for your health.... With a little price you have acquired an immortal fame.' ...

"The price is not little;—but no matter, Don John, you do not seem to recognise me.'

"It seems to me!... But can it be possible!... Don Miguel?' ...

"De Cervantes Saavedra, at your service.'

"What! Don Miguel? Give me your hand.'

"I have already given it to you, Don John; if it could grow again, by my faith, I would give it to you again.'

"And the wounded man showed in the dark his mutilated arm wrapped in bloody linen. Don John then recognised in him the soldier who had supported him when falling and in danger of his life; he was silent, and had it not been for the darkness, we should have seen the unconquerable captain weep. After a short pause, Don John resumed in a moved voice:

309

"And when did you arrive? And why did you not present yourself?"

"Don Miguel replied:

"I arrived late, because, thanks to the sacred college of the Muses,^[59] of whom I confess myself a most unworthy priest, I had not money enough to pay for a horse or carriage to go from Genoa to Naples; and God knows how I grieved about it, for fear of not arriving in time; but as it pleased Our Lady, I reached the army in time for the review which you held at Gomenizze. I had resolved to place myself during the battle at your side, prepared to defend with my life the most valiant champion of Christianity, and the noblest blood of Spain. Fortune, kind to me for this once, assented fully to my design, and I ought to thank her, if, having resigned my life to her, she restored it to me with one hand the less. It seemed then better to me not to discover myself, for if death spared me, I could have pressed your honored hand, and rejoiced in your glory; if, on the contrary, it was destined that I should fall, you, being ignorant of it, would not have grieved for me; and, finally, if we had both died, we should now be together in the presence of God.'

310

"These simple words, yet full of majesty and greatness, filled us with wonder; when a Spaniard interrupted our holy silence, observing:—'Who would have believed we should meet our Poet among the warriors of Lepanto?'—To which observation Don Miguel calmly replied:

"Sir knight, your wonder would cease, if you would for a moment consider that all that which appears to us great, noble, and glorious, is poetry. Our Don John ought to be hailed as the greatest Poet of Spain.... There are two kinds of Poets—those who enact glorious things, and those who sing them. Don John has given us the subject of the poem—now who will write for him the noble Epic? Ah! Lord ... not I ... for I am not equal to the task.'

"Thus met the two choicest spirits that Spain ever produced: both very great and both very unhappy, and held in little repute in that country, which shall have fame among posterity principally because it was their native place.

"As Veniero had foreseen, a terrible storm raged during the night. The burning galleys, blazing more than ever, now appeared upon the summit of the waves, now disappeared; some, leaning sideways, moved rapidly on the surface of the water.... Indeed they looked like demons, who issuing from hell had come to gather souls, and to exult over the immense slaughter in the place of combat!—On the morrow, thousands of corpses were washed on shore, and the ocean rolled on as in the first days of creation: the swelling surge breaking against the shore, seemed to say:—'O land, take back your children; behold! with a breath of my nostrils I have repulsed this bloody and cruel dust, which you call humanity. If your children love to furrow my face, I soon close up this furrow, so that none can find the trace of it. If I bear them on my back, I do it as a boy with playthings, in order to divert myself, and then I break them: behold, I have purified myself from them; the trace of the slaughter of Lepanto remains upon me as the trace of the halcyon's flight through the air. You, my unworthy sister, allow their cities to stand, and, daily torn and tortured in a thousand ways, dare not revenge yourself but from your open furrows send forth everlasting fruits to nourish them; come! be wise once, open your bosom and bury them all. If when greatly angered, you overthrow some city, or swallow some chain of mountains, your wrath seems more like that of a mother who chides, than an executioner who punishes. I, once, came to wash you with a universal ablution, and would gladly do it again, for I see that you are more stained than before, if the word of God did not repulse me from your shores. Come, beg the Creator with me to revoke the command, and I will clean you for ever with the multitude of my waters,—with a deluge—for this time;—without Noah.' ... Thus my affected fancy imagined.—How much all Christendom exulted, you all know.

311

"The Holy Pontiff ordered a great part of the wall near the gate of Capena to be thrown down, in order to admit through that opening Marcantonio Colonna into Rome drawn in a triumphal chariot like the ancient Cæsars to the Capitol, where

there was presented to him a great amount of money, which, accepted by him, he, thanking the Pope, deposited in trust to be used as a dowry for many poor and orphan maidens. Thus, rich only with increase of fame, Marcantonio returned home, so much more the greatest, as he was the only one: a truly Roman soul! The Venetians, whose soldiers fallen in battle amounted to two thirds of the whole armada, would not consent to mourn for the valorous men, who, fighting for the faith, had died for it with weapons in their hands, leaving immortal fame; and their relatives appeared at the public thanksgivings which were rendered to God, dressed in brocade and other precious robes: they also, a Latin race! What you may not have heard, is this; that Philip of Spain was very sorry for the victory, reproaching his brother for having risked the forces of the kingdom, without any advantage resulting to him from the victory; and while the Holy Pontiff, in the effusion of his heart, hailed Don John with the words of the Evangelist:—*Fuit homo missus a Deo, cui nomen erat Joannes*;—there were some in the king's council, who dared even to propose whether it were advisable to have his head cut off. Even Philip himself was ashamed of the impudent cowardice of his counsellors; a greater cowardice than he himself would have wished. Don John escaped with his life, but humiliated by the undeserved rebuke, grief and indignation now oppress him;—and this was Spanish envy!—What benefit did the Christians derive from so many dead, so much valor, and such a wonderful victory? Nothing, but fame. O glory, inebriation of great souls, how you fall from estimation and desire, when you are made the tool of kings, cool calculators of noble passions! Every one thinks of himself, and for to-day; for the morrow he neither knows nor cares. Venice on the sea, Poland on the land, remain abandoned like two lost bulwarks against the forces of the enemies of Faith. One day (may God avert the omen) these bulwarks conquered, the Christians will awake at the cries of the plundered fields, at the flames of the burning cities;—if God does not help us, in twenty years we shall be all Moslems."

Here the Duke ended his long narrative, and from around the room there rose a murmur of applause and at the same time of dread; and after the company had tarried for some time in pleasant conversation, the hour being already late, they rose from the table. The Duke dismissed them with agreeable and courteous manner, begging them to be ready on the morrow for the hunt, before the Sun should be too warm. He himself, offering his arm to his wife, accompanied her to the foot of the stairs, where, kissing her hand, with many wishes for a very good night, he withdrew.

Every one retired to his own apartment, and in expectation of a merry time for the morrow, went to rest.

In less than half an hour all seemed to be wrapt in sleep. It *seemed* only!—The Duke of Bracciano watched. Coming into his chamber he threw himself upon a seat, leaning his head on one hand, the other hanging down. He was pale and changed, yet did not utter a word: two beautiful white hounds with scarlet collars marked with gold about their necks, accustomed to receive his caresses, lay at his feet gazing at him, and as if to draw the attention of their master softly licked his hands. It would seem as if a fierce contest betwixt would and would not was raging in the Duke's soul, and that having examined everything, discussed the benefit or injury resulting from it, weighing all reasons for good or bad, or all those that seemed so to him, and the insult, the revenge, and the forgiveness, one might clearly discern to what conclusion he had at last arrived, when these words escaped from his lips: "It is a thing that *must* be done!" Then added quickly:

"Titta!"

"My Lord."

Duke Bracciano hissed from his mouth:

"Have you prepared everything?"

"I have."

A wearisome silence succeeded: the Duke first broke it saying:

"Titta!"

"My Lord."

"Ah! it would have been better to have died in the battle of Lepanto."

"It would."

"Tell me, is not my wife a handsome woman? Is she not graceful, elegant, endowed with all the gracious manners of noble birth?"

"Yes, my Lord, yes."

"And would it not seem sacrilege to extinguish in a moment with one treacherous

blow so much beauty and genius?"

"It would have been better, my Lord, to have died in the battle of Lepanto!"

The Duke arose, wiping the perspiration dripping from his brow;—he walked the room restlessly: then suddenly stopping, and fixing his eyes on Titta, said:

315

"Do you not know better than to express wishes for things impossible to happen? Have you no better advice than this for me?—Nothing, nothing. Are you a man, or only the echo of a cave?"

"Did you not say, *it must be done*? How can you expect servants to advise, when they know that the master would hold their advices as a resistance to his own desires?"

"Titta, you are right;—with me you always have the grave offence of being in the right.... Is all that I ordered ready?..."

"Everything ... you may see for yourself ... by looking up...."

"It is all right ... no matter ... I trust you...." And instead of raising his eyes he fixed them on the floor. "Now take these two hounds, and go as silently as you can to the room of the Duchess; knock softly ... and say to her ..." and he whispered in his ear. Titta nodded assent. The Duke then said in his usual voice:

"Using courteous words; in a pleasant manner. Do you understand?... Go now...."

But as Titta made some delay, he repeated:

"Go!..."

Titta took the hounds, but before he crossed the threshold of the door he stopped, and turning towards the Duke, said slowly:

"Must I go, my Lord?"

"Go ... go.... *It must be done!*"

And Titta went.—He ascended the staircase softly, and approached the room of the Duchess, and scarcely had he knocked, before a voice from within called:

316

"Who is there?"

"I come by the Duke's order, my Lady, to beg you to accept these two hounds that he sends you as a present, hoping you for his sake will hold them dear; and desires also that to-morrow you will observe in the chase if they are active and fleet;—he also prays you to come to him for a short time, wishing to see you, after so many years of absence, without witnesses."

Titta, on entering, saw the Duchess with the Lady Lucrezia Frescobaldi kneeling before an image of the Blessed Virgin, reading prayers from a Missal; and he said to himself: "Better thus, she is provided with sacrament for the great journey."

Isabella stood up, and said to Lucrezia:

"*Should I, or should I not, go to sleep with my husband? What say you?*"

Lady Frescobaldi, shrugging her shoulders, replied:

"*Do whatever you wish; he is your husband still.*"^[60]

"I will go then."

The poor Duchess descended slowly, but without trembling.

Lady Lucrezia, moved by curiosity, or compassion, or rather by both, stirred from her usual impassibility, decided to follow her unobserved in the distance. Scarcely did she see her enter her husband's room, ere she hastened her steps, and placed her ear at the door.

She heard merry greetings and cheerful salutations.

"God be thanked, it begins well,"—she murmured.

317

Then listened again, and heard a sound of laughter, and kisses given and returned.

"Better and better ..."

And holding her breath, she still listened eagerly.—But we will say no more, only repeat with the Poet:

The modest Muse forbears to speak
Of close embrace and flashing cheek,
And kisses warm, and words of love;
The strings though struck, no sounds return,
Responsive to the stars that burn,

The stars that in conjunctions move;
But to themselves they murmur low
The secret words that none may know,
Which.....^[61]

Lady Lucrezia returned on tip-toe to her own room, saying to herself: "I think that there will be no storm in the house after all, or if there should be one, we will see it terminate with some lightning perhaps, but without thunderbolt."

Half an hour, or a little more, had passed, from the time in which Lady Lucrezia left the door of the Duke, when it opened, and Titta came out, crossing the hall which led to the door of Troilo's apartment, and arriving there, knocked with his knuckles upon it, without much caution.

318

Troilo, although there seemed to be no cause for fear, yet either on account of the unusual excitement, the warmth of the day, or from too much drinking, his blood had become so heated, that, tossing about the bed, he could not sleep. Therefore hearing the knock he jumped out of bed, and opened the door.

"What is it, Titta?"

"Sir Troilo, my Lord the Duke ordered me to say to you, that he has not been able to sleep...."

"Just my case!..."

"So much the better;—therefore he begs to know whether you would not like to keep him company a little while, and have a little chat ... to cheer each other...."

"Exactly what I should like! Wait till I dress, and I will go with you."

And putting on what garments first came to his hands, he was soon ready. Titta preceded him with a lighted taper, but when they arrived at the Duke's door, drawing aside, and bending low, he said respectfully:

"Walk in, your Excellency!"

Troilo having entered, Titta shut the door, and locked it, putting the key in his pocket; and when the former had entered the next room, he carefully closed that door also, remaining outside.

Troilo on entering the room saw the Duke sitting beside a table near the bed, and, whether it was fancy, or the effect of the fight, he thought he seemed as if grown ten years older since an hour ago. The Duke, without lifting his eyes, said:

"Troilo, sit down."

This voice does not contain a threat, it has nothing of rancor in it, it is peaceful and low,—and yet it does not seem to issue from the lips;—uttered thus from the inmost depth of the heart as from the bottom of a sepulchre, it had the power of infusing a chill through the frame of Troilo.

319

And Troilo sat down.

"Troilo, I have words to say which it behooves me to speak, and you to listen to them in the shadows of darkness; ... in the mysterious silence of night.... Troilo, after three long years of absence I return home.... But is this to which I have returned my home? Can I sleep safely in it? Can I sit without suspicion at my own table?..."

Troilo, thus taken by surprise, was silent.

"Troilo! When I departed from home, knowing that the woman who was my wife ... who is my wife, was changeable in her fancy, of manners more free and loose than becomes a haughty lady, the fault perhaps of her education ... ready to pass all limits ... somewhat petulant and obstinate ... I hated to confide the treasure of my honor to, I will not say unfaithful, but certainly dangerous hands.—In whom could I better trust than my own blood? I therefore chose you, I intrusted to you my honor, which is also yours, and begged you with tears in my eyes to keep a good and vigilant watch over it.... Do you remember it, Troilo? Is it not true? Would you deny it?... And even if you would, could you?"

"It is true."

"And do you remember the promises which you made then? Have you always remembered them? Now tell me: how have you kept your loyal watch over my wife?"

320

The Duke kept his arm with closed hand stretched upon the table; the muscles of his forehead were horribly swollen, his eyebrows frowning, and his eyes sparkled under them through the ruffled hair like fire burning in the midst of a thorn bush. Troilo

still kept silent; and the Duke said again:

"How have you kept your loyal watch over my wife?"

As there was no reply, he continued:

"If I listen to the reports which reached me even in Rome, indeed my reputation is lost without remedy; my house is full of shame: henceforth I cannot hear the name of my wife spoken without suspecting that it is done through insult or mockery. Virginio will not be able to hear his mother's name without bowing his face for shame. We heard shameful things, cousin, and such at which nature itself would be horrified ... such that no man could possibly bear, and which I neither can, nor know, nor wish, by any means to suffer."

"My Lord!" ... replied Troilo with faltering voice; "could a knight like you, gifted with the best discernment, as all know ... experienced in the world ... give credit to such false accusations ... to the words of idle and malicious men? The people generally repute us happy, and those whom envy gnaws love to hurl poisoned arrows at us. Let us make them weep, they say; thus they will be our equals in tears at last."

"You speak truly; but the shameful report was confirmed by such a person that now I can no longer doubt it."

"And do you believe it worthy of faith?"

321

"I leave you to judge. Isabella herself confessed it to me."

"What! Isabella?"

"Isabella."

"Your wife?"

"She herself ... my wife. Now tell me, Troilo, ... is not your name Orsini? Is not the blood which runs in your veins of the same race as mine?—Answer!"

"Why reply to what you know yourself?"

"Because it behooves me at this solemn moment to hear it from your own lips, and be assured that you remember it, that you feel convinced of it.... Here I find myself surrounded by traitors,—for with the exception of my own relatives ... I dare not hope to escape being betrayed. You are then of my blood?... Now give me advice ... Isabella!... must I forgive, or kill her?" ...

"And shall I advise you?"

"Yes."

"But neither I nor any one else can believe me capable of that. You have more wisdom than I."

"I do not think so; and even were it so, do you not know that in such occasions man loses his wisdom? Come, I command you to advise me."

"And then ... consider, Giordano, how merciful is the Lord ... and how mild and clement appear those famous men who resemble Him.... Let the weakness of nature, the age of the woman, the bad examples among which she was educated, obtain mercy in your eyes; ... recall to your mind what you said to me a little while ago of her changeable mind, her poetic imagination, the time, the place, the occasion;—and even ... fate, Giordano, since we are all governed by an unconquerable fate—and use mercy ... Isabella can no longer present herself before you in her innocence, you can never love her again ... and perhaps not even esteem her ... and yet there remains a consolation to the injured one, bitter, it is true, but yet desirable, that is, to feel himself undeserving of the insult, and to see the offender truly repentant."

322

"You see that you do not want wisdom! You certainly do not lack eloquence!... And I thought so! In truth I would follow your advice, but one idea keeps me from it, which is this: in such an affair is my honor only at stake? Ought we not to consider the honor of the family as an entail, which I am not allowed to alienate, and not even diminish, but which I must restore to my children as pure and intact as I received it from my ancestors? Doing otherwise, does it not seem to you that some day I may hear my ancestors say to me:—what have you done with our patrimony?—and my children:—This is not our inheritance?"

"For my own part I believe that it is noble to seek and accomplish a difficult revenge; but it seems to me also a proof of a generous soul to relinquish the revenge that can be executed by merely wishing it. To conquer others is a praiseworthy thing, but to conquer one's own passions is manly and divine."

"And for this reason too would I be almost willing to pardon her; ... only that another motive distresses me, and closes my heart to mercy; and it is the refusal of my wife to reveal the name of her seducer."

"And do you not know it?"

"No.... Do you?"

323

"I? No."

"So I thought, for you had other things in your mind than watching my wife; and you have committed a great wrong against me and my house, Troilo, a wrong which I know not how to forgive you. But perhaps the fault was not entirely on your side, it was rather in a great measure my own, for I, knowing you to be young, desirous of glory, and of a noble heart, should have allowed you to attend to other things, rather than be the eunuch of a palace."

"And does she then refuse to reveal the name?"

"Neither by prayer, nor threat, nor hope of pardon was I able to induce her to reveal it."

"Indeed this is a grave fault.... And you tried all means to make her speak?"

"All."

"There, you see then how difficult it is to give advice when one is ignorant of all the particulars:—if I had known her obstinacy in this particular before, I would have advised you differently."

"Indeed!"

"Rather the contrary."

"You agree with me then! I am inevitably forced to use severity: would that I knew at least the man who did not scruple to contaminate my house while I was shedding my blood for the Faith ... the man whom neither the respect due to my house ... nay, more than that, the fear of my sword did not deter from this abominable crime!—Ah! I would think myself less unhappy if I could plunge my hands in his blood, and tear forth his heart.... And, believe me, Troilo, I would do it, as true as there is a God ... but the coward hides himself.... Oh, who art thou, who wounded me so mortally, and did not take my life? What is thy name?—Show thyself!—Alas! how painful is the offence done by an obscure, abject, and unknown person, against whom we cannot revenge ourselves, or revenging we may be more stained by the revenge itself than by the insult."

324

"Indeed such offences deserve an atonement of blood."

"But since I cannot shed that of the hated seducer ... what think you?"

"It seems to me...."

"No ... no faltering," said the Duke rising to his feet; "here it is necessary that you should reveal to me your whole mind."

"Then...."

"Then?... Why do you hesitate? Here no one can overhear us ... no one."

"Then ... the jealous honor of the family requires that ... that Isabella should disappear from the world."

"It is well," replied the Duke; and stretching his hand to the curtains of the bed, he drew them aside, adding:—"Behold ... I have done it."

"Vengeance of God!" cried Troilo, rising and staggering back two or three steps with his hands in his hair.

She who had been Isabella Orsini reclined on the bed in a sitting posture: her hair loose and dishevelled, her arms stretched out, her face black, her eyes open, intent, and almost bursting from their sockets ... a fine rope yet girded her delicate neck, the ends of which were lost in the darkness of the room, and fastened in the ceiling.

Miserable spectacle of crime and perfidy!

"Thus perished Isabella dei Medici, who would have made herself and others happy, if heaven had granted to her either less beauty, or greater virtue, or better parents."

325

[62]

The Duke, also as pale as death, repressing with violent effort the passion which agitated his soul, stood immovable in his place where with one hand holding the curtains back, and stretching the other towards his cousin, he thus spoke:

"Now my bed has become deserted ... for every woman will fear that it will be turned into a scaffold;—my house is deserted, for the father cannot live with the son whose mother he has strangled.... Days of sorrow and infamy,—sleepless nights, filled with remorse and fear,—bitter death ... terrible judgement of God,—behold the peace which thou hast given me, Troilo!—Thou, and no one else!—I know thee ... fully ...

iniquitous and abject man ... and I feel and know that death must have been less bitter to this woman, who was my wife, than the knowledge of having lost the dignity of a Princess, of a wife and of a mother ... for so miserable and degraded a creature as thou art.—Wretch! The secret died not with thy accomplice ... no ... nor with her murder did I lose the trace of the traitor.—Now it is for thee to die. I could and should abstain from taking thy miserable soul from thy body with this honorable hand of a knight; a villain is enough for a villain;—but as thou wilt suffer a deserved death, I do not wish that thou shouldst complain of the manner of it, if we ever meet again in the next world."

Thus saying, he took two drawn swords, that lay at the feet of the corpse, and throwing one of them on the ground towards Troilo, added:

326

"Take it up, and defend thyself; and since thou hast lived as a traitor, die at least as a gentleman."

Like a bow bent by a strong hand, that snapping the cord straightens violently, thus Troilo starting up, as if possessed by a demon, gave a leap towards the open window behind him, leaned with both hands upon the seat, and with one leap jumped out of it. As fortune willed, although he fell on his head, he received no injury, on account of the window not being high from the ground. Starting again upon his feet, he rushed precipitately down the staircase.

The Duke, seeing this act, with no less fury rushed after him through the window, sword in hand.

Not a word—not a threat—there was only heard the sound of hurried steps upon the stairs.

Troilo, losing breath, and out of practice in violent exercises, would have easily been overtaken by the Duke, had not the latter, stumbling against a projecting step, fallen headlong down the marble stairs, and bruised himself badly. The sword escaped from his hand, and falling down from step to step, broke the silence of the night with a dreadful clatter, and glided far away into the public road.

Not only was the Duke unable to pursue Troilo further, but he could hardly raise himself again; yet leaning his body upon his elbows fixed in the ground, he turned his head to where Troilo was fast disappearing, and sent after him through the darkness of the night this dreadful menace:

"Since thou hast not desired to die like a knight, many months will not pass before thou shalt die like a dog!"

327

Titta rushed to the aid of his master: lifted him up, and with loving care washed and bandaged his bruises; then placed him, raving feverishly, upon a bed in the antechamber.

He went afterwards to Lady Lucrezia, who, overcome by the dreadful event, much more so to her as not expected, remained insensible for more than an hour; and as long as she lived never recovered from the shock, nor was she ever seen to smile or rejoice again. Having returned to her senses, Titta placed himself before her, and with his right forefinger pointing in the middle of his eyebrows, proffered very slowly the following words:

"Lady!... Listen attentively!... Our Lady the Duchess died suddenly ... of apoplexy ... whilst she was washing her head with cold water, ... by which accident ... she fell into your arms ... and died before we had time to call for any help.... Be careful, Lady, of mistaking, as you love your life!... The notices to be given, of her death, to the several Courts—already prepared since yesterday—say exactly this. Be then on your guard...."^[63]

Titta then removed the body to the apartment belonging to the Duchess, and arranged it upon the bed. Lady Lucrezia sent for Inigo, and told him word for word what Titta had said. The major-domo glancing at the corpse, understood the case too well, and taking with his left hand the hem of the sheet, covered its blackened face, whilst with his right he wiped a tear from his eyes.—Inigo, the major-domo, reputed a heart of stone, wept!

328

"May God receive in peace the soul of this poor Lady!" said he, and with a deep sigh he left the room.

A great and solemn funeral was performed over the body of Isabella: servants, relatives—her husband and brothers, put on mourning. Over the bier was recited a funeral oration, composed by an academician of the *Crusca*, in classic Tuscan language.

The price of her blood was, in part payment, and in part arrangement of the Duke's debts, and this is narrated by Galluzzi.^[64]

Settimanni also informs us that the Duke of Bracciano obtained from the munificence

of his brother-in-law even a greater reward in the following October, which was the donation of the estate of *Poggio a Baroncelli*, to-day called *Poggio Imperiale*.^[65]

But God's judgment rewarded to the Duke according to his deserts. He died a horrible death; his soul was contaminated with new crimes, for blood calls for blood, as it is with wine; and that judgment was entailed, so that his descendants also feared it. And if fortune will grant us time and health, the subsequent history of the life of the Duke of Bracciano shall form the subject of another narrative.

329

The following passage from the History of Galluzzi will inform the reader of the fate of Troilo Orsini.

"The Grand-Duke, determined, however, to sound the opinions of Queen Catherine, sent his Secretary to that Court under the pretext of collecting the balance of the money which he had loaned to king Charles IX., for it was then due. The Secretary's commission extended no further, but liberty had also been given him, to reproach, according to the occasion, the Queen's ill will against the Medici house, and the injury done the Grand-Duke. The Secretary having arrived in Paris, and delivered his commission, the Queen said to him:—*I know not how to satisfy this desire of the Grand-Duke, for he lends to the King of Spain a million of gold at a time, and with us he even demands back such a little sum.*—The Secretary remonstrated that if the King of Spain had been helped with large sums, he had at least shown more esteem for the Grand-Duke than she had done, for she had ill-treated him, and done him an injury which he did not deserve.—*This I confess*, said she, *and I did it because the Grand-Duke has no respect for me, rather with much grief to myself and to the King he has caused the assassination under our own eyes, of Troilo Orsini, and others, which is not right, this Kingdom being free to any one to reside here.*—The Secretary replied, that Orsini and others, having been guilty of grave offences against the Grand-Duke, it was not becoming in her, who was of his own blood, to protect, and aid them with money.—*Enough*, replied the Queen, *write to the Grand-Duke not to continue thus any longer, and particularly not to order any assassination to be committed in this Kingdom, for the King, my son, will not allow it.*"

330

THE END.



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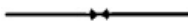
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FOOTNOTES:

[1]

Corpo gigante, e gambe di fanciulla
Ha il nuovo Perseo: sicchè tutto insieme
Ti può bello parer, ma non val nulla.

[2] Con le ginocchia della mente inchine.

[3]

Passi chi vuol, tre carte, o quattro, senza
Leggerne verso.

[4] Segni, vol. ii., p 337.

[5] Essay on the Knight L. Salviati, read before the Florentine Academy by Pier F. Cambi.

[6] Bernardo Davanzati. Oration on the Death of Cosimo.

[7] Segni, History; books 14 and 15.

[8] Manuzio; Life of Cosimo dei Medici.

[9] Ammirato. Florence Edition, 1827. Last volume.

[10] Aldo Manuzio.

[11] Segni's History, pp. 159, 184. Ed. of Milan.

[12] All the Academicians of *La Crusca* took some *nom de plume*, by which they were always known.

[13] The Prisoner of Chillon. Byron.

[14] Abrégé de Mézeray.

[15] Montaigne, *Voyage en Italie*, t. i.

[16] Sismondi, *Literature of the South*, vol. i.

[17] Sunt lacrymæ rerum, et mentes mortalia tangunt.—*Æneid*.

[18] The young Cardinal Giovanni dei Medici died suddenly, at Rosignano, a castle of the Maremma, while hunting with his brother, Don Garzia, in 1562. It was said, however, that the Cardinal had been murdered by his brother, for very soon after, Don Garzia himself died suddenly, and it was reported that he was killed by his father, Cosimo, in order to avenge the Cardinal's death.

[19] Galluzzi, *History of the Grand Duchy*, vol. ii. p. 271.

[20] Galluzzi, *ibid.*, vol. ii, and Ammirato, last vol.

[21] Galluzzi, *ibid.*, vol. ii.

[22] Morbio, *History of the Italian Communalities*, p. 27.

[23] Machiavelli, *On the Nature of the French*.

[24] Machiavelli, *Sketches on French Affairs*.

[25] Che fortuna "qualunque estolle, il tuffa prima in Lete."—Ariosto, *Satires*.

[26]

Martirio in terra appellasi,
Gloria si appella in cielo.

Beatrice Tenda, by Tedaldi-Fores, a young poet who died in the flower of his youth.

[27] Suetonius, *Life of Claudius*.

[28] Candles of yellow wax were used at court until the time of the Grand Duke Ferdinand I.: he changed them to white, as we learn from a letter by Soderini.

[29] Montaigne, being invited to dinner by the Grand Duke Francesco, observed that he put a great deal of water into his wine, while Bianca drank it almost entirely without: "On porte à boire à ce duc et à sa femme dans un bassin où il y a un verre plein de vin decouvert, et une bouteille de verre pleine d'eau; ils prennent le verre de vin, et en versent dans le bassin autant qu'il leur semble, et puis le remplissent d'eau eux-mêmes, et rasséent le verre dans le bassin que leur tient l'échanson. Il mettoit assez d'eau; elle quasi point. Le vice des Allemands de se servir de verres grands outre mesure est ici au rebours, de les avoir extraordinairement petits."—*Voyage*, t. ii. p. 59.

[30]

Porque dixo la venganza
Lo que la offensa no dixo?
Calderon de la Barca.

[31] These last words of Francesco were heard when he dismissed the Duke, after the secret colloquy between them.—MSS. *Capponi and my own*.

[32] It was one of the chief passions of Francesco to manufacture most elegant porcelain vases, which he then presented to princes and great barons.—*Galluzzi's Hist.*, vol. iii.

[33] Francesco, with a company of merchants, carried on this commerce of pepper, and employed his galleys in it. This company had the exclusive privilege of selling it throughout the world.—*Galluzzi's History*.

[34] Their escutcheon was a Moor's head.

[35] In fact it is thus registered in a book of mercantile records.

[36]

Non fu sì savio, nè benigno Augusto,
Como la tuba di Virgilio suona:
L'avere avuto in poesia buon gusto
La proscrizione ingiusta gli perdona.

[37] "The atrocity," narrates Galluzzi, in his History of the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, "the atrocity of the deed was hidden from the public, and veiled with the report that she had died suddenly of disease of the heart, to which the physicians asserted she had always been subject. It was confided, however, to King Philip through the Florentine ambassador, by means of a private letter, of the 16th of July, in the following words: 'Although in the letter mention is made of the accident that happened to Donna Eleonora, nevertheless you will state to His Catholic Majesty, that Don Pietro, our brother, has himself taken her life on account of her treasonable behavior, unworthy of a lady, and we notified Don Pietro of it through our secretary, and begged him to come here, but he did not come, nor did he allow our secretary to speak to Don Garzia. We have desired that his Majesty should know the whole truth, and every act of our house, and particularly this, for if we had not removed this disgrace from before us, we should not have thought that we served his Majesty well, to whom, at the first opportunity, we shall send the process whereby he may learn with what just cause Don Pietro acted.' King Philip was pleased with this mark of confidence, etc."

[38] When reproached for so easily changing his religion, Henry IV. is said to have replied: "Paris vaut bien une messe."

[39] This figure needs a word of explanation for foreign readers. The two opposing principles are monarchy and democracy; the intervening wall represents the nobility, which was virtually destroyed when the power of the barons was taken away, thus bringing the monarch and the people, as it were, face to face. The devouring of the first of these principles by the second alludes to the decapitation of Louis XVI., but monarchy, though destroyed, revived again in the person of Napoleon, a man of the people, and may thus be said to have caused sickness and weakness in that principle from which it sprang.—*Translator.*

[40] Napoleon.

[41] The writings of Ariosto were at that time as "familiar as household words" throughout Italy; now, even his name is hardly known in the rural districts. Montaigne, who travelled through Italy in the time of the Grand Duke Francesco, writes in the third volume of his Travels: "I wondered particularly at three things, first, to see the people here working on Sunday, threshing, preparing grain, cooking, and spinning. The second, to see these peasants, *with lutes in their hands, and even the shepherds singing the verses of Ariosto.* This is common throughout all Italy. The third, to see how they leave their cut grain in the fields for ten days or a fortnight, without fear of their neighbors." It would seem that in those times the French were greater thieves than the Italians.

[42]

Vaghe le montanine pastorelle,
Donde venite sì leggiadre e belle?
Vegnam dall' alpe presso ad un boschetto:
Piccola capannella è il nostra sito,
Col padre e con la madre in piccol letto,
Dove natura ci ha sempre nutrito.
Torniam la sera dal prato fiorito,
Che abbiam pasciute nostre pecorelle, &c.

POLIZIANO.

[43] Mettigli l'ale, è un angiolel di amore.—PERTICARI.

[44] The wherefore.

[45] Ahasuerus is said to be a Jew, who, while Christ was ascending Golgotha, denied Him water to quench his thirst, and would not let him rest beneath the shadow of his house; he was therefore condemned to wander, for ever cursed and despised. This legend, very common in Germany, is only a fable, as any one may see. Edgar Quinet composed a drama on this subject, the personages represented being sphinxes, winds, trophies of arms, ruins, rivers, and even the ocean. It cannot be denied, however, that among so many and so strange fancies, this drama contains some noble passages of splendid poetry.

[46] Achille della Volta stabbed severely the satirical poet Pietro Aretino in Rome, and on this account his arm was lame during his lifetime. Tintoretto, the painter, hearing that Aretino spoke very badly of him, meeting him one day near his studio, invited him very courteously to walk in, and look at his pictures. Aretino went, and Tintoretto, after bolting the door, without saying a word went to a closet and took out a cutlass, and advanced with threatening aspect towards Aretino. "Alas! Tonio," exclaimed Pietro, trembling, "what do you mean to do? Do not allow yourself to be tempted by the devil! Would you kill me without sacrament, like a dog?" Tintoretto

quietly approached him, who was trembling from head to foot, and measured him with the cutlass, and seeing he was almost ready to die with fright, said: "Fear not, Sir Pietro; for taking a fancy to paint your portrait, I wanted to measure you: you can go now; you are exactly three cutlasses and a half high!" and opening the door he dismissed him. Aretino always spoke well of Tintoretto after that. Aretino having been very intimate with John dei Medici of the black-bands, continued his attachment to the Grand Duke Cosimo his son, from whom he received many presents, as shown by his letters; therefore, adverse to Piero Strozzi at the time of the war with Siena, he wrote a humorous sonnet upon him, which began thus:

E, Piero Strozzi arma virumque cano,
etc.

Piero, after that, warned him to carry the extreme unction in his pocket, for he would cause him to be murdered even were he in his own bed. Aretino, frightened, dared not go out of his house for a year or more. I cannot conclude this note without recording the epitaphs or *epigrams*, in the true meaning of the word (since the ancients meant by epigrams those funeral inscriptions, full of contumelies, written for men yet living), which Paolo Giovio and Pietro Aretino exchanged.

Giovio said:

Qui giace l'Aretin, poeta Tosco:
Di tutti disse mal, fuorchè di Cristo,
Scusandosi col dir: non lo conosco.

Here Aretino lies, in many a poem
Who railed at all mankind save Jesus Christ,
And this was his excuse: I do not know him.

And Aretino replied with this:

Qui giace il Giovio, storicone altissimo,
Di tutti disse mal, fuorchè dell' asino,
Scusandosi col dur, egli è mio prossimo.

Here Giovio lies, historian widely known,
All he defamed, except the Ass alone;
And when his friends, astonished, asked him why?
He is my next of kin, was his reply.

[47]

O ciechi: il tanto affaticar che giova?
Tutti torniamo alla gran madre antica,
E il nome vostro appena si ritrova.—PETRARCA.

[48]

Ormai convien che tu così ti spoltre,
Disse 'l Maestro, chè, *segendo in piuma,*
In fama non si vien, nè sotto coltre;
Sanza la qual chi sua vita consuma,
Cotal vestigio in terra di sè lascia,
Qual *fumo in aere od in acqua la schiuma.*

INFERNO XXIV.

"Now needs thy best of man;" so spake my guide:
"For not on downy plumes, nor under shade
Of canopy reposing, fame is won;
Without which whosoe'er consumes his days,
Leaveth such vestige of himself on earth,
As smoke in air, or foam upon the wave."

CARY'S *Translation.*

[49] Anaxarchus, a philosopher of Abdera, one of the followers of Democritus, and the friend of Alexander. When the monarch had been wounded in a battle, the philosopher pointed to the place, adding, that is human blood, and not the blood of a god. This freedom offended Nicocreon, tyrant of Cyprus, who ordered him to be pounded in a stone mortar, with iron hammers. While the executioners were performing the sentence, he exclaimed, as long as his strength lasted; "Pound the body of Anaxarchus; but thou canst not pound his soul."

[50]

Ma del misero stato ove noi semo
Condotte dalla vita altra serena,
Un sol conforto, e della morte, avemo:
Che vendetta è di lui ch' a ciò ne mena;
Lo qual in forza altrui, presso all' estremo,
Riman legato con maggior catena.

[51] It is foolish to enjoy sleep and to be terrified at death, for eternal sleep would be death.

[52] In the Memoirs of the Maréchal de Bassompierre, occurs the following remarkable passage: "Maria dei Medici, when her authority as regent was on the decline, intended to refuse the request of some of her barons to recall several exiles, which they were urging upon her with great persistency; but she did not dare to pronounce her refusal until she knew her actual condition. So, on some pretence she called Bassompierre aside, and asked him what means of resistance remained to her. Bassompierre replied, 'None, especially since some of her friends, such as the Marquis d'Ancre, had abandoned her.' Lors la reine ne peut se tenir de jeter quatre ou cinq larmes, se tournant vers la fenêtre afin qu'on ne la vit pas pleurer, et, *ce que je n'avois jamais vu, elles ne coulèrent point comme quand on a accoutumé de pleurer, mais se DARDÈRENT hors des yeux sans couler sur les joues.*"

[53] The arms of the Medici family were six balls.

[54] As Lamoignon Malesherbes, the aged defender of Louis XVI., was being dragged to the scaffold, he struck his foot against a step in the prison, and remarked: "A Roman would have turned back."

[55] It was not long before they received notice of the death of Don John of Austria, caused by fever and the deep vexation of excessive care.

[56] *i. e.* The liberation of Lombardy and the kingdom of Naples from the Spanish yoke.

[57] Flagship.

[58] *But no one counted them.* This was the expression used by that judicious Ludovico Muratori narrating in his *Annals* the Battle of Lepanto.

[59]

God of the lyre, and goddesses of song
In vain for gold your faithful votaries sigh,
Small need and recompense to them belong;—
E'en a poor cloak I have not means to buy.

Apollo, tuo mercè, tuo mercè santo
Collegio delle Muse, io non mi trovo
Tanto per voi, ch'io possa farmi un manto.

ARIOSTO—SATIRE.

[60] Those were the very words spoken by Isabella to Lucrezia, as the records of the time report them precisely.

[61]

Gli abbracciamenti, i baci, e i colpi lieti,
Tace la casta Musa vergognosa,
E dalla congiunzion di quei pianeti
Ritorce il plettro, e di cantar non osa.
Sol mormora tra se detti segreti,
Che.....

TASSONI.

[62] BOTTA, *History of Italy*, book XIV.

[63] The notices given to the Courts of Europe contained these words; "that this unhappy Lady, while washing her head with cold water, struck by apoplexy, fell into the arms of her attendants, and died before any assistance could be given her."—GALLUZZI'S *History*.

[64] "Not only did the Grand-Duke and the Cardinal keep their good relationship with Orsini, but also interested themselves in appeasing his creditors, and gave some system to his embarrassed economy. All this would prove that, either the death of Donna Isabella was not violent, or that the Grand-Duke and his brothers, being in the secret with Orsini, with their dissimulation rendered the crime more detestable."

[65] Settimanni. MSS. Chronicle.

Transcriber's note:

Minor inconsistencies of spelling, hyphenation, and punctuation have been made consistent.

Obvious typographical errors have been corrected.

Missing page numbers are page numbers that were not shown in the original text.

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