

THE BEST  
TERRIBLE TALES  
FROM THE  
ITALIAN

★ ★ ★



LONDON :  
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# TERRIBLE TALES

(ITALIAN)

## THE BRIDAL WREATH

‘THIS wreath must be finished before the evening. Down with those tiresome hands. You jumble together all my leaves; you give me one colour instead of the other; you are spoiling all I have done. Be it known to you, however, that I am determined you shall not leave Padua until I have put the last leaf to our garland.’

These pettish words, qualified by the sweetest of smiles, were addressed by a beautiful girl of sixteen to a young man who was sitting beside her, and taking a mischievous pleasure in disturbing her work; now catching hold of her hands; now removing out of her reach something that she wanted; now playing with her long and luxuriant hair, which floated negligently on her shoulders,—affectionate interruptions which left a doubt whether the name of brother or lover better suited him. But the light which flashed from the eyes of the youth, and

seemed to irradiate the countenance of the maiden, showed that his emotions were more rapid and ardent than those inspired by fraternal love. They were seated at a table strewn with shreds of cloth, gummed cotton, green taffeta, little palettes of colours, small pencils, and all the necessary apparatus for artificial flower-making.

‘Well, then,’ replied the youth, ‘I will do as you wish; but what haste with a wreath which is not to be used till Heaven knows when? Ah! if you were to wear it to-morrow, I would then assist you with hands, eyes, heart, mind—with my whole being.’

‘What matters it? What harm will it do these flowers to wait for us? I promise you to keep this garland so carefully that it shall look quite new on the day when it shall encircle my head; and then it shall seem to all others but an ordinary wreath; but to us—to me—oh, what charms it will have! It will have been born as it were, and have grown with our love; it will have remained to me in memory of you when you were obliged to leave me for a time; it will have spoken to me of you when absent; will have a thousand times sworn love to me for you. I shall have consulted it, and kissed it a thousand times, till that day in which I shall be yours. Do you hear that word, Edoardo? Yours—yours for ever! never more to leave you!—to be divided from you only by death.’

‘That will indeed be a blessed day, the loveliest day of our life. The desire of devoting all the powers of my mind to your happiness will then become a right. Poor Sophia, you know not yet what happiness is. So young, so good, you have hitherto met with only thorns in your path. Poor Sophia! I desire no other glory in this world than

that of being able to make you feel the sweet that Providence in pity mingles with the bitterness of human existence. There is no sweetness in the life of mortals that is not the offspring of love.'

'Yes,' said Sophia, 'when love is united with constancy. But what are you daubing at, Edoardo? You are actually putting red on orange leaves! Where have you learned botany? And what does that rose signify? Is not this a bridal wreath, and are not bridal wreaths always made of orange flowers? Do you know what I mean to do with those roses? Ah! you would never guess. I shall make of them a funeral crown. Here, take these leaves and reach me the palette. You have positively learned nothing all the time you have been seeing me make flowers.'

A servant entered the room, saying—

'There is no post to Venice either to-day or to-morrow. The Signor Edoardo cannot set out before Friday.'

'Friday!' exclaimed Sophia; 'vile day,' and, with a clouded countenance, she silently resumed her self-imposed task. Edoardo, on the contrary, seemed glad of the delay.

'No matter. But,' he added, 'is not this a trick of yours—a plot concocted by you and Luigia to prevent me from leaving Padua?'

'You mistake, Edoardo. I would wish rather to hasten your departure.'

'I am very much obliged to you,' replied Edoardo, half vexed. 'What do you mean? If you do not explain your words I shall be very angry.'

'The explanation—the explanation, Edoardo, is here in my head, but not in my heart. The explanation simply is that I love you too much, and

I am not pleased with myself. Yes, but there are sorrows, Edoardo, which sadly wear away our life ; but these sorrows are a need, a duty, and to forget them is a crime. My poor sister, the only friend I ever had,—that poor saint, the victim of love, dead through the treachery of a man hardly two years since ; on memory of her I have lived for eighteen months ; but I even forget her when I see you—when I speak to you. Perhaps I do not bestow on my mother as much attention as her unhappy state requires. Alas ! there is no reproach more bitter than this—“You are a bad daughter.” And this my conscience reproaches me with being a thousand times. Thus you see I am wanting in my duties. I am a weak creature. A powerful and too sweet sentiment threatens to take entire possession of me, to the detriment of the other sentiments that nature has implanted in our hearts. Go, then, Edoardo. I have need of calm, I have need of not seeing you. Suffer me to fulfil my duties, that I may be more worthy of you. When you are far away I shall have full faith in you. But if your father should refuse his consent to our union ?’

‘Leave those sad thoughts. My father wishes only to please me, and it will be sufficient for me to ask his consent to obtain it. Even should he refuse it, in two years the law will permit me to dispose of myself as I choose.’

‘May Heaven remove this sad presentiment from my mind, but it makes me tremble. Oh ! if you return with the desired consent of your father, if my mother, as the physicians give us reason to hope, should then be well, we shall be the happiest of mortals.’

The sound of a silver bell, heard from a chamber

close by, called away Sophia from her occupation. She rose hastily, saying, 'My mother! oh, my poor mother! Adieu for a while, Edoardo.'

Edoardo Valperghi was the son of a wealthy Venetian merchant. He had received a grave but unprofitable education, it being that which is wholly directed to the intellect and nothing to the heart. He was staying in one of those colleges in which the system of education is as old as the walls of the edifice. He had been told that he had a heart, but no one had spoken of how it was to be directed to good. He had been told that he must resist his own passions, but no one had shown him what arms to make use of in this moral warfare. He had been told to love virtue and to hate vice, but no one had furnished him with a criterion for distinguishing true virtue from its counterfeit. The temper of Edoardo was ardent and hasty, but flexible and weak. Nature had made him good, but society could make him very bad. He was like a ship without a good pilot—one to become good or bad according to circumstances. Enthusiastic, easily impressed by example, he would be most virtuous if his steps were directed among the virtuous; if among the wicked he would rush to perdition.

A letter of recommendation to the father of Sophia, who had formerly had some commercial dealings with the Valperghis, introduced him into the house. His timidity made him prefer that family to richer ones with which he was also acquainted, and amongst which he could have found youth's amusements and habits similar to those he had left behind in Venice. But Sophia, lovely, amiable, and frank, had shown him the affection of a sister. He had soon conceived a passion for her. Declarations of

love, promises, oaths, everything had thus been impetuous and sudden with him, as his disposition prompted. The inexperienced girl believed that a sentiment so strong, so ardent, must be equally profound and constant, and yielded to the enchantment of a first love. Edoardo had terminated the first year of his legal studies, and was now preparing to return to Venice.

Alberto Cadori, the father of Sophia, was also a merchant. He had begun business in a small sphere; but having guided his industry prudently, from being poor he had gradually become rich, and he at length retired from commerce with a considerable fortune. Cadori was avaricious, harsh, exacting. He wished rather to be feared than loved. He was not the father but the tyrant of his family. There was seemingly some secret cause of disagreement between him and his wife; and it was, perhaps, for this reason that he did not love his children; but what it was no one could tell. His family was now limited to Sophia and his wife. He had had another daughter, fair and amiable as Sophia; but the sad school of the world and the all-powerful empire of love had ultimately laid her low. The Signora Cadori, though still young, was already on the brink of the grave. The grief that preyed on her life, and especially the lamentable end of her first-born, had brought on paralysis. She could no longer move without assistance.

One other person formed part of the family, without being connected with it by relationship—a woman, who seemed at first sight to have reached her seventieth year, so slow and difficult were her movements. Her words savoured a little of obscurity, and her countenance was rather repulsive. She was

a Milanese. Having come to the baths in Padua, she had taken lodgings in Cadori's house. She seldom spoke, and paid no attention to what was passing around her. She always seemed unconscious of the loud and angry language of Cadori which was proving fatal to the neglected wife and the oppressed daughter. She appeared to love no one; no one loved her. However, as she paid a large sum for her apartments, Cadori did everything to keep her in his house.

Though Sophia led a melancholy life, it was much relieved by the exercise of her accomplishments, which were numerous. No female in Padua, for instance, could compare with her in the art of flower-making. Her friends contending among them for the pleasure of adorning themselves with one of these flowers, courteous and kind to all, she distributed some to each. Even the mercers of the city, when they had need of flowers of superior beauty, applied to Sophia, who willingly acceded to their requests.

The two days of delay to Edoardo's departure were past, and in those two days the Signora Cadori had had a new and very violent attack, which placed her life in danger. Edoardo came to take leave of the family. When alone, the conversation, the adieus, of the lovers were not long. They both wept, looked at each other, and were silent. Yet how many things had they to say to each other, how many promises to renew, how many hopes and fears to exchange!

They parted; Edoardo pleased with himself, and Sophia dissatisfied with him and herself without knowing why.

The heart is a true prophet. The fears of Sophia

were about being realised—the days of her mother were drawing to a close. Sophia, sad and terrified, was never absent from her bedside. Her heart—her heart alone—sometimes wandered after the footsteps of another beloved, but less happy, being. Forgive that thought of love to the maiden; call it not sin. Sixteen!—a soul so tender!—the first love! The maternal eye saw into the inmost heart of the daughter, and felt no jealousy at those thoughts flying to her distant lover. In those moments she silenced her own wants lest she should disturb her in her reveries, and humbly prayed for the happiness of her child. Sophia, on recollecting herself, would testify the greatest sorrow, ask pardon of the sad invalid, and redouble her attention. Neither day nor night was she away from the pillow of her dying mother. Her strength supported her as if by a miracle. No one divided with her this pious office except the Countess Gahazzi, the mysterious guest of that house, and she came but seldom to the chamber of suffering.

But the last hour had struck for the Signora Cadori. With her dying breath she spoke of Edoardo.

‘You love,’ she said; ‘and your love may be the source of good to you. Take this cross which I have worn on my heart since the day of your birth. It was the gift of your father. Take it and wear it in memory of your poor mother. You will find in my chest a sum of money, and some bills on the Imperial Bank of Vienna. It is no great riches, but it is sufficient for the unseen wants that may press upon a woman. I would never consent to give up these sums to your father, and that was one source of our disagreement; but it was impossible for the heart



of a mother to deprive herself of what she could one day share with her children. I am glad that I have not done so ; for without such aid your poor sister would have died of misery, as she did of grief and despair.'

She said more, and seemed to make other revelations to her daughter, but her words were uttered so feebly that they were lost. She then leaned her head on the shoulder of Sophia, never to raise it more.

Four months after this event the time of study returned, and Edoardo came again to Padua. He did not bring the consent of his father to their marriage, but only some distant hopes. Cadori, who was aware of Sophia's inclinations, forbade Edoardo to frequent his house until the formal permission of his father could be procured, and Sophia was thus deprived of the pleasure of being often near her lover, of enjoying his society, his conversation. She could see him but seldom, and that unknown to her father.

But her lover was changed. He was no longer the frank, the loving Edoardo of former times. A residence of five months in Venice without being subjected to restraint, or having means to elude it ; the company of other young men familiar with vice and dissipation ; above all a fatal inclination, had depraved and ruined him. He had suffered himself to be fascinated by the fierce delight which is found in gaming ; play had become his occupation, his chief need. Play and its effects—the orgies which precede, the excesses that follow—were the life of Edoardo. Waste and debt were the consequence ; and when he had, under a thousand pretences, extorted from his father all the money he could, he began, on arriving

in Padua, to apply to Sophia, whom he neglected, or at least did not see as often as he might, though he still loved her. Sophia was as indulgent as he was indiscreet; at every fatal request for money she offered him double the sum he had asked. When Edoardo began to tell her some feigned story to conceal the shameful reason of his wants, and to give her an account of how he had employed those sums, she would not listen to him.

‘Why,’ said she, ‘should I demand an account of your actions? Why should I think over and debate what you have already considered? Will not all you have be one day mine? Shall we not be one day man and wife?’

These words took away from him every sense of remorse; conscience ceased to reproach him for the baseness of despoiling that poor girl of the little she possessed. The thought that he was one day to make her his wife justified him in his own eyes, for by this he thought he should recompense her for all her sacrifices.

His demands increased with his exigencies. He was making rapid advances into the most terrible phases of the gamester’s vice, and the weakness of Sophia of giving, of sacrificing, all her means for him did not stop. All the money left her by her mother had already disappeared, most of her valuable ornaments had been sold, some of the bank bills had been parted with; but as this could not be done without her father’s knowledge, he had made the law interpose and had sequestered the remainder. Sophia did not dare to speak or to complain. She felt in her heart that her father was probably in the right, that her own conduct was at least unreflecting, and that Edoardo’s expenses were too great; but still

she found a thousand arguments to excuse both herself and him. She spent all the day making flowers, and stole a great part of the night from repose to devote to this labour; but she, formerly so ready to make presents of her flowers, and to adorn with them the young girls of her acquaintance, now exacted payment for them, so that every one wondered at this new and sudden avarice. But what did she care what was said of her? What did she care about appearing without those ornaments which women so love, and which add so much to their charms? What mattered it to her that she was ruining her own health by depriving herself of rest, toiling, and weeping? One look, one smile of Edoardo, the having satisfied one of his wants, compensated for all. What afflicted and troubled her was that her labour should be so insufficient to meet his wants. Often did it occur to her mind that he gambled, that he was ruining himself, and she thought of reproving him for it, but had not courage to do so. Sometimes she accused herself of aiding him to destroy himself. Then she thought that she was mistaken; her doubts seemed to her as injuries to his love, and she grieved for having for a moment admitted them.

One treasure alone remained,—the cross which her mother had given her on her deathbed. It was of brilliants, and might bring a large sum. She thought over this, and wept for a whole week. Many times she went out with the intention of selling it, but her heart would not allow her to do so, and she returned penitent and sorrowful.

Meanwhile her lover was involved himself more and more in debt. Assailed by creditors on one side, and drawn to the gaming table by desire and necessity on the other; menaced with a prison;

threatened with denunciation by his father ; stupid from want of rest, midnight revelling, and anxiety, he one day presented himself before Sophia in a state so different from usual that the poor girl was terrified at him. Whither, Edoardo, has departed the beauty, the freshness of your youthful years? the simplicity of your heart? Buried, buried beneath dice and cards. Sophia no longer doubted that he gambled, that he had given himself up to a life worthy of reprehension, but she was disposed to pardon him, to hope that he would repent and turn to better counsels. But what made her tremble was the coarse and desperate accent in which he told her that he had need of money—that he was hard pressed, obliged to pay ten thousand *lire*. The glance that he directed to every corner of the apartment, perhaps because he did not dare to look her in the face, was dark and unsteady. Some broken words, uttered in a low voice, pierced her heart like a dagger. Without any available means she promised him the required sum by the next day.

When he left the house, therefore, she threw herself at her father's feet and begged him for a sum of money that belonged to her, but of which she could not dispose without his signature. Cadori refused it. It would be needless to state what passed between them. From that conference she came in a state of distraction. Her mind seemed desolate. Hideous thoughts passed through her brain. It was night. She found she was alone. She felt desperate. A terrible temptation occurred to her mind. Her father, she knew, had heaps of gold lying useless in his coffers, but locks and bolts placed their contents out of reach. She then bethought herself of the Countess's bureau, in which her own cross had been

deposited, secure from the old man's covetousness. There, too, the countess kept her treasures. She took a light, observed whether any one saw her, or could follow her, and repaired to the apartment of the Countess Gahazzi, who was from home, spending the evening with an acquaintance. Hardly breathing, and walking on tiptoe, Sophia took a key from under a bell-glass and opened the bureau. How her heart throbbed! She was terrified. She trembled in every movement. The noise she made in opening the money-drawer seemed to be the footsteps of some person following to lay hands on her. The light of the lamp reflected in some mirrors and in the furniture seemed to her so many eyes that looked on and reproached her. She opened the drawer and took out her cross. Under it were several notes of the Bank of Vienna. The temptation was strong. She laid her hand upon the papers, but a thrill of terror seemed communicated through her frame by the touch, and, overcome by intense excitement, she fell senseless to the floor.

Some time afterwards the Countess Gahazzi returned home. On entering her apartment she beheld the wretched girl stretched on the floor with the diamond cross in her hand. The bureau was still open. She ran to succour Sophia, and by the application of essences recalled her to life. The moment the latter awoke to consciousness she threw herself on her knees, wept bitterly, and tried to speak but could not. The only words she was at length able to articulate were—

‘Forgive me! Forgive me!’

The Countess used every means to pacify her, by the compassionate expression of her countenance, by her maternal gestures, caressing and pressing

her to her bosom, with words of comfort and tenderness.

‘Calm yourself, calm yourself,’ she said. ‘Go and take some repose. You have need of it.’

‘Countess,’ replied Sophia; then wept anew. ‘Shame, shame, and desperation! Oh, wretch that I am! Oh, my poor heart!’

‘Go to bed, Sophia. To-morrow we will talk. Here is the light.’

Saying this she reached her the lamp with one hand and led her by the other, using a little affectionate violence to conduct her out of the room and prevent her from speaking another word.

The next day Sophia was so overwhelmed with grief and shame that she was confined to her bed, struck down by a violent fever which was the commencement of a dangerous illness. The Countess was the nurse.

Edoardo, having lost the source whence he derived all his supplies, through the illness of Sophia, could no longer prevent his father from hearing of his irregularities. He was immediately recalled by him to Venice. Disgraced in the eyes of the companions of his debaucheries, and now forced in quiet to reflect on the consequences of his conduct, he seemed to be cured of his fatal passion. He gave up the study of the law, and devoted himself to commerce, to which the passion for making money, of becoming rich, made him steadily apply himself. His old inclination had changed its name. It was now ‘mercantile speculation,’ but the reality was the same. He had written to Sophia that his father would not consent to his marriage, unless it were with a lady of large fortune. Unfortunately she was not rich enough. He declared, however, that he would wed none but

her, and that they must be resigned and trust to time. Sophia, living on the few letters that he continued to write to her, and grieving that she was not as rich as Valperghi would have wished, waited and hoped. Her illness had been long and dangerous. Her youth and the care bestowed on her had alone been able to save her life. She had long been oppressed by remorse. It was long ere she dared to lift her eyes to the Countess, or address one word to her.

The latter had sought to evade every allusion to the past; and the poor girl, beginning to overcome her fears, ended at length in making the Countess her friend and confidante. She told her everything, and was fully forgiven everything.

After a time Sophia recovered. They had lived together for four years, during which time Sophia had opened her heart to that lady—made her the repository of all her everyday thoughts and hopes. The Countess had always answered her with vague, uncertain words, or with silence. Alas! Sophia was fated to lose every object on which she had set her affection. After having closed the eyes of her mother and sister, adverse fortune obliged her to witness the death of the Countess Gahazzi.

When her affairs were looked into it was found that she had left her large fortune to Sophia Cadori, so that that which deprived her of so tender, so generous a friend should at the same time have made her happiness complete. Every obstacle that divided her from Edoardo—which separated her from him she loved so ardently, had vanished. In a few days a boundless love, a love of six years, a love she had cherished through so many sorrows, would be crowned. In a few days she would be Sophia Valperghi!

She wrote a letter, full of the joys and hopes soon to be realised, to her lover. She was happy, as happy as she had desired, as happy as she had so long dreamed of being. She made all preparations for her marriage. Being now quite independent of him, she spoke of her love to her father, to every one. She sought garments of the colour and taste she knew Edoardo liked. She imagined and planned a thousand surprises. How many times did she feel the cherished wreath on her head, consult her mirror, study every position in which those flowers might appear to better advantage and increase her beauty ! How often did she open the box that contained it to look at it, scarcely daring to touch it for fear of spoiling a leaf or disarranging a spray !

At length came the answer to her letter—an answer that to any other person might have seemed constrained, cold, terrible ; but it was, on the contrary, to Sophia the seal of her felicity. She was only afflicted that Edoardo should have made illness an apology, which he said prevented him from coming immediately to Padua. To Sophia it was as clear as the sun that expressions of affection did not abound, because now was arrived the opportunity she and Edoardo had so long hoped and looked for ; that the letter did not dwell on particulars precisely because great joy is not talkative, and because the illness of Edoardo prevented it. She made ready to set out to Venice without delay, expecting that her father would join her there, and that the nuptials would be celebrated in that city when the health of her lover would permit.

Arrived at Venice, she was set down at the house of the Valperghi, and ordered the trunk which contained the few robes she had brought with her to be



brought into a room, into which she had been introduced while the servants went to announce her arrival.

After a few minutes Edoardo entered the room, to discover who wanted to see him, and, on recognising Sophia, was disconcerted and abashed. She was on her part surprised to see him splendidly dressed, as if for some extraordinary occasion. Then he was *not* ill! She read confusion and terror in his countenance.

‘Are you quite recovered?’ said she, after some moments of silence.

‘It was but a slight indisposition, as I have written to you,’ replied he; ‘nor was there any reason for your hasty presence in Venice.’

‘There was no reason? I have written to you! Why do you speak so to me? Why are you disturbed? Do you no longer love me? Tell me, tell me, what is the matter with you?’

‘Nothing. But what do you think will be said of you,—a young girl alone in the house of a family she does not know?’

‘You kill me! Explain yourself more fully. This is a house I do not know? Am I not to be mistress in this house? Am I not to be your wife?’

‘But without any previous announcement of your coming, it would not be well if my father were to find you here so unexpectedly. I think it would be better if you were to lodge, at least for a very short while, in an inn!’

‘Your father! But am I not rich enough for him? This is a fearful mystery. Explain it if you do not wish to drive me mad.’

The conversation was interrupted by the entrance of a servant, who said—

‘Signor Edoardo, your bride requests you to pass into her apartment for a moment.’

Sophia had strength to command herself until the man had gone away. She then threw, or rather let herself fall, into a chair, covering her face with her hands, crying—

‘His bride! his bride! Is it true? Is it not a dream? For mercy’s sake, if you have the heart of a man, tell me it is false—that I have not heard rightly. For pity’s sake answer me—answer me or kill me.’

‘It is too true, Sophia. It was my father’s will. In a little time I am to give my hand to another woman.’

‘Merciful heaven! It cannot be. It is not true. You are not yet married. There is still time. Go to your father; tell him that you do not love that woman—that you love me, me only; that you have loved me for six years.’

‘It is impossible, Sophia. Things have already gone too far. She is of one of the noblest families in Florence. It breaks my heart, but it is impossible.’

‘What matters her rank, her relatives, if you do not love her?’

‘And if I did love her?’ said Edoardo, wavering, rather to see whether it would be a means of ridding him of Sophia than expressing the sincere feeling of his heart.

‘If you did love her! Then you would be the most infamous of men—you would be a monster. But no. You cannot have forgotten your vows. You cannot have forgotten all your words—our life of six years.’

She rose, and throwing herself on her knees, went on—

‘Forgive me! Forgive my words! I am mad. I do not know what I am saying. Tell me that you have only wished to put my affection to the proof; that you love no other woman—none but me alone! Do not drive me from this house; do not say that you love another!’

‘Sophia, if I could help it, do you think I would make you weep thus?’

‘If you could help it? What prevents you? Nothing, nothing.’

‘My honour!’

‘Honour! Where was your honour when you forgot all your sacred promises? Have you not perjured yourself?’

‘Sophia, Sophia, pity me! Do not make me the talk of all Venice. I am the most infamous of men, but I can do nothing for you. I will confess to you the whole truth—a truth I had not the heart to tell you before. That woman is already my wife. I have married her by civil contract, and the ceremony that is about to be performed now is a mere formality. Sophia, forgive me if you can—forgive me, and leave me.’

‘I cannot go from this house,’ she replied. ‘I will die here before your eyes.’

A sound of footsteps was heard. It was easy to guess that those light footsteps were those of a woman. Edoardo turned towards a table, as if to look for some papers, saying to himself, ‘I am lost.’

Sophia knelt down by the trunk which contained her clothes, pretending to rummage for something in it, while she wiped away her tears and suppressed her sighs.

The bride entered. She stood for a moment perplexed, seeing a woman there, and then said—

‘Edoardo, I sent for you that you might yourself choose one of these wreaths. Which of them do you think will suit me best?’

And she showed him two bridal wreaths which she held in her hand.

‘Neither,’ said Sophia, rising and presenting a wreath to the bride. ‘The Signor Edoardo ordered me some time ago to make this for his bride, and I trust I have not laboured in vain.’

‘In truth, it is much handsomer than either of these,’ said the bride; ‘but you told me nothing of this, Edoardo?’

‘It was a surprise,’ said Sophia.

‘Another kindness,’ said the bride, ‘another proof of your affection! How dear this wreath will be to me!’

And she left, taking it with her.

Sophia looked at the door through which she had disappeared, and burst into tears, exclaiming—

‘Ah! my poor wreath!’

‘Sophia, Sophia,’ said Edoardo, ‘you are an angel. Once more I owe you my life!’

‘Since she is yours,’ said Sophia sadly, and sitting down, faint and exhausted—‘since she is yours, ought I to bring death to her heart—such death as I feel already in my own? No one knows, no one can know, what is suffering but those who suffer. Go, prepare yourself for the ceremony. They are waiting for you. I have no reproaches to make—no right to make them. All was in that wreath, and in giving it away I have renounced all. Go! I have need of not seeing you. I promise you that when you return I will be no longer here to trouble you with my presence.’

Pale, confused, penitent, he bent a last long look on her, and left the room.

Two hours later the marriage ceremony was performed. The gondolas that bore the bridal cortège on their return from the church of St. Moisé were met by some fishing-boats, in one of which was the corpse of a drowned girl. The gondolas had to stop in order to let them pass.

‘A sad omen for the bride and bridegroom,’ said an old woman of the company.

Edoardo, after one glance at the lifeless burden, had thrown himself at the bottom of his gondola in order to conceal his emotion, and with a convulsive motion he pressed the hand of his bride, which he held between his own. The simple girl, interpreting his action as an expression of his love, raised her eyes to his face, and said—

‘And you will ever love me?’

‘Ever, ever!’

## DOMENICO MATTEO

As you sail along the shore of the lake of Como, between the celebrated island Cernaeina and the delicious Tremezzinas, you see, stretching out into the water, the promontory of Lovedo, on the side of which, half-way down, stands the village of Campo, on the other that of Lenno.

At the period of the events which we are about to narrate the headland between these villages had been for two years the abode of an outlaw, who, to escape the prison and the cord, deserted his own country, and assuming the garb of a Franciscan and the name of Fra Nicola, had made his way to this retreat. Here, to all external show, his life had been such that he had earned for himself the esteem, nay, the veneration of his rustic neighbours. And who, indeed, would not have deemed him worthy of admiration? Was not his lamp ever burning before the image of the Holy Virgin that was painted on the wall of his little half-ruined chapel on the crest of the promontory? When the villagers revisited his hermitage, was he not ever found engaged in prayer, or making chaplets or amulets, or certain little cakes that were held in great esteem by the devotees, who, indeed, regarded them as almost sacred, coming from his hands, and as an infallible cure for all sorts of maladies?

Close to the little chapel the worthy Franciscan, with the willing aid of the villagers, had raised a lowly straw-thatched hermitage. A stool, a table, and a truckle-bed constituted its modest furniture ; the other appurtenances being a crucifix, a human skull, a shepherd's pouch, a hair shirt, and some images stuck up against the walls round a great daub of a picture representing St. Anthony with his pig, terribly tormented by a host of devils. Against the farther corner of the room, more out of sight, negligently leant a long-barrelled gun, a somewhat incongruous addition it may seem, but one which was even too necessary in those days in the most peaceful dwelling.

It was really edifying to hear the holy father expatiate upon the joys and beauty of faith and piety ; to listen to the tales he had ever ready for each man's case, of miraculous cures that his panaceas had effected ; to see him giving forth with profound gravity his cakes and his medicinal herbs for tooth-aches and headaches, and aches of every sort ; to hear him exorcising witches, and sorcerers, and blight, and noxious insects, with one unvarying formula of five or six barbarous Latin words he had picked up ; or blessing women in childbed, or new-born infants, or dying men, with the same formula said backwards. These tricks brought him in a plentiful supply of the best wine and the best provisions the country-people could command, though the good man never accepted any of these good gifts without a pious groan at the necessity which his weakened health—poor sufferer !—imposed upon him of breaking the strict fast which he had vowed to blessed St. Anthony.

But when night came on how different a part did

Father Nicola assume ! The fierce restless eyes, which all day he had kept fixed upon the ground lest they should give the lie to the lowly humility it had been his difficult task to wear the semblance of, now glared around, terrible with ferocious pride and daring. No sooner had the disappearance of the last light in the villages beneath freed him from the risk of observation than the friar's robe was cast aside, and the bandit, arraying himself, from a secret recess, in a garb more suitable to his taste and to the work in hand, would sally forth to join his band of fellow-marauders.

One night Fra Nicola, with seven associates, all armed to the teeth, descended to the water-side, and embarking in a boat,—the property of one of the band who ostensibly followed the occupation of a fisherman,—pulled lustily in the direction of Como. And now, in the tall, powerful, muscular man who guided the helm who would have recognised Fra Nicola ? Here he became himself again ; here his comrades knew him for the famous freebooter, Domenico Matteo di Brienzo. The native of a village in Switzerland, he had left his native country to avoid the consequences of his crimes, and taking refuge in this part of Italy, he had collected around him a band of worthies of his own stamp, with whom each night he committed the most horrible excesses. Churches and houses, nay, whole villages burnt ; mothers and maidens entrapped ; whole families massacred,—deeds such as these everywhere attested the presence of a pitiless band. But the perpetrators, disbanding at early dawn,—Fra Nicola to his hermitage, the rest to their cottages, where they passed as fishermen, foresters, or husbandmen,—had hitherto remained undiscovered.



When the boat arrived opposite Argentoz the leader, with a deep sigh, exclaimed—

‘Tis just here I saw fall at my very feet poor Pelosina da Sala, the best and bravest comrade man ever had. The ball that finished him whizzed close past my ear. My curse upon the hand that fired it! Poor Da Sala! He fell into the water just like lead, and we could never hear anything of his body. My uncle, too, old Gianni Brienzo, a fellow that fear never found at home, had his brains dashed out at the same time by those accursed Tornese. The bullet passed as near me as I am to thee, Isidore. It seems only yesterday that he fell back into the boat—’twas the very boat we are in now—gasping out, “I die; be it thy task to avenge me!” and so, by all the saints, I will. Often in my dreams he appears before me pale, ghastly, dying as I then saw him, and demands in a hollow voice, “Revenge, revenge!”

Moved by these recollections, the rough brigand, taking off his broad-brimmed felt hat, began to chant as much as his memory would supply him with of *De Profundis*, in behalf of the souls of the departed worthies whom he had been commemorating, and his comrades joined in with a somewhat imperfect chorus.

At length the party arrived opposite Torno, but although the night was far advanced the little town, from one end to the other, was illuminated with infinite torches, lanterns, and bonfires, whose light shed glittering reflections far over the rippling waters of the lake, presenting a charming contrast with the surrounding darkness. The bells were ringing merrily, and every now and then there arose, above the confusion, shouts of ‘Long live the fair

Cecilia de Palanzo ! Long live our gallant captain, Gualtiero !

An expression of hatred and jealous rage came over the face of the bandit chief as these sounds reached his ear, for they told him of the happiness of the rival who had triumphed over him, of the woman who had scorned him. Seeing Cecilia, he had loved her with all the fierce ardour of his nature ; loving her, he had dared to seek her and to declare his passion. He had been repulsed, as might have been expected, with contempt and indignation, and the desire for vengeance then took possession of his soul. He had now come to execute it.

The rowers rested from their labours, and a signal having been given by the discharge of a pistol, there appeared gliding over the water an object which, emerging from an inlet on the opposite side of the town, and growing gradually more and more distinct, at length on near approach assumed the form of a skiff guided by a single rower.

‘ Who goes there ? ’ exclaimed Domenico. ‘ Is’t thou, Grabelo da Porlezza ? ’

‘ The same,’ replied the new-comer, attaching his skiff to the larger boat. ‘ The night is our own ; everything is arranged. The fisherman Ambrogio is ready at his post, and the moment the signal is given he and his party will fire several volleys in the way you spoke of.’

The plan of the marauders was to alarm the Tornese by a feigned attack upon that quarter of the town exactly opposite to that in which the festivities were proceeding, so as to divert thence Gualtiero and the other fighting men, and give Domenico an opportunity of executing his project without interruption. The cottage of Ambrogio

stood at some two hundred paces out of the town, on the road to Como, so that he and his associates, having fired off two or three volleys under the walls, could easily retire undiscovered on the first indication of the approach of the townspeople.

Meantime in the house of the bridegroom all was festive joy and happiness. In the courtyard facing the lake was arranged a long table laden with an abundant banquet, at which were seated forty or fifty guests of the humbler sort. From the centre of the table rose a pyramid of wax torches, which lit up every corner of the place, and threw a long stream of radiance over the lake. In an upper apartment were assembled the visitors of higher rank, comprising all the notables of Torno, and of its neighbour and ally Lario—for in those times of unhappy dissension each little community had its allies and its enemies. The bride, timid as all young brides are, or should be, on their marriage day, sat blushing and confused amongst the glittering throng, conscious that all eyes were ever and anon upon her as the centre of attraction.

But in the very midst of this buoyant and open-hearted felicity treachery was at work. Attired as a domestic of one of the guests, Grabelo had found ready access, and unobserved by any of the happy party, had made himself thoroughly acquainted with the interior of the house, the distribution of its apartments, the direction of its passages, its exits and its entrances; and having acquired all the information so necessary to his master's purpose, he quitted the place as the clock struck twenty-three,<sup>1</sup> and pro-

<sup>1</sup> The Italians count the whole of the twenty-four hours throughout. Twenty-three o'clock would thus be the hour preceding midnight.

ceeded, as we have seen, to communicate the intelligence he had gained to Domenico.

At midnight the various guests took their leave, and to the confusion which had but just prevailed, succeeded the solemn tranquillity of night. The lights were extinguished, the pyramids of which we have spoken perished in a magnificent display of fireworks, and then darkness assumed her sway.

Upon learning from Grabelo the exact position of affairs, Domenico had ordered his men to pull into a little creek between La Pliniana and the town, where, in profound silence, they watched the departure of the bridal visitors. When all was in repose the bandit chief discharged his carbine, and the signal was immediately obeyed by Ambrogio and his party at the other extremity of the town. As had been anticipated, the alarm of an assault flew in every direction. The Tornese leaped from the beds they had but just sought, and, half dressed, rushed along the streets leading to the Great Square. There amidst a confusion of cries—'The Swiss!'—'The Spaniards!'—'Francesco Morone of Lecco!'—'No, 'tis the Comese!'—the stronger and braver among the men rallied round their young leader, who had rushed to the succour of his people at the first alarm; and some armed with swords, others with guns, others with pikes, others with scythes merely, marched towards the Comese Gate, where, according to the prevalent impression, the supposed attack had to be resisted. Grabelo, who had been watching the progress of affairs, no sooner saw his opportunity than he hastened to Domenico, whom he met advancing with his band, altogether free from interruption, or even observation.

Meantime Cecilia, horror-struck at the danger

which seemed to threaten him who that day had become her husband, knelt before the image of the Virgin, and in an agony of tears commended him and herself to the Mother of Mercy. Her prayers, however, were soon interrupted by the sound of approaching footsteps, and looking up she beheld the figure of a man, enveloped in a cloak, advancing towards her through the gloom of the chamber.

‘Gualtiero, Gualtiero!’ she exclaimed. ‘Is it thou? Art thou safe?’

‘It is I,’ replied a hoarse voice; and as he spoke the intruder threw over the unhappy girl the cloak that had covered him, and catching her up in his powerful grasp, rushed down the staircase with her, heedless of her screams and struggles. When the cloak was removed, Cecilia found herself in a boat, surrounded by a band of ruffians, who were impelling the vessel through the water at its utmost speed. A mist passed suddenly before her eyes, her senses became confused, a cold perspiration bathed her forehead, and she fainted.

In this condition she remained for some time, senseless and motionless as one dead, in spite of all the efforts of Domenico to restore her to consciousness. In her trance she thought she was in her mother’s house at Palanzo, standing in the balcony, and gazing at the distant chamber window of her beloved Gualtiero; then, like the change of scene in a play, the balcony became a richly decorated nuptial chamber, and the air resounded with joyous shouts and acclamations. First, by her side stood two beloved forms, those of her parents; presently these two forms melted into one, that of a young and handsome warrior—her betrothed, her husband. Anon this gentle vision faded away, and in its

place there appeared before her the gigantic proportions of a dark-visaged ruffian, his countenance horrible with every fierce passion, his hands bathed in blood. The shriek which terror forced from her restored Cecilia to consciousness, but it was only to find herself supported in the arms of the frightful man whose image had so appalled her. Throwing herself at his feet she implored him, with all the eloquence of despair, to restore her to her parents, or at once to send her to her eternal home.

‘Cruel girl,’ exclaimed Domenico, ‘knowest thou not what torments thou hast caused me? Never before I saw thee had these eyes known what tears were; but since that fatal moment—shame upon me for it!—I have wept, wept bitterly, again and again, at the thought of thy scorn. Dost thou recollect when I first saw thee, sitting alone upon the rock of Billagio, watching the ripple of the waves? Dost thou remember how, my fierce nature subdued by thy gentle beauties, I fell at thy feet, imploring thy love, praying for one ray of hope to save me from the abyss which else I saw before me? Dost thou remember thy haughty rejection of my passionate suit? From that moment never has this heart of mine known peace. To me earth became a hell; many a time have I raised my dagger on that life which was so insupportable; but the desire of once more gazing upon thee, a ray of hope, a yearning for vengeance, stayed my hand. The hour of vengeance is come; but love reigns all-powerful in my breast; and once more, humbly at thy feet, I implore thy pity.’

‘This is cruel mockery,’ cried the unhappy girl. ‘It is I who implore pity at your hands. Let me return to my home, to my husband, to him who but

a few hours since received my vows at the altar, and my gratitude shall ever bless you. This I implore at your hands—by the holy Mother of Heaven, by the dead and the living, by the memory of your mother, by all you hold most dear, most sacred—do this, or kill me !’

‘Thy husband !’ exclaimed Domenico, all his fury once more aroused ; ‘thy husband ! How knowest thou that thy husband lives to receive thee ? Dost thou not imagine that his heart would be the first this trusty sword would seek in the midnight assault ?’

At these words, so full of terrible import, Cecilia, overpowered with the ghastly image which they presented to her mind, once more lost all consciousness.

Meantime, who shall describe the despair of Gualtiero when, on returning home after a fruitless search for an enemy, he found his home despoiled of his newly-acquired treasure ? Rushing forth into the street, his cries soon reassembled his people ; but for some time no information could be obtained. At length a fisherman, who had just landed, brought the intelligence that he had seen a large boat, whence issued piercing cries, pulling towards Menaggio, at a rate which would soon carry it to its destination. Upon this intimation a body of young Tornese, headed by their chief, rushed to the boats, and were soon rapidly advancing in the track of the marauders, guided at short intervals by fishermen whose vessels they passed. The pursuit was so close that Domenico and his party, with their captive, still half-unconscious of the external world, had made good their retreat to the hermitage but one short hour when the Tornese reached the promon-

tory. Here, however, the pursuers necessarily came to a pause. All clue seemed to fail them, but Providence unexpectedly favoured them beyond their hopes. On looking up the height before them, attracted by vociferous cries, they saw the hermitage of Fra Nicola surrounded by a crowd of men, shouting and furiously gesticulating, whom they soon recognised as their good friends and allies, the townspeople of Menaggio. They at once hastened onwards to ascertain the cause of this unusual scene, and, to their amazement and delight, found that the crowd were assembled round a party of nine men, bound strongly back to back, among whom they discovered that worthy Franciscan, Fra Nicola, who had hitherto been surrounded by such an odour of sanctity. Near these was seen the rescued Cecilia, safe in the arms of an old man, her uncle. Who can describe the mutual joy of the newly-married pair, thus reunited after so strange and terrible a separation?

This was how it had happened.

The people of Menaggio, having traced many robberies wellnigh home to their neighbour, Grabelo of Porlezza, had been for some time past watching an opportunity to seize him. Having learned that on several occasions he had been seen to enter the hermitage of Fra Nicola at nightfall, it had been determined that a body of townsmen should search in that retreat, some morning ere break of day, undeterred even by the sanctity of Fra Nicola, which indeed had suffered somewhat in popular estimation in consequence of his reported connection with the notorious Grabelo. Accordingly, on the very night of our story, a party of some fifty Menaggese, well armed, arrived at the hermitage by early dawn, almost



immediately after Domenico and his band had returned with their captive. Entirely surrounding the building to avoid all chance of escape, some of the party commenced a violent knocking at the door. Domenico, hastily throwing on his friar's garb, looked out at the little window, and seeing the assembled crowd, hastily drew back, and ran to close the entrance of the secret chamber, which he and his companions had constructed out of the chapel vaults, and whither the latter had now retired. Then drawing his cowl over his brow, with crucifix in hand, he opened the door, and the crowd, confirmed in their suspicions by his delay, rushed in. No Grabelo, however, was to be seen. All at once, however, as, ashamed at their apparently unwarrantable violence, they were about to leave the holy friar to his matins, a stifled scream was heard as it were proceeding from behind the friar's bed. Then there was another. The bed being instantly removed from its position, a small door was discovered behind it, which, when opened, discovered a flight of steps. With a shout of triumph the Menaggese rushed down the descent, and found themselves in a large vault, lighted by a number of lamps suspended from the ceiling. Around it were ranged guns, pistols, pikes, clubs, swords, weapons of every description, with vizards and disguises of infinite variety. In all directions were heaped up gold and silver household plate and sacred utensils; jewellery, tapestry, rich dresses, plunder of all sorts—the produce of many a night of outrage and blood. But the more immediate object of attention was the brigands themselves, who, surprised at the sudden attack and overawed by the numbers, made no attempt to defend themselves, and were immediately seized and bound

together. All eyes were now turned upon poor Cecilia, who sat bewildered with the various occurrences of the night. What was her delight when, in one of her deliverers, she recognised her uncle Maniglio. After a thanksgiving to God her next impulse was to ascertain the safety of her husband, but upon this point no one present could satisfy her.

The question now was what was to be done with the prisoners. The first proposition was to throw them all together into the lake, each with a good stone round his neck ; but this hasty suggestion was rejected as disrespectful to religion, which demanded that the condemned persons should have time to confess themselves ; and accordingly it was arranged that they should be conducted to Menaggio, and thence, after they had received the consolations of the church, to Palezza, where in the very house of Grabelo they should suffer the death their crimes so well merited.

It was at this point of time that the Tornese, as we have seen, arrived, and you need hardly be told that the sentence which had just been passed upon the marauders met with the full concurrence of the new-comers. The whole party then, with the exception of some half-dozen, who were left in charge of the discovered plunder, descended to the lake, where the prisoners were embarked in a vessel under a sufficient escort, and proceeded to Menaggio, followed by the rest of the Menaggese in other boats, while the people of Torno, with their young chief and his bride, returned home.

The brigands, on their arrival at Menaggio, were received by the whole population, who accompanied them, with shouts and execrations, to the church.

From the church, after receiving the last offices of their religion, the condemned band were carried, each malefactor bound hand and foot, and stretched upon a sort of litter borne by two men, towards Palezza, where they were to receive their doom, still accompanied by a large portion of the enraged population.

All at once the sky, which had hitherto been resplendently clear, became fearfully overcast. Thick black clouds collected together, and formed a dense mass which hid the face of the sun. The broken flashes of lightning alone guided the travellers through the otherwise total darkness. The thunder pealed louder and louder, the rain fell in torrents, and hail, such as none present had ever known before, wellnigh struck the men to the earth.

Superstition, which in those days was ever ready with its marvellous solution of every unusual circumstance, completed the terror and confusion of the crowd. They were now in the valley of Grona, the place in which, as everybody knew, witches and sorcerers were wont to hold their horrible meetings. It was Thursday, the day on which, as everybody knew, these meetings were held. They were leading to death Domenico Matteo, who, as everybody knew, was the favoured associate of the witches and sorcerers who assembled there. If the inference from all these manifest facts required confirmation, the confirmation was at once furnished

A herd of goats (the animal whose form, as was well known, it was the favourite pastime of the witches and sorcerers to assume, though in this particular instance the goats were veritable goats, maddened with fear by the storm) rushed down the road along which the party were slowly advancing,

and overthrew the two men who were carrying the litter of Domenico. Overcome with panic and fear at this manifest appearance amongst them of the spirits of evil, the Menaggese, casting one look of concentrated horror at Domenico, left him where he fell, and fled onwards, dragging with them their other prisoners. Arrived at Palezza, no time was given for a further interposition of the world of magic in favour of the condemned, who were forthwith strung up on the beam which supported the ceiling of Grabelo's outer room.

A still more horrible fate was reserved for the leader of the band. Left prostrate on the earth by the fugitive Menaggese, the strong cords with which he was bound hand and foot effectually prevented him from seizing the opportunity which seemed to present itself of recovering his liberty. There he lay, utterly helpless, for hour after hour passed away, and no one came even to free him from his misery by slaying him. The terrified Menaggese had returned by a circuitous route, and the tale they spread abroad deterred all persons from approaching the witches' glen for many and many a day. One night drew its veil over the sufferings of the famishing wretch, and another, and another. On the third day the vultures fed upon him ere life had yet departed.

When the Menaggese once more revisited the valley, a skeleton and the fragments of a Franciscan robe were all that remained of the once fierce and terrible Domenico.

## THE BETROTHED

IN the centre of the island of Corsica, and in its loftiest part, there rise two steep mountain chains which run parallel to one another. Near the bridge of Castirla they form a ravine about six miles long, through which flows the river Goli. Along the banks of this river may be traced the tortuous path of the range Santa Regina, near to which these two mountain chains open out into a beautiful valley, broken here and there by precipitous gorges ; coming together farther on, they close this valley at its southern end, and form the boundary-line of the country on both sides of the Santa Regina. The scenery here is of a truly sublime grandeur.

The mountain slope is for the most part covered by a dense forest of pines, some of which have weathered the storms of centuries, while others are sturdy and tufted, spread out, like the plants in a nursery garden, before the astonished gaze of the traveller. This forest bears the name of the Gualdo Niello or the Black Forest.

To the east, the mountains are nearly all covered with woods, and everywhere the summits are shaded by pines, beeches, firs, or bush. On the western side, however, the slope is more gentle and affords more opportunities for cultivation. In the valley, midway

between the mountains and towards the south, rise towering above the other mountains, Mount Vaglierba and Mount Cinto, which, declining gently, have on their sides verdure-clad valleys beautified by streams and limpid springs, and then descend abruptly in terrible precipices and steep and rugged rocks. Like an impenetrable barrier, these mountains seem to have stayed the progress of that artificiality which, under the high-sounding name of civilisation, has undermined society. The inhabitants still retain the physiognomy, the manners, and the customs of the ancient Corsicans, of the old companions of Sampiero and Paoli. Their virtues have even grown in proportion as they have become farther and farther removed from those ideas which their natural pride associated with points of honour. They nowadays, as a rule, deplore the fatal legacies of those hereditary feuds which entailed the ruin of families, and even of entire communities.

The Niolins, who have the reputation of being the least cultivated among the Corsicans, are nearly all shepherds—strong, hardy, and of remarkable stature, the result either of their continual occupation in war, and in enduring hardships of all kinds, or of the extreme simplicity which they have ever maintained. They lead patriarchal lives, and treat strangers of whatever rank with that familiarity which might have been usual in the early ages,—an outcome of the natural equality of man. Violent in all their passions, they have sometimes imported into that of love a devotion and a constancy hardly to be expected in folk of such rough and primitive natures.

Rising in the centre of the valley of the Niolo, not far from Mount Cinto, is a little village which

overlooks a number of little hamlets scattered here and there, each at a certain distance from the others. This village is called Calacuccia, and is the most important one of the canton. The houses white and well built, the rivulets winding along the meadows, the tall chestnut trees, the smiling landscape,—all contribute to make it a most delightful spot.

Climbing up the steep sides of the Santa Regina, where he sees only bottomless precipices and frightful abysses, the traveller, on emerging into the valley, lingers fondly on the site of an old chapel; and, near by, in front of an old chestnut tree with its spreading boughs, is a quiet-looking house two stories high. This is deserted now, but not long ago there dwelt in it a happy family, whose misfortunes, caused by love and revenge, are never mentioned in the country without a feeling of sorrow combined with a vague sentiment of horror.

Maria Felice had scarcely emerged from childhood, but her features, although of rare regularity, indicated the possession of the liveliest emotions. Her clear blue eyes, arched eyebrows, black eyelashes, her long thick hair, the tresses of which were folded gracefully round her head, after the custom of the country—in short, a happy mixture of freshness and delicacy, distinguished her from all her companions; but her gentle and engaging manners, her affability and grace, made them forget to envy her beauty, and drew all hearts to her. To all these advantages she added a lively spirit and a disposition full of energy. She was at once the pride, the joy, and the hope of an old mother who had been sorely tried by misfortune, and of a brother, a promising young priest, distinguished alike by his attainments and the purity of his life. This brother had a friend in the neigh-

bouring village, a young man of the same age as himself, to whom had been promised Maria's hand. The union of the two lovers, whose love had grown with years—this union which was to fill up the measure of the happiness of the two families who desired it equally, was on the point of being accomplished when the young priest, still in the flower of his days, fell by the hands of two assassins, prompted to the murder by a hereditary feud. Never before had been heard repeated so often at a funeral that terrible word *vendetta*. But who was the assassin? Who could have raised his hand to slay the young priest, the last scion of his race?

The news of the murder excited everywhere a feeling of pity and of terror. From all the surrounding hamlets the women came flocking in, distracted, tearing their hair, and wailing and crying after the fashion of the Niolins when a violent death has happened. When the women had formed themselves in a circle around the coffin and sung the *caraçolo*, Maria Felice, rising in her turn, sang her funeral chant as follows:—

‘I was spinning at my wheel in the moonlight, when a pistol-shot resounded suddenly in my heart. With a dread pre-sentiment, I rushed into thy chamber, where I found thee lying bathed in thy blood. Oh my brother! Then thou saidst, “A bullet has pierced my breast.” At these words I swooned. If I did not survive thee solely to avenge thy death life to me would be insupportable. Oh my brother! he who killed thee knew that thou hadst neither father, nor brother, nor cousin, who at the sight of thy blood-stained shirt would have let grow his beard till the day of vengeance. Thy enemies knew well that thou hadst left only my tears and those of my mother, who, crushed with grief, will follow thee soon to the grave. Of the race of Ilario, the terror of his foes, I alone remain, but I, alone, shall have my revenge.’



Since the pitiable occurrence, joy and gladness disappeared from the face of the young girl—not a line in her features but bore the stamp of sombre sadness. The spindle and the shuttle lay idle by her side. Shunning even her dearest companions, she was no longer to be seen at the merry village festivals, or seated in the circle around the Ziglia listening to ghost stories, or to the *lamenti* of the brigands, or the *voceri* chanted over the dead. But after she had doffed her *saccola*, and put on the dress of a mountaineer, with pistols in her belt and a gun over her shoulder, she might have been observed more than once in the silent night sitting in ambush for her enemies, scouring the forests and the mountains, the usual retreats of the brigands, and braving all manner of perils in the search for the murderers of her brother.

As if she had lost the memory of his love, she refused her hand to Pietro, her betrothed, the faithful friend of her unfortunate brother, declaring that she had vowed not to marry any but him who avenged his death.

Pietro Antonio Luccioni, of Sidossi, one of the most picturesque little villages in the valley of the Niolo, was a young man of about twenty years of age. His figure was tall and well set, his hair black and thick, his complexion brown, his forehead high, whilst his powerful limbs and his extraordinary bodily strength proclaimed him one of the hardy children of the mountains. But what distinguished him chiefly among the other young men of his day, whom he surpassed in nimbleness and agility in the sports and games to which the Niolins were addicted, was a certain delicacy in his features, the impress of a melancholy air which he had assumed since the death of his friend and the withdrawal of his sweetheart.

Hope and gladness had fled from his heart ever since the time when, from religious motives forswearing all ideas of vengeance or blood, he had incurred the resentment of Maria Felice.

The young girl said to him, one day that he came to visit her—

‘I shall hold you unworthy of my hand and heart if you do not avenge me. So long as I cannot redeem the innocent blood of my brother there will be no happiness for me. How, if I became thy wife, could I bear the insulting reproaches of the women in thy village, who would never cease to say to me with contempt, “Thou art without relations, alone in the world, with nobody to care for thee, for thou hast not found any one to avenge the death even of a priest; or if thou still hast any kindred living, they must be far from here, on the other side of the mountains.” They would be deemed cowards. This, Pietro, would be slow poison to me; it would aggravate my suffering day by day.’

‘For the love of heaven calm thyself,’ replied the young man. ‘Hast thou forgotten the words of the curé? The soul of the good Ilario is at this moment in Paradise, because in his death he forgave his enemies. Was not thy brother a priest? Did he not teach us to forgive our neighbours as we would that God should forgive us? And is there not a God above to punish the guilty? You know what the proverb says, “God does not pay on a Saturday.” Wouldst thou have me become a murderer, to wander like thy enemies in the woods, far from thee, deprived of liberty and peace, to die at last an infamous death? Hast thou forgotten that on our side are God, and the world, and justice? and thou wouldst have them for enemies! Does thy brother need blood?

Knowest thou not that if we do not ourselves forgive we may not expect the forgiveness of God? Ah, if thou hadst more faith thou wouldst at least wait till the hand of justice itself avenged thee.'

'Justice!' replied the young girl with indignation; 'justice is not for them. Their wives boast already of the help of rich and powerful persons. What I want is vengeance, and even God Himself cannot condemn one who meditates the death of the sacrilegious murderer of one of His servants.'

'It is a blasphemy,' Pietro was about to reply, when Maria Felice, with death in her heart and the blush of shame on her countenance, left him in anger, to rejoin her mother. She threw herself, sobbing, into the arms of the old wretched widow, and remained there for some time, overwhelmed by her sorrow.

In the meantime Pietro's image was never absent from her thoughts. She remembered the day when he declared his love to her, and the day also when she saw him weeping over the coffin which contained the bleeding remains of her brother. Never had he seemed to her so handsome as on that day of mourning. Nevertheless, during the beautiful summer evenings she sat up more than once in the hope of hearing Pietro's voice chanting some love ditty, but she no longer heard the report of the musket under his windows nor the sound of the zither.

It was the month of November, when the inhabitants lead their flocks from the mountains to the plains. Pietro, not without causing Maria Felice to drop a silent tear, left for the wild and uncultivated country of Sia. His absence plunged the girl into the depths of despair. A secret voice seemed to say to her desolate heart, 'Thou wilt never see thy lover again; no, he will never return;' and she would then feel

that she could not live without him. The thought alone that he would not avenge her seemed, for a moment, to wrest him from her heart, but soon his form occurred again to her thoughts, and the remembrance of him left her no peace. Sometimes she would dwell on the sweet idea of being united to her beloved Pietro, and endeavour to stifle in her bosom her thirst for vengeance ; but at such a moment she would fancy she saw the bleeding corpse of her brother rising, upbraiding her for her weakness. So, amid the conflicting strife and passions raging in her bosom, she passed her days, full of bitterness and sorrow. She had no one to console her. Her dearest relatives were long since dead. Her most intimate friends, despairing of assuaging her grief, no longer came to share her troubles or to dry her tears. An extraordinary pallor overspread her countenance, her eyes grew dim. She seemed to languish and to breathe with difficulty. A fierce fever consumed her, and she would often repeat the name of her absent lover and that of her brother. 'My end is approaching,' she would say to the bystanders. 'Three times during the night have I heard the voice of my unhappy brother, calling me by my name, and I answered him.'

Moreover, every one in the village knew that the *malucella*, or night owl, had been hovering over the house, uttering ominous cries. Impressed by these sinister omens, she began to take leave of her friends, begged of them to excuse her grief, and expressed a wish that when she was dead she might be attired in the *sottana* and cap which her mother had prepared for her wedding day. She also desired that her hands might be tied with the ribbon which Pietro had given her for her nuptial *fiocco*, and that her kerchief

might be given to her unfortunate lover, who had loved her so tenderly. She accompanied these words by deep sighs, and cast her eyes around the chamber as though in search of Pietro ; but, disappointed in her hopes, she burst into tears. Then she wished to see the curé, and having discoursed with him for some time, she expressed to him a wish to be honoured after her death by an imposing wake.

The curé was a man remarkable among the zealous servants of God. He did not, as did so many others, spread dissension amongst his flock ; but, persuaded that his mission on earth was a mission of charity, of consolation, and of love, he kept aloof from all intrigues, and never left his dwelling except on an errand of peace, to help the poor, to succour the afflicted, and to spread blessing and joy in the family circle. He was full of dignity without pride, affable and tender-hearted without losing the gravity which commands respect and veneration. Although he had attained the age of threescore years, time had but slightly diminished his natural vigour. The poor of the village were his only family, and he was beloved and respected by them as a father.

At the bedside of Maria Felice he said—

‘ You speak of death, my dear Maria Felice ; but your sickness is not so dangerous as you think. See, my child, you have put away from you the Saviour by the fierceness of your sentiments, and the Saviour who imposes tribulation on those whom He would call to Him has chosen you to be the object of His justice and goodness. You had need of this trial to regain the right path, and you should see the hand of God in this your affliction. He wants us to suffer for His sake, because He wants to show us how He can change sorrow to gladness. For my

part, if you remember, I have taught you from your earliest infancy to forgive for the love of God, but you have always been deaf to my exhortations. You have given yourself up to hatred, to the point of urging on to the committal of murder the unfortunate youth who had so much love for you. God has enlightened Pietro. He has turned him away from crime; but whilst punishing you for your hatred, He has in His infinite mercy touched your heart and left you time to repent. Therefore take courage, profit by this grace, make your peace with yourself and your God in submitting to His will. He has ordained that if you would obtain pardon you should pardon your enemies. Moreover, you have made unhappy a man whose wife you should have been, and although betrothed to him, you have refused his hand because he would not accept the compact of blood which you proposed to him. Promise, then, that Pietro shall be your husband, if it please God to let you live.'

At these words of the curé, whom she knew to be the friend of the afflicted and the enemy of vengeance and party feuds, Maria Felice felt a new sense of peace in her heart, her face became serene, her breathing easier, and her voice firmer.

'Forgive me,' she said; 'my affliction made me forget your advice, madwoman that I was. I thought it honourable to shed the blood of my enemy, and shameful to abstain from vengeance; but now, thanks to God and to your good counsels, my eyes have been opened; I beseech you to join your prayers to mine, that the Saviour may pardon me. I have no other hope than in Heaven. I feel that death is approaching. . . . If Pietro were here. . . . Oh! how happy I should be. I conjure you to seek out the kindred of my brother's murderers, to tell them

that I forgive them all. Tell Pietro's father too that I wish to see his son as soon as possible, so that I may die, if it is possible, bearing the name of his wife.'

At these words her face became radiant with joy, an inexpressible smile dwelt upon her lips, and her dull eyes lit up anew. Her whole being seemed to revive. The thought of her last hour no longer troubled her; her heart was filled with hope. Death no more seemed to Maria Felice other than a compassionate friend come to accompany her to a banquet of peace.

At the same time, the news came that the murderers of her brother had been overtaken by the hand of justice, and that one of them had put an end to his life in his dungeon in order that he might escape an ignominious death.

The priest took care to keep this from the knowledge of Maria Felice, so as not to allow her to waver in her repentance, or to trouble her calm and resigned spirit, but he sought to strengthen her in her pious resolves by the words of the gospels—'Happy are the peace loving, for they shall be called the children of God.'

Meanwhile neither the resources of science nor the consolations of religion succeeded in arresting the progress of her illness, which increased every day. A message was quickly despatched to Pietro, in the hope that his presence would restore his unhappy bride, or, at least, lighten her last moments.

Pietro, on his part, filled with a vague presentiment, had left for Sia. For several nights the slumbers of the young man had been disturbed by strange dreams, and particularly so on the night preceding his departure, when there arrived at his

hut the famous old man of Ghidazzo who was believed to possess the art of reading the future in the shoulder-blades of animals. Of a tall and majestic figure, with a venerable air and a long and flowing white beard, his eyes were bright and piercing, his voice grave, and his countenance austere. His head was covered with a black woollen cap, pointed with ends. His jacket, made of goat-skin reached down to his knees, and was unbuttoned at the breast to display a *carchera*, studded with pistols and cartridges, from which hung a long sheathed dagger. His legs were encased in gaiters. A long carbine was slung across his shoulders, and he walked supported by a stout oaken stick. Years ago he had been in the wars against the Genoese, and had been the friend of Paoli.

From the threshold of the hut he greeted the shepherds in the usual fashion ; then entered the humble dwelling. No warmth was lacking in the manner of his welcome by the shepherds, who greeted with cordiality this chronicler of old times, this wise man and seer. A big dish of milk was brought to him, and some *mouffoli*, or wild lamb, cut into long pieces, salted and seasoned with aromatic herbs, which the shepherds keep in order to regale their guests.

After the repast the old man began to narrate to the shepherds, who sat around him beside the hearth, many events in the history of Corsica in which his ancestors had taken part. He told them how his father, more learned even than himself in the art of divination, when examining one day a bone in which appeared a tree the long branches of which reached as far as the clouds, but the roots of which were very frail and scanty, had predicted that a Corsican would



extend his empire over the world, but that this empire would not endure.

'These,' added Pietro, 'are predictions of events which have long since taken place; tell us rather if we or our flocks are menaced by any misfortune.'

'I will try,' replied the old man, 'always provided that the lamb be a year old. The left shoulder-blade must be taken; the right one leads to error.'

The *omoplate* was handed to him, which he polished till it began to shine. Then he put his forefinger to his forehead and, for a moment, remained in an attitude of meditation. Turning towards the assistants, who, breathlessly and with fixed eyes, stood waiting for the oracle to speak, he said—

'I see a veil spreading over the Niolo. I see in a coffin a young maiden, whom death has not robbed of her charms. Then I see another coffin——'

'Enough, enough,' exclaimed all the herdsmen.

Pietro felt his heart sink, the more so that he observed all eyes were fixed on him.

His fears increased when he remembered how, a few days ago, his dogs, whilst hunting the boar, searched only through wild and impassable paths, without penetrating into the *makis* or thickets, and how they returned home as though seized with terror, their ears down and their tails between their legs. Since that day, too, the long and plaintive howling of his dog had resounded far and wide in the desert solitude, and had filled him with a presentiment of some imminent misfortune.

It is an old belief among the mountaineers, and one generally accepted, that the howling of a dog by night is a presage of misfortune to the family of its master. This belief had been strengthened in the mind of Pietro by the stories told him by his father,

who used to say that in the year 1774, called the year of humiliation, the dogs howled for several nights before the corpse of his grandfather was found hanging from a cypress tree in the convent, where it was discovered, loaded with chains, crucifix in hand, and with an ignominious sheet of writing on its back.

After the long tales of the old man the shepherds one by one fell asleep. Pietro wrapped himself in his cloak and tried to sleep. But the mournful howling of his dog, the old man of Ghidazzo, the chase, and the image of his sweetheart, all in turn engaged his thoughts, and rendered sleep for some time an impossibility.

At length, wearied with thinking and overcome by fatigue, he fell into a deep slumber. In his sleep he seemed to see Maria Felice hastening gaily with him to the church, surrounded by his kindred in their wedding dress. There, after a short prayer whilst kneeling at the altar, she gave him her hand, but it was cold and icy. This painful feeling awoke him, and it was some time before he could realise that he still lay in his own hut. He no longer doubted his misfortune, and scarcely had the day dawned than, leaving his flock, and without bidding adieu to his companions, he made for the road along the coast, through the winding paths and dense thickets, his musket over his shoulder, and round his neck the holy relic which protected him from shot and from the sting of the malmignatto.

Before sunset he arrived at the village of Ota, which lies at the foot of a mountain on the summit of which rises an inaccessible rock which it is believed will some day roll down and crush the village below. He did not stop, although worn out by fatigue. He

pressed on, following the stream which, entering the forest of Aitone, rushes headlong into a dark and rocky ravine. He crossed the bridge at Zaglia, and reached the Gulf of Evisa, where he saw united all the horrors of nature. Two torrents, which had worn a passage through the inaccessible mountains, here mingled their wild waters, and on all sides there frowned huge masses of rock worn by time and shaded by trees and bushes.

Night approached and the traveller could no longer distinguish the road. Not a human voice was to be heard in these wild and inhospitable regions. The shadows of the rocks deepened the darkness of the night. At this moment Pietro was roused from his reverie by the distant tinkling of the bell of Evisa, which sounded the hour of evening prayer, awaking the echoes in the surrounding caverns. He made the sign of the cross, and for the first time felt the necessity of offering up a prayer to the Virgin for the prolongation of his sweetheart's days.

Without stopping or slackening his pace, however, and occupied only with one thought, he climbed up a steep and rocky hill, passed the village of Evisa, and plunged into the forest of Aitone. The soft rays of the stars lit up the scene of wild desolation through which he was now wending his way, and disclosed to his eyes a long track which, rising gently and then descending, finally disappeared.

He had nearly passed the forest of beech trees when he saw at some distance from the road a fire burning brightly, over which stood a man warming his limbs. He went up to him and asked him whence he came, but the mountaineer, disclosing himself, said—

‘Is it thou, Pietro? I have been searching for thee.’

He then told him of the illness of Maria Felice, that she had pardoned her enemies, and that she waited for him to call him husband.

‘All this,’ he said, ‘is the work of our good curate. Do not think she is in danger; the sacraments have not even been administered to her, so thou seest her illness is not dangerous.’

‘Assure me on thy honour that there is no danger of her death.’

‘Life and death are in the hands of God, and His will must be done; but all say, even the priests, that there is nothing to fear.’

The mountain gorges at Vergio were covered with a great quantity of snow, and a threatening cloud heralded an approaching storm. The young shepherd, however, beset with the fear of some imminent misfortune, quickened his steps when the moon emerged from the clouds, walking cautiously whenever she was obscured, until at length, at day-break, he reached the Gualdo Niello. From there he could distinguish the Mount Pertusato, and the peak which dominates the valley of Ino, where he had so many times led his flocks around the lakes whilst singing some of Tasso’s beautiful verses. Thence he could also recognise the church of Calacuccia by its whiteness. At this sight he felt his heart beating faster than ever, and a crowd of sweet memories rushed upon him mixed with dread and vague forebodings. His only consolation was to utter a prayer every time he passed a cross engraved on the bark of a tree, or planted in the earth to indicate the spot where some wayfarer had perished in the snow or had fallen a victim to a hereditary

*vendetta*. Having travelled some distance farther, he at length saw the smoke, rising from the chimneys of Sidossi, ascending above the tall chestnut trees and venerable oaks which screen the hamlet from the traveller, who leaves behind him Gualdo Niello and San Remigio.

Pietro had by this time nearly forgotten the hardships of the journey, and having rested for some hours, he left in the afternoon for Calacuccia. An irresistible feeling, as much of joy as of fear, urged him on to the dwelling of his betrothed. He noticed some women seated in groups before their houses warming themselves in the rays of the sun, so precious in the Niolo during the winter months; and though it was not a fête day, all these women had on their Sunday clothes and were, contrary to custom, without their spindles or distaffs. He at once fixed his glance on them and thought he saw Maria Felice in their midst, but it was an illusion. Disappointed in his hope, his grief became more and more acute, till it became uncontrollable when he noticed so many friendly faces far from receiving him with a pleasant smile, so many folk far from coming to him to embrace him, as was the custom when the shepherds returned from the plain. On the contrary, they pretended not to see him, as though endeavouring to avoid the fulfilment of a painful duty. At last he rushed into the house, where he found only solitude and the signs of grief. He called several times 'Maria Felice!' but all was silent. Tortured with suspense, he went to the window, and saw, seated on the threshold of the door, a young girl, with dishevelled hair, and features distracted with grief, whom he immediately recognised as the favourite companion of his betrothed,—she who had

shared her innocent joys from childhood, and who had so often wept over her misfortunes.

‘Maria Felice,’ he cried ‘where is she?’

The young girl was silent, but the tears which bathed her face spoke more eloquently than might the words that died away on her lips.

Pietro knew both his own misfortune and the fate of his sweetheart. He did not weep, but remained motionless.

Then, supporting himself with difficulty, he staggered into the next house, where the funeral banquet had been prepared for the mother of the deceased. At the sight of him all the women, rising, commenced anew their lamentations, making the village resound with their cries. In their *voceri* they had all presaged the death of Maria Felice. One had seen a pale clear light near her dwelling; another had dreamt of her death before her illness; others said that they had heard the sound of the tambour, and seen the penitents unfurling the banner of the dead, and meeting at her house betwixt midnight and cock-crow.

The night was far advanced; black and menacing clouds covered the tops of the mountains which hemmed in the Niolo as with a wall. A stormy wind came from the African coast, rushing through the forests, shaking the little huts in the hamlet, and raging like a whirlwind in the valleys below. A carpet of snow covered the surrounding hills; all was silence in the houses of Sidossi. Only one man was keeping watch in a small room by the pale and fluttering light of a lamp. With head sunk on his breast, with downcast eyes, and haggard features, he recalled to his mind the adored image of his beloved one—the happiness of a love which had only been a

m, her sweet manners, her conversation, the  
sive utterances with which they delighted one  
her, the bliss with which they were wont to  
n to each other's talk before the misfortune of  
brother's death. Oh! if he had been but able  
ender the last service to the departed, to close  
eyes, and to recall her sighs in one last kiss!  
y, a prey to grief, did not the shade of his  
oved come to him to console him, and to assure  
that she was in a place of rest? The bitterness  
his sorrow would have been sweetened. He had  
rd when a child that, in the night, the dead  
ted those whom they loved most in life, to  
sole them, to tell them of their happiness and of  
need they had of their prayers. Possessed with  
thought, he awaited the apparition of Maria  
ice; but the cock crew, and Pietro gave up all  
e. Day appeared. The sun shone over the  
k of Mount Nuvolato, but his grief was not  
ted. In vain did his infirm mother, supported on  
aff, drag herself to him to console him. In vain  
she with trembling voice give expression to her  
ress at finding him so, as though he were the  
rt of fortune, of the *fattura* or of the evil eye.  
ther her words nor her caresses could calm him.  
It is said that on the evening of the second day  
er the funeral of Maria Felice a shepherd named  
chel de Castellace, coming by chance from the  
ins of Filosorma, arrived at the cemetery situated  
ind the church of Calacuccia, when he heard the  
nd of moaning, which, according to the direction  
the wind, appeared to be now near and now far  
His hair stood erect with terror; he piously  
de the sign of the cross, but in vain. He added  
rayer, but the moaning still continued. Being

now convinced that this noise could not be that of the demon, he bethought himself that it might be a ghost, such as he had heard of in his childhood. He drew a pistol from his pocket, and with his finger made several crosses on the trigger-guard so that the weapon might not miss its aim, owing to some enchantment. He walked on, pistol in hand, listening on the side from whence came the moaning, and looking before him he saw on the edge of a grave what appeared to him to be either a shadow or a living being, and near it a corpse in an open coffin. Still holding his weapon and gazing on the strange sight, he clambered up a little hill, and from there he thought he recognised the corpse of Maria Felice. The moon shone out from amid the gathering clouds and covered the corpse with a pale and deathlike light. From the arrangement of her hair, the neatness of her dress, one would not have said that Maria Felice was sleeping the sleep of death, but that she lay lulled in the slumber of innocence, as when her mother, in the days of her girlhood, sang her to sleep whilst foretelling her a happy destiny. At the sight of her, filled with terror and pity, Michel began to recite piously the prayers for the dead. Then with sad feelings he departed from the scene of mourning. He had scarcely walked a few steps when, turning round, he found he could no longer see the vision.

Next day Pietro's father, having heard from Michel about the nocturnal apparition in the cemetery, sought out his son, and in grave and severe tones said to him—

‘Pietro, I thought thou wert a man worthy of the race which counts so many Fathers of the Commune, but thy love and thy grief have rendered thee



weaker than a woman. I have seen nearly all my kindred perish under the fire of the Genoese at the time they were fighting for the independence of our country. I have seen the barbarous Sionville carry fire and flame into my houses, destroy my flocks, and I have never shed a tear. I only thought of vengeance. Be a man too, calm thyself, respect the will of Heaven, and above all let me never hear again that thou hast left thy father's roof in the night.'

Pietro dared not answer. He went away to hide the sorrow that these words had called forth in his soul. Whether it was that he could not enjoy that last consolation of the afflicted, the liberty of shedding tears, or whether the excess of his grief had exhausted his powers, his face became wan, his features livid, his look fixed, and he sank into a kind of languor from which nothing could rouse him. After a few days he had ceased to suffer. His only dying wish was that he should be buried beside his betrothed and covered with the earth which he had so often bedewed with his tears.

## THE STORY OF THE LADY ERMINIA

I AM the daughter of noble parents, whom I will not name,—for they shall rest undisgraced in their tombs,—who left me sole heir of an estate in the most fertile fields of Italy. I had fair and stately halls, vassals for service in court or field, ladies for attendance, and everything needful or unneedful with which human pride can be pampered, and honour or humour desire or deserve. Mistress of these enviable possessions, I had many princely suitors, who met with such honourable entertainment as their many pleasant qualities merited. But there was one never seen among these flattering suitors, who was a thriving wooer with my heart, though he had never worshipped at its shrine ; and might have had that woman's toy as a gift which he was either too humble or too proud to ask.

This was the noble gentleman called Guido de Medicis, the owner of a poor estate touching upon the wider skirts of mine. He was of an ancient race of poets, painters, sculptors, legislators, and representatives of all the various intellect of Italy—that proud land where the hand of humble genius is of more nobility than the entire body of mere honourable birth. But he of whom I write is now cold in a grave only vaster than his great capacity,

the earth-embracing sea ; and could these miserable and shameful tears which fall at the recollection of the wrong which I have done him outwater that sea, they would not enough mourn him who is the drowned hope and pride of my dear fatherland. Vainly, therefore, do I weep a sin which tears may never wash away, nor for which my life or death may atone.

I have said that though poor he had that nobility which is more noble than rank—independence ; but, though seemingly proud, he was really humble. His humility shrank only from the proffered hands and the open palaces of princes, not because he was unworthy of them, but because he would not accept the uncertain honours of the present when he might enjoy unconditional honours in the future. I bade him to my vanities and sating pleasures, but with a humbleness which was more gratifying to me than the proudest acknowledgments of more princely men, he would ever refuse, and this with so winning a face that I was happier to see my advances refused by him than accepted by the highest in Italy. His severe studies and his patriotic endeavours for the welfare of his country were the first wishes of his noble nature ; these were excuses which I, who desired his future glory, could not be deaf to, and I was therefore more pleased at his absence from the vain parade of pride and the worthless revel of pleasure, feeling that his presence must have been bought with precious hours, which are few and numbered here that we may use them only as purchasers of immortality hereafter. But though absent from my court he was ever present to my mind ; and whichever way I looked, in hall or bower, at the banquet or in the dance—whatever I saw that was noble or graceful,

seemed only like so many faint resemblances and remembrances of him.

This admiration could not long exist without other pulses stirring in my heart. Jealousy and doubt, and fears of what might happen as impediments between me and him, racked me with painful anticipations. It was necessary to my happiness that I should draw him nearer, and insure him mine. But how was this to be brought about with no loss of modesty and that self-respect which even virtue, in her purest intentions, may not leave to the mercy of calumny and the accidents of chance? I could not, from a maidenly shame, confess that I loved him. I deemed that the difference between our fortunes alone separated us, and resolved, if it might be done, to remove his poverty. I set about it with that delicacy which only a heart that loves can devise. He was already eminent throughout Italy for his sculpture. To engage him to adorn my palace with the creations of his chisel would place him more frequently before my eyes, and, by enriching him, make his fortune more equal to my own. I resolved therefore to place a large sum in his hands to purchase such works as his genius had already created to be immortal, and all that it might for some time create. Sending a careful messenger before, announcing that I would visit his gallery, I set out with a small retinue of noble friends to his little villa. He met me at the door, and with the grace of genius surrendered the heirs of his fame at my wish with as much modest indifference to their value as if they had been but the toys of an idle taste. But for the gold and jewels which I had sent him, rather as presents than as a consideration for his productions, which were above price—he would have none of them. His fortune, he insisted, was

enough for all his wants, and it was more than enough for him that his poor works were thought worthy of the honour I intended them. Still I pressed these presents on him, and still he refused. Finding at length that he would not suffer himself to be enriched by my hands, I resolved at least to make myself as poor as he was, and determined on founding a school for the Arts in Florence, and on endowing it with more than the sum he had so resolutely yet so modestly refused. I made my intention public, and invited the artists to the work, not doubting meanwhile that this poor munificence would find favour in his eyes. He praised my devotion to the true glory of his country, and for a time I was hopeful of success. But this pleasant dream was too soon dissipated, and like a vapour before the sun, it vanished.

From some inquiries which I had made among his domestics, I learnt that his heart (which I had thought I might possibly have succeeded in gaining) was irrecoverably given to the fair Bianca, daughter of Baptista Buonaventi, an old merchant of Florence; and that in a few days he was to set out to Syracuse to claim her hand, in fulfilment of a solemn contract made when passing his novitiate in that city. This intelligence came like death upon my heart; and for many days I held myself apart from the gay company and the old courtiers of my house. My noble friends saw my spirit to be sick, and strove to discover its disease; but I had already formed my resolution rather to die of an undiscovered grief than confess my weakness, and, since my malady was hopeless, that it should be also voiceless. I preserved that strict silence which is alone the security of secrecy. But, nevertheless, I wept my sorrows in the loneliness and darkness of the sleepless nights; and this I did till

the paleness of my cheek was now so constant, instead of its wonted ruddiness, that it was scarcely noticed either by the pitying kind folk or the prying curious. The flatterer, the whisperer, and the surmiser left me thenceforth to myself ; and my palace, which had been the open hall of revel and riot, was now as still as the house of death. A moody quiet and the silent abstractedness of a pining passion informed the silence, with a voice audible as the song of pleasure or the hum of revelry, that joy had winged from those walls.

This great change in the manner of my living did not escape the notice of Guido ; but still his heart, which was too much occupied with his promised happiness, seemed utterly unconscious of the reason of this gloomy change. He inquired, with the kindness natural to him, of those he could not be informed by, why it was ; and deeming it to be some mood of the mind arising from the satiety of fortune, or from the pain of too much pleasure, he left the secret of my malady to perplex those who might torture it by their probing but could not cure it by any skill which they possessed.

The day and the hour were now arrived when he was to set out on his way to old Baptista's, and as he passed under the lattice of my chamber with a brave retinue of horsemen, chiefly his friends and kinsmen with some few followers of his house, I could not, though my eyes were dim with tears at the sight, refrain from witnessing his departure, although I felt that with him went all that was dear to me in love and pleasant in life. As his horse curveted restlessly under my window, Guido looked up, and, reining in the restless steed, lifted his cap from his head and let loose to the wind his curled redund-

ance of raven-shining hair. Then, gracefully bending in his saddle and kissing his hand to me, he passed on, followed by the blessings of the poor—to whom he was ever charitable, and by the admiration of the wealthy, who saw in him the hope and example of his country. I watched his retiring as a Persian follows the sun, till I could no longer descry anything in the distance but the circling horizon, and then, throwing myself upon a couch, vainly endeavoured to turn the tempest of passion to patient prayers for his happiness.

Thus, by cultivating resignation to the will of Heaven, my soul gradually softened into composure, though sadness would often enforce her due of tears; and the blessed Mother heard my prayers and comforted me, and rest for a while came back to my bed. But it was not long that it abode there. Religion could not longer render me patient under suffering, nor administer comfort where there was no hope. Again I summoned the votaries of pleasure to my halls, but their hollow vanities were now hateful, and the happiness they pretended to bestow made me the more conscious of that which I had lost. Weary of all that was once pleasant to me, I resolved, in an evil hour, to follow De Medicis, preferring rather to see the happiness of one who had made me most wretched than not again to behold him. Summoning my chamberlain, I informed him that sudden business demanded my presence in Florence, but that my departure must be secret, and my absence equally so.

Ere the early lark had rustled wakefully in his nest I was in the saddle, and, followed by a trusty servant, hurried on my way to the bright city, where I soon discovered the house of old Baptista, and

going up to it, I was seen by the gentle Guido, who, coming out to meet me, hospitably welcomed me. I feigned that the business of my foundation for the Arts had brought me thither, so that my intent was unsuspected, and I was once more in sight of him who had robbed me of happiness never more to be restored.

Bianca Buonaventi was indeed a woman worthy of a sculptor's love, for all those beauties which Art has imitated from Nature were mingled in her. In her form were blended all that I had till then thought the idealities of Grecian grace and Roman majesty. In motion she was stately as the swan, and swam the air rather than walked the earth. Her step was music; her voice sweeter than the recollected harmony of a dream. Her mind was a book of pure and wise thoughts, written surely by some divine hand; her countenance such as angels wear,—and they were made fair that man might love heaven, where all is beautiful. Love shone in her eyes, but with so holy and placid a fire—two sister stars burning in the winter heaven cast not a chaster light. Wherever they were cast all eyes were illuminated, and whatever she looked upon reflected back the beauty she turned upon it. Indeed, in all those fair and admirable qualities which make woman worthy of man she was perfection. That Guido should love the gentle girl was no longer wonderful, for I even loved him the more that he did love her, so endearing a power has beauty in its purity.

As every hour developed her exceeding worth, and disclosed to me some new loveliness which I had not before discerned, the selfishness which would have made me the serpent to destroy the happiness of this second Eden became innocuous and innocent



—pride melted to pity, and pity to love ; and I then religiously resolved to turn the bitterness of my passion into a sister's love for her. This resolution gave a happiness to my heart which was new to it, and for a while I kept true to this holy purpose.

On the morrow following they were to be married—womanliness to manliness—beauty to love—grace to genius. That morrow came. I attended the solemn rite ; saw two hearts made earthly one indivisible, and heavenly happy ; and though my human heart shed some natural tears, I wrestled with the dying struggles of passion with more than woman's fortitude. Never was Florence, that gay city, happier than on that day, for never did so many hearts breathe their benedictions on two happy beings, or more fervently invoke Heaven for the welfare of the pride of Italy and the flower of Florence.

Guido in this happy hour seemed as if rapt in a poet's ecstasy, and trod the earth as lightly as an alighting angel up-buoyed by open though motionless wings. He seemed, indeed, too ethereal for an earthly being ; whilst she, shrinking with a maidenly diffidence from the admiring glances of the crowd, gave only now and then a look of fondness and pride at the lord of her choice, and so trod her gentle way from the church, followed by the blessings of her friends, and the loud benedictions of old and young—of Florentine and foreigner. The gay procession then took horse, and passing out of the city, journeyed on through the country till it came to Campanelle, on the silvery shore of the Mediterranean, where lay anchored a goodly vessel, which was to carry the lovers, with some few friends, over sea to Syracuse. There at a villa, pleasant by reason

of the fair prospect,—lying as it did among purple vineyards on a hill, at whose foot was the clear blue sea,—they were to while away the summer hours of love.

Going safely on board the goodly ship, we bent sail before an easy breeze from the shore, and stood out for the straits of Messina, through which we had to pass.

It was evening ere we had cleared the pleasant shore of Tuscany, and the sun as it set seemed flushed with a troubled red which threatened a storm; but as a storm in that sea is seldom serious, the helmsman was commanded to stand still farther out, and so get room for the vessel to run before it if it came. Being put about, the gay bark danced over the waves trimly and gallantly, and so for some time she sped. Suddenly, however, the wind, from breathing regularly and gently as a sleeping child, held its breath like a heart in terror, as if nature had suffered some sudden pause in its general activity; and the ship, which was cutting her rapid way through the waves with all her sails stretched to straining, dropped as it were out of the hands of the wind and fell heavily and almost without motion into the lap of the sea, the white sails flapping feebly and empty in the air. A faint cry of surprise from the crew told too plainly that all was not well. Old Baptista and the master mariner looked troublously at one another, and blessing the vessel from harm, gave their orders secretly to the men. The clouds which had enveloped the sun in its descent looked fiery red, whilst others, which seemed fixed by their own density, poured a darkness blacker than night upon our path. For an hour the breathless ship lay becalmed, but at last the wind stirred again, but weakly

and fitfully, and howled among the cordage its shrill notes—a preluding strain, prophesying too fatally the terrors of the tempest which was fast coming on. The sails flapped a moment, and then dropped loosely down, and babbled idly with the dying breeze.

The night was now dark to blindness, and there was no friendly light either of moon or star. The red clouds that till then had caught the day's last lingering ray gradually grew black as a funeral pall, and the wide horizon grew dark as the dome where Death holds his court. But soon the rapid lightning began to run through the clouds, and made the darkness more dark, when it had flickered past, from its momentary excess of light. And now in the distance began to be heard the surly threatening of the thunder. The wind began to blow in gusts, the lightning flashed wider and more vividly, and once the ship seemed to tremble through her very frame under a thunder-burst that sounded to our startled ears as if it had exploded against the cap of her creaking mast of pine. The lovers, who till then had heeded only each other, for a moment looked aghast, and muttered their prayers to St. Lucy, the virgin martyr of Syracuse, to bear them safely thither. The master was pale, as if he saw what calamity had overtaken us; the mariners crossed themselves, and committed their souls to the care of the holy saints. Again the lightning streamed over the deck in, as it were, a whiter and more silvery water than earth contains, flowing down in a flood from heaven, and no eye could bear to look on it longer than a moment. The helmsman let go his hold of the wheel that he might cover his face with his hands. The mariners turned away their faces from the blinding flashes, and the lovers hid theirs in

each other's bosom. The thunder now seemed to shake the very heavens under which it rolled. The riotous sea, as if awed by its power, hushed its appalling roar, and for a moment lay still and smooth as a lake between two wind-shutting hills. In the next it rolled with terrible rushes along its way, apparently without the compulsive power of the winds. Soon the wind came—feebly at first, but gathering a savage strength as it advanced.

The frail vessel, which had lain on the waters like a log, strained under its strong stirring and creaked as if her ribs were severing. High wave followed high wave, as if they were, indeed, not waves but mountains sliding off the face of the earth into the sea, and, rolling some way over the common level of the waters, they fell with a crushing noise into the bed of the sea. At length all the fury of the tempest seemed gathered, and again the lightning glanced along the deck and mingled with the washing waves, so that it was not easy to say whether the water was not lightning or the lightning water, for they appeared one. The crazy vessel dipped down, and now heaved to this side and now to that, like a toy in the hands of the mighty tempest. The master gave command, seeing that the sea broke with every rush over the ship, that those who feared the peril should go below; but not one of all the trembling throng stirred from where they held to the ship, for all foresaw the worst, and none thought it possible to escape from it. Bianca clung in silent horror to her husband, who strove to comfort her, and bid her take heart. The old man covered his gray head with the folds of his cloak, and as he sat motionless and wordless, seemed the very personification of resignation and despair. The crew were alternately on their

knees, or starting up with fresh courage to do the best they could for the groaning ship. All was of no avail. The hand of man could not guide her through such a sea, and the master would have quitted her helm had it not been something to hold by as the waters swept fiercely over the deck, carrying away whatever thing, animate or inanimate, was loose or infirm. The rudder having been some time powerless, it was not easy to guess whither the vessel had been driven. She had drifted before the wind, but the master knew not whether we were off the shore of Sicily or of Calabria. It was certain that we were not far from land, for in the pauses of the bellowing wind we might sometimes hear the sound of a convent bell, rung by the good religious of that pious sanctuary to warn the mariner of his nearness to the rocks off the land. When the wind got up again it blew the guiding sound back upon the shore, and left us without hope or help. Whilst we were thus expecting the worst, it came, for on a sudden the ship struck violently on a reef of rocks, and a loud cry from the crew, succeeded by a louder shriek from the women, proclaimed with horrid voice that all was lost.

The shock of her striking was so great that the affrighted folk who were clinging together were torn from each other's arms as by a stronger grasp and thrown apart to different parts of the deck, and the storm at that moment gave a hideous howl, as if it triumphed in its strength. The gallant Guido, though flung from his seat upon his face, fell with the fainting Bianca in his arms, but getting instantly upon his feet again, shouted with a resolute voice that put courage even into the hearts of the most despairing—

‘Fear nothing! God is the protector of the good! He will save us yet!’

The master at that moment shouted too, but fearfully and shrilly, as if he shrieked—

‘She is off again unharmed! Fear not, fear not! Our heavenly mother, Mary, and the good saints are about us!’

Then all on board crossed themselves on brow and breast, and muttered inwardly their prayers to Heaven. It was true that the vessel had received but little hurt, and with the recoiling rush of the waves she was thrown afloat again; but before the master could leap to the helm to put her farther out, a strong sea came driving before the wind, which now blew as if it would part the poles, and again flung her, as if she were no more than a sea-shell, upon the sharp rocks. She broke with the blow like parted bread, the stern half of her huge hulk tumbling over into the sea, while the head of the vessel lay reeling on the rock. Then the shriek of dismay and death went up from men that were never more to call on Heaven, for many of the crew were crowded about the helm, and when the ship parted, went down, never again to rise with life. The venerable Baptista, Guido, his fair wife, and my wretched self still clung to the chains at the bow. But not for long held we there, for a strong wave came mounting at our backs, and in a moment we were hurled with the halved vessel down from the reef into the gaping depth the wave had left in the sea. Again the fragment mounted to the surface, and we had all held to each other and to the ropes which were coiled round our bodies save the feeble Bianca, who had sunk out of the grasp of her husband, but, being entangled in the coil of the ropes, was not swept into the sea. We

could hear another wave coming with a rushing roar towards us, as if it had determined we should be its prey, when Guido, seeing with the calmness of courage that if we awaited it our escape was hopeless, cried out—

‘Father, take thou the care of the Lady Erminia, as I will of thy daughter, and let us at once leap beyond the reef into the sea, and struggle for the land.’

And now, shrink not as from a fiend to hear me tell the story of that crime which has cursed me here and may do so hereafter.

After these words he again cried out—

‘Bianca, my beloved, where art thou?’

The fatal love which had fed upon me, like a flame upon a living sacrifice, even in this awful hour burnt sensibly in my hateful heart, and prompted by that miserable passion and by the love of life, some fiend surely answered with my tongue—

‘Here!’

He caught at me as a desperate drowning person does at a floating weed, and leaping into the sea, cried to the old man—

‘Follow me, father, follow me!’

But Baptista heard him not. I knew that he was dead, and had fallen on his swooning child, who, as we leaped into the sea, shrieked out and audibly informed me that she still lived, though my struggling soul would gladly have quieted its conscience with the thought that she was dead, and so have palliated to itself, if it failed afterwards to do so to Guido and to Heaven, its damnable deceit. Guido heard not her cry, or if he did, took it, in the stunning turbulence of the tempest’s roar, for mine. For a long time he buffeted the waves with a giant’s

strength and a courage that could not be subdued, and still, as he beat the waves aside or breasted them like a living rock, he cried—

‘Be of good cheer, my Bianca ; I shall save thee yet!’

When I heard him call on her name, my heart smote so fearfully within me that, though I was sure of death if I disclosed that I was Erminia, I thrice had nearly confessed the dreadful truth. My love of life and my cruel love of him, however, stifled my voice. Twice I saw in the glare of the lightning that he gazed upon me to see if I had life, for the fear of exposure and the peril of the waters made me voiceless and strengthless, and I lay almost lifeless in his clasping arm, as he struck through the waves with the other. He looked on me again, but the waters had washed my long hair over my face so that he knew me not, and still he clasped me to him tenderly, and beat his burdened way through the sea. For a long time he contended thus resolutely with death, when, just as his strength was spent and he had bidden me commit my soul to Heaven, he descried lights not far from us, and faintly told me still to hope, for we were near land. This nerved him anew, and he plied his way lustily, till at length we touched the rocky shore where, summoning a desperate man’s might, he clambered up the low craggy cliffs, and feeling the firm earth under him, fell to the ground from utter exhaustion. For some time I knew not what occurred, for safety then seemed more dreadful to me than the dangers I had passed through, and I swooned. When I recovered I found Guido endeavouring to bring life back by cherishing me in his bosom ; and ever and anon he would call for help as strongly as he could to the



distant fishermen's cottages where he had first discerned the light which led him to the shore.

At length we saw a light approaching the spot where we were, and we could hear the loud halloo of the comers. After some time, guided by Guido's cry, a fisherman came up with a torch. As the light neared us I shrank from it like a foul and guilty thing that loves darkness rather than day, but in vain. Guido's anxious eye looked at last upon my face as the light fell on me. Uttering a dreadful shriek of dismay and despair, he dropped me from his arms and, starting from the ground like one made mad by some sudden stroke upon the brain, he rushed, staggering and strengthless but wildly, to the cliff. I clung to him, as well as I was able, to prevent him leaping again into the sea, but I dared not speak to him save by feeble inarticulate cries. He glanced at me with a look which withered me, and shaking me off like a serpent to the earth, with a terrible cry flung himself from the cliff. I beheld him, as the lightning momentarily flashed over the sky, beating his way back to the wreck, and at length I saw him grasp at some white burden on the waters and again turn for the shore. Suddenly his right arm ceased to strike out, and though I kept my almost breaking eyes fixed on the spot, when the next lightning flashed I saw that he was no longer there.

Crying to God in my despair, I fell on my face and became insensible to all about me.

Within these peaceful and holy walls years have since passed over me; but the thought of that dreadful hour, and of the still more dreadful guilt which it brought upon my soul, is ever present to my mind. The images of Guido and his murdered

bride rise between me and all rest—even between me and devotion. My wealth has been given to the pious uses of this convent, and my penance and prayers are proportioned to my great guilt. But the calming and restoring influence even of religion cannot wholly kill the troubled agony of a memory like mine. Still, in the trust in God and the holy saints, I look with hopeful joy to the term of all human suffering. Oh, if the intensity of earthly agony can extenuate and atone for earthly guilt, then even I may dare to look with confidence towards Heaven!

## THE BRIGANDS

CASTEL MADAMA, 30th August 1819.

I SEND you the detailed account you requested of the misfortune which befell me on the 17th current. Early on the morning of that day the factor (bailiff or farm-agent) of the Cavalier Settimio Bischì, named Bartolomeo Marasca, a person well known to me, came to my house with a letter from his master, desiring me to come to Tivoli, my assistance as a surgeon being necessary both to Signor Gregorio Celestini and to the nun-sister Chiara Eletta Morelli. On this account I hurried over my visits to my patients at Castel Madama, and set off on horseback, accompanied by the factor, who was armed with a gun, towards Tivoli. I passed through all the parish of San Gregorio and that of Tivoli as far as the second arch of the antique aqueducts which cross the road two miles from that town, in a spot commonly called the Narrows of Tivoli, without accident. And here I must observe that it is impossible for the road, from its natural position, to be better adapted for banditti and more terrible for travellers. After passing the bridge *Degli Archi*, on the way to Tivoli, it is bounded on the left by a steep hill covered with thick under-wood, which reaches to the very edge of the road.

The other side is a continued precipice of great height and quite perpendicular to the plain, through which the Anio runs below. The breadth of this road is very little more than sufficient for a carriage, so that it is not possible to perceive the danger which may be easily concealed in the thicket above, nor to fly from it on either side when it bursts out upon one, and therefore one must inevitably become the victim of lawless violence.

I had scarcely passed the second arch of the antique aqueducts when two armed men rushed from the thicket near a little lane to the left, and stopped the way, and pointing their guns at the factor, who was riding a little before, ordered him to dismount. Meantime two others came out of the wood behind me, so as to have us between them and the former. We had both dismounted on the first intimation. The two men behind me ordered me to turn back instantly, and to walk before them, not by the road to Castel Madama, but by that to San Gregorio.

The first question they asked me was, whether I was the Prince of Castel Madama, meaning, I fancy, the Vice-Prince, who had passed a little before. To this I answered that I was not the Prince, but a poor surgeon of Castel Madama; and to convince them that I spoke the truth, I showed them my case of lancets and my bag of surgical instruments. All was, however, of no use. During our walk towards San Gregorio I noticed that the number of brigands increased to thirteen. One took my watch, another my case of lancets. At the beginning of our march we met at short distances four youths belonging to San Gregorio, and one elderly man, all of whom were obliged to share my fate. Shortly afterwards we met another man, and an old woman, whose earrings

were taken, and they were then permitted to continue their journey.

In the meadow by the last aqueduct the horses which I and Bartolomeo had ridden were turned loose, and after passing the ravine called *dell Valcatore*, we began to pass the steepest part of the mountain with such speed as, together with the alarm I felt, made me pant so violently that I trembled every moment lest I should burst a blood-vessel. At length, however, we reached the top of a hill, where we were allowed to rest, and we sat down on the pass. The factor Marasca then talked a good deal to the brigands, showed himself well acquainted with their numbers, and said other things which my wretched state of mind prevented me from attending to very distinctly. Seeing him apparently so intimate with the robbers, a suspicion crossed my mind that I was betrayed by him.

The chief brigand turned to me, and throwing down my lancet case by me, said that he had reflected upon my condition, and that he would think about my ransom. Then I, with tears, explained to him my poverty and my narrow means, and told him how, to gain a little money, I was on my road to Tivoli to attend a sick stranger. Then he ordered me to write to that stranger, and desire him to send two thousand dollars, or I should be a dead man, and to warn him against sending out an armed force. He brought me pen, ink, and paper, and I was obliged to write what he bade me with all the earnestness that thirteen assassins and the fear of death could inspire me with. While I was writing he sent two of his men to take a man who was ploughing a little lower down. He belonged to San Gregorio, but one of the messengers having seen one of Castel Madama in the plain below, he went down for him,

and they were both brought up to us. As soon as they were come I begged the man of Castel Madama to carry my letter to Tivoli for Signor Celestini, and in order to enforce it, I sent my case of surgical instruments, with which he was well acquainted, as a token. This countryman, who was as civil as he was wary, prudent, and fit for the business, accepted the commission which I gave him, and after having afforded me some encouragement, without however offending the brigands, he gave me some bread which he had with him, and set off for Tivoli, the chief desiring him to take one of the horses we had left below, so that he might make more speed. The ploughman from San Gregorio was sent with him, but not quite to Tivoli, but only to await at a certain spot the return of the peasant of Castel Madama.

We were remaining in the same state in expectation of the return of the messenger when in about three hours' time we saw in the distance a man on horseback coming straight to us, which we believed to be the man returning. A little while after, however, several people were seen together, which the chief took to be the armed force of Tivoli. He abused one of his companions who had broken his spy-glass the day before, because he could not obtain a more satisfactory view of them. At length, having made the best observations he could, he concluded that there was really an armed force advancing, and gave orders to his men to retire to the highest and most woody part of the mountain, obliging me and the other prisoners to keep pace with them. After a long and painful march, finding himself in a safe place, he halted, and there awaited the return of his messenger; but as he still did not arrive, the chief came to me and said that perhaps it might happen

to me as it did to a certain inhabitant of Viletri, who had been taken by this very party, that entered his house in disguise, and carried him off to the woods, and because his ransom was long in coming, they killed him, and when the money came the messenger found him dead. I was alarmed beyond measure at this story, and regarded it as a forerunner of my own speedy death. However, I entreated them with tears to have a little patience, and the messenger would surely return with the money. Meantime, to satisfy the chief as well as his companions, I told them I might have written another letter to Castel Madama, with orders to sell whatever I possessed, and to send up the money immediately. Thank God, this pleased them, and they instantly caused me to write another letter to Castel Madama, and one of the prisoners from San Gregorio was sent with it. After he was gone I saw the factor Marasca walking carelessly about among the brigands, looking at their arms and making angry gestures, but he did not speak. Shortly after he came and sat down by me. It was then that the chief, having a large stick in his hand, came up to him, and without saying a single word, gave him a blow on the back of the head just where it joins the neck. It did not kill him, and he rose and cried—

‘I have a wife and children. For God’s sake spare my life.’

Thus saying, he defended himself as well as he could with his hands. Other brigands closed round him. A struggle ensued, and they rolled together down a steep place. I closed my eyes; my head dropped on my breast. I heard a cry or two, but I seemed to have lost all sensation. In a very short time the brigands returned, and I saw the chief

thrust his dagger, still stained with blood, into its sheath. Then, turning to me, he announced the death of the factor in these very words—

‘Do not fear; we have killed the factor because he was a sbirro. Such as you are not sbirri. Then he was no use among us. He looked at our arms and seemed disposed to murmur, and if the force had come up he might have been dangerous.’

Thus they got rid of Marasca.

The chief, seeing that the money did not come from Tivoli, and being afraid lest troops should be sent, seemed uncertain what to do, and said to his companions—

‘How shall we dispose of our prisoners? We must either kill them or send them home.’

They could not decide on either, and he came and sat down by me. I, remembering that I had a little money about me, which might amount altogether to about thirty pauls (three crowns), gave them frankly to him to gain his goodwill. He took it in good part, and said he would keep it to pay the spy.

After this it came on to rain heavily. It was already twenty-one o’clock (about four in the afternoon, English time), and I was wet to the skin. Before the rain was quite over we heard some voices from the top of the hill above us on the left hand. Then a strict silence was kept, that we might discover if they were the voices of the messengers from Tivoli, or some party of the troops of whom they seemed so afraid. I endeavoured to convince them that it was probably the messenger. They then called out, ‘Come down.’

No one, however, came, nor did we ever find out who it was, so we remained where we were.

After another short interval we heard another



voice also from above, on the left ; and then we said surely this must be the messenger. The brigands would not, however, chance anything, and forced us to go on to a place a good deal higher than that whence the voice proceeded. When we reached it they all presented their muskets, keeping the prisoners behind them ; and thus prepared to stand on the defensive, they cried out—

‘Come forward.’

In a few moments the men appeared among the trees ; one of them was the peasant of Castel Madama, who had been sent in the morning to Signor Celestini at Tivoli ; the other the ploughman of San Gregorio, his companion.

As they were recognised they were ordered to lie down with their faces to the ground, and asked if they came alone. The man from Castel Madama answered—

‘It is a fine thing, indeed, that me, who am almost dead with the fatigue of climbing these mountains, with the weight of five hundred scudi about me, should be obliged to lie down with my face to the earth. Here’s your money. It was all that could be got together in the town.’

Then the chief took the money and ordered us to change our station. Having arrived at a convenient place, we stopped, and he asked if there were any letters. Being answered that there were two, he gave them me to read, and learning from them that the sum sent was five hundred crowns, he counted them, and finding them exact, said all was well, praised the punctuality of the peasant, and gave him some silver as a reward for his trouble. His companion also received a small present. The robbers, who no longer cared to keep the prisoners

belonging to San Gregorio, from whom they could not hope to get anything, released them all in this spot. I, therefore, and the peasant from Castel Madama remained the only prisoners, and we began to march across the mountains, perhaps only for the sake of changing place. I asked why they did not set me at liberty as well as the others, as they had already received so considerable a sum on my account. The chief said that he meant to await the return of the messenger sent to Castel Madama. I continued to press him to let me go before night, which was now drawing on apace, saying that perhaps it had not been possible to procure any more money at Castel Madama, and that if I remained out all night on the hill in the cold air it would have been better to have killed me at once. The chief stopped me, and bade me take good care how I said such things, for that to them killing a man was a matter of perfect indifference. The same thing was also said to me by another outlaw, who gave me his arm on our rocky journey. At length we reached the top of the mountain, where there were some pools of water formed by the rain that had fallen a little before. There they gave me some very hard and black bread that I might eat, and I drank some of the water. I drank three times, but I found it impossible to eat the bread.

The journey was continued over the tops of these mountains which succeed one another, till we arrived at a place known by the name of S. Sierla about midnight. There we saw an ass feeding, and heard some one call to us, to ask if we had seen the ass. The chief in a feigned voice answered 'Yes,' and then made the man from Castel Madama desire him to come down for the ass. It appeared that the man

was afraid to come down, for which reason the chief said that if he had been near him he would have poniarded him. Piqued that the shepherd was afraid of them, he said—

‘Did one ever hear of a shepherd being afraid of the brigands?’

When the man at length came down they reproached him with his fear, but he, taking courage, said he was not afraid, and invited them to his hut. The ass was then taken and a greatcoat put upon its back, with a shepherd’s coat of sheepskin, upon which I was mounted, and we went on to the hut, where there was a threshing-floor. This was the only time I saw the brigands drink anything but water. The chief told me they were always afraid when fresh wine came lest it should be drugged, and that they always made whoever brought it drink a good deal of it, and if in two hours no bad symptom appeared they used the wine.

After this we went to the sheepfold, which we reached about the fifth hour, and there we found a quantity of boiled meat which the brigands tied up in handkerchiefs and a greatcoat, together with some cheese. Before we left the fold the chief, reflecting that the messenger was not come back from Castel Madama, began to think he might have made his escape entirely, because he was one of the prisoners from San Gregorio. He, therefore, determined to make me write another letter, and accordingly brought me all that was requisite for writing, and ordered me to tell my friends at Castel Madama that if they did not send eight hundred crowns the following day they would put me to death, or carry me to the woods of Fajola if there was a farthing less than the above-named sum. I consequently wrote

a second letter, and gave it to the countryman to carry, telling him also by word of mouth to say that if they found no purchasers for my effects at Castel Madama they might send them to Tivoli, and sell them there for whatever they would fetch. The chief of the brigands also requested that a few shirts might be sent. One of the brigands proposed—I do not know why—to cut off one of my ears and send it to Castel Madama. It was well for me that the chief did not approve of the civil proposal, so it was not put into effect. He, however, wanted the countryman to set out that moment, but the man, with his usual coolness, said that it was not possible to go down that steep mountain by night. The chief told him then that he might remain in the sheepcote all night and set out when it was daylight.

‘But take notice,’ said he, ‘that if you do not return by the twentieth hour to-morrow you may go about your business, for we shall throw Cherubini into some pit.’

The peasant tried to persuade him that it might not be possible to collect so much money in a small town at so short a notice, and begged to have a little more time. The chief replied that they had no time to waste, and that if he did not return on the morrow by the twentieth hour I should be a dead man.

After they had given their orders they left the countryman at the sheepfold to wait for daylight before he set out to Castel Madama, which was about three miles from it. The brigands then set off, carrying me with them, and obliging a shepherd to carry the greatcoat in which they had wrapped up the cold meat and cheese. And now, instead of the

low thicket it was so difficult to walk through, we came to fine tall timber trees, where the road was comparatively smooth, except where a fallen tree lay here and there across it. At that time I was overcome with fear in consequence of the new threats I had heard to kill me the next day if the whole sum of eight hundred crowns was not brought by the twentieth hour, for I thought it quite impossible that so much money could be collected at Castel Madama. I therefore recommended myself to God, and begged Him to have compassion on my wretched state, when one of the brigands—a man of great stature, who figured among them as a kind of second chief—came up to me, and taking me by the arm, he assisted me to walk, and said—

‘Now, Cherubini, that you cannot tell the man from Castel Madama, I assure you that you shall to-morrow go home free however small the sum he brings may be. Be of good cheer, therefore, and do not distress yourself.’

At that moment I felt such comfort from the assurance of the outlaw that he appeared to me to be an angel from heaven. Without thinking why I should not, I kissed his hand and thanked him fervently for his unexpected kindness.

When we again reached the thicket and found a fit place, we all lay down to sleep, and I had the skins to rest on as before, and the chief wrapped my legs in his own greatcoat, and he and the second chief lay on each side of me. Two sentinels were placed to keep watch, and to prevent the shepherd with the provisions from making his escape. I know not how long we rested before one of the sentinels came and gave notice that the day was breaking.

‘Come again then when it is lighter,’ said the chief; and all was again quiet.

I turned my face so as not to see the brigands and dozed a little, till I was roused by the cry of some wild bird. I am not superstitious, but I had often heard that the shriek of the owl foreboded evil, and in the state of spirits in which I was everything had more than its usual effect upon me. I started up and said—

‘What bird was that?’

They answered—

‘A hawk.’

‘Thank God!’ I replied, and lay down again.

Among my sufferings I cannot forget the stinging and torment of the gnats, which fastened on my face and throat, but after the death of Marasca I dared not even raise my hand to drive them away lest it should be taken for a sign of impatience. A little after this we all arose and walked on for about an hour, when we came to a little open space in the midst of the thicket, where the brigands began to eat their cold meat, inviting me to join them,—but I only took a little new cheese without bread. After they had breakfasted they lay down to sleep, the second chief giving me his greatcoat to wrap myself in, as the ground was damp. While the others slept one of them began to read a little book, which I understood to be the romance of the Cavalier Meschino. After about an hour they all arose and filed off one by one to a higher place, leaving a single sentinel with me and the shepherd. In another hour the youngest of the robbers came to relieve the guard, who then went and joined the others. When I saw this, and perceived that they were then engaged in a sort of council of war, I feared that they were coming to

some resolution about my life, and that the new sentinel was come to put their cruel designs into execution. He very soon, however, said to me—

‘Be cheerful, for to-night you will be at home.’

This gave me some comfort ; but as I could not entirely trust them, I had still an internal fear, which, however, I endeavoured to hide. Shortly afterwards we were called to join the rest, our station being now on the mountain commonly called Monte Picione, not very far from the ancient sanctuary of Mentorella. There we remained the rest of the day, only going out of the way once, on the approach of a flock of goats, that we might not be seen. We soon returned.

Then the second chief, who said he was of Sonnino, and one of the five who went to treat with the President of Frosinone, began to talk of the political nature of their situation. He said that the Government would never succeed in putting them down by force ; that they were not a fortress to batter down with cannon, but rather birds which fly round the tops of the sharpest rocks without having any fixed home ; that if, by any misfortune, some perished, they were sure of the recruits to replace their loss, for criminals, who would be glad to take refuge among them, were never wanting ; that the number of their present company amounted to one hundred and thirty individuals ; and that they had an idea of undertaking some daring exploit, perhaps of threatening Rome itself. He ended by saying that the only way to put an end to their depredations would be to give them a general pardon, without reservation or limitation, that they might all return to their houses without fear of treachery ; but otherwise they would not trust to nor treat with any one ; and he added that this was the reason why they had not concluded anything

with the prelate sent to Frosinone to treat with them. As it was, their company was determined to trust nothing but a pardon from the Pope's own lips. And he repeated this same sentiment to me several times during the second day that I was obliged to pass with him and his fellows.

One of the brigands begged me to endeavour to obtain from Government the freedom of his wife, Marincia Carcapola di Pisterso, now in the prison of St. Michael in Rome. Another said to me—

‘Have patience, Signor Cherubini; we made a blunder when we took you. We intended to have had the Prince, who, according to our information, was to have passed by at that very time.’

In fact he was to have travelled that road; and just before I passed not the Prince but the person commonly called so, the Vice-Prince or Agent, Signor Filippo Gagoni, had gone by, but fortunately for him, they did not know him, because, as I understood, he was walking leisurely, only accompanied by an unarmed boy, who was leading his horse. The band bit their fingers with rage when they found that they had let him slip, for they said that they would not have released him under three thousand crowns. The brigand who said all this had the collar of the Madonna della Carmine round his neck, and he said to me—

‘Suffer patiently for the love of God.’

Then the chief came to me and told me that he was not very well, and desired me to prescribe for him, which I did in writing. Another, the same as had taken my watch from me, told me that the watch did not go, and showed it to me. I found that he had broken the glass and the minute hand. He said if I had any money he would sell the watch to



me, but I gave it to him back again, saying nothing but shrugging my shoulders. Meantime the day was drawing to a close, and the chief, taking out his watch, said it was now twenty o'clock. He called the shepherd to him and ordered him to return to the sheepfold which we had left during the night, and see if the countryman had come back with the answer to the second letter to Castel Madama. In that case he ordered him to accompany him back to the place we were now in ; and if he were not come he ordered him to wait three hours, and if he did not come then, to return alone. The shepherd obeyed, and after an hour and a half he came back with the countryman and another shepherd who had been sent with him. They brought with them two sealed packets of money, which they said contained six hundred crowns. They also brought a few shirts of home-spun linen, which the chief had begged of me, and some food for myself, and a little wine to recruit me. I could, however, take nothing but a pear and a little wine, and the rest was consumed by the robbers. They took the money without counting it, and gave the messengers some silver for their pains, after which they gave me leave to depart. Thus I found myself free from them, after having thanked them for their civility and for my life, which they had had the goodness to spare.

On the way home the two men of Castel Madama informed me that the prisoner from San Gregorio, who was sent the day before with the first letter to Castel Madama for money, and who had not been seen since, had really been there, and had gone back the same day at the hour and to the place appointed with the sum of one hundred and thirty-seven crowns sent from Castel Madama ; but the

robbers having neglected to send any one to the place agreed on because we were a great way from it, the messenger returned to town with the money, after having waited till night, carrying back the intelligence that the factor had been killed, which alarmed all my townsmen, who began to fear for my life. I found that the last six hundred crowns had been furnished half by Castel Madama and half by Tivoli.

I went on to Castel Madama, where all the people anxiously expected me. In fact, a mile before I reached the town, I found a number of people of all ranks who had come out to meet me, and I arrived at home a little before night in the midst of such public congratulations and acclamations as were never before heard, which afforded a most affecting spectacle. I had hardly arrived when the arch-priest Giustini ordered the bells to be rung to call the people to the parish church. At the first sound all the people flocked thither with me to render public and devout thanks to the most merciful God and to our protector, S. Michael the Archangel, for my deliverance. The priest had summoned the people together when he first heard of my capture, and soon after, when the six hundred crowns were raised. On each occasion he had assembled his congregation in that very church to offer up supplications to the Lord to grant me that mercy which He deigned afterwards to show.

I cannot conclude without saying that the epoch of this my misfortune will ever be remembered by me. I shall always remember that the Lord God visited me as a father; for at the moment when His hand seemed to be heavy upon me, He moved the city of Tivoli and the whole of the people of Castel Madama, even to the very poorest, to subscribe their money and to sell their goods—in so short a time and with

such profusion—for my sake. The same event will also always remind me what gratitude I owe to the Signors Cartoni and Celestini, both Romans, who with such openness of heart exerted themselves in my favour. I now pray God that He will preserve me from all the bad consequences which commonly arise out of similar misfortunes.—I am always your affectionate friend,

EUSTACHIO CHERUBINI.

## THE VILLAGE PRIEST

TOWARDS the end of the year 1769 the island of Corsica, notwithstanding its heroic resistance, fell into the power of the French. The illustrious Paoli had retired to England, accompanied by the wishes and regrets of his countrymen, whose destinies he had for so long vainly endeavoured to control ; and the Corsicians in losing him lost all hope of success, all hope of ever regaining their independence. They submitted with a pang to their new masters. Those, however, of the inhabitants who were settled at the foot of the mountains that divide the island north and south, those whose blood was warmest and whose patriotism was most ardent, still revolted at the idea of paying homage to their enemies, who, as they considered, fought neither for glory nor for country, nor for the aggrandisement of their territory. But what roused them most of all was the thought of being sold like a flock of sheep—they who, with the highest belief in themselves, were possessed of a lofty appreciation of human dignity. They were still further incensed when they remembered how they had been deceived by a people to whose honour their kindled imaginations had raised altars, and who had always been represented in their writings as a nation of noble paladins and illustrious knights, born protectors

of innocence, sworn enemies of injustice, and cherishing, above all, honour, courage, and loyalty. Having up to then been always deceived or tyrannised over by their rulers, they little dreamed that this fair land of France, which they had been accustomed to look upon as the ally and accomplice of the Genoese, would on the contrary treat them as her dearest children, and that they would one day be as proud as they were happy in belonging to her. Amongst those who offered the stoutest opposition, the inhabitants of the village of Guagno distinguished themselves by their courage, their audacity, and their love of independence. Of a warm and impulsive nature, which predisposed them to a life of adventure, they would never acknowledge themselves beaten, but when defeated would ascribe it to treachery. Inured to hardship, daring, eager after honour, the inhabitants of Guagno had been accustomed to a free and roaming life, engaged either in the pursuit of the mouflon amid the snowy peaks of Monte Rotondo, in hunting the wild boar amid the *makis* and the dense forests, or in tending their flocks in the depths of the valleys or on the immense stretches of table-land on the coast. Their manner of living exercised a powerful effect on their spirits, and old warlike traditions excited their imagination as in the past. The disastrous years 1769 and 1774 are even now called by them the years of humiliation. On the slope of a little hill, shaded by pines and chestnut trees, the village of Guagno offers a most enchanting prospect. The horizon is bounded by the pointed peaks of the mountains, above which rise like pyramids, the one quite bare and the other wooded, the crests of Monte Rotondo and Tritorre.

A terrible hatred had for several years deluged

the country with blood. The *voceri*, the popular songs of the peasantry, which are still sung in this village, attest the horror caused by these dreaded feuds, brought about in the first instance by some affront, and afterwards embittered by a *rembecco*, or a taunt flung at any one who abstained from avenging an insult.

A young man of the family of Leca, Giovanni, nephew of the village priest, had fallen in love with Anna Dea, of the family of Poli, called Codanello. The beauty of this young girl has been celebrated by the poets of the time, and in a song of Leca, which has come down to us. On one of those beautiful summer nights, under the clear fragrant sky of Guagno, the lover had ventured forth to sing under the window of Anna Dea the song he had composed in her praise. But the tender feelings of love which it breathed were mingled with a certain spirit of pride, of boasting, and of menace.

When he had finished his song several musket shots were heard in quick succession, awakening the echoes of the deep valleys around. The father of Anna Dea, old Poli, affronted by the tone and the threatenings of Leca and his companions, forbade his daughter to open the doors and to offer refreshments, as is customary when being serenaded. Nay, more; he ordered the windows to be closed and the lights to be put out, whilst a voice from the house raised the cry of the *scuoccalo*, announcing to the village the insult that had been offered to the family. At this affront the young men returned to their homes, full of anger and vowing vengeance.

A few days afterwards two women belonging to the two families having quarrelled about some trifling matter in the market-place, the *scuoccalo* was heard

from the house of the Leca. From that day young Leca fell a victim to the deepest melancholy, hatred, and vexation. He found his hopes frustrated, and the thirst for vengeance filled his heart. One day in the country, seeking in the pages of Metastasio some solace for his grief, he saw on an adjacent hill the young girl, the object of his hopes, who had so haughtily repelled his love. Beside himself with passion, he rushed to her, snatched her kerchief from her neck, undid her hair, and cut off one of her long locks. The weeping girl ran to hide herself in her father's arms. The next day at the brotherhood Codanello offered up prayers as was his wont, then raising his voice, he said—

‘No member of the family of Poli will attend church until the lock of hair torn from my daughter shall have grown again; but you know the proverb, “When the hair goes, the beard grows.”’

From that moment war was declared between the two families, and it lasted till 1769, when all internal dissension ceased in view of the common danger to the country.

The village priest at that time was a member of the family of Leca, a man less distinguished by the austerity of his manners than by his talents and his love for his country. Although he had been sent when very young to study in Genoa, his hatred of the foreign yoke had been made stronger by the incessant outrages of a nation hostile to his country. Having joined the priesthood, the young Corsican quitted a place which he abhorred to repair to the illustrious capital of the Christian world. Received everywhere with distinction, caressed by fortune, he soon saw himself on the high road to fame; but the memory of his dear mountains—its forests,

clear brooks, and waterfalls; his love for his country, and for her freedom, impelled him to sacrifice all advantages, present and to come, and he left Rome to take the humble post in his village. His heart was filled with love of God and country, and his only care was to pray in his church for those who fell fighting in the sacred cause. The time which he snatched from prayer he spent in helping the poor, whom he loved as his children, in comforting the weak, in stifling the germs of dissension, and in carrying everywhere hope, consolation, and joy. The French army already occupied the most important places in the district of Vico, which had capitulated, and the regiment of Labonillerie having announced its intention of venturing into the interior by roads then almost impracticable, the news spread to Guagno. All the terrified inhabitants came rushing tumultuously about the streets crying, 'To arms!' Some thought they could already see the French soldiers and distinguish their flags; others announced that they had crossed the torrent, and arrived at Cruzino. Everybody gave his advice: it was best to go and meet the enemy—best to await him—better to die than to surrender. Everything was confusion and disorder. There was only one man who seemed not to take part in the general commotion, and he began to harangue the multitude, when suddenly the bell tolled to prayer for the dying, and cries of 'To the church, to the church!' resounded from all parts. Immediately they all crowded to the church, as the place where the most important matters were usually discussed. Arrived there, the people, just now so boisterous, became still. Mothers, with their children in tears, invoked with fervour the protection of God for the afflicted, and implored Him to remove the



dangers that threatened them. The man who had been about to harangue the multitude stood apart. He was standing supported by a stout knotty staff. His beard was long and neglected, his eyes shaded by thick heavy eyebrows, his forehead furrowed with deep wrinkles. It was old Poli. He cast his eyes distractedly around him, and fixed them tenderly from time to time on a young girl of rare beauty, who knelt in a corner of the church—Anna-Dea, the pride of his heart and the object of all his thoughts. The presence of the priest, who had ascended the pulpit, roused him from his reverie. All eyes were now turned towards the pulpit, but those of the old man now glanced with anger on the priest, and now resumed their gentleness as they rested on his daughter. Suddenly the sonorous voice of the pastor broke the silence.

‘Dear and unfortunate brethren,’ he cried, ‘my lacerated heart derives great joy from day to day in reading in your countenances the courage by which you are animated, and your contempt for a life which could only be endured by slaves—for they are not men. Of what use is this life if you are to be deprived of the only pleasure you possess? True, you only inhabit these forests and these mountains, but here you find your delights, here at least you are free. But it would be hoping against hope that your rocks and your miserable hiding-places should afford you any security from the slavery of a cruel and ungrateful country, whose only object is to betray us, as it formerly betrayed our fathers of this country of Henry II, which, after having caused the purest and most generous blood to flow in torrents, hands us over to the mercies of our barbarous oppressors. To-day we are being ruined and outraged. They

talk of selling us like slaves or vile cattle in the market-place of Genoa. Oh shame! oh infamy! What else could you expect from a nation which has nothing in common with you—neither language, nor laws, nor customs, nor sky; and which has invaded our country as a just punishment for our transgressions? When the Lord wished to chastise the Israelites for their unfaithfulness he said to them by the mouth of the prophet Jeremiah: "House of Israel, I will send to you a people from a distant country, a mighty people, an ancient people, a people whose language will be unknown to you, and you will not understand what they say."

'But all is not desperate; the mercy of God is infinite. Pray fervently then, my brethren; trust firmly in God; He may yet, if moved by your tears and repentance, put away from you the strong man. The lion, hidden for a moment, can reappear more terrible. In one night the Lord destroyed the Assyrian hosts. Heaven and nature will that you should remain free, encircling you with mountains, forests, and deep ravines—barriers which tyranny will be unable to cross. Remember that where the Spirit of God is there dwells liberty. Swear then to shed your blood to the last drop, and to die if it must be, rather than to buy an infamous life by cowardice still more infamous.'

All present, with a shout, raised their hands in token of assent. One man only left the church, struck with consternation; but scarcely had he reached the threshold when cries resounded of 'Death to the traitor! Death to Poli!'

'No,' said a voice which resounded above the rest. 'Death to the only enemies of our country.'

At these cries Anna-Dea fled from the church

after her father, who reached his house without appearing daunted by the outcries of his enemies. The threatening crowd pressed after him, but a faithful servant coming up, immediately closed and barricaded the gates of the courtyard of the house in which the old man had taken refuge. Meanwhile the cries of the crowd grew louder, and the multitude, inflamed by young Leca, were about storming the house when Poli showed himself at one of the windows.

‘You are enemies well worthy of France,’ he said to them, contemptuously. ‘You who turn your anger against an old man whom you have deprived of children and brothers. You call yourselves Corsicans and brave men! Cowards and boasters that you are!’

Then, turning to Giovanni Leca: ‘Thou knowest what I mean, thou young villain; thou who hast urged on the others in my pursuit, and who darest appear before my eyes with thy luxuriant locks to remind me, no doubt, of thy cowardice and thy outrages. But thou knowest who I am, and if thou hast caused blood and tears to flow among the Poli, the Leca shall not be spared. However, in this matter thou wilt do well to trust to thy heels, for to-morrow thou wilt require them to escape the pursuit of the French.’

‘I fly from the French, thou hoary-headed scoundrel? Thou at least shalt not see me fly. Thou knowest well enough that the Leca do not fly even before death’; and transported with rage, he and his followers immediately set themselves to break down the gate. The hinges creaked, the bars shook, and the yells of the people became louder and louder, when the pastor hastening to the scene, cried breathlessly—

'Is this your field of battle, young people? and do you in this manner prove yourselves the sons of Corsican liberty, the children of the country, held in reserve, as it were in a sanctuary, to serve her in the hour of her extreme peril? Do you think that by using your strength against an infirm old man you are learning to brave death, or rather to meet it? What do you hope for by insulting a man's gray hairs, even though he be an enemy? To propitiate heaven? Shame on you!'

At these words of their pastor the crowd departed from Poli's castle on their way home; but at this moment was heard the clamorous sound of the concha from the bottom of the valley, and presently a mounted man was seen riding at full speed, his musket slung over his shoulders, and carrying a concha at his side.

'It is Triccino d'Orte on his dapple gray horse,' they cried.

'Yes, it is he. No doubt he brings us some sad news. Let us run to meet him.'

'The enemy! The enemy!' cried the young man in the distance. 'To arms! To arms!'

At length reaching the place, he fired his pistol in the air, causing the tocsin to sound.

'The enemy,' he said, 'have already passed the gorges of Soro—the villains! They wanted to arrest me to make me act as guide and spy—curse them! to arms, friends.'

Soon the inhabitants came flocking in from all parts, carrying weapons. Men, women, children,—old and young,—animated by the same ardour, came to hold themselves at the disposal of their chiefs. The *podestà* and the fathers of the commune ordered Uccellone, the public crier, to sound the *colombo*

from the steeple. This famous shell, which from time immemorial had been the rallying signal in Corsica in great emergencies, resounded over the valley which stretches from Soro to the hills of Vergiolo, and the French could hear it from the hill of St. Antonio, where they halted, although the place was surrounded with *makis*, trees, and heather.

On the place of St. Nicholas, surrounded by his parishioners, the pastor of Guagno, intent on everything, like the commander of an army, enjoined the old people to bring arms, and the young girls to prepare lint and bandages, to fill the *carcheres* with powder, to barricade the windows of the houses with mattresses, stones, and planks, to make loopholes, and to secure all the doors. Then turning towards an old priest he said—

‘If we are driven back to the village, elevate the Host and sing the vespers of the week’s saint. At the last flickering of the taper a great sacrifice to God and to our country will be consummated.’

He then descended at the head of his mountaineers to meet the enemy. Arrived near the torrent of Melo, he halted his troops and addressed them in these terms—

‘All human power is vain without God. Of what avail against Him would be all the powers on this earth? He needs but a word to make them all dust. Let us therefore prostrate ourselves before His presence and invoke the aid of the holy Virgin Mary, and the great St. Nicholas, our blessed patron, so that we may be deemed worthy to be succoured and saved by Him who lives and reigns through all ages.’ With great fervour he intoned the *Sub tuum præsidium confugimus*. After a few moments of silent prayer he rose.

‘Courage, my friends,’ he said. ‘God is with us. A narrow passage, capable of making up for our deficiency of numbers, offers itself in the steep and winding path of Melo. If we succeed in driving back the French in our first encounter, victory is certain. Once discouraged by resistance it is easy to beat them. Let our war cry be: *Paoli and liberty!* Remember that not only Corsica but all Europe will admire your courage. What glory will be yours, you obscure dwellers in the mountains, to serve as models to the friends of European liberty, and of terror to the tyrants who presume to impose upon you not only a passive and absolute obedience, but even an oath of fidelity.’

He then ordered the young men to go out skirmishing, protected by the *scopa* and the bushes, while he disposed others in ambush behind the trees, the hedges, and the walls, to wait until the French troops had ventured forth out of the ravine. As for himself, having chosen a suitable locality for the combat, he held himself, with the bulk of his men, in readiness to fight to the death or to beat a retreat, as need might be.

Meantime the French continued their advance in such order as the nature of the ground would permit. The young men of Guagno, who had been sent on in advance, fired on the first soldiers who presented themselves. The French, impatient and furious at finding themselves assailed by hidden foes, dashed on to force the passage at all risks. The colonel was the first to advance; but perceiving that the path led through steep and towering rocks, he commanded the halt to be sounded, feeling loath to fight against a people dear to France. To guard against any attack he bivouacked his troops on an open piece of ground.

The shades of night had already fallen on the mountains; the peasants had returned to their homes to seek a little rest and to provide for the needs of the next day. Old Poli, a prey to his distracted thoughts, lay in his arm-chair near the *ziglia*. He said to himself—

‘I have suffered before now, but never have I felt the weight of my misfortunes so keenly as to-day. Bowed down with age and infirmity, outraged and attacked by my enemies in my own house. Oh rage! they have left me my life to enjoy the pleasure of making it a bitter one. They have compassion they say on my gray hairs. Cruel mockery! A Poli outraged with impunity! I feel I have lived too long. But must I die without being revenged? Shall I have sighed in vain for the death of my enemies? Shall I leave, alone and deprived of all support, the only being that binds me to life. No, rather come disgrace.’

His rage and desire for vengeance became redoubled.

‘Rejoice, Anna-Dea,’ he said to his daughter, who was sitting at some distance from him, occupied with some needle-work. ‘The news is good; to-morrow will be a great day for us.’

He lapsed into silence. Probably, had he continued, he would have added—

‘The French will enable me to redeem the blood of thy brothers and uncles.’

He called a servant.

‘Hasten quickly to Brusco,’ he said, ‘and bring that brave man to me.’

This herd, completely devoted to Poli, dwelt in a little hut situated high on the mountain. Not having heard from his master, he had taken no part

in the events of the day. However, he furbished his arquebuss in case of need, and got ready his *carchera*. His old mother was spinning at the wheel, whilst making two little half-naked children say their prayers, seated in the midst of a dense smoke near the *ziglia*, from the roof of which hung a cauldron containing the *polenta*, which the old dame kept stirring. Scarcely had the herdsman been informed of Codanello's desire than he hastened to prove to his master, by the alacrity with which he obeyed his orders, his gratitude for all the favours he had received at his hands, and all the zeal of a devoted dependent for his patron, whose influence had extricated him in the course of his life in more than one conflict with the law.

'What I am about to confide to thee,' Poli said, when Brusco had been introduced into his presence, 'is of such importance that I must needs entrust it to a man like thyself. A great blow is to be struck. Take this letter, deliver it thyself within two hours to the French colonel encamped near St. Antonio. You hear?'

'Your command shall be carried out punctually. It is not the first time —— and you know that——'

'Enough,' said Poli; and the man disappeared.

In his letter to the colonel, Poli vaunted the devotion of his family to France, which had that very day exposed it to the greatest dangers.

'A single man,' he added, 'but one who has a large following, the famous pastor Circinello de Leca, is keeping alive the spirit of revolt and disorder in the village. It is he who has armed his parishioners, who have proclaimed him their general; it is he who is lying in ambush for your regiment in the



passes, which are so narrow and dangerous that a handful of men would suffice to obstruct a whole army.'

He then indicated to the general a little-known path which led from the bridge of Soccia to Guagno, following the right bank of the Liamone, by which he could penetrate into the village from the heights. He ended by begging the colonel to place entire confidence in the guide whom he sent to him.

Brusco, without losing any time, had descended the mountain with the agility of a mountain goat, notwithstanding the darkness of the night. Accustomed to perilous enterprises he contemplated, with a secret joy, the fires which illumined the French camp. He was brought before the colonel. This officer examined him with some mistrust; then having read Poli's letter, he said to him—

'You are to conduct us by a path, safe but little known, my brave man, is it not so?'

'Yes, colonel.'

'But if it were into an ambush?'

'I am not yet desirous of ending my life, or of assuring the triumph of our common enemy.'

'Thou wilt then accept this purse?'

'You wish to insult me? I do not sell my services!'

'Thy name!'

'I may not tell you, and it is not necessary that you should know. I do not wish my children some day to bear the name of *Vittoli*.'

At this thought the heart of Brusco became oppressed.

'If to-morrow,' thought he, 'it becomes known that it was I—accursed Poli! But it is now too late.'

Meanwhile all was made ready for the departure.

The tents were struck in silence, and Brusco at the head of the regiment led them over the hills by the deep ravines, over the slopes—now bare, now covered with wood. Having crossed the current of Carbenaja they at length arrived at break of day on the hill of Veggiente, which dominates Guagno. The colonel gave the order, by means of signals, to advance, and the regiment descended to the village in quick time. At the sight of the soldiers the women came out of their houses crying and wailing, tearing their hair, bruising their faces, calling aloud by name on their fathers, their brothers, or their husbands, who had left at daybreak to occupy once again the positions they held on the preceding day. The regiment, without encountering any resistance, halted in the market-place of St. Nicholas. Some soldiers ascended the belfry to take down the head of the Moor and to hoist up the French flag in its place. Old Poli, beaming with joy, advanced towards the colonel holding out his hand; and after a short conversation, he led him into his house, with several officers, to do them the honours of hospitality. At the conclusion of the repast the colonel, having reiterated to Poli his thanks for the signal service he had rendered to France, promised to acquaint his government with them.

‘You will be called,’ said he, ‘as a member of the Junto of Vico, for you possess, if I mistake not, all the necessary qualities for such a post.’

‘As for knowledge, God knows what will happen when a Corsican takes a matter in hand,’ replied Poli. ‘But I only desire peace—that peace of which I have been deprived for so many years, and which you alone can restore to this unhappy country, to Corsica, and to my family.’

‘And what, in your opinion, would be the surest way to bring about this peace?’

‘The way which has been proved by experience to be efficacious, unique, but terrible.’

‘And that is?’

‘The justice of Paoli—Corsican justice.’

‘Which means?’

‘Fire and blood. Burning the houses, uprooting the vines, stripping the bark from the trees, arresting all the relations of the rebel Circinello. . . .’

‘And you call that justice,’ exclaimed the French officer, rising angrily from the table. ‘My king told me, when leaving, that the Corsicans were his children; and I have resolved to treat them as brothers, as far as justice and the law will permit me.’

In the meantime the pastor had been informed of the advance of the French, and of their entry into Guagno. He mustered his companions on the plateau of the Tritorre, and ordered the national concha to be sounded, but no response came from any bell or horn or concha in the two valleys of Guagno and Crazino. After meditating for some moments, his eyes filled with tears; he turned towards his companions.

‘Our brothers have deserted us or betrayed us,’ he said. ‘But God will be with us. One more effort, and if our hopes are deceived we will go and seek an asylum in a region where men may breathe freely and live in the old faith. We will direct our steps towards that camp, formed by nature, where we shall join Clement, and Nicodeme, and Bonaparte. Courage my friends. For us alone is reserved the honour of measuring ourselves with the valour of France, or the glory of dying like men.’

Marching at the head of his followers he descended the mountain with a firm and steady step, and ventured boldly on as far as the entrance to the village. Now from one position, now from another, protected by the trees, he attacked and harassed the French in every direction. Night finally put an end to the unequal, desperate struggle. The pastor seeing the impossibility of regaining Guagno, all the approaches to which were completely guarded, retired with his band to the hill of Santa Maria, intending to reach Campotile on the road of the Niolo. Meanwhile the colonel, astonished at so much audacity, and desiring at all hazards to prevent the spilling of French blood or that of the Corsicans, called his officers together to consult with them as to the speediest means of putting an end to the war. One of them, Captain Lagarde, proposed to enter into negotiations with Circinello.

‘The Corsicans,’ he said, ‘are brave, but, above all, they love to be considered brave. They have a great opinion of themselves—are proud of the confidence they inspire, but they deliberate over all their actions beforehand; and if Circinello should learn that the *podestà* have submitted and that we have three thousand men encamped in the village, I do not think he will persevere in a fruitless resistance.’

The captain’s proposal being approved of, the colonel entrusted him with the delicate mission, and enjoined him above all to remove any conscientious scruples the Corsicans might have in regard to the oath of allegiance; and otherwise gave him full power. The captain, a young and daring spirit, undertook the mission joyfully; then turning towards Poli, said—

‘Are not the two mountains visible from the summit of the Rotendo?’

‘Why this question?’ replied the old man. ‘This is not the time for hunting the mouflon, and I cannot believe that you have any intention of conferring with the rebels. That would be both cowardly and imprudent.’

‘It is for the purpose of securing you that very peace that you so much desire,’ said the colonel.

‘Peace!’

At this word a fiendish smile overspread the countenance of Poli, who saw that the matter had been decided.

‘May God send us peace,’ he exclaimed.

He then retired to order some wood to be carried to a little garden situated between the castle and the house of the pastor.

At break of day Captain Lagarde set out for Campotile, and Uccellene, the best guide in the country, accompanied him. They followed a rugged and difficult path, descended into a deep valley, and climbed a steep mountain. The young Frenchman had no time to admire the rugged scenery which everywhere encountered his gaze—here a waterfall which seemed to descend from the skies, and there a lake of crystal waters, and, farther on undulating meadows, veritable oases amid the bare rocks. The voice of some shepherd calling to his flock on the crests of the mountains alone broke the silence in these parts. Arrived at La Bocca Cernente, the captain halted for some moments to contemplate more leisurely a scene such as he had only met with in idylls. Before him was a green plateau covered with flowers, the cattle roaming about uncontrolled, the hills, shaded by beeches, at the foot

of which flowed the Tavignano, its transparent waters covering the pebbles of variegated colours at the bottom. Along the banks an old man was walking with a book in his hand. As soon as he observed them he hastened to meet them, and with true Corsican curiosity asked them—

‘Whence do you come, whither do you go, and who are you?’

The officer answered him in a kindly tone. The old man was moved to tears.

‘You will easily,’ said he, ‘be able to see the pastor of Guagno. He no longer continues his journey. The news from the Niolo has detained him here. But honour me by resting for a little while in my hut.’

The officer followed the shepherd into the fold and gladly accepted the rude meal which was so cordially offered him.

Seated on a moufflon skin, Captain Lagarde and his companion did ample justice to the bowl of warm milk which was placed before them, to the new cheese and rye bread, and to the wild boar which roasted over the coals. After the repast the old man, who hailed from Calasima, offered to accompany his guests as far as the valley of Ino. There they found the pastor surrounded by his followers. At the sound of the travellers’ footsteps he rose and advancing to meet them—

‘What other fatal news do you bring us?’ he asked.

‘I bring you peace,’ the officer replied in warm-hearted tones, ‘and an honourable peace’; and with an air of confidence, the captain seated himself on the soft grass, and invited the pastor to do the same. The others, with their caps in their hands in token

of respect, stood a little farther aside. In the course of the conversation the Frenchman found means to sing the praises of Paoli, to extol the heroic resistance of the Corsicans who had ventured to measure swords, and not without glory, with the most powerful nation in the world, and to glorify in particular the bravery of the inhabitants of Guagno. But he showed the imprudence and futility of resistance when the rest of Corsica had submitted, and when even the Niolo was in the power of the French. He dwelt at length on the magnanimity of the king, and particularly on the love he bore to the Corsicans. Finally he appealed to the pastor in the name of his country, of religion, and of humanity, to accept peace for himself and for his brethren, to send them back to their hearths, and to deliver them to the arms of their wives and children, who would hail him as their saviour. Circinello was affected.

‘Ah pity, pity,’ he cried, ‘the miserable condition of my country, condemned to see its most generous citizens, those whose noble efforts had for their object only honour and liberty, banished for ever from her bosom. Must she then, after so many hardships, so much suffering, so much bloodshed, again fall under the dominion of the Genoese, after another treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis? Whilst your government is protecting with its gold and assistance, the first struggles for liberty of a race forgotten by Europe, is it well done, is it generous, to come here as the ally of our oppressors, and to deprive us at once of our liberty, for which we have paid so dearly—we who have ever been admirers of your heroes; we who have never ceased to supplicate your kings to have compassion on our misery, and to help us to maintain our independence? Venerable divines,

brave youths, are languishing in their dungeons, praying to God to put an end to their sufferings, and you are astonished that I alone dare to offer resistance! But do you not know that when a priest is possessed by the love of his country—that love which fired Judas Maccabæus, not only does he not take into calculation the chances of success, but even torture and death itself fill with joy his heart devoted to his God and to his country? Nevertheless, I must yield to the force of circumstances, not so much for my sake, determined as I am to drag out a miserable existence in exile so as not to violate my oath and to act against my conscience, but for the sake of these young people, the support of their families, and whose blood would be shed uselessly,—although the blood of martyrs in the cause of liberty always covers with ignominy those who shed it, and forms the prolific seed of free men! Yes, I agree to the peace. I only demand that my family and my friends be not molested, and that I may be permitted to retire to Tuscany. This evening at midnight I shall be on the hill of Vergiolo, and after commending to your colonel my unhappy country, I will bid adieu for ever to the land where repose the ashes of my fathers, and where abide my dearest memories.'

The captain, full of admiration for a man of such a rare spirit, tried in vain to dissuade him from his resolve.

The day was advancing. The colonel counted the minutes with anxiety. Standing on the terrace of the house of Poli he followed with his telescope all the faint lines traced on the neighbouring mountains, but saw not a living soul. The land was deserted by the husbandmen, and the mountains by



the huntsmen. Suddenly he distinguished Uccellene, who was descending the slope of Lavatoggio.

'Ah, there they are! What do I say? The guide is alone. I do not see Lagarde. Can he have been kept as a hostage, or has he fallen by the hands of some assassin?'

Poli, dissembling his joy, appeared to share the uneasiness of the colonel, and never ceased to reiterate that it was madness to place confidence in the malefactors.

'You will one day realise,' said he, 'when too late of what infamies the Leca are capable.'

At this moment Uccellene appeared before the colonel with a contented air, handing him a slip of paper on which were pencilled a few words. Poli fixed his eyes on those of the colonel, and saw that the contents were satisfactory.

'Good news,' cried the latter. 'Peace is assured in the future. This evening I go to receive the adieux of the pastor.'

'You little understand the faith of the Leca, colonel,' said Poli; 'may God keep from you and your officers that sad knowledge.' So saying, he descended to talk with Brusco.

At midnight the colonel left the house, accompanied by one of his officers to the place of meeting. Scarcely had he arrived at the place when a musket-shot from the house caused his companion to fall at his side. A man slipped out by the door and disappeared in the thicket. At the sound of the report Poli appeared, crying—

'Treason! Infamy!' And addressing the soldiers—who were trooping up to the side of the terrified colonel, who stood holding the hands of his friend, 'Destroy! Burn to the ground,' he said to them, 'this

old retreat for wolves, this abominable house of assassins.'

A soldier, seizing a bundle of brushwood, lighted it and set fire to the house of the pastor. Instantaneously the flames spread. Giovanni di Leca, at the head of the other inhabitants of Guagno, advanced to stay the progress of the conflagration, the cause of which was unknown to him, but no sooner had he reached his uncle's house than he met Poli dagger in hand. The young man succeeded in freeing himself from his grasp, and moving a few steps backward, he fired his pistol at his murderer and fell bathed in his blood.

'Oh blessed vengeance!' cried Poli. 'At length my vows are fulfilled, and the outrage of my daughter is avenged.'

He turned, and by the light of the burning house he saw at his feet Anna-Dea, who, hastening to the relief of her father, had received the bullet destined for the old man.

'She is dead, and dead in my place!' cried Poli, and he fell into a swoon over the lifeless body of his daughter.

In the meantime Circinello and Captain Lagarde, followed by the young men of Guagno, had arrived on the hill of Vergiolo. It was one o'clock, and the time dragged wearily, for the hours of waiting seem long when one is distracted by fear and suspicion. The slightest rustling of the leaves, the murmuring of the wind or the sound of the plashing streams, everything that should strengthen one's hope but increased the suspense, which now, however, suddenly came to an end. Instantly they saw the valleys of Occia and Cardeto lighted up by the gleams of the flames. The pastor, already oppressed by a dread

foreboding, climbed the summit of a rock and perceived with horror his house ablaze, the flames from which were fed by the French soldiers. Transported with rage, and turning to the Captain, he said—

‘Give thanks to God that you are our guest. Without that title, which we hold sacred, you would at once pay the penalty due to the perfidy of your base companions. The miscreants! It is thus that they keep their promise. Genoese in spirit, if not in blood, trafficking in human flesh, and surpassing in infamy the thieves of Soria and Arabia, be accursed! May the wrath of God, the avenger of crime, alight on your heads! As for thee, thou mayest go to thy colonel and inform him that I will extinguish the flames of my house with the blood of the perjured.’

Having sought in vain amongst his companions for his nephew, he suspected some further calamity, and his rage still increasing, he vowed aloud that he would have a terrible vengeance. He therefore marched against the village, urging his men, with curses and malediction on his lips, to resist the French. The French, no less exasperated against the pastor, whom they looked upon as a murderer, on account of the killing of their young officer, rushed forward to meet them, greedy of vengeance. On both sides the combat raged with fury. The flames of Leca’s house lit up the horrible scene of carnage. Protected by the trees, by the nature of the ground, which they knew so well, the assailants fought strenuously for some time, but, forced at length to give way to superior numbers, they retired in disorder. The pastor, dangerously wounded, was dragged away by his men, and was forced to take refuge in the forest of Orso Petroso. There, stretched

out under the shade of an old oak, he implored his friends, ready to die at his side, to leave him—

‘What should I gain by the sacrifice of your lives?’ said he. ‘All is over, my good friends. You know the fugitives of Monte Rotendo have taken their oath, *al carte*, at the hands of Count Devaux. Niolo has surrendered. Clement is in Tuscany; as for me, I wish to end my life in the makis-bush, where I shall die. Return to your homes. Weep in silence over the woes of your country. Perhaps the day of revenge is not distant. Babylon will not triumph always. Cyrus promised to console Jerusalem in her affliction. Adieu, my friends, adieu for ever.’

He then embraced them and blessed them. His sorrowing people left him in silence. And he, as soon as his strength allowed him, left the thicket and proceeded towards the grotto of Tiridore. But, being constantly pursued by the soldiery, he roamed a long while from mountain to mountain and from ravine to ravine. His lodging was on the ground. Many a night he passed under a tempestuous sky amid the howling of the wind, in the forests, the caverns, and the dark grottoes. Many a time, seated on the mountain, and calling on God to succour the afflicted, did he stretch his gaze far in the distance of the sea to spy a sail. At length he stopped on the Monte Bianco. Shepherds from Fruniorbo and Coscione, to whom he had made himself known, brought him bread and milk from their huts. Sheltered in a grotto, and feeling his end approaching, he was one day visited by an old man of Coscione, who had travelled from Guagno, and brought him news from his country—news that he had been so long and ardently wishing for.

‘Codanello is no more,’ added the peasant—at his

name the pastor sighed deeply ; 'and I saw him die, torn by remorse, alone, without friends, abhorred by his own kindred, and despised by the French whom he had deceived. He suffered a long and terrible agony, calling his daughter in harrowing tones. In his delirium he was heard to exclaim : 'Unhappy Brusco, why didst thou obey me !' Sometimes he thought he saw the shades of Giovanni, of his daughter, and of the French officer. He also pronounced your name in terror. The consolations of religion hardly sufficed to calm him in his last moments.'

'He learned at last,' said the curate, 'that the pleasure of vengeance is paid for by infamy and a tortured conscience. Who has ever been happy by crime? May God accept his repentance, since He has deigned to move his heart. May He also forgive me as I forgive my enemies. Eternity ! This word has nothing terrifying for the righteous, whose death is only the ending a long and often painful journey.'

Circinello sighed, however, when he thought of his country. He felt his heart oppressed when he looked towards the sun which illuminated with its last rays the mountain where Sampiero had perished ; but he recalled at the same time the mysterious words which had been heard resounding in the air on the death of Bolmessere, the predictions of the philosopher of Geneva, and those of the old man of Ghidazzo. A smile curled his lips and he fell into the eternal sleep.

The shepherds flocked from the surrounding parts to honour with their tears, as though he had been one of their nearest relations, the funeral of a priest, of an unfortunate leader, of a martyr in the cause of liberty and his country. They laid him on a large

stone, tied his hands with the holy herb, and four young shepherds, armed in Corsican fashion, watched around the corpse, whilst the others chanted the *voceri*. A grave was dug in which was placed the corpse attired in priestly robes, the head turned towards the north ; and then, each covering it with a spadeful of earth and kneeling in prayer around the grave, they took their last and tearful farewell.

## EURISPE

As a young cavalier was standing on the beach of Genoa observing with an eye of curiosity the arrival of strangers from almost every clime, his attention was particularly attracted by the appearance of a lady, whose noble air and step, in spite of her simple and disordered dress of a pilgrim, could not fail to interest the beholder. She occasionally raised her eyes towards heaven, then cast them with an expression of wildness and sorrow upon the earth, as if doubtful where she should seek for relief, whether to confide in the mercy of the Deity alone or still venture to trust the world.

‘How ill,’ thought the young observer, ‘does that rude neglected dress seem to become the sweet and noble features of her that wears it!’

So earnestly did he continue to gaze on her, that though apparently buried in her own thoughts she became aware of his notice, as all women recognise attention, and turning away her eyes towards the shore, she again withdrew them, and gazed around her as if greatly alarmed. The next moment there leaped upon shore from a little pilot-boat a person of a noble and imposing figure, evidently the occasion of her alarm, who singling her out in an instant, was speedily at her side. When he was about to address

her she recoiled from him a few paces, and turning towards the young cavalier whose eyes were still fixed upon her, she said—

‘Save me, for the love of Heaven ; save me from his sight.’

At the same time she approached close to him as if placing herself under his protection ; on which Ansaldo—so the young citizen was named—beckoned to one of his slaves, and saying—

‘You will take care of her,’ advanced to meet the stranger.

‘Stop, signor,’ he cried, as the latter attempted to pass him ; ‘that lady has solicited my protection.’

‘You have nothing to do in this, signor,’ said the stranger, pushing on ; ‘you had better give way and withdraw.’

‘That I will cheerfully do,’ returned Ansaldo, when you have answered me a few questions.’

‘No, signor,’ was the reply. ‘I wish to speak with the lady, who has so very unnecessarily appealed to your regard.’

‘Of that,’ said the other, ‘I must now judge ; in the meantime, I will permit you to speak to her if she consents to it.’

‘Permit, signor !’ exclaimed the stranger ; ‘you have no interest in her ; you can have none equal to what I feel. Why do you then oppose me ? Is it wise, is it courteous to a stranger ?’

‘Would it be courteous to a lady, signor, a stranger and alone,’ retorted Ansaldo, ‘to reject such an appeal ?’

‘Then thus will I enforce my claim to be heard,’ returned the other, as he clapped his hand to his rapier, while the young cavalier was preparing to do



the same. The fair pilgrim, recovering herself from the shock of her first surprise, now summoned courage to address the stranger as she stepped between—

‘Wherefore are you come? Return and enjoy your good fortune, but leave me to my sorrows alone.’

A deep sigh followed these words, which led Ansaldo to believe that he was perhaps only interfering in a mere love quarrel, so he said in a conciliatory tone—

‘You had better agree to become friends; there is a crowd already gathering about us; let us not consent to gratify the folly and curiosity of all the world. Come with me to my house, and we shall find means, I doubt not, of clearing up the mistake. I daresay it is not the first time you have quarrelled, nor will it be the first love pique which I have had the pleasure to remove.’

‘No, no,’ cried the fair lady; ‘I will go with you, but not to your house. You are good, very good; but I will never consent to cross the same threshold with him again. Let the ingrate enjoy all I have conferred upon him, but cease to think of me more. For this reason did I leave him; I will receive nothing at his hands;’ and with a quick step she hastened along the shore.

Ansaldo curious to learn the result of such an adventure, also followed her, saying to the stranger with a smile—

‘Do not despair, but let us try to pacify her;’ for he was now sorry to see the wretchedness of his looks.

‘What is her name?’

‘Eurispe,’ said the stranger in a sorrowful tone. ‘If I thought she would ever forgive me and be reconciled, there is nothing——’

But here interrupting him the lady said to Ansaldo—

‘Let me thank you for your kindness; I will trouble you no longer if you will take that man away with you and remove him from my sight.’

‘I will go with him,’ said the stranger, in a gentle tone, ‘after I have spoken to you, when I am sure you will be satisfied.’

‘No; you have spoken to me enough,’ replied Eurispe; ‘let me go where I please, Constanzo; leave me to myself. Trifle with my forbearance no longer; never venture more to appear in my sight. I should hate myself were I capable of repenting of my resolution.’

‘But only hear me and then treat me as you please,’ said Constanzo; ‘describe my conduct in the darkest colours you can and let this gentleman decide between us.’

‘Traitor!’ cried Eurispe, ‘and would you revive the recollection of all your baseness and unkindness to harrow up my soul afresh? Out of my sight! take him away!’ she continued, as she again turned into a new path to avoid him, while Ansaldo, in greater perplexity than before, was now attempting to prevail upon Constanzo to leave her to herself.

But the stranger observing, ‘We shall soon, I trust, be better friends,’ again accosted the lady with a more cheerful air: ‘Do not be so angry, dear lady, but consent to return with me quietly home: you will find me everything that the kindest benefactress could wish, and be convinced how truly I respect and honour you.’

‘And is mockery too to be added to my woe? This was still wanting; but——’ and drawing a poniard from her bosom, she rushed upon him like

a fury, and stabbed him several times before Ansaldo could disarm her. She dropped the weapon of her own accord and went on, while the young citizen, having consigned the wounded stranger to the care of his slaves, quickly overtook her, bidding her follow him if she wished to save herself from the hands of justice and an ignominious death. She obeyed, while the people engaged with the wounded man gave them time to escape. As they were proceeding along they met an aged priest who, when Ansaldo had communicated their distress, consented to afford the fair culprit an asylum in his own house. After having seen her in safety, and committed her into the hands of the females of the house, Ansaldo proceeded to inquire into the situation of the wounded man, whom he found in the utmost danger, the surgeon declaring that he must be kept perfectly quiet, or he could not answer for his life. The patient, however, who had caught Ansaldo's voice, insisted upon seeing him immediately. His first wishes were expressed for Eurispe's safety, and his gratitude towards the author of it was unbounded. He next entreated that he might have a notary, in order to depose that he had incurred his own fate from the hand of his superior and his benefactress, whose servant he was, and not from an equal, or from any other cause. He further requested that no process or investigation might take place; and that if such were insisted upon, the lady at all events, might, agreeably to his last wishes, be acquitted. Ansaldo, after trying to encourage him and to soothe his deep emotions by promising in every respect to fulfil his wishes, left him to repose, and returned to the wretched Eurispe, more desirous than ever of penetrating into the mystery in which

their story was apparently involved. He informed her of what Constanzo had said, how much he appeared interested in her safety, and he expressed his hopes that the affair was yet open to reconciliation, without coming under the cognisance of justice. At the same time he assured her of his influence and support in case of the worst, advising her to assume a different dress, and to partake of such courtesy and hospitality as he had it in his power to bestow. Affected by his kindness, Eurispe returned her grateful thanks; while she sought to avoid his earnest and inquisitive looks, which more than once seemed to ask for an explanation. Indeed she appeared to shrink from the least approach towards the subject, and she was almost as much unable to bear the admiration of her beauty, which he occasionally evinced in his fixed and ardent gaze. Blushing at the suspicious situation in which she was conscious that she appeared, she soon therefore rose, on the plea of want of rest, to which, however reluctantly, Ansaldo was compelled to yield, and afterwards proceeded to consult with his reverend host. But as they were both equally at a loss what to think or how to act in the strange circumstances in which they found themselves placed, they agreed to avoid making the matter public until they had learned further particulars and ascertained the result. They were resolved in the meanwhile to detain and interrogate her after she had enjoyed a little repose, the priest at the same time informing Ansaldo that he might rest assured of her safe and honourable custody while in his house. Soon after he had taken his leave there arrived at the house a variety of wines and all the delicacies of the season, from which the host only concluded that the

poor young man was already deeply smitten with the fair culprit left in his charge. On this account he did not think it proper to present them to her, but giving them into the hands of his housekeeper, ordered her to put them carefully under lock and key. In a few hours, to the surprise of the good priest, the young lady again made her appearance, at the same time requesting an audience, with which the conscientious father, having secured the wine, was fain to comply. Yet it was not without some fear and trembling; for there was a degree of wildness in her eye which, on recollecting her late exploit, gave him no little uneasiness, and completely banished the least idea of dwelling upon her charms. He entreated that the old housekeeper might witness their interview, a request he had never before made during confession; but the lady insisted upon making her disclosures to him alone. Though forced to comply, he sat very uneasy in his chair; if he saw her eyes sparkle, he thought she was running mad; or if his glance met hers, or rested a moment on her bosom, he only dreamed of concealed daggers and sudden death. When she exhibited any violent emotion, the matter became still more serious; if she happened to touch him, he recoiled, and he became eager only to soothe, and to grant her absolution from all her sins. Indeed the poor man was greatly relieved when his fair but fearful guest addressed him in the following words:

‘It is now, holy father, time to part; you must permit me to resume my wanderings whither I will.’

‘Oh certainly, certainly,’ said the compliant father, forgetting his promise to Ansaldo.

‘Yes’ she continued, ‘I must go; I must not

remain here to involve myself, as well as that innocent and excellent young man, in fresh troubles.'

'Oh, by no means,' said the good father, alarmed at the elevation of her voice.

'Then do you wish me to go, to be so soon rid of me?' cried Eurispe in a louder tone.

'Oh, by no means,' he exclaimed, repeating his words, 'that is, I mean I would have you please yourself.'

'Then I will hasten away,' she replied; 'that noble young man must not suffer for my sake, for I foresee what would shortly happen: he would love, and become wretched as I have been.'

'There is not the least doubt of that,' said the priest, desirous of conciliating her as much as possible.

'Is there not?' pursued the lady; 'you mistake me—how dare you say that?'

'How? how? Oh, because he told me,' cried the alarmed priest: 'he said so, to be sure.'

'Then quick; let me away; prepare me a barge—here is money; go soon, very soon.'

'Yes, now,' cried her confessor, rejoiced to get away; 'it is the best plan; I will give orders immediately.'

And he forthwith, in spite of his promises to Ansaldo, proceeded with the business. Hastening directly to the beach he bespoke a felucca from Palermo which was just on its return, and having placed his fair guest in a close carriage, he caused her to be carried at the appointed hour, while the good citizens were engaged at dinner, to the shore, agreed with the mariners for her passage, and she set sail. On touching at Viateggio, for the purpose of better concealment, she assumed another name and dress;

thence passing on to Lucca she hired a small house, with only one domestic, and secluded herself completely from the world.

We must now return to Ansaldo, who, with the utmost eagerness and agitation proceeded the next morning to the priest's abode, desirous of informing his fair culprit of the dangerous situation of Constanzo. The surgeon had declared there was no hope for him; and though he ought to have felt greatly shocked at such tidings, and desirous, like the good priest, of breaking off all communication with the prisoner, yet such was the impression that her charms had produced that he felt something very like pleasure at the idea of her being thus consigned to his care, and at his being enabled, perhaps, to penetrate into the motives of her strange conduct. What was his surprise and indignation, then, to find that she was gone! The good father, alarmed at his excessive rage and emotion, affected complete ignorance of her disappearance, declaring that she must have escaped from her window during the night; and that he was well assured she was a witch, an emissary of the devil, and no real woman; for he had never passed such a night in his life. In spite of Ansaldo's threats to extort further confession he persisted in this story, so far from satisfactory to the young lover's feelings, whose mind was filled with the most distressing apprehensions. Still, however, having no proofs to the contrary, he was compelled to rest satisfied with the story, such as it was; and after engaging the priest to assist in the recovery of the fair culprit, he was again called to the couch of the dying Constanzo.

'I wish,' said this unhappy martyr of woman's scorn, as Ansaldo drew nigh, 'I wish before I depart,

as I shortly must, to acquaint you, as a friend, with some circumstances of my life. It is true that I perish by the hand of one who professed to love me as dearly as her own life, and who was once mistress of my soul. Though aware of her strange and fickle disposition, I still confided in her attachment, and could not possibly have contemplated what has happened. Deign to listen then to our singular history, and you will be enabled to judge how far I am to blame; for though I have erred, there is much palliation for my conduct.

‘Eurispe is a noble lady of Cosenza, sole heiress to a rich family, and was early sacrificed to the views of ambition in a union with a man of high rank, much older than herself. Such likewise were his infirmities, that happily for her he died within a few months after his marriage, leaving her the mistress of an immense fortune. Thus freed at length from the influence and restraint of her family, she continued to lead a single life from her fifteenth to her eighteenth year, devoting herself to noble and charitable pursuits, and loved and honoured by all in her vicinity. It was at this period I became acquainted with her. During a commercial voyage I had the misfortune to fall a captive to that celebrated but detested corsair, Amurat Rais; and after encountering various hardships, I was at length offered to sale, and purchased by a foreign merchant, whose affairs soon afterwards carried him into Calabria. He was induced to allow me to accompany him by the offer of two hundred crowns, to be paid on my arrival, in addition to what else he might obtain for my ransom. We disembarked at Cosenza, where Eurispe, having seen and taken compassion on me, kindly paid down the sum required and took me into her service.



Such was my gratitude, that though she would have permitted me to resume my affairs and return to my native place, I found it impossible. For my gratitude and respect soon ripened into a deeper feeling, and though I scarcely ventured to confess it even to my own heart, that heart, in spite of me, began to beat tumultuously when it caught even the sound of the approaching footsteps of my lady. You have seen her, but you cannot now form an idea of her noble and charming manners, and of her surpassing beauty. Soon I had the happiness to obtain her confidence in the management of her affairs. I became the steward of her fortune, the happy medium of her numerous pious and charitable benefactions to the country around. Never, however, did I venture to breathe a word, or to raise my eyes to hers, beyond the immediate scope of my duties; but I suffered dreadfully as I became more deeply and truly attached. When did love such as mine listen to reason or summon courage to abandon the scene of its sorrows—the sweet and bitter pleasure of gazing on the object it must never possess? I could not quite repress the grief at my heart; sighs escaped me in her presence; I madly gazed on her whenever I thought myself unseen; and well might the poet of love exclaim—

“ Ben s' intende  
Chiusa fi amma talhor da chi l' accende.”

“ A secret sympathy conveys the smart.”

For truly in a short while she appeared to become aware of my unhappy passion, though she neither reproached nor admonished me. Surprised and delighted beyond measure, hope for the first time sent the blood tingling through my veins, and I dared

to look up, though still in fear and silence. About this time, however, an incident occurred which put my resolution of burying my griefs in my own bosom to a severer trial than any I had yet borne. A young cavalier who resided near became more and more frequent in his visits ; he admired her beauty, but he considered her fortune a still higher prize. He was not really in love with her, and this she appeared at length to have discovered, and gave him his dismissal. But he would not take this as a final denial, and continued to haunt her residence in such a manner, that I was fearful he would in the end succeed in his project. As I was late one evening indulging in bitter fancies, a person arriving on horseback was announced, and on his being shown into the room where I was sitting, I had the pain of beholding my haughty rival. With an air of ease and freedom he entreated hospitality for the night, pleading the lateness of the hour ; upon which, turning from him with a feeling of bitter jealousy, I went to acquaint the lady. My anguish was visible on my countenance ; and I had the mortification to hear her say that she feared in common courtesy she could not refuse him. I thought she blushed deeply as she said so ; and bursting into sudden passion, I exclaimed, "Then first permit me to leave the house." "No, that must not be," she replied ; "I cannot spare you, for I am going myself. You will attend me as far as my friendly neighbour's, and inform the gentleman on your return that I am on a visit there, and too unwell to see him." I bowed in delighted emotion to the earth : I thought I should have fallen at her feet and blessed her ; for she had removed a load of wretchedness from my soul ; and with a joyous and triumphant air I hastened to rejoin the cavalier.

‘With what secret pleasure did I deliver the lady’s message and answer the thousand questions which he addressed to me ! Whether he perceived this, I know not ; but though I now made myself the best company in the world, and treated him with all the delicacies the house could afford, I failed to make myself agreeable. He seemed hurt that I ventured to sit down to supper with him ; he began to frown, and to regard me with no very pleasant looks ; until observing that I took no notice of them, he began to hazard sarcastic remarks, inquiring whether, in my capacity of steward, I did not find that house-dogs, when caressed, were apt to become too familiar. “Certainly,” I said, “there is great difference between men and dogs, the one being fond of bones and the other of reputation.” “It follows, then,” replied my polite guest, “that he who enters into service without regard to his reputation acts beneath himself, and is unworthy even of a menial’s situation.” “Ah !” I cried, suddenly plucking forth my rapier in the impulse of passion, “were you not here under my lady’s roof, I would stab you to the heart. Insult me if you please ; but dare to introduce her name, and it shall be the last word you will ever speak.” Instead of meeting the fierce indignation with which I spoke in as fierce a tone, to my surprise he became somewhat softened ; when turning away with a feeling of unutterable contempt, I left him alone to his own cogitations. In the morning, when breakfast was announced, it was found that he had taken his departure early ; not very long afterwards we heard that he had left the country, and finally, that he had been assassinated on his route from Cosenza towards Lucca, most probably without making any defence, for he certainly could never have fallen in a duel.

Freed from this despicable rival, I became somewhat bolder in my pretensions ; my eyes began to reveal what my tongue refused to tell ; and instead of hating me, I thought that hers seemed to invite me to give my looks a language. I was one day engaged in rendering her an account of some sums of money which had lately passed through my hands ; but such was my trepidation, such my wish of discovering the sentiments I entertained for her, that I repeated the same errors over and over ; until, half angry and half laughing at my perplexity, she asked me if I had really run mad. "I fear I have long been so," I replied, "and it will not be long before you will have to send me to an asylum ; and you will have"—Here my voice failed me, and I could say no more. "And I shall have to answer for it ; is that what you mean, Constanzo ?" "You have said it," I replied, "and you ought not to make so light of it, I assure you. It were better I should leave your service at once. I have resources of my own. I am neither poor nor ignoble." "Ah ! Constanzo, did I ever think, did I ever say you were ?" Her face became crimson when she had uttered this ; but suddenly checking herself, she added, "I am not often used to jest in this way, and it is perhaps not very becoming either in you or in myself."

'As I had at length, however, mastered the subject, I soon summoned courage enough to proceed. "The fault, most honoured lady, lies more in your beauty than in me. I have fought with my feelings long and terribly. I have tried to remain reasonable ; but it is vain to deny it. I have loved, I have sorrowed, I have despaired, and I must meet with mercy, or I must cease to exist." Uttering this, I fell at her feet, and covered her hands with

my kisses and my tears. "You are mad indeed," she exclaimed, as she attempted to assume a tone of anger, though she scarcely struggled to withdraw her hands. "It is done," I cried; "condemn, reproach me as you will, but do not drive me from your presence." "If you loved me," she answered, "you could not talk of leaving me, nor could I afford to lose your service; but," she continued, resuming her composure, "I shall never permit the repetition of such a scene; for your own sake I shall not; you must try to banish so absurd an idea. But it is a mere fancy, and therefore I pardon you this time, on the condition that you never breathe a syllable of the like again." Her voice trembled, however, and not with anger, as she uttered these commands, out of a feeling of pride and dignity, which had yet to contend with a superior foe. Though promising obedience, I was now too happy and triumphant to observe it, and even without resuming the conversation, I daily made such visible progress in her affections, as soon to induce her to feel pleasure in acknowledging me for her lover with her own lips. Soon I insisted on her repeating, for the thousandth time, that she loved me, and was happy in my having owned that I loved her in return.

'Such being our mutual attachment, it was resolved, in order to avoid the least occasion for remark, to sanction it with our union almost immediately; Eurispe proposing to dispose of the estates at Cosenza, and to retire for a season to a delicious residence in the vicinity of Puggia, out of the reach of the invidious observations with which she was aware we should be unjustly assailed. Just at this period, however, it was our ill fortune that a widow lady, with her daughter, a very beautiful and accom-

plished girl, arrived at Cosenza on their way from Sicily; an event which entirely altered the colour of our destiny. I had heard, I had seen much of the fickleness of women, but such an instance as that I am about to record could never have entered into my comprehension. The knowledge that these ladies were in misfortune was enough to induce Eurispe to offer them a home, and to lavish upon them every consolation and comfort in her power to bestow. But grief and sickness had already made inroads too deep on the health of the mother to admit of much alleviation. She continued gradually to sink; all her dying thoughts were wrapped up in her daughter, and expressing her deep gratitude for our kindness, she tenderly recommended her poor girl to our protection, and soon after expired.

‘With a sister’s affection, then Eurispe received the beautiful Lesbia to her arms, and like a sister she made her the partner of everything she possessed. Their acquaintance ripened into the strictest intimacy, and Eurispe no longer talked of disposing of her estate. She began, indeed, to give me some reason to complain. She delayed, under a thousand pretexts, to fulfil her immediate promise of yielding me her hand. I took the alarm, and became more earnest and urgent, fearful that fortune was about to abandon me when just on the consummation of all my dearest wishes. Still she delayed. She would no longer listen to my complaints; and I was compelled to dissemble the disappointment and anguish of my heart. One evening as I was beginning to press the subject, she interrupted me by alluding to the beauty and accomplishments of her fair charge, and after dwelling upon them for some time, she added, “What think you, Constanzo, will Lesbia

say? what will the world say of us, if we proceed, in spite of all difficulties and inequalities, to seal our attachment at the altar? I know you to be fully deserving of my affection, but I fear for my reputation, to which every one, you are aware, sacrifices so much. Let us consider, then, while there is yet time; let us see that we are not preparing future unhappiness for each other. Under all circumstances I think it would be the wiser and the safer plan that you should try to forget me, and to love my gentle Lesbia, upon whom I will confer such a dowry as will leave you no reason to repent. I shall thus, I am sure, escape much scandal and ill usage; for the world never pardons such an error, and I dare not commit it." I grew pale and trembled with emotion as she spoke; I beheld the promised delights of love and fortune fading from my view. What was Lesbia to me? Unknown, uncared for! what was all the world beside? For some moments I could not speak; but laying my head upon my hand, I sighed deeply. "Well might Fortune," at length I cried, "be likened unto a woman—a woman in fickleness, such as you. Oh, cruel as you have been, to raise me, Eurispe, from the earth into the very heaven of love, only to precipitate me into the depths of despair. You tell me to love Lesbia; that you will give us your fortune: but it is not your fortune I love, it is you. Do you think I can so easily change, and transfer my affections as readily as my dress? No, I were then unworthy both of her and you. You snatched me out of misfortune, it is true; but you would now, by depriving me of ineffable hopes, by tearing me from yourself, plunge me into greater misery than I have yet suffered, and destroy all my happiness upon earth." "But such love is a folly,"

she cried ; “ why indulge it ? To be happy we must be reasonable. And I do not deprive you of myself, for I give you fortune ; your love, I fear, would soon be over ; but fortune will last when love is gone. I begin to see that our attachment was an idle and childish thing from the first ; and if I give you Lesbia, you can have no reason to complain. Think of it, and think wisely. I love you, or I have loved you ; but we must submit to the voice of reason, and no longer think of playing the fool.”

‘ As she said this in a hard and careless tone, she precipitately left the room, leaving me to no very agreeable reflections, of which indignation was not the least. In the sudden revulsion of my feelings I could have sought the side of the fair Lesbia ; I could have wished, by lavishing the most tender attentions, to give the faithless and heartless one a pang of jealousy, and make her feel something of the pain I endured. What strange motive could have actuated her ? was it mere fickleness, scorn, or jealousy ? Surely, I thought, I could have given her no reason for the latter, though I had more than once remarked, in conversing together, that she jested on the subject in the presence of Lesbia ; that she had her eye upon us, and that she might probably entertain an idea of trying the stability of my affection—for such, I had heard, was the simulation and subtlety of love. When this struck me, I came to the resolution of persevering in a virtuous and constant line of action, and by this conduct at least to merit the love and confidence of one whom I feared I could not forget.

‘ With this view I resolved to be perfectly open and sincere with her, and the next day went to her to inform her how impossible it was that I could be



obedient to her wishes. "Did I try to forget you, it would be in vain, and still more so to turn my affections elsewhere. Permit me, my dear lady, to remain, therefore, with you, to try to merit your approbation of my conduct, if I can no longer retain your affection; and if you repent the kindness, the sweet hopes and promises you have lavished on me, do not, at least, deprive me of your society. For, believe me, I shall either succeed in recovering your affections, or soon end my sorrowful days as I wish to do." "Indeed, Constanzo," she replied, "I wish you to stay with me; I do not at all regret the kindness and affection I have lavished on you, for I am still as much attached to you as ever, and nothing but an imperative sense of duty could prevent me from sealing my affection at the altar. I would willingly give you my hand, but the world will not have it so; it requires at least equality of rank in the husband, or it will asperse the fair fame of her who raises him to her own standard. And even if we had left Cosenza, as we intended, it would have pursued us with its taunts and mockery, would have said we were ashamed of our errors, and blasted our future happiness whithersoever we had turned. It is better, then, as it is; and if you truly love me, you will strive to bury what has passed in oblivion, and keep it from the world." "And this I could have done," I made answer, "had you not flattered me with other hopes, Eurispe; but you have received and returned my vows; I am no longer master of my own affections, and I take Love to witness that I cannot and will not permit you to retract. We have given our mutual consent; by mutual consent alone, then, can we become disunited.

Whether Love be a divinity or not, I cannot tell ; but I feel something like his divinity within me, allied to everything that is noble, and perfect, and pure in its nature. Its divinity, besides, is said to be immortal, and I cannot cease to love you at pleasure." "But you must be obedient ; you promised me that you would, Constanzo." "Yes, but you first promised to be mine ; and it is I only who have to complain." "If your love be so true and perfect, then," she returned, "continue to love me thus ; be satisfied that I esteem and value you, but let us venture no further to unite our lot in one." "It may be easy for you," I replied, "to talk and even to act in this manner, faithless and cold-hearted as you are ; but to me there is death even in the thought. You are become very strange and casuistical of late, and unusually afraid of the opinion of the world ; and had I not more confidence in you than you appear to have in me, I should say that you had formed some new attachment, and wished to be rid of me altogether." "No," exclaimed Eurispe, a little piqued, "I have formed no new attachment ; though it is true that I wish to recall my promise, on the condition of settling a very sufficient fortune upon my Lesbia, which you may accept or refuse at your own pleasure," and having said this, she again turned somewhat coldly from me.

'Disappointed pride, jealousy, and revenge now all took possession of my soul at once ; and in the hopes that I might perhaps awaken some degree of pain by exciting her jealousy and affection, I resolved to obey her, and to devote my whole attention to Lesbia. In this view I exerted all my powers of pleasing to the uttermost, I lavished upon her the most delicate attentions, striving to make myself the

most agreeable to her in the presence of Eurispe, to whom I affected to praise her incessantly. Eurispe seemed, however, to regard my conduct with indifference, preserving the same kind and conciliating manners towards Lesbia, and rather encouraging our apparent intimacy. But bitterly did we both repent this error ; for having assumed, not with impunity, the character of the fair Lesbia's lover, it was soon my fate to become gradually enamoured of her attractions, thus showing my obedience to the orders of my mistress. Nor did my attentions seem at all disagreeable to her ; in a little while she returned my affection ; and it was agreed by Eurispe that our nuptials should be immediately celebrated. From this time the proud Eurispe seemed to treat me on terms of nearer equality. The time stipulated for my service since she redeemed me from captivity was expired ; and possessing some little fortune of my own, besides what she settled on Lesbia, we considered ourselves extremely fortunate in our union. Nor had we any reason for some period to repent of it, for Lesbia loved me most truly and tenderly, her virtues and attractions soon won my whole heart, and when we married we were as perfectly happy as we wished to be.

‘But our happiness was doomed to be of short continuance. The manners of our hostess became colder, she sought to avoid our society, and appeared hurt at witnessing our mutual regard for each other. Her conduct soon became extremely variable ; she was either absorbed in sorrow or affected the liveliest spirits imaginable. She would treat us with contempt and unkindness, or lavish upon us the warmest expressions of favour. It was now I dreaded any feelings of uneasiness or jealousy at our union as

much as I had before wished to excite them. She was often strange and harsh towards my Lesbia; her dislike of her seemed to increase, while her manner towards me was more flattering. I pressed our immediate departure; but of this our fair hostess would not hear. She was even extremely hurt and angry at the proposal. Indeed, whenever I recurred to the subject, she seemed more desirous than ever of conciliating me. She flattered me and tried to win my attention, while she assumed the utmost coldness and indifference on the approach of my wife. Fortunately Lesbia was thus unacquainted with my unhappiness, for I wished to spare her the pain of witnessing the grief of our benefactress. I gently reminded her that my marriage was her own work, and the result of her express injunction, however reluctantly I had submitted to it. Passion, indignation, and grief seemed to struggle for utterance in her reply, as she declared that she had never disowned her love for me; that I knew she had always continued attached to me, in spite of her exertions to act consistently with her duty, and that I had made her words a pretext for breaking with her. "Every word, every look you give to Lesbia," she continued, "is a portion of what you have robbed me of. Your happiness is injustice; it is ingratitude; it is death to me!" "You grieve me to the heart, my dear lady and benefactress," I replied, "for with your own you have destroyed my hopes of happiness for ever. But think how unworthy I ever was of you; let the same pride and dignity which led you to abandon me support you now. Think how many noble motives, how many great objects you have yet to live for. Live, then, and bestow your hand upon some more for-

fortunate and deserving being. Assert once more your pride and dignity, the same prudence and greatness of soul that you have ever shown. Recollect who you are, and what the world expects from you." Though somewhat harsh, I thought it quite requisite to speak in the manner I did. It brought the blood in tides of crimson to her cheeks; her neck, her temples, and her very finger ends seemed to burn with indignation. Yet my words had the desired effect. The sudden revulsion of her feelings, as in my own case, now brought to her support a deep sense of scorn and hatred. Heaping upon me the most bitter and opprobrious epithets, she left me, invoking maledictions on my head; and I saw no more of her until I found her standing near you, signor, on the beach of Genoa whither my evil genius brought me in pursuit of her. On the ensuing morning I found also a letter on my toilet with these simple words—"O Constanzo! you have triumphed over—you have trampled on my very soul; you have ruined me in my own opinion for ever. How have I deserved it? My fortune, with everything I had, I laid at your feet. I redeemed you from captivity, I gave you my home, I would have given you myself; but could you not bear with a woman's waywardness and fickle humour even for a season? I erred from a sense of duty; I thought I could have forgotten you; yet surely you might have delayed to seal my fate a little longer. Wretch as I am that I ever loved you! But I hate, and will punish myself sufficiently for it. Then seek me not, ask no more of me, for Eurispe will never return!"

'I immediately, however, set out in quest of her, filled with the most sad and fatal forebodings, and you see the result. Yet little did I think I was tak-

ing leave of Lesbia for the last time, nor could I imagine that Eurispe would have carried her revenge so far. But it is done, it is too late to repine," continued the dying Constanzo. "I have only to thank you, dear signor, for your humanity, and to make my peace with Heaven. Bear my dear love to my wife, and say——" But here his voice failed him, and heaving a deep sigh, he expired.'

## LANUCCI

DURING the time that Pisa and Florence formed two distinct republics, and were incessantly agitated by the intestine broils of the Guelphs and Ghibellines, it happened in Florence that Anthony Bandinelli, who was of the Guelph party, adding to his political reasons others of a private nature, conceived the most fierce and inveterate hatred against Frederic Lanucci, who was of the Ghibelline party. Seeing him one day walking alone on the banks of the Arno, he began to provoke him with insulting and opprobrious language, and at last, drawing his sword, he rushed at him in order if possible to take his life.

Lanucci finding it was necessary he should defend himself, drew and calmly received the attack of his enemy. They fought a long while till, in stepping back Bandinelli's foot slipped and he fell to the ground, on which Lanucci ran to him, and, pointing his sword at his antagonist's throat, he ordered him not to speak a word.

'You now see,' said he to him, 'that your life is in my hands, but I grant it to you willingly, but on condition that all private enmity may cease between us from this moment.'

Bandinelli, finding himself in such an extremity, promised everything, but hardly had Lanucci stepped

back when, rising furiously, he made a lunge with his sword, seeking to run Lanucci through. Lanucci had scarcely time to parry the thrust.

‘Infamous traitor,’ he cried, transported with rage, ‘thou wilt have death then, at all events. Then die.’

Saying these words he plunged his sword into Bandinelli’s breast, and left him lying in his blood upon the ground.

Having retired to a friend’s house in Pisa, he immediately wrote to Florence to justify himself. It was unfortunate for him that Bandinelli was still alive. He had been found by some countrymen lying where Lanucci had run him through, and they, stanching his blood, carried him to Florence, where his wound was found severe but not mortal. In addition to his former hatred, he was now filled with rage at the idea of his having been vanquished, and he invented the grossest calumnies concerning Lanucci. The want of witnesses to belie him encouraged him in his falsehoods. He said he had been surprised and wounded treacherously. He raised all the party of the Guelphs against Lanucci, and the unfortunate man, notwithstanding his innocence and protestations, was banished under pain of death, and all his property was confiscated by the State.

Amongst those who exerted themselves on behalf of Lanucci was his friend Belfiore, who having, in vain, done all he could in order to get Lanucci’s innocence recognised, generously offered him a perpetual asylum at his house in Pisa. Belfiore was indeed the only consolation left the unfortunate man in his severe misfortunes. But evil fortune had not yet departed from him.

The chamber where Lanucci slept was separated



from that of his friend by a hall which communicated with both rooms. One night while Lanucci was asleep he was aroused by a noise that seemed to come from this hall. He raised himself and listened. All was still, and thinking that he might have been mistaken, he lay down again. A few minutes after, however, he again heard a noise which seemed like a low groan proceeding from his friend's chamber. Lanucci at once leaped from his bed. He listened intently. The groan was repeated, and this time fainter. Full of uneasiness he ran to Belfiore's chamber and called him repeatedly but received no answer. He advanced to the bed, sought for his friend, shook him ; but he did not awake. Agitated by a thousand terrors, he went back to his room, lighted a taper, and returned to Belfiore's bedside. How surprised was he to find him dead, a dagger still sticking in his breast, and his blood sprinkled around. Lanucci gave a loud shriek at the sight ; the light fell out of his hand ; he threw himself upon the body of Belfiore, overcome with terror and grief.

The noise had in the meanwhile awakened the servants, and they now made their appearance in the room. There they found their master dead, and Lanucci, smeared with blood, standing speechless beside him, his eyes fixed in stupor, his face pale and distorted, the taper lying at his feet and still smoking. The attendants uttered a cry of horror. Lanucci was aroused by the noise, and looking round furiously—

‘Ha! where,’ cried he, ‘where is the murderous villain, the treacherous assassin? This dagger, this very dagger, why cannot I plunge it into his heart? Unhappy friend! Poor Belfiore!’

Then, bursting into a flood of tears, and once more speechless with his grief, he threw himself again upon his friend. Full of confusion, astonishment, and horror, all were thunderstruck, and none knew what to say or think.

The next morning the news of this horrible murder was spread abroad, and all Pisa was acquainted with it. Every person found in the house of the unfortunate Belfiore was placed under arrest, and among them was the unfortunate Lanucci. Who could describe his sorrow on finding himself among those who were suspected of this horrible atrocity? Unfortunately all appearances were against him. The place wherein he was surprised, the blood with which he was stained, the paleness and trouble which overspread his face, the newly extinguished taper at his feet, and the report of the attempted murder with which he was credited at Florence, were circumstances which seemed to establish his guilt. On hearing of the suspicion with which he was regarded, he broke out into the most violent exclamations.

‘What!’ cried he, ‘I kill the only friend I had in the world! Him to whom I owed these feeble remains of life, which I now detest; him whom I loved more than myself, and for whom I would have given all my blood, to the last drop, a thousand times! I kill him barbarously! I, myself, with my own hands, to murder him so atrociously, and in such a manner! By night, when he was asleep, under the veil of friendship! Can I be suspected of harbouring so cruel, so treacherous, so dastardly a soul? Am I then reduced to such humiliation? Ah, heavens, have you not tried me enough?’

After pronouncing these words he remained in the utmost dejection. All his protestations did not,

however, dispel the suspicions of those about him. At the sitting of the judges there was found a person who, moved by his grief and the air of ingenuousness that marked him, dared to take upon him his defence, but the majority attributed the accused man's exclamations and agitation either to remorse or mere cunning. They said that the proofs of his crimes were too clear; that the treachery formerly committed at Florence corroborated them; that the laws were to be respected; that the atrocity of the crime demanded that an example should be made of the criminal; that the people expected it, and it could not be deferred. The unfortunate man was almost unanimously condemned.

The fatal news was brought to him whilst torn by the most piercing grief. He lay upon the ground loaded with chains, exclaiming to himself—

‘I to be accused of his murder! I to be thought the assassin! Will the heavens allow it to be thought so?’

When he heard the sentence which declared him guilty read to him, he burst out in the most violent rage, which was followed by consternation and dejection almost like the annihilation of death. He recovered from this only to break out in the most outrageous ravings, and to fall again into his former dejection. So the whole night was passed in the most poignant misery the soul could endure. The persons present wept for pity, and in vain tried every argument to pacify him. The horror of death did not move him. Since the death of his friend he looked forward rather to that moment as the end of his sufferings. The cruel reflection that he should be regarded as the murderer of his benefactor was the only idea that tormented him.

At last, however, religion came to the aid of dejected nature. In a calm moment he fixed his eyes steadfastly on a crucifix that was placed before him. He remained motionless for a while contemplating it. Whilst absorbed in meditation it seemed to him that a voice full of tenderness and holy love said to him—

‘I was much more innocent than thou.’

Struck by this divine voice, he suddenly rose, embraced the sacred image, and pressing it tenderly to his breast—

‘My God!’ cried he, ‘my God! Thou hast conquered. Pardon my mad transports. I no longer refuse death and infamy. In life I did not imitate Thee. I shall be happy if in death I can do so, though in but the smallest degree. Too worthy and ill-fated friend, thy faithful Lanucci flies to thee. Unjust fate would not allow me to arrive in time to deliver thee from the hand of thy inhuman murderer. I come at last now, and shall be happy to embrace thee. Ah, may the fatal moment hasten! May it quicken its arrival! I sigh for it!’

Saying these words he began to weep, and those who saw him in this mood were much affected. None of them any longer doubted his innocence. All would have had him saved; every one would have answered for his being guiltless. Increasing murmurs were heard on all sides. Many whispered that it was necessary that the too hasty sentence should be suspended, that fresh information should be sought, and examinations made. Whilst folk were in this condition of mind a messenger arrived from Florence with news which filled them all with joy.

The man who killed Belfiore was an assassin sent

by the villainous Bandinelli to murder Lanucci. Not content with having, by means of the blackest falsehoods, stripped his enemy of all his property and caused him to be banished, Bandinelli wished still to have his life. He, therefore, promised a great reward to a ruffian whom he employed to accomplish his purpose. This fellow having repaired to Pisa, and having obtained such information as was necessary for his purpose, introduced himself secretly into the house of Belfiore. There he concealed himself till past midnight, when he set about putting his design in execution. He, however, in the confusion of that terrible moment, mistook his way, and, coming to Belfiore's chamber, killed him, thinking he was Lanucci. Having hastily fled from Pisa, he was afterwards met near Florence by another of his stamp, whom the villainous Bandinelli had sent to despatch him, fearing that he might reveal how he had been employed by him. This new perfidiousness of Bandinelli was the cause of his ruin, and the salvation of him whose destruction he had so persistently sought. The assassin of Belfiore being mortally wounded and not killed on the spot, when he saw that he was at the point of death, confessed the murder he had committed at Pisa. Bandinelli was seized, and a messenger was at once despatched to Pisa with the news of what had happened.

The joy of all the people, who had already become almost convinced of Lanucci's innocence, was unbounded. The happy news was, however, near hastening his death instead of preventing it. On suddenly hearing his innocence pronounced, such an instantaneous revolution occurred in him that he fell breathless and almost deprived of life. By the remedies which were administered to him he was,

however, soon recovered, and with solemn honours he was taken from prison and restored to liberty. In the meantime the perfidious Bandinelli confessed not only the murder he had planned, but also the black falsehoods with which he had begun to injure his innocent adversary.

Lanucci was recalled to Florence by an honourable decree, and received there in triumph. He was immediately reinstated in his property, and a share of Bandinelli's was also added to it. Still, however, he remained inconsolable all his lifetime for the death of his friend Belfiore, of which he had been the fatal, though innocent, cause.

## THE LOVERS

AMONG other families that in times gone by are known to have ornamented our native city, one of the most noble perhaps, was the Saracini, a house which still preserves unsullied its ancient worth and splendour. In the long list of names that constituted its different branches we find mention of one Ippolito, the sole surviving heir of a distinguished cavalier. At the period we are about to refer to, he numbered no more than eighteen years, was extremely graceful and handsome in his person, of elevated mind and intellect, and much esteemed by his friends and fellow-citizens for the vivacity and courtesy of his manners. Now it fell out, as is most frequently the case with youths of a fine temperament, that he became deeply enamoured of one of the most beautiful and attractive girls in all the city, whose surpassing charms and accomplishments were celebrated wherever she had been seen. Her name was Gangenova, the youngest of three daughters left to the care of a widowed mother, the relict of Messer Reame Salimbeni, whose family ranked among the first in Sienna for numerous services rendered to the republic in periods of the greatest peril, though now, along with its arms and palaces, become almost extinct, nothing of its past grandeur remaining but the

name. The delight of all her relations, as well as of the society in which she moved, it was no wonder, then, that the fair Gangenova should so far have enthralled the soul of young Ippolito, that, by frequent contemplation of her beauties and accomplishments, he resolved to run all hazards in order to win her love. Nor had he, in the few opportunities permitted him of conversing with her, any reason for despair, since he rightly interpreted the tones and looks with which she occasionally addressed him. But in consequence of the very strict superintendence of her mother, which was exercised with greater severity over Gangenova than over her elder sisters, the interviews of the lovers were very rare; a system of intolerance so little in accordance with the open and ardent character of Ippolito, that, despising the very particular forms and ceremonies which it exacted, he was apt to grow impatient for the enjoyment of a more unconstrained society with the object he adored. With this view he made known his wishes to the young lady's mother, leaving the terms of their future union in the most liberal manner wholly to her, and beseeching her only to grant him a little more of the society of her he loved. What was his surprise to receive a direct refusal, on the ground that it was the lady's duty as a mother to attend first to the disposal of her two elder sisters! an answer that threw the young lover into a paroxysm of mingled rage and despair. The grief of Gangenova was little less than his own, and her affection gathering strength by opposition, was indulged with double freedom. Aware at the same time that her lover's conduct in attempting to obtain an interview added only to the jealous caution of her mother, she was at a loss in what way to proceed,



being so closely watched as scarcely to be allowed to breathe the air, much less to partake of the innocent sports and amusements to which young persons of her age are attached. It was impossible, however, to preserve so strict a watch as to deprive them of all kind of mutual intelligence, and Ippolito became acquainted with her unhappy situation. She even entreated of him, in pity to her, that he would discontinue his assiduous attentions, and either absent himself or feign absence during a short period from the city, as she grew fearful of the extremities to which her friends in their anger might proceed. At the same time she besought him to consider this as a proof of regard, not of coldness or indifference, as she would ever endeavour to show herself grateful and worthy of the high opinion that he had so kindly and nobly avowed for her. These tidings served at once to increase the passion that Ippolito already entertained, and the unhappiness he felt in being the unwilling cause of the least portion of suffering to her he loved, when he felt as if he could gladly have sacrificed his life to her happiness and repose. Still he exulted in the idea that she returned his affection, and he tried to flatter himself with the prospect of brighter days to come. In order to convince her of the purity and disinterestedness of his attachment, he resolved, however difficult the task, to obey her wishes, and to leave for a while his native place, giving out that he was gone upon a pilgrimage to the shrine of San Jacomo of Galicia. He was, moreover, desirous of thus proving the sincerity of the affection of her he loved, and of ascertaining whether her regard was likely to increase or diminish by distance; and with this view, having arranged his affairs and bid adieu to all his

friends as if on the eve of a long voyage, he assumed his pilgrim's dress, and, to the surprise and grief of all his acquaintance, left the city. When the unhappy maiden heard of his departure, she shed many tears, regretting that she had ever proposed so harsh and trying an alternative, and upbraided herself as the sole cause of every sinister event that might chance to follow, never having imagined it possible that he would venture upon so painful and hazardous a journey. In this she reasoned well, for when Ippolito had pursued his way until about sunset, he abandoned the great road, and, striking into one of the thickest woods near at hand, he there deposited his pilgrim's mantle, cowl, and staff; then retracing his steps in another dress, he entered, about the hour when the gates were closed, without observation, into Sienna. Proceeding direct to the abode of an old nurse—the only person whom he had admitted into his secret counsel—he there provided himself with everything requisite for his purpose.

Now, near the Church of San Lorenzo was a little country-seat, with a small orchard attached, belonging to Ippolito, both of which he had presented to his aged nurse, who, on her side, had always felt the same affection for him as for an only child. Next to this little tenement lay a spacious and beautiful garden, the property of the mother of Gangenova, Ippolito's beloved mistress; and here with her daughters she was often accustomed to take the air and enjoy the fragrance of the new-blown flowers.

'Surely,' thought the gentle and enamoured youth, 'here at least we shall hardly be suspected; nobody will believe me bold enough to seek her under her mother's very roof; let us only find an opportunity of conversing with each other, and I cannot fail to

discover some means of bringing our difficulties to a happy termination.'

Solely for this object did he keep himself concealed, like a bird that shuns the eye of day, within the bounds of his little cottage ground, never venturing forth except late in the evening, when, scaling a lofty wall, he descended into the garden of his beloved Gangenova, and approached close under her chamber windows. Up the side of these there chanced to flourish a lofty and lovely mulberry tree, one of whose spacious branches overshadowed the apartment in which she lay, and where her mother kept her, as being the youngest of her charges, constant company. Under its shade likewise Ippolito was wont to take his evening station, eager to avail himself of any opportunity of beholding or discovering himself to the object of his attachment. In this way he was soon convinced that the sole chance he had of profiting by his situation was about the hour of sunrise, when he observed the fair girl appear on the balcony overlooking the garden, on which were placed a number of beautiful plants, interspersed with lilies and violets, from which she would cull some of the sweetest to deck her breast and hair. There, too, he observed her amuse herself with a pretty linnet which had nested itself in the tree, and which, won by her sweet encouragement, would hop into the window and nestle in her bosom; and it was then his delight to watch her thousand gentle looks and motions, and to imagine how delicious it would be to appropriate to himself the whole of those kisses and caresses. Often had he been on the point of accosting her, however great the risk, when her mother, her sisters, or some one in attendance, suddenly appearing, would dash all his hopes, and

compel him to be doubly cautious, lest a discovery should be the cause of fresh restraints over his beloved. He next resolved to avail himself of the assistance of his kind old nurse, who, under a variety of pretences, obtained admission into the mother's house, of which she took advantage to gain the ear of the young lady, and inform her of all that her lover had done for her sake ; of his passionate attachment and devotion, so well worthy a return, and his extreme desire of beholding her once more. Finding her equally delighted and surprised with what she had already heard, the nurse ventured to reveal to Gangenova the place of her Ippolito's concealment ; and the pleasure she experienced on finding that he was so near became almost too much for her to support.

'Has he not, indeed, deserted me then ? Is he not really journeying far away, over seas, and in a foreign land, on my account ? Oh, dear nurse ! tell him that his image is engraven on my soul ; that I am too blest, too happy, and never more will give him reason to complain !'

Upon hearing these words, the good old dame, thinking that she had happily succeeded in her mission, returned as fast as she could, in order not to forget the least portion of the message which she well knew would carry such joy to the soul of the young lover.

Ippolito preserved the utmost caution in his proceedings, and it was not long before Fortune seemed to favour his wishes ; for keeping watch one evening very assiduously, he saw the arrival of a messenger who bore tidings that the wife of one of the old lady's brothers was taken suddenly ill, and entreated to see the mother of Gangenova without a moment's delay.

She was thus compelled to set out and leave her precious charge for one night, at least, to her own discretion ; and Ippolito believed that he had at length an opportunity of convincing himself of the reality of his beloved girl's affection for him, by inducing her to embrace the long-wished occasion, and to secure their happiness by flying together and uniting their fate in one. Fired with the hope, he hastened to his usual station underneath the mulberry tree that overspread her chamber windows, and in order better to attract her attention, he shook some of its boughs, imagining that her beloved bird if nestling there would fly to her, and by its little cries and flutterings lead her to appear on the balcony. Not succeeding, however, in this, he hastily ascended the tree, when soon the affrighted bird, flying with timid cries into some neighbouring shrubs, uttered such loud and sorrowful tones as to startle the gentle girl, who, fearing some sad accident had befallen it, hastily ran to the window. With a simple veil thrown over her neck and bosom, and her fine bright tresses carelessly yet gracefully arranged, she appeared in the eyes of her enchanted lover rather like a vision than a creature of mortal beauty, while a mingled look of anxiety and tenderness was impressed upon her countenance. Solicitous for the fate of her little companion, she cast her eyes eagerly on all sides, when, instead of her linnet, the accents of Ippolito, eager to dissipate her alarm, met her ears. The next moment she beheld him nearly at her side, and he succeeded almost in reaching her chamber window, while he attempted to prevent her crying out by addressing her in the lowest and sweetest tone.

‘Fear not, my gentle Gangenova ; it is Ippolito

who speaks; fear not, either for yourself or your little favourite, for soon he will resume his blithesome notes, secure and happy as before. But mine, alas! how different a fate, though far more fond, a thousand times more passionately devoted to you, serving you so long and faithfully! Had you the heart, then, my sweetest, to think I was now taking my woful pilgrimage far from thee, through remote and strange parts, perhaps gone upon my everlasting journey? Oh, no, no! I knew you had not, and I have been near you day and night ever since the period when I left my friends to go upon my feigned pilgrimage. For, alas! when I cannot turn my thoughts from you for a moment, how could I wilfully bend my steps another way? how could I find a moment's repose till I had laid my wearied limbs and my burdened heart as near you as I could? Hath not our poor nurse told you all I have done and suffered for your sake? my lonely days and sorrowing yet delicious nights, passed amidst the scenes you have loved, among the very trees, and fruits, and flowers, where you have wandered? Often have I seen you at the glimpse of dawn gathering flowers or caressing your bird, yet ventured not to intrude, afraid of calling down still further anger from your jealous guardians upon your innocent head. But my fond and unceasing vows have wearied Heaven at last: your mother is gone, and the hour arrived that is to repay us for a world of anxiety and dread, the fear of losing thee, and all that promised to make life sweet to me. Yet our time is precious, and I came to gather from thine own lips that thou dost indeed honour me with thy love; that thou wilt deign to receive my plighted vows and loyalty unto death. And this I would entreat in the name

of all my anguish, all my fears for thee, by the horror of a rival's arms, and by thine own surpassing beauties, that amidst all our city's charms have alone succeeded in riveting my enchanted sight. Yet I know how all unworthy I am; how much better and longer thou deservest to be sought ere won. Still thou knowest my whole life and bearing, though thou canst not form an idea of the sighs and tears I have poured for thee. Pity me, then; and with pity let love and reason, let all the heavenly gifts you possess, plead in my favour, and induce you to receive me as your husband.'

Here he ceased, waiting with eager and trembling looks for a reply: while the beautiful Gengenova, overpowered on her side by a thousand wild and sweet emotions, was almost unable to articulate a word. Having descended into the balcony, on her sudden alarm, to recover her favourite bird, she had attempted on first hearing Ippolito's voice to fly, yet surprise and terror chained her to the spot; for having read the fabled metamorphoses of plants into mortals, and human beings into plants, on hearing a voice from the mulberry tree, her blood began to run cold, and her attempt to call out died away ere it passed her lips. Yet there was something in the tone that convinced her she need not fear, and gradually recovering her confidence, her heart seemed actually to swim in a tide of rapture before her noble lover had concluded his passionate appeal.

'Dear Ippolito,' she at length replied, 'it grieves me that we are so situated that it would be dangerous to tell all I have thought and felt since last we met and parted, much less the delight I have at finding you safe and near me once more. But, alas! this is no place for you; speed away, I beseech you, and think me neither hasty nor unkind, as indeed I

esteem all your love and goodness to me as tenderly as I ought. But I fear for you, my kind Ippolito, and I entreat you to bid me one adieu, and let me see you safely depart.'

At this moment, hearing a noise in the ante-chamber, and fearful lest her sisters should approach, Gangenova hastily drew back, while Ippolito, imagining that it proceeded from her room, and hearing a rustling noise continue for some time, was seized with sudden suspicions of some rival being harboured there, either by her sisters or the fair Gangenova herself. Maddened by this idea, he no longer remained master of himself, and in his attempt to reach her window from the tree so as to obtain a view of what was passing, such was the hurry of his spirits, that, missing his footing, he fell to the ground.

Startled at the sound, the girl again rushed forward, bending as far as possible over the balcony, and calling on the name of Ippolito in a subdued and gentle tone; but no longer did the sound reach his ear, where he lay deprived of sense upon the cold earth. Suspense and terror seized upon the heart of the tender girl when she received no answer; love urged her to afford him her immediate assistance, while fear of discovery restrained her steps. Unable, however, longer to control her fears for his safety, she hastily descended into the garden by a back staircase rarely made use of, having remained from ancient times as a retreat in seasons of trouble, and having its outlet at the extreme part of the garden. And there, she found him stretched under the mulberry tree, lying cold and pallid, apparently deprived not only of sense but of life itself.

Almost as insensible as he, she threw herself at his side. Upon recovering her consciousness, showers



of tears expressed the intensity of her sufferings; her cries would have moved rocks and beasts of prey to pity, such were the piteous tones in which these words were uttered.

‘Sweet Heavens! what dreadful thing hath happened? What malignant star hath struck with death one of the best and noblest hearts that ever beat? Oh, where is the soul that but now shone in thy face? Wretch that I am, shall I never behold it more? Art thou fled, for ever fled, sweet guardian of my honour, my love, and peace? But what will betide them now when every tongue will be busy with my fame? Whither shall I turn for help, reduced to such sad extremities as I now am?’

And while, abandoned to her woe, the hapless girl thus poured her lamentations to the night, she never ceased her endeavours to restore the object of them by every means in her power, rubbing his heart and temples, joining his hands and lips to her own, and trying to breathe her soul into his. Finding that he yet gave no signs of life, she sweetly folded him in her arms and bathed his inanimate features with her tears. Ippolito’s soul, just on the point of taking wing, seemed to welcome so much bliss; and suddenly recovering his suspended powers, he heard the sweet words she uttered, and found himself alive in her arms. It was then he felt himself amply repaid for all the trials he had undergone, the sweetness and ecstacy of the reward far surpassing all he had been able to conceive, in breathing his vows thus closely into her ear. The moment before, she was about to transfix her breast with her lover’s sword in a paroxysm of despair; the next she found herself pressed to his breathing bosom, receiving, as it were, the gift of two lives restored to her at once. For some time

they both remained doubtful whether to believe that all was real, and gazed upon each other as if in a dream, until the fresh spirit of their joy being somewhat abated, they sat down by each other, side by side, with that serene and ineffable pleasure which the imagined certainty of their bliss inspired. But it was destined, alas! to be of short duration; a voice was heard calling upon the name of Gangenova, gradually approaching nearer and nearer, so that they were compelled to part almost without bidding each other adieu. The poor girl hastened, trembling, by the same path that she had left the house: she fancied in the disorder of her spirits that she suddenly heard the terrific howlings of wild beasts, accompanied by the most dismal screams and cries; and such was the impression they made upon her imagination, just after having taken leave of Ippolito, as to deprive her of the power of motion. It was long before she recovered even strength enough to regain her apartment, and with panting breast and dishevelled hair she threw herself upon the couch, still unable to banish the terrific ideas that haunted her imagination.

In the meanwhile, the sisters of Gangenova, being likewise freed from the superintendence of their mother, had been in their chamber, frequently calling the fair girl by her name to come and join them. Paying little heed to her silence, they continued for some time to amuse themselves, until one of them, by way of adding a little novelty to the scene, crept forward in the dark intending to surprise her in her own room. Still receiving no reply she ran for a light, and on returning found her sister stretched upon the bed, resembling rather a lifeless statue than a breathing human form. Calling her second sister

in great alarm, they made eager inquiries into the cause of her agitation, feeling assured that something extraordinary must have happened. The poor girl was equally unwilling and unable to reply, and her sisters, in some anxiety, despatched a messenger for their mother, who lost no time in returning to resume her charge. With a little more authority, she insisted upon knowing the cause of her alarm, and upbraided her sisters severely for not keeping a more vigilant watch. Gangenova declared herself quite unable to account for the manner in which she had been affected, and the others professed equal ignorance as to the cause of her indisposition. In this dilemma her mother had recourse to the advice of the most expert physicians the city had to boast, which brought no alleviation, however, to her daughter's alarming symptoms, not one of them being able to discover that her illness was owing to some sudden surprise, while she, far more jealous of her fair fame than of her life, concealed from every one the real cause of her sufferings. Growing rapidly worse, she became extremely anxious to behold once more her beloved Ippolito, and recollecting the old nurse, she instantly sent for her, entreating that she would as soon as possible acquaint him with her situation, and find some means by which they might at least meet to take an eternal farewell. Upon receiving these sad tidings, Ippolito grew deadly pale and trembled, though at the same moment he hastened to comply with her wishes. He assumed the dress of a poor traveller, with a false beard, so as to render it almost impossible to recognise him, and set out to beg alms at several houses adjacent to that of his beloved. As he approached the latter, the lady of the mansion herself made her appearance, half wild and distracted at the situation

of her loveliest daughter. Informed of the occasion of her grief, the wily pilgrim, availing himself of the circumstance, bade her not despair, as the power of the Lord was infinite, and His goodness equal to His power. Moreover, with His aid, he had himself become skilled in all the virtues of almost all the plants under the sun, and had devoted his knowledge of herbs and juices to the relief of his unhappy fellow-creatures, besides possessing secrets adapted to every species of disease. The poor credulous old lady raised her hands to heaven in gratitude upon hearing such consolatory words, vowed that he had been peculiarly sent by Providence, and insisted that he should be instantly introduced to her unhappy girl. The moment Ippolito beheld her, he perceived that the tidings he had received were indeed too true. So much was he shocked, that he could with difficulty support his character; more particularly when he saw, from the brightening features of his beloved, that she instantly recognised him. Taking, then, the hand of the suffering girl within his own, as if to feel how fast her life-blood ebbed, he begged her attendants to stand apart while he proceeded to try his secret prayers and charms in his own way. Ippolito was thus enabled to learn the real source of her illness from her own lips. Beholding him with a mixture of tenderness and pity that added momentary lustre to her dying charms, she attempted, in those low soft tones he so much loved, to infuse balm into his spirit. Painfully sensible of the extent of his loss, Ippolito from very grief was unable to utter a word, much less to ask the needful questions of his beloved. Wildly pressing his hand, she besought him never to forget the tender love he had borne her, and which she had seldom been

happy enough to tell him how warmly and deeply she returned.

‘For joyful, oh! very joyful, my Ippolito,’ she continued, ‘would my departure have been to me before now, had not solicitude for your fate detained me. As it is, I die content, nay, grateful, for two unexpected benefits: the one to have seen you thus, to hear you, and feel your hand in mine; and the other, to know that I lived and that I died beloved by you!’

It was now that the latter attempted to console and encourage her, declaring it would be his only pride to fulfil her wishes in the minutest point; but here his voice failing him through his fast-coming tears and sobs, he laid his aching head down by the side of his beloved’s, and there remaining for a short time as he breathed forth a soul-distracting adieu, he raised it again painfully, passed his hand over his eyes, and looking his last look, left the apartment. He joined her weeping mother, and so far from holding out any hope, he said that pity for the sad and dying state in which he had found the poor patient had drawn scalding tears from his eyes. He had not long been gone before the gentle spirit of his love, as if unable to continue longer without him, prepared to take wing, and in a few hours actually fled, as if to prepare in some happier scene a mansion of rest for their divided loves. For the wretched Ippolito, though able to bear up long enough to behold her beloved relics consigned to earth, had no sooner witnessed all the virtues and charms he had so fondly esteemed and loved for ever entombed in the vault of the Salimbeni, than, just as the ceremony was about to close, he fell dead at the foot of her marble monument. So strange and sudden an event threw

the surrounding company, by whom it was regarded as little less than a miracle, into the utmost surprise and confusion, all of them believing that Ippolito Saracini was then on his way to the shrine of San Giacomo of Galicia. His unhappy parents, hearing of this his untimely end, hastened to join their tears with those of the mother of the beauteous Gangenova, by whose side the faithful lover was laid.

## THE UNLUCKY FORTUNE

IN the annals of Pisa is found the name of Guglielmo Grimaldi, who came to settle in Pisa from the confines of Genoa. He was then a youth of about two-and-twenty, with very few resources, and living in a hired apartment; yet with saving habits and some ability, he was at length enabled to lend little sums of money upon usury. And in this way, by hoarding his gains while he spent little, he became in no very long time a rich man without losing his desire of adding to his wealth. He lived alone, and with the most unremitting diligence and secrecy amassed and concealed his increasing stores, until growing old at length he found himself in possession of thousands, of which he would not have parted with a single crown to save the life of a friend or to redeem the whole world from eternal punishment. On this account he was detested by all his fellow-citizens, and paid dearly enough for it in the end. Having one evening supped out with some of his miserly acquaintance, he was returning late to his own house when he was assaulted by an unknown hand, and feeling himself wounded in the breast, he cried out for help and fled. Just at this moment came on a terrific storm of hail and wind and thunder, which increased his distress and compelled him to look out for shelter. Becoming faint from the loss of blood,

he ran into the first house that he found open, belonging to one Fazio, a goldsmith, attracted by the blaze of a large fire at which he, the said Fazio, was making chemical experiments, having for some time past devoted the whole of his earnings to these pursuits, attempting to convert the dull metals of lead and tin into fine silver or gold. For this purpose he had now made so glorious an illumination that he was compelled to open the door to admit air while he melted down his metals; but hearing the sound of footsteps, he turned round and beheld Guglielmo Grimaldi, the miser.

‘What are you doing here friend,’ he inquired, ‘at such an hour and in such a night as this?’

‘Alas!’ answered the miser, ‘I am ill; I have been attacked and wounded; I know not why nor by whom;’ and he had no sooner uttered these words than he sat down and died upon the spot.

Fazio was greatly surprised and alarmed on beholding him fall dead at his feet, and opening his bosom to give him air, tried to recall him to life, believing at first that the poor miser was dying of pure exhaustion and inanition from the want of food. But on discovering the wound in his breast, and finding that his pulse no longer beat, he concluded that his visitor had really departed this life. Running to the door he was about to alarm the neighbourhood, when hearing the terrific raging of the storm he again drew back and sought refuge in his house. Now his wife Pippa and twin boys happened just at this time to be on a visit to his father-in-law, who was likewise about to take his leave of the world. Instead of calling a physician then, he suddenly changed his measures and closed the door; examining next the body of the deceased, he found



only four florins in his purse. Then hid in a heap of old rags he discovered a great bunch of keys, which from their appearance belonged to the house and chambers, the chests and strong boxes of the miser, who, if report were true, had hoarded up immense wealth, especially in ready cash, secured in his own house.

The moment the idea flashed across Fazio's mind, being of a keen and penetrating genius, he determined to turn it to his own account, and to aim a bold stroke at fortune, whatever were the event.

'Why not hasten,' he said, 'to his stronghold at once? I am sure to find it in his house without a living creature near to say me nay. Why not transport it quietly, I say, into my own dwelling? I think no one will hinder me, such a night as it is, thundering as if the sky would fall! Besides, it is past midnight, and every living soul is either sheltering or asleep. I am alone here too, and the assassin of the poor miser must by this time, I think, have taken to flight without stopping to see where he took refuge. So if I can only keep my own counsel who will ever suspect that Grimaldi the miser ran into my house thus grievously wounded and died? This is surely, then, an unlooked-for blessing; and were I to go about telling the real truth, who knows whether I should be believed? People might say I had robbed and murdered him, and I should infallibly be taken and put to the question; and how should I be able to clear myself? I dread to encounter the ministers of justice, for most probably I should never come alive out of their hands. What, therefore, will be the best? Why, Fortune is said to aid the bold; bold then will I be, and try to rescue myself at once from a lot of penury and pain.'

Saying these words he thrust the keys into his bosom, and throwing a fur cloak over his shoulders, his face half buried in a huge slouched hat, he issued forth with a dark lantern in his hand, offering his bosom to the pelting of the pitiless storm with a secure and joyous air. Arriving at the miser's house which stood at no great distance, he seized two of the largest keys, and soon made good his entrance; then advancing at once to the most secret chamber he could find, he gained admittance by double keys, and beheld a large chest, which after much difficulty he succeeded in opening. This contained others which were equally well secured, and which he had still more difficulty in unlocking; but what treasures opened upon his view when his task was completed! One contained all kinds of gold rings, chains, and jewels, with other ornaments, the most massive and valuable in their nature. In another were bags almost bursting with gold ducats, all regularly numbered and parcelled. Fazio, overpowered with joy, relinquished the bags filled with chains and jewels, saying—

‘As these may perhaps be recognised I will stick to the solid gold.’

Having secured the last, then, under his arm, he departed with the keys in his belt towards his own house without meeting a single person by the way, such were the pealing thunders and the flashes of terrific light which redoubled the terrors of the storm. Fazio having reached his house, and having secured the treasure changed his dress, and being stout and active he took the dead body of the miser in his arms and bore it into his cellar. There he proceeded to make in the floor an excavation sufficiently large to contain his remains, into which,

dressed exactly as he was, with the keys of all his treasures in his pocket, Fazio now thrust the body at least six feet below the earth, and covering it up he fixed the whole firmly down with certain pieces of lime and tiles in such a way that no one could perceive the place had been at all disturbed. Having thus disposed of the old miser, he proceeded very leisurely to count over the bags of money to which he had thus become the heir; and such was the sudden blaze of gold that opened on his eyes that it was with difficulty he could support the sight. Each bag contained exactly three thousand ducats, as it had been marked, which he deposited in a large chest of drawers secured by a secret lock. His next care was to consume the trunk and bags in which he had brought the treasure in the great fire prepared for the transmutation of his metals, and to these he added his crucibles, his bellows, and his base metals, having no further use for them; and having thus completed his labours, he went to rest.

By this time the storm had abated, and it was already daybreak. Fazio, therefore, continued to sleep and recruit his exhausted strength until near vespers. He then rose and went as far as the piazza and upon the Exchange in order to learn whether there were any reports yet afloat in regard to the disappearance of the deceased, but he heard nothing either that day or the following. On the third day, however, the miser being no longer seen about his usual affairs, people began to make remarks, more especially when they saw his house shut up, suspecting some evil must have befallen him. Several of his friends with whom he had last been in company then made their appearance relating everything they knew; but no further intelligence could in any

way be elicited. Upon this the court issued an order that his dwelling should be forcibly entered, where everything was found apparently as he had left it, to the surprise of the spectators, and the whole of his property was taken possession of in the name of the government. Books, writings, jewels, and furniture, everything was found as it ought to be in such a way as to preclude the idea of any attempt at robbery. Advertisements, however, were immediately issued, offering great rewards for the production of his person either dead or alive. All inquiries were in vain; and though the subject excited considerable noise and alarm, nothing whatever transpired. At the end of three months, the government being at war with Genoa, and no relatives advancing their claims, the whole of Grimaldi's goods were confiscated to the use of the state; but it was considered an extraordinary circumstance that there was no appearance of ready money.

Fazio in the meanwhile continued quiet and unmolested, rejoiced to perceive how well the affair went off, and leading a happy life with his wife and family, who were now returned to him. To them he did not venture to breathe a syllable of his good fortune, and had he fortunately persisted in this resolution he would have avoided the utter downfall and ruin of his family. For the affair had already begun to be forgotten, gradually dying away for ever, and Fazio had given out that he was about to take a journey into France for the purpose of disposing of several bars of silver which he had recently made—a report ridiculed by many who were aware that he had already thrown away his time, his labour, and money in forging the precious metals, while his friends strongly dissuaded him from leaving the

place, observing that he might carry on his experiments at Pisa as well as at Paris. But our goldsmith had adopted his plan very well knowing that he had plenty of good silver to dispose of, though pretending that he had not money enough for his journey, he mortgaged a little farm for one hundred florins, half of which he took with him, and left the other half for his wife. He then took his passage in a vessel to Marseilles, deaf to all the tears and entreaties of his wife, who besought him not to throw away the last of their little substance and abandon her and her little ones to penury and to woe.

‘When,’ she said, ‘were we happier or better than when you pursued your own trade, bringing us daily enough for all our wants? Leave us not, then, to solitude and despair!’

Fazio, tenderly soothing her, promised on his return to throw such a golden harvest into her lap as would console her for all past sufferings; but still in vain.

‘For,’ she continued, ‘if all this fine silver really exists, it will surely be as valuable here as in France; but I fear you want to desert us for ever; and when once these fifty ducats are spent, what will become of me, wretch that I am? Alas! must I go begging with these helpless little ones? Must I lose you, and be left to solitude and tears?’

Her husband, who loved her most affectionately, unable to behold her affliction, determined to acquaint her with his good fortune, and kissing her tenderly, he took her one day after dinner into the chamber where he had concealed his newly acquired wealth, and related to her the particulars that had occurred. He then exhibited the whole of the riches he pos-

sessed, bags of ducats, silver and gold without end ; and such was the astonishment and delight of his now happy wife that she flung her arms in an ecstasy of pleasure round his neck, and weeping begged forgiveness for all the complaints and reproaches she had used. Insisting upon her promise of secrecy, Fazio then acquainted her with his future plans, explaining how shortly he meant to return to her, and what a joyful and uninterrupted course of happiness would thenceforward be theirs. She no longer objected to his departure, but taking a tender farewell, bade him to think of her, and hasten his return as soon as possible.

The next morning accordingly, having well secured the valuable metals he was taking along with him, double-locked and barred, and leaving a large portion of his treasures with his wife, he went on board, accompanied by the regret and reproaches of all his friends, in which his wife, the better to conceal her feelings, affected to join. Indeed, the whole city united in ridiculing his enterprise, and some who had known him in his better days expressed their opinion that he ought to be taken care of, for that he was certainly inclined to run mad. Others said that they had long been aware what would be the consequence, and he would very soon share the fate of his mad predecessors in the accursed art of alchemy, which ruined instead of enriching its followers. In spite of all, however, Fazio set sail, and with prosperous breezes soon arrived at Marseilles, taking care by the way to throw the whole of his chemical apparatus into the sea, reserving only the more valuable articles he had obtained from the miser's house, with which he landed, and proceeded with the carriers as far as Lyons. In a few days after he emptied the contents

of his money-bags, depositing a large sum at one of the first banks, for which he received letters of exchange on Pisa, some at the house of Lanfranchi, and others at that of Gualandi, after which he sat down to write to his wife, acquainting her that he had disposed of his silver, and intended shortly to return to Pisa. This letter the lady showed to her father, as well as to the rest of Fazio's friends and relations, some of whom expressed themselves much surprised, while others declared that he was a ruined man, the truth of which would speedily appear. Soon after having received his letters of credit, Fazio left Lyons for Marseilles, and thence taking ship for Leghorn, he had the pleasure in a short time of again beholding his wife and children. Embracing them again and again, he declared that he had succeeded beyond his utmost expectations, while the tidings quickly spread among his acquaintance that he had returned home rich with the products of his metals. He lost no time in presenting his letters of credit, on which he received nine thousand gold ducats, which were immediately sent to his house, exciting the joy and congratulations of all his relatives and friends.

Thus finding himself one of the richest men in his trade, and with the credit of having realised his fortune by his own ingenious experiments, Fazio began to think of living in a more splendid manner, and of sharing some of his happiness with his friends. In the first place therefore he bought an estate, and then a handsome house, besides making several other rich purchases; and investing his money in such advantageous concerns as offered, he soon assumed the manners and establishment of a prince. He added to the number of his domestics, and set up

two equipages, the one for himself and the other for his lady ; his sons were distinguished for the richness of their apparel ; and he continued to live on the happiest terms with his wife, enjoying together the luxuries and pleasures which they had at command. Pippa, to whom such a life was wholly new, became somewhat vain of the change, and was in the habit of inviting her acquaintance to witness it, among them an old lady with her fair daughter, whom she invited to come and stay some time with her. Fazio, to whom she said that they would be of use to her in a variety of ways, was induced to give his consent, happy to perceive that they assisted his wife in the cares of her establishment, and that they all lived together on the best terms.

But Fortune, the constant enemy of any long-continued enjoyment and content, was preparing to change the colour of their fate, and turn this summer sweetness and glory of their days into the chilling winter of sorrow and despair. For it was the cruel lot of Fazio to become suspected by his wife of loving their guest's daughter. On this account scenes of the most cruel and distressing nature were continually occurring between him and his wife ; the demon of jealousy had taken possession of her bosom, and family peace and love were thenceforward banished from their house. It was in vain that Fazio attempted to soothe or to subdue her irritated feelings. She spurned him, and she met his threats with still more violent passion, treating them with indignation and contempt. In order to avoid these reproaches her husband went to one of his villas at some distance, while his wife remained plunged in the profoundest wretchedness and despair. These feelings, however, were soon absorbed in rage and



jealousy, and dwelling with ceaseless anxiety and pain upon one hateful idea, the sense of her imagined wrongs became too great to bear, and in a short time she came to the resolution of accusing her husband to the State, by revealing the transaction which had led to his sudden elevation and prosperity. This appearing the only resource she had left of revenge, without further warning or consultation she proceeded alone to consult a magistrate, who, holding an office similar to that of the Council of Eight in our own city, took down her deposition, comprehending everything she knew relative to the affairs of her husband. She, moreover, directed them to the exact spot where the remains of the miser had been buried in the cellar of their former house, and there the officers of justice accordingly found them. Then, still retaining her in custody, the magistrate despatched the captain of the band to the residence of her husband. Immediately seizing him as a prisoner of the State, they conducted him back to Pisa overwhelmed with the most abject despair; and when brought up for examination he refused to utter a syllable. But his wife being ordered to appear against him, he cried out with a loud voice at the sight of her—

‘This is justice indeed!’ And then turning towards her he added—‘My too great affection for you has brought me to this.’

Then, taking one of the magistrates aside, he freely revealed to him the truth of the affair exactly as it had occurred. With one accord the whole Council refused to give credit to the story, asserting that there was every appearance of his having himself robbed and murdered the unfortunate Guglielmo, and threatening instantly to put him to the torture if he

did not confess. This, upon his maintaining his own story, they proceeded to do, and by dint of repeated trials they at length compelled him to say what they pleased, and afterwards proceeded to sentence him to be broken alive upon the wheel, while the State appropriated the whole of his possessions. The remains of the miser Grimaldi were then ordered to be removed and interred in sacred ground. The establishment of Fazio was completely broken up; his wife, with her family and domestics, being compelled to take refuge wherever they could. On being released from court, where she had appeared as evidence against her own husband, the wretched Pippa returned home, but to a home desolate and deserted by all but her children. In the agony of her grief she wept, she raved, she tore her hair; too late perceiving, with feelings of remorse, the grievous error she had committed.

The tidings spread rapidly throughout all Pisa, and the people joined in expressing their astonishment, no less at the supposed enormity and deceit of which Fazio was accused, than at the strange treachery and ingratitude of his wife. Even her own relatives and friends, who assisted her unanimously, agreed in condemning her conduct, reproaching her bitterly for the degradation and ruin which she had brought upon her family, besides the inhumanity of having thus betrayed her husband to a painful and ignominious death. Having said this, they left her weeping bitterly and overpowered with intolerable remorse. On the ensuing day the wretched Fazio was led forth, and drawn through the streets of Pisa on a sledge, and after being thus exhibited to the people, he was conducted to the place of execu-

tion. There, having been first broken upon the wheel, he was executed in the presence of the people, and left on the same spot by way of example during the rest of the day.

The tidings of this terrific scene coming to the ears of his wife, whom he had continued cursing and reviling to his latest hour, in a fit of desperation she resolved to take vengeance upon herself. About dinner-time, then, there being few people to observe her, she seized her two little boys by the hand, and led them, weeping, towards the great square, the scene of the execution, while such as met her by the way only bestowed their maledictions on her, and allowed her to pass on. When she arrived at the foot of the platform where the body lay, few spectators being present, she proceeded, still weeping bitterly, to ascend the steps of the platform with the children along with her, no one around offering the least resistance. There, affecting to lament over the wretched fate of her husband, she was sternly and severely upbraided by all who stood near, who said aloud—

‘See how she can weep now that it is done! It is her own work; she would have it so; and let her, therefore, despair!’

The wretched wife then tearing her hair, and striking her lovely face and bosom with her clenched hands, while she pressed her burning lips to the cold features of her husband, next bade her little boys kneel down to kiss their father; at which sight the surrounding spectators, forgetting their anger, suddenly burst into tears. But their distracted mother, drawing a knife from her bosom, with remorseless fury hastily plunged it into the breasts of her sons, and before the people were prepared to wrest the

deadly weapon from her hand, she had already turned it against herself, and fallen upon the lifeless bodies of her husband and her children. With a loud cry the people ran towards the fatal spot, where they found the dying mother and her two infants pouring out their last sighs as they lay weltering in their blood. Tidings of this tragic scene having spread rapidly throughout all Pisa, crowds of people came hastening from all sides, filled with lamentation and terror, to witness so heart-rending a spectacle, while the yet warm and reeking bodies of the father, the mother, and the children were piled indiscriminately upon each other. And surely nothing we have heard of the woes of Thebes, of Syracuse, or of Athens, of Troy, or of Rome, can be said to equal the domestic sorrow and calamity which Pisa thus witnessed in the lot of a single family, the whole of which was swept away in one day, the innocent victims of mistaken justice. The terror and surprise of the inhabitants of Pisa shortly spreading through other parts of Italy, caused so great a sensation in the different cities, that people left their houses to visit the fatal spot, lamenting over the bodies of the innocent children, lying with smiling countenances as if buried in a profound slumber, on their parents' funeral bier. It was impossible for them to restrain their tears at the sight—a sight sufficient to soften a heart of stone, and at which Justice herself now dropped her fatal sword. For she at length consented to grant to the prayers of Fazio's relatives that the bodies of the hapless children should be decently interred in the burial-ground of Santa Catarina, while those of the parents, who had died a desperate and unrepentant death, were to be placed without the sacred bounds under the walls of the

city. The procession was accompanied with the tears and lamentations of thousands, whose outcries against the cruelty and injustice of Fazio's fate, and whose expressions of pity for his sufferings, were loud and vehement.

THE END

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