

THE LOST HEIR

—OR, THE—

DUKE AND THE LAZZARONE.

A Tale of Naples and its Environs.

BY SYLVANUS JOBB, JR.^{cy}

William Strong



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THE LOST HEIR.

CHAPTER I.

THE BOAT.

AMONG travellers, "VIDI NAPOLI E POI MORI," has long been a saying: "See Naples, and then die!" For my part, though to "see Naples" is a privilege, I would rather see many other places that have been opened to my vision and pictured upon the varied panorama of my memory. Yet Naples is wondrous beautiful. Her bay—perhaps the handsomest sheet of salt water in the world—is compassed by a dioramic scene of more than ordinary grandeur. The sweet islands of Ischia and Procida, the lofty rocks of Pausilippo, and the bright waving foliage of a thousand flowery trees, open upon the left hand as we enter the bay; then further around lays the great city, stretching along the curving shore, and lifting its marble palaces and churches upon the sloping hillside, till the towering fortress of Mount Saint Elmo crowns the whole. Then the city of Portici, too, sparkles like snow heaps upon the shore to the right, and back of it, lifting its

double head among the clouds of its own making, towers that black, solemn monument of destruction—Vesuvius! Buried cities lie at its feet, and living cities tremble beneath its thunders.

A day that had been fair and beautiful was closing over the Neapolitan Bay, and the golden sun was fast sinking into the waters of the Mediterranean. A gentle breeze that had been blowing from the northward all the afternoon had lulled into quiet, and the broad bosom of the bay was gradually assuming a surface of polished glass. The atmosphere seemed lighter now that the wind had died away, and ere many minutes the sulphurous vapors from Vesuvius began to settle upon the water, and respiration became more the creature of necessity than of fancy.

Some time before—perhaps an hour—a small boat had rounded Point Campanella, and was now heading towards the city. It contained two men—one of them seeming to be the owner

of the boat, a stout, athletic fellow, dressed in the garb of a Neapolitan fisherman, and the other was a young man, not more than twenty-six years of age, of more than ordinary personal beauty, dressed in a rich garb, and wearing upon his bosom the star of a marquis. The latter was somewhat noted in Naples, not only for his wealth, but for his noble heart and cheerful disposition. He was generous to a fault, acknowledging no restraint but the impulses of his own nature, and constantly doing a great deal of good that the world knew nothing about. The king loved him for his wit and understanding, and his compeers loved him for his social generosity, while the people who knew him loved him for his benevolence, and respected him for his virtues. Such was Guiseppe Zarani, Marquis di Sello.

The sails of the boat were flapping against the masts, but no wind came to fill them, while the lazy, glassy swells were rocking the frail bark like a child's cradle.

"This is bad," said the marquis, as he held his hand up to feel if a breath of air would strike it.

"It is," returned the boatman. "The sails will be of no more use."

"But we may catch a breath," suggested the marquis. "'Twill take you three hours to row to the Villa Reale."

"We may catch a breath, signor," answered the boatman, "but we shan't want the sails."

"And why not?"

"They would n't stand such a breath as we may catch now."

"But you don't apprehend a storm?" uttered Zarani, in a tone of concern.

"Yes, I do," returned the boatman, as he let go his sheets, and then left the helm. "I wish we'd left Salerno two hours earlier than we did."

"My business would n't let me do that, and it's too late to remedy it now. If you are spry we may escape. I can pull an oar if it is necessary."

"I will do the best I can, signor, but I have no hopes of escaping the storm. I have lived

upon the bay for over forty years, and I never knew such signs as these to fail of giving us a blow. This wind's dying away so, all of a sudden, is bad, and then the smoke of the volcano's settling is worse. When that thin, white vapor settles upon the bay, it is sure to draw a storm in."

The marquis smiled at the man's natural philosophy.

"Do you know what makes that vapor settle about us?" he asked, as he lent a hand to unstep the masts.

"Only that there's a storm coming."

As the boatman took his oars, Zarani explained to him the nature of rarified atmosphere, and showed him that the settling of the vapor was but the result of the same cause that produced the storm. The fellow understood but little of what he heard. He knew what he had seen, and his mind could comprehend but little more beyond.

"Learning is a good thing," said the boatman; "but he that gets all his learning from experience, and knows just what he sees, is well enough off for this world."

Zarani allowed his companion to enjoy his own opinion, and in pursuance of his promise he took one of the oars and commenced rowing. The distance to the city was nearly fifteen miles, and though the boat went through the water at a good rate, yet its occupants had much fear that the landing could not be reached in safety. The boatman proposed landing at Torre del Greco, but the marquis overruled him, and the boat's head was kept towards Naples.

At the end of an hour six miles had been gained, but the vapor had become more dense, and respiration was more ungrateful.

"I can't stand this much longer," said the marquis. "This atmosphere is a real pest."

"We shan't have to stand it much longer," returned the boatman, "for I think I can feel a fresh breath on my cheek now."

"Then in heaven's name, let it come."

"You'd better stand the smoke," uttered the boatman, in a half-hushed voice, as he turned his head towards the sea. "Hark! Don't you hear that?"

The marquis turned his ear towards the sea, and he distinctly heard a low moaning sound, like the faint wail of one in distress.

"I hear a moan," he replied.

"And that's the voice of the storm."

"Then let us pull."

"If you can stand it, signor."

"As long as you can," was Zarani's reply, as he bent himself to the oar.

The moan grew louder, and the breath that the boatman had felt grew stronger. The glassy surface of the bay was broken, and as the twilight was beginning to deepen, the gathering storm rolled in, and premature darkness shut the distant shore from sight.

"It has come," murmured the marquis, as the spray began to fly over the boat.

The boatman made no answer.

"Will it be much worse?" asked Zarani.

"It has hardly begun yet," was the answer.

"Then we are not to be envied."

"No. We'd better both of us pray."

"We'd better work while we pray," said the marquis, as he noticed that the other was slackening his efforts.

"The most we can do now is to keep the boat before it," returned the boatman. "The wind and sea will set us in fast enough."

The storm had now increased to a fearful point, and yet the shore was more than eight miles distant. The waves dashed into the boat, and the wind roared wildly over the dashing spray. The storm was from the southward and westward, and the hoarse roaring of the surge on the rocks of Capri could be distinctly heard. Zarani could no longer see the features of his companion, but he could hear the murmurs of fear that fell from his lips, and his own heart began to sink within his bosom. The darkness was intense, and it was with the utmost difficulty that the boat could be kept before the wind.

Half an hour had passed since the storm fairly broke, and during that time it was evident that the boat had been driving furiously towards the shore. Considerable of the distance had been gained, but as the roaring of

the surge fell upon the ear, the shore became equally a subject of fear with the sea. The boat was being driven towards the rocks to the southward of the city, and in such case there was little hope on either hand.

"The boat must be bailed out, signor," said the boatman; "and if you will keep her head in, I will do it."

The speaker's tones were tremulous, and betokened the deadly fear that had beset him.

"I will look out for that," returned the young marquis, as he shoved his oar out over the stern. "Bail away as fast as possible, for the water is already nearly to my knees."

The boatman laid his oar upon the thwarts, and then opening the small cuddy at the bows he obtained a small pail, with which he commenced dipping up the water and throwing it overboard. Zarani could just see the outlines of his figure as he moved to and fro, but he could not see his movements.

"Great God, have mercy on us!" cried the boatman, starting up from his work and clasping his hands. "May the holy virgin protect me!" And he crossed himself as he spoke.

"What now?" exclaimed the marquis.

"Hear the surge!"

"I've heard it for a long time. Bail away."

"It's of no use," uttered the affrighted man, dropping upon his knees.

"Yes it is of use," shouted Zarani, as he placed his hand above his eyes to prevent the spray from utterly blinding him. "Bend to it, man, or we shall sink ere a dozen more waves can reach us."

The marquis could see the man still kneeling upon the thwart, and he was upon the point of moving forward, and had pulled in his oar for that purpose, when a heavy sea struck the boat upon the quarter, knocking him over into the bottom of the sternsheets, and drenching him with water. He was not seriously hurt by the fall, and getting upon his feet as soon as he could, he grasped the rail with both hands and tried to gaze out into the darkness, but nothing save the dim outlines of the bows of the boat met his gaze! His companion was gone!

No shriek, no groan, was heard, for the roar of the tempest shut out all sounds but those of its own making. Zarani with difficulty worked his way to the centre of the boat and gazed down beneath the thwarts, but there was no man there! Guiseppe Zarani now thought of prayer, and a petition of frenzied desire burst from his lips. The heart that had been comparatively calm in the companionship of a second sufferer sank into despair in its solitude. The soul that knew no fear of mortal foe quailed before the power of the tempest. Had there been even work to do towards salvation, the marquis might have been calm, but this was denied him. All he could do now was to cling to the frail bark and trust to the fortune that seemed playing the demon.

The roar of the surge, as it broke upon the rocks, was now deafening, and the unhappy man could see lights upon the shore. Soon afterwards he could see a thousand white spectres dancing in the darkness where the foam was being dashed from the broken wave-caps, and he knew that a few minutes would decide his

fate. Instead of entirely unnerving him, however, the reality of the fearful scene gave him more strength, and his thoughts came to his assistance. Amid the thunders of the breaking waves, and in the dread presence of the death-killing, Zarani quickly studied the relative position of the boat with the shore, and he found, as he might have known had he thought, that she was setting side on. The most he could do was to throw himself flat upon the bottom of the boat, with his head held clear of the water that had collected there, and thus await the result.

Hardly had the young man chosen his position, when the boat was lifted upon the bosom of a rising sea, and on the next instant came the crashing of the strained fabric as it was rent in sunder. Zarani felt the shock, and he heard the crash, but further than that he knew not. For an instant a confused roar rushed through his brain, and then all was hushed in forgetfulness. He had felt a blow, and he experienced an instant's pain, but that was all.

CHAPTER II.

THE LAZZARONE.

WHEN Guiseppe Zarani came to himself he would have moved, but he was too weak. He was sensible of but little pain, and that was in the back of the head. He was in a coarse bed, the covering of which, though clean and neat, was yet but the larger part of a boat sail. His pillow, however, was soft, and the couch upon which his limbs reposed felt easy and comfortable.

"Are you awake, signor?" asked a rough, yet kind voice at his side.

"Yes," returned the marquis.

"Here is some drink, then."

The young man took the proffered cup, and at the same time the attendant placed his hand beneath the invalid's neck and raised the head. The drink was a kind of cordial, and it tasted grateful to the parched lips and tongue.

"Where am I?" asked Zarani, as he gave back the cup.

"Where you need sleep," was the laconic response. "I'll see you again when you need my attendance."

Next the unknown turned from the bed, and in a moment more, Zarani heard the door close

behind him. The proceeding seemed rather summary, but the marquis thought little of it, and he soon began to look about, which he was able to do by simply moving his head. The room in which he lay was very small, not over eight feet square, and the windows upon two opposite sides showed that it was a wing of some other building. The walls were of soft stone, and the brown tiling of the roof was in sight not more than seven feet from the floor. There was no view, however, beyond, for the windows were screened by green paper curtains, and Zarani's curiosity waxed warmer to know where he was. A few bunches of maccaroni hung upon the wall at the foot of the bed; upon a small shelf on one side, near the right window, stood a small alabaster crucifix, and close by it hung a rough painting of the Madonna. Of one thing alone was the young man satisfied, and that was, that the abode was one of poverty, but, at the same time, of taste and cleanliness.

A drowsy sensation soon overcame the invalid, and he closed his eyes and sank into a quiet slumber. When he again awoke, the room was lighter than before, and he could see that the

sun was shining brightly in through one of the windows. Again he gazed about him, but all was the same as before. He called aloud, but no one answered him. He felt stronger than when he had first recovered his consciousness, and he resolved to arise from the bed and survey the premises for himself.

There was considerable pain in his head as he arose to a sitting posture, but the natural impetuosity of his disposition was not easily to be overcome, and he slipped out upon the floor. His first object was to seek his garments. The green velvet frock was still about him, but his cloak, hat, and boots were missing. There was an old cap upon a peg near the door, however, and this the marquis secured and placed upon his head. An old pair of top-boots, too, stood by the head of the bed—just such a pair as a nobleman might have given to a beggar—and these he drew on without difficulty.

His soiled frock, his quaint cap, his heavy boots, and his unshaven face, gave him a look anything but agreeable, as he could see by a piece of looking-glass that hung near the crucifix, but he cared little for this, so that he found out where he was. The door yielded to his touch, and as he stepped out beyond he found himself in another square room somewhat larger than the one he had left. There was a door upon the left hand, and this the marquis opened, thereby finding himself in the open air, and stepping off to a short distance, he turned about and looked back upon the place he had left. It was a small dilapidated building, looking as though the original owner had left it to any who might occupy it. To the right he saw the city, some three miles distant, and before him, some hundred rods beyond the house he had left, was the shore of the bay. All vestiges of the storm had passed; the sun was a little past the meridian, and the air was soft and warm. The pain in Zarani's head began to increase, and a dizziness came over him. He pressed his hand upon his brow, and soon his brain was more steady.

Back from the small building, through a grove of lemons, opened a wide court, at the extremity of which stood the old cathedral of

St. Joseph. Towards this court the marquis made his way, and upon one side he saw a small deal table, upon which stood a drinking-cup. Near it was a low stool, and as he felt the dizziness again coming over him, he hastened to this seat and sank down upon it. The exertion had been more than he could bear, and resting his elbow upon the table, his head sank upon his hand, and for several moments all was confusion in his brain.

For some time the marquis remained thus, when his brain became quiet, and he thought he heard a low exclamation near him. He opened his eyes, and for an instant he thought some fairy vision had burst upon him. At a short distance stood a huge chestnut tree, and looking out from behind it, half-hidden by the low aloes that grew around, was one of the sweetest female forms he had ever seen. Her dress was simple in the extreme, and about her dark brown hair, which was gathered into a glossy mass ere it reached the shoulders, she wore a wreath of white roses and orange blossoms. The lovely presence was regarding him with an earnest look, with one hand extended as if in wondering anxiety, and Zarani dared not raise his head lest he should frighten her away.

[SEE ENGRAVING.]

The girl seemed to know that she had been observed, for she stepped out from among the aloes and softly approached the spot where the young marquis sat. All Zarani's senses came to his aid in a moment. Such loveliness he had never before seen. In the halls of the noble and the proud he had met with Italia's fairest daughters, but none of them had he seen in the fair beauty of unadorned nature—none whose simple sweetness blushed as God made it to blush, unassisted by art, and unconsciously owned and worn. As the sylph-like form came nearer, he could see that the features were classically regular, though here and there, about the eyes and mouth, lurked traces of warm smiles that bore no comparison to aught else than themselves.

"Signor marquis," spoke the girl, in a tone as sweet and mellow as the notes of a flute.



THE MARQUIS ZARANI AND THE LOVELY VISION.—See Chapter II.

Zarani started to his feet, but the excitement of the scene proved too much for him, and he sank back exhausted. His brain reeled again, but he lost not his consciousness until he felt himself supported by the fair hand that had been stretched out towards him. He heard her sweet voice calling for some one at a distance, and then he sank once more into the oblivion of mental chaos.

When the marquis came to himself again he was in the same room as before, and when he opened his eyes they rested upon the form of a middle-aged man who sat by his bedside.

"How do you feel now, signor marquis?" asked the watcher.

Zarani leaned over and gazed into the face of the speaker. His countenance the young man knew he had seen before, and a moment's look at the *tout ensemble* of the man convinced him that his watcher was a lazzarone. His garb was well-worn, and evidently purchased second-handed, for the faded velvet doublet illy corresponded with the blue woollen hose and tights. The countenance had little in it to distinguish it, save that there was more of kindness stamped there than is usually found among the lazzaroni, and the eye, too, upon a close scrutiny, sparkled with considerable intelligence. In form, the man was of ordinary size, with considerable muscular development, but not enough to mark him.

"Where am I?" asked Zarani, as he finished his scrutiny.

"Safer than you would have been if you had had your own way," replied the lazzarone.

"But how do you feel now?"

"Stronger and better. Now tell me where I am?"

"Not far from where you landed—three miles and a half from the Villa Reale—half-way between Naples and Portici—and beneath the humble roof of Gebo Massinello, gentleman at large, and fiddler to all who have a mind to hear him."

The marquis smiled at the man's humor, and he at once recognized him as a violin-player whom he had often seen about the streets.

"Was it you who picked me up?" asked Zarani.

"Yes."

"Last night?"

"I picked you from the church court yesterday towards evening."

"How? then I've been here two nights?"

"Yes—four."

"Four!" repeated the marquis, in surprise.

"Was I hurt so badly as that?"

"An ugly cut you had on your head, signor, and your constitution is better than good that you ran clear of the fever."

Zarani closed his eyes and tried to think of what had passed. Suddenly he started up.

"I was in the church court yesterday, you say?"

"Yes."

"I saw a female there. She caught me as I was falling."

"Yes."

"Who was she?"

"Adele Massinello?"

"Your daughter?"

"Yes."

"By San Carlo, sir fiddler, she is a beautiful creature."

"Others have said so before, Signor Zarani."

"You know me, then?"

"Everybody knows Guiseppe Zarani. If I had known you not, my daughter should not have nursed you."

Massinello's tone was serious and meaning.

"She did nurse me, then?" exclaimed the invalid, with a kindling eye.

"Yes, as she would have nursed a dog had it been brought to her in suffering."

A quick flush passed over Zarani's face.

"I mean, signor," continued the lazzarone, as he saw the effect of his words, "that your suffering alone commanded my daughter's attention."

"Her heart must be kind, then."

"It is."

"And yet she nursed me, because you knew who I was?"

"Yes, signor. I knew you would not repay

my kindness with base ingratitude. You understand me?"

"Ingratitude? And for kindness like yours? What mean you?"

"My daughter is beautiful, signor marquis."

"I understand you now, Gebo, and I thank you that you know me so well," returned the young man, in a gratified tone. "The demon you fear never shall find an instrument in me for his work. He who will grind the jewel of virtue beneath his heel has no standing with me."

"I knew it, signor." And as the lazzarone spoke, the shade of anxiety passed from his face.

"Have you drink at hand?" asked the marquis, at the end of several minutes' silence.

"Yes," returned Gebo.

He left the room, and soon returned with a cup, which he placed in the young man's hand. As Zarani drank off the grateful beverage and returned the cup, he asked:

"How did you find me, Gebo?"

"I was returning from the Toledo when the storm was in full rage, and knowing that a companion's boat was made fast upon the rocks I went down to see if it was already damaged, and if not, to haul it up. It was smashed, however, and just as I was turning away, my eye caught your boat as it rose upon the top of a wave. When it was dashed upon the rocks you were thrown over upon the fragments of the boat that had been already wrecked. I soon got you up and brought you here, where you were well cared for, as you have reason to know."

"And for which you shall be well rewarded, if you will accept reward."

"It is not my trade to refuse money. I never was guilty of it."

"I thought so."

"Yet, signor, the poorest lazzarone in Naples would have received the same at my hands."

"I believe you, Gebo. Now tell me, was there much damage done by the storm?"

"Some among the shipping, and there were some lives lost, too. Poor Sallino has gone."

"Who was he?"

"A boatman who pulled from the landing of San Carlo."

"Holy saints! 'twas his boat I was in. He went overboard in the storm."

"His body came ashore the next day, and we buried it."

"Peace be to his soul!" murmured the marquis, fervently.

"You had better sleep, now," said the lazzarone, rising from his seat. "You must stay with me one more night."

At first, Zarani would have refused, but he knew that he was yet weak, and then he hoped once more to see the fair being who had appeared to him in the court of the cathedral, though he said not so to Massinello.

"Do you think I shall be strong to-morrow?" he asked.

"If you are careful to-day—yes."

"But I feel strong now."

"'Tis natural you should. You felt strong yesterday. My daughter will attend you if you want anything before I return."

As Massinello thus spoke, he left the room, and ere long afterwards Zarani sank into a gentle, easy slumber.

CHAPTER III.

ADELE.

THE last rays of the setting sun were streaming in through the crevices in the worn window-curtains, when Guiseppe Zarani awoke, and they lay in golden threads along upon the brick floor. He felt much better than he had when last he woke before, and he knew that he was stronger. His head felt more solid, and he could plainly see that his thoughts were clearer.

The color came to his pale cheek as his eyes rested upon a lute that lay across the chair by his bedside, and while he yet wondered how it came there, the door was softly opened and Adele Massinello entered the room. She saw that her charge was awake, and she would have started quickly back had not the marquis called to her.

"You will not surely leave me, sweet girl," uttered Zarani.

"Not if you wish me to remain," frankly returned the girl. "My father bade me wait on you. Can I help you now?"

"Yes. I am lonesome. I have slept till there is no more sleep for me, and I would

have some one to help me wear the time away. Is that lute yours?"

"It is, signor. I brought it here to put new strings upon it, while I watched you as you slept."

"If you will but sing to me I shall be happy."

"If such a trifle at my hands can give you happiness, I should be cruel to withhold it."

There was a bright smile upon her lips as she spoke, and to the marquis she looked more beautiful than ever. To one so deeply read in the ways and habits of the world as was he, the reading of Adele's character was easy. He saw at once the stamp of holy virtue in her every look and movement. The brightness of her large, dark eyes, the pureness of her complexion, the loveliness of her smile, and the confident melody of her voice, all spoke of innocence and purity. One thing he saw with pleasure, and in his conclusion on this point he knew that he was not mistaken. He knew that the maiden was frank with him because she confided in his honor.

"Sing to me something," he said, as the girl picked up the lute.

Adele tuned the strings, and seating herself upon the chair from whence she had taken the instrument, she commenced a song. It was of her own sunny home, and she sang it most sweetly. Zarani watched her varying countenance as she proceeded, and when she concluded, he had forgotten all else save the song and the singer.

"Does it make you happier?" she naively asked.

"Yes," murmured Guiseppe, hardly conscious of what he said.

"Shall I sing again?"

"Yes."

Again Adele tuned her lute and sang, and as the young marquis drank in the sweet sounds, he forgot that she who uttered them was but the daughter of a lazzarone.

"Lovely being!" he uttered.

"You forget yourself, signor."

"No, by my faith, I do not. If I should call you aught else, I should surely forget myself," insisted the marquis, with a sparkling eye and beaming look.

"Shall I play more?" the girl asked, with an earnest desire to change the subject.

"Not now. I would know something of you more than I can judge by what I can see. Those who know me, lady, fear not to trust my honor."

"Did I not trust you implicitly, I should not be here, signor," returned Adele, with a mantling blush, as she sat her lute against the wall.

"You are the child of a lazzarone?" said Zarani, regarding his companion with an earnest look.

"My father belongs to that class, signor."

"And yet he owns a roof to shelter him?"

"No, signor. This place I hire myself. Till I was able to work, we slept in the boat of a friend; but now that I can work flowers in wax, and sketch a few simple things for the print sellers, we hire this place. My father earns enough with his violin to find us in food, while I pay for our rooms. His clothes he most-

ly begs, or gets in return for his music, but mine I buy, and sometimes I have money enough to buy flowers and fruit. I love flowers, and I love my father, and my father loves me. I mean to do as nearly right as I can, and though my father is a lazzarone, yet he is a very good man. There, signor, you have it all in full, and are saved the trouble of needless questions."

"As frank as beautiful, and beautiful as good," exclaimed Zarani, in admiration. "But you told me not of your mother?"

"Because I had nothing to tell. These eyes retain not her form. My heart alone holds that sacred name."

There was a soft sadness drooped over the features of the fair girl as she thus spoke, and she turned her eyes towards the small alabaster crucifix that stood upon the shelf.

"It seems impossible," uttered the young man to himself, as he gazed into her half-averted features; but she caught the words, and quickly turned.

"What seems impossible, signor?"

"I spoke with myself."

"But yet it was of me?"

"Yes."

"Do you doubt my word?"

"No. I believe you are all truth."

"Then what meant you was impossible?"

"That you should be the daughter of Gebo Massinello."

Adele started. The blood mounted quickly to her brow, and then fell back again, leaving her face paler than before.

"Massinello is my father, signor," she at length said.

"By the saints of our holy church, fair girl, I doubt it."

"Doubt it, signor marquis? Why?" She betrayed much anxiety in her manner, and her eyes were fastened earnestly upon the countenance of her companion.

"From the dissimilarity of your features."

"Is that all?"

"It is enough upon which to found a doubt, at least. The blood of a parent cannot be

wholly lost in the child. I am not blind enough to believe that the blood of the lazzarone runs in your veins."

"I think I am Massinello's child."

"But tell me," continued Zarani, urged on by some irresistible power; "have you not sometimes doubted the parentage thus given you?"

"No, signor."

"Ah, Adele, that answer came too reluctantly."

For the first time the fair girl seemed to realize the admiring look of the man she had attended, but instead of causing her offence, it brought a deep blush to her face, and she bowed her head to conceal her emotions—emotions, however, not all caused by the look she had noticed, but occasioned more by the subject of discussion.

"It may seem unmanly, ungrateful, and perhaps, almost impudent, for me thus to speak of matters so sacred to you, and which concern not me, but it is my mood, and you must pardon me," continued the marquis, as he noticed the effect of his words upon his companion.

"In fact, I know not why I should have broached it; but a sick man has privileges, you know. Yet your countenance struck me as not belonging to the herd from which the world thinks you sprung, and so I spoke of it."

"You have done nothing wrong, signor. My father is very kind, and I would not disown him."

Zarani gazed steadily into Adele's face as she spoke, and he could see that she spoke not all her feelings. He knew not what reason he could have for asking further questions on a point that so little concerned him, but there was one more question upon his mind, and he asked it:

"Do you not sometimes wish that your parentage had been different?"

"Signor!"

"I think I am right, lady."

Adele was silent, and her white brow sank upon her hand.

"I may be foolish to question you thus,"

continued Zarani; "but I declare I cannot help it. But let not my words give you pain. We are all governed more or less by the opinions of the world, and though modest merit is Heaven's purest stamp of nobility, yet the soul sometimes longs for a flight higher among its fellows. The dove, with its pinions clipped, cannot soar above the earth. God made humanity and worth, but man has made society; and, argue as we will, society regulates us, if regulation you can call it."

"I understand you, signor," said Adele, raising her dark eyes to the face of her companion. "You think I sometimes wish that fortune had placed me higher in the scale of society?"

"Yes. Is it not so?"

"Perhaps it is. But yet I am content. If my station is humble, I can fill it the better."

"By my faith, fair girl, I do not believe your station was thus humble by birth. The Neapolitan lazzaroni are but vagabonds, and I believe not that the tide of your life took rise from that source."

"Say no more, signor. Your words will make me unhappy. The thoughts you have spoken oftentimes come unbidden to my mind, and they only serve to make me discontented. Above all things, I would be content with the portion God has assigned me. The poorest lazzarone in Naples, with content, is richer than our king."

"Not richer, Adele, for our king is surely content."

"Is it so? I heard that Charles was long-ing for the Spanish throne."

"So he is."

"Then even a king is not satisfied, and surely I can gain nothing by discontent. I will sing to you again, signor, if it would please you."

"It would," returned Zarani; but while she sang her sweetest notes he could not fasten his thoughts upon them. He could only think of her surpassing beauty, her strange words, and the improbability of her being the lazzarone's child.

The sun went down, and as the last notes of the singer's voice died away upon the air, the softened shades of rich twilight were resting upon her countenance. Those features wore a saddened cast—the light of the dark eyes was liquid with feeling, and as the small hand that had just swept the lute strings rested now upon the swelling bosom, the figure seemed more like the inspired artist's *chef-d'œuvre*, dwelling there in living marble, than it did like a child of earth.

Adele arose and left the apartment, but for a long time after she had gone, Zarani gazed upon the vacancy her sweet form had occupied, and in the vision of his soul he bore her image still.

"She is a strange creature," he murmured to himself at length; "more noble by far than the thousands we call so. Beauty and wit are hers—a kind heart and virtuous principles. Why did not she have a station in life equal to them? Would to God she had."

As this last exclamation came from the lips of the marquis, he fell into a reverie as deep as it was pointless, in which the voice, the words, the form, the features, and the smile of Adele Massinello were mixed up with thoughts of other things.

When Zarani slept that night, strange visions came to his dreams, and though they were pleasant, yet they were such as he dared not cherish.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DUKE.

SEVERAL times during the night, Zarani awoke and busied his mind in thinking of his dreams. At length he found the sunlight streaming through the eastern window, and he raised himself upon his elbow. His strength seemed mostly restored, and he was pleased to find that his head was free from pain. He was just thinking of leaving the bed, when Massinello made his appearance.

"Signor is better," was the lazzarone's first remark, as he saw his patient. "Were that long beard from your face you would look like yourself again."

"I should feel more like myself, too," was Zarani's reply.

"If you will trust me, I will remove it, signor."

"Do so, by all means."

"And then signor will go to another room and take a cup of coffee, and perhaps eat a fresh roll?"

"With all my heart."

Massinello left the room and when he returned, he bore in his hands a mug of hot water, a basin, a brush and soap.

"You have no razor," said Zarani, as he looked in vain for that instrument.

"Yes," returned Gebo, at the same time setting down the other things, and then drawing the knife from a small sheath which he wore in his belt. "This will answer." And he drew the edge across his thumb-nail as he spoke.

"A rough-looking razor, upon my soul."

"And a good one. See there."

The lazzarone laid a single hair across the edge of his knife, and severed it at a single movement.

"My hand is steady, signor."

"Go on, then."

Gebo prepared his lather, and soon he applied his knife. The edge glided over the marquis's face smoothly, and as he arose from the operation, he complimented the amateur barber for his skill.

"Now I will help you dress, and then you shall have breakfast, for there may be some one here after you before long."

"Ah, how so?"

"Because yesterday I left word upon the *Reale* that you were here."

"Then some one will surely come. But let me dress now, for I am anxious about that coffee."

Zarani's garments were brought to him. They had been dried and brushed, and looked not much the worse for the siege they had undergone, and soon he was ready to accompany his host. In the adjoining room he found a small table set, and the grateful odor of the coffee and rolls revived him. There were some figs and grapes upon the table, too, and a peculiar emotion came to his soul as he thought who had procured them for him.

Adele met the young marquis with a sweet smile, and a deep blush made rich her cheeks, as she received his kind words of social recognition.

"Say, my daughter, does not our guest look better?" gaily asked Gebo, as they took their seats at the table.

"Much better," returned Adele, casting a furtive glance at Zarani's really handsome face.

"For which I am sincerely grateful," added the marquis.

"How easy it is," remarked Massinello, as he helped himself to a roll, "for circumstances to make equalities. Here am I, Gebo Mussinello, lazzarone, and fiddler extraordinary, on a footing with a marquis."

"Yes, and with a king, for that matter," returned Zarani, with a smile.

"So I am. Here, taste of these figs, signor. Adele purchased them this morning on purpose for you. Diabolo, signor marquis, but I doubt me if the noble blood of Naples warms a better heart than that of my daughter. Don't blush, Adele. It don't look well."

"You speak the truth, good Gebo. By my faith, you do," exclaimed Zarani, gazing admiringly into the flushed features of the fair girl. "You are blessed in your possession."

"That I am. I should have had but a stray boat for my home had it not been for her. Ah, here's a carriage at the door. Who can it be? Some one for you, signor, upon my life. The coronet of a duke upon the door panel, too, as I'm alive. Diabolo, but Gebo Massinello's

house is rising in the world. Bestir thee, Adele, my dear, and open to our noble visitor."

The "noble visitor," however, entered without waiting for admittance. He was a man about fifty years of age, somewhat taller than the average of men, and rather slim in his build. His hair was gray, and so were his eyes, though darker than most gray eyes. His nose was thin and long, with a straight ridge, his mouth marked by stern lines, and his lips very thin, evidently made so by their constant compression.

"Tartani," uttered the marquis, rising from the table.

"My dear marquis," cried the new-comer, seizing the young man by the hand, "thank God you are safe."

"Tartani?" murmured Gebo, jumping from his seat. "Garcia Tartani?"

"Yes, good Gebo," returned Zarani.

"The Duke of Prezza?" continued Gebo, opening his eyes wider.

"Yes," responded the marquis.

"Diabolo, but this is an honor. Wont your highness take a cup of coffee?" Gebo said, turning to the duke.

The duke deigned no reply to the lazzarone, but he made himself busy by inquiring into the circumstances attending the fate of Zarani, while Adele pulled her father by the sleeve, and whispered to him to be more careful how he spoke to the nobleman.

"You see me just as I am," said the marquis, in reply to a question from Tartani. "I was overtaken by the storm on my return from Salerno, my boatman was knocked overboard by a sea, and I was landed upon the rocks just over the way here. These good people have saved my life."

"You should have let me know of this before, and I would have come and taken you away," said the duke.

"Why, bless you, signor duke," uttered Gebo, "he didn't know it himself till yesterday."

"Silence, vagabond."

"Hush, Tartani," urged Zarani. "Do not repay a kind friend thus."

"Let him hold his peace, then."

The cast of Massinello's countenance changed as if by magic. His heart had been filled with kindness and good nature, and he had expected a kind answer from the duke, but the answer he received struck a canker to his soul.

"I am beneath my own roof, Garcia Tartani," he uttered, with pale lips, "and it is as sacred as is your own palace."

"Peace, father," urged Adele, plucking him forcibly by the sleeve.

"Am I a vagabond, my child?"

"You are but a lazzarone."

"Ay, and he a duke. One begs from the king, the other from the people. What one gets is forced from unwilling hands, while the other—"

"Hush!" cried Adele, turning pale and trembling. "Excuse him, signor duke. You have moved his temper."

"And who are you?" asked the duke, fastening his eyes upon the fair girl.

"His daughter, signor," returned she, gazing up into the face of the man who had spoken to her.

Tartani took a step forward and bent his eyes eagerly upon the girl. A strange tremor shook his frame, and his face became more pale. The deep lines about his mouth were more marked, and the thin lips slightly parted.

"Your daughter?" he at length said, casting his eyes upon Massinello.

"Yes," shortly answered the lazzarone.

The duke took no notice of the manner of Gebo's answer, but he again bent his eyes upon Adele until the fair girl shrank away from him in terror. But great as was her fear, she seemed to experience no more than did the duke. All command of himself was gone for the time, and he trembled like a leaf.

"His child!" fell from his lips unconsciously.

"Yes, signor."

Tartani started again at the sound of that voice, and for a moment his emotion was more apparent than before. Massinello had at first

attributed the emotion to a wrong cause, but his quick eye soon detected his mistake, and the sudden sparkle of revengeful fire that had burned there was changed to a look of painful apprehension.

To the young marquis this was all strange and unaccountable. He looked first upon one and then upon another of his companions, and as he wondered at the scene the thought of his last evening's conversation with Adele came over his mind. He could see that the girl's emotions were solely those of being repulsed by the duke's rude manner—Massinello's seemed to be a wakening of some secret fear, while the duke himself was evidently struck with a terrible dread, as was manifest by his livid features and trembling lips.

"Come, Zarani," at length said the old noble, endeavoring to hide his emotions, "let us go. My carriage waits, and you shall be conveyed to my own dwelling."

"I will follow you in a moment," returned the marquis; "but first I must settle with my kind host here."

"Then I will wait," said the duke, casting another trembling glance at Adele.

"As you please," responded Zarani, but in a tone which seemed to indicate that he would have been pleased to have had it different. "Here, good Gebo, take this purse. It contains a few pieces of gold, but that shall not be the end of my bounty for the life you have saved me."

"I accept your money, signor, for I told you I would—not, however, in pay for what I have done, but rather as a sum which you can well spare, and which I much need."

"As you will, Gebo. I give it freely and thankfully. And for you, my fair nurse," the marquis continued, stopping towards Adele, and taking her by the hand, "I cannot repay you now for all that I owe you."

"Signor owes me nothing," returned the beautiful girl, with a blush.

"Yes, I do, nor shall I soon forget it. I shall see you again, and until then I must leave

you to find your reward in the consciousness of having done a good deed."

"That is the richest reward I can hope."

"Come, marquis," impatiently, and rather authoritatively, uttered the duke, "are you not through yet?"

"Yes—in one moment. Fare thee well, Adele. God be kind to thee, as thou hast been to me. And you, good Gebo, a thousand blessings on your head."

There was a large tear trembling upon Adele's long, dark lashes as Zarani turned away, and he saw it. It gave a sudden motion to his heart, and the sweet face whereon it rested was not to be effaced from his memory.

The duke helped Guiseppe into the carriage, and then he himself followed, and the coachman started the horses towards the city. For some distance the two remained in silence, and while Zarani wondered at the scene he had witnessed at the dwelling of Massinello, he could see that his companion was sorely troubled.

"Zarani," abruptly spoke the duke, as the carriage reached the spot where Napoleon's barracks now stand; "who is that girl we have left behind us?"

"Gebo Massinello's daughter, Adele," returned the marquis, casting a sharp glance at the countenance of his questioner.

"Do you believe it?" the duke continued, almost abstractedly.

"They both say so," was Guiseppe's reply. He had determined not to betray his own suspicions till he had ascertained, if possible, the cause of Tartani's strange conduct.

"She is no child of that lazzarone."

"Why do you think so, Tartani?"

"I know it."

"Ah. Then who is she? Tell me."

"A fiend!" uttered the duke, setting his clenched hands hard upon his knees.

"A fiend!" iterated Zarani, starting in astonishment.

"Did I say a fiend?"

"By my faith, you did."

"Ha, ha, ha—I was thinking in another

direction. No, no, no—I know not *her*, though I would I could."

"And why so? What interest can you have in one like her?"

"Why, to tell the truth, Zarani, she looks like one whom I knew years ago."

"Who was it?"

"I forget me now, and hence am I sorely puzzled. But let it go—it may come to my memory when I least expect it."

The duke's pretence was too shallow to deceive Guiseppe Zarani. He knew that there was some deep cause for what he had seen and heard, and his companion's efforts to conceal it only made him more curious and anxious. He knew the old noble too well, however, to question him upon the subject, so he resolved to keep his eyes and ears open, and learn the secret if possible.

"Did this girl nurse you, while you were sick?" asked Tartani.

"So her father told me. I have no recollection of what took place myself."

"You think her beautiful, I suppose?"

"Most exceedingly."

"And you think of seeing her again?"

continued the duke; eyeing the young man with a sharp look.

"I may see her again, for I would give her some token of my gratitude for her services."

"Gratitude!" muttered the duke, contemptuously.

"That was the word I used."

"Gratitude is a very handy thing to a marquis, when there is a pretty lazzarone in the question."

"Tartani," pronounced the young noble, with a flushed cheek and kindling eye, "what mean those words?"

"Cannot you guess their meaning?"

"Yes, sir, I can guess it, and let me give you to understand, and know, that it casts upon me an imputation which I cannot contentedly brook. 'Sdeath, signor duke, do you dare make light of the holiest of all impulses—gratitude? Do you dare to intimate that my soul is so craven that it could trample upon the innocence

of a human being—and, much more, upon that of one to whom, perhaps, I owe my life? Have a care of your words."

"Upon my soul, Zarani, you take me to task severely."

"Because your insinuation was base."

"Well, let us say no more about it," said the duke, in a tone that showed him to be desirous of avoiding direct conflict with his companion. "I meant not to wound your feelings. Your sense of honor is more nice than I thought it."

Here the conversation ceased, and each of the noblemen gave himself up to his own reflections as the carriage rolled on through the city. The duke ever and anon cast furtive glances at his young companion, and the marks of anxiety upon his features grew deeper and deeper. Zarani's thoughts were of a milder nature, though occasionally a shade would pass over his handsome countenance as he caught the fitful eye of Tartani, and then he seemed uneasy and restive, as though some confidence he had heretofore held was now shaken.

CHAPTER V.

JOANNA.

THE road from Naples to Benevento is one of the most beautiful that can be conceived of. The way is among vine-clad hills and blossoming dales, with here and there a cascade to cool the air. Upon the walls the grape-vines creep in abundant luxuriance, aloes spring up on all hands, spreading their broad green leaves to the sun, and the chestnut and fig, the olive, the lemon, the orange and the pomegranate spring gratefully from the genial soil.

Some three miles distant from the great city, but yet in the immediate suburbs, and upon this road, stood the palace of Garcia Tartani, Duke of Prezza. It was a magnificent structure of white marble, bearing the stamp of the Roman architect, and of the period of the fifteenth century. It stood upon the slope of a hill that rose gently from the road to the northward, and the wide gardens that were spread out about it spoke of the wealth, more than of the taste, of the owner.

Within a richly furnished apartment, the ample balconies of which looked to the southward upon the winding road, sat the old duke

and the marquis. Near one of the windows sat Donna Leonora Tartani, the duchess, a woman in the middle age of life, a still beautiful, but yet proud and haughty lady. Near her sat her daughter, the Lady Joanna. The latter was twenty-two years of age, tall and beautiful, but haughty in her bearing, and too restless in her manners for the gentle, confiding woman. Her hair was of raven blackness, hanging in jewelled clusters from her white brow, her features regular, and her eyes, the distinguishing feature of her countenance, sparkled in their blackness with too keen a fire for a generous soul and frank disposition. Their light was never soft, never liquid, but always sharp and piercing, unless, indeed, when she wept with vexation, and then they were dull and heavy.

There was one more person in the room—nearly of the same age with the marquis. It was the Count Cornaro Tartani, the son of the duke. There were few distinguishing features in his countenance, save that he resembled his father; and a close observer might have detected the marks of dissipation upon his face.

Giuseppe Zarani's connection with the duke's

family was no more nor less than his thoughts of marrying Joanna. Though he had never bound himself by any pledge to the consummation of such an event, yet the subject had been freely discussed between the duke and the young marquis, and also between the mother and daughter. Zarani was known to be one of the wealthiest nobles in Naples, and it was considered by the family a stroke of exceeding good fortune that they had thus, as they supposed, secured such an alliance.

"Faith, Giuseppe, I would almost consent to be blown ashore myself, could I but have a pretty girl to nurse me," exclaimed Cornaro, as the marquis finished telling his story.

"I said nothing about her beauty," returned the marquis, not seeming to like the manner of the count.

"Ah, Giuseppe, but I could see it in your eyes. I've been in the world long enough to read more than people speak. Now tell me, for I've fairly caught you—was not this girl very beautiful?"

"She was good and kind."

"Of course; but was she not beautiful? Don't dodge the question."

"Passing."

"Ah, I've got you there," cried the count, with a laugh. "Did you not see her, father?"

"Who?" said the duke, arousing from a deep reverie.

"The young girl at the place where you found the marquis."

Tartani started, but the emotion thus called up was soon hushed.

"Did you see her?" continued the count.

"Silence, Cornaro. Trouble me not with such matters."

"There's a parental disposition for you," muttered the young man, to himself.

The duke heard not the remark, for he had arisen from his seat as he spoke, and with a quick step he left the apartment. Cornaro then turned his attention upon his sister.

"What think you of the matter, Joanna? How like you the idea of the pretty nurse?"

"Will you mind what concerns you?" uttered the offended beauty.

"O, ho—does it touch you there? Now, my mother, dear, you will be gentle, I know. What do you think of Giuseppe's five days' nursing?"

"You make yourself ridiculous," was the donna's reply, as she arose and moved out of the room.

"Upon my soul, Giuseppe, your pretty nurse turns out a bugbear."

"For mercy's sake, Cornaro, do hold your peace," exclaimed Joanna.

"To please you, certainly," returned the count; and he, too, left the room.

"Joanna," said Zarani, as they were left alone, at the same time rising and taking a seat nearer to the lady; "your brother is disposed to make light of my adventure, but I assure you I have reason to be grateful to those who so kindly protected me."

"I suppose so," returned Joanna, in a tart tone and manner.

"You might never have seen me again, had not the good lazzarone picked me up."

"And his daughter nursed you," added the lady.

"That I could have dispensed with."

"And it would have been better if you had. But I suppose her company was very agreeable."

"The company of any one would have been agreeable under such circumstances," said the marquis, biting his lips.

"I presume so—but more especially that of a pretty lazzarone."

"If you will have it so."

"I thought as much."

"Are you offended, Joanna?"

"Don't ask me."

"Come, come," urged Zarani, striving hard to keep back his injured feelings, "let us not trifle thus. I have given you no cause for ill feeling."

"Not even by spending nearly a week in the solitary company of a lazzarone girl?" quickly returned Donna Joanna.

The color fled from Zarani's lips, and the muscles of his face quivered; but still he controlled his feelings.

"During most of that time, I had no consciousness of what transpired about me," he said at length.

"It is very easy for you to say so, signor marquis."

"Do you doubt my word?"

"And what if I do?"

"I will tell you what, Joanna. There should be more confidence and good feeling existing between us, than that would indicate. There must be no trifling with my feelings, nor with my honor."

"So, so, signor marquis. Your honor varies in its price like the merchant's stock. It depends upon the market, I suppose. It was quite easy when you were with the girl who so kindly nursed you."

"Joanna, you must stop this."

"Must?"

"Yes."

"And at your command?"

"No—at the command of reason. If you regard the peculiar relations that exist between us as of any account, you will see that such feelings can only serve to make us both unhappy."

"You are philosophical, signor. What relations are there between us of such vast moment?"

"Does none of your happiness depend upon me?" asked Zarani, his lips quivering, and his eyes burning with indignation.

"I should be sorry if it did," coolly returned Joanna.

A moment the marquis was speechless—then a bitter answer arose to his lips—but with a powerful effort he even yet contained himself. He knew that Joanna was proud, that she was wilful, but he did not believe her utterly heartless.

"Do not speak without reflection," he said, in a calm tone. "This is but a sudden freak of folly. You love me too well to speak thus with soberness."

"Love you, signor! Are you beside yourself?"

"No," returned the marquis, gazing in astonishment upon his companion

"Then what put so foolish an idea as that into your head? Love you? Why, I never thought of such a thing."

"Are you serious now?"

"I was never more so in my life."

"Then, lady," said the marquis, as he arose from his seat, "I have been deceived. There is no need that I should multiply words, for we have had too many already; but yet permit me to say, that I am disappointed. I shall not repine, however, nor shall I make myself miserable, for the consolation will be mine, at least, that you are pleased with the result. Whatever may have passed between us that might bear the appearance of more than mere social friendship will henceforth be forgotten. Fare thee well, Joanna."

"I beg, signor marquis, that you will commend me to the lazzarone," cried the coquette, as her quondam lover turned away.

Zarani cast one more look back upon the proud girl, but he saw nothing there save bitterness and beauty combined, and with his heart beating in powerful emotion he left the room.

"Thank God, I'm free!" cried the young marquis, as he gained the court. "When first I saw thee, Joanna, I thought thee all gentleness and goodness, but most sadly was I mistaken. Long have I known you for a proud, self-willed being, though your beauty has had chains for me; but they're broken now—all broken, and I feel my heart more happy in its freedom."

"Ah, Guiseppe. Alone here in the garden?" cried the young count, coming up at that moment. "Where's Joanna?"

"I left her in the same place where last you saw her," returned the marquis, trying to throw off his concern.

"She was jealous, a whit—eh, Guiseppe?"

"I know not what was the matter, but she can probably tell you if you ask her."

"So, so,—you've had a quarrel. Ha, ha, ha! But let me tell you, Guiseppe, you'll have many more yet, for my sister has a way of her own that don't suit everybody. And besides, your account of that young girl did n't suit her over and above well."

"And what did I say about her, except to express the gratitude I experienced for the saving kindness that had been shown me?"

"'Twas n't what you said. Diabolo, Guiseppe, but your eyes sparkled like diamonds when you spoke of that girl, and I saw that Joanna eyed you like a gazelle. Egad, man, if you flirt with other women, you must n't tell of it."

"By what scale do you judge of my actions?" asked Guiseppe; his eyes kindling, and his face flushing with just resentment. "Am I weighed in the same balance with the libertine?"

"O, come, don't put such a face as that on the matter. I understand those things."

"Hark ye, Cornaro. Did you ever know me to be trifling with any female?"

"No."

"Did you ever know me to be engaged in any debauch?"

"No."

"Did you ever hear the insinuation fall from mortal lips, that Guiseppe Zarani was a libertine?"

"No."

"Did you ever suspect that I would be guilty of such things?"

"Diabolo, no—but what are all these questions for?"

"Simply to show you that I may not be judged in the balance into which you have thrown me. You speak as though there were extraneous motives for my gratitude to the lazzarone's daughter. To a dog that would drag me from the brink of a watery grave, I would owe a lasting gratitude, and my eyes would not hold their calm unconcern when I spoke of the noble brute. My soul has room for gratitude as warm towards a human being."

"Ha, ha, ha, Guiseppe, your moral philosophy is good; but will you answer me one question fairly and frankly?"

"As many as you choose to ask."

"Then did n't this nurse of yours have large, soft, lovely eyes?"

"Yes."

"And a face most beautiful?"

"Yes."

"And a form like a sylph?"

"Yes."

"And a voice made up all of music?"

"Yes."

"What a pity she is but a lazzarone."

"Yes, by heavens, it is a pity."

"Aha, signor marquis, I've got you, have I! Now what means that uncommonly bright sparkle of the eye—and a blush, too, upon my soul. Why, man alive, you don't know words enough to tell me more than I can see now."

The marquis knew that he was betraying feelings which till that moment he knew not himself that he possessed. The subtle questions of the count had probed deeper than he was previously aware his soul offered opportunity for. Had he been worldly wise, he would have laughed the matter off in the first place, instead of making a serious matter of it to those whose hearts were incapable of appreciating feelings like his own.

"Come, Guiseppe," continued the count, in a merry mood, as he had enjoyed long enough his companion's discomfiture, "don't take the matter so seriously to heart. But upon my soul, you don't look well."

"Neither am I well, Cornaro. My head is painful, and I feel a weakness coming over me."

"Then you had better seek the house, for you have n't recovered from your injuries yet. And egad, I must hunt up my father, for I am anxious to find out what it was that troubled him so sorely. Do you know what it was?"

"No, I do not."

"I must find out. Here, take my arm, and I'll assist you to the house. Egad, you are as weak as an infant now."

The marquis took the proffered arm, and the two turned their steps back towards the palace. Zarani knew the count could be a friend, but he knew, too, that the same heart was capable of utter baseness, and as he accepted the proffered assistance he felt a strange presentiment that the arm upon which he now rested, might ere long be raised against him. He had resolved that he would trust no longer his happiness in the keeping of Joanna, and hence arose his fears, if fears they could be called.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PICTURE GALLERY.

It was with an uneasy, nervous step that the duke left the room where his father had been sitting, and the shades upon his countenance deepened as he was alone. He took his way through the spacious hall that occupied the centre of the building, and ascended the broad stairway that led to the rooms above. Beyond here, around the angle of the eastern wing of the palace, opened a long, wide gallery, the walls of which were hung with pictures, most of which were portraits. There were features of all casts looking forth from the heavy gilt frames that hung around, and most of them were such as would be likely to arrest more than a passing notice from the visitor. The duke passed on to the extremity of the gallery, and there he stopped and gazed upon a picture that hung in a corner, behind the projection of a window-frame, where scarcely any light could fall upon it.

At length, however, the eyes of the gazer became accustomed to the scant light, and he clearly saw the face that the artist had placed upon the canvass. It was that of a female, in the bloom of life, and of exceeding beauty. The

mild features seemed clouded by an unhappy look, and the large, dark eyes appeared to be looking mournfully upon the man who stood before them. It may have been the effect of the deep shade in which the portrait was hung, but it struck not the duke so, for a fearful shudder moved him as he fairly drank in the scene.

"The same features," he murmured to himself; "the same large eyes—the same fair brow, and the same rich, brown hair. Surely, there is more than mere chance here. She has not one feature that is akin to the dark face of the lazzarone—not one—but *here* they are *all* pictured!"

A moment more the duke gazed, and then he commenced pacing the gallery. The time-worn faces seemed to look down upon him with frowning brows, and he even started involuntarily as his eyes fell upon one old face that looked forth from the largest canvass that hung in the place. It was the portrait of an old man—the progenitor of the long line of nobles that had dwelt within the marble walls of the palace. That old man was the forefather of all the

princes and dukes who had left their pictured features upon the walls of the gallery—the PRINCE DE SCARPA. But the De Scarpas no longer dwelt in those halls, and another had taken their place. They were noble-looking men—those De Scarpas—and Tartani trembled beneath their mute looks; but when he met the silent gaze of the old prince, as it looked upon him from centuries that had passed, he quailed with fear. In a moment, however, he laughed off the feeling, but the laugh was a spectral one, and its echoes frightened him more than had the frown of the portrait.

For nearly half an hour the duke paced the gallery with slow, uneven steps, and he had again approached the portrait that hung in the deep shadow of the corner when he was aroused by approaching footsteps.

"Really, father, you are choice in your selection of company," exclaimed the young count, as he approached. "Are you holding a talk with these stiff old dukes?"

Tartani regarded his son with a vacant look, but he made no reply.

"What has happened?" continued Cornaro, more seriously. "You look strangely. Upon my soul, father, you look as though you had been frightened into a ghost."

"Do I appear much moved?" asked the duke, striving to rally himself.

"Upon my soul, you do. What is it? Come, tell me?"

Tartani turned away from his son and slowly walked to the other end of the gallery. His eyes were bent upon the pavement, and he seemed engaged in deep thought. Cornaro was sorely puzzled, for he had often seen his father deeply moved in this same gallery, and he had as often wondered at the cause without daring to ask it. When the duke returned he bent his eyes sharply upon the count, and for some time he seemed still to be reflecting upon what course he should pursue.

"Cornaro," he said, at length, in a low, tremulous voice, "I believe I can trust you with a secret."

"Certainly you can," returned the young man, with eager haste.

"Especially when its inviolability concerns your whole future welfare," continued the duke.

"Eh—what?" uttered the count, his countenance falling several degrees.

"Come this way further, my son."

Cornaro followed his father to the corner of the gallery, where the latter pointed to the portrait that had already engaged so much of his own attention.

"Look upon that portrait, my son."

"It's too dark here."

"Shade your eyes and look steadily."

The young man did as directed, and gradually he seemed to gain a view of the features upon which he gazed.

"She is beautiful, father. Lovely, upon my soul. Who is it?"

"No matter."

"Egad, I should like to see her."

"She died years ago."

"Was she of our family?"

"There are none of our family here," returned the duke, and then, while a deeper cloud passed over his features, he added—"and unless we have a care, I fear there never will be: I am the first Tartani who owned these massive walls and broad vineyards, and I may be the last."

"Diabolo, father, what is all this?"

"I saw the girl of whom Zarani spoke—the one who took care of him while he lay insensible at the lazzarone's."

"Well—and what of her?"

"She is the very counterpart of that picture!"

"She! The lazzarone! Poh—a mere freak of fortune, father."

"No, by the holy cross, it is not. I marked her well, Cornaro, and I know I am not mistaken."

A moment the young man gazed up at the picture again, and then he said:

"Upon my soul, such features are not to be mistaken."

"In truth they are not," returned the duke, gazing in turn upon the portrait.

"But who is she—this girl?"

"You will never slip it—and if I tell you, you will assist me."

"I agree to both conditions."

"Then she is a De Scarpa!"

"A De Scarpa!" repeated Cornaro, with a start. "But how? You do not mean that she is a descendant of the dukes?"

"Yes—so near that her hand would lay heavily upon these estates, and upon my title, too."

"So near as that? Then how in heaven's name came she where she is?"

"I know not."

"Who was her father?"

The duke did not answer.

"What became of him?" continued the young man. "Did he die?"

Garcia Tartani turned as pale as death, and he strove in vain to shake off the emotion that tortured him. But that was a thing he could not do, for upon his memory's indelible tablets were stamped in characters of living fire the things whereof his emotions spoke.

"What ails you, father? Shall I bring you cordials?"

"No, no—'twas but a passing thought. There—it's gone now. Cornaro, I fear this girl."

"And if what you say is true, we both have occasion to fear her."

"Yes."

Both father and son remained some time silent. They both gazed upon the portrait of that beautiful woman, and they both thought those features were more sad in their cast than before.

"Cornaro, you have a bold heart."

The count was startled by the deep, spectral tones.

"I am not a coward, father."

"I know you are not."

Again the duke walked across the gallery and back again.

"Cornaro, this girl must be removed!"

"Speak plainly, father."

"We are not safe while she lives."

"And would you have me murder her?"

Tartani uttered a deep groan.

"Come, come, father, if there is to be heart in this business, let not yours be craven. If I thought this girl really stood as you say she does, I would not hesitate to remove her; but I would not do such a thing upon mere supposition."

"There is no supposition in this matter. I know she is a De Scarpa, and the rightful heir of these estates!"

"Diabolo!"

"I speak the truth, Cornaro."

"Who, think you, knows it?"

"The secret is locked in our bosoms."

"But Zarani—suppose he should mistrust?"

"He cannot."

"Should he see this picture, he would."

"But that he will not do. It is the most unobtrusive picture in the gallery, and it hangs here, too, where none would think of watching it long enough to use their eyes to the gloom that envelopes it. But it must be moved, for I would not trust the marquis."

"No, by my soul, I would not," emphatically said the count. "May I die, if I don't believe the lazzarone girl has even now made more than a passing impression upon his heart."

"She is beautiful, my son, but yet the marquis would not look upon her with feelings dangerous to our hopes. Joanna has too fast a hold upon him for that."

"It may be," returned Cornaro, with a dubious shake of the head; "but if Joanna would secure the prize, she has got to carry a steadier hand than she has heretofore. She trifles with Zarani too much. Should he but smell this secret, I wouldn't trust him out of my sight."

"If you are resolved, there is no need that he should mistrust it."

"I am resolved."

"Upon what?"

"To satisfy myself that your suspicions are correct."

"You can see for yourself, but your eyesight is no better than mine."

"I will do more than to see—I'll be satisfied beyond a doubt, and then—"

The count hesitated, and a slight tremor shook his frame.

"Then what?" whispered the duke.

"I'll put her out of the way!" hoarsely returned Cornaro.

"God bless you for that assurance. It has taken a load from my mind."

"God bless me?" repeated the count, with marked emphasis, as he looked his father full in the face. "Does God ever bless those who do murder?"

Again the ashy, deadly pallor overspread the countenance of the duke, and he turned away towards the window.

"You said, 'God bless you.'"

"Hush! Cornaro. Get you the small ladder that stands in yonder oriel, and we'll take this picture down."

The count did as directed, and having placed the ladder against the wall he ascended and lifted the frame from the hook whereon it hung, and then brought it down.

"What shall we do with it now?" he asked, as he stood by the side of his father.

"Carry it into the oriel, and place it behind the rubbish that is collected there. I'll remove it to a more secure place at some future time."

The thing was done, and then the father and son left the gallery. The count looked the same as usual, but the duke wore an expression of deep concern—an expression such as one might wear whose heart was all cankered, and whose soul had been deprived of rest for years.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ASTROLOGER.

It was towards the middle of a pleasant day that a curious looking person was wending his way out from the city of Naples towards Portici. It was a man, dressed in a long gown of brown woollen, secured at the waist by a girdle, and hanging to this girdle were a book and a roll of parchment. In dress he would have looked like a Capuchin monk had it not been for the long white beard that fell upon the man's bosom, and the curiously constructed hat which he wore. He carried a heavy staff of olive wood in his hand, and his steps seemed feeble and way-worn. A person who might have seen that man, and who understood such matters, would have said he was an astrologer.

The strange man kept on his way without seeming to notice those who stopped and gazed inquisitively upon him, until at length he reached the old cathedral on the Portici court, and after gazing about the premises he took a seat beneath one of the large chestnut trees.

The sun was up to its meridian, and as the hot rays began to be reflected with more power

from the pavement, the old man arose and turned his feeble steps towards an opening in the shrubbery at the western angle of the yard. Having passed beyond the limits of the flowery hedge that shut in the old church court he saw a small building ahead of him, the door of which was open. He entered without waiting to summon the inmates. In one corner of the apartment to which he had thus gained access, sat Geba Massinello, engaged in cracking apricot stones, the meats of which he was carefully depositing in a small dish by his side, while the beautiful Adele was just beginning to prepare the frugal dinner.

"I give you a God's blessing, my children," said the old man, raising his hat and baring the snow-white head.

"And return, I give thee a hearty welcome," exclaimed Geba. "Adele, come here, and put another plate upon the table. You must be fatigued."

"Truth I am, my son. I am foot-sore and way-worn. Since last I have rested, my weary limbs have borne me hence from Benevento."

"From Benevento? Diabolo, signor, but that is a good twelve leagues from here."

"I know it, my son, but I have business that urged me on. I was on the road long before the sun was up."

"Going to—to—Salerno, I suppose?" said Geba, in his characteristic way of asking questions.

"No—to the mountains."

"Eh? Vesuvius?"

"Yes, my son."

"Business with—with—"

"My business is at the top of the mountain, and were I to tell it you, you would not understand it."

Geba looked askance at the old man's quaint dress, at his musty book and his parchment roll, and then he devoutly crossed himself. He asked no more questions, but regarded the strange guest with awe.

"If you will join us in our scanty fare, you are welcome," said Geba, as the dinner was prepared.

"With pleasure," returned the astrologer, as he moved his seat towards the table. "I knew I should find a welcome here. For those deeds of kindness which mark the true heart I must ever look to the abodes of the poor and lowly."

The meal was eaten in silence. Geba gave over his desire for talking in the presence of one who had inspired him with so much awe. The astrologer seemed engrossed by other thoughts than such as would serve for a commonplace conversation, while Adele only minded that her father and his guest were supplied with food.

"Shall I pay you for my meal?" asked the old man, as he moved back from the table.

"No, no. I charge nothing for such little deeds," returned Massinello.

"Good. You will gain a reward for this when you least expect it. What shall I call your name?"

"Massinello, signor, Geba Massinello."

"I think, Massinello, you have a good share of curiosity."

Geba trembled.

"If you have, I might divert you by satisfying a portion of it," continued the old man, with a laugh. "What say you, my fair daughter, shall I read the future for you?"

"No, father," answered Adele. "I desire to look no further than God has given me to look."

"Then come hither, and I will tell thee of the past. Even should you know it all, the trial will still divert you."

The fair girl started at the mention of the past.

"No, no," uttered Geba; "not of the past."

"Yes, my son, and you shall hear how truly I can tell. Come, my daughter."

Mechanically Adele obeyed. A strong impulse moved her—an impulse which Massinello knew not of. He never dreamed that Adele doubted her parentage, but since that time when she had held her conversation with Guiseppe Zarani, the fair being had more than ever thought of the subject then brought up. The wish that she might have been born into a higher scale of society had changed into a hope, and that hope had almost become a belief; so when she moved towards the astrologer she did it, with a trembling step and a strangely beating heart. Geba said no more in opposition, but his countenance plainly showed that he was by no means satisfied with the proceeding.

"You have a comely hand, fair daughter, and one well marked," said the astrologer, as he took the extended fingers and gazed upon the fair palm. "Ha! this delicate line that runs along upon the verge of the palm, losing itself behind the thumb. You were born beneath the subtle genius of Sirius. Massinello, what hour first gave the light to your daughter's vision?"

"Hour, father?" repeated Geba, with considerable embarrassment.

"Yes, at what hour was she born?"

"Diabolo, good father, I cannot tell you."

"A strange memory you must have."

"Ah, but you see I was away at the time,

and I never thought to ask my wife the question when I returned."

"Very well. It matters little for the past, only the future is clouded by the loss of the hour of birth."

"I wish not to know of the future, father," tremblingly urged Adele.

"I shall not tell thee of the future," returned the old man.

"Nor of the past," uttered Gebo. "Let it rest. This is dealing with unholy things."

"Sirius was near the sun when you were born," continued the astrologer, without noticing the remark of Gebo. "That star led the sun. Raise your thumb, my daughter. Ha! here must be a mistake. Have you never received a severe wound upon the hand?"

"No," returned Adele, in amazement.

"Then how came this mark here? My science for once is baffled, else you are not the lazzarone's daughter!"

"She is my daughter," exclaimed Gebo, starting up from his seat, while Adele trembled like a leaf.

"No, no, my son—look here. See you not that mark. You will find no such one upon your hand. This girl is not of your blood."

"Whose, then?" gasped Adele.

"Thy blood, fair daughter, had a nobler fount, but the malignity of Sirius ruled thee. Thou callest it the Dog Star, Massinello. She whom thou callest thy daughter is not so, but of noble blood. Thou canst not deny it, for it is written so by the constellations of heaven."

Adele uttered a low cry, and as the astrologer released her hand she sank back upon a seat, and she would have sunk to the floor had not Massinello sprang forward, and assisted her.

"Blame me not, my son, for the secret I have revealed," said the old man, as he arose from his seat.

"I do not blame you," returned the lazzarone, as he held his daughter to his bosom. "Only leave us alone now."

"I will leave you, but yet I trust I go not with your ill-feeling on my head, for you know I have spoken but the truth."

"Harken ye, good father," exclaimed Gebo with a sudden energy. "I have been kind to you, and given you food and shelter."

"Yes, my son."

"Then I ask in return that you will not speak of this to any one without my dwelling—that you will never breathe it again."

"You have my promise, my son."

"Then God protect you on your way."

In a moment more the astrologer was gone, and the lazzarone was left alone with his daughter.

"Look up, my child. He's gone," uttered Gebo.

Adele raised herself from her father's bosom and gazed about the room.

"What was that story he told me?" she murmured, as she at length fastened her look upon Gebo.

"It was nothing, my child."

"Yes, yes—he said I was not your child. Did he speak truly? O, as you value my happiness, do not deceive me."

The lazzarone trembled with excitement, and for some time he remained silent.

"Speak," urged Adele. "Did the astrologer tell the truth?"

"I cannot deceive you, Adele. He did."

"Who then am I?"

"I do not know."

"Tell me what you do know."

"You will not leave me, nor love me less?"

"No, no, I'll be ever what I have been."

"Then I'll tell you all I know," said the lazzarone, as he sank into a seat and bowed his head. In a few moments he raised his eyes to the face of Adele. His features were more composed, and the fear-marks had left his face.

"It is now nearly twenty years," he commenced, "since I first saw your face. It was on a cold, wet evening, in the month of January. I had been out to the strada beyond Saint Elmo, and was returning by the way of the eastern villa, when I saw a man coming towards me with swift but unsteady steps. I would have passed on, but he stopped and seized me by the arm. 'Here,' said he, 'I remember well his

words, for they were frantic and full of fear—'take this child. It is but an infant, yet in God's name, I charge you to keep it and protect it. It has no parents now. Do you be a father to it.'

"Then the strange man took an infant from beneath his cloak, and gave it into my hands. I hardly knew what I did, for at that moment I saw that the man's hands were all covered with blood, and that his inner garments were all bloody, too. No sooner had I taken the child, than the stranger turned and walked off as fast as his legs would carry him. He was an ugly-looking fellow, and I haven't a bit of doubt but that he meant to have killed the child, only his heart failed him."

"And that child!" murmured Adele.

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"I brought up as my own."

"Myself?" fell trembling from the fair girl's lips.

"Yes, Adele, my child. I have reared you from the infant I thus gained, and if I have been poor, God knows my heart has been warm. You will be my daughter yet?"

"Yes, yes, ever. But did you never see that strange man again?"

"No. I looked at every person I saw for years, but I saw not him."

Adele bowed her head in thought, and the lazzarone saw tears trickle down between her white fingers, but he disturbed not her reverie; only he looked upon her more kindly, and felt his love grow warmer than ever.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PLOT.

AS he threw down a heavy bundle, and laid a book and parchment roll upon the table that stood near at hand, "Upon my soul," uttered Cornaro Tartani, "I have done the thing to perfection—better, far better, than I could have hoped."

"How, how, my son?" nervously asked the duke, at the same time moving to the door to see that it was fast.

"See here," returned the count, tearing open the bundle. "Look at this brown gown—the very embodiment of sobriety; and at this hat—what a caput covering for a mufti; and at this wig—there's venerated age for you; and at this magnificent beard—what an impersonation of mysticism; then that book and parchment—diabolo, how grave I looked. I played the astrologer—told the girl's fortune—hand—fair, deep lines—astonishment—aint the lazzarone's daughter—noble blood. Girl fainted, almost—old lazzarone loth to give up, but I brought him to the point—promised never to divulge the secret."

"Then you have satisfied yourself beyond a doubt?" uttered the old man.

"Yes, of two things. She isn't that Mas-sinello's daughter—that's the first. And next, whoever was the original of that picture in the gallery was her mother. If my life depended upon the oath, I would take it to that effect. By the holy church, but she is beautiful—lovely as the morning's sun. What eyes—what cheeks—what hair—what a form—what—what—diabolo, what everything."

"And she is very dangerous."

"Then she must be removed."

"Will you do it?"

"On one condition."

"What?"

"That you tell me who she is."

"I told you that she was a De Scarpa."

"But I would know more."

"I cannot tell you more now," said the old duke, with a troubled look.

"Then I am to work in the dark?"

"No. You may be assured that our claim upon these broad estates is not worth a fig while she lives. But do this thing, my son—let me feel that she is out of the way, and you shall know all."

"Why can you not do this thing yourself?" asked the count, bending a keen look upon his father.

"O, Cornaro, I have done enough already," returned the duke with a shudder. "Do you this thing, and then you shall know all."

"But this girl—did you ever see her before?"

"Once—she was an infant then. Her mother died in this palace, almost as soon as her child saw the light. It was a natural death, Cornaro—I swear, by the God who made me, 'twas. She could not survive the birth of her infant."

"And her father—did he die a natural death?"

"O, God! ask me no further."

"But does her father live?"

"No!" cried the duke, shuddering as though his limbs would have quaked in sunder. "Now let the matter rest till this girl is disposed of."

"It shall be done; so rest you assured on that point."

"But it must be done at once."

"It shall be—to-morrow night, perhaps. I will set matters at work to-night."

"Bless you for that assurance, my son. If you get the assistance of a second person, be wary of his tongue."

"I know my men, so fear not on that point. I shall go into the city to-night."

As the count spoke, he turned towards the door.

"Cornaro," uttered the duke, in a hoarse, sepulchral whisper, "how—how—do you mean to do this thing?"

"The deep waters of the bay shall hide it all. This first—and then the water."

The count significantly placed his fingers upon the hilt of his dagger as he spoke, and then he quickly passed out from the room.

Again the duke was left alone. Alone? No! He had with him a companion that had not left him for years. Once he had made a compact with sin of the deepest dye—but when the bargain had been struck he knew not that forever Satan was to bear him company. He sinned that he might gain enjoyment, but he

was soon to find that every green spot in his soul could only sear and wither beneath the hot breath of the evil spirit he had conjured up in his own bosom. And still that old man had to sin on to keep the fabric of his support beneath his feet. A rotten, thorny support it was, but the miserable man clung to it, though the closer he clung the more deeply sank the thorns into his flesh. There was a ghost, too, that ever looked over the duke's shoulder—a spectre that screeched and howled in his ears without ceasing—that stood by him in the day, and haunted his dreams at night.

No! In truth that man was not alone. In this wide world there lives not a man, with the memory of unrepented sin upon his soul, who can evermore enjoy the silence of sweet solitude. Riot and conflict with the world may drown the voice of the soul's self-avenger, but nothing save the pure spirit of Christian repentance—the indwelling of contrite sorrow and humble prayer—can hush the Satan-tongue and yield the balm of repose; but even then such a soul may never know the sweet repose of INNOCENCE. No, the soul that has once been crushed by a deadly sin—a sin for which no reparation can be made—is like the lightning-stricken tree. The hand of care may nurture it, and it may again put forth its leaves of verdure, but evermore on earth will it be bowed by the shaft that once struck so deeply to its heart.

Garcia Tartani stood long in the same spot after his son had left him, with his eyes bent upon the marble pavement at his feet. His hands were clasped in nervous agony by his side, and his thin lips were tightly compressed.

"Out upon these fears," he muttered, as he started across the room. "None can know this deed, and when once done the cord that binds me to danger is cut in twain. Cornaro will do the deed—he cannot fail."

Even as he spoke, there was a voice whispering to him that there was an EYE that saw his heart, and an EAR that heard his words; but he dared not raise his head towards the heaven where the Eye and Ear dwelt!

"Signor duke, have you any orders for the

city?" at that moment asked Zarani, entering the apartment.

"No."

The marquis started almost in affright as he saw the countenance of the old man.

"Heavens! Tartani, what is the matter?"

"Matter? Nothing. That is—I am not well—there's a sickness just come over me."

Zarani bent a keen look upon the duke, and he knew that the cause of such emotions as he now saw, lay deeper than mere physical suffering. It was natural that a thought of Tartani's strange behaviour at the lazzarone's should come to his mind, and though the thought remained upon his mind like a thing of form and substance, yet he betrayed it not. He was naturally quick in his mental conclusions, and he determined to watch for further developments, for such he was sure would come.

"Ah, you've been upon a masquerade," he lightly remarked, as his eyes fell upon the astrological paraphernalia the count had left behind.

"That's old trumpery I've been clearing out from one of the closets," returned the duke.

"Then you have no orders for the city?"

"No. But hold. What is all this haste? You are not fully recovered yet."

"Yes, I am; and I have business, too, that needs my attendance."

"But it is almost night now. You had better wait until to-morrow."

"No, I am perfectly recovered, and I will go now. Excuse me to the duchess."

"Where is Joanna?"

"I know not. I have not seen her since yesterday."

"How? Not seen her. You have had no lovers' quarrel, I hope?"

"No, far from that, Tartani. No *lovers'* quarrel, I assure you."

"I am glad of it," returned the duke, whose mind for the time turned from the darker things over which it had been brooding. "My daughter is a wayward creature, but she will be more kind and steady when she is your wife."

"Don't deceive yourself, Tartani. What-

ever may have passed between us on that subject may as well be forgotten. Joanna and myself can never wed."

"Sdeath! Zarani, what do you mean?" exclaimed the duke, turning pale again.

"Have you been playing me false?"

"No," calmly replied the marquis; "but your daughter has assured me that she does not love me."

"A mere freak of hers. She does love you."

"Then her words and actions most palpably belie her."

"She'll get over it. Don't notice her little foibles."

"Look ye, Tartani, I do not wish to misunderstand you, nor wish I that you should misunderstand me. When I marry, it will not be for money, for I already have more than I know what to do with; neither will it be for a title, for I seek none higher than that which now I have. When I take a wife, it will be for the social and intellectual enjoyment she is capable of conferring upon me. In my wife I seek a jewel, not to wear in my button-hole, with which to dazzle the crowd; but one which shall warm and invigorate my heart—one who shall be, at least, as kind and generous as myself, and who will have no senseless, foolish foibles to fret me. When Joanna becomes such an one, with her consent, I will marry her."

"Your aims are high, signor marquis," the duke bitterly replied.

"If honor—if peace of mind—if innocence—if earthly happiness—if the soul's highest good, can be high, then my aims are high. But what ails thee? Worse again?" uttered Zarani, as he noticed the duke trembling more fearfully.

"No," groaned Tartani.

"Then adieu. You may tell Joanna what I have said, if you choose; and it shall yet rest with her regarding our union."

Once more the duke and his conscience were alone together. He heard the footsteps of the marquis die away, then he picked up the articles of disguise his son had used and left the apartment.

CHAPTER IX.

THE GREEK. THE DUNGEON.

THE sun had already sank below the summit of Saint Elmo when Zarani left the palace of the duke, but he knew that a long and beautiful twilight was before him, and he took his way leisurely along towards the city. He had entered the road and was pursuing his way with his eyes bent to the ground, and just as he turned an angle where a lemon hedge made out upon the roadside, he was recalled from his reverie by the sound of approaching footsteps. On raising his eyes, he beheld a man approaching from the city. The stranger was dressed in a Greek costume. A close-fitting blue velvet cap, from the side of which dangled a red silk tassel, covered his head; a jacket of the same material, deeply pointed, and wrought with silk cord, was worn upon the broad shoulders, beneath which, and hanging to the knees, was a buff shirt or frock, which was confined in ample plaits about the waist by a red sash. A pair of blue cotton hose covered the legs, and the well-worn shoes of the feet showed marks of much travel. The whole dress was soiled and worn, and the wearer was in the same plight. The face of the Greek was not much of a one for

study as it now appeared, for a long dark beard almost entirely covered it. The brow, however, was marked with deep lines, and the eyes were such as seemed capable of shooting forth the thoughts that moved them in glances of fire. In stature he was tall, and though somewhat spare, yet he showed much good muscle.

"A fair evening to you, signor," said the stranger, in good Italian, though a tinge of the Greek idiom was manifest.

"The same to you," returned the marquis, not much liking the sound of the man's voice, and instinctively shrinking from his strange-looking eyes.

"Is not yonder palace, the dome of which rises above the orange trees there, the dwelling of Garcia Tartani?"

"Yes."

"He's duke of Prezza, I think?"

"Yes," returned Zarani, wondering what a man of such a cast could have to do with the duke.

"Think you I should find him at home?"

"Yes, I left him but now."

"Ah, then you know him?"

"Yes."

"A son, perhaps," uttered the Greek, his eyes burning intensely.

"No, not of Tartani, thank God!" involuntarily ejaculated Zarani.

The Greek's eyes fairly emitted electric sparks. His brow worked into deeper furrows, and gradually his lips parted, as if a fiendish smile were working there.

"There are others, young signor," said the stranger, in a deep tone of more than ordinary power, "who might be thankful for the same favor of fortune. Yet, Tartani has children?"

"Yes," returned the marquis, almost spell-bound by the presence that stood before him, "a son and daughter."

"And his wife?"

"She lives there."

"You have my thanks, signor marquis."

"Ha! do you know me?"

"You wear your title on your breast," returned the Greek, pointing to the star upon Zarani's doublet.

"I forgot," said the marquis, half smiling at his own undefined mistrust.

"Few nobles forget what their insignia means, however. A pleasant journey to you, signor."

For some moments, Zarani stood and gazed after the Greek, and when he could see him no longer, he once more turned his steps towards the city. He walked quicker now, and his thoughts had a new object added to their workings; but ere long, as his busy brain worked deeper into the mysteries that had been conjured up by the late circumstances, his step grew slower again, and surrounding things were lost to his observation.

He had gained half the distance to the city before the gloom of nightfall fairly deepened upon the earth. He was where an olive-dressed hill sloped down to the roadside from the right, while upon the left, stretching away into the valley, was an extensive vineyard, dotted here and there with groves of figs and pomegranates. He was again startled back to a comprehension of things present by the sound of voices that

seemed to come from among the olives upon the right. The simple fact that there were human beings there would not have moved him; but the sound was a suppressed whisper, and he was sure he heard his own name pronounced.

Instinctively the marquis laid his hand upon the hilt of his dagger and hurried on. He stepped lightly, however, and listened attentively, but the voices had ceased. Perhaps he might have been mistaken, and with this thought he partly gave over his vigilance. He did not hear the quick steps that were hurrying through the olive grove, or if he did, they sounded more like the playing of the wind than like the fall of human feet.

A few rods in advance the road took a sudden turn to the right to avoid a somewhat precipitous descent on the other hand, and as Zarani approached the spot, he observed two men coming towards him. It was now so dusky that he could not distinguish their features, but they showed no signs of interrupting him, and he kept quietly on. The two men had passed him, and he was in the act of turning his head to see if they kept straight on, when a heavy hand was suddenly laid upon each arm. The marquis struggled to free himself from the ruffian's grasp, but the second man came to the assistance of the first, and before he could fairly collect himself his arms were securely bound behind his back with a strong cord. His assailants both wore peasants' dresses, and they were stout, athletic fellows.

"What means this, villains?" exclaimed the marquis, hardly able to articulate from the effects of both rage and astonishment.

"Nothing," returned one of the men, coming around in front of Zarani.

"Nothing!" Then let me go. If you seek my money you shall have it."

"O, no, signor marquis, we want not your money—we want you."

"Out upon you, villains! Speak your object in this assault. Do you know whom you have to deal with?"

"O, yes, very well, Signor Zarani."

"Then if you know me, you can surely have nothing against me."

"No, but we want you, nevertheless. You must come with us, too, and you need ask no questions."

"And for what is that?" exclaimed the marquis, as he noticed the second ruffian folding a handkerchief over his knee.

"That's for your eyes, signor."

"Now by the powers of heaven, if you—"

"Hold, signor marquis. If you are a reasonable man, just listen a moment. We do not intend you harm, but go with us you must. Now if you go peaceably all will be well. You ought to know what must be the consequences of resistance as well as I can tell you, for you surely cannot hope to escape."

"But where are you going to carry me?"

"We are going to blindfold you so that you shall not know," was the laconic reply.

The man who held the kerchief approached to the side of the marquis and was about placing it over his eyes, when the young man, with a powerful effort, broke from the hand that held him and darted off. A deep curse from both the villains followed this movement, and they quickly gave chase.

Under ordinary circumstances the marquis would have easily outran his pursuers, but the pinioning of his arms greatly impeded his progress, and he soon found that he must be overtaken, yet he strained every nerve, in hope that he might reach some one who would assist him.

"Diabolo, signor marquis, but you run well," exclaimed one of the assailants, as he laid his broad hand once more upon the young man's shoulders. "Try that again, and by the saints you'll repent it."

The other man came up, and Zarani saw that further resistance would be useless, so he submitted to be blindfolded without more opposition.

"Now will you walk quietly, or shall we have to use force?" asked one of the men, in a voice none of the most promising.

"I yield by force of necessity," returned the

marquis; "but you shall rue the day you did this thing, nevertheless."

"Never mind that," uttered the villain, with a broad laugh. "The present is all we care for particularly, so come along, and let the future take care of itself."

The marquis now had a man upon each side of him, and in this manner he was started off. He knew that he was turned to the right—that he crossed a stile that led to the olive grove—that he was ascending the hill, and he bent his whole mind upon reckoning the turns he made. But this he found a difficult task, for he was turned so often, and the directions and courses were so varied, that he at length gave up the object.

It seemed to Zarani over an hour that he was thus led through what he knew to be a path among trees and shrubbery, and at the end of that time he knew by the freshness of the breeze and by the ceasing of the music of the rustled leaves, that he had emerged into an open space. Soon his feet trod a rocky pavement, and then he felt one of his conductors led go of his arm immediately after which he heard a heavy door open with a creaking noise. A current of cold, damp air struck upon his face, and again he was led forward.

"Easy. Here are steps," said the man upon his right.

Zarani thought of springing back, but he remembered that he was blindfolded—that his hands were fast, and with a heavy heart he descended the steps to which he had come. When he reached the foot of the steps he knew by the dull echo of the footfalls that he was in a passage-way of solid masonry. Another flight of steps was descended, and then after passing some distance, and taking several angles in the way, the guides stopped. A door was opened, Zarani was turned towards it, and in a moment more the bandage was taken from his eyes.

"There, signor," said one of the men, as he unloosed the cords that bound the young noble's arms, "you can look about you now."

It was a taunt that the man spoke, for the place was as dark as Erebus.

"Where am I?" asked Zarani, striving in vain to peer through the blackness.

"Where you are to remain for the present, and where you will be perfectly safe. When we go out we will slide a wicket at a short distance from here, so that you may know when the daylight comes. If you feel around here you will find a place upon which you can sleep, and in the morning you shall have something to eat. Keep up a good heart—you won't have to stay long."

"But who—who—at whose command am I placed here?"

Zarani got no answer to his question, and on the next moment he heard the door close upon him. In a minute the sounds of the departing footsteps had died away, and the marquis was alone with himself. It was a long time before he moved from the spot where his mysterious guides had left him, for his thoughts were lost in a chaotic vortex of undefinable surmise. Where he was he knew not, nor could he imagine why he had been thus imprisoned.

At length the marquis felt around for the place whereon he was to rest, an undertaking which was very simple in its execution, seeing that the whole space allotted to him was not more than ten feet square. The cot was hard, but the prisoner thought not of that. As he sat down upon it, his mind reverted to the fair

being who had cared for him at the house of the lazzarone, and his heart beat quicker as he thought of her sweet smile and musical voice. In regular consequence his mind went on to the meeting between Adele and the duke, and he thought of the strange emotions of the latter; then he looked at what had subsequently transpired, and suddenly he started to his feet.

"Tartani has had a hand in this!" he uttered, as he clasped his hands together. "By heavens! it must be him. But why? If he mean me no harm—and they dare not do that—they have no reason—then I am only placed here to be kept out of the way. San Carlo, Guiseppe, you must be right there. O, God, if I knew it was the duke—and yet it must be he. Can Adele be concerned in this? No, no—Tartani cannot—"

Zarani's thoughts came thicker and faster, and they became more painful. He doubted not that he was confined that he might not be in the way. In the way of what? With prophetic vision the marquis still dwelt upon the duke and the lazzarone, and his brain grew dizzy beneath the load of fear that came over him.

Strange that Zarani should have *feared* when only Adele was in danger; but even for her his heart beat with—*gratitude!*

CHAPTER X.

A VISIT TO A STRANGE PLACE.

THE duke was in the room where Zarani left him, but he had been busy, however, for the marks of business were upon his features, and there was a sort of self-satisfied smile there, too. He had just lighted a large lamp and set it upon the table, when one of his servants entered.

"There is a man below, signor, who wishes to speak with you."

"Who is he?"

"I know not, signor. He would not give his name."

"Not give it? What does he look like?"

"Rough and uncouth—sharp-spoken and severe—and he wears the dress of a Greek."

"Let him come up."

The servant withdrew, and in a few moments more the Greek, whom we have seen upon the road, entered the apartment.

"The Duke of Prezza?" I think, said the Greek, removing his cap and revealing the iron gray locks that had clustered beneath it.

"Yes—I am the duke," returned Tartani, regarding his visitor with a puzzled look not unmixed with dread.

"I should have known you, though I doubt not you have forgotten me."

"I certainly do not know you, sir."

"Not my voice?"

"No."

"Time makes sad changes, 'tis true, but I thought you would know me. You have altered some, and I think, for the worse."

"Who are you, and what is your business?" uttered the duke, not at all pleased with the familiarity of the stranger.

"Not too fast, Tartani. My business you shall have soon enough. But did you never see these eyes before?"

The duke gazed upon the burning orbs, and he trembled.

"I know you not," he said. "Now tell me your business and be gone."

"As soon as I am satisfied I will. But first you must know me! Let me see—when I saw thee last, it was—Ah, Tartani, years roll heavily upon such as you and I. Don't start, I'll come to the point in a moment. If men have kept the calendar correctly, it will be twenty long years next January, since we met."

"Great God!—No, no—"

"I think you guessed rightly."

"Hold! Whoever you are, lie not to me! I know you not. Go, leave me."

"You do know me now, Garcia Tartani. Don't you remember that dreadful night? how it stormed—how the rain fell—and how the winds howled their fearful music around these old walls? Aha! now you remember! You know me well."

"O! O!"

"Sdeath, Tartani, have ye grown craven, that ye quake so with fear, or does the memory of that night haunt ye? You look like a frightened girl."

"MONMARTO!"

"That's my name."

"O, God!" why came ye here?"

As the duke uttered this he sank into a chair, and shut the form of the Greek from his eyes.

"Come, Tartani, why should you fear?" said the visitor, his eyes burning like coals of living fire, and the muscles of his face set to a sarcastic look. "Our work was safely done."

"Your work! your work!" shrieked the duke, starting from his chair.

"As you will about that. My hand did the deed; but whose heart was it that made the murder? Whose money paid for it—and who riots in luxurious plenty upon the circumstance?"

"Stop, stop," cried the duke, in terror of tortured memory. "It was done, and there let it rest. But why come ye back? You swore I should never see your face again."

Tartani had tried hard to overcome the weakening terror that had seized him, and he had succeeded so far that he was able to meet his visitor's gaze with more composure, yet he quailed whenever he met those eyes, and he had a cankering dread which he could not shake off.

"If I swore that I would never come back to you, I think I have kept my oath well. Twenty years is a long time for such as you and I to keep an oath," said the Greek, half-mockingly.

"Don't taunt me, nor place yourself upon a level with me. Now what brings you back? Is it money?"

"The want of money, you mean."

"Yes."

"I may want some, but 'twas not for that I came. You remember that night, do you not?"

"Yes," the duke said, with a shudder.

"Ha, Monmarto," he continued, with sudden energy, "you did not fulfil all your engagement."

"Ah—" whispered the Greek.

"The infant—you did not slay her."

"Garcia Tartani, it was upon that business I came. Where is that child, now?"

"I—I—do not know," returned the duke, with some hesitation.

"Hark ye," uttered Monmarto, in a tone so deep, that the sound and articulation seemed to come from the very centre of his heart; "when I took that child from this palace I did not murder it. You bade me carry it off and destroy it, but I let it live. I gave it to a poor lazzarone whom I met in the street. The wail of that infant, as it arose to my ears while I rushed through the storm, has haunted me, and I have sworn in my heart that I will protect it if I can find it. Now does she live?"

"I have told thee I did not know," said the duke, decidedly, but with an expression that did not escape the quick eye of the Greek.

The latter gazed a moment into the face of the old noble, and then he moved towards the table and took up the lamp that set upon it.

"Tartani," he said, as he motioned with his hand, "follow me."

"Whither?"

"No matter—follow me, and you shall know. O, do not fear me, for I shall not harm you."

"But wherefore?" uttered the duke, seeming struck by an awe that would not let him disobey.

"I will show you something. Come."

"Not till I know where."

"You shall not go beyond the walls of this palace, and you shall return to this place in safety. Come."

As the Greek spoke, he moved towards the door, and almost involuntarily the old noble followed. That proud man was humbled, crushed, before the being who knew the dread secret of his heart, and though he was beneath his own roof, yet he dared not disobey. He would rather have given up his poor miserable life than to have severed the bonds that bound the Greek to secrecy, and he found himself within the power of one whom he thought to be only his tool. There may have flitted wildly through his brain a wish that the Greek were dead, and as his hands worked by his side, perhaps he thought if 'twere not easy to be rid of him.

Monmarto passed on through the large hall, entered the corridor beyond, and from thence he descended to the lower story of the building. Here he proceeded to the door that led to the wine cellar, and soon he gained that repository of casks and bottles.

"Would wine revive your spirits?" asked the Greek, stopping and turning towards the duke.

"No, I want none of it."

"Then let us on."

"No, no, I'll go no further," cried the duke, as Monmarto placed his hand upon the surface of a rock that seemed only a key-stone in the masonry.

"You see I've not forgotten the way you learned me, Tartani," remarked the guide, as a secret door flew back beneath his touch.

"I'll go no further. Give over this thing."

"We are not at our journey's end yet. Come."

The Greek passed through as he spoke, and then held back the light for his companion to follow.

"No, no, I cannot go further."

"If your limbs are weak, I'll carry you."

"I shall return. Come, this is all folly."

"I'm waiting for you," uttered the Greek, in a stern tone—such a tone as a master would use towards a cowering slave.

A moment longer Tartani hesitated, and then he tremblingly followed, but his limbs seemed ready to fail of performing their office.

"Whither go you now?" he asked, as the guide turned down a narrow flight of stone steps which led to a vault that seemed only to have been intended for a coal pit. "There is no passage beyond here."

"Ah, Tartani, when I was last here, I discovered a way of ingress here. It is nearer than the other, and more shielded from observation. I think I have not forgotten it."

Neither had he; for on one side of the vault he found a low door which he easily opened, and stooping down, and at the same time shielding the light with his hand, he passed through.

At length the Greek stopped. It was before an iron door, set strongly and deeply within the wall, and it was fastened with heavy bolts, besides which there was a lock. Monmarto placed his hands upon one of the bolts, but it had rusted into its place, so he set his lamp down and soon found a loose stone with which he commenced pounding the bolts. They gave way beneath repeated blows, and then picking up the lamp the Greek drew his dagger and inserted the point into the keyhole. He seemed to know well the situation of the spring that held the bolt of the lock, for with a quick movement of the steel there was a snap from the spring, and gradually the bolt was moved back by the dagger point.

The old hinges creaked and screamed as the heavy door was swung sluggishly open, and with a quick step the Greek entered the vault to which he had thus gained access.

"Come, Tartani."

"No, by all the powers of heaven, I will not enter there," cried the duke, trembling like an aspen.

"How long since you have entered here?"

"Not for years, Monmarto. A year after you went away I came here, but the place has not been disturbed since. Come back, come back. Let the sepulchre be undisturbed."

"Ha, ha, ha," laughed the Greek, his tones seeming to come from the nether world; "your fears ill befit the author of the deed that makes this place a sepulchre. Come in."

"No never!" came gaspingly from the duke's lips.

"You've gone too far to go bootless back," uttered Monmarto, at the same time stepping back to the door and laying his hand upon the duke's shoulder. "Come."

Garcia Tartani would have shrank back, but the hand that was upon him was too strong.

"You are a coward!" whispered the Greek.

That word revived the duke, for it called to life the only part of active humanity he possessed—pride in himself—not pride in what makes the man, but in what makes the brute of prey. He shook off the hand from his shoulder and entered the vault.

As the rays of the lamp struggled through the gloom of the place, they revealed a square vault, the walls and vaulted roof of which were of stone. To a heavy ring-bolt that was moulten into the rock of the floor was attached a chain, upon the end of which were still the rusted manacles. Some parts of the chain were rusted differently from the others. The rust was of a deeper, redder cast, and the flakes glistened in the lamp light. Upon the pavement, too, there were dark spots, and near where the shackles lay there was a large spot, as though

a pool of some dark liquid had once been there, and from this spot there was a crooked line running towards the door, just as though it had been a small stream that ran from the dark pool. There were spots upon the walls, too, but they looked so dark, that they might have been only smooth places where the slimy mould clung more tenaciously.

In one corner stood a large oaken chest. It was bound with iron, and looked quaintly in the dim light. Upon that, too, there were spots.

"A gloomy looking place," said Monmarto.

The light fell upon the face of the duke, and even the Greek seemed startled by the expression that rested there—it was so deathly, so ghastly. Tartani's foot touched the chain, and as its dull clank fell upon the air, he started and uttered a quick cry, as though a pang had shot to his heart. He laid his trembling hand upon the Greek's arm, and in a hoarse whisper, he gasped: "I would not open that chest."

"It was for that I came here," returned Monmarto, fixing his eyes keenly upon the trembling noble. "Tartani, I had a purpose in coming here—a deep purpose, too. Come!"

CHAPTER XI.

THE LAZZARONE BRAVO.

WHILE the duke and his strange companion were in that deep, damp vault there was a plan of operations on foot in another place that deserves our attention.

Upon the southern extremity of the Villa Reale, and beneath the shadow of the high buildings that flanked the seaside promenade, were two men, who moved stealthily along towards a point where a boat-house was built out over the margin of the bay. One of them was Cornaro Tartani; the other was a lazzarone brava, named Bep, and known to but few in Naples, but known to those who did know him as an unmitigated scoundrel of the darkest dye. There was many a dark deed upon his soul, and his keen stiletto had earned him much money. That subtle blade, with its smooth, edgeless sides, could easily find the heart without letting forth blood to tell the deed that had been done. Such a man had the count chosen for his purpose, and a fitting choice it was, where a deed of darkness and guilt was to be done.

The two companions crossed over when they reached the point opposite to the boat-house, and

entered the low wooden building. Bep laid his hands upon the chain of one of the boats that were fastened there, and having released it from the ring that held it he threw it over the bows of the boat.

"Get in, count," he said. "I will shove her off."

"Steady," muttered Cornaro, as the boat rocked. "There—now leap in."

Bep gave the craft a shove and with the same movement he sprang lightly over the bows. The impetus thus given sent her out beyond the roofing of the house, and then the bravo seated himself upon a thwart and picked up his oars.

"Now, signor count," he said, "we are beyond the reach of other ears, and we may talk without fear. You say the victim is a girl, and that you know where to find her?"

"Yes," returned Cornaro, in a tone that showed pretty plainly that he had drank deeply at the wine-cup to find the nerve he wanted for his present expedition.

"And she is to be finished entirely, eh?"

"Yes."

"I charge high for such jobs."

"Never mind that. You shall be paid in full."

"So that's well. And who's to dispose of the body?"

"Both of us. We'll sink it out in the bay."

"San Pello, signor count, you have more courage than I gave you credit for. I've done jobs for those who were qualmish about the matter. Now where shall we turn?"

"You can just see the dome of the old church yonder?"

"Yes."

"The house stands just this side of it."

"This side," repeated the old bravo—for he was far from a young man—rather doubtfully

"Yes, almost upon the edge of the church court."

"San Pello, signor, you must mistake."

"No, Bep. I've been there."

"Why, that must be Gebo Massinello's old house?"

"It is."

"Diabolo, signor, what do you mean? Surely, poor Gebo—good Gebo—jolly old Gebo, don't stand in your way?"

"No, there's another there."

"Ah, I forget. It is a girl."

"Yes, she that is called Massinello's daughter."

"She's the fairest girl in Naples."

"Perhaps she is. She's too fair for earth, at all events."

Bep pulled at his oars more vigorously, and gazed down upon the bottom of the boat.

"Almost too fair to kill," he murmured.

"What," exclaimed the count, "do you hesitate about performing the job?"

"O, no," quickly returned the bravo; "but I am puzzled to understand how such as she can stand in your way."

"She does stand in my way, and she must be removed."

"I had always thought Adele was not Gebo's child," said Bep, half to himself, but yet with an eye upon the count.

"Ah," uttered Cornaro, suddenly, and with earnestness. "Do you know who she is?"

"No, but I suppose you do?"

"Of course, I know something, or I should not be upon this errand."

"Very likely," uttered Bep, with something like a low chuckle in his throat.

The count's brain was not so muddled by the potations he had taken but that he noticed the manner of his companion, and he looked earnestly into his face. It was too dark to see plainly, however, but yet Cornaro could see that Bep was still looking down into the bottom of the boat.

"Tell me," he said, "for I go not unprepared into this business, have you any objections to this job? for if you have, we may as well stop where we are."

"Do you think me a craven fool?" almost fiercely returned Bep.

"No, not that."

"Then fear not for me. One can wonder at a cause without stumbling against the effect. And one can agree to perform a work without sealing up his thoughts. I'll do your work, Tartani."

"Then pull smartly, for if we make haste we shall reach the place before Gebo returns. I saw him in the Toledo with his fiddle, and his course was towards San Carlo, so I think he'll make the round of the strada before he returns."

"He generally does," returned Bep, "especially if the coppers flow in upon him."

Nothing more was said till the boat touched the shore where a low sand bed lay between two huge rocks, and after jumping out, the men hauled their craft far enough upon the sand so that it should not be washed off, and then turned towards Massinello's house. From one of the little windows—one which looked from the room in which Guiseppe Zarani had slept—there shone a light, but the curtain was so arranged that they could not look in.

"Do you remain here, behind these aloes, Bep, while I gain admittance to the house," said the count, as the two gained the yard.

"She will not know me, and I can—"

"Not know you! I thought you had been here once?"

"Ah, yes—but she won't know me now. I was disguised then. Mark ye, Bep, as soon as I find all right, I'll whistle. Come you then quickly, for we must be off before Gebo comes."

"But you do not mean to do the work here."

"No, in the boat. We'll bind her mouth and carry her to the shore."

"Who shall do the binding? Let it be arranged now, so that there shall be no awkwardness in the business," said Bep, with professional precision.

"You shall do it, for you are probably used to the thing."

"Very well. Go in now, but don't keep me long in waiting."

The count approached the door and knocked. It was soon opened by Adele. The beautiful girl shaded the light with her hand and looked forth.

"Is Massinello within?" asked Cornaro.

"No, signor—he has not yet returned."

"Do you expect him?"

"Very soon, signor."

"I will step in and wait, then, for I wish very much to see him."

"This way, signor, our room is at your service," said Adele, as she moved back.

The count entered the small room, and then the girl shut the door.

"You will excuse me a moment," she said.

"I have left a light in the other room."

"Diabolo," murmured Cornaro to himself, as he was left alone; "she is more beautiful than before, and more like that picture, too. 'Tis almost a pity she cannot live. Ah, she should not have been who she is."

Adele returned and took a seat upon the opposite side of the room.

"I should think you would be lonesome here while your father is gone," said the count.

"O, no, signor."

"Ah, you are not alone then, I suppose?"

"Yes, but then I manage to keep myself good company," she said, with a smile.

A sudden ray of satisfaction shot over the count's features as he heard this answer, and he quickly sprang from his chair, uttering a shrill whistle as he did so.

"What means that?" cried Adele, starting from her seat in affright.

"Hush! for heaven's sake, hush! Ha! he comes!—he'll seize me! Lady, you cannot protect me!"

Adele stood aghast at this strange speech, and her tongue clove to the roof of her mouth.

"What!" she made out to articulate, as Bep rushed into the room, "is that—"

Her further utterance was stopped by the broad palm of the bravo, and in a moment more a thick scarf was tied tightly over her mouth.

The poor girl broke from the hands that held her, and sank upon her knees. Her fair hands were clasped in agonized supplication, and her eyes ran streams of hot tears; but no heed was taken of her more than gushing prayer.

"Quick!" ordered the count, turning to Bep. "Let's be off."

The frantic fair one turned her large, imploring eyes upon the speaker, and her hands were clasped more eagerly; but Tartani only growled at the delay, and seizing her roughly by the arm he lifted her to her feet, and then Bep seized her upon the other side. Upon the latter, Adele cast a melting look of supplication—a look that seemed to speak as though she had hopes in appealing to him for mercy.

The bravo did not stop to notice that look long, for he turned away his head and hurried on through the doorway, into the yard. The street was quickly crossed, and the water's edge was gained, where Bep proceeded to tie the maiden's hands behind her, before he put her into the boat.

"Now, signor count," said he, as Adele was out of hearing in the stern of the boat, "we are ready for the first payment. You remember the sum: 'fifty golden sixes.'"

"Yes, Bep, here is the purse. It contains the fifty six-ducat pieces. The rest you shall have when the job is finished."

"If it would please you better, signor count, I will do the rest of the work alone. The jingle of this gold gives me new heart."

Tartani moved nearer to the bravo and

gazed into his face, but he saw nothing there save the cold, dark expression of ferocious daring that usually rested there. In truth, the young noble liked not the remainder of the work that lay before him. The waves dashed mournfully upon the shore, the air was damp and cool, and as the wine began to evaporate from his brain, his coward heart failed him; yet none of his baseness was gone, for he would make sure that the work should be done.

"Will you do the deed faithfully?" he asked, still gazing into the face of Bep.

"Most faithfully."

"Shall she die?"

"Yes."

"How shall I know you have not deceived me?"

"My word when the deed is done."

"If I could be sure."

"Then come, and you shall strike the blow yourself."

"No, no, I have a mind to trust thee, Bep. I don't like the looks of the bay."

"Nor the nature of the job," said the bravo, with a half-bitter laugh. "But I'll do it. I'm used to such business."

"And when shall I see you again?"

"To-night, if you choose. It will not take me long to do the business in hand."

"I shall be at the San Carlo until nearly midnight, so you may meet me at twelve—it shall be at the western pillar of the church Saint Gennaro."

"That will be in two hours. I will be there if I can."

As Bep spoke, he leaped into his boat and shoved it off, and he was soon seated at his oars.

Cornaro Tartani stood upon the shore and watched the boat till he could see it no longer, and then he turned from the water and made his way towards the city. His step was quick, for he seemed anxious to get away from the scene of his first great crime. Twice he cast his eyes back upon the dark waters of the bay, and as he heard the low rumbling of the waves along the rocky shore, it seemed like the voice of outraged heaven murmuring vengeance in his ears.

But young Tartani hastened on, and he tried to calm his conscience by assuring himself that the step he had taken was necessary to his own and his father's safety. He liked not the thought that when his father died he should himself be left without an estate, and he believed that she whom he had consigned to her death could, should she live, in some manner operate in the way of such an event.

At length the count reached the theatre. At the saloon he stopped and swallowed a large goblet of wine, and then he sought the boxes. The opera was a brilliant one, but he took no pleasure in it. Time wore heavily on his hands, and he was glad when midnight approached. He left the theatre before the curtain fell, and ere long afterwards he stood within the shadow of one of the pillars of Saint Gennaro, there to await the coming of the bravo. But midnight passed, and the next half hour rolled slowly away, and yet the count was alone.

"He is detained," he muttered to himself, as he drew his cloak about him. "Two hours was a short time for the business. I'll see him to-morrow." And thus speaking, the count descended to the street and hastened away.

CHAPTER XII.

THE CHEST IS OPENED—AND WHAT THE DUKE SAW THERE.

THE duke exclaimed, "No, no, Monmarto, let us not look into that place," as the latter laid his hand upon the lid of the chest. "Tell me what your purpose is, and let that suffice, but open not the chest."

"Come here, Garcia Tartani," pronounced the Greek, in tones of indescribable depth. "There! Look!"

The lid of the chest was thrown back, but time had eaten away the iron of the hinges, and it fell upon the pavement with a dull, heavy sound. Even Monmarto shuddered, and Tartani fairly groaned in agony.

"Look!" repeated the Greek.

It was a human skeleton, upon which the duke's eyes rested! Portions of clothing, which the moth had not yet eaten up, were still clinging to the marrowless bones, and upon a fragment of what looked as though it might have once been velvet, there was an object that caught the rays of the lamp and threw them back with ten-fold power. Monmarto stooped over and picked it up. It was a diamond cross, surmounted by a ducal coronet.

"Do you know who found his last sleep in

this narrow house?" whispered the Greek, still holding the jewelled insignia in his hand.

"Yes," the duke replied involuntarily, seeming transfixed by the scene.

"Do you know who did it?"

"You! you! you!"

"Ay, Garcia Tartani, I slew that man, and placed him there; but let me tell thee how it was."

"No, no, I wish not to hear it!"

"But I wish to tell it, for I would have you realize how we stand. Joseph De Scarpa was the Duke of Prezza. You were fortunate enough to marry his cousin, and in default of heirs, she was the next to inherit these broad lands. You at length imagined that you might be Duke of Prezza, by the king's good will, were De Scarpa but dead. The young duchess De Scarpa bore a child, but she lived not to bless it with a mother's care. You came to attend the funeral of the duchess, and your wife came with you; and while yet the deep tones of the bell of Saint Elmo were ringing a requiem for the departed, you planned for the funeral of the duke; and your wife—may God have mer-

cy on her—helped you in your plans. Shortly afterwards the family vault of the De Scarpa was again opened, and a ducal coffin was pompously carried into it, but there was no duke within it! Only a waxen head and face, fashioned by the hands of your wife, received any tears that might have been dropped by a sincere mourner."

"O! O! Stop!"

"No, Tartani, not yet. While all that pomp of funeral was going on, Joseph De Scarpa was chained in this vault. You would have slain him, but you dared not meet him. You dared not let him starve, for fear the process would be so long he might attract attention by his cries before he died, so hired me to do the job. I did it, as this ghastly thing can testify, and I did it well, too. You would have the infant dead, too, and I was hired to do that. Thus the long line of those noble princes and dukes was to close in blood, and you sit upon the ducal state. I could not kill that sweet infant, though I had sworn to you that I would. As I hurried through the storm on that night of fear, the gentle innocent snuggled closer to my bosom, and its low wails struck to my heart. I could not have killed it then had it been to save my own life. I met a man, and I gave it to him. I told him the infant had no parents, and in God's name I charged him to protect it, and be a father to it. If I had been poor before, your money had made me comparatively rich, and I determined to leave the country where I had performed the deed of death. I sought the shores of Greece, and there I have lived till within a month. If ever a man sincerely repented of a sin, I have of mine; but I cannot go down to my grave in peace till I know what became of that child. In my dreams she haunts me, and in my ears she shrieks for her father! Can I but see her, and from her hear one word of forgiveness, I can die content."

For a moment, the Greek bowed his head upon his hand, and a powerful emotion shook his frame. The duke gazed upon him like one who sees the coming avalanche and cannot move from its course.

"Tartani," slowly pronounced Monmarto, raising his head and fixing his eyes upon the old noble, "if I have been a villain, I am not one now; yet I am not to be trifled with. It was my work that made you what you are, and *I can unmake you!* You need not start; but tell me the truth to what I ask. Above stairs you lied to me, and I brought you here to see if this ghastly scene, and the fearful memories that cling to the place, would make you fear to lie again. Remember, now, and answer me truly. *Does that child—the daughter of JOSEPH DE SCARPA—live?*"

"I do not know," returned the duke, startled into life by the new danger he thought hung over him.

"You have spoken a lie! You do know."

Tartani trembled violently.

"Hark ye," continued Monmarto. "Had you at first but told me that you knew nothing of the child, I might have believed you; but you betrayed yourself. You told me I had not kept my promise—that I had not killed De Scarpa's infant. Now how knew ye that? Look upon that mass of fleshless bones—think of the spirit that once animated them, and of the form they once wore—think of the scene that once transpired here. Think deeply of it, too—know that God reads your heart—and then lie to me if you dare! Does the daughter of the De Scarpas live? Ponder well—but lie not!"

While Monmarto had been speaking, one hand had been laid upon the duke's shoulder, and the other was pointed towards the skeleton that rested in that old chest. His words came forth like slow-rolling streams of lava, and his eyes looked to the very soul of the man to whom he spoke. Tartani was like a child in the hands of the man who knew him so perfectly, and he involuntarily turned away from the gaze that was gathering up his own thoughts.

"I think the girl lives," he uttered, as though the words were dragged up from his throat by some resistless, yet sluggish power.

"Do you not know?" the Greek asked, with startling energy.

"No, I do not."

"When did you see her?"

"I cannot remember. Perhaps a year—it may be less."

"Where was it?"

"Hold," cried the duke, as a new thought came to him—a thought which, in his excess of agony, he had forgotten—his features growing brighter at the same time. "I do not *know* that I have seen her at all—I do not *know* that she has lived to be even a girl. Once I saw a girl upon the Portici villa, and she looked the very original of the Duchess De Scarpa. I have not seen her since, nor have I sought her; yet I think she was the infant of whom you speak. I know no more."

Though Garcia Tartani now told a lie, yet the subterfuge was such a relief to him, that he spoke more boldly than he had done before, and Monmarto seemed to place some confidence in what he said.

The Greek picked up the fallen cover to replace it upon the chest, and while he did so there was even a light of triumph shot across the face of the duke. Before Monmarto could succeed in finding the lost heir, even should he look, Cornaro would have placed her beyond the reach of mortals.

"Now," said Monmarto, as he took up the lamp, "we will go."

"But that ducal insignia," uttered the duke.

"I shall keep it. I am poor, and I may need it. These diamonds will bring me much money."

"No, no, you must not keep that. If you want money, I will give it to you."

"I'll take no more of your money, Tartani.

I have taken too much now. But this belongs to me by right."

"How?"

"By simple right of plunder—as the con-

queror sacks the city which he takes. And more, Tartani, it may serve me in another way. I know not what you may think to do again, me. I will keep it as an evidence of the compact that has existed between us. Come—you need not fear."

The duke's eyes did sparkle with a vengeful fire as the Greek turned to go, and his hand rested upon the hilt of his dagger for an instant, but he had no courage to do more. The movement spoke the will of his heart, and showed that Monmarto had not been far from right in his conjectures.

As the two passed out from the vault, Monmarto set down the lamp, and having closed the door he placed his dagger in the keyhole to move the bolt of the lock. A single instant Tartani gazed upon his companion as he was thus engaged, and all the energy of his soul was called for once into active life.

The Greek was stooping over the lock, and his back and left breast were exposed. The lamp stood upon the right of the marker, nearly a foot further back than he stood, and his face was in the shade. Tartani drew his dagger, and gathering all his strength for the blow, he raised his arm. The Greek sprang quickly upon one side, and the lithe steel struck with a ringing sound upon the iron door, and the severed blade rattled upon the pavement.

"You should have looked to see that the lamp did not write your movements upon the wall," said Monmarto, while a bitter smile broke over his features. "Think not that I should for a moment lose sight of your movements, for I know you too well. I pity your weakness. Come."

Tartani uttered a deep curse as he cast the bladeless hilt upon the pavement, and with a trembling, cowering step he followed the Greek as he stalked along the vaulted passage.

CHAPTER XIII.

ANOTHER JUDGMENT AGAINST THE DUKE.

STOPPING suddenly in the passage and listening, "Hark!" uttered Monmarto, "heard you not a noise?"

"No," returned the duke, starting.

"I did, surely."

"Some bat, perhaps."

"No. Ha, hear it again. 'Tis a human being, Tartani."

"No, no, there is no one here but ourselves. Let us hasten on. This damp air is already shaking my bones."

"No, by heavens, Tartani, I go not till I know from whence comes that sound. It may be some victim of your ill will."

"There's no one here, I tell you," urged the duke, in terror.

"Yes, there is. Hark! the voice comes from beyond the place we have left. Let us go back."

Monmarto laid his hand upon the duke's shoulder as he spoke, and dragged him back. The noble had not even a dagger now, and resistance was beyond his power.

A current of cool, fresh air soon struck the

two men, and it would have extinguished the light had not Monmarto placed his hand quickly before the blaze.

"There's a wicket open somewhere," he said, as he stopped a moment to allow the blaze to fully gain the wick again.

"Help! help! Whoever you be, release me from this cold place," shouted a voice close by where Monmarto had stopped.

"Ha! Heard ye that, Tartani?"

"I know not—"

"Silence! Tell me no more lies! By San Capello, you shall soon know who it is. Have patience, my friend—I'll let you forth, if it is but to see what manner of thing ye are."

It was but a single step to the door of the cell from which the voice had proceeded, and in a moment the Greek was moving back the heavy bolts.

"Now come forth," he said, as he swung the door open.

Guiseppe Zarani leaped out into the passage.

"Now, by Saint Peter, if I did not meet this man as I came hither to-night, then my

eyes and ears play me false," exclaimed Monmarto, as he held the light up to Guiseppe's face.

"You did," the marquis returned; and then turning to the duke, he continued, while his eyes flashed with indignation:

"Garcia Tartani, I had not expected this at your hands."

"It's none of my work, Zarani," uttered the duke, bringing every nerve that could bear energy to aid him in his effort to appear composed.

"I cannot believe you, signor duke. Am I not in your palace?"

"Yes, but I know not how you came here."

"You need not tell me that, for I would not believe it though you swore it upon the holy cross. I know full well that you have some deep design, and that I may stand in the way of its execution. Tartani," the marquis continued, laying his hand quickly upon the old noble's shoulder, and speaking with startling vehemence, "was I placed here that you might get that fair young—"

"Stop! stop! for God's sake, stop!" cried the duke. "I know nothing of it. Come, you shall be free—I will hunt out the perpetrators of this deed—say no more—come—to my room—you are cold—come."

There was a wildness of fear in the duke's manner, and he grasped Zarani by the arm to lead him away. The young marquis saw the workings of that fear, and he was not balked in asking his question.

"Answer me first," he exclaimed, shaking off the hand that was laid upon him. "Have you not set some design on foot against that fair creature whom you saw at the lazzarone's? You started when you first saw her—you were troubled when she spoke—and you were incoherent with excitement when you spoke of her after we entered your carriage. I watched you well, and I know that you fear her. Do not deny that, signor duke, for your own unwittingly spoken words have revealed more to me than you may imagine."

"'Tis false! all false! I know her not, nor care I for her."

"Ah, there's light breaking in here," pronounced Monmarto, in a deep, loud whisper, as he turned first a hasty glance upon the cowering, heart-fainting duke, and then fastened his gaze upon the marquis. "Tell me of this thing, signor marquis?"

"Of what?" said Zarani, turning towards the speaker.

"Of this girl—for 'twas of a girl I think you were speaking."

"Yes, I spoke of one who has a holy claim upon my gratitude, and whom I have reason to think the duke fears."

"But more—more. What of her?"

"I can tell you nothing more than you have already heard. I have seen her but thrice, and that was during a few days of illness that I spent beneath the roof where she lives."

"Who does she live with?"

"A man whom she calls her father—Gebo Massinello."

"And you think he is not her father?"

"I do."

"And you think Tartani fears her?"

"Yes."

"Garcia Tartani," said Monmarto, turning towards the duke, "answer me. Is not this De Scarpa's child?"

"De Scarpa!" cried the young marquis. "De Scarpa!" And he gazed like one astounded.

"Yes," returned Monmarto. "That was the name I spoke."

"De Scarpa!" murmured the marquis to himself. "There's none of that name but the noble house that was founded here. Do you mean the duke? Signor Joseph?"

"Yes," returned Monmarto, but keeping his eyes on Tartani the while.

"I remember the good duke, though I was but a mere child when he died. I remember, too, how he came to my father's house, and how I loved him because he played with me, and took me upon his knees."

Zarani hesitated, and pressed his hand upon

his brow. There was a strange twitching of the muscles about his temples, and one could have seen that his fair brow was working with thought. At length he raised his head, and gazed full into the face of the Greek.

"The Duke De Scarpa had a wife, as fair and beautiful — Good God! she that I saw beneath the lazzarone's roof, is the living image of the woman I saw in my early childhood!"

"When? when?" fell from Monmarto's lips.

"Not a week since—but the other day."

"Great God, Tartani! have you harmed that being?" exclaimed the Greek, springing like a tiger upon the duke, and seizing him by the throat. "I told you I was a reformed man, that I had repented, but if you have harmed her—if you have put her beyond my reach, I may add another deed of blood to my life-page."

Garcia Tartani did not answer, but with a deep groan he sank senseless upon the cold, damp pavement. Every stream that had been turning against him seemed now to have joined their waters into one whelming flood which came tumbling down upon him.

"Who—what are you?" uttered Zarani, looking with wonder upon the Greek.

"One who would save that child from the clutches of this villain," Monmarto returned, starting suddenly from the reverie into which he had fallen while gazing upon the prostrate form of the duke. "Say, Zarani, can you lead me to her?"

A strange doubt stole over the mind of the marquis, but when he tried to define it, he could not.

"Do you fear me?" the Greek half bitterly asked.

"No, no," cried Zarani, shaking off the momentary feeling, for as he thought of all he had heard, he became assured that the stranger could not mean harm to Adele. "I can lead you to where I saw her last."

"Then come. Let the duke remain where he is till he can move himself."

"Most readily," returned the marquis. "We may have no time to lose, for Tartani has most assuredly commenced same plan for the removal of that girl."

Monmarto led the way with a quick step up the stone stairs, and Zarani followed closely after. They met no one in the hall, nor in the corridor, and without observation they gained the court. It was very dark without, and though not very cool, yet there was a heavy fog that came sweeping up from the bay which made the air damp, and made the night more dark than it would otherwise have been. No moon was up, and none of the stars could struggle through the mist.

For some distance after the two gained the road they hurried on in silence, but at length Monmarto spoke. He asked Zarani the circumstances attending his strange imprisonment. The young marquis told the whole story.

"Then there is no mistake but that you were in Tartani's way," said Monmarto, as his companion closed.

"Of course not."

"And this girl must have been the object he had in view."

"Most assuredly; for there is no other possible thing with which I could have been connected unfavorably to his wishes," said the marquis. And then, after a moment's pause, he continued:

"I do not wish to be impertinent, but yet I would ask in what way you are connected with this affair?"

"I cannot explain it now. Suffice it for you to know that I seek the girl's good, and her good alone."

"But your name—I do not even know that."

"Monmarto is my name."

"A Greek?"

"By adoption, but not by birth. The last nineteen years I have spent in Greece, but I was born in this city. People have called me a lazzarone."

"A lazzarone!" repeated Zarani, in surprise.

"You wonder, young signor, and perhaps you think me but of little account in the world. But let me tell you that the noble and the lazzarone are both upon one moral scale. They may occupy very different social positions, but yet in the great body politic they are the same. They produce nothing—do nothing towards making the country richer—only they live upon the earnings of others, and live at their ease, too. And how many nobles do you think there are in Naples, who are happier than the independent, vagabond lazzarone? I'm above the lazzarone now, so I have cares to perplex me."

"But what dealings could you have had—"

"Stop, signor marquis. I broached a foolish argument, hoping to drag you into it, and thus stop you from useless questions; but I see you take not the hint. Ask me no more. I will be assured that the daughter of De Scarpa is safe, if that thing be possible, for I owe it to her. When I have done that—and God grant it may be—Naples will know no more of Monmarto."

There was a deep solemnity in the man's voice as he spoke, and the marquis could ask no more. He could only gaze upon the tall form in the misty gloom, and silently wonder what were the thoughts that worked there.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SEARCH.

THOUGH the bell of Saint Elmo had told that it was midnight, ere the young marquis and his companion reached the Villa Reale, yet they determined to go at once to the dwelling of Massinello, to assure themselves of the state of affairs there. They had both of them strange forebodings that mischief was at hand. Neither had spoken to the other of his thoughts, but yet the very breathing—the very method of the ominous silence, told that fear was at work. Zarani led the way with rapid strides, and Monmarto kept snugly by him.

The dwelling of poor Gebo was reached, and the front door was found open. Zarani's heart leaped with a sudden pang as he saw this, for it surely augured ill. The two men entered the house, but they found no person there. There was a small brass lamp burning upon the table, and near it lay Gebo's violin, seeming to have been hastily thrown there, for it lacked but little of falling off upon the floor. The marquis snatched up the lamp and hastened to the small room he had occupied. Adele's lute lay upon the bed, a half-finished waxen flower lay upon the stand near the window, and the peculiar

lamp she used in melting and coloring her material stood near it. The marquis called out as loud as he could, but he got no answer. He went to the back door, but it was fastened upon the inside. He opened it, however, and looked forth into the darkness, and sent his voice into the quiet church court. A dull echo was the only answer he got. He returned to the eating-room, set the lamp down in the place from whence he had taken it, and then the two men stood and gazed into each other's faces.

"She's gone!" whispered Zarani, seeming afraid to trust the fearful truth with utterance.

"All gone!" returned Monmarto, with a heavy breath.

For a moment the men gazed upon each other as before. Then Monmarto continued:

"You are sure this was the place?"

"Yes. Here, in this room, I last saw her sweet face. Sweeter than the breath of summer, and more beautiful than the flowers that breath awakes to life—purer than the purling brooklet, and more cheering in her presence than the murmur of the cooling waters—milder than the gentle stars of heaven, and more glo-

rious in her smiles than the queen of night. An angel of mercy she was, all beauty, all grace, all goodness, and all purity."

Monmarto did not speak, but he gazed fixedly into the face of his companion.

"A moment that sweet orb arose upon the heaven of my vision, and her bright beams sank deeper than I knew to my heart. Adele! Adele! Gebo! Massinello! O, this is horrible! Which way shall we turn? Where shall we look? Monmarto, speak."

Before he could obey the young man's half-frantic injunction, the sound of rushing footsteps were heard from without, and in a moment more, Massinello sprang into the house. The poor lazzarone's hair was streaming in wild masses, his eyes were glaring and haggard, and his face was pale as marble. His eyes rested upon Zarani, and a strange change came over him.

"O, God! signor marquis, is it you that have done this? You whom I saved from the grave of waters, and whom I nursed with a brother's care? O, give me back my child! give me back my child!"

"No, no, good Gebo—'twas not me," uttered Zarani. "You know I could not have done it."

"Who then has robbed me of my more than life? Who has stolen my very heart of hearts, and left me thus?"

The marquis explained all that he knew, though he dared not yet mention the duke, for he had no evidence that Tartani had done this thing.

"And you came to save her if you could?" said Massinello, with a tone of gratitude. "But, alas! I know not how this thing is to be done. I know not where to look, for I know not whom to suspect. And you, signor," he continued, turning to Monmarto, "have you come, too?"

"I came with the marquis to help protect the girl."

"I know you not. Did you know Adele?"

"That matters not now. Let us first find

her if we can. How long since you missed her?"

"Nearly two hours," returned Gebo, as he wiped the tears from his cheek. "I came home from the city, and I found my door open, and Adele gone. There was a chair tipped over. Yonder stool was kicked into the corner, and in the sand upon the floor I found marks of a scuffle. I feared it—O, I feared it from the moment that Satan put his foot into the house."

"Who was it?" asked the marquis, in wonder.

"An ungodly astrologer—a man that read the future, and looked into the past. I felt sure that a curse would come after him; and yet I gave him food and shelter."

"What manner of man was he?" suddenly uttered Zarani.

The lazzarone described minutely the dress and appearance of the man.

"Now I know him!" cried the marquis, with vehement energy. "It was Tartani, for I saw that very dress—that white beard and hair, within his palace this very day that has passed."

"(Not the old duke, who was here,)" said Gebo.

"Yes."

"Diabolo, that could not have been. The scamp may have been disguised, but I know it was not him."

"Then it was one of the duke's emissaries, as I'm alive. But who would he trust? Ha! I have it. 'Twas Cornaro, his son."

Zarani felt confident that he had arrived at the truth, and the fact that Cornaro Tartani had been the instrument of the affair was set down as a sure foundation upon which to act.

"Let us not stand here," said Monmarto, just breaking from a deep thought-spell that had bound him. "Whoever has taken the girl away has not remained about here, nor shall we be likely to find her very near."

"But which direction shall we take?" queried the marquis.

"Let us see if there are tracks in the light

dust of the road," returned Monmarto. "Have you a lantern, Gebo?"

"No."

"Then some glass vase will do, anything to shield the lamp, and yet give us light."

The lazzarone soon found a small flower vase that Adele had purchased as a slight ornament to her room, and this answered all necessary purposes. It was placed over the lamp, and thus equipped, the trio set forth.

Any one who has ever been upon the Portici road will not fail to remember the deep, light, noxious dust that lays there in such generous quantities—composed mostly of ashes, and cinders ground to an impalpable powder, that have come from the troubled volcano. From the moisture of the atmosphere, the surface of the dust retained all impressions that had been made upon it since nightfall. Tracks were easily traced from the yard to the road, and from thence across to the rocky shore of the bay, and those of Adele were readily distinguished. At this point the examination was necessarily more careful, but yet the tracks were traced along the spots of sand among the rocks, until at length they reached the broad bed at the edge of the water.

"They have taken to the water," uttered Gebo, as he noticed the spot where the boat's keel had grated upon the sand.

"Then we can trace them no farther," said the marquis.

"I know not about that," remarked Monmarto. "Tell us, Gebo, do you not know all the boats about here?"

"Yes, I do," returned the lazzarone.

"Then let us follow the shore along towards the city, and see if any of them be gone."

"That would be but little use, for many of the boatmen are sometimes gone all night."

"We can try it, nevertheless," said Monmarto.

"Yes," thoughtfully returned Gebo.

The trio took their way as had been suggested. Here and there they found a boat fastened to some rock-embedded ring or bolt, but none were missing.

"This is a useless search," groaned the poor lazzarone, as the party reached the point where the shore ran near the roadside. "She is gone, gone! Poor Adele, whither have they carried you?"

"Hark! Here come footfalls," uttered the marquis. "We may inquire of whoever it is if he has seen her."

A heavy footfall, as of some one in much haste, was heard from the road, and the party hastened up from the shore to intercept the stranger.

CHAPTER XV.

A STRANGE DISAPPEARANCE.

FOR some time after the lazzarone bravo, Bep, pushed his boat off from the shore he rowed on in silence. There was a stern resolution in his manner, and he seemed by his nervous movements to be anxiously arguing within himself. It was so dark that he could not see the countenance of Adele, but he could hear her stifled moans as she struggled to overcome the impediment that had been placed upon her mouth.

Bep had rowed some three miles out into the bay before he rested upon his oars, and then he raised the blades from the water and gazed about upon the darkened surface of the sea. He pulled his oars inboard, and then bent his head in a listening attitude. Having satisfied himself that he was beyond the reach of detection, he arose and approached the fair prisoner. He drew his stiletto and placed his thumb upon the point. He hesitated a moment, and then shoving the weapon back into its sheath, he murmured to himself:

"San Pello, but she shall have the chance to say her prayers, if she wants it. I'll grant her that favor out of my love for her and her father."

Thus muttering, he moved towards Adele, and when he had reached her he placed his hand upon her head, and looked down into her face.

"If I'll take off that scarf and let you say your prayers, will you promise not to make any loud noise?" he asked, in a hoarse, rough voice.

Adele started, strained her eyes so as to read the expression of the man's countenance, but she made no answering movement.

"If you'll do as I say, just nod your head. Not a lisp, remember, loud enough to be heard a rod, for you are going to die in a few moments."

Adele sprang to her feet, but with a strong hand, Bep pushed her down again.

"Come, come," he uttered, "don't waste the time, for it's precious. You haven't ten minutes to live, but I won't kill you till you have said your prayers, if you'll promise what I ask. Quick."

Adele bowed her head, and Bep reached over and untied the scarf that was bound over her mouth.

"Now pray."

"Bep, you jest with me," uttered Adele, in a quick whisper, but so fearful in its tone that it spoke louder than a shriek.

"No, no, it is a solemn truth. I am not the man to lie."

"Nor to kill such as me. O, I know you are not, Bep."

"Hush, it is my trade. I have been paid for it. Had I not done it, another would, and perhaps one who would not have granted you the boon I now offer. Pray, pray."

"Who was it, Bep, that—"

"Stop. Don't ask me any questions, but pray, if you wish to. You know this is no farce. Come, be quick."

"O, this cannot be real. You have not the heart to kill one like me."

"Yes, yes, I have, and the minutes are flying, too. Don't waste any more time."

"Unbind my hands, Bep. Let me at least die with my hands towards heaven."

"Will you pray then quickly?"

"Yes."

"Then you shall have that favor, too," said the bravo, as he bent over and untied the lashing of the fair girl's hands.

The poor girl sank upon her knees, and her lips moved a moment in prayer.

"Are you ready?"

"If you can kill me, Bep, I am. O, can you not remember the times when I have been kind to you, and when—"

"Hush! If you have been kind, I have been kind, too. Had another one taken this job you would not have had the favors you now have."

"Then I am ready, Bep. Strike me to the heart, and let me die quickly. Mine is a poor life at best, and it will be an easy task for you to take it. If you see my poor father, tell him that I blessed him with my last breath. Tell him that Adele is in heaven. And you will see some of those poor creatures who have depended upon me in their sickness and want. Tell them to seek some other minister now that their Adele is gone. And you, too, Bep—you

will not forget the poor girl who has nursed you when your body was racked with pain. I would have all think kindly of me, and love my memory. Ah, there is one other thing. In my little room—it is the same in which you once lay when you were sick—there is an alabaster crucifix. You remember you gave it to me because you said I had been so kind to you. You may take that. I am ready now, and may God forgive you for this deed!"

Bep had drawn his stiletto, but he did not strike.

"Come, Bep, keep me not in torture. My life will fly easily away, if you but strike truly. But your hand trembles."

"Does it?" uttered the bravo.

"Yes."

"It ought not to tremble, for it is used to this work."

"Here, Bep, you think I shall look down from heaven and curse you; but I will not. No revenge shall rankle in my soul. Here, I'll kiss thee now, and pardon thee when thou hast struck me."

Adele caught the man's hand and pressed it to her lips.

"Now I am ready."

Bep raised the stiletto, and as Adele saw its bright blade dimly gleaming above her, she placed her hands before her eyes. She heard a quick movement, and on the next moment the sound of a light splash in the water struck her ear. She removed her hands from her eyes, and Bep had sank down upon one of the thwarts.

"What noise was that?"

"My stiletto, Adele."

"What! have you—No, no—you lost it."

"I threw it away. Adele, I cannot kill you."

"Cannot? O, God bless you! God bless you!" cried the poor girl; and she wept aloud.

"I'm a fool, perhaps, and they will laugh at me that I feared to kill a girl; but I can't do it. You'll never speak of it?"

"No, no, Bep, only to you, and that shall be

to bless you. You will carry me back to my father?"

"Yes, and I'll give back the money to him who owns it."

"And who is that, Bep? Who, upon the face of the wide world, has sought my life? Tell me. I'll never mention it."

"No, that's asking too much. I shall tell you no more than you know already. If Gebo asks you of me, only tell him that I saved you."

"I will, Bep, indeed I will; and never shall a word escape me that can cast blame upon you. I'll nurse you if you are sick, and—"

"No more, no more," interrupted Bep, as he took up his oars.

The bravo turned the head of his boat towards the shore, and with quick, strong pulls he sent the light craft bounding over the dark waters.

"You are not going towards my dwelling, good Bep," said Adele, as she saw the long line of surf that broke upon the rocks in front of her house far to the right.

"No, there may be people there. I'll pull to the boat-house, and then your father shall come for you."

Ere long the boat was shot beneath the low roof from whence it had been taken in the early part of the evening, and as the bravo assisted Adele to the landing, he said:

"You must remain here, while I go in search of your father."

"No, no—let me go with you."

"You must not, for we may meet those whom I would not see. You would hardly be safe alone, and I should not like to be seen with you. Remain you here—hide, if you wish—and I will soon have good Gebo here after you."

Adele consented to the proposal, and having promised that she would not leave the place till her father came, Bep left her.

As the bravo struck into the street he hurried along through the darkness towards the dwelling of Massinello. He talked to himself as he walked along, and though he felt that he had for

once in his life obeyed the impulse of a generous prompting, yet he seemed not so highly pleased at the reflection as he might have been. Had any one heard his mutterings they would have learned that Bep had rather disliked the job when first he found who was to be the victim, but that he accepted it partly because he feared to show his employer any of the "*white feather*." Black and hard as was his heart, he had not the power to slay one who had appealed to all that was generous in him, without moving one of his baser passions; and now he rather wished that he had never undertaken the work more than he thanked Heaven he had not done it. He felt that he had stained his profession—that if it were known he had engaged to do a deed of blood and had shrank from the performance of it, he should be laughed at by his compeers and derided by those who might employ him. Yet Bep could not hide from his soul that his step was lighter, now that he was going for the father to come and take back his daughter, than it would have been were he coming from the murder. He was doing a good deed, and however foreign it was to his nature his heart would leap more lightly with the thought.

Thus walked Bep along, his mind hanging between the object in view and the scene he had passed, when he suddenly stopped as he heard approaching footsteps that seemed coming from the seashore. He would have moved to the opposite side of the street, but the corners were upon him before he could evade them.

"Hallo, stranger, are you from the city?" asked one of them.

"San Peblo, that's good Gebo."

"Diabolo, but you should be Bep, unless that voice lies."

"'Tis Bep."

"Then in God's name, Bep, tell me if you have seen my child—my sweet Adele," cried Gebo, advancing and looking into the face of the bravo.

"Who are these men with you?" asked Bep, looking over Gebo's shoulder at the two forms he could distinguish through the gloom.

"They are friends, Bep, who have joined me in my search. But tell me, have you seen her?"

"Yes. I have left her but now."

"Where—O where?"

"Come with me, and I'll show you."

Massinello clasped his hands in joy as he heard this, and he uttered wild notes of thanksgiving as he followed Bep. It was some distance back to the boat-house, a mile, perhaps, but with quick steps the party hastened on, and ere long they reached the spot.

"San Peblo! I left not this door open," said Bep, as he stopped in front of the boat-house.

"The wind, perhaps," uttered Gebo, in breathless agitation.

"The wind couldn't do it."

"Then perhaps you didn't shut it."

"But I did, though."

As Bep answered, he stepped into the house. Gebo and his companions followed with the light, and anxiously they looked around. The whole of the plain interior could be viewed at one glance, but no Adele could be seen!

For several moments the men gazed upon each other in silence.

"She's gone!" uttered Bep.

"Perhaps into the street," whispered Massinello. "We shall find her again."

"I hope so."

"Here is where you left her?" said Zarani, trembling with apprehension.

"Yes."

"Then she may have gone home," suggested Gebo, but hopelessly, though.

"She could not have done that, for I know she did not pass me, and of course we have not met her," returned Bep.

"But where did you find her?" asked Zarani.

"No matter. Suffice it for you to know that I found her. When you see her she will tell you what she chooses."

"Then our search is but yet begun, Monmarto," said the marquis.

"Monmarto!" uttered Bep, starting.

"Yes, Bep," returned the seeming Greek.

"San Peblo, but I can see the hole through a macaroni stem now," uttered Bep. "It must have been twenty years since I saw you last?"

"Yes, nearly."

"Come outside, I would speak to you a moment."

Monmarto followed Bep to the street.

"Hist," uttered Bep, in a whisper. "Didn't you finish the Duke De Scarpa?"

"Yes."

"I thought so. Tartani came to me for that job, but I wouldn't do it. Once more—isn't Adele De Scarpa's child?"

"Yes, she is, and I have come to save her if I can. I spared her life when she was an infant, and I would save her from the clutches of the villain duke now."

"I thought as much of the girl. She looks as the duchess did."

"Now tell me, Bep, have you told the truth about leaving the girl here?"

"Yes, I have. I have saved her life to-night, and I would have restored her to Massinello; but you see she's gone—I don't know how nor where."

"Ha! I, too, can see a hole through the macaroni stem now. Tartani has had a hand in this."

"You know our profession too well to ask questions on that point," returned Bep, with a peculiar tone—a tone which might have been meant as an affirmative answer to the question Monmarto had asked.

"Bep," said Monmarto, after a moment's pause; "will you promise me to protect this girl if you again come across her?"

"I will—by San Peblo, I will."

At this moment, Gebo and the marquis came out from the boat-house. The distracted father (for a father's affections made him a father yet) called aloud the name of her he sought, but no answer came back.

"Hark, ye, Gebo," said Bep. "If you would find her you must search. I am going to the Strada di Toledo, and I will keep my

eyes about me as I go. You can divide yourselves as you choose; but let me tell you, you had better make your search towards the city."

As Bep spoke, he turned to Monmarto.

"Where shall we meet again? San Peblo, but I would sit over a good bottle with you."

"Perhaps you shall, but I can make no appointment now."

In a moment more the bravo had started off, and the others soon followed. When they reached the villa, they separated with the agreement that they would meet at daylight at a given point. Monmarto alone seemed calm and cool. Poor Gebo was really frantic, and Zarani was moved by a feeling far deeper than pity or gratitude.

CHAPTER XVI.

MAG.

LET us now turn our attention for a while upon Cornaro Tartani. When he left the church of Saint Gennaro, he proceeded to a hotel upon the Toledo where he intended to pass the night. He went to his room, but feeling far from inclined to sleep, he moved a seat out upon the balcony of one of the windows and sat himself there to think. There was but one channel in which his thoughts could run, and the longer he dwelt in that channel the more nervous he grew. He did not feel satisfied that he had failed to see the bravo, and he blamed himself that he had not waited longer at the place of rendezvous.

The great city was most all asleep—only here and there a sound of humanity broke upon the air, and once in a while the echo of some solitary pedestrian's footfall would reach the count's ear.

"I cannot sleep till I have seen Bep," he uttered to himself, as he started up from his chair, "for I must know what has been his success. Of course the deed is done, but still I would have it from his own lips."

As the last words fell from the young man's lips he had re-entered the room and thrown on his cloak; then placing his cap upon his head, he started forth for the street. His first direction was towards St. Gennaro, but the broad

piazza of the church was deserted. Then Tartani resolved that he would go at once to the boat-house and see if Bep had returned, and if he might not, perchance, find the bravo there. With quick steps he hastened along through the streets and narrow alleys till he reached the Villa Reale, but here he kept his eyes and ears on the watch, and proceeded more carefully, lest Bep should pass him and he not know it. Several times he came near stumbling in the darkness, but yet he hastened on, and at length he reached the boat-house without having met anyone.

The count found the door shut, but not locked, and though he knew that he could not very well see within, yet he thought he had taken observation enough of the place to be enabled to feel and ascertain if Bep's boat was made fast to the same bolt from which it had been cast off. With this intention he opened the door and groped his way into the house. It was all like Egyptian darkness there—so dark that the utter blackness seemed rather a positive quality of the place, and Cornaro was upon the point of turning back, when he was startled by the sound of a human voice.

"Father! father! is that you?" came in faint, frightened accents from the farther corner of the place.

In an instant the count recognized the voice of Adele, and a variety of quick, passionate emotions ran through his soul. As quick as thought could come, came the conviction that Bep had spared the girl's life, and with the chagrin which that conviction occasioned, came a cool, determined resolution to make the most of the opportunity which was thus unexpectedly offered.

"Hist!" he whispered, in a tone that could not be distinguished. Come here."

"That is not my father's voice."

"—sh! Your father is searching. Bep directed me here while he looked for Gebo," whispered the count, at random. "Come, let me have your hand, and I'll lead you hence."

Carefully the poor girl advanced, and Cornaro thought he could hear her heart beat.

"Where are you?" she asked.

"Here," said the count, taking a step forward.

In another moment he felt a small hand upon his arm, and quickly taking it within his own, he moved back towards the door. At the entrance he stopped an instant and carefully listened to assure himself that no one was near, and then he started forth into the street.

"This is not the way," quickly uttered Adele, when she noticed that her companion's face was turned towards the city. "My father's dwelling lies the other way. Let me go there at once."

"Don't speak. We shall find friends not far from here."

"But you promised to lead me to my father?"

"No, I did not. I said I'd lead you from the place where I found you."

"Who are you? Surely I know that voice. I've heard it—O, mer—"

Her utterance was quickly stopped by the hand of the count, which was pressed over her mouth.

"Don't make any noise. You know me now, it seems. But never mind—you must go with me, and you may have your own choice how you shall go. Make but one note of sound that shall give alarm, and my dagger shall find your

heart on the instant. Hold thee still a moment. That villain Bep has been kind to you."

As the count uttered the last sentence in a bitter tone he bent the light form of Adele back over his left side, with his hand still over her mouth, and then drawing a handkerchief from his pocket, he bound it tightly over her mouth.

"Now come," he uttered, allowing her once more to stand upon her feet. "Come along, and remember what I have told you."

Poor Adele was too weak from the excitement she had already passed through to offer effectual resistance, and with a fervent prayer upon her lips that God would protect her, she resigned herself to her fate, faintly trusting that Heaven would not desert her.

Cornaro Tartani held his fair prisoner tightly by the hand, and hastened on towards the city with as much speed as the intense darkness and the nature of his charge would permit. Twice on the way he hesitated. He had some doubt as to the course he should pursue. He would have slain Adele himself had he dared, but such a deed in the heart of a great city was not a safe one, and so he determined to carry her to a place of security, from whence he could have her taken to her death at any favorable opportunity.

When the count reached the Villa Reale, he found that the girl was becoming too weak and exhausted to walk much further. He slackened his pace, but Adele would have sank upon the cold pavement, so he was forced to take her in his arms. The burden was not a very heavy one, though his way through the darkness was now more difficult. He dared not avail himself of the light of the oil lamps that were burning upon the upper side of the villa, for he could see that hordes of sleeping lazzaroni were gathered about them, so he was forced to keep the side next the water.

At length he reached the point where he wished to turn up into the city, and he crossed over. It was where one of those long, narrow, arched passages led up from the Villa Reale to the strada beyond. There was a small lamp at the entrance—a lamp that burned within a rough

shrine of Saint Joseph—and a number of lazzaroni were stretched out upon the pavement. The count entered the passage, stepped lightly over the legs of the sleeping vagabonds, and though one or two of them awoke, yet they made no movement to intercept him.

A little over half-way up the passage the count stopped. It was where a door was half sunken below the level of the pavement, and through a dingy glass in the top of which there struggled a few beams of light. Cornaro descended the stone steps that led down to the entrance and placed his hand upon the door. It was locked, and he kicked smartly against it with his foot. In a few minutes, during which the applicant cursed at the delay, a bolt was heard to move on the inside, and then the way was opened.

It was a woman who thus answered the call, and in her hand she bore a lamp, the light of which shone upon her face. She was an old woman, looking the very impersonation of all that could be wicked and repulsive.

It may seem strange that young Tartani should have been acquainted in such a place as this, but dissipation and debauchery make men at home in strange places—open to them the doors of all kinds of iniquitous sinks of sin, and find them companions in demons and soulless villains. Rich men, and titled men, are not exceptions to this general rule. If a man knocks at the gates of sin, Satan will surely open the door.

"Mag," said Cornaro, as soon as the door was opened, and he was sure that no one else was in the way. "I have a charge here for thee. Who's in the old room?"

"Eh, Cornaro."

"Hush your old tongue. Don't make so free with my name."

"You've got a—"

"Silence. Lead me to some place where we shan't be disturbed. Quick—I've got more load here than I want to hold."

"Then come along," said the old hag, as she turned and led the way through the entry.

When she reached the extremity of the pas-

sage, she turned up a flight of stairs, and the count quickly followed.

"You can go higher if you like," said the woman.

"Yes, up, up—anywhere so that we are out of the way of all ears but our own."

"Then you shall go as high as you like."

The woman ascended another stairway, another, and then another.

"Up one more, if you choose," she said, stopping at the head of the fourth flight.

"Is there a secure room up there?"

"Yes, one of the strongest in the house."

"Then go on."

Mag ascended the fifth stairway, and then turning to the right, she opened a door that led to a small attic which received its light in the daytime from a glazed scuttle in the roof.

"There," she uttered, with a sort of swinish grunt, "here is a place safe enough. Now what do you want of it?"

"I want to leave this girl here, till she is called for."

The woman held her lamp up to the pale face of Adele.

"How long will that be?"

"Perhaps twenty-four hours, and maybe longer," returned the count, as he laid the form he bore down upon a heap of old rags and rubbish in one corner.

Adele had been long insensible, and she seemed now like one dead. Her captor removed the bandage from her mouth, but she did not seem to breathe.

"She's dead," said the old woman. "I tell you, Tartani, I don't want dead folks brought here."

"No, she is not dead—she's only fainted. Don't you see her bosom move? Now will you promise me that she shall remain safely here till I come for her?"

"I don't know about that. Who is she? What are you going to do with her?"

"Never mind you that. All I ask of you is, that she shall be kept here, and that no one but you shall see her."

"I don't like to promise."

"No, I suppose not. What say you, though, to a purse of gold?"

"Eh!" uttered the hag, and her dull, sensual eyes almost sparkled.

"I'll give you gold, if you will swear to keep this girl in this room till I come for her?"

"Give it to me now, and I'll swear," said the woman, extending her bony hand.

The count put his hand into his pocket, but he found nothing there.

"San Capello, Mag, but I paid away my last piece of gold to-night. (Curse the villain.) But here, I'll give you this diamond ring as a pledge. I'll redeem it with gold. You know the value of that gem."

"I'll keep her," chuckled the old Jezebel, as she took the diamond in her hand.

"And no one else shall know that she is here?"

"No. There's nobody ever up here, and to make sure I'll lock the door at the foot of the stairs."

"And this door."

"O, that fastens strong enough, I'll warrant. It was made for strength, and it has been proved, too."

"Then I'll hold you to your promise."

"But say—shall I give her any food and drink?"

"Yes," said the count, after a moment's thought. "If I don't come for her in the morning, you may; but don't answer any questions if she asks them."

"O, I know all about that," returned Mag, with a self-satisfied air.

The woman and the count left the small room, and then the former turned to fasten the door. There were two bolts, both of iron, and Cornaro was satisfied with their strength, and as soon as they were pushed into their sockets he turned to descend the stairs. At the foot he stopped till Mag had also fastened that door, and then he moved on. At the distance of a few steps, however, he stopped and laid his hand nervously upon his companion's arm.

"Mag," he said, in a hoarse, unearthly

whisper, "suppose that girl was never carried hence?"

The woman stopped, held up her lamp, and gazed into the count's face.

"Do you understand me?"

"Not quite."

"Then, plainly—suppose she should not live to go hence!"

"Now I think I understand you," uttered Mag, without materially changing the villainous cast of her features. "You mean that she shall die up in that room?"

"Yes."

"Well," returned the woman, with her eyes actually looking as though there were life in them, "such a thing could be done."

"And will you do it?" anxiously asked Cornaro.

"I can do it, if you pay me enough."

This was more than the young villain had hoped. He knew that no spark of generous sympathy would ever find its way into her cold, dark bosom, and he believed that his object was accomplished.

"You shall name your own sum," said he.

"Then say—say—" the old woman ran over her fingers as she reckoned; "say fifty big gold pieces."

"You shall have them. I will be here to-morrow evening, and if she is dead then, the money shall be yours."

"She shall be dead," Mag uttered.

"You will do it safely—no noise."

"Let me alone for that. A furnace of burning coals, with a few grains of sulphur, will do the work, and she won't know what hurt her. If she sleeps again she will never wake up."

"And the body. Her's is a face that will be easily recognized."

"A tight box often makes a lazzarone's coffin, and few will look to it."

Even Cornaro could but feel a slight shudder creep through his frame at the woman's diabolical coolness; and as soon as he had assured himself that all was safe, he descended to the lower floor, sought the dark alley, and then hastened away towards his hotel. It wanted

but a few hours of morning when he entered the Toledo, and though the first part of his night's work had disappointed him in its result, yet he felt that he could safely rest on the result of the compact he had entered into with Mag.

Cornaro Tartani at length laid his head upon his pillow, and he told himself that he was satisfied; but he told himself a lie! He sought sleep, but he could not find it. He courted

content, but the goddess would not come to him. Then he thought that time would wear off the trouble that pricked his heart—that the future would hush the whisper that woke him now to bitter thought. But in all this he was sorely deceived. He had placed the bright jewel of peace beneath his heel, and crushed it to atoms, and while he hoped for peace once more, it was flown from him forever.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE FURNACE.

WHEN Adele came to herself the light was struggling in through the skylight, and she arose to her feet. It was some time before she could collect her thoughts, and when at length her mind became clear enough to comprehend the past, she sat down again and buried her face in her hands. She could remember the circumstance of being led from the boat-house, and she started when she remembered that it was by the same man who had accompanied Bep to her dwelling. She knew that it was that man who had sought her life. She remembered of the fearful threats her captor had used, and of his muffling up her mouth. Then she remembered of being led along at a swift pace towards the city, and of growing weak and faint. She remembered no more. The thought came to her of what all this could be for—why her life should be thus sought? Though it was dark and uncertain here, yet her mind gained an inkling of the truth. She remembered the saying of the astrologer, and she remembered, too, the strange manner of the elder Tartani; but more than all she thought of the confession Massinello had made to her. Her mind was strong enough to reason on this point, and she thought over the whole matter as it appeared to her.

The idea was hers that she was indeed of

noble blood. Then why was she thrown upon the lazzaroni while an infant? Only because she was in the way! This appeared clear to her. Now she thought her whereabouts had been discovered by those who would years ago have been rid of her, and she was thus to be removed. On this point she felt certain. All the circumstances—the words and manner of Bep—were to her mind convincing.

"O, and this is to be of noble blood!" she uttered, as she once more arose to her feet. "O, if they but knew me better—if they but knew I would ever be happy and content as the poor lazzarone's child, perhaps they would not have done this—perhaps they would even now let me live! But surely the marquis could have no hand in this. No, no, I know he has not. Zarani has too noble, too generous a heart, to lend his hand to this."

As the fair girl uttered this last sentence her eyes grew brighter, the color came to her pale cheeks, and she spoke with an energy that startled even herself.

Adele was just turning her attention to a further examination of the room, when her ears caught the sound of a door opening, and then she heard footsteps upon the stairs. In a few moments the bolts of her own door were withdrawn, and the wicked old hag entered. The

poor girl was more frightened by the looks of this presence than she could have been by the appearance of any man she had ever seen, and instinctively she shrank away into the corner where the rags were heaped up.

"Don't you want something to eat and drink?" grunted Mag, as she stooped over and sat a wooden tray upon the floor, within which were a piece of black bread and a cup of sweet wine.

The sound of a human voice, though repulsive as the shriek of a ghou, called Adele back to herself.

"Woman," she cried, "where am I?"

"No matter. Don't ask me any questions," said Mag.

"But surely I may ask that. O, if you have a heart, let me go from this place," Adele begged, as she sank upon her knees and clasped her hands together.

"I've got nothing to do about it, signora."

"Don't call me signora. I am but a poor girl, and I have done no wrong. Let me go from this place and God will reward you."

"I don't know anything about it," growled the woman. "There, don't fret yourself about what you can't help. Eat some of this bread, and drink some of the wine. The wine will do you good."

Mag waited to hear no more words, but quickly leaving the room, she shut the door and re-bolted it, and then her lumbering footfall was heard upon the stairs.

"Wine do me good!" murmured Adele, as she was left alone. "And am I a mere sensualist, to bow to physical wants. Wine do me good? No. Alas! I fear me that there is little more of good for me on earth. How ugly she looked, and how her great leaden eyes looked. Ah, were it but a man, I might weep with ease; but that one of my own sex should turn against me. *My own sex?* No! She is not a woman—her sin unsexes her, and makes her a demon. *Wine.* I will wet my lips, for I am weak."

Though it was hard for the poor girl to weep, yet she shed a few tears, but they were hot,

scalding ones, and their own latent heat dried them quickly up. She moved towards the wooden tray and took the wine cup in her hand.

"She said the wine would do me good," said Adele, as she moved the cup to her lips. But she did not drink of it. The cup remained there for a moment, and the fair girl looked down upon its ruby contents with a steady, deep gaze.

Was it an angel that whispered to Adele then? Perhaps so, for we are taught that angels love to do good deeds, and surely an angel could have found a no more worthy recipient.

"He hired a man to kill me with a dagger. I touched the man's heart, and the steel harmed me not," whispered Adele, while she looked upon the wine. "May he not have hired a woman-fiend to do it now, and may not *this* be her instrument?"

Adele sat the cup down, for she dared not touch it. Then she went back to the pile of rags and sank upon them. She was weak and worn, and as she lay there, half-sobbing and half-praying, a drowsiness came over her and she sank into an uneasy slumber. For a long time strange phantoms came to visit her dreams, and she often started out from her sleep with a low cry.

At length her dream took palpable form. She thought the door of her room was opened, and as she looked up she was in her own little room on the Portici villa. A strange being entered—it was a priest, and he bore in his hand a censer within which he burned a holy incense. He beckoned for her to follow him, and she did so. He led her to the court of the cathedral, and he swung the censer before him all the way. Gradually the smoke of the incense grew noxious, and it seemed to smother her. The priest turned towards her, and from the living coals in the holy vessel there shot up a red glare. He tore off the sacred robe, and she saw, instead of the priest, the woman-fiend who had given her wine, and each coal in the censer had changed to a hissing serpent.

Adele screamed in her fright, and sprang to her feet. She rubbed her eyes, but she was all alone in her high prison. She went to the door, but it was fastened, and nothing had been disturbed. Then she thought of her dream, and she shuddered. She pressed her hands upon her aching brows, and tried again to weep, but she could not. She knew not how long she had been sleeping, but she knew that it must be near noon, for the sun was shining into the sky-light above her head.

The poor girl felt a burning thirst upon her parched lips and tongue, and again she took up the wine-cup. She raised the sparkling beverage to her lips, but she drank not. It must have been again an angel that whispered to her, for certainly there was a voice that stayed her hand. As she looked into the liquid depth again she felt the fear come back stronger than ever. She burned with thirst, but she dared not drink, and, lest the tempter should speak more strongly to her the next time, she turned and cast the wine upon the rags, and then she sat the cup down again.

The girl began now to think of dying. It was a fearful thought, and she shrank from a single act that might lead to its consummation; but she knew that she could not much longer survive the horrible ordeal to which she was now subjected. Already she began to feel a loosening of the vital functions—a lightness of the head—a weight about the heart, and a weakness of the voluntary nerves. No wonder that she thought of the visit of the death angel! No wonder that at length she prayed as one who was soon to be a dweller in the home of spirits.

Again she sank down upon the pile of rags, and she might have fallen into a state of unconsciousness had she not at that same moment heard the sound of that lumbering footstep upon the stairs. She did not arise from her miserable resting-place, however, for she felt too weak; but ere her door was opened the sudden thought came to her, that she would be a silent spectator of the scene that was to follow. Her mind was active enough for that, and she even

called a good degree of presence of mind to her aid. She knew that if violence were intended she could offer no resistance, and she thought that if anything else were on the tapis, it might benefit her to know it, even though she could do but little to thwart whatever plans might be formed against her.

She heard the bolts withdrawn, then the door was opened, and as the old hag entered she involuntarily closed her eyes. She heard a low chuckle from the woman that started her back to new life, but an exclamation that followed, prevented her from giving signs of consciousness.

"Ha, ha, she's drank the wine!" mumbled Mag. "This work is easily done. *Dads!* but if I had had poison I might have done it easier, though; but all's well when the work is done, and a few breaths of this will do it. The wine won't let her wake."

Adele heard something heavy set down upon the floor, and then she heard the woman turn towards the door. It was opened and shut again, the bolts were thrown, and then the footstep was heard descending the stairs.

Adele smelt the strong fumes of sulphur, and she sprang to her feet. Not far from her stood a small hand-furnace, within which burned a heap of charcoal and sulphur. Every nerve in the girl's frame was suddenly strained—the presence of that diabolical engine of death brought her fearful dream back to her mind, and it gave her the strength of the maniac without taking from her the power of thought. She dared not pour the coals out upon the floor, nor dared she attempt to smother them with the rags, for in either case she might set the place on fire, and then her death would not only be full as sure, but far more horrible.

The fumes of the sulphur were beginning to load the atmosphere of the narrow place, and in a few moments at the farthest, Adele knew that they would overpower her. In this emergency her eyes rested upon the window of the skylight, but that was beyond her reach. Another minute—another short minute—and she knew that she could breathe no more. A quick cry

of hope broke from her lips as she caught sight of the loaf of bread that had been left for her, and quickly taking it up she threw it with all her strength against the high window. It struck the light sash, and three of the dingy glasses were shattered in pieces.

A current of fresh air came pouring into the place, and as Adele breathed it, she felt new strength. Thoughts came rushing through her brain in wild strains, and the sight of that broken window, through which was now streaming the fresh air of heaven, made her start with a hope as sudden as it was wild. The window was not over three feet higher than she could reach, and her eyes quickly ran over the premises to count the things that might aid her.

With this new thought came new strength, and even now thanks were upon her lips. She quickly huddled the great heap of rags into a pile beneath the window, gathering them up as high as they would hold. Upon these she placed the furnace, and then the wooden tray which the woman had left she placed in an inverted position over the burning furnace. Upon the tray she carefully stepped, and her heart

bounded with joy as she found that she could more than reach the window. The sash was only fastened down by a hook, and it was but the work of a moment to throw it back. A single instant Adele waited to gain all her strength for the trial, and then balancing herself carefully upon her dubious standing-place, she made the spring. The tray and the furnace were thrown over upon the floor by the movement, and the coals were scattered among the rags, but the girl had fortunately gained a fast hold above!

It was with almost superhuman strength that the poor girl struggled to work her way up through the scuttle. She had no place for her feet, not even a smooth wall, and once the fearful, dreadful thought came over her that she should have to fall back into her prison! That single thought, however, found her the strength she needed. She struggled with more than human might, and soon she gained a footing upon the roof, but she was not yet safe, for her strange power had been exhausted, and she sank down upon the tiling, with her head resting upon the casing of the scuttle.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE FLIGHT.

ADELE did not faint so as entirely to lose her consciousness, for soon after her head sank down upon the raised casing she was startled by the voice of the wicked hag. The tones of that voice thrilled through her soul, and she struggled back to life. She felt a strange sensation of heat, too, and something seemed to choke her. There was a sharp, crackling noise came upon her ear, and then the hoarse voice of the woman sounded again.

Adele started up and gazed down through the scuttle, she looked but a moment, however, for the room was enveloped in a blaze of fire, and through the flame and smoke she could just distinguish the faint form of the woman-fiend who stood at the door wildly gesticulating and screaming.

"Come back! Come back!" shouted Mag, in a tone of frenzied disappointment. "Come back, and I'll save you. You'll be killed on the roof. O, curses on you! If you don't come to me I'll murder you!"

A hundred other wild, frenzied things the foiled woman uttered, but Adele stopped not to listen. She saw that Providence had kindly

aided her, for the mere accident of her having upset the burning coals among the rags had been the means of preventing the murderess from following her, and she took new courage. The sound of the woman's voice still fell upon her ears, and she could still hear the crackling of the flames.

The roof upon which the girl found herself was nearly flat, with only inclination enough to carry off the water that might fall upon it, and she made her way along upon its surface with comparative ease. Ever and anon she turned her head back towards the place she had left, and she could see that the flames were shooting up in bright, serpent-like forks through the scuttle, but she did not shudder at the work she had done, only she hastened on the faster, for she feared that she might yet be pursued, nor were her fears groundless.

She had reached the extremity of the building within which she had been confined, but the roof of the next was of the same height, and clambering over the low railing that separated them she made her way up towards the centre of the city. She had passed the roof of

that building, and gained the next, when she heard a quick cry behind her. She turned, and saw that fearful woman just emerging from the scuttle of the roof she had last passed. New fear lent speed to her steps, and she flew along in her frantic wildness like a thing of air. On came the hag, screaming in fury, but her lumbering form refused to go fast enough to overtake the fugitive.

In a few minutes, Adele gained the last building upon the course, and without stopping to consider, she turned to the left and scrambled up to the roof of the first building that flanked the Strada di Sello. This was more declivitous than the others, and she had to use more care, but yet she fled on, and an unseen power seemed to hold her in safety upon the dubious path.

At length Adele saw an open scuttle ahead of her, and with a joyous, hopeful bound she sprang towards it. She instinctively turned her head, and saw her pursuer just clambering over the parapet at the angle of the strada and the alley. With a fervent prayer that she might find friends in the dwelling below her, she trusted herself upon the ladder that fortunately stood against the edge of the scuttle, and when she reached the floor, she thoughtfully pulled it out of the way. There was but one door to the room she had thus entered, and that was open. She sprang through it into a long passage beyond, at the end of which she found a flight of stairs. These she descended, and they led to a small entry from which another flight went still lower, and down these she also ran. Here Adele found herself in a sort of corridor upon the sides of which were several doors. One of them she opened at a venture and rushed into the room beyond.

It was a chamber into which she had entered. Upon a sumptuous couch near one of the windows reclined a middle-aged woman, and by her side sat an old monk of the order of St. Benedict. The woman was evidently an invalid, and she uttered a cry of alarm as the wild-looking fugitive rushed into the room.

"O, save me, save me!" shrieked Adele,

sinking upon her knees and clasping her hands towards heaven. "Whoever you be, in the name of our holy mother, save me!"

The invalid instinctively clung to the monk as she met the wild eyes of the intruder.

"Fear not, signora," the holy father said. "'Tis only some poor creature who seeks safety."

Then turning to Adele, he asked:

"Whence come you, my daughter?"

"From those who would kill me. O, don't let her murder me!"

"But how gained you admittance here?" the monk asked, rising from his seat and approaching the spot where the girl had knelt.

"I fled upon the roofs of the buildings. To this one I found entrance. O, she will not find me—you will not let her?" and Adele cast her eyes fearfully around as she spoke. "Save me! in the hope of Heaven save me! I am not wicked. I have done no wrong, but they would murder me!"

"You are safe here, my daughter," uttered the monk, as he gazed with pitying kindness upon the poor girl. "Arise, and tell me of thy troubles. Do not tremble, for they shall not harm thee here. Come, and sit upon this couch."

"And am I safe?"

"Yes. I will protect thee."

"Then God is merciful, and God be praised."

"God is ever merciful, my child."

But the monk's last words fell upon ears that heard them not. Poor Adele's nerves had borne all that nature could endure, and as she knew that she was safe, she sank into a deep, death-like swoon.

"Mercy on me," cried the lady, starting up from her seat, "she's dead!"

"No, my daughter," returned the monk, "she has only fainted. The excitement she has passed through, has proved too much for her."

As he spoke, he stooped over and raised the insensible form in his arms and placed it upon the couch. The lady approached and gazed

more calmly upon the pale face, and as she saw how much of innocent beauty there was there, her trepidation left her.

"She is most beautiful, Father Boemo."

"In truth she is, daughter."

"I cannot think she is a wicked girl," the lady continued, becoming more interested.

"No. There is no sin stamped upon those features. She has been unfortunate."

"She must have been. But why, think you, did she seek refuge here?"

"Did you not hear what she said? She evidently had no choice in the matter."

"Ah, yes—I remember now what she said; but who do you think she is?"

"I have no means of judging."

"She must have been insane. I think she knew not what she said, good father. She said some one had tried to kill her."

"And I think she spoke the truth in sober understanding."

"But who would kill such as her?" uttered the woman, with a shudder.

"Ah, my child—you who have ever been the child of smiling fortune know but little of the great city about you. You know not what suffering there is in our midst, nor what sin stalks abroad. Naples is rife with hidden crime. The nobles are not all virtuous, nor would their life look well could it be spread to the gaze of their fellows. Then see the hordes of poor wretches who throng our streets, and most of whom may perhaps live upon the products of crime. And our church, too, I fear me, is not all pure. Many of those who are clad in holy vestments are rotten at heart. O, God has yet a reckoning with the people. Wonder not that this fair girl has fled from murderers."

The woman trembled at the words of the monk and for a time she was silent.

"She must have assistance," she at length said; "and when she revives we may find out who she is."

"I'll tell you," said the monk, after a few moments of thought. "I will send some of our good sisters here, and they shall take her to

their own home, where she will be nursed with all care and gentleness, and in the meantime you can call some of your own servants and revive the poor child if you can."

"Would it be safe to have her removed?" the lady asked, with a feeling of compassion.

"Yes, no gentle movement can harm her while in this swoon, and as a fever will be likely to follow such utter exhaustion as is here apparent, she will be much better off with our good sisters than she could be here. It is but a short distance to their *lazzaretto*, and I will haste me with all speed."

Father Boemo hastened away upon his mission, and the lady called some of her servants to her assistance. The poor girl had everything done for her that could be thought of, but she came not yet back to consciousness.

The monk was not gone long, and when he returned he brought with him four of the Sisters of Charity, and also two waiting-men. The noble-hearted sisters, whose life had been religiously set apart for the duties of Christian charity, thankfully took the care and charge of the insensible girl upon their hands, and they had her conveyed to the street, where a close litter was in waiting.

The kind lady promised to call at the *lazzaretto* if her health would permit, and after she had assured herself that she could do no more, she allowed the sisters to depart with their charge.

Those who are acquainted with the institution of the Italian Sisters of Charity will at once understand that Adele had found friends, than whom none could be more kind. Founded by women who wept for suffering humanity, and who gladly set their lives apart for the labor of gentle love and care—and working in a city where destitution and sickness go hand in hand, this institution has been, and still is, one of the bright spots upon the face of Christendom.

Here poor Adele was nursed and cared for, and though she ere long came to a state of consciousness, yet it was only to sink into a malignant fever, in the ravings of which her mind was darkened by wild and fitful delirium.

CHAPTER XIX.

A CONFERENCE.

It was some hours after daylight when Zarani, Monmarto and Gebo met upon the piazza of Saint Gennaro. None of them had any tidings. Poor Gebo was half-distracted, and the marquis was pale with fatigue and excitement. Monmarto was thoughtful, and though somewhat moody, yet occasional flashes of light would shoot forth from his eyes.

"What more can we do?" asked Zarani, in a despondent tone, as each had told the fruitless result of his labors.

"Nothing but search as to each may seem best," returned Monmarto.

"If I thought she were living, I would search to the ends of the earth," bitterly exclaimed Gebo, as he drew the sleeve of his greasy jacket across his eyes.

"By all the powers of heaven!" uttered the marquis, "I'll sift this thing to the bottom with the duke."

"No, signor marquis," quickly returned Monmarto, "leave the duke to me. I can handle him. You may deal with the son, if you suspect him. Promise me that you will not speak with the duke?"

"I promise."

"Well. Now we can do no more together.

Hold, Gebo—I would speak with you before you go. And you, signor marquis, had better seek your rest. You look pale and care-worn."

"And in truth I feel so; but I should like to know you—"

"Hush! You know me well enough now. Should I tell you all, you might not feel so easy in my company as you now do."

"But I would see you again."

"So you shall. Give me your address and I will call upon you."

Zarani took a card from his pocket-book and wrote his address upon it, and then handed it to Monmarto.

"There. Now when will you call?"

"As soon as I can. I shall see the duke first, at all events."

"Now, Gebo," continued Monmarto, as the marquis turned slowly from the spot, "let us seek some more retired place, for I have somewhat of privacy to tell you."

Massinello gazed up into the dark features of his companion, and without speaking he fol-

lowed him into the church. There were one or two priests within the vast building, but the two men easily found a private place within one of the numerous shrines.

"Let me warn you of one thing," said Monmarto, as he was assured that he was secure from observation—"be careful that you do not allow your wonder to betray you to either of those priests at the other end of the church."

"Diabolo, signor, what can you have to tell?" uttered Gebo, a look of strange wonder beginning to overspread his features.

"I mean to speak of Adele."

"My poor daughter."

"Yes, if you have been a father to her."

"A father, signor? God knows I have. I have loved her with all the love I had to feel, and though I be a lazzarone, yet I can love as well as a duke."

"Better than some dukes. But I believe you, good Gebo. And now I am going to tell you why I take such an interest in the girl. Do you remember how you got her when she was an infant?"

"God will never let me forget it," returned Gebo, with a shudder.

"Don't start, now; but tell me if you never saw me before last night," said Monmarto, as he bent his eyes fixedly upon the lazzarone.

Gebo looked into the face of his companion with a startled gaze, but no gleam of intelligence manifested itself.

"You don't remember?" continued Monmarto.

"No."

"Don't you remember that night when you first took the infant to your arms?"

"Yes."

"—sh! Don't start so. It was I who gave you that child."

"Diab—"

"—sh!"

"You—you?"

"Yes, and I told you to protect it and care for it."

"I have, I have. But you—you— That man's hands were all bloody, and—"

"Speak not of that, but let us look to the present."

"But you have not come to take her away from me?"

"She is already gone."

"But we may find her."

"Then you have nothing to fear, for if we find her, let her fill what station she may, if her love and gratitude be such as I think it must, she will not be separated from you. Now I will tell you in a few words what I have to say, and I think I may depend upon your secrecy while it is necessary."

"Yes," almost unconsciously returned Gebo, half-wildly starting at the strange man.

"Then know you that it is Garcia Tartani who is working against Adele," said Monmarto, "and he is doing this because she is in his way. There, you will prosecute your search with more light, now; but mind that you mention this to no one. I have told it to you because you have a right to know it, and because the knowledge may be of service to you."

"But you will tell me who Adele is?"

"Only that she's of noble blood."

"And has she an estate of her own?"

"Would you search for her more readily, if you thought she had, and that she could win it?"

"No, no, I would not," quickly and energetically replied Gebo. "No love of mine for that sweet child can be made more."

"I think you speak truly, good Gebo. But I cannot tell whether she will ever gain the estate that of right belongs to her or not."

"Diabolo, but this comes of being of noble blood. Better be a lazzarone, and then you will never attract the eyes of robbers."

"Let us, you and I, be content with our stations; but if we can restore Adele to hers it is a duty we owe her. All grades of life have their joys and their sorrows. You and I are poor, but yet we may suffer. We cannot guide the hand of fate, but we can so encase ourselves in moral armor that fate's hand shall not find us defenceless."

"True—most true," thoughtfully returned

Gebo; "but yet there may be such a thing as sorrows we cannot lighten."

"Yes," said Monmarto, in a tone of startling power and depth; "a sorrow that comes from the memory of a great sin will fall heavily upon us. Massinello, if you would be a happy old man, never do a deed for which your own heart will ever curse you; for not all the shafts of sorrow that others can cast at you can produce such misery as may one sharp dagger of thought that pricks eternally in your own bosom."

Gebo gazed with a kind of awe upon the man before him, and he trembled as he looked upon the hands he had once seen covered with blood.

"But tell me," Monmarto continued, "does Adele know the secret of your relation to her?"

"Yes. That villain astrologer told her that she was of noble blood, and after he had gone she questioned me so sharply that I could not deceive her."

"And you told her all?"

"All that I knew."

"You have watched her well from infancy, and studied her disposition?"

"Yes."

"Is she mild?"

"As mild as heaven itself, and as kind, too, as human being can be. Ah, signor, everybody loved her."

"And think you she is *forgiving*?"

"Yes. Diabolo, but I think she would forgive the man who would attempt to kill her."

O, signor, you cannot know how good, how kind, how forgiving, she was."

Monmarto was moved by the words of his companion, and for some time he remained silent. At length, however, the emotion passed away, and he motioned for Massinello to follow him from the church. Upon the piazza he stopped.

"Now, good Gebo," he said, "you had better return at once to your own dwelling, for should Adele have escaped danger she would naturally return there. If you find her, be sure and carry her to the nearest convent at once, for she will not be safe at present elsewhere; then fail not to convey intelligence at once to Guiseppe Zarani, upon the Toledo. Do you know his house?"

"Yes."

"And will you do as I have said?"

"Most faithfully."

"Then you can do no more. Go you now."

Gebo turned slowly away, but several times he turned and gazed back upon the man he had left, but at length, as he turned a sharp angle that hid Monmarto from his sight, he quickened his pace and hurried on. When he reached his own dwelling, it was deserted and gloomy. He called faintly for Adele, but the echo of his own voice sounded so sepulchral that it frightened him, and he sat down and bowed his head upon his hands. All was cold and dreary about him, and while the name of the lost one trembled upon his lips he wept.

CHAPTER XX.

THE HUSBAND, THE WIFE, AND THE SON.

THE shades of night were closing about the palace of the De Scarpas. Garcia Tartani was in his own room. He sat by his table, and an open book lay before him, but he had no power to read.

"Why does he not return?" the duke said to himself, as he closed the book and pushed it from him. "He must do this work, and then I can breathe again. Ha! who's there?"

The door of his apartment opened, and the duchess entered.

"What seek you, Leonora?" asked the duke, settling back into his chair.

"I seek you, my lord. Why do you stay from me? I am lonesome and dreary."

"Lonesome and dreary?" repeated the duke.

"Yes," returned the woman, with a perceptible shudder. "I like not to be alone. Everything haunts me in this great palace."

The duke started as though he had seen a ghost.

"You are not well, Leonora," he said, with as much composure as he could command.

"You used not to be so when you were alone."

"I know it; but it is not so now. As time

creeps over me with its irresistible steps, I feel more sad and more uneasy. But you, you, Garcia, look not so well as usual. You look pale and care-worn."

"Do I?"

"Indeed you do."

"It is because I am not well. I shall be better ere long. Seek your rest, my wife. Repose will calm you."

"No, my lord, I cannot retire till you are ready to accompany me. Last night I could not sleep, nor the night before. My dreams were horrible, and strange whispers sounded in my ears. O, it was dreadful! dreadful!"

"Hush!" uttered the duke. "Do not tell me the phantasms of your excited mind."

"But they were so fearful!" groaned the duchess, sinking into a chair. "I saw my cousin Joseph. He came to my bedside, and he was all bloody, and he held his innocent infant in his arms. He showed me the deep wounds that had let out his life, and even the infant looked upon me and reproached me. O! O! O!"

Tartani was white as marble, save where a

livid line ran around the thin lips. He trembled like an aspen.

"Cease—cease," he whispered. "This is all folly. Calm yourself, Leonora."

"Calm myself? Ah, my lord, you are not calm. This thing moves you as much as it does me. For us there is no more peace on earth—no more calmness—no more joy. Garcia, I wish we had never done that deed. I wish we had never let the demon into our hearts. O! I would rather be the meanest slave that grovels in the dust of toil than be what now I am. Then I might look to heaven for rest when the toils of earth are done—but now I dare not lift even a hope towards heaven. O, mercy! mercy! mercy!"

The duchess bowed her head as she spoke, and her husband sat like one upon whom the lightning-bolt has fallen. He would have spoken harshly to his wife, but he dared not move her to say more.

"Garcia," the duchess again spoke—but it was in a tone more calm; "have you never had such feelings? Do not the dead sometimes come to visit you in your solitude?"

"The dead!" groaned the duke. "No! the living curse me more. Go to your room, Leonora, for I would be alone."

"And I dare not be alone. Let me stay here, my lord, and you shall tell me what troubles you."

"I can tell you nothing."

"Yes, yes—tell me, for if you have aught to fear, I may fear it, too."

The duke gazed into the face of his wife with a trembling look, and across his countenance there swept conflicting emotions.

"We have things to fear," he at length uttered. "The man whom I hired to kill Joseph De Scarpa, has returned to Naples!"

"O! O!"

"But list ye. That child yet lives!"

"What child?"

"De Scarpa's daughter!"

"Lives!" screamed the duchess, starting from her chair and laying her hand upon her husband's arm.

"Yes, and perhaps to thwart us yet."

"Lives! O, thank God!"

"What! Have you lost your reason?" exclaimed the duke, grasping his wife by the arm. "Would you have that girl come forth now to publish our crime to the world?"

"O, Garcia, our crime can be no greater than it is now. It is not the world I fear. It is that BEING who saw us when we did the crime."

"And we have the world to fear, too," groaned the duke, dropping his wife's hand and closing his eyes, as if to shut out the thoughts that came crowding upon him.

"But this girl, my lord—where is she?"

"I do not know. I only know that she lives. And now tell me," continued Tartani, looking up at his wife, "would you have her come and claim her patrimony—reveal our infamy to the world, and cast your own daughter forth penniless? Tell me, Leonora—would you have our shame stamped upon our children to curse them?"

"No! O, no, no!"

"Then you would not have this girl arise to do it."

"Perhaps—"

"There is no *perhaps*! Ha, whose are those footsteps? It is Cornaro. Go, Leonora. Do not let him see you so moved."

"But you, too, are moved."

"I'll tell him I am sick. Go, and I will join you ere long."

The duchess left the apartment by the way that led towards her chamber, and hardly had she closed the door behind her when Cornaro entered from the opposite direction.

"Who left the room?" he asked, as he closed the door and fastened it.

"Your mother," returned the duke.

"Then I'll fasten that door, too," and so saying, he stepped across the room and shoved the bolt, after which he took a seat near his father.

The count's face was flushed with excitement, and he looked care-worn and chagrined.

"What news, my son?" tremblingly asked the duke, for he saw a foreshadowing of disappointment in the young man's countenance.

"Bad enough."

"But the girl—where is she?"

"I don't know. Listen."

The count related to his father how Bep had deceived him—how he had found Adele in the boat-house, and how he had carried her to the den in the city, and also how Mag had promised to make way with her.

"But," continued he, "she got away from there, and I fear she is now past recovery."

"Why didn't you do the work yourself when the bravo failed?" uttered Tartani, in a tone of bitter disappointment and fear.

"Because I cared not to run any such risk. But if I had thought of this, I would have done it, though, at all hazards. As it is, we must hope for the best. The old woman has promised to help me; but first, though, I have got to pay her the snug little sum of one thousand ducats."

"A thousand ducats! Saint Peter, Cornaro, what mean you?"

"Why, this girl was locked up in an attic, and Mag gave her a sleeping potion in her drink. Then she carried a furnace of burning coals into the room to kill her; but the girl seems not to have taken the drink, though the woman thought she was under the influence of it when she placed the coals in the room. A little while afterwards the Jezebel went to the attic to see how her plot worked, and she found the scuttle broken open, the furnace tipped over, the room all on fire, and the girl safe on the roof of the building. But we have not quite lost her yet, for Mag ran into another house after having called some of her people to put out the fire, and thus gained the roofs of the buildings. She could not overtake the girl, but she marked the place where she entered, and now if we use her rightly we may get the girl back yet."

"But this thousand ducats, Cornaro."

"San Feblo, father, but the old woman's house came nigh burning down about her ears. Nearly half the inside was burned out."

"And now we must pay for it?"

"Most assuredly. The woman holds the reins now, you know."

"So she does," muttered the duke.

"Such dealings as this gives us queer masters," said the count.

The duke started as that remark fell from his son's lips, and he felt how bitter was the truth it conveyed.

"If you pay this woman the thousand ducats, do you think you may trust her?" he asked, after a moment's pause.

"Trust her? yes. She will work some way to lay hold upon the girl, and if she once succeeds, there is no fear for the rest."

The duke was sorely disappointed at what had happened, and he expressed himself in bitter and deep language, and cursed the fate that seemed to attend him.

"Come, father, there's no use in wasting so much feeling on this point," said Cornaro, getting tired of the old man's complaints. "Now tell me of all this mystery that is connected with the girl."

"Not now, my son."

"But you promised."

"I said, when she was disposed of."

"Well, I've done all I could, and now you must tell me. I'll do no more unless you do."

The duke saw that his son had the upper hands of him.

"If I tell you this, will you promise not to despise me?" uttered Tartani.

"There is no fear of that."

"Then I'll tell you, and I have more, too, to tell than when I promised you."

"It must be something of moment, if I should judge by the effect it has on you."

"It is of moment," said the duke, trembling with apprehension. "Listen now, and you shall see how much we have to fear. I have told you already that this girl was the child of De Scarpa. It was of Joseph De Scarpa, the last duke of his line. Your mother was his cousin. By the death of the duke without children, your mother was the next heir, and I soon satisfied myself that should she succeed to these estates I might obtain the dukedom and all its emoluments. The Duchess De Scarpa gave birth to a child, but she died shortly af-

terwards. Then, Cornaro, the thought came to me that I might gain the coronet I coveted. My own estate as Count de Castro had gone, and I was almost penniless."

"Diabolo, and that is the estate I so gloriously luxuriate in now," muttered Cornaro. "But go on. I am interested."

"I determined to make way with the duke, and have it appear that he died of a broken heart and unmitigated sorrow for the loss of his wife. I secured the services of one whom I could trust—a Neapolitan bravo, named Monmarto—and having given to the duke a strong sleeping-potion, I had him conveyed to one of the deep dungeons. Then I obtained a waxen head, with features exactly like the duke's—only livid and pale with the death-color, and this we placed in a coffin."

"But who made this wax image?"

"It was— But no matter. It was made by one who understood it, and so well was it made that it passed through the long funeral ceremony without creating a doubt."

"But you must have had some assistance in this more than the bravo," persisted the count. "Who acted as nurse, to tell how the poor duke De Scarpa died?"

"Ask me no more of that," said Tartani, with an uneasy, restless look.

Garcia Tartani could not betray his wife!

"Well, go on," returned Cornaro.

"As soon as I found no doubt had been excited, I gave the bravo his work. He was to go to the dungeon where the duke was chained and kill him, and then conceal the body in an old chest that had been carried for that purpose; then he was to take the child and carry it off, kill it, and hide the body. The first part of the work Monmarto did well. When he came back from the dungeon I placed a heavy purse in his bloody hand, and he promised that he would kill the child, and then leave the country and never let me see him more. The child he did not kill, and last night he came back to me!"

"Who came back?"

"Monmarto. And he has come to see if he

can find the girl. He says he gave her to a man whom he met on the night when he took her from here. Massinello is of course the man."

"San Peblo!" uttered the count, with a strange mixture of alarm and wonder in his manner, "what does the fellow want?"

"He says he wants to ask the girl to forgive him for what he did. He feels the sting of conscience—"

"Blow his conscience to the winds. I tell you, father, he has come to drain your money bags. San Peblo, but we *should* be in a mess if he got the girl into his hands."

"You may be partly right, my son, but yet I think he has real qualms of conscience about what he has done."

"But tell me," said the count, with more earnestness than he had heretofore manifested—"do you really think that this fellow means to tell Adele who she really is? that he means to place her in a knowledge of her right to these estates?"

"Perhaps so."

"But he dares not do that. He could not do it without betraying himself. Take courage, father, and let not this bravo have any power over you. He cannot betray a single act of yours without criminating himself, and that would be sure death for him."

For an instant there was a gleam of light upon the duke's countenance, but it soon passed away.

"I fear Monmarto is too ready-witted for that," he said. "If he moves in this matter, he will give his intelligence to those who will make the most of it, and then take himself out of the way. Joseph De Scarpa had many friends, and there will not be wanting those who will take the business up, if they know that Adele lives. And more than that—Zarani will operate against us; and you know he is popular and powerful."

"Diabolo! but you were not to let the marquis go to the city."

"He escaped from me in a most strange

manner, and worse than all the rest, he went off with Monmarto in search after this girl."

"At what time?"

"About an hour before midnight."

"San Peblo! The sky looks black, father. Don't faint. This work should call you up to action rather than sink you thus. Come, drive away that craven, coward look, and be yourself. You who have already dipped your hands in blood, should be harder of heart. There's work for us, and it must be done quickly, too. I'll trust the old woman for Adele, if we but pay her, and as for that Monmarto, he must be taken care of, too. If I but knew him, I'd run a dagger to his heart before I slept. Zarani can do us no harm if both the others are but out of the way. Come, start up now, and be alive to the necessity that surrounds us."

"Cornaro," said the old man, with a show of renewed hope, "I have misjudged you. You can be of more assistance to me than I had dared to hope. O, if you could but rid us of Monmarto we should have little to fear; but he is a man not easily to be overcome."

"He is not impervious to steel, is he?"

"No; but it must be a quick eye that directs the blow."

"I'll strike it if I find him. What looks he like?"

"Like a Greek," returned the duke; and he then described the dress and appearance of the man.

"If that be the man, I should know him among a thousand."

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"You could not mistake him."

"Nor will I. But stop. If he thinks you have a hand in the disappearance of the girl, he may come here again."

"Perhaps so," returned the duke, with a shudder.

"Then let him not go away alive. If you cannot do the thing yourself, you can call for the assistance of some of your men. There are several whom I would not fear to trust."

"By heavens!" exclaimed the duke, fairly awakened by his son to brutal life, "I will do as you have said. If he comes here again he shall not go away."

"Let it be so, and surely so," said the count, rising from his seat. "And now I will haste me back to the city and hunt up this Monmarto if I can. Draw me a check for the thousand ducats, that I may be prepared for Mag. San Peblo! but there's light yet in our path. Let me but get my eyes once upon the bravo, and I'll not lose him till my dagger has found his heart, and as for Adele, if she be once more within my power she shall not escape again. My own hand will not deceive me."

Garcia Tartani gazed upon his son for a few moments in silence, and then he turned and drew his writing materials towards him. He wrote the check, handed it to Cornaro, and then arose from his seat. The son left the room for the city, and the father sought that couch from which repose had fled for aye.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE ASSASSIN.

THE fever which succeeded Adele's mental and physical excitement and consequent prostration, was not of a kind to maintain its malignity for a great length of time. It was a nervous disease, and for several days it kept its victim within the world of unconsciousness, but yet the invalid sometimes spoke, and though her words were wild and incoherent, the sisters gained some knowledge of who she was. The name of Massinello was often upon her lips, and as it was spoken with that tone and look which betokens the love of the heart, the sisters resolved to seek him out if possible. Some of them knew Gebo, the old fiddler, and one of their number was deputed to hunt him up, and ascertain if he knew aught of the girl they had in charge.

It was no difficult matter for Gebo to be found, and when the subject was mentioned to him, he leaped and danced like a wild man in the untutored manifestation of his joy. His marvellousness was large, and not a doubt entered his mind that it was Adele of whom the sister spoke. He was of course permitted to accompany the woman back to the lazzaretto, and

on the way she told to him all the circumstances, as she knew them, of Adele's entrance to the house on the Strada di Sello, and of her subsequent removal to the charity hospital.

Gebo was bidden to step lightly, as he entered the apartment where Adele lay, but as his eyes rested upon the well-known features he could not resist the temptation to spring forward and imprint a kiss upon her marble brow.

"Adele! my child!" he whispered, taking one of her white hands in his own and bending eagerly over the low couch.

The fair girl opened her eyes, but no sign of intelligence manifested itself upon her countenance.

"She will not know you," said the sister who had accompanied him. "Her mind is yet feeble, but if you have patience you shall yet again see her in health."

"Then she is not dangerous," cried Gebo, with a joyful countenance.

"No, but yet she should not be disturbed. If you will take my advice, you will not come to see her until she is entirely recovered. As soon as this mania passes off she will mend fast, if

she is kept quiet and easy. I will tell her that you have been here, and that her friends know where she is."

"But how long before I can come?"

"Perhaps in a week."

Gebo was entirely satisfied with this arrangement, and he promised to abide by it. He kissed Adele once more, and then he turned from the room. Before he left the building he was questioned concerning the cause of the girl's abduction, but he remembered the injunction of Monmarto, and he professed entire ignorance.

When Massinello at length left the lazzaretto he made all possible haste to the Toledo, and entered the dwelling of Zarani. He had the good fortune to find the marquis and Monmarto both there, and with almost incoherent tongue he told them the joyful intelligence he brought, and also repeated to them what the sister had told him with regard to Adele's entrance at the lazzaretto.

Zarani murmured a fervent thanksgiving as he heard the intelligence, and Monmarto, too, appeared thankful, but he had more of calm reflection than had his younger companion. For some time after Gebo had told his story the strange man remained silent, and when he at length raised his head his countenance showed much joy, but yet one of deep concern.

"Gebo," he said, "go you back to the lazzaretto, and bid the women there that they let no stranger whatever enter the room where the girl is. She has enemies in Naples, and there is no knowing what means may be taken to hunt her up."

"But how should they find her there?" uttered Gebo, somewhat startled by a fear which had not before entered his mind.

"Why, according to the story which the sister told, there must have been somebody following Adele when she entered the house on the Sello, and if that is the case it may not be very difficult for them to ascertain her present whereabouts. At all events it will be far more safe to place the women upon their guard."

"Diabolo, but I'll do anything you think is

best," returned Gebo, as he took his cap in his hand.

"Then go to the lazzaretto at once."

Gebo hastened away as quickly as he had come, and after he had gone the marquis turned to Monmarto and asked:

"What are your intentions respecting this girl?"

"To save her, if I can."

"But that is nearly done already. I mean what do you intend to do after that? You must have had some design in commencing your search for her before you was aware of her danger?"

"Surely I had a design. The girl has been most foully wronged, and I would make her reparation."

"Then you knew of her wrong, and perhaps—I mean not to dive at any secret you would not divulge—but perhaps you may have been so connected with the wrong that was done her, that you could bring proof of it."

"Yes, yes, I could bring a proof that would make men shudder."

The marquis started.

"If I am not mistaken," continued Monmarto, "you would lend your aid in restoring Adele to her rights."

"Yes, yes, I'll do anything—everything."

"You are ardent," said Monmarto, casting a peculiar glance at his companion.

"Ay, and well I might be," returned the marquis, with undisguised enthusiasm. "I believe her to be all goodness and purity, and I know her to be all beautiful and kind. I will spend my last ducat, if necessary, in her behalf—"

"And your heart, too?" added Monmarto, with peculiar accents.

Zarani started, and the rich blood mounted to his face.

"Do not be offended, signor marquis."

"Why should I be offended? No, you have guessed a truth which I have already acknowledged to myself, and now I am not ashamed to own it."

"I thank you for your confidence," return-

ed Monmarto, with a grateful look, "for now I can trust you. I do mean to reinstate Adele into the possession of her rights, if the thing is possible. In this I may need your assistance, and doubt not that you will readily grant it?"

"Most happily. But how will you work? Garcia Tartani, if I mistake not, is to be troubled in this?"

"Yes."

"And it was he who—who—"

"Speak on, signor."

"Then I would ask if the duke did not use foul play towards the death of De Scarpa?"

"Yes! But let that rest now. You shall see it all in the end. We will move no further till Adele has recovered; but when once she is well, you shall see Tartani in his true light."

There was but little more conversation, for Monmarto was almost moody in his thoughts, and Zarani had little to say. Though the former had shaved much of the beard from his face, yet the cast of his countenance was by no means inviting to a social chat; not that it was repulsive from any sinister look, but it looked stern and frowning. The marquis could not avoid the thought that great crime had set its marks upon those features. He involuntarily shuddered as the thought assumed the substance of a conviction, but he felt sure that all was meant kindness towards Adele. At any rate, he hoped Monmarto was honest in this, and he resolved that he would not doubt him.

When Monmarto left the dwelling of the marquis, it was understood that they need not proceed any further with the business in hand until Adele had sufficiently recovered to be moved with perfect safety.

As the man stepped into the street he stopped for a moment upon the side-walk, and then passed over to where a row of fruit-sellers' stalls were displayed in front of the gorgeous buildings of the strada. He had passed the stalls and was upon the point of turning into a by-way, when he heard his name pronounced. He turned quickly. There were a number of people standing near the last stall he had passed, but none of them were looking towards him. It struck him as very strange that any

one there should have known him, and he tried to think that he had been mistaken in the sound; but that was not so easy.

As he kept on his way he pondered upon the circumstance, and it troubled him not a little. He had gained the Strada di Sello, and crossed over into one of the arched passages that led from thence to the Reale. The place was deserted and shrouded with its usual gloom, receiving no other light than that which entered at the ends. Monmarto had passed half the way through the narrow passage when he heard a quick step behind him. He stopped and turned, but before he could see who it was that had caused the footfall, he received a blow in the side, and the sharp pang that followed told him at once that he had received a dagger-stroke. A second and a third followed before he could defend himself, and even when he had fairly turned, his right arm was powerless, and he staggered against the wall.

"There," muttered Cornaro Tartani, as he hurried from the spot upon seeing two men enter the passage from the Sello, and at the same time hiding his bloody dagger in his bosom, "there's one out of the way. My dagger has not failed me in this, nor shall it fail me till this cloud that hangs over our family's head is blown away."

The count heard the sound of loud voices from the passage he had left, and without stopping to look behind him, he hurried on as swiftly as possible to the next passage, where he turned, and soon entered the low, sunken way to the dwelling of Mag.

"Here, woman," he exclaimed, as he shut the door behind him and bolted it, "get me water and let me wash my hands. He that I told you of is out of the way, and now, if you but do your work as well, I shall think the money you have received well spent, and there shall be more forthcoming to redeem my ring."

"I know where she is," said the old crone.

"Ha, that's fortunate. You'll not lose her?"

"If I do, I'm a fool."

"Get me the water."

The bowl was brought, and Cornaro Tartani washed the blood from his hands.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE MORNING OF LOVE.

EIGHT days had passed away since Adele had been moved to the lazzaretto. She was now sitting in a chair, and her health was so far restored that she walked about with ease. Though the full bloom of health had not again flushed upon her cheek, yet she seemed more beautiful, if possible, than ever. She had seen Massinello several times since her return to consciousness, and from him she had learned all the details connected with his search for her.

As she sat now by a window she held in her hand a bound volume of water-colored paintings, and she was dwelling thoughtfully upon one which she recognized as having come from her own pencil, when she was called from her occupation by the entrance of one of the sisters.

"Adele, there is a gentleman in the hall who would see you."

"Who is it?" asked the young girl.

"The Marquis Zarani. I think you have no occasion to fear such as him, for he has been here very often to inquire after your health since you were sick, and I think his sympathy for you comes from a noble heart."

"He may come to me if he wishes," returned Adele.

"Been here very often," she murmured to herself, as the sister departed; and the rich blood came to her cheek as she thought of the young and handsome marquis.

Her thoughts of Zarani were not now for the first time called up, for she had heard from Massinello of all that the marquis had done in her behalf, and she had made her old protector tell to her every circumstance connected therewith, that she might catch every word the young man had uttered concerning her. When Massinello told her that she was really a child of Joseph De Scarpa—he who was once the powerful Duke of Prezza—a strange thought—no, not a thought, for it was not well enough defined for that—but a strange thrill had shot through her soul as she thought that she stood nearer upon the level of the marquis in the social scale.

While her mind was running over the short, but strangely laden, past, the door of her apartment was carefully opened, and Guiseppe Zarani entered. She arose from her seat, and while a trembling, grateful smile broke over her features, she extended her hand.

"Thanks be to God, Adele, that I find you thus," uttered the marquis, as he pressed the fair hand within his own. "You have suffered much."

The fair girl murmured her gratitude for her visitor's kind salutation, and as she took her seat, Zarani drew a chair near to her side.

"I suppose Massinello has told you what has happened?" said the young man.

"Yes," returned Adele, looking up into her companion's face, "and he will soon take me away from here. I am well now, and I have trespassed long enough upon the kindness of these good sisters."

"But where will Massinello take you?"

"He has not said. Perhaps he means to his own dwelling."

"No, that will not do. You would not be safe there at present."

"But there is one whom Gobo told me would aid me."

"You mean Monmarto?"

"Yes."

"Did Massinello tell you who you were?"

"Yes. He said I was the daughter of a duke, that my true father was Joseph De Scarpa. He said this strange man told him so; but it may not be true."

"I think it is. Monmarto has told the truth."

"Do you know this strange man, signor?"

"Only from what I have seen of him since the night you were taken from your house."

"Do you think it was he who murdered my father?" asked Adele, in a hushed voice, while a fearful shudder shook her frame.

"What do you mean by that question?" the marquis uttered, not a little startled by the mention of the subject.

"I am not blind, nor is Massinello so dull of comprehension, but that he can understand some

things that are not directly told to him. If Joseph De Scarpa was my father, he was murdered, and I fear that Garcia Tartani planned the deed. It was Monmarto who gave me to Massinello, and his hands were all covered with blood when he did it."

"And suppose this thing were so?" said the marquis, after a few moments of deep thought. "Suppose this man had suffered the keenest of mental torture for what he had done—suppose that the man who planned for the murder of the poor duke, also planned for your murder as he has done since, and that this man's heart relented and he saved you when you were an infant; and then suppose that he had come now to do what he could in reparation?"

"I could bless him," murmured Adele.

"And suppose he should ask you, with contrite, humble heart, to forgive him?"

"My whole soul should go forth over him in forgiveness."

"Noble, generous girl," uttered the marquis, as he gazed upon the fair features before him; "it is for this that Monmarto has returned to Naples. I am confident of it; and to him must we look for the proof of your parentage."

"Where is he now?"

"I do not know," returned Zarani, with a troubled look. "I have not seen him nor heard from him for a week. I must own that to me it seems strange."

"I trust I may see him, for I would have from his lips what he knows of my father. Perhaps he will come to me when I am at my own dwelling again."

"No, no, Adele—you cannot go to that home again. You would not be safe."

"I would not ask to stay here," the fair girl said. "Though I know the kind sisters would protect me here, yet I cannot intrude upon them, for they have even now many poor sufferers who need their room and attention."

"You shall not be without a protector, Adele," the marquis uttered, in a low, deep tone. "If you will trust to me, I will answer for your safety."

"Of course, I would trust to your kindness, signor."

"And you will accept a home from me?"

Adele gazed up, and a deep blush suffused her fair face.

"Ah, signor marquis, you could not give me a home without calling down the bitter tongue of scandal."

"Yes, Adele, could you but feel as I feel, the world should not have occasion for that."

As Zarani spoke, he moved his chair nearer to the side of the beautiful girl, and before she could comprehend the movement, he had taken one of her hands within his own.

"Adele," he continued, "let me speak to you soberly and in all honesty. I am an orphan, and I have plenty of what the world calls wealth, but there is much lacking to make life all that it should be. For years I have been courted by those who sought my worldly wealth, and I have found them hollow-hearted. I have not lived single because it was my choice, but because my heart found not its mate among all the beauty that has dazzled and shone before my eyes. Once I thought I had found the being I sought. It was the daughter of him you have so much occasion to dread—the Duke Tartani. But, thank the virgin mother, I was undeceived before it was too late. I found her to be, not only hollow of heart, but possessed of no true feeling. When my eyes first rested upon you, and I saw all your loveliness, I felt in my heart that such a one I could love. That was because you were beautiful. But when you watched by me when I was sick, I knew you had goodness of heart—that you were kind and noble. Then you sang to me, and I heard you converse, and I knew you were as virtuous and pure as you were lovely. I failed not to read your every look and action, and my heart had learned to love you before I knew it. Nay, turn not from me, for I must speak now that I have begun. I had learned to love you with that love which finds its fountain in the purest emotions of the soul, and my heart cherished it as a boon too sweet to lose. Then danger threatened you, and villains tore you away, and when I knew that you were gone—that bitter misfortune had seized upon you, then I knew

how much, how fondly I had loved. Adele, I have hung upon the words that came to me of your welfare since you have been here, as I would upon the clinging of my own life to its throne, and now that I find you once more in health, I am almost happy. One step more, and my happiness shall be complete.

"You are the child of nobility, and should you ever gain your true standing, it will not raise you so far but that I may aspire to your hand. Say, Adele, will you accept the home I offer you? Will you be mine, to love me, to cherish me, to sympathize with me in my sorrows, and to joy with me in my joys—to be mine forever—my wife?"

Adele raised her eyes to the face of her companion, and they were swimming in tears. There was a rich flood of joyous light over her countenance, and her lips trembled with strong emotion.

"Speak, Adele."

"Not now," murmured the fair girl.

"Yes. You must know the feelings of your heart. Speak only as that shall dictate."

"Would that my heart could speak."

"It can. Let your lips but interpret its language."

"Let me first know what shall be the ending of this strange business that hangs so doubtfully over me."

"And if you were to be restored to the station from which a wicked man has so long kept you banished, would your answer be different from what it would now?"

"No, no—O, no," quickly replied the fair being, betraying every emotion of her soul by the deep lights and shadows that sprang across her face.

"Then speak it now. Will you accept the home and the heart I offer you?"

"O, I dare not give my heart a hope that may be crushed. Zarani, I have cherished your image as a thing that pictured forth a true and noble soul. What wonder then that I have loved you—that I love you now—that so long as I live I can never love you less. I can say no more."

"Adele, I ask no more," exclaimed the happy marquis, raising the fair hand he held to his lips. "But when you are once more where you can feel at home, I shall ask you to be the sweet companion of my life. No matter where that home shall be, whether in the halls of your fathers, or beneath the roof that my love and care would provide; for back to your old home you cannot, must not go. I must make one more search for Monmarto, and if I find him not, I will go on with this business myself, without further delay. Will not all that meet your approbation?"

"Yes," returned the sweet girl, gazing up with a grateful smile.

Zarani caught that smile, and while he twined his arms about the fair form of her that gave it, he felt that life must be all joy and sunshine in the future.

CHAPTER XXIII.

MAG'S LAST EFFORT.

It was a long time that Guiseppe Zarani sat and talked with Adele, and when he arose to depart he promised that he would come again on the morrow. He passed out from the room and descended to the small hall, and was about to inform the sister that accompanied him that he should be there again the next day, when they were both startled by a sharp, painful cry from the street. Zarani sprang to the door and threw it open, and he found that a poor woman had fainted upon the sidewalk.

"Here is a subject for your charity," he said, as he stepped out to raise the woman up.

"And a needy one, I should judge," returned the sister, as she, too, stepped out to assist the marquis.

"She could not have fallen in a more fitting place, at all events, than in front of your *lazzaretto*."

"No; and some choose this place," said the sister, with a smile.

"Ah. They impose upon you, then?"

"O, not exactly imposition; but some who are really suffering, and who yet dislike to ask

us for our charity, take this sure method of obtaining it, for they well know that we turn none away. But this woman is not so poor as she seems. See that ring upon her finger."

"She stole it, perhaps," lightly suggested the marquis, as he let go of his burden upon reaching the hall. "But such things are not to be wondered at among the poor ignorant beings who throng our city. There, you can attend to her now."

"Yes, signor marquis, and I thank you for your assistance."

As soon as some of the other females came into the hall, Zarani took his leave. His first attention was turned towards the finding of Monmarto, but he was unsuccessful. He employed every means in his power to gain intelligence of the missing man, and he kept up his search until nightfall, but he had to go bootless home. He had learned that a murder had been committed in one of the alleys towards the Villa Reale a week previous, but he could gain no intelligence of the circumstance further than the rumor that had spread over that quarter of the city, and even that rumor was confined mostly to the lazzaroni.

After the marquis returned to his own dwelling, he retired to his private room and began to puzzle his brain with projects for the direction of his further movements. He had sunk into a sort of brown study, in which no single idea was very clearly defined, when his mind accidentally reverted to the old woman he had helped carry into the lazzaretto. He thought of the curious circumstance of her fainting directly at the door of the hospital, and in the course of wandering thought he called to mind the story of Adele's adventure with the murderous hag, as he had heard it from Massinello. This thought came with great force, and it brought a tangible point with it.

"Holy virgin!" he exclaimed, starting up from his seat and gazing wildly upon the picture that had vividly arisen to his imagination; "that ring upon her finger was Cornaro Tartani's. I have seen him wear it!"

Zarani's hair seemed to fret with the horror

of the idea, and his whole soul was strung with agony. Everything connected with the train of circumstances that led him to the conclusion were so many convincing proofs to his mind, and he resolved to hasten at once to the lazzaretto and make the matter sure. Already he saw Adele in the hands of the merciless woman, and he could imagine the painful cries that broke from her lips.

The marquis left his dwelling and hurried along through the streets. When he reached the lazzaretto he stopped not to ring the bell, but opening the door he pushed into the hall.

"Signor, what means this intrusion?" uttered the sister who had charge of the hall, recovering from her fright, however, as soon as she recognized the marquis.

"Where is that old woman who fainted at the door to-day?"

"In the room we have appropriated to her use," returned the female, considerably startled by the agitation of the young noble.

"Lead the way there at once, for we must see to her."

"But, signor, she is—"

"An impostor!" cried Zarani; "a wolf in the fold of lambs—a murderess! Show me to her room at once."

"But, signor—"

"Stop not to talk now. I tell thee, she is an impostor, and has come here to murder Adele!"

"The holy mother defend us!" ejaculated the sister, seeming at once to comprehend the words she had heard.

"Lead the way quickly."

The female caught a lamp from a niche in the wall and hastened up the stairs. She ran her eyes along over the numbers upon the various doors, and soon she stopped before one of them.

"This is her room, signor, and I think she is safely here. Not over ten minutes since I went my usual rounds, and she was then in her bed."

"Open, open," cried Zarani.

The door was opened, and the marquis sprang into the room.

"There is no one here!" he exclaimed, as he found the bed and the room empty. "Haste thee to Adele's room. O, if she has harmed that dear girl—"

"Hark!" uttered the sister. "I heard a door close in this hall."

Zarani turned from the room and quickly followed the sister along the passage to the door of Adele's apartment. It was fastened upon the inside! With one powerful blow of the foot the marquis drove the door from its bolt and rushed into the room. His eyes were strained towards the small bed, and over it was bent the form of the old hag. She was shading the small light she held with her hand, and the marquis could see, by the position in which the woman's body stood, that she had but just approached the bed.

Mag started up as she heard the crashing of the door, and at the same instant, Adele uttered a sharp, piercing shriek.

"Infernal hag!" shouted Zarani, as he bounded at a single leap to the side of the bed, "what do ye here?"

As he spoke, he grasped the woman by the arm and threw her to the other side of the room.

"Adele, Adele, are you hurt?" the marquis hurriedly asked.

"No, no—but who—O, God! that fearful woman! Zarani! Then I am safe! Don't let her kill me!"

"Hush, sweet Adele—there is no danger. Let not this thing alarm you more. I will leave you for a while, and you must arise and throw on a robe, for I would speak with you before I leave. You will do it?"

"Yes," breathlessly returned the fair girl.

"Is not that the woman who would have murdered you?"

"O, heavens! yes."

"Stop!" Zarani exclaimed, as he noticed that the hag had recovered herself, and was trying to glide from the room, and at the same time intercepting her, and grasping her again by the arm. "You escape me not thus. Your course is well nigh run."

For a moment the woman's features were tortured by disappointment and rage, and as Zarani dragged her from the spot she uttered curses loud and deep; but when she was led to the hall she broke into an unearthly laugh. At first the young man was puzzled by the circumstance, but he soon found that she was trying to make it appear that she was insane. This, however, availed her nothing, for Zarani was too confident of her real character to be thus deceived, and by a course of keenly directed threats he brought her again to a manifestation of her rage.

The marquis examined more carefully the ring which the woman still had upon her finger, and he assured himself that it was the property of Cornaro Tartani. He cared not to question the murderous hag, for well he knew that he would get no truth from her. He knew enough already to answer his purpose, and he gave his prisoner over to the charge of two stout waiting-men who had been called for that purpose.

A few minutes after the woman-fiend had been taken away, one of the sisters came to inform the marquis that Adele was ready to see him.

Zarani found Adele in a state of intense excitement, but by his gentle assurances he soon soothed her troubled mind, and succeeded in bringing a smile of hope to her face.

"There is one thing evident," he said, as he had placed Adele's mind at rest with regard to immediate danger, "and that is, that you are no longer safe without some direct and effectual protection. When I first saw that woman's face as I helped her from the street, an ill-defined fear possessed me. When I sat me down in my room that fear became defined. You know how true it was. Now I am determined to bring this matter to a crisis. To-daily longer will only be to give your enemies more opportunities to work their wickedness against you. To-morrow you shall leave here with me, and I will take you to one whom I know will aid both you and me."

"What would you do?" asked Adele.

"I would stop this foul work by giving the

characters of its perpetrators to the light. They now work in the dark, and so they work fearlessly, but let them be known—let the gaze of the public be turned upon them, and they will dare to molest you no further. To-night you shall remain here, and one of the good sisters shall keep watch with you. To-morrow, I will come to take you hence. Will you go with me?"

"But whither will you carry me?"

"To the king."

"The king!" murmured Adele, starting.

"Yes. Charles is my friend, and he is the friend of all who look honestly to him for assistance. I will see him before I come for you on the morrow, and if he will extend to you his royal protection, will you not go with me and accept it?"

"Yes," returned the fair girl; and as she spoke, she laid her head upon the arm of the marquis and murmured a blessing upon him for the love he so nobly gave.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE ACCUSATION.

THE day that succeeded the events recorded in the last chapter, had passed into the great flood of time that is done with earth. It was evening again, and in the apartment of Garcia Tartani sat Cornaro. He had just entered, and his face showed the uneasiness that racked his mind. Ere long his father entered.

"Ah, my son," the duke uttered, as he sat down the large lamp he bore, and took a seat; "what news have you now?"

"None, save that Mag is in the lazzaretto where the girl is. But her delay puzzles me. I was to have seen her this morning; but she has not yet come out."

"Perhaps she waits for an opportunity," said the duke; but it was said in a hopeless tone, for the face of his son gave him little to hope for.

"Father," spoke the count, with a strong effort, "I fear she will have to wait long for an opportunity. San Pablo, who is coming now?"

"That's your mother's footstep."

It was the duchess who entered. She placed her lamp upon the table and sank into a chair. Few could have recognized in that crushed woman the once haughty duchess of Prezza.

"What seek you, Leonora?"

"O, my lord, I cannot remain alone. I will sit here with you."

"Fie, mother—you should not be afraid," said the count. "What, fear to be alone?"

The duchess seemed to notice for the first time, as he spoke, that her son was in the room, and she trembled as she saw how narrowly he watched her.

"I am not well, Cornaro," she said, as she bowed her head upon the table that stood by the side of her seat.

"No, my son," added the duke, attempting to rally from the effects of his wife's grief-stricken remark; "your mother is very ill."

"Hark!" exclaimed the count. "I heard a carriage in the court."

"Some of the servants have been out," half vacantly returned the duke, still absorbed by the manner of his wife.

"Servants!" uttered Cornaro, a moment afterwards. "No—there are footsteps upon the hall stairs. There is a servant's voice, but he bids some one this way. Diabolo, but they stand at the door. I'll see who it is."

The count started up as he spoke, but before he reached the door it was thrown open, and Guiseppe Zarani entered.

"By Saint Peter, signor marquis, but you choose a strange method to intrude upon me," said the duke, his face flushed with anger.

"Excuse me, signor duke, but I have friends with me," returned Zarani, in a strange tone.

Tartani had arisen from his seat, and would have approached the door, but he noticed that his son was retreating with a deadly fear. He looked up and caught the form and features of a man who had walked into the room. For an instant he stood like a statue—then his legs trembled, and he shrank back towards the centre of the room.

"The king!" fell from his lips in startling accents.

"Yes, Tartani," returned Charles. "We have come to see thee on business."

"Your majesty is certainly welcome."

The duke had spoken thus with all the calmness he could assume, when he noticed that the king led a female by the hand, and that in the doorway stood the poor lazzarone, Gebo Masinello.

"I knew, good duke," continued the king, as he led the veiled female forward and assisted her to a seat; "I knew that you would welcome me."

While the duke was sinking into a seat, almost overpowered by the fears that were creeping over him, Cornaro had recognized in the female none other than Adele. All his presence of mind forsook him on the instant, and he staggered back aghast.

"Who—what—is all this?" the duke stammered, rising again from his chair.

"The marquis of course you know," the king returned, "and I think you know our friend Gebo, here. Here is one whom you have surely seen."

As Charles spoke, he lifted the light shawl from the girl's head, and the light fell upon the beautiful features of Adele. The first exclamation was from the duchess. The moment her eyes rested upon those features, she started from her chair and gazed wildly upon the presence thus revealed.

Cornaro Tartani had managed to recover himself, and with a quick movement he pulled his mother back into her chair. Then he moved to the side of his father.

"Up! up!" he whispered. "Don't expose yourself now. Remember, Monmarito is out of the way. Deny everything. For life's sake, now, be a man!"

"Tartani," said the king, after he had saluted the duchess, "I will come at once to the business that has brought me here. Be seated, signor. Now, Zarani, let's hear the charge you have to make. Listen, good duke, for you have matters of grave moment to refute, or answer to, as best you can."

The poor duchess had sunk back in terror as

the king spoke, and the varied emotions that raged within her soul completely overpowered her. Cornaro showed defiance in his manner, but there were traces of fear upon his countenance. The duke was fiercely struggling with himself, but the admonition of his son had had some effect, and he betrayed not all his feelings.

"Sire," commenced the young marquis, bending his flashing eyes upon the duke, "I accuse this man, Garcia Tartani, Duke of Prezza, of resting under the guilt of forcibly restraining this fair girl from an inheritance which is justly hers. Upon my knightly oath I declare that this girl is the legitimate and only heir of Joseph De Scarpa, she being his own child; and I furthermore make oath that this duke, and his son, the Count Cornaro, who is now present, have endeavored to put to death Adele De Scarpa—that they have hired people to murder her."

"By San Pablo, sire," exclaimed the count, "this is as false as—"

"Silence!" pronounced the king. "You shall have chance to answer. Proceed, Zarani."

"I furthermore declare that this count went to the dwelling of this girl and in person brutally dragged her forth and gave her into the hands of a bravo to be killed. These charges, and the assertion I have made with regard to the lady's parentage, I will sustain."

"Sire," uttered the duke, "this lie is as black as the father of lies! I know not of this matter. It is a conspiracy to rob me of my estate, and to rob you of a faithful noble."

"Now, by my faith, good duke," interrupted Charles, with a light tone of irony, "you go too far. God knows our royal self would never miss your faith. But these charges are well-founded, and come from an honest man."

"Honest!" repeated the duke. "How can one be honest who fabricates such lies? I know nothing of this matter, sire."

"Marquis, there was one other thing of which you spoke," said the king, seeming not to notice the duke's last remark.

"Ay, sire. I accuse this man—and I call God to witness that I do it with an honest heart—of having caused the murder of Joseph De Scarpa!"

"Up, father!" cried Cornaro, springing to the side of his cowering, shrinking parent. "Will you listen to this infernal falsehood, and not brand the liar to his face? Sire, I spit upon the marquis, and dare him to the proof of what he has said. Father, let not this foul lie strike your honest heart with such terror. Sire, wonder not that such an awful charge should strike this poor old man with virtuous horror."

"I do not wonder at it, signor count," sarcastically returned Charles; for he saw in the abject terror of the duke an emotion not all made up of virtuous indignation. "But, signor duke," he continued, "what answer make you to this?"

"Alas, sire, what can I do but deny it? I am not well, and this calumny falls heavily upon me."

"That can hardly make good your innocence," the king said. "But tell me what you had to do with one Monmarto, a Neapolitan bravo, who has visited you of late?"

"Nothing! nothing!" cried the duke, seized again with frenzy. "He came here of his own accord."

"To force money from us," quickly added the count.

"And how could he have done that?" the king asked, with a winking smile.

"By threatening to swear that my father had a hand in the murder of De Scarpa; and your majesty well knows that the duke died in his bed of a natural death."

"Your memory must be remarkably good, signor count. How know you that De Scarpa died in his bed?"

"My father has told me of it," returned Cornaro, with much confusion.

"Then let your father speak for himself," said the king, with severity. And then turning to the duke, Charles continued:

"Now, Garcia Tartani, upon your oath before God and your king, do you not think this fair girl is the daughter of Joseph De Scarpa?"

"No, no."

"Beware, now."

"She is not De Scarpa's child. De Scarpa's infant died."

"Died!" whispered the duchess, pressing her hand upon her brow, and gazing wildly upon the lovely face of Adele, who sat trembling like a shaken reed in the midst of the strange scene. "Died! O, God!"

"Back! Move not upon your peril!" exclaimed the king, as Cornaro started towards his mother. "Speak, signora."

"O, sire, this is horrible!" uttered the duchess, moving to the side of the monarch, and grasping him wildly by the arm. "Let my husband pass from this scene. O, let not—let not—"

"Speak on," said the king.

"She is like the young duchess. She is the counterpart of one who is now no more; but she may not be—"

"Her poor mind is shattered, sire," interrupted the duke, nervously grasping hold of his wife and pulling her away.

At this moment a royal messenger entered the apartment.

"Sire," he said, "there is a man below who would see you."

"Who is he?"

"I know not, but he came with me from the palace, where he came to seek you. He was anxious to see you, and as he insisted upon it I came hither with him so that he might come at once to your presence."

"Then let him come up at once."

The messenger departed, and Cornaro sprang towards the door to follow him, but the king held him back.

"You go not hence, signor count, till I will it."

Charles spoke sternly, and Cornaro tremblingly shrank back. The duchess had sunk into her seat again—the duke was half dead with a new fear—Zarani drew the trembling Adele nearer to him, and the king stood erect in the centre of the room awaiting the coming of the man who had sought his presence.

CHAPTER XXV.

CONCLUSION.

THERE were strange emotions in the bosoms of those who were within the duke's apartment as they heard the approach of footsteps towards the door. At length the messenger opened the way, and in a moment more, Monmarto stepped into the apartment. He was pale, and he looked weak and worn, but his eyes—those bright, speaking orbs—were not dimmed. His right arm was in a sling, but he was erect in his carriage. For a moment his eyes swept the group there assembled, but they finally rested upon Adele, and almost fearfully he moved towards her. The fair girl gazed up into those large, dark eyes, and she seemed charmed by their intensity.

Monmarto took the small white hand in his own. Adele did not resist—she could not. He raised it to his lips, and out from those large eyes there rolled a few warm tears.

"Sickness has made me weak," he whispered, half turning towards Zarani, as he wiped the drops from his cheek.

"Stranger," said the king, "what seek ye?"

"To do justice!"

Even Charles started at the massive depth of that voice. Upon the duke and his son, it was like a thunder-bolt.

"Speak, then," continued the king, with marks of strong and anxious curiosity upon his features. "I heard the duke murmur, Monmarto. If thou art he, then thy coming is most opportune."

"Gracious heavens! sire," exclaimed the duke, arousing himself in this, his last effort; "will you listen to the words of a bravo? of a professed murderer?"

"I will listen to anything, and judge afterwards as wisdom dictates. Speak, Monmarto."

"I will, sire; but first let me thank yonder count that he showed me his face when he thought to assassinate me."

"Ah," uttered the king.

"Sire, I do not deny the charge," cried the count, his eyes flashing fire as he gazed upon

Monmarto. "I did attempt to kill him, but if there be one word of truth in him he will tell you that I did it in self-defence. The villain sought my own life. It is his trade to kill."

"Lie on, poor fool!" bitterly returned Monmarto. "But, sire, you have asked me what I know of this matter. It shall be told to you in simple words and few. She who sits there by the side of Guiseppe Zarani, is the child of Joseph De Scarpa. When she was an infant I carried her from this very palace by night, and I gave her to Gebo Massinello. I knew him not then, but he is here to compare his notes with mine. Look upon those features, sire, and say if they be not those of Marie De Scarpa?"

"If my memory serves me right they are," returned the king, looking with admiration upon the lovely features to which the speaker had pointed.

"In truth they are," continued Monmarto; "and she is what I have said; and though the base duke and his son have tried to put her from earth, yet she stands here now a living evidence against them. They feared my tongue, and they thought to kill me, too, but Cornaro's dagger found not my vitals. A good monk picked me up and nursed me in his cell, and now I am here to testify."

"But tell us of Joseph De Scarpa," said Charles, nervously. "Tartani stands charged of having caused his murder, and it has been whispered, that you were the instrument. Speak out on this point."

"I will, sire; but first I would hear Garcia Tartani speak. Does he dare accuse me of the deed?"

"No, no!" cried the duke, starting in agony. "De Scarpa died a natural death."

"He did not die a natural death!" pronounced Monmarto. "He did not die in his bed, for he was dragged away that he might be murdered in a dungeon. That was a foul mystery that was said over the ducal coffin, was but a fade of wax that rested there. The duke would have been murdered and placed therein, but Tartani dared not do the deed himself, and he feared to risk the face of a murdered man to the gaze of spectators."

"Mercy! mercy!" shrieked the poor duchess; and as the ejaculation fell from her lips she sank into a swoon.

Tartani and his son were confounded. They had hung their last hope upon Monmarto's fear of revealing the truth.

"Garcia Tartani," spoke the king; "what answer have you to make to this?"

"A lie! a lie! all, all a lie! he!—Monmarto—"

"What," said Monmarto, as the duke hesitated; "what of Monmarto?"

"It was you—you—who—who killed him!"

"Garcia Tartani," uttered Monmarto, advancing towards the cowering, trembling noble, "I *did* kill him; but who, *who* was it I killed?"

"Joseph De Scarpa."

"Was it? Garcia, look at me."

"By heavens! I should know that noble voice," cried the king, moving to the strange man's side and glancing into his face. "Speak, signor, I charge you, by my royal authority to speak. If thou art not the noble duke himself, then false is my thought."

"Sire, *your thought is truth!*"

"And thou art Joseph De Scarpa?" uttered Guiseppe Zarani, with a wildness in his eyes that told how deeply his wonder was moved.

"Yes, Guiseppe. I am he who used to set you upon his knee and play with you, and whom I heard you say not long since you loved. Ah, those words of yours, spoken when you knew not who it was that heard you, were like balm to my soul."

He ceased speaking and turned towards Adele, who had risen from her seat, and stood half leaning forward as though some whispering angel were beckoning her on.

"Adele, Adele," spoke the man; and he reached forth the only hand he could use. He could speak no more; but as he wound his arm about the fair form that had sprung to his side, he bowed his head and kept the language he could not utter in words.

"Father!" the beautiful being murmured.

"O, my heart tells me the sun has risen. Father! O, the night is passed. Father! O, joy, joy, joy!"

Garcia Tartani sank down upon his chair like one who had been stabbed with a dagger to the heart. There were no words upon his lips—there was no attempt to speak, for he had nothing to say. He recognized Joseph De Scarpa, and his heart sank into the cold, cheerless darkness of sin's unawaking night. He groaned, and it was with a groan so dreadful that even one who knew his sins could not but have pitied him. Cornaro was bewildered. He was fear-struck, but bewilderment predominated. There were curses upon his lips, but he dared not utter them.

"De Scarpa, my noble cousin," said the king, "I am racked with curiosity. What is this?"

"Here, Zarani," said Joseph De Scarpa, "take this sweet child to your side." The father pressed a kiss upon his daughter's white brow, and then he took a seat.

A low, broken sob from the duchess told that she had come back to outward life. For a moment De Scarpa gazed upon her—a shadow passed over his face, and then he said:

"Sire, you well remember my angel wife? She gave me an infant, and then God took my wife away to himself. You are probably aware that Signora Leonora is my cousin, and how, by my death, together with that of my infant, she succeeded to the estates of Prezza, and how, also, Tartani hoped to gain my title. After my wife died, I was sick and heart-sore, and while I lay thus, I was seized one night and conveyed to the dungeons beneath the palace. There I was chained in a cold cell, and at length I was told that I was to die. One night a man came to my dungeon who bore in his hand a lantern and a dagger, and when he set his lantern down he dragged a large chest into the place after him. The manacles upon my hands I had broken from those of my feet, and as the man dragged in the chest, his back was turned towards me. He did not notice that I was loose, or he would not have been so careless. I recognized my visitor at once, as Monmarto, a noted Neapolitan bravo, and I knew that he had come to kill me. As he moved to turn, after he had placed the chest, I gathered all my

strength for the blow, and with the heavy manacles I struck him fair upon the back of the head. He fell to the pavement, and his dagger rolled to my feet. I seized the weapon, and with it I easily moved the springs that held the bolts of my feet irons. As I threw them off the bravo sprang to his feet and attacked me; but fear lent me strength, and I struck him with the dagger. He grappled me, and again and again, I struck him with the keen weapon, and ere he could harm me he grew weak, and sank down upon the cold floor. I knelt over him, and found that my dagger had reached his life, for it was ebbing fast away.

"Before he died, however, he confessed the part he had come to play. That Tartani had hired him to kill me—that he was to hide my body in the chest—that my funeral had already passed—and that as soon as he had accomplished my death he was to have gone to Tartani, take the pay for the bloody deed, and then carry off the infant, which he told me lay upon the bed in my chamber. He told me all, and shortly afterwards he died. A frenzy had come over me—a sort of fearful delirium, brought on partly by the death of my wife, but more by the scene that had passed, though my confinement in the cold dungeon of course gave the disease a firmer hold upon me. My mind caught at the idea of escape with my child; I forgot that I could face the villain and bring him to justice, for the nobler part of myself had gone—my reason was toppling upon its throne. I thought I could pass myself off as Monmarto. To this end I quickly tore off my velvet doublet, and having taken the clothes, all bloody as they were, from the body of the bravo, I made an exchange by donning his rough garb, and placing mine upon him. Then I managed to lift him into the chest, with his face down, and this done I shut down the cover, took up the lantern, and hastened to the room where I had been told I should find Tartani. His lamp burned dimly, and as I pulled the bravo's slouched hat down over my face, his own conflicting emotions prevented him from seeing that I was not Monmarto. He asked me if I had done the deed, and I showed him my hands and told him I had. I spoke only in a whisper. I demanded my pay, and he gave me a heavy purse of gold. Then he went with me to the chamber where lay my child. I took the infant and placed it under my garment, and then he made me promise that I would kill it, and hide the body where it could never be found. I promised all, speaking all the while

in only a hoarse whisper, and I got away from the palace without his once mistrusting me.

"It rained that night, but I hugged the babe close to my bosom and hurried on through the darkness. My mind was growing more and more weak, and thoughts flew wildly through my brain. I overtook, or met a man, and I gave to him my child. There was a lamp burning not far off, and I thought I could see that he had a kind face. I remember that I gave him my child, and that I then hurried away. I can remember of going to the seashore and washing my hands, and I can remember a long, loud laugh that burst wildly from my lips, and with it went my soul's memory!"

"When I awoke to my manhood of mind again, I was in Athens, a poor maniac beggar. People told me that the year of our risen Lord was one thousand seven hundred and fifty-eight. Then I knew that I had been wandering for the space of more than nineteen years. Upon the dubious path I had trod there were some twinklings of light, but I could only remember that night on which I gave my child away. I soon gained my full powers of mind, and I set forth for Naples, hoping that I might find my child. I knew that years had so changed me—that the sun had so burned me, and that the wanderings of my mind had so set the marks of their touch upon my features, that Tartani would not recognize me, and I met him as though I were Monmarto. I found that he not only believed me, but that he had never suspected the mistake he had made.

"Sire, what need I tell you more. Of the emotions of my soul when I found that my child lived you can judge, and also of the alternate hopes and fears that have possessed my bosom. But if I have suffered, I am more than repaid now.

"Adele, Adele, come once more to my bosom. O, while I press thee thus, I can only thank God for his mercy—I'll think not of the sufferings he has seen fit to inflict upon me. Truly, sweet Adele, hast thou said, '*The sun has risen! The night is passed!*'"

"Noble duke, it shall be yours to pass judgment upon the culprits," spoke the king.

"Then, sire," said Joseph De Scarpa, "their punishment shall be this: Their crime shall be made public in every particular. Their true characters shall be held up to the gaze of the world. If they can then remain in Naples they may."

"It shall be done as you have said."

"O, Joseph—my cousin—mercy! mercy!" shrieked poor Leonora, falling upon her knees and clasping her hands frantically together. "O, for the love of heaven, make my misery no more!"

"Leonora, you shall have the boon you ask. It will be a poor one at best, but the world shall not know while you live the part you have acted—yet, my cousin, I cannot relieve you of that memory which must always be a curse to you. You, Garcia, I cannot so easily forgive, but I will try to do it, though your punishment I will not abate. You may sleep beneath this roof to-night, if you choose, but on the morrow you must leave it. For you, Cornaro, I have most of pity and scorn. Follow your father, if you like, but let me assure you that your life will be of but little worth to you unless you can entirely change, and that I think is improbable, to say the least. Arise, Leonora. You have a daughter. You and she may remain here beneath my roof till you can find a home if you desire it. Now I would have you leave us. Garcia Tartani, go to your room, and you, signor count, go where you please, so you but leave here. Leonora, your husband waits."

The poor woman arose to her feet, but she spoke not. Her husband, too, arose, and turned to go.

"Hold, a moment," said the king. "Tartani, that insignia is no longer yours."

As Charles spoke he drew his dagger, and taking the jewelled coronet, that hung suspended from Tartani's breast, in his hand, he cut it off.

"Now go."

It was almost a piteous sight to see that crime-laden old man crawl away, but when he was gone, the place seemed more comfortable.

"Now, Zarani," said the Duke De Scarpa, "I have a judgment to pass upon you. Nay, speak not, for you deserve it. I shall make you a prisoner for the rest of your days. Adele, my own sweet child, you I make his keeper. Signor marquis, will the durance be very disagreeable?" the old duke added, as he joined their hands together.

Neither Zarani nor Adele spoke, but they knelt at De Scarpa's feet. He blessed them.

"There, don't weep, my children."

"But you are weeping, father."

"Am I? Then to weep such tears is a blessing. Ah, but here is one who yet awaits his judgment. Good Geba Massinello, you shall find a home here. You shall bring your

fiddle, and when time wears heavily on your hands it shall be yours to cheer us with your music. What—you, too, upon your knees? Well, God bless you, Geba, and my blessing you have with my whole heart's gratitude and love. What—weeping, too? And you, sire, do you weep?"

"Yes, De Scarpa," returned the happy monarch. "It is a blessing that God has given us, that we can sometimes shed tears of joy to counterbalance those we have to shed in sorrow."

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We have but a word to say concerning the other characters of our tale. Cornaro Tartani did not live to try whether he could change his character. On the day succeeding the developments that gave his crimes to the light, the bravo, Bep, met him and offered to return the money he had received for the deed he did not choose to do. The count was enraged and would have struck the bravo with his dagger, but Bep was too quick, and Cornaro Tartani fell beneath the stiletto of the man with whom he had made his first league of crime. Bep fled from the city, and no more was heard of him in Naples.

Mag ended her days in a strong prison.

Garcia Tartani never arose from the shock he had received. His mind died before his body; but the few short months he spent on earth, hidden from the gaze of the world, contained a lifetime of anguish and bitter remorse.

Joanna—the proud, the haughty Joanna, fled in shame to Florence, where she entered the opera-house.

Leonora Tartani! She deserved pity. Her repentance was sincere. She sought a convent in Benevento, and when she died she was almost happy, for Joseph De Scarpa, and Zarani with his beautiful Adele, were by her bedside, and they forgave her for all she had done against them.

"My poor, misguided cousin," murmured the old duke, as he placed his hand upon the cold brow from whence the spirit had fled, "may God forgive you as I do. Thou hast sinned—most fearfully sinned—but such repentance as thine should make thy soul pure in heaven."

"My children," he added, as he turned away from the scene, and wiped a tear from his eye, "she is where the weary are at rest, and may God give her that place which she could never have hoped for on earth, while busy memory kept up its whisperings to her soul of the past."