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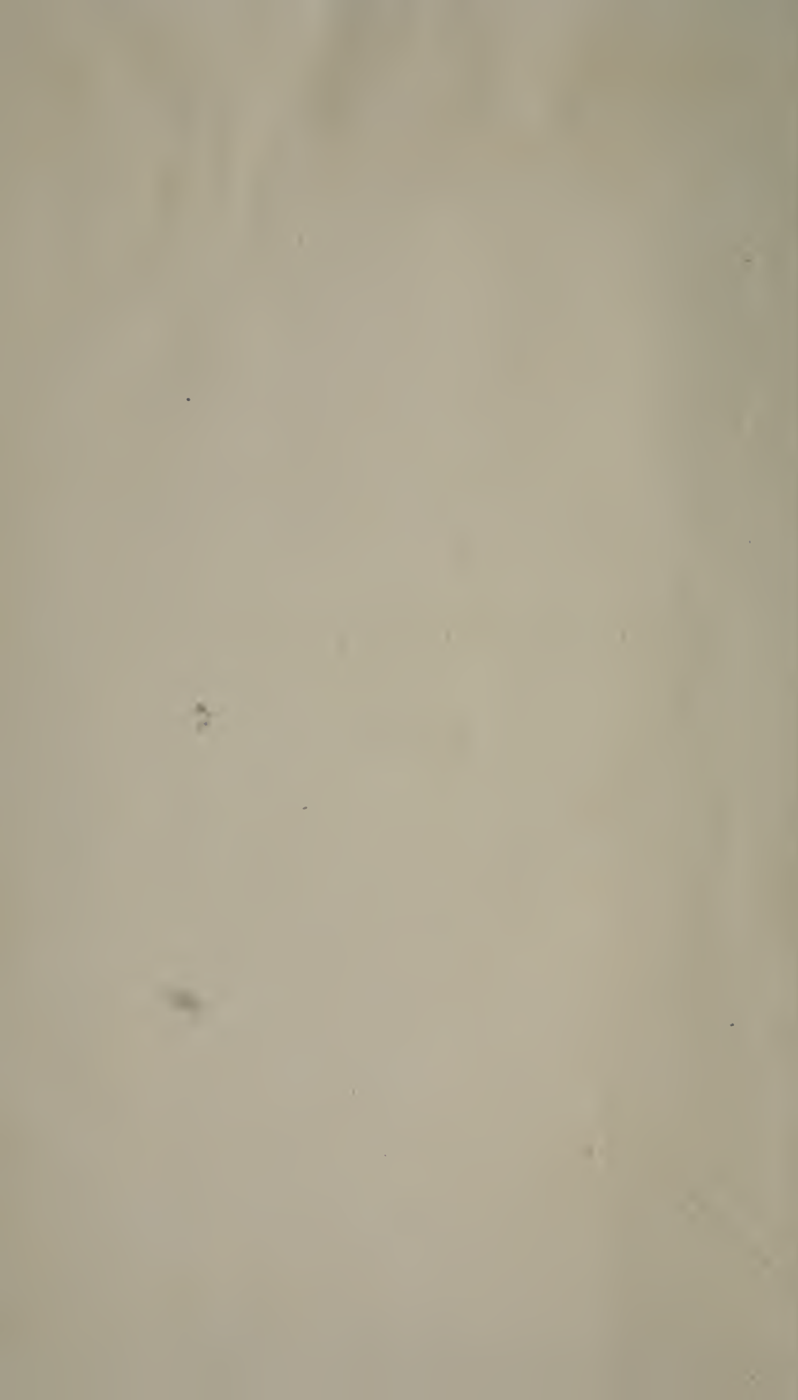

BARBARA'S HISTORY.

VOL. III.

BARBARA'S HISTORY.

BY

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"MY BROTHER'S WIFE," "HAND AND GLOVE,"
"THE STORY OF CERVANTES,"
&c., &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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BARBARA'S HISTORY.

CHAPTER I.

OUR LIFE AT BROOMHILL.

HUGH'S prophecy came but too true. Our arrival at Broomhill was no sooner known through the county, than we were overwhelmed with visitors. They came day after day, and week after week, till I began to think we should never be at peace again. The gravel in the avenue was cut into furrows by their carriage-wheels; and had to be rolled continually. The card-baskets filled and overflowed, like perpetual fountains. Every evening I added fresh names to the list of visits which must be returned—some day. I need hardly say that this influx of strangers wearied and annoyed me beyond description. I knew that curiosity

alone brought nine-tenths of them to my door, and felt that I was the object of their criticism from the moment they passed its threshold till they went away again. That I was Mrs. Sandyshaft's niece; that my father was descended from the Marlborough family; that my sister Hilda was married to the Count de Chaumont; that I had been educated in Germany; and that we had been married and living abroad for more than a whole year, were facts that seemed to have propagated themselves in the air, and spread, heaven only knew how! in all directions. Everybody seemed to know everything about me; and one of the county papers even went so far as to hint at "a romantic attachment of long standing;" though that could have been nothing but conjecture. In the midst of all this visiting, I confess that I did not regret the absence of Lady Flora Bayham, now married, and living in a distant county. That childish wound of jealousy had left its scar, and though long since healed over, was not forgotten.

In the meantime my husband lavished gifts upon me; and, sober and simple as were my tastes, insisted, though with a more substantial result than did Petruchio, on providing me—

> "With silken coats, and caps, and golden rings,
> With ruffs, and cuffs, and farthingales, and things."

I had cashmeres brought by himself from the East, that a queen might envy; furs fit for a Russian princess; gold and silver filigrees from Genoa; coral ornaments from Naples; mosaics from Rome and Florence; silks and velvets so rich that I felt afraid to wear them, and which a stately London court-dressmaker came all the way to Broomhill to fit and adapt to my little person. Then I had a riding horse; and a new habit; and a dainty little whip set with turquoises. And, above all, there came one day for my approval the most exquisite lounge-chaise that Messrs. Turrill and Co. ever turned out from their workshops—a graceful shell-shaped thing, so light that it seemed to be hung upon nothing—and a pair of the shaggiest, tiniest, friskiest Shetland ponies that ever scampered in harness! This last gift delighted me more than all the rest, and went far to reconcile me to the stern duty of returning my neighbours' visits.

In spite, however, of all this luxury, and all these indulgences, my happiest hours were those which I spent in my painting-room, or alone with Hugh after dinner in our favourite turret-chamber. The painting-room had been a spare bed-room in the wing traditionally appropriated to visitors, and I chose it for my studio for two reasons; one of which was that it commanded a fine view and an excellent north light, and the other that it was

only separated by a landing from that very turret chamber, the threshold of which no strange foot ever profaned. I had but little time; for the days grew short, and my interruptions were frequent; but it was very pleasant only to have a picture on the easel and a task in hand; and I contrived almost daily to secure the first two hours after breakfast.

My aunt, meanwhile, recovered rapidly; and, save such inevitable alteration as seven years must work, looked much the same as ever. Her step perhaps was a shade less firm, her carriage a trifle less erect, her voice a little less resonant, than when I first came to live with her at Stoneycroft Hall; but her eye was as vigilant, and her tongue as caustic, as of old. As for her temper, it had become far more sour and overbearing than I had ever known it before. While she was yet very ill I began to suspect this; and as she got well, I saw it more and more plainly.

"I know I am cross, Bab," she used to say. "I know I am cross, and very disagreeable; but I can't help it. It's my infirmity. If you had never left me, I shouldn't have been half so bad. I had got used to you; and the loss of you soured me—I know it did; and now it's too late to be helped. I have lived too much alone these last years. It isn't in human nature to live alone, and improve. You

must take me as you find me, and make the best of me."

I did take her as I found her, and I made the best of her; but, for all that, things would not go quite easily and cordially between us. Her temper was an infirmity; and I made every allowance for it. The loss of me had soured her—I did not doubt it for an instant. But that was not all. The fact was that she could never forgive me for marrying Hugh, nor Hugh for asking me. It had frustrated all her favourite plans; and time, instead of reconciling her to the disappointment, seemed only to aggravate her sense of the injury and injustice which she conceived had been dealt out to herself. Thus it came to pass that she was always saying some bitter thing which I could not hear without remonstrance, and which she was angry with me for feeling. To my husband she was so rude, that, with all his forbearance, he found it difficult to steer clear of open disagreement with her; and so stayed away more and more, till at last his visits might almost be said to have entirely ceased.

These things were to me, of necessity, the sources of profound and frequent trouble. The two whom I loved best in all the world were gradually growing to dislike each other more and more; and nothing that I could do would avert the cata-

strophe. The breach widened daily before my eyes. I tried to patch it over continually; but in vain. In the attempt to justify Hugh to my aunt, or excuse my aunt to Hugh, I soon found that I did more harm than good; and so gave it up after awhile, and sadly suffered matters to take their course.

The month of October, and the greater part of November, passed by thus, in receiving and paying visits, driving, riding, wearing fine clothes, and staving off that quarrel between my aunt and Hugh which seemed to be inevitable at some time or other. Active and restless by nature, my husband had been more than ever unsettled since our return to Broomhill, and now lived almost entirely in the open air. When not riding or driving with me, he was out shooting in his preserves. He rode to every meet, however distant; although in Rome he had never expressed a wish to follow the subscription pack. It appeared, indeed, as if he had lost his taste for all the quiet pleasures of indoor life; as if he could never be happy unless out and stirring; as if, alas! he took so little pleasure in his ancestral home that it was a relief to him to get beyond its precincts.

There were times when I looked back with loving regret to our delicious life in Italy—when, but for the confident hope that better times must

come, I should almost have wished that I had never brought him back to Broomhill.

In the meantime Goody—dear, faithful Goody—came down and made her home in a little gothic cottage that had once been a game-keeper's lodge, situated on a pleasant green knoll, just where the woods bordered on the western boundary of the park. To furnish this little *maisonette* for her, to stock her presses with linen, her cupboards with crockery, and her poultry-yard with cocks and hens, afforded me many hours of unmixed pleasure. Possessed of all these luxuries, she thought herself a rich woman; and though it was almost winter when she came, looked upon Broomhill as little short of an Eden upon earth.

CHAPTER II.

THE FAMILY DIAMONDS.

"Barbarina mia," said Hugh, as we were sitting together one evening after dinner, "I forgot to tell you that the Bayhams are going to give a great ball."

"Who told you so?"

"Lord Bayham, himself; I met him as I was coming home."

"Oh, dear me! shall we be obliged to go?"

"Most undoubtedly; since it is to be given chiefly in honour of ourselves."

"I am so tired of society," said I, with a sigh.

"I am not 'tired' of it—I loathe it," grumbled Hugh, dealing a savage kick at the log upon the fire, and sending a shower of sparks, like a miniature firework, careering up the chimney.

"If we could only live here, Hugh, as we lived abroad!"

He shrugged his shoulders gloomily.

"We might if we liked, you know," I pursued, laying my hand coaxingly upon his. "We were bound to return the people's calls, and we have done so; but we are not bound to accept their invitations, or cultivate their acquaintance, unless we please."

"Bah! what else can we do? What else is there for us to do in a place like this?"

"More than life itself would be long enough to do satisfactorily, depend on it. In the first place, you have books; in the second, you have art . . ."

"My dear girl," said he, impatiently, "books and pictures are all very well in their way; but to an English country life they can add very little real enjoyment."

"You desired no other pleasures when we were in Italy."

"In Italy the case was different. In Rome we had all the art of the world. At Albano we had natural scenery. In both we had the climate of Paradise."

"But . . ."

"But, my darling, this is a subject which we see so differently, that it is useless to argue upon it. And now about this ball at Ashley Park. It is to take

place in about a month from the present time—that is to say, a week before Christmas; and as it will be her first appearance in a large assembly, I am anxious that my little wife should make a good appearance."

"I want no more new dresses, Hugh," I exclaimed. "I have more now than I shall ever wear."

"What an amazing Barbarina it is!" laughed he, unlocking a quaint old carved bureau in a recess beside the fire-place, and taking thence a large red morocco case. "The lady of Burleigh herself could scarcely have regarded the haberdasher and dress-maker with a more pious horror. *Mais, rassure-toi, chérie.* It was not of your dress that I was thinking, but of these."

He touched the spring, and disclosed what looked like a constellation of diamonds.

"Oh, husband, how beautiful!"

"They were my mother's, and my father's mother's," said Hugh, somewhat sadly; "and some of the stones, I believe, have been in the family even longer. They are yours now, my darling."

"They are magnificent; but—but fancy me in all these diamonds!"

"Why not?"

"I should feel ashamed—my grandeur would

overwhelm me. How well Hilda would become them!"

"Not better than thyself, *carissima*. But they are old-fashioned, and must be reset before my little woman wears them."

"Indeed, no! they will do beautifully as they are."

"Indeed, yes. Look at this aigrette. How would you like to go to Lord Bayham's ball with an aigrette perched upon your head, like an ornament on a twelfth cake? Then here are ear-rings. You have never worn ear-rings in your life; and do you think I could endure to see my wifie's ears barbarously stilettoed, as if she were a Choctaw squaw? No, no—the aigrette and ear-rings will make a charming little tiara for her brow; and the necklace shall assume a more modern pattern; and the brooch . . . what shall we do with the brooch? Have it reset as a brooch, or turn it into a bracelet?"

"Turn it into a bracelet, by all means, with a miniature of yourself in the midst."

"*Bon.* I should not have trusted anyone but myself to take the jewels up to town, and I can see about the miniature at the same time. I think I will go to-morrow by the early train."

"And come back by the last?"

"Humph! I don't know how to promise that,

Barbarina. I shall have to choose the patterns for the diamonds; to find an artist, to give my artist a sitting, if he will take me on so short a notice; to . . . . well, I will do my best; and if I find I cannot catch the train, I will telegraph."

"You will not telegraph," said I. "You will come. Remember the motto of Henri Quatre:—'*à cœur vaillant, rien d'impossible!*'"

I drove him over to the station the next morning by starlight, and saw him vanish, like Aubrey's ghost, to the "melodious twang" of the railway whistle. As I came back, the day was superb. The frosty road rang beneath the hoofs of my Shetlanders. The blue sky, unflecked by even a vapour, seemed immeasurably high and transparent. There was a magical sharpness in the tracery of every bare bough that rose into the sunlight; and the yellow leaves that still masked the nakedness of the woodlands, mocked the wintry landscape with autumnal hues. But for those yellow leaves, it might have been a morning of early springtime.

Some such thought as this it was, perhaps, that led me back, during that homeward drive, to old memories of the happy springtide that I spent here long ago. I thought of that last morning when I met Hugh in the woods; and remembered, almost with a sense of self-reproach, that I had not once

revisited the place since my return. Then I looked at the silver ring, now transferred to my watch-chain; and wondered if the marks of the shot were yet visible on the beech-bark; and if the old mossy stump on which I was sitting when they whistled past, had been spared all this time by the woodcutters. Finally, when, at about the distance of a mile and a half from Broomhill, I met one of the grooms and two or three of the dogs, I alighted, desired the man to drive the ponies home, and announced my intention of walking round by the woods.

"If you please, 'm," said he, touching his cap, "I think Nap would like to go with you."

"Then he shall certainly do so, Joseph. Come, Nap! Come on, boy!"

And with this I struck down a side path, leading to the woods, with the great dog barking and galloping round me. The groom, the pointers, and the Shetlanders pursued their way by the high road.

Nap and I were great friends. He was a magnificent beast, of pure St. Bernard breed; powerful and tawny as a young lion, with a deep furrow on his brow, and a voice that sounded as if it came from an organ-pipe. His name was Napoleon, called Nap for shortness; and his pedigree was as illustrious as his name. He was, in

fact, the last lineal descendant of an ancestor whose owner acted as guide to the First Consul in the celebrated passage of 1800; and who himself accompanied his master and the army through all the difficulties and dangers of the route. I used sometimes to think that Nap was conscious of his own nobility, and becomingly proud of his genealogical advantages. He accepted caresses as if they were his due; was dignified in his intercourse with small dogs; and had at all times such an air of easy grandeur that it would have been impossible to treat him with disrespect.

His first greeting over, and his satisfaction sufficiently expressed, Nap trotted calmly forward, some three or four yards in advance, with now and then a pause and a glance back. Thus we crossed the upland fallows, and skirted part of the Stoneycroft land, and entered the woods by a little rustic stile, the top-rail of which was carved all over with the initials of by-gone loiterers.

It was by this time nearly mid-day, and the wintry wood, carpeted with russet leaves, and interspersed here and there with ilex, holly, and fir-trees, glowed in the sunshine with a beauty peculiar to the season. Unexcluded by foliage, the broad full light poured in upon every bank and hollow, and chequered the ground with shadows of interlacing boughs. There was scarcely

a breath of air, and the calm of the place was perfect. The dry leaves crackled underfoot. Now and then, a bird twittered, or a pheasant rose, whirring, from the brushwood. Now and then, a leaf fluttered down through the sunshine. As I went forward, half uncertain of the way, and looking out on all sides for any indication of the rising ground which had been the scene of my childish romance, I could not help thinking of this passage in "Christabel:"—

> "There was not wind enough to twirl
> The one red leaf, the last of its clan,
> That dances as often as dance it can,
> Hanging so light, and hanging so high,
> On the topmost twig that looks up at the sky."

Suddenly, while I was repeating the last two lines dreamily over and over, the St. Bernard uttered a short joyous bark, bounded from my side, dashed away across a little space of open glade where several fallen trunks showed that the woodmen had been lately at work, and precipitated himself in a rapture of recognition upon the knees of a lady whom, but for this incident, I believe I should have passed without seeing. She was dressed all in black, and half hidden by the pile of log-wood on which she was sitting. I was just close enough to see her throw her arms passionately round the dog's neck, and kiss him on the furrowed forehead

—glance quickly round—snatch up a book from the grass beside her—start to her feet, turning upon me a pale face with a strange flash of terror and dislike on it—and plunge hastily away among the trees. The dog plunged after her. Surprised and disturbed, I stood for a moment, looking after them. Then, while I could yet hear him crashing through the brushwood, I called "Nap! Nap! Nap!" repeatedly, but in vain. Once, after an interval of several minutes, I heard him give a faint, far-away, uncertain bark—then all was still again.

Somewhat unsettled by the loss of my four-footed companion, and perplexed by the strange manner of his disappearance, I followed the open glade till I came to a game-keeper's cottage, and thence inquired my way home. I was tired, and it was useless to think of searching the woods to-day for a spot which by this time, no doubt, had lost all its former characteristics. Besides, I did not quite like wandering alone, without even a dog to bear me company. So I went back, by the nearest path, to Broomhill, intending to send some one in search of Nap as soon as I got home; and feeling something like an uneasy doubt as to whether we should ever see him again.

What, then, was my relief when the first object I beheld as I approached the house on the library-

side, was Nap himself, lying sphinx-like, with his nose upon his paws, in the midst of the sunny gravelled space where the fountain was playing!

I opened the little iron gate—the same through which I had ventured, a breathless trespasser, that day when Hugh surprised me at the window—and went up to him, and patted him, and remonstrated with him on his late behaviour. But he only thumped his tail upon the ground, and blinked at me lazily—and it was of no use to ask him where he had been, or with whom.

Then I went in, sent for Mrs. Fairhead, described the lady, and inquired if anyone had seen the dog come home. But Mrs. Fairhead could tell me no more than Nap himself; so I betook myself to my painting-room, and proceeded to work away the weary hours before my husband's return.

CHAPTER III.

IMPERIAL TOKAY IN VENETIAN GLASSES.

"To have my way, in spite of your tongue and reason's teeth, tastes better than Hungary wine."

DEATH'S JEST BOOK.

"PUT the painting by for to-day, Barbara," said Hugh, thrusting his head just inside the door, "and come with me."

"Where, dear?"

"Into the next room."

"What for?"

"You shall know, when you get there."

"Well—in five minutes."

"No, *carina*—at once."

"Tiresome fellow! The light is just going, and I want to add another touch or two to this head, before leaving off."

"Never mind the head. I can show you something much better worth looking at."

"Your own, perhaps?"

"May be. *Chi lo sa?*"

"Your portrait?" I exclaimed, starting up at once. "I am sure it is your portrait? Who has brought it? When did it come?"

"I have not even said that it is my portrait," replied he, laughing, and leading the way. At the door of the turret chamber, he paused and put his hands over my eyes, saying that I must go in, blindfolded.

"And now, *one*—TWO—THREE, and the curtain rises on the Halls of Dazzling Light, in the Refulgent Abode of the Fairy Crystallina!"

He withdrew his hands, and for the first moment I was really dazzled; for he had caused the fading daylight to be shut out, and two enormous branch candelabra and a powerful vesta lamp to be lighted; so that the little room seemed all ablaze. Then, as my eyes grew accustomed to it, I saw that these lights were ranged round a sort of fantastic altar draped with a rich oriental shawl of crimson silk and gold, supporting a velvet cushion on which were arranged a glittering tiara, necklace, and bracelet of diamonds.

I flew to the bracelet, and burst into exclamations of delight.

"Oh, husband, how charming! What an admirable likeness! What a treasure!"

"I am glad the portrait pleases you, Barbara mia."

"It enchants me! You never gave me anything that pleased me half so much."

"Come, that's well. And the setting?"

"It has your very expression."

"My expression is brilliant, I confess," said Hugh; "but you mustn't be too flattering."

"I could declare that the mouth is just about to say 'Barbarina!' And then the eyes, looking up, half in jest and half in earnest . . . ."

"Will it please your Majesty to turn your own eyes in this direction, and tell me what you think of the rest of the regalia?"

"I think it exceedingly beautiful—much too beautiful for my wearing. I shall feel like King Cophetua's bride, or Grisildis with the 'croune on hir hed,' when I wear that circlet upon mine."

"Never mind how you will feel; I want to see how you will look. Come, let me crown you."

"Nay, in this woollen gown . . . . . ."

"Oh, the woollen gown is easily disguised. See, with this shawl flung over it—and fastened on the shoulder, thus—and the sleeve rolled up, out of sight—and the bracelet on the pretty white arm—and the tiara . . . . ."

"What a boy you are, Hugh!"

"Stop, here's the necklace yet to come. *Per Bacco,* I have seen many a genuine queen who looked not half so well in her finery!"

"But I cannot see myself in this mirrorless room!"

"Then we will go into the drawing-room, *carina,* where you can flourish at full length in three or four mirrors at once."

"How absurd, if we meet any of the servants on the stairs!"

"Pshaw! what does that signify?" laughed Hugh, ringing the bell. "We will make a state procession of it. Tippoo shall precede you with the branches, and I will bring up the rear with the lamp. Shall we send for Mrs. Fairhead to carry your train?"

"Mercy on us! what mummery is this?" cried a voice at the door; and not Tippoo, but Mrs. Sandyshaft stood before us.

We both started at the sight of this stern apparition, and, for a moment, could find nothing to say.

"You must be mad," pursued my aunt, still on the threshold; "stark, staring mad, both of you! It's only charity to suppose it. Pray, may a sane person inquire what it is you're after?"

"My dear aunt," I stammered, divesting myself

of the shawl, and pulling down my sleeves as fast as I could; "the—the diamonds—Hugh wanted to see how I should look in them. They have just come home."

"The diamonds?" repeated she, incredulously. "Stuff and nonsense—the fiddlesticks! What are they made of? Bristol paste, or bog crystal?"

"My dear Madam," said Hugh, shrugging his shoulders, "do you suppose I should allow my wife to wear mock jewels?"

My aunt snatched the tiara from my head, and examined it closely.

"If the stones *are* real, Hugh Farquhar," said she, "the more shame for you! No man in your position can afford to buy diamonds at this rate. They'd be worth eight or ten thousand pounds."

"They are valued at twelve," replied he, calmly.

"But he has not bought them," I interposed. "They are old family jewels, reset. They belonged to his mother, and his grandmother; and some of them are older still."

"Humph! And are you going to be such a fool as to wear them, Bab?"

"I cannot see where the folly would be, aunt."

"Nonsense! a child like you; young enough to be at school now . . . . people will laugh at you."

"If they do, the folly will be theirs. As the

wife of a gentleman, and the daughter of a gentleman . . ."

"Bab, don't argue with me. I won't stand it. I think one of you might have offered me a seat all this while, considering it's the first time I've called on you."

"Forgive me, Mrs. Sandyshaft," said Hugh, placing a chair for her, immediately; "but you took us so by surprise that . . ."

"That you forgot your good manners," interrupted my aunt, sharply; "though, goodness knows, they're not much to boast of, at any time!"

"Always indulgent and complimentary, Mrs. Sandyshaft," retorted he with a bow of mock acknowledgment.

Having by this time thrust the shawl out of sight, and shut the jewels away in their cases, I hastened to divert the conversation by helping my aunt to loosen her great cloth cloak and boa, and telling her how glad I was to see her at Broomhill.

"You're not glad to see me, Bab," said she, suspiciously. "I don't believe it."

"My dearest aunt, why . . ."

"Because I'm old, and you're young. Because I'm crabbed and sour, and you're happy and gay. Don't tell me! I know the world; and I know you'd far rather have my room than my company!"

"You know nothing of the kind, aunt," I replied,

giving her a hearty kiss; "and you don't mean a word of it."

"Every syllable," said she, obstinately.

"And you know that I have always loved you dearly, and that . . ."

"You care a deal more for your trumpery diamonds, and your ugly 'ponies, and your gauds of silk and satin, I'll be bound!"

"How dare you say so? I've a great mind to say that I don't love you a bit—that I am very sorry to see you—that I wish you would go away directly, and not even stay to dine with us, like a dear, good, sociable, welcome old darling, as you are!"

"I'm not good," said my aunt, grimly; "and I never was sociable."

"Be bad and unsociable, then, if you like; but at all events remain a few hours with us, now that you are here," persuaded I, with an impatient glance at Hugh to second my invitation.

"I think Mrs. Sandyshaft will stay," said he, smiling.

"Do you?" exclaimed she, with a determined little jerk of the head. "Then you're mistaken. *I* dine with you, indeed? No, thank you. None of your outlandish foreign messes for me! I go home to my plain beef and mutton—plain English beef and mutton!"

"But my dear aunt," I began, "you shall . . . ."

"Bab," said she, "you're as bad as he is by this time, I've no doubt. I can't eat sour kraut, my dear. It's of no use to ask me."

"What shall we do, Hugh, to persuade her?" pouted I; fancying that she, perhaps, refused because he did not press her sufficiently. "How shall we make her believe that she would not be poisoned?"

"We—that is, *you*, can do no more than you have done, my child," replied he, drawing back one of the curtains, and looking out across the park. "Still I am of opinion that Mrs. Sandyshaft will stay."

"And why?" said my aunt.

"For two excellent reasons; the first of which is that it is now dark, and . . . ."

"I have my old close carriage with me," interrupted my aunt.

"— and rather foggy," pursued Hugh; "and your old close carriage has just disappeared through the gates of the west lodge."

"Disappeared? Mercy on us! who dared to send it away?"

"I did. And the second reason . . . ."

"But I tell you I can't stay, and I won't stay! I insist on having it called back! Bab, do you hear me?—I *insist* on having it called back."

"And the second reason," continued Hugh, with the same cheerful impassibility, "is that we have red mullet for dinner."

Now if there was one delicate dish which more than another tempted my aunt's frugal appetite, it was a dish of red mullet. Distant as we were from any large town, fish was at all times scarce in our part of the country; and red mullet especially so. It was not in human nature to resist such a combination of circumstances. My aunt's countenance softened. I suspect that she had wished, in her heart, to stay with us from the first; but the red mullet gave her an opportunity of doing so upon purely neutral grounds, and that was no small advantage.

"Red mullet?" said she. "Humph! Where did you get it?"

"From London—fresh this morning."

"And how d'ye have it cooked? Red mullet properly cooked is the best dish that comes to table; but messed up with foreign kickshaws . . . ."

"It shall be dressed, my dear aunt," said I, "in any way you prefer."

"Well—what else will you give me?—not but what I can make my dinner off the fish, if the rest is uneatable."

"My dear Mrs. Sandyshaft," said Hugh, "you shall dine exclusively upon red mullet, if you

please; though I think I can answer for a palateable pheasant as well. As for Barbara and myself, we, of course, habitually sit down to birds' nest soup, fricasseed frogs, alligators' brains *à la sauce*, potted cobra-di-capello, and other foreign trifles of the same kind; but of these you need not partake, unless you please."

My aunt smiled, grimly.

"You have a disgusting imagination, Hugh Farquhar," said she; "but you may depend that you have eaten things quite as bad, and worse, many a time without knowing it."

And so the dinner question ended, and she stayed. How often and how vainly I afterwards wished that I had never persuaded her to do so!

We dined at seven, and it was nearly six by the time she had agreed to remain; but that hour was actively employed by Mrs. Fairhead and the cook, and the result was an excellent dinner in the genuine English style; so well dressed and so well served, that it even elicited the approbation of Mrs. Sandyshaft herself. In addition to this, Hugh, of course, brought out the best wines that his well-stocked cellars afforded; and, at dessert, produced a very small, cobwebbed, ancient looking bottle, which was placed upon the table in a silver stand, as reverently as if it had been a sacred relic.

"What have you got there?" asked my aunt, complacently.

"A patriarch," replied Hugh. "A patriarch that once dwelt in an Emperor's cellar, and was one of a hundred dozen presented by the Emperor to a great Jew capitalist. The Jew capitalist died, and his heirs put up to auction all his wines, plate, pictures, books, horses and personal property. At this auction the patriarch, with his surviving brethren, now only twelve dozen in number, passed into the hands of a great English physician, famed alike for his wit, hospitality, and learning. The physician and my father were friends and school-fellows. My father died first; but the physician remembered me in his will, and left me, among other items, a valuable chronometer, a very curious Latin library, and the last fifteen bottles of the wine now before you. Tippoo, draw the cork."

Tippoo stepped forward from behind his master's chair, where he had been standing like a bronze statue, and obeyed.

"Bring me three Venetian glasses."

And three Venetian glasses (quaint, delicate things, with bowls like finely blown soap-bubbles, and fantastic wreathed stems of white and sapphire glass) were placed before him. Into these he slowly poured the precious liquid, which came out

sullenly, like a liqueur, and hung in heavy red drops about the brim.

My aunt tasted hers—set it down—tasted it again—sniffed it—held it up to the light; and finally said—

"The richest wine I ever tasted in my life. What is it?"

"Imperial Tokay."

"And is that all true that you've been telling us?"

"Every word of it. The Emperor was Francis the First of Austria; the capitalist was Goldschmidt, and the physician was Sir Astley Cooper."

"I've tasted Tokay before," said my aunt; "but it wasn't like this."

"I dare say not. This is the real Tokay essence, and is used by Austrian and Hungarian wine-merchants merely as a flavouring for the Tokay that is bought and sold. The genuine essence, in its unadulterated purity, is hardly to be tasted at other than royal tables. The name of this wine is the Mezes-Malé Tokay, and it grows in a small vineyard which is the property of the Emperor."

"It must be valuable," said my aunt, emptying her glass with infinite gusto.

"It is valuable. This wine is at least sixty years old. Sir Astley Cooper bought it for sixty-three shillings the bottle. The bottle contains six

glasses, and each glassful is therefore worth half a guinea. The Venetian beakers out of which we drink it are three hundred years old; and the value of each beaker is about equivalent to a bottle of the wine. There's a pretty piece of arithmetic for you, ladies."

"It's drinking money," exclaimed my aunt. "It's sinful!"

"Pleasant sinning, however," replied Hugh. "*Péchons encore!*"

"Not for the world. Mercy on us! I wouldn't have drunk that, if I had known what it was worth."

"Nonsense. The patriarch is sacrificed in your honour, and you are bound to perform your share in dispatching him. Tippoo, fill Mrs. Sandyshaft's glass."

"No—no thank you; not another drop!"

And my aunt, in the energy of her abstinence, clapped her hand so roughly over the top of her glass, that the delicate globe snapped away at its junction with the stem, rolled over the edge of the table, and shattered into a thousand fragments.

"Mercy on us!—a glass worth three pounds! I'll—I'll get you another like it!" gasped my aunt, aghast at her misfortune.

"Indeed you must not think of such a thing,"

said Hugh. "It is a matter of no importance. Tippoo, another glass for Mrs. Sandyshaft."

"But indeed I will! I'll have every curiosity shop in London ransacked till I find one. Give me the pieces for a pattern, please . . . . dear, dear me, I wish people wouldn't eat and drink out of things that are too fine for use!"

"People who do so, dearest aunty, must be prepared for the possible consequences," laughed I. "Pray say no more about it."

"And pray do not attempt to replace the glass either," added Hugh; "for it would be perfectly useless. I bought that half-dozen at the sale at the Manfrini palace, and I know there are no others like them."

"How do you know it?" asked my aunt, snappishly.

"Because I am a *connoisseur* of antique glass, and am acquainted with all the best collections in Europe."

"I believe, Hugh Farquhar," said my aunt, "that you know everything that isn't worth knowing, and nothing that is."

"I know that this Tokay is too good to be refused. Let me persuade you to take a second glass."

"Not I! I only wish I hadn't taken the first."

"I should have been really vexed if you had declined it," said Hugh; "for it is a wine that I only produce on rare occasions."

"The rarer the better, I should say," retorted my aunt. "Especially if you give it to people in glasses that can't be touched without being broken; and which, when broken, cannot be replaced. It may be a compliment—I dare say it is; but it's a very disagreeable one, let me tell you."

"I wish, upon my honour, Mrs. Sandyshaft, that you would think no more about it."

"But I can't help thinking about it. It annoys me."

"Well, let us, at all events, *say* nothing farther upon the subject."

"Oh, it's of no use trying to impose silence on me," said my aunt. "What I think of, I talk of. It's my way."

A slight flush of displeasure rose to my husband's brow, and he looked down without replying. He had been admirably polite and good-humoured up to this time; but I could see that he had not liked the tone of her remarks for some minutes past.

"And besides," added she, working herself into a worse temper, as she went on, "I hate to incur obligations that I can't return. I feel I've cost you six guineas within the last half-hour; three

of which, at least, no money can make right again."

"I beg leave to assure you, Mrs. Sandyshaft," said Hugh, coldly, "that I am not in the habit of estimating the pounds, shillings, and pence which it may cost me, when I entertain a friend at my table."

"Perhaps if you thought a little more about the pounds, shillings, and pence, it would be better for you," replied she.

"Of that you must permit me to judge."

"A civil way, I suppose, of desiring me to mind my own business."

"My dear aunt," said I, growing momentarily more and more uneasy, "this conversation has wandered quite far enough from the subject. Pray let us talk of something else."

"Bab, it's neither your place, nor your husband's, to stop my mouth. What I think, I think; and what I choose to say, I say; and both Houses of Parliament shouldn't prevent me. When I see people extravagant, and ostentatious, and thoughtless, I tell 'em of it. If they don't like to hear the truth, it's not my fault."

"You must give me leave to say, Mrs. Sandyshaft, that I am really at a loss to understand your meaning," said Hugh. "If I could suppose that you intended those expressions for . . . ."

"Intended?—fiddlesticks! Who else should I intend them for? *You* are ostentatious, and extravagant, and thoughtless, Hugh Farquhar; and you know it. There isn't another man in this county who has spent his money so wildly and foolishly as yourself—and not only his money, but all the most precious years of his life, into the bargain. Ah, Bab, it's no use to look at me like that! These things have been on my mind a long time, and now that I've begun, I'll just say my say out, and have done with it. I tell you I'm sick of your art-jargon, and absenteeism, and continental ways—of your Paul What-you-may-call-'ems, and your ponies, and your diamonds, and your curiosities, and your nonsenses and follies. Nothing English is good enough for you. If you've a horse, he must be Arabian. If you've a dog, he must be a St. Bernard, or a Dutch pug, or a French poodle, or an Italian greyhound. If you buy a picture, it's never a Gainsborough nor a Sir Joshua Reynolds; but some miserable foreign daub got up in the back slums of Rome, to dupe the English. Every sentence you speak is interlarded with parley-voos. The very servant that stands behind your chair is a nasty, sly, black, heathenish savage, more like a monkey than a man!"

"Stop, Mrs. Sandyshaft," interposed Hugh, the angry vein swelling on his temple, and an ominous

flash lighting up his eyes. "I can make large allowance for your prejudices and your temper; but I will not suffer you to utter malicious untruths of the most faithful friend and servant I have ever known."

"Oh, Hugh!" I exclaimed, "she does not mean it! Pray, pray let this discussion be ended!"

"Bab, I *do* mean it," replied my aunt, whose long-repressed irritation had now burst forth in a fiery torrent, stronger than her own reason. "I do mean it, and it's true; and I only say what everybody thinks, and nobody dares to say before his face. He's no Englishman. No man who lives as he has lived these last twelve or fifteen years, deserves the name of Englishman. He has performed none of the duties belonging to his position in the county. He has neither represented it in Parliament; nor served it as a magistrate; nor improved his acres; nor cultivated the good-will of his neighbours and tenants; nor done any one single thing but spend out of his country the money that his ancestors invested in it. Nothing but ruin can come of it—nothing but ruin!"

"Upon my soul, Mrs. Sandyshaft," said Hugh, rising angrily from his seat at the table, "this is insufferable! By what right do you take the

liberty of judging my conduct according to your standard? I have yet to learn that . . . ."

"By the right of my relationship to this poor, luckless, mistaken child!" interrupted my aunt. "A year ago, I would have said nothing about it. You might have gone to perdition your own way, for any interference of mine; but now things are different. Your worthless lot is linked up with hers, and if you're ruined, she must be the victim. I wish she'd never seen you. I wish I'd never seen you. I'd as soon she'd married a strolling player, or a wandering Arab, as you, Hugh Farquhar! You're the last man living whom I'd have given her to, if I'd had any voice in the matter; and I don't mind telling you so!"

"Having told me so, Mrs. Sandyshaft, and having, I presume, insulted me sufficiently at my own table, you will now be satisfied, and permit me to wish you a good evening," said Hugh, looking very pale, and moving towards the door. "Barbara, I leave to you the task, or the pleasure, of entertaining Mrs. Sandyshaft during the remainder of the evening."

"That won't be for long, then, I can tell you; and what's more, it will be many a day before I cross your threshold again."

"As you please, Madam."

And with this, he left the room.

"Oh, aunt Sandyshaft! aunt Sandyshaft! What have you done?" I cried, bursting into tears.

"Told him a piece of my mind, Bab; and much good may it do him," replied she, stalking angrily up and down the room.

"But you will never, never be friends again!"

"I can't help that."

"But I—what am I to do? I who love you both so well! Remember how dear he is to me—my husband . . . ."

"Bab, he's a scamp. He is not worthy of you."

"It is false! You do not know him—he is the best, the bravest, the—the noblest . . . ."

My sobs choked me, and I broke down. My aunt stopped short before me, and struck the table violently with her open hand.

"Bab," said she, "you're a fool. The man will break your heart, some day; and then you'll believe me."

A few minutes more, and she was gone; never, as I felt in my heart, to return again.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MYSTERY IN THE HOUSE.

"——to be wroth with one we love
Doth work like madness in the brain."
CHRISTABEL.

SHORT as were the wintry days, and frequent my interruptions, I went on painting regularly throughout November and the greater part of December. The beloved occupation did me good in all ways, and helped to keep my thoughts from dwelling too constantly on that painful breach which now seemed as if it could never again be healed over. My aunt had been the aggressor; and I knew her too well to hope that she would ever acknowledge herself wrong. She would have died, at any time, rather than apologise. This being the case, I found it more and more difficult to keep peace with her;

and so stayed chiefly at home and at work, during the time that elapsed between the great Bayham ball, and the evening of her unfortunate visit. As that long appointed date drew nearer, my picture approached completion. The subject had been suggested by Hugh when we were travelling in Switzerland, more than a year ago, and had dwelt in my recollection as a hope and a project ever since. It represented Erasmus at Basle.

The great wit and theologian was seen standing, towards evening, on the terrace in front of the Cathedral, looking thoughtfully over towards the hills of the Schwartz-Wald. The sun had just set, and a calm light filled the sky, Far below coursed the Rhine, broad, green, and eddying. Between the chestnut trees on the terrace peeped the quaint red columns of the cloister which he loved to pace; and on the ledge of the parapet, against the stone-bench on which he would seem to have been sitting, lay an antique folio, printed, perhaps, by Gutenberg of Maintz. On the figure of Erasmus I had bestowed infinite pains, having made a sketch from his portrait in the *Concilium Saal* for this purpose. Desirous of representing him as he appeared towards the latter end of his life, when he had returned to Basle for the second time, I took care to deepen the lines about the face; and strove to light it up, as if from within, with that divine expression of

hope and resignation which is said to have settled upon it, like a glory, during his last sufferings. He wore a long furred robe, and a flat, three-cornered cap of black velvet. One thin hand rested on the book, while with the other he supported his frail and failing form upon a stick with a transverse handle, like a short crutch. Close of day, and close of stainless life; peace within, and peace on the world without; night coming on, and the Great Dawn after the night:—these were the thoughts I sought to utter upon the canvas; this was the tale I endeavoured, however imperfectly, to relate.

It happened one morning, when Hugh was out with his gun, and I had settled down to a long day's work, that I became dissatisfied, somehow, with the folio on the parapet. I had taken the 1623 Shakespeare for my model—a fine old book, which looked as though it might have sat for its portrait to the author of these well-known lines descriptive of a mediæval volume:—

> "That weight of wood, with leathern coat o'erlaid,
> Those ample clasps of solid metal made,
> The close-press'd leaves unclosed for many an age,
> The dull red edging of the well-fill'd page,
> On the broad back the stubborn ridges roll'd,
> Where yet the title stands in tarnish'd gold."

The Shakespeare's "leathern coat," however,

was of dark brown calf, and looked too sombre when seen in conjunction with the deepening shadows on the terrace, and the dark-robed figure of Erasmus. I placed the picture in various lights, and the more I looked, the more I became convinced that some less heavy colour would improve the composition. What if I made it a binding of antique vellum, toned by age to a mellow golden hue, in harmony with the warm tints of the sky? I had seen one whole compartment full of such in the library below—great, ponderous, ancient folios of theologic lore, lettered "*Acta Sanctorum*," and extending through some thirty or forty volumes. Could I do better than take one of these? Could I, if I searched for a year, place in the hands of Desiderius Erasmus a work which he was more likely to have had in frequent use? Delighted with the idea, and eager to put it into immediate execution, I ran down at once to the library, to select my volume.

The circular stove within its trellis of wrought bronze, diffused a mild warmth throughout the great room. The wintry sunlight poured in at intervals through the lofty windows, and fell in bright patches on the floor. The long rows of books, shelf above shelf, in their rich and varied bindings, glowed with a friendly lustre, and gave out a pleasant odour of Russia and Morocco. The

brass wire-work glittered like gold. It was a place to have made even a savage in love with books—a *columbarium* where there was found neither dust, nor ashes, nor funereal urns; but only caskets of rich workmanship embalming the souls of the wise.

The library, as I think I have already mentioned elsewhere, was divided into compartments of carved oak; each of which was about four feet in width, and reached all the way to the ceiling, where it terminated in a simple cornice supporting a small entablature. Of these compartments there were sixteen on the right hand side, divided half way by the stove, which stood somewhat back in an antique carved fireplace. On the opposite side, divided at regular intervals by five long windows, stood twelve similar compartments; while at the end, the great Tudor window, through which I was caught peeping so many years ago, filled in the vista with rich heraldic emblazonments of stained glass, through which the daylight filtered in streams of purple and gold.

And all this was his and mine!

There were moments, now and then, when I seemed to wake up to a sense of sudden wonder and gratitude, scarce believing that my happiness was more than a dream; and this was one of those moments. I paused; looked up and down the

noble gallery; and asked myself what I had done to deserve so much devotion, so much wealth, so great and many advantages? Truly, I had done nothing but love, and love perfectly; and my love had brought its own "exceeding great reward." Was not that reward too gracious and abundant? Was I old enough, and wise enough, to use it rightly? I could but try, humbly, earnestly, faithfully. I could but try; and I would try—and my eyes grew dim as I registered that silent resolution, which was a prayer and a promise in one.

Turning these things over in my mind, I passed slowly up the library, looking for the compartment of the "*Acta Sanctorum*." I found it at the farthest end, making the last compartment on the right hand side, on a line with the fireplace. I have said that the books were protected by wire screens. These wire screens worked upon hinges, and opened in the middle of each compartment, like folding-doors. I turned the key; took out the first volume on which I happened to lay my hand; and was about to close the book-case without further investigation, when it occurred to me that the folios on the left half of the compartment looked fresher and more attractive. I therefore replaced it; unbolted the other half of the wire-door; and proceeded to take down another specimen.

To my surprise, the book would not stir. I

tried its next neighbour, and then one on the shelf below; and still with the same result. Looking more closely, I found that, although their vellum backs were gilt and lettered precisely like those on the adjoining shelves, they were, in fact, not books at all; but imitations put there to fill a vacant space. No wonder they looked fresher than their genuine brethren, which had withstood the wear of centuries!

Half smiling at the deception and its success, I was about to turn back to my former choice, when a thought flashed across me, like a revelation, and brought the blood in a torrent to my face. The door! The door that I had heard as I came in that morning, weeks and weeks ago! The secret door of which *no* one knew anything, and for suggesting the very possibility of which I was laughed at as a romantic child!

Trembling with excitement, I eagerly examined the false half of the sixteenth compartment, in every part. If it were a door, it must open somewhere; and that opening would, most likely, be hidden in some part of the woodwork. Nevertheless, I scrutinised the woodwork in vain. I next looked for the hinges; but no trace of a hinge was visible. I then thought that one of the mock books might, perhaps, be moveable, concealing a lock at the back; but having tested all in succes-

sion, I found all false alike. At last I began to think I must be mistaken, and that no door existed, after all.

Having come to this conclusion, I chanced to pass my hand, almost mechanically, along the under edges of the shelves. I did not even say to myself "there may be a bolt here;" but I did it, as if by a kind of instinct. Suddenly my finger slipped into a groove, and encountered a metal catch. I drew back, flushed and agitated, and scarcely able to stand. I had suspected the existence of the door; I had searched for it; and now that I had found it, I was terrified by my own discovery. What weakness! Half angry with myself, and half defiant, I pulled the catch quickly back, and, leaning my knee against the books, saw the five lower shelves yield at once to the pressure, swing back on concealed hinges, and reveal a narrow dark passage of about two feet in width. The passage once before me, I plunged into it without a second's hesitation; struck my foot almost immediately against the first step of a steep and narrow staircase; and felt my way cautiously upwards.

I counted the steps, one by one, till I reached the eighteenth, and then my outstretched hand came suddenly against a door. It was totally dark, and only a faint gleam from below showed the

way by which I had come; for the staircase seemed to have turned in ascending, and the hidden door had swung nearly close again, after I passed through. I felt the panels over, with the slow and careful touch of a blind person. I found a small metal knob, which turned noiselessly within my grasp. I paused. My heart beat violently. My forehead was bathed in a cold perspiration. I asked myself for the first time what it was that I was about to see when this door was opened? What chamber, long closed—what deed of mystery, long forgotten—what family-secret, long buried, would be revealed to my eyes? Was it right, after all, that I should pursue this discovery? Ought I not, perhaps, to go back as I had come; tell my husband of the secret upon which I had stumbled; and leave it to him to deal with according to his pleasure? Hesitating thus, I had, even now, more than half a mind to go no farther. It was a struggle between delicacy and curiosity; but I was a mere woman, after all, and curiosity prevailed.

"Come what may," said I aloud, "I *will* see what lies beyond this door!"

And with this I opened it.

My disappointment was great. I had strung myself up for the sight of something strange and terrible—for closed shutters, through which a

narrow thread of daylight should half reveal a room, in every corner of which the dust of years would lie like a mysterious mantle; for a floor stained, perchance, with blood, and furniture giving evidence in its disorder of some fearful struggle enacted long ago; for something, perhaps, even more ghastly still; and now . . . .

And now I found myself, instead, upon the threshold of a pretty, cheerful, bright little sitting-room, with a good fire blazing in the grate, and a window overlooking part of the shrubberies. The walls were covered with books and pictures. In a cage hanging against the window, sang and fluttered a pair of little gold coloured canaries. Across the back of an easy chair beside the fire-place lay a woman's shawl of black cashmere, bound with black velvet; and on the table lay a pile of books, some of them open; a desk; writing materials; and a small workbasket.

I had made a wonderful discovery, after all! Here was, doubtless, some little *sanctum* sacred to the private hours of good Mrs. Fairhead; and a very snug little *sanctum*, too!

"She must be fond of reading," thought I, looking round at the books with some surprise. "Where can she have got all these? And what kind of literature does she indulge in?"

I went over to the table, smiling at my own

thoughts, and expecting to find the works of Soyer and Miss Acton on the desk of my studious housekeeper. But the smile vanished, and left me cold, motionless, paralysed.

The first book on which my eyes fell was entitled "STORIA D'ITALIA, *di* FRANCESCO GUICCIARDINI, *gentiluomo di Firenze*."

I sat down, mechanically, in the chair facing the desk, and closed my eyes, like one who is stunned by a sudden blow. A history of Italy, in Italian! How should this thing be possible? Who, in my house, could read that book, unless it were my husband or myself? Surely I must be mad, or dreaming.

I opened my eyes again; but the same words stared me in the face. Another book lay beside it, also opened—the celebrated "STORIA DELLA LETTERATURA ITALIANA" of Tiraboschi. Three or four others were within reach. These I drew towards me with shaking hands that could scarcely turn the leaves. I examined them in a kind of dull stupor. They were "Baretti's Italian and English Dictionary," "Waverley," the "*Prigioni*" of Silvio Pellico, and Rogers's "Italy."

Who, then, was the reader of these books? Who the inhabitant of this room? I looked round vaguely, with a sense of bewildered uneasiness, such as one feels in a dream, when on the

verge of some unknown danger. There lay the shawl—here the work-basket. Then it was a woman . . . . merciful God! what woman? Why had I never seen her? Why had no one told me that she lived under my roof? What was her name? What right had she here? Was Hugh in the secret? Was Mrs. Fairhead? Were they both deceiving me; and, if so, for what purpose? I sprang to my feet. I felt as if my brain were on fire. Finding no name written in any of the books on the table, I turned to those on the shelves, and tore down volume after volume with feverish haste. They were chiefly Italian, some much worn, and some yet uncut—Manzoni, Alfieri, Metastasio, Ariosto, and the like. In none of them, any writing. There were pictures on the walls; coloured prints and engravings, for the most part —Naples, Messina, Pæstum, and the Grotto of Capri. There were ornaments on the chimney-piece—a leaning Tower in alabaster, a bronze Temple of Vesta, a model of Milan Cathedral. Italy—everywhere Italy!

Then this woman was Italian.

The very thought that she was Italian seemed, somehow, to make the mystery less endurable than before. I felt that I hated her, unknown as she was. All my senses appeared to be unnaturally keen. Nothing escaped me. I saw everything,

and reasoned upon all that I saw with a rapidity and directness that seemed like inspiration. Possessed by a kind of despairing recklessness, I searched every article of furniture, every shelf; even the shawl on the chair; even the work-basket on the table. Then I opened the desk. At any other time, the mere thought of such an act would have shocked me; but now, half insane as I was, I did it without even the consciousness of possible wrong.

The first things that I saw inside were a small book, and a little oval velvet case, about the size of a five-shilling piece. I opened the book first; a dainty pocket volume of Petrarch's Sonnets, bound in scarlet morocco, with a gilt clasp. On the first leaf was written in Hugh's bold hand, somewhat cramped to suit the tiny page—"*Maddalena, del suo amico—H. F.*"

Maddalena! Her name was Maddalena.

Then I took up the oval case. A mist swam before my eyes. I scarcely dared to look at the portrait within, even when it lay open before me—but I did look. It was Hugh—a younger Hugh, beardless, boyish, different, and yet the same. Opposite the portrait, on a gold plate inside the cover, were engraved the words "*Hugo a Maddalena.*"

I do not know how long I stood gazing down

upon this in my dumb despair; but it seemed as if hours had gone by, when I at last dropped again into the chair, laid my head and arms on the table, and burst into an agony of sobbing.

Presently I became conscious that there was some one in the room. I had heard no one enter; but I felt that I was no longer alone. Looking up in sudden terror and defiance, I saw my husband standing before me. He was very pale—lividly pale—and his eyes were full of tears.

"My poor Barbara," said he, softly, and held out his hand. I shrank back, involuntarily. He shuddered.

"No, no," he said, "not that! anything but that." Then, as if recollecting himself, he resumed his former tone, and added, "I see it all, my Barbara. Come with me—trust me—and I will explain everything."

I pointed to the portrait.

"Yes, everything, my darling—everything."

LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

CHAPTER V.

THE STORY OF MADDALENA.

"Un pezzo di cielo caduto in terra."—SANNAZARO.

"POOR Maddalena!" said Hugh. "Her life is very solitary—her story very brief. An exile from her country, a fugitive from her family, she has for years taken refuge under my roof. It is her only home. Alone here with her books and her sad thoughts, she wears away the slow cycle of a companionless existence. She is no longer young; and she has no friend in all the wide world, but myself. You will pity her, my Barbara, as I do, when you have heard me to the end.

"You know that I chanced to be abroad when my father died. It was my first visit to the Continent, and I was making what was then called the

"grand tour." I loved him very dearly, and could not endure to return to the home where I should have missed him in every room; so I prolonged my travels indefinitely; and, instead of coming back to England, went farther and farther East, leading a wild nomadic life, and seeking to forget my sorrow in deeds of peril and adventure. Wearying at length of the tent and the saddle, I retraced my steps, after a year and a half of Oriental wanderings, and returned westward as far as Naples; where I bought a yacht, hired a villa at Capri, and lived like a hermit. Here Tippoo and a female servant constituted all my establishment; while, for the management of my little yacht, I needed only one sailor and a pilot. The pilot's name was Jacopo. He lived in the island, and was at my service when I needed him. The sailor slept on board; and there was a sheltered cove at the foot of my garden, where we used to cast anchor.

"In this place I lived a delightful life. Every day I coasted about the enchanting shores and islands of the Neapolitan bay; sketching; fishing; reading Cicero, Suetonius and Virgil; landing wherever it pleased my fancy; and wandering among the ruins of Pæstum, Pompeii, and Baiæ. My books, at this time, were my only associates. I knew no one in the neighbourhood of Naples, and desired only to be alone. It was a strange

life for a young man, not yet twenty-three years of age.

"I have already mentioned to you my pilot Jacopo. He was a swarthy, handsome fellow, about three years older than myself, sullen, active, and taciturn as a Turk. All I knew of him was that he was unmarried, and lived somewhere on the other side of the island. Accident, however, brought me to a knowledge of his family. Coming home one afternoon, about two hours before sunset, and running the yacht into our little harbour, I saw a young contadina waiting in the shadow of the rocks. As Jacopo sprang on shore, she ran to meet him, clasped him by the arm with both hands, and spoke with great apparent earnestness. He, in reply, nodded, muttered some three or four brief syllables, and kissed her on the forehead. She then ran lightly up one of the many rugged paths that here intersect the face of the cliff, and disappeared. As we went up to the house, I laughed at Jacopo about his innamorata. 'She is no innamorata, signore,' said he. 'She is my sister.'—'Thy sister, Jacopo,' repeated I. 'Hast thou a sister, *amico?*' —'I have a sister, signore, and a brother, and a sister-in-law,' replied he; 'and Maddalena tells me that the sister-in-law has this day been delivered of her first-born. The babe will be baptised to-night, and if the signore wants me no

more this evening . . . .'—'No, no, Jacopo,' said I. 'Go to the baptism, by all means. Thou wilt act as godfather?'—'Sì, signore, and as father, too; Paolo being away.'—'Who is Paolo?'—'My brother, signore, who is at sea.'—'Friend Jacopo,' said I, 'do you think the sister-in-law would allow me to be among the guests?' Jacopo flushed up under his dark skin, and said she would think it a great honour. 'But,' added he, with a kind of proud shame, 'it is a poor place, signore.' To which I replied that I was a citizen of the world, and all places were alike to me; and so it was settled. We then started at once for his home, striking across the island by short cuts and sheep tracks known to my companion, who preceded me in his accustomed silence. By and by we came again in sight of the sea, and, following the course of the shore, reached an open space, or high level plateau, on the very verge of which stood a small antique stone dwelling, bowered in with trellised vines, and almost overhanging the sea. A raised terrace in front; a little garden at the back, full of orange and fig-trees; a rude dovecot clinging, like a parasite, to the walls of an outhouse; a few goats browsing on the herbage round about; and a flight of rough steps, hewn in the solid rock, and leading down to the beach, seventy feet below, made up the picture of this humble home. As we

drew near, the music of a *zampogna* and tamburine became audible; and Maddalena came out to meet us. Learning that I was the *padrone*, she kissed my hand, bade me welcome, and made me known to the guests. They were the priest; some fishermen and their wives; and one Matteo, a wealthy peasant, who kept the only little *albergò* in Capri. They all rose at our approach. The zampogna and tamburine players laid aside their instruments; the priest put on his alb and chasuble; the innkeeper made his best bow; and we all went into the house, where, in a room opening on the garden, lay the young mother and her infant; their clean white coverlet strewn with sprigs of rosemary and fresh thyme, and a crucifix at the head of the bed. Jacopo and Maddalena then stood by as sponsors —the priest gabbled through the baptismal formula—the little Christian protested lustily against the mouthful of salt administered to him on the finger of the holy man; and so the ceremony ended. Maddalena then ran to prepare supper on the terrace, while we congratulated the mother, and made such little presents to the baby as each could afford. Thus the priest gave a tiny medal, blessed by the Pope; Jacopo a piece of linen; the innkeeper a string of coral beads; and I, in pledge of a gift to come, a broad gold coin, for which the mother and Jacopo kissed my hands. After this we went out

on the terrace, and supped by sunset, waited on, in Eastern fashion, by the women. I shall never forget the crimson splendour of that evening sky, nor the pastoral charm of that rustic festival, at which Plenty and Good-will presided, like unseen gods. There was white bread made from Indian corn, and wine in goat-skin vessels. There were crabs fried in olive-oil; quails, for which the island is famous; omelettes, dried fish, salad, fresh cucumbers, melons, green figs, maccaroni, and the delicious *ricotta* of goat's-milk, which every peasant of South Italy is skilled in making. While we were yet feasting, the tender twilight came on, and the broad summer moon rose over the tops of the olive-trees, glowing and golden. Then the tables were cleared away; the priest took his leave; those who could play snatched up their instruments; and a circle was formed on the grassy plateau for the tarantella. I could dance it myself, then, as well as any Neapolitan among them; and so, by and by, took Maddalena for my partner, and delighted my simple hosts by performing their national dance like one 'to the manner born.' Would you know what Maddalena was like when I first saw her? Well, I will try to describe her. She was about eighteen years of age, and looked somewhat older. Her features were agreeable without being handsome. Her

complexion was pale, her figure slight, her hair black and abundant. At eighteen, most Italian women are married or betrothed; but Maddalena was neither. Her life had, hitherto, been devoted to her brothers. Their will was her law; and if she feared Jacopo more than she loved him, she adored Paolo and his wife with her whole heart. I learned these things afterwards, and by degrees; but I tell them to you now, *carina*, to make my story clearer and briefer. For a peasant—and you must remember, my Barbara, that she was nothing but a peasant—Maddalena had a more than ordinary air of intelligent thoughtfulness. Something of this she may have owed to her housewifely habits and secluded life; but much also to natural abilities of no common order. For all this, she could neither read nor write; and was as ignorant as a child of all the world that was not Capri. She had never been farther than Naples in her life. Her beads were her library; the Madonna was her religion; Tasso, as she had now and then heard him chanted by the *Canta Storia*, her only historian.

"I have always loved to identify myself with the life of the people in every land that I have visited, and my introduction to this family of simple islanders gave me unusual pleasure. I stayed with them till nearly midnight, taking my turn

at the guitar or the tarantella; helping Maddalena to mix lemonade for the thirsty dancers; and joining, between whiles, in the chorus of a *canto popolaro*. When, at length, I bade them farewell, and went home, with Jacopo for my guide, the fishers were out in the bay with their nets and torches, like sea meteors, and the moon was declining with yet unabated splendour.

"'I shall go over to Naples to-morrow, Jacopo,' said I, as we went along. 'Sì, signore.'—'But you must tell me what gifts to buy.' Jacopo shook his head. 'Nay, but how can I guess what would be acceptable to the father and mother?' Jacopo, however, was as proud and shy as he was taciturn, and would only say that whatever the *padrone* pleased would surely be most acceptable; so, being thrown on my own resources, I suggested a pair of gold ear-rings for the mother, a piece of cloth to make a holiday suit for the father, and a necklace for Maddalena. To each of these, Jacopo bent his head, with a pleased '*grazie*, signore;' and to the last he said, '*La sorella* will keep it for her wedding.'—'Has she then a lover?' I asked. He shook his head again. 'Not yet,' he replied; '*ma vedremo*—we shall see.'—'And Paolo,' I said, 'where is he now?'—'At sea, signore, with his ship.'—'And where is his ship?'—'*Non so*, signore.'—'To what port was she bound?'—'To

Smyrna, signore, and the Greek Isles.'—'You never hear from him while he is away?'—'Never, signore.'—'Surely his wife is sometimes anxious?' Jacopo shrugged his shoulders. '*E buon giovane*,' said he; 'the Madonna will watch over him.'

"By this time we had come upon roads that I knew, and so I bade Jacopo good night, and we parted company.

"The next day, I sailed over to Naples, as agreed; made my purchases, spent my evening at the San Carlo, and returned to Capri just as the sun was rising behind Vesuvius. That same afternoon, I coasted round to the north-west of the island; cast anchor in a little creek at Point Vitareto, about half a mile below Maddalena's home; and went up to the cottage on foot. I found Jacopo there before me, tying up the vines; and Maddalena sitting in the porch, spinning, singing to the baby, and rocking the cradle with her foot. She rose and bade me welcome, fetched a wooden chair from the house, and placed before me a plate of fresh figs, and a small flask of wine. 'It is the *vino Tiberiano*, signore,' said she. 'The wine of Tiberius!' I repeated. 'A good wine, but deserving a better name.' She looked up inquiringly. 'Did you never hear of Tiberius, who lived on this island in the ancient times?' I asked. 'Yes, signore,' she replied, crossing herself; 'he was a ma-

gician.'—'Aye, and a Pagan,' added Jacopo, coming down from his ladder among the vines. 'He built twelve palaces here by enchantment; but they were all destroyed by the holy Saint Constantine.'—'*E vero—è verissimo,* signore,' said Maddalena, seeing the smile which I could not wholly suppress; 'one may see the ruins in all parts of Capri.'—'I have seen the ruins, Maddalena,' I replied; 'but Tiberius was no magician. He was a wicked Emperor, and all his palaces were razed to the ground by his successor.' At this moment, my sailor came up from the beach, bringing the box of gifts, and we went into the house to open it. The sister-in-law was sitting up in bed to receive me, and the room, as usual in South Italy, when a woman is recovering from her confinement, was fragrant with sweet herbs. First, I took out the ear-rings; then a mug for the baby; then the cloth for Paolo; then a silver watch for Jacopo; and, lastly, a coral necklace for Maddalena. You would have thought, Barbarina, that I had given them the sovereignty of the island. The young mother called on the Madonna and all the saints to bless me. Jacopo, though he said little, was eloquent in gesticulation. As for Maddalena, almost childlike in her joy, she clapped her hands, laughed, danced, hung the necklace on the baby's little neck, and finally ran to the well, like

a young water-nymph, to see how it looked upon her own. For my part, *carina*, I only felt ashamed to think at how little cost of money or effort I had made these poor souls so happy. Anxious, at last, to put an end to their thanks and praises, I proposed that Maddalena should go down to see the yacht.

"We went—Maddalena going first, rapidly and lightly as an island-born Diana—down the rock-hewn steep, and along the narrow path of amber strand that lay between the precipice and the sea. She had seen the yacht often, from afar off; but had never yet been on board. She admired everything—the polished deck; the brass-swivel gun, shining like gold; the compass in its mahogany shrine; the dainty little cabin, with its chintz hangings, its mirror, its pictures, and its books. All was beautiful, all was wonderful in her eyes; and she would have taken off her shoes at the cabin-door if I had not prevented it. My book-case, which, like that of the clerk in Chaucer, stood at my 'beddes hed,' and contained about as many volumes, surprised her more than all the rest. '*Dio!*' said she, to Jacopo, 'can the *padrone* read all these?'—'*Certo*,' replied her brother; 'and ten times as many.' She shook her head, incredulously. 'What can they tell him?' exclaimed she. Jacopo shrugged his shoulders; but I came to his assistance. 'They

tell me, Maddalena,' said I, 'of all kinds of strange and precious things, some of which happened hundreds of years ago, and some of which are happening every day. Here is a book that tells me about Italy in the time when all men were pagans, and no one had heard of Christ or the Madonna. Here is another which explains about the stars, how they come and go in the heavens, how far off they are, and what are their appointed uses. This one gives an account of all the seas and cities, islands, mountains, and rivers all over the face of the earth. This is poetry—not such poetry as the hymns and ballads which the fishermen sing; but long histories of war and love, all in rhyme, like the 'Rinaldo.''—Maddalena listened eagerly, devouring each volume with her eyes as I took it out, and almost holding her breath while I spoke. '*La guerra e l'amore!*' repeated she. 'How beautiful! What is it called, signore?'—'It is called the Ilias of Homer,' I replied, 'and it is written in Greek.'—'Did Homer write it?' she asked, quickly.—'Yes, Homer wrote it.'—'In Greek, signore?'—'Yes; Homer was a Greek by birth.'—'Then perhaps Paolo will see him; *chi lo sa?*'—I laughed, and shook my head. 'No, no, Maddalena,' I said, 'Paolo will not see him. Homer has been dead nearly three thousand years.' She clasped her hands, and her dark eyes dilated with wonder.

'Three thousand years!' she murmured. '*Madre beata!* three thousand years!' And presently, when we were leaving the cabin, I saw her turn back to the book-case, and touch the volume timidly with one finger, as if it were a sacred relic, and had some virtue in it.

"After this, I landed now and then at Point Vitareto, and went up to the cottage to see Maddalena and her brother's wife. The affection of these women for each other, and for the sailor far away at sea; the patriarchal simplicity of their home; the calm sanctity of their lives; the antique songs which they sang to the baby in his cradle; the legends which they repeated with the credulity of children, were all, to me, sources of interest and pleasure. Even their household occupations charmed my imagination, like the details of an idyllic poem. The plying of the distaff, the pruning of the vines, the salting of the olive-harvest, the gathering of the honey, the preserving of the figs—what were these but commentaries upon Hesiod and Virgil? If only as a student of the poets and an observer of manners, I loved to familiarise myself with this pastoral interior, and to learn all that I could of the hopes, fears, and narrow ambitions of its inmates. Sometimes, however, we talked of Paolo, and then their hearts welled over with love and praise. Sometimes I

told them tales of far-off lands, or translated into their own soft vernacular a page of the Georgics. Then would Jacopo pause in his work, and Maddalena's distaff lie idle on her knee; and when I left off, they would point across the bay towards Posilippo and the tomb of Virgil, and say, 'Yonder is his place of rest.'

"At length there came a day when Jacopo informed me, not without a certain air of subdued exultation, that *la sorella* had just been asked in marriage by Matteo Pisani of Capri. 'Matteo Pisani!' I repeated. 'Not the innkeeper, Jacopo?' —'Sì, signore,' he replied. 'Matteo whom you saw on the night of the baptism of little Paolino.' —'But he is old enough,' said I, 'to be Maddalena's father!' Jacopo shrugged his shoulders. 'He is rich, signore.' I shook my head. 'Riches alone do not make a marriage happy,' I objected. 'Does Maddalena love him?' Jacopo laughed. 'Matteo is a good man,' said he, 'and if *la sorella* likes him well enough to marry him, the love will be sure to follow.' And with this he turned away, and said no more.

"It happened that this conversation took place as we were scudding before the wind on our way to Salerno, where I had made arrangements to remain for some days, for the purpose of sketching that part of the coast. During all this absence,

neither my pilot nor myself recurred to the subject of Maddalena's betrothal, and by the time we returned to Capri I had almost forgotten it. Once home again, I found my time more than usually occupied; for the term of months for which I had hired my villa was on the point of expiration, and I had made up my mind to go to Algiers for the winter. Busy, therefore, in packing my books and sketches, and making such final arrangements as not even a dweller in tents like myself could wholly escape, I allowed nearly another week to elapse before visiting my humble friends at Vitareto. When at length I found time to do so, it was to bid them farewell.

"The afternoon was mild and delicious, when I walked across the heights towards Jacopo's home. It was the third week in October. The yellow vine-leaves were withering fast in the grape-stripped vineyards, and the early snow already lay in faint streaks about the summit of Mount Solaro. As the ground rose, Naples and Ischia, Vesuvius with its plume of smoke, and the blue sea flecked with sails, came into sight. Half way to Vitareto, there was a point whence all the glorious bay might be seen on a day as clear as this. A stone seat and a solitary tree marked the spot. I pressed eagerly forward, remembering how many and many a year might go by before my eyes should

rest upon that sight again. As I drew near, I saw a woman sitting on the bench, with her face buried in her hands. At the sound of my approaching footsteps, she looked up. It was Maddalena.

"'Well met, Maddalena,' said I. 'I was coming to see you.'—She blushed; but the blush died away, and left her very pale. 'Our hearts always bid the signore welcome,' she replied.—'I was also coming,' I added, 'to say farewell.'—'Alas!' said she, 'we have heard it. The signore is going away.'—'Yes,' I said, regretfully; 'I am going; but I am sorry to leave Capri.'—She looked up with naïve wonder. 'The padrone is master,' said she. 'He can stay if he chooses.'—'True,' I replied; 'but I can also return when I please; and—and I have something of the Zingaro in my blood—I cannot help wandering. I am going to Africa for the winter. Still, I should have wished to stay, Maddalena, for your wedding.'—She blushed again, more faintly than before, and turned still paler after. 'I hear that it is a fortunate marriage,' said I, hastily disengaging a small ornament from my watch-chain. 'You must accept my congratulations, and this little remembrance of your English friend.'—She murmured some scarcely audible thanks. I looked at her closely, and could see that she had been lately weeping. Her face, too, looked haggard, and her

hands thin. 'I hope, Maddalena,' said I, 'that you may be happy.' Her lips trembled; but she made no reply. 'Marriage,' I continued earnestly, 'is a very serious thing—almost more serious, Maddalena, for a woman than for a man. It is a bondage for life; and unless it be a bondage of love, not all the golden ducats in the world can make it happy. I hope you do not accept Matteo because he is rich?'—'No, no, signore,' she replied, turning her face from me.—'Nor in obedience only to the wishes of your family?' She shook her head. 'If you do not love him,' I said, 'which I fear may be the case, you at all events respect him, Maddalena? You have no personal objection to him?' She shook her head again, with something like a suppressed sob. I took her hand. It was cold and damp, and I could feel all the nerves of the palm vibrating with agitation. '*Cara* Maddalena,' I said very gently and soothingly, 'I have no right—I know I have no right to question you thus; but I cannot bear to think that you are, perhaps, about to sacrifice your whole life to some mistaken sense of duty. Confide in me, as in one who knows the world so much better than yourself; and be assured that I will spare neither money nor influence, if money or influence can help you. Is there—as I cannot help thinking there may be—some other with whom you believe

you could be more happy?'—Maddalena covered her face with her hands, and burst into an agony of weeping. 'No one can help me!' she cried, brokenly. 'No one can help me!'—'Hush, Maddalena,' I said. 'Do not weep—do not despair. I am your true friend. I offer no more than I am ready to perform; and I believe that I *can* help you. Who is it that you prefer? If there are obstacles, what can be done to remove them?'—'Nothing, signore! nothing!'—'Is it that your lover is poor?' I asked. She shook her head. 'Is it that Jacopo dislikes him?' She shook her head again. 'Is it that you have quarrelled, and parted, and are too proud to be reconciled; or is it that he is no longer free to claim you?'—Maddalena started to her feet, and for the first time since our conversation had begun, looked straight at me through her tears. 'Signore,' she said, rapidly and vehemently, 'ask me no more. You mean kindly; but you can do nothing, nothing, nothing! If my heart aches, no medicine can cure it. My lot is cast. I *must* marry Matteo. I have given my promise, and whether I keep or break it, can make no difference now. He is rich. He is our landlord. If I marry him, I can, at least, do something to help my brothers and our little Paolino. By refusing him, I could do nothing to help myself. If you desire to be

kind to me, question me no more, and forget all about me! God and the Madonna bless and keep you, dear signore! I am not ungrateful, and—and I am not unhappy!'

"And with these words, Maddalena seized my hands, covered them with tears and kisses, and fled away before I could utter a word in reply. I sat for a long time on the stone bench, after she had disappeared, troubled and perplexed by what had taken place. I was sincerely grieved for her, my Barbara; and all the more grieved because I could see no way to serve her. The more I considered what she had said, the more I became convinced that it was now my duty to interfere no farther. I had sought her confidence, and she had refused it. I had offered my aid, and offered it in vain. If neither money nor influence could avail her, there remained but one conclusion. Maddalena, without doubt, loved a man who was already married; and in this case her best hope lay in honest Matteo. What readier cure, after all, for the heartache, than the love of a good man, the cares of a household, and the duties of maternity? As I sat and pondered thus, the sun sank lower and lower, till it was too late for me to go on to Vitareto that evening. So I rose and retraced my steps, resolving to send some farewell message by Jacopo the following day.

"The rest of my story, *carina*, may be summed up in a few words. I went no more to Vitareto; and, having only two days to remain in Capri, I discharged Jacopo. Having made arrangements to dispose of my little yacht and forward my superfluous books and drawings to England, I then bade farewell to the pretty villa; and, on the third day after my interview with Maddalena, slept on board my boat for the last time, and steered for Naples. I had now only my one sailor to navigate the yacht; but it was all plain sailing enough, so, after remaining on deck till the little white house that had been my home for so many months was carried out of sight by the curve of the shore, I went down into the cabin. At the cabin door I met Tippoo, with a strange, startled look upon his face. 'Sahib!' he said, pointing over his shoulder. 'Sahib—do you know?'—'Do I know what?' I asked.—'There, Sahib—in there!' Puzzled and impatient, I pushed past him into the cabin, and found—Maddalena! Maddalena, who fell at my feet, entreating me to forgive her, and imploring me to save her!

"I am almost ashamed to confess to you, Barbara, that my first impulse was one of anger. I felt that, having offered to help her when I could have done so without serious inconvenience, it was excessively annoying to find her claiming my pro-

tection just as I was starting on a long journey. However, I raised her up, soothed her as well as I could, and learned, to my amazement and distress, that she had been married to Matteo Pisani the day before. Once married, her friendly indifference changed, to use her own impassioned expression, to an unconquerable personal loathing. Feeling that she could never be his wife, she fled from his roof on her wedding night, and took refuge till daylight in a little oratory on Mount Solaro. Returning at dawn to her old home, she found Jacopo absent, summoned away to assist Matteo in the search for herself, and her sister-in-law in the deepest trouble. In vain she represented her aversion towards her husband. In vain she implored her sister's mediation and sympathy. She was told, and with bitter truth, that she should have known her own mind while there was yet time; that now her only course was submissively to apologise to Matteo, and return to his roof without delay; and that if she did not do so, none of her family would ever speak to her again. 'In this strait, signore,' said Maddalena, 'what could I do but fly to you for protection? I found your vessel ready to start—I chose a moment when there was no one within sight—I stole on board, and hid myself under your bed, till I knew that we were safely at sea. And now—now I am at your

mercy! If you take me back, my husband and Jacopo will kill me. If they do not, I shall kill myself, sooner than be the wife of a man whom I abhor. You, and you only, signore, can save me now!'—Serious, almost tragic as the situation was, I could not help feeling that there was in it an element of the ludicrous. 'Good God! Maddalena,' said I, 'it is all well enough to ask me to save you; but what am I to do with you?'—'Let me be your slave;' replied she. In spite of myself, I could not keep from smiling. 'You foolish little girl,' said I, 'what do I want with a slave? And why should you prefer slavery to a comfortable home with an honest respectable husband, like Matteo Pisani? Come, now, Maddalena, don't you think you have been somewhat rash and romantic, and that it would be better for us to turn the boat about, and steer for Capri? I will do my best to make your peace with Matteo, and . . . .'—'Enough, signore!' she exclaimed, flushed, and trembling, and indignant. 'I see that you despise me! Take me back, if you will. Take me back, and abandon me to my fate. I deserve your scorn.' I became serious in an instant. 'Maddalena,' I said, 'I no more despise you than I am disposed to abandon you. I offered you my help three days ago, and I will help you still. Give me a few moments to think what is

best to be done; and believe that, whatever the difficulty or danger, I will, by the help of Heaven, save you if I can.'

"With this I went on deck, and looked out ahead. We were, as nearly as possible, half-way across between Capri and Naples, and the shores of the little island were already indistinct in the distance. I went up to my sailor, who was steering. 'Tommaso,' I said, 'what wind have we? It seems to me to be blowing due west.' 'Sì, signore; due west,' replied Tommaso, with his eye on the compass. I took a turn or two on deck, and came back again. 'You are not a married man, I think, Tommaso?' said I. He looked surprised at the question, laughed and shook his head. 'And you have no particular home-ties, either—I mean you are a free man, to come and go as you please; is it not so?' '*Sì, signore; certo, certo,*' replied Tommaso. I took another turn; again came back; laid my hand on his shoulder, and said, 'Supposing that I were to keep the yacht, after all, Tommaso, and change the whole of my plans, would you stay with me?' 'Gladly, signore.' 'And could you, do you think, pilot the boat safely as far as Palermo, without putting into Naples at all?' 'Yes, signore.' 'Are you certain, Tommaso?' 'Quite certain, signore. It is all open sea, and my whole life has been spent in these waters.'

'Then 'bout ship, my man, at once,' said I, 'and steer for Palermo. There we shall be sure to pick up a pilot; and we can go on to Greece, or Constantinople, or Grand Cairo, or to the deuce, if we choose!"

"And this, Barbarina, was how I came to know poor Maddalena, and how I made myself responsible for her protection. I took her first of all to Palermo; then up the Adriatic to Venice; and from Venice to Vienna, where I placed her in a private family, and gave her, in accordance with her own desire, every facility for the improvement of her mind. She had excellent abilities, and a passion for knowledge; so that she became educated, as it were, by a miracle. At the end of three years, she could not only read and write her own language with correctness, but had made good progress in English as well. Since then, she has gone on improving year after year. Her happiness is bound up, so to speak, in her favourite authors; and her whole life is one long course of study. For the last five or six years, she has lived under my roof here, at Broomhill; occupying two little rooms at the back of the house; maintaining the strictest seclusion; knowing no one, and known of none. It has pleased her, poor soul, to constitute herself my librarian. She loves, in her gratitude, to believe herself of some little service to her bene-

factor; and the arrangement, classification, and cataloguing of the books downstairs have given her occupation and amusement together. As for the secret door, my Barbara, it has only been so disguised since she came here. It was originally contrived by my grandfather for his own convenience, and communicated with the rooms which he had in occupation. Those rooms, for that very reason, I assigned to Maddalena; and the door I caused to be masked by shelves of mock 'Acta Sanctorum,' partly for the better appearance of the library, and partly for Maddalena's satisfaction. She is haunted to this hour by a morbid fear of discovery. She believes, after all these years, that her husband or her brother, will some day track her to her hiding-place; and that she is, perhaps, a little safer in having a concealed door by which to escape to her apartments. She dreads every strange face—even yours, my wife; and would have kept her very existence secret from you, had it been possible. Now you know her story, and my share in it. Was I not right when I said that, having heard it, you would pity her, even as I pity her myself?"

I have not here interrupted Hugh's narrative, as I continually interrupted it at the time, with questions, and anticipations of what was to come. I have given it as he would have given it to a less

impatient listener; and, even so, feel that my version fails to do his story justice. When he had quite finished, he took me in his arms and asked me if I was satisfied.

Was I satisfied? Yes—for the moment; and frankly gave him the assurance for which he asked. Listening to him, looking at him, how could I do otherwise than accept in its fullest sense every explanation given or implied? How could I pause to ask myself if, when all looked fair and open, there were any flaw, or gloze, or reservation? I did not pause, I believed. It was, therefore, in the simplest faith that, just as we were parting, I said,

"Oh, stop, Hugh! One thing more—did you never find out who it was that poor Maddalena loved, after all; and why she could not marry him?"

"I did, my darling, and a hopeless affair it was. She loved a man who no more loved her, or thought of her, than you love or think of the Grand-Duke of Zollenstrasse-am-Main."

"Poor, poor girl! But do you think, Hugh, that you could have done anything if she had confided in you that day when you met her on the heights? Do you think . . . ."

"My child, how can I tell? You might as well ask me if I believe that Tasso and Leonora would

have lived happily together all their days in the bonds of holy matrimony, if the poet had not been mad, and the lady a duchess!"

"Still, if Maddalena could have procured a divorce . . . ."

"Barbarina," interrupted he, laughing, "you are a goose, with your ifs and supposes! If Queen Cleopatra's nose had been an inch shorter, the face of the world would have been changed. We have that fact upon the authority of Pascal. Besides, the Holy Roman Catholic Church couples up her children very firmly indeed. I could more easily have procured a cardinal's hat for myself, than a divorce for Maddalena."

CHAPTER VI.

TOTAL ECLIPSE.

. . . . "Total eclipse
Without all hope of day!"—MILTON.

THE eventful night came at last—the night on which I was to make my *debût* in society. It was my first ball; excepting only the memorable night at Broomhill, years ago—but I am not, therefore, going to describe it. In brief, it was a ball like every other; crowded and stately, with blaze of lights and blush of flowers, with rustle of silk, and murmur of compliment, and, over all, the clash and clang of a military band. "Every ball," wrote one as wise as he was witty, "is a round; but not a perpetual round of pleasure." To me it was no pleasure at all, but a moral penance. I was the heroine of the evening, and would fain have been

unsought and unobserved. I was nervous; I was stared at; I was flattered by the men; I was criticised by the women; and I went through more introductions than I could ever hope to remember. Happy was I when, having taken leave of our noble entertainers, we were once more driving homewards.

"My little wife," said Hugh, circling me fondly with his arm. "My little wife, who has borne herself so well and gracefully, and of whom I have been so proud!"

"You would hardly have been proud of me, Hugh," said I, "if you had known how frightened I was the whole time."

"I did know it, *carissima*, and thought you went bravely through the ordeal—looking so pretty, and so pale, too, under that coronal of diamonds!"

"It is very heavy—it hurts my forehead."

"What! wearying already of the 'polish'd perturbation,' and sighing for the 'homely biggin,' my Barbarina? Tush! these are the penalties of splendour."

"Say, then, the penalties of a penalty."

"Do you mean to tell me seriously, wife, that you did not enjoy the homage lavished upon your little self this evening?"

"Seriously, husband, I did not."

"Nor the attentions of Lord and Lady Bayham?"

"Not in the least. I thought him very dull and pompous; and her so satirical, that I dared not open my lips in her presence."

"Still, my darling, you are but mortal; and I don't believe there ever lived the woman who did not love to be well dressed and admired."

"I love to be well dressed, *for* you; and I love to be admired, *by* you—and I love both because I love you. There, sir, are you satisfied?"

"If I were not more than satisfied," replied he, "I should deserve to have you carried off from my arms by some worthier knight. By the way, I have gleaned one wheat-ear of useful information out of the barren stubble of small-talk this evening. Holford tells me that Lord Walthamstow's library has come to the hammer, and will be on sale to-morrow, and the four following days. It is an auction that I would not willingly miss. Will you come with me, Barbarina, in the morning?"

"Where will it be held?"

"At Christie and Manson's."

"What, in London?"

"Unquestionably. Where else would you have it? We should try to get our old rooms at Claridge's, and . . . ."

"No, no, Hugh—not in December, thank you. I prefer Broomhill to a dreary hotel, where I

should be alone all day, with nothing to do but watch for you from the windows. *Must* you go to-morrow?"

"If I do not go to-morrow, my darling, I may as well not go at all; for the very books that I should, perhaps, most desire to purchase, may be the first offered."

"Then why go at all? I am sure we have books enough—more than you or I will ever live to read."

"Books enough, Barbarina! Can a hero have glory enough? or a miser gold enough? or a collector books enough? Why, my child, there is one volume in the Walthamstow library for which I would go to Calcutta, if necessary; an original copy of Meninsky's great Oriental Dictionary. It is a very scarce book. Shall I tell you the cause of its rarity?"

"If you please, Hugh," I replied, sleepily.

"Well, then, Meninsky was a great Oriental scholar, who lived in Vienna towards the latter part of the seventeenth century. This dictionary, in four folios, was the result of seven years' labour and the studies of a life. In 1683, Vienna was besieged by the Turks. A bomb burst upon Meninsky's house. Nearly the whole edition of the Dictionary was consumed; the very types from

which it had been printed were destroyed; and of the few copies which remain scattered through Europe, scarcely one may be found which is not either blistered by the fire, or stained by the water with which the flames were extinguished. Now, for a dabbler in all kinds of tongues, like myself, that book will be . . . . ."

I heard no more. Meninsky and his dictionary, Vienna and the Turks, seemed to shift confusedly by, in a stream of unmeaning phrases; and when I next opened my eyes, it was to see Tippoo's olive face at the carriage door, and the lighted hall beyond.

Wearied out with fatigue and excitement, I went up at once to my dressing-room, whither my husband presently followed me.

"I have come, my darling," said he, "to say good night, and implore you to go to bed as quickly as possible. For myself, I shall be late, for I have several letters to write."

"Letters?" I repeated. "Why, it is already two o'clock!"

"I know it; but, having to start by the early train, and be at the rooms by the time the sale commences, I must write now, or wait till to-morrow evening. You see, my love, I go so seldom to town, that I am compelled to make the most of

my short visits; and by writing now to my lawyer, my tailor, and such other persons as I may desire to see while in London, I save several posts, and provide for my more speedy return."

"And when will that be, husband?"

"Perhaps the day after to-morrow; but I shall know better when I have seen the catalogue, and learned on what days the various books will be sold."

"Which means, I suppose, that you may possibly be away till Saturday?"

"Possibly; but not probably."

"Oh, Hugh, what a long time! Five days!—five dull, dreary, miserable days; and all for the sake of a stupid Oriental dictionary!"

"What an illogical Barbara! In the first place, I do not go 'all for the sake of a stupid Oriental dictionary,' because that book is only one among many which I should wish to secure. In the second place, the dictionary is one of the noblest works ever undertaken by a single labourer. In the third place, it is unlikely that the best lots should be left to the last, or that I should need to remain away later than Thursday. In the fourth place . . . ."

I put my fingers to my ears, and refused to hear another syllable.

"Enough!" I cried pettishly. "If you had been

Orpheus, and I Eurydice, you would have talked Pluto into compliance without help of song or lyre. Go write your letters, Hugh, and try to snatch, at least, a couple of hours' rest before starting."

He laughed, and pulled my ear.

"I forgot to mention," said he, "that there are some magnificent 'picture-books,' in the Walthamstow collection :—fac-similes of the drawings of Raffaelle and Michael Angelo ; engravings after Leonardo, Veronese, and Titian ; to say nothing of a complete set of Piranesi's Roman Antiquities."

"Oh, Hugh!"

"But they are sure to fetch a large price. Good works of art always do."

My enthusiasm went down to zero.

"Besides," added he, maliciously, "they will undoubtedly reserve the prints till the books are sold ; and by that time I shall have returned home again."

"Hugh, you are the most tormenting, tiresome, tantalizing . . . ."

—"Indulgent, delightful, and admirable husband upon earth!" interpolated he. "*Eh bien, petite, nous ferons notre possible.* I shall see to what price these things are likely to mount ; and if I ruin myself, we will sell the family diamonds.

Now, good night, my dear love—good night, sweet dreams, and happy waking."

And with this, and a kiss, he left me.

The ball-dress thrown aside, and the "warmèd jewels" all unclasped and laid in their velvet cases, I then dismissed my maid, and sat by the fire for some time, in a delicious idleness. I was very happy, and dreamily conscious of my happiness. Every uneasy doubt that had of late been knocking at my heart seemed laid at rest; every perplexing trifle, forgotten. I tried to think of the old time at Zollenstrasse, and to compare the dear present with that past which already seemed so far away in the distance; but my eyes closed, and my thoughts wandered, and I sank away to sleep.

By and by, after what seemed like the interval of only a few minutes, I awoke. Awoke to find the fire quite out, the lamp dim, and myself ice-cold from head to foot. I sat up, shivering. My first thought was to hasten to bed, lest Hugh should come and find me waking. I next looked at my watch. It was half-past four o'clock. Half-past four already, and Hugh still writing! Naughty Hugh, from whom I had parted more than two hours ago, and who would have to leave the house, at latest, by seven! I rose; exchanged my slight dressing-gown for a mantle lined with furs; lit

a small Roman hand-lamp; peeped into his vacant dressing-room as I passed; and went at once to seek and summon him.

In order to go from our sleeping-room to the turret-chamber, I had to traverse a corridor extending the whole length of one front of the house. All was very dark and still. My little lamp shot a feeble glimmer on each closed door that I passed. My shadow stalked awfully beside me. The very rustling of my garments had a ghostly sound. At the top of the great well-staircase I looked away and shuddered, remembering the shape that I saw, or fancied I saw, gliding down the darkness, the first night of my coming home. Once past this dreaded point, I went on more bravely, and reached the door of the turret-chamber. Before lifting the inner curtain, I hesitated.

It seemed to me that I heard voices.

I held my breath—I advanced a step—I paused.

"*Hugo—Hugo mio*"—these were the words I heard—"*guardami*—look at me, listen to me, for a moment!"

"*Pazienza, cara*," replied my husband, abstractedly.

"*Pazienza!*" repeated the other. "Alas! is it not always *pazienza?* What is my life but one long patience?"

I had heard the scratching of his pen. I now heard it laid aside.

"My poor Maddalena!" said he.

"*Sì—povera Maddalena*," she echoed, with a heavy sigh.

"You look very pale to-night," said he. "Are you tired?"

"Of my existence—yes."

"Alas! Maddalena, I know how weary it must be. And then I can so seldom see you."

"That is the worst—that is the worst!" replied she, eagerly. "If I could speak to you once or twice in each long day—touch your hand, or your hair, thus—feel the sunshine of your eyes upon me, I should be almost happy. You do not know how I pine, sometimes, for the tones of your voice, Hugo. You do not know how often I creep out at dusk, to listen to them."

"But, *cara*," said Hugh, "it is not well that you should haunt about the house in such ghostly fashion, for fear . . ."

"For fear that I should meet *her?*" interrupted Maddalena. "No, no, I am careful. I only venture near when you are dining or reading. There is no danger."

"You cannot tell. Accident might . . ."

"Never. I have seen her once, face to face. I would die, sooner than meet her so again."

She had seen me once? My heart was beating so heavily that I almost thought they must hear it. I blew out my lamp, advanced a step, and drew back a corner of the curtain. It was as I had already suspected. Maddalena and the lady in the woods were one and the same. Hugh was sitting at his desk, with his head resting on his hand. Maddalena was kneeling beside him, with just the same look of defiance on her pale face that I saw upon it first.

In the same moment the look faded and the face became gentle.

"And yet, *Hugo mio*," said she, "I do not hate her. I—I have even tried to love the thought of her, for thy sake."

"You would love herself, if you knew her," said my husband, quickly.

"She is very young, and fair, and true-looking," replied Maddalena. "I am glad she is so fair, for thee."

"She is as true as she looks," said Hugh. "She knows all your story now—at least, as much of it as I could tell her—and if you would only see her . . ."

"See her!" interrupted the Italian, with a vehement gesture. "Are you mad, to ask it? See her—the woman who bears your name?—who sleeps every night in your arms?—who, perhaps,

even now, bears a child of yours in her bosom? Whilst I . . . *Dio!* how tame a wretch you must think me!"

"Maddalena . . ."

"The light in my eyes would wither her—the breath of my lips would poison her!" continued she, impetuously. Then, suddenly checking herself, "Pardon, pardon," she cried, "I do not mean to vex thee, Hugo! Thou knowest how gentle I have been—how patient—how obedient! Thou knowest how I have kept my word to thee!"

"Yes, yes, *poverina;* I know it."

Maddalena took his disengaged hand, and kissed it, and laid her cheek caressingly upon it.

"What do I live for, *idol mio,*" murmured she, "if not to obey thee? Why do I drag on this weary chain of years, unless to dedicate each day and hour to thy service? And yet, I sometimes weep because I can do nothing for thee. Dost thou remember the time, Hugo, when I used to mend thy gloves? It was long, long ago. It made me very happy. I have not even that happiness now. Dost thou remember a little purse which thou hadst thrown away one day, and I asked for it? See—here it is, all worn with my kisses. Ah, do I not love thee?"

Standing there, cold and trembling, with that horrible sensation of helplessness that one has in a

dream, I saw my husband cover his eyes with his hand—heard him reply, in a voice altered by emotion—

"*Sì, sì, Maddalena—tu m'ami.*"

"Could anyone love thee better?"

He shook his head.

"Could any one—*anyone*, Hugo, love thee so well? Could *she* give thee up as I have done? Could *she* sleep under the same roof, knowing another in her place, as I do? Could *she* live, banished as I am, and yet love thee as I love thee, utterly and blindly?"

"No—no, impossible!"

"And yet you avoid me! Nay, do not shake your head; for it is true. You keep out with your dogs and your gun, day after day, and never seek to see me of your own will. Is it that you fear my reproaches? You need not; for I never even think blamefully of you, now. Is it that you shrink from the sight of my sorrow? You need not; for when I see you, I am happy. Are you not my king and my life? Is not one such hour as this, my recompense for weeks of suffering?"

"Maddalena, Maddalena, you torture me!" cried Hugh, brokenly. "When I think of thee, and of all the misery I have caused thee, I hate myself!"

"Nay, thou shalt not hate what I adore," said Maddalena, with a piteous smile.

Hugh laid his head down upon his desk, and covered his face with his hands.

"Hugo," she faltered; "*Hugo mio*, there is one thing—one little thing, which thou couldst do, my love, to make me very happy."

"Then in God's name, let me do it."

"Dare I ask it?"

"Yes, if . . . . if . . . . what is it?"

"Only this—only this,"—and I saw her throw her arms passionately about him, and press her head against his shoulder—"call me once—but once—by my old name. Let me, oh! let me hear it, even though it be for the last time!"

He lifted his pale face from the desk, and took her head in his two hands. My heart stood still. I felt as if it were my sentence that he was going to utter.

He bent forward—his lips moved—he whispered, "*Sposa mia!*"

CHAPTER VII.

WEARY AND HEAVY-LADEN.

His wife!

He had called her his wife—I had heard it—and I lived. I remember wondering, vaguely, how it was that the words had not killed me where I stood. But they did not. They only paralysed me, brain and body, and left me scarcely conscious of the blow by which I had been crushed. I have no distinct recollection of any thing that followed. I saw their lips move in speech, but the words had no sense for me. I saw Hugh resume his writing, and Maddalena trim the lamp, without at the time deriving any kind of mental impression from what passed, or being sensible that their conversation was ended. I can form no conception of how long I stayed there; or how I

came to find myself, by and by, in my own room, standing before the empty grate. Here, for the first time, a wondering consciousness of misery dawned upon me. I began to remember, word by word, look by look, gesture by gesture, all the fatal evidence that had just been brought before me. I began to comprehend that Hugh had deceived me with a false story—that two words had changed all my past and all my future—that my world had suddenly become a chaos of ruin, and that I had better have died than survived it.

The room was almost dark. The lamp which I had left flickering had long since gone out; and only a faint reflex of the outer starlight struggled through the blinds.

Cold and dark as it was, I crept to bed without relighting the lamp—a statue of ice with a brain of fire. The reaction had come now. My head burned; my temples throbbed; fears, possibilities, retrospections, thronged and surged upon me, like the waves of a tumultuous sea. I could not think; for I had no power to arrest my thoughts. They racked me, tossed me to and fro, mastered and bewildered me. I could weigh nothing, compare nothing. I only felt that I was wrecked and heart-broken—that he called another, Wife—that he was no longer my own—that I was alone in the wide world—alone for evermore!

Some time had gone by thus—perhaps hours; perhaps minutes—when I heard a cautious footstep in the corridor, and a hand at the door. I buried my face in the pillow, and feigned sleep. He came in very gently. I heard him set his candle down upon the table and cross to the foot of the bed, where he stood some moments without moving. It then seemed to me that he went back, drew a chair to the table, and took something from his pocket. Once or twice, during the silence that followed, I distinguished the rustling of paper. Presently he moved again, very cautiously; and I distinctly heard him fold the paper over and over. He was writing to me—I knew it as well as if I had been at his shoulder—writing to bid me farewell, because he would not awake me! I felt as if my senses were leaving me. I bit the pillow in my agony of anguish; and felt my heart contract, as if grasped by an iron hand.

Then he came back to the bed; laid the note beside me; bent over me silently. I felt the soft incense of his breath upon my neck—I heard him murmur my name fondly to himself—I knew what a loving light was in his eyes as he looked down upon me. Then he lifted a stray curl from the pillow, pressed it to his lips, lingered, sighed, and went away.

For one moment—one wild, delirious moment—I

felt as if I must call him back, open my arms and my heart to him, forgive all, and weep out my grief on his bosom. But the words "*Sposa mia*," started up before me in letters of flame. The desperate question, "What am I to this man, if another is his wife?" forced itself upon me with pitiless rigour. I crushed the impulse down—I let the moment pass. He was gone.

Then a deadly, sickening, stifling sensation rushed suddenly upon me. I tried to sit up in the bed; but it seemed to sink away beneath me. I fainted.

I recovered my consciousness gradually and painfully. I think I must have lain a long time, for when I again opened my eyes, it was daylight. O God! was I mad, or was it all a wicked dream? My eyes fell upon the note which he had left on the pillow. I recoiled, as if I had been stung; for it was directed in pencil, "*To my wife.*" His wife? What wife? Not I! not I! Another claimed that title—it was her "old name;" whilst I . . . . oh shame and sorrow! I was only his mistress.

I had but one thought now; one insane, desperate, overruling thought—flight.

Yes; flight. I felt that I must go—that I could not sleep another night under his roof—that I never dare look upon his face again. I scarcely asked myself whither I should turn. I neither knew nor cared. Anywhere, so that it were but far, far away, where none who had ever known me should witness my misery!

This resolve once taken, I became possessed by a feverish haste which brooked no delay, and hurried me from step to step, from project to project, with an energy of will that, for the time, supplied the place of physical strength. I rose, weak and trembling, and dressed myself that cold December morning, without any thought of those luxuries of the toilette to which I had of late been accustomed. While I was dressing, the thought of my poor old faithful nurse flashed across my mind, and I determined, if she would go, to take her with me. Desperate as I was, the prospect of being utterly alone in my flight appalled me. As for my father, or my sister, or Mrs. Sandyshaft, I would sooner have died than seek a refuge with either. Their pity would have driven me mad.

I rang for my maid, who was amazed to see me up. From her I learned that Hugh had left the house at seven, taking Tippoo with him. It was already half-past eight o'clock. The next direct train left, I knew, at half-past one; therefore I

had four hours before me. I desired the girl immediately to pack my smallest portmanteau, and said that I was going to London.

"To London, ma'am—to-day?" faltered she. "You—you look so very tired—more fit to be in bed than to take a journey."

I glanced at the glass, and saw a haggard, white-lipped shadow of myself. I tried to smile, and answer carelessly.

"I am not used to balls and late hours, Ann," I replied. "I think I shall never go to another large party."

"What would you please to have packed, ma'am?" said Ann, still looking at me somewhat anxiously.

"Only necessaries—no laces, no jewellery. Nothing but some underclothing and one dress; the darkest and plainest I have."

"That will be your brown silk, ma'am. Nothing else?"

"Yes—my case of colours."

"And shall you require me to go with you, ma'am?"

"No; I go alone. I may, perhaps, take Mrs. Beever with me. I am now going across the park, to ask her about it."

Ann looked more surprised than before.

"Not without your breakfast, ma'am?" said

she, seeing me with my bonnet in my hand. "May I not bring you a cup of coffee first? Indeed, you should not go out this bitter morning without it."

I told her she might bring it, and, when she was gone, swept the jewels that were lying about into my jewel-case, stripped the rings from my fingers, took out the brooch with which I had mechanically fastened my collar, and locked them all in—all, except my wedding ring. I could not part from that. Mockery as it was, I felt I *must* keep it.

In a few minutes more, I was hurrying across the park. The day was dull and intensely cold; but I went forward like one under the influence of opium, heeding neither the moaning wind nor the wet grass about my feet. I should scarcely have hesitated in my path had a thunderstorm been raging. Arrived at the cottage, I went in without knocking, and found my old nurse ironing linen.

"Goody," I said, abruptly; "will you leave all this, and come with me? I am going away."

She looked at me, turned deathly white, and sank into a chair.

"Dear God!" stammered she, "what has happened?"

"Great wrong and sorrow," I replied. "I am

leaving my . . . . Mr. Farquhar, for ever. Will you come with me?"

She wrung her hands, and stared at me piteously.

"Yes, yes—God love you, yes, my poor lamb!" she cried. "Where will you go?"

"I don't know. Somewhere abroad, far away."

"And when, my darling—when?"

"To-day—at once."

The old woman clasped her head with both hands, utterly bewildered.

"To-day!" she repeated. "Mercy! that's sudden."

"Yes, yes—to-day," I replied, impatiently. "Every hour that I linger here, is torture to me."

I wanted to be gone without delay. I felt as if the loss of every minute were irreparable. I would have set off for London, walking, by the high road, sooner than wait for the train, if she had proposed it.

"Oh, that it should all end like this!" moaned she, rocking herself to and fro. "My little lamb, that I nursed on my knees so often! Well, well, my poor rags are soon put together . . . . What will the master say? And Miss Hilda, too! Oh, dear! oh, dear! we are here to-day and gone to-morrow. Where is he, my darling?"

"Gone."

"He'll support you in comfort, my deary, anyhow?"

"I would not accept a farthing from him, if I starved!" I cried, fiercely. "I have kept nothing of his—not a book, not a jewel. I can support myself, Goody, and you too."

"Well, well, deary, there's Mrs. Sandyshaft—she won't let you . . . ."

"Mrs. Sandyshaft knows nothing—never will know anything from me," I interrupted. "All I want is to hide myself far away, where none of them will ever see me, or hear of me, again. Don't ask me why. You shall know all, by and by. I have been cruelly deceived and wronged . . . . there, not a word. Make haste, for God's sake, and let us be gone."

The old woman stood up mechanically, and began folding the linen that lay upon the table. All at once she stopped, and said:—

"But, my deary, have you any money?"

Money? In my distress and eagerness, I had never thought of it! I had none of my own; and I would not have taken his to save myself from beggary. I felt as if a thunderbolt had fallen at my feet.

"Not a farthing," I replied.

Goody shook her head sorrowfully.

"Alas, and alas! my lamb," said she, "where

can we go, and what can we do, without it? I—I have a little bit of money laid by, myself; but it's only a bit, and when that's gone . . . ."

"When it's gone, I can earn more, and pay you back tenfold!" I said, hurriedly. "How much have you?"

"Oh, very little, my deary; a—a matter, maybe, of thirty pound," replied she, somewhat reluctantly.

Thirty pounds! We might travel a long way for thirty pounds, with economy. To Belgium, perhaps; or some obscure corner of Switzerland; or Rome—ah! no; Rome was too difficult of access. We could not go to Rome for thirty pounds; and yet in Rome, I could have earned money by my art more easily than elsewhere. What was to be done?

"Or—or, maybe, it's pretty nigh as much as fifty," added Goody, after an anxious pause, during which she had watched all the changes of my countenance. "I'm pretty sure it's fifty; but no more."

"But it's enough," I said. "Yes—yes, quite enough."

Goody took a little withered stump of myrtle from her window, set the pot on the table, and said, with a sigh:—

"It's all there, my deary—every penny of it.

I'll give it to you at once, and it will be off my mind."

And with this, she turned the myrtle out, took a very small circular tin box from the bottom of the pot, cleansed it carefully from the loose earth, and laid the contents before me. There were some bank notes, and a few loose coins.

"Two twenties, my lamb," said she, smoothing them out tenderly, as they lay upon the table; "two twenties, and a five, and four sovereigns, and two halves, and a lucky sixpence. It's the savings of a life, my deary, but you're welcome to them, that you are—kindly welcome."

The simple, generous fidelity of this honest heart melted the ice of my despair, and I burst into tears.

"God bless you, dear! God bless you, and thank you," I cried, throwing my arms about her neck, and laying my head down upon her shoulder, as I used when I was a little child. "You, at least, will never deceive me!"

They were the first tears I had shed since this blow fell upon me; and they seemed to cool my brain, and slacken the unnatural tension of my nerves. They left me clearer to think and freer to act; and it was well they did so, for now, alas! helpless and inexperienced as I was, I had to act and think for two.

In the meantime, the day was passing. A few more words, and we had arranged all. I was to keep the money; we were to leave Broomhill at midday; and I was to take her up at the lodge-gate, on my way to the station. Thus we parted. I had scarcely passed the garden gate when she came running after me.

"You'll bid them mind the poor dumb things, my deary," said she, with her apron to her eyes. "There's the cat, and the bullfinch, and the cocks and hens—they all love me; and I should be loath to think they were forgotten."

Struck with the selfishness of my sorrow, I turned back, took her by both hands, and said, earnestly—

"You shall not leave them—no, dear old friend, you shall not leave them. You—you love your little home; you had thought to end your days in it. I will not tear you from it, to share my sad and uncertain fortunes. I am young; fitter and better able to battle with the world than you. Forget that I asked you to go with me. God bless you, dear, and good-bye."

But Goody would not hear of this. I might say what I pleased; but she would never leave me. If I refused to take her with me, she would follow me upon her knees; beg her way after me wherever I might be; pursue me to the ends of the earth with her love and her devotion. Finding

her thus resolute, and feeling my own weakness and desolation, what could I do but thank her with my whole heart for the sacrifice, and gratefully accept it?

A few hours more, and we were speeding towards London; Broomhill receding every moment farther and farther into the past, and the wide world opening, a desert, before me.

A weary journey! a weary, wretched journey, made up of anxious days and dreary nights; of bodily unrest, and nervous prostration; of perpetual heart-ache, of broken sleep, and terrified wakings, and strange mental confusion! My recollection of it is indistinct and fragmentary. Scenes and incidents occur to me here and there, as one might remember glimpses of a half-forgotten panorama. Faces of fellow-travellers pass before my mind's eye, like faces seen in dreams. To this day, I shudder when I recall these scattered mosaics of things and places which are bound up in my memory with so much suffering.

Now, it is the dull room where we wait, hour after hour, till the starting of the Dover train. I see the gloomy fire-place with its cavernous hollow of sullen red fire. I see the reversed letters on the ever-swinging glass door. I see the table heaped with rugs and travelling-bags; the travellers that

come and go incessantly; the coloured flashes on the wall from red and green lamps which are carried past, lighted by hurrying porters. I see the widow-lady in the corner, with her little girl asleep on the sofa beside her, at the sight of whose pale face and mourning garb my tears fell without control. I hear the rumbling vehicles outside, and the shrill whistle of arriving trains; and I remember, oh, how distinctly! the dread with which I turned to the door each time it opened, trembling lest some fatal chance should bring Hugh to the spot before we could get away from it.

Now it is midnight, and we are in Dover. We are late, and are hurried off to the boat, which is on the point of moving. A few wintry stars glimmer here and there overhead. The lights from the quays flicker down upon the troubled water in the harbour. The pier seems to recede. The steamer begins to lurch. We are at sea.

Now we are on shore again, in a dim office guarded by foreign soldiers. Here, all is confusion and dismay, for I have forgotten to provide myself with a passport. Interrogated, rebuffed, alarmed, I am forbidden to pursue my journey without the authorisation of the resident English Consul. It is now between four and five in the morning, and the Consulate will not be open before

nine; so we are conducted to a huge gloomy hotel, like a prison, and there left till morning. Our room is immense, carpetless, damp as a vault, and furnished with two funereal-looking beds, antique oaken bureaus, dusty mirrors, and consoles that look as if they dated from the reign of Louis Treize. Weary and miserable, my poor old nurse and I sit, hand in hand, talking and weeping together till the neighbouring clocks clash and clang the hour of six, and the market-folks begin to be noisy in the street below. Then, outworn with fatigue and sorrow, we both sleep heavily.

Now it is the railway again, and we are on our way to Marseilles. I am Mrs. Carlyon, British subject, travelling on the continent, attended by her servant. It is a good name, and belonged to some distant ancestor of our family. I remembered it in the old genealogical chart that used to hang in my father's sitting-room, and chose it for that reason. It is very trying and monotonous, this perpetual railway travelling. Hour after hour, in daylight or dusk, the same landscape seems to be for ever flying past. Sometimes the lamp is flickering down upon the faces of our fellow-travellers, while without there are white villages dimly seen, steep cuttings, and wide flats crossed at intervals by lines of skeleton poplars that look ghostly in the moonshine. Some-

times it is daylight, and very cold. The country is lightly sprinkled with snow. Trees, hills, plains, and villages flit past us as before; and every now and then we come to a station near a large town, where passengers arrive and alight, and vendors of roasted chestnuts and French journals cry their wares shrilly to and fro upon the platform. And all this time I travel like one who is flying from fate; jaded, benumbed, feverish, and sullenly silent. Sometimes I fall asleep; then wake, trembling, from fantastic dreams, in which Hugh and Maddalena and my old school-friends at Zollenstrasse are strangely associated. My head aches; my lips are parched and bleeding; my eyes are burning hot; and, sleeping or waking, an oppressive sense of woe weighs on my chest, and impedes my very breathing. There are times when, do what I will, I cannot keep my thoughts steady; when all seems confusion in my brain, and I cannot dissever the things of the past from the events of the present. There are also times when I recall our life in Italy with strange distinctness—when I torture myself with reproaches and self-questionings, and repeat over and over again, in the silence of my heart, "Alas! why was I not content in my Paradise? Why could I not have been happy a little longer?"

Thus, with one night's rest at Châlons-sur-Saône,

the long land journey passes, and we traverse all France from coast to coast. The poor old woman by my side sleeps nearly all the time; and bears it, on the whole, better than I could have hoped. For my own part, I have some recollection of wondering once or twice, in a passive confused way, whether acute mental suffering and bodily fatigue acted upon others as they were now acting upon me—whether this faintness and shivering, this alternate burning heat and freezing cold, this torpidity and languor, were common to all who, like myself, were weary and heavy-laden, and in need of rest?

Now it is a great crowded port; and high white buildings, forts, batteries, ships, piers, quays, lighthouses, and traffic of all kinds, seem to pass multitudinously before me. Our luggage is placed upon a truck, and we follow it down to the place of embarkation, through streets crowded with vehicles, soldiers, sailors, and foot-passengers. Weak and trembling, I cling to Goody's arm for support; and, once on board, am thankful to go at once to my berth, and be at peace. By and by, the steamer begins to sway, and we are again at sea.

Then comes a troubled, restless time, of which I can remember nothing distinctly. A time when I lie, hour after hour, in a state which is neither sleep-

ing nor waking—when I have dreams which seem scarcely to be dreams, but are mixed up, in some painful way, with realities—when not blood, but fire, courses through my veins—when my thoughts wander, and I try in vain to stay their wanderings—when I am conscious of uttering words over which I have no control—when my own voice sounds far away—when I fancy I can hear Hugh's footstep in the cabin; and there is something unfamiliar in Goody's well-known face beside my pillow; and the steamer is no longer the steamer, but the old house in which I was born; and the dashing of the sea against the port-hole is the flowing of the canal, through which the painted barges pass and repass all day long.

Then I hear a strange voice, which says that I am very ill—and then all is blank.

CHAPTER VIII.

GOODY'S SECRET.

"SURELY, dear Goody," said I feebly, "I have been very ill?"

"Indeed you have, my lamb," replied Goody, wiping her eyes. "So ill, that I never thought to hear you call me by my right name again!"

I looked, languidly, round the room; at the painted arabesques on the walls and ceiling; at the print in a black frame over the fire-place; at the medicine-bottles on the table. All were strange to me.

"What place is this?" I asked.

"They calls it a hotel," said Goody, contemptuously. "*I* call it a barrack."

"And where is it?"

Goody shook her head vehemently.

"There, then, my deary," exclaimed she, "don't you ask me, for I'm sure I can't tell you, no more than one of them cherubs on the ceiling! It's some outlandish name or another; and though I hear it twenty times a day, and though, when I do hear it, I know it, I couldn't fit my lips to it, if it was to save my life! All I can answer for is, that the Pope of Rome ain't very far off, and all the travellers land here from the steamers."

I closed my eyes and lay silent for a long time, trying to remember how and why it was that I had left Broomhill, and by what chance my old nurse happened to be with me; but I was too weak to think, and in the effort fell asleep.

When I next woke, it was dusk, and there were two gentlemen in the room, talking softly together beside the fireplace. Finding that I was awake, one came to my bedside and sat down; the other left the room.

"*La Signora sta meglio*," said the stranger, taking my wrist between his fingers, and smiling gravely. "*Molto meglio*."

"It's the doctor, my darling," whispered Goody, over his shoulder.

He was a tall young man, with a black beard, and a very gentle voice. Catching the sense of her explanation, he bowed his head slightly, and added—

"*Sì, Signora; sono il medico.*"

I replied, in Italian, that I was much obliged to him; and asked how long I had been ill.

"The Signora arrived here," said he, "on the fifth of January, and it is to-day the second of February."

"And this, I suppose, is Civita Vecchia?"

"*Sì, Signora. E Civita Vecchia,*" he replied.

I had been ill a month—a whole month, every day of which was as completely blotted from my memory as if it had never been! He turned away, examined the medicines in the bottles, and scribbled a rapid prescription. In that moment I remembered all that had happened; but, being so very weak, remembered it with no other emotion than a kind of languid wonder, as if it were a thing of long ago. The prescription written, the doctor came back to my bedside.

"The Signora must keep very quiet," said he.

To which I replied—

"How soon, Signore, shall I be able to go on to Rome?"

He smiled, and shook his head.

"If you are impatient, not so soon as if you could, for the present, put all thought of it aside. You cannot keep your mind too calm. You cannot, just now, think or converse too little."

I promised to obey as literally as I could; whereupon he took his leave.

The next day, about noon, I suddenly recollected the second gentleman whom I had seen in the room the evening before, and asked Goody who he was.

"Second gentleman, my lamb?" said she, confusedly. "What do you mean? What second gentleman?"

"He left the room just as I woke," I replied. "He was standing by the fireplace, where you are, with his back towards the bed. Surely you must know whom I mean!"

"Eh? deary me! What was he like, darling?" said Goody, bending over the fire.

"I don't know. It was dusk; and he was gone immediately. Is he the doctor's assistant?"

"The doctor's assistant?" repeated she. "Aye, to be sure. Yes, yes, my lamb, I remember."

"Then he was the assistant?"

"Now, didn't I say so? But, bless your heart, deary, you know you're not to talk."

"Well, tell me one thing—what is the Doctor's name?"

"His name? Bless you! my lamb, *I* can't remember their outlandish talk. Why, they don't even call beef-tea, beef-tea; nor gruel, gruel—the poor heathens! I'm sure, I'm ready to go down on

my knees, sometimes, and thank God that I wasn't born one of 'em. His name, indeed! No, no, my deary; but here's his card. Maybe, you can make it out by that."

I looked at the card, which she held before my eyes, and read—"*Giorgio Marco, M.D.*"

I lay still, after this, for a long time; for my thoughts flowed very slowly. When I next spoke, it was to say—

"Goody—how much money have we left?"

To which Goody replied, briskly—

"Oh, plenty, my deary. Near five-and-twenty pound."

Near five-and-twenty pounds! I closed my eyes again, and tried to think how much we had spent before I lost my memory; but this was an effort of which I was quite incapable. I then tried to calculate what our expenses at Civita Vecchia might amount to; but with no better success.

"There's the doctor to pay, Goody," I suggested, after awhile.

"That won't be much," said she.

"He has attended me for a month, has he not?"

Goody admitted the fact, reluctantly.

"And has called, I suppose, daily?"

Goody admitted this also.

"Indeed, there were some days," added she, "when he came twice—that was when you were at

the worst, my deary. But, bless you! *his* bill won't be much, for all that. Why, he lives in two little rooms up at the top of a great white house over yonder; and he always comes walking; and when it's wet, he carries a red umbrella."

Another long pause.

"And then there's the hotel bill," I resumed, by and by."

"Ah, well; that can't be much either," said Goody. "We have only this one room, and I attend upon you myself; and as for eating and drinking—ugh! it's little enough *I* take of their nasty food. My living don't cost sixpence a day."

"Well, well, Goody," I sighed, quite wearied out by this long conversation, "I daresay the money will last out till I can earn some more. If not . . . ."

"Don't you think of that, my lamb," interrupted she. "It'll be enough, and to spare; take my word for it. And besides, I know what I know . . . . but there, the doctor says you're not to talk; so don't let's say another word about it."

And I noticed, after this, that whenever I began to speak about money, or my desire to reach Rome, or any other subject involving anxiety about the future, she invariably took refuge in Dr. Marco's prohibition, and reduced me to silence.

Day by day, though very slowly, I progressed

towards recovery. My hours went by in a kind of passive languor. Sitting up in bed, or propped with pillows in an easy chair, I was content to watch Goody at her work; or to let my eyes wander from curve to curve, from wreath to wreath of the poor conventional arabesques upon the wall, with scarcely the accompaniment of a thought. As I grew stronger, however, my mind began to dwell more upon the future and the past; and the old perpetual sense of trouble resumed its hold upon my heart. I became restless and feverish. I pined for active occupation. I felt that the first great shock of my grief was indeed over; but that the weariness and desolation of life were mine for ever.

My young physician, observant of every symptom, came to me one morning with a parcel of books under his arm.

"What have you there, Dr. Marco?" I asked.

"A tonic, signora," he replied. "Your thoughts want feeding, just as your body wants strengthening. Change of mental occupation is as necessary to health as change of scene or diet."

I thanked him, and untied the parcel. There were Sir Joshua Reynolds's Discourses; Lessing's "Laocoon" in German; Schlegel's "Letters on Christian Art," also in German; and Viardot on "Les Musées d'Italie." Every one upon Art!

I was startled, and, looking up with the quick apprehension of one who has a secret to keep, said—

"This is a strange choice, Dr. Marco. Your books are all on one subject. How could you tell that that subject would interest me?"

He coloured up to the roots of his hair.

"I—I did not know—I did not observe, signora," stammered he.

"You did not observe?" I repeated.

"The truth is, signora," replied he, "they are not my books. I borrowed them for you; and took them, as they were given to me."

"Then you borrowed them from an artist," I said, smiling.

"Even that I do not know," he replied, examining the volumes with some embarrassment. "They belong to a gentleman who was staying at this hotel when you were first brought here, and who is now in Rome. He still comes occasionally to Civita Vecchia. He may be an artist. It is very possible. Rome is always crowded with them."

"Ah, Signor Marco," I said, eagerly, "if I could but reach Rome, I should be well. How soon, do you think . . . ."

"As soon, signora," interposed he, "as you can take a drive without too much fatigue, and are strong enough to bear a journey of eight hours. In the meantime, I think it would be as well if

you could remove into a more cheerful room. There are apartments in this house which look towards the south, and command the sea and the harbour. You would find one of those much pleasanter."

I thought of our scanty means, and sighed. Dr. Marco blushed again, like a girl.

"You have been here so long," said he, "that the landlord would, no doubt, let you have a front room for the same rent as this. May I negotiate for you with him?"

I thanked him, and accepted his offer. When he was gone, I took up a volume of Schlegel. Turning to the fly-leaf, I found the right-hand top corner torn off. I turned to the next, and found it mutilated in the same way. I then examined all the rest; and from each the name of the owner had been subtracted in the same rough fashion. The strangeness of it awakened my curiosity.

"Goody," I said, "did you ever see that gentleman who was staying here when we first came? —the gentleman who lent these books to Dr. Marco?"

"How should I know, my deary?" replied Goody, carelessly. "I've seen a good many gentlemen, first and last, since we've been in this house."

"The one I mean has gone to Rome."

To which she only said, "Aye, indeed?" and so the subject dropped.

The next day we removed into a front room overlooking the harbour, where I could sit for hours in a southward window basking in the sunshine, and watching the fishermen's barques as they came and went with the tides. Leaning on Goody's arm, I could now walk about the room for a quarter of an hour at a time; and Dr. Marco proposed that I should venture on a drive the following morning.

Thus recovering, as it were, hourly, and seeing myself ever nearer and nearer to the end of my journey, I began to get seriously anxious lest our money should not be sufficient for the discharge of our debts at Civita Vecchia. I examined the contents of the purse, and found, as Goody had said, a sum equivalent to about twenty-four pounds and twelve shillings.

"What *shall* we do, dear, if it is not enough?" I said, looking hopelessly at the money in my lap.

"It will be enough, and pounds to spare, my lamb, as I've told you before," replied Goody, oracularly.

"I might sell my watch and chain, it is true," I pursued; "though I should be sorry to do so."

"Did He give 'em to you, my deary?"

"*He?* Do you suppose I should have brought

them away with me, if he had?" I asked, flushing at the mere mention of his name. "No, they were my father's gift, on—on my wedding-day."

"Ah, well; you won't have to part from 'em just yet," said Goody, with confident composure.

I was not quite so well satisfied; and so, by and by, wrote a little note to the landlord in my best Italian, and begged that I might have his bill made out up to the present time. To my amazement, Goody flatly refused to take it down.

"Goin' worrittin in this way about bills, and money, and watches, and what all!" exclaimed she, irritably. "It's just the way to make yourself ill again, and lay you on your bed for another month, it is! I wonder what Doctor Mark would say! No, no,—I'll have nothing to do with it. Wait a day or two longer, till you're strong enough to think of going, and then I'll take your messages, and welcome."

I rose, and rang the bell.

"I had not expected this from you, Beever," I said, angrily. "But there are servants in the hotel who will obey my orders."

The door opened almost immediately, and a waiter, who was probably passing, came in.

"Is the landlord within?" I inquired.

"Sì, signora."

"Then be so good as to give him this note, and say that I shall be obliged by a speedy reply."

The waiter took it, and retired. He was no sooner gone than Goody burst into tears, and went over to the window in great agitation.

"Oh, dear! oh, dear!" moaned she, "what's to be done now? What's to be done now? I can't bear your anger, my lamb, and all I've done, I've done for the best; and because I love you as if you'd been my own flesh and blood! And now you'll never trust me again—I know you won't; and whether I've done right or wrong, I know no more than the babe unborn!"

The vehemence and suddenness of her repentance quite took me by surprise.

"My dear old friend," I said, affectionately, "don't be grieved—don't say another word about it. You were wrong to refuse, but . . . ."

"No, no, no," she interrupted, sobbing. "It isn't that, my deary love; it isn't that at all! But you'll know quite soon enough—oh, Lord! oh, Lord! here's the landlord himself; and now it'll all come out!"

The landlord came in; a grave man dressed all in black, with a white cravat, and a profusion of jewellery. He held my note, opened, in his hand; and said, bowing profoundly—

"The signora has done me the honour to write?"

I replied that I had written, and requested him to be seated. Goody's last mysterious words had somewhat unnerved me, and I waited with some anxiety for what he should say.

He, however, bowed again, sat down, coughed, and ventured to hope that the signora's health was becoming re-established.

I thanked him, and said that my health was already much improved; for which I was largely indebted to the care of Doctor Marco.

"Doctor Marco, signora," observed the landlord, "is a very clever young man. He is lost in Civita Vecchia. There is an opening in Rome for a physician of Doctor Marco's abilities."

I replied that I had no doubt there might be.

"The air of Civita Vecchia, signora, is highly favourable to invalids," continued the landlord. "Many come from Rome to recover. The signora, I will venture to affirm, would not have been restored so rapidly either in Rome or Florence."

I bowed, interrogatively; and was about to lead to the subject of my note, when the landlord, with polite fluency, resumed:—

"The signora," said he, "sees Civita Vecchia at its dullest season. At this period of the year, we stagnate. The signora should visit us in the bathing season. Then all is life and gaiety. Every hotel and lodging-house is filled. The beach is

covered with promenaders. We have music on the Molo, daily. *E molto piacevole.*"

"I have understood," I replied, "that it is an agreeable *villeggiatura*. But . . . ."

"The bathing, too, is excellent," said the landlord, "and is preferred by many to the Baths of San Giuliano. We were honoured, last autumn, by a visit from His Holiness the Pope."

"To return, however, to the subject of my note," said I, resolutely stemming this tide of small talk. "The *padrone* will do me the favour to make out my bill in full, up to the present time; after which, if he pleases, we can begin a new account. I purpose leaving Civita Vecchia for Rome in a few days, and I wish to form some estimate of what my expenses have been, during my illness."

The landlord bowed again; referred to the note through a double eye-glass; darted a suspicious glance towards Goody, who was rocking herself restlessly to and fro in her chair at the farther end of the room; and said—

"The signora desires to have a—a copy of all her weekly accounts, dating from the fifth of January?"

"Precisely."

"We are not in the habit of copying former accounts," said the landlord; "but as this is not our busiest season, and the signora has been with

us for some weeks, it shall be done, to oblige her."

"To oblige me?" I repeated, with a smile.

He darted another glance at Goody; looked somewhat embarrassed; and said, with a hesitation very unlike his former fluency—

"I am surely mistaken in supposing the signora to be ignorant of the fact that—that her accounts have been regularly paid during the period of her stay in my house?"

"Paid?" I echoed, scarcely believing my ears.

"Paid punctually, every Monday morning."

"By whom?"

"By the signora's own servant, who has all the receipts in her possession."

"Is this true?" I asked, rising, all in a tremble, and facing her where I stood. "Is this true?"

"Is what true?" whimpered Goody, with averted face.

Her voice and attitude confirmed it, without need of confession. I turned to the landlord, who was fidgetting with his eye-glass in the utmost perplexity, and wished him good day.

"If I can be of any further service to the signora . . ." he began.

"Not of the least, thank you."

"The accounts," said he, lingering, "shall be copied forthwith."

"Pray do not take the trouble," I replied. "It

is sufficient if my servant has the originals in her care. Good afternoon."

"Good afternoon, signora—good afternoon."

And the padrone reluctantly took his leave, with his curiosity unsatisfied.

When he was gone, I went over and stood before her.

"Whose money was it?" I asked, in an agitated whisper. "Tell me at once. No lies—no equivocations. Whose money was it?"

"Oh, dear! oh dear!" cried she, "I did it for the best—indeed, indeed, I did."

Half beside myself with apprehension and anger, I took her by the arm and shook it violently.

"Speak at once," I said. "What wicked folly have you been committing? You have betrayed me—confess that you've betrayed me!"

"No, no, my dear lamb, not that! not that! I couldn't help his seeing you—you being carried up on a mattress, poor love, as helpless as a babe—how could I? But, there—only give me time, and don't frighten me, and I'll tell you everything—that I will, my deary, true as Gospel!"

"*He?*" I faltered, catching at a chair for support. "Who? For God's sake, who?"

Poor old Goody wrung her hands together, and looked up, deprecatingly, through her tears.

"I don't know, my deary!" she sobbed. "I

never saw him before, in all my life; but he said he knew you as well as if he was your own father —and—and I believed him—and I know I was very wrong to take his money; but I was all alone among strangers, my deary, in a—a foreign land—and you all but dying—and—and I was so thankful to find a friend, that—that . . ."

I flung myself into her arms, and kissed her over and over again.

"Hush, dear, hush!" I cried. "I thought it was—you know who I thought it must be! Since it is a stranger, never mind. We can pay him back his money, whoever he may be. I was very, very harsh to you, dear—pray forgive me. There, now—dry your eyes, and try to describe him to me; and let us think how we can find him out, and how much we owe him, and who he can be. In the first place, what is his name?"

"I don't know, my deary."

"Did he never tell you? Or have you forgotten it?"

"He never told me, my deary."

"Was he old or young? Tall or short? Fair or dark?"

"Bless you, my lamb," said Goody, with a bewildered face, "I haven't the least notion."

"It isn't Dr. Topham?"

She shook her head, doubtfully.

"You remember to have seen him, dear, at Broomhill? The doctor, you know—my aunt's doctor, who used to come riding through the park on his little pony—a very cheerful, pleasant . . ."

"It's no one I've ever seen before," replied Goody, decisively; "and the farthest off from cheerful and pleasant that I've come across this many a day. I don't mean to say but what he's very kind, my lamb—as kind as can be. He helped to carry you upstairs himself; and he downright forced the money into my hand, saying you might want comforts, and that was to make sure of your having all that was necessary before he came again."

"And he did come again?"

"Bless you, yes—he was staying in the hotel for the first day or two; and after he'd gone away to the Pope of Rome, he came back once or twice; and would have had me take more money every time, only I knew we had enough without it, and wouldn't hear of it."

"Did he seem to be very rich and grand?" I asked next, with some vague idea of the Grand Duke floating through my mind. "Had he many servants with him; and did he seem like a nobleman?"

"Lord, no, my deary! as plain as could be."

"You are quite sure he was an Englishman?"

"Indeed I wouldn't be sure at all," replied she.

"He had a queer way in his talk. To be sure, he might be from some other part of the country; but I can't help thinking the English didn't come quite natural to him."

My eyes fell upon the volumes. A sudden thought flashed across me.

"It is the same who left the books with Doctor Marco!" I cried, eagerly. "Run, dear—run down and ask the landlord to let me see the visitor's book. I'm sure I know who it is now!"

"How am I to ask for it, my deary?" said Goody. "You must write it on a bit of paper, please, and . . . Mercy! there he is!"

"Where? where?"

"There, my deary—down by those posts there —coming up to the house, with his face this way!"

I followed the direction of her finger; and saw, as I had already expected to see—Professor Metz.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CHANGE 'TWIXT NOW AND THEN.

"Roma! Roma! Roma!
Non è piu come era prima!"

To an artist, the words "habitable Rome," convey few ideas beyond the Via Margutta and the Café Greco. In the former he lives and works; in the latter he smokes, sups, meets his friends, and with them discusses his bottle of Orvieto and the news of the day. From the café my inclinations and sex alike excluded me; but in its immediate neighbourhood, if not in the street itself, my lodgings were situated. I lived, in short, in precisely that central house of the Vicolo d'Aliberti that looks down the Via Margutta. Those who know Rome will not need to be told

that these two streets, in their relative position, take the form of a T.

The Via Margutta is a street of studios and stables, crossed at the upper end by a little roofed gallery with a single window, like a shabby Bridge of Sighs. Horses are continually being washed and currycombed outside their stable-doors; frequent heaps of *immondezzajo* make the air unfragrant; and the perspective is too frequently damaged by rows of linen suspended across the road from window to window. Unsightly as they are, however, these obstacles in no wise affect the popularity of the Via Margutta, either as a residence for the artist, or a lounge for the amateur. Fashionable patrons leave their carriages at the corner, and pick their way daintily among the gutters and dust-heaps. A boar-hunt by Vallati compensates for an unlucky splash; and a Campagna sunset of Dessoulavey glows all the richer for the squalor through which it is approached. But I was not a resident in the street of painters. I only commanded it from my bedroom window; and I lived chiefly at the back of the house, in a room which served me for studio and parlour together. Just outside this room was a little loggia, where I could breakfast in the open air; and where Goody used to sit in the sun with her needlework while I was painting, and chat to me

through the open window. The loggia was a great comfort to us; for there was no garden attached to the house in which we lived. We were, however, surrounded on this side by the gardens of others, overlooking, as we did, the great quadrangle formed by the backs of the houses in the Via Babuino, the north side of the Piazza di Spagna, the high ridge of the Pincian hill, and our own modest little Vicolo d'Aliberti. Within this quadrangle the air was always fresh, and the sunshine warm and lulling. The gardens below were full of orange and lemon trees; some of which (laden with yellow fruit, like the golden apples of the poets) were trained along the walls; while others, again, stood sturdy and wide-spreading, like mere northern apple-trees. Most of our neighbours kept poultry; and many were the contrivances of up-stairs lodgers to hang linen from window to window, or balcony to balcony. In one garden close by, there was an old marble water-tank, that had once been a costly sarcophagus, and came, most probably, from the tomb of some noble Roman on the Appian Way. In another, were two crumbling moss-grown urns of stone, apparently of cinque-cento origin. Piled high upon a loggia nearly opposite, rose a pyramid of empty Orvieto bottles, in their wicker-coats. Lower down were the stables of a *remise*; and on the brow of

the Pincian, closing in our horizon on the left, stood the twin-towered villa of the French Academy. Merely to lounge on this little loggia in the morning sunlight, throwing crumbs to the chickens in my neighbour's garden, watching the light and shadow on the green leaves and the broken urns, and listening to the military music on the Pincian, was pleasant and soothing to one whose health was so broken as mine. It was a quiet, cheerful nook—just the place in which to live a life of work and solitude; day repeating day, and year year, till the end should come.

This little home was found for me by my good friend, the Professor. Poor Goody, it appeared, had told him, in her perplexity and fear of possible consequences, that I had lost my husband, and come abroad for change of scene. He believed my name to be Carlyon; and he knew that I looked to my artistic talents for a livelihood. Finding all this to be the case, I suffered him to continue in the same convictions; and this with all the less difficulty, since he scrupulously abstained from even an allusion to my married life. Was I wrong to do this? I think not. I could have told him nothing, unless I told all; and my wounds were too fresh to bear re-opening. And then the shame of it! No—no; broken as I was,

my pride sealed that confession on my lips, and gave me strength to suffer in silence.

The dear, rough, kind Professor! I had never known till now how gentle, how chivalrous, how generous a heart beat beneath that rugged exterior. I was unhappy, and he respected my sorrow. I was ill, and he succoured me. I was alone, and he protected me. He brought me to my little home himself, all the way from Civita Vecchia; saw to the drawing up of the agreement by which I hired it; and was as careful of my interests and my comfort as if I had been his own child. He had come to Rome to collect works of art for the Grand Duke, and was lodging temporarily in the Piazza di Spagna. Closely as his time was occupied, he came to see me once in every day; and often, when he had been the whole morning among the printshops or studios, would bring an open *vettura* in the afternoon, to take me for a drive along the meadows behind St. Angelo. As I became stronger, he introduced me to several of the best picture-dealers; one of whom at once commissioned me to copy a painting in the Schiarra Palace. From this moment, my modest future was assured. Once known in Rome as the pupil of so eminent a master, I was certain of employment as a copyist; and a copyist was now all that I desired to be. Ambition, hope, the desire of excellence,

the love of praise, were all dead within me. The enthusiasm with which I once worshipped the painter's art, was dead also. I did not even look upon the masterpieces of the past with the same eyes as before. For me, the Magdalens of Guido had lost their languid charm. Something of its subtlety had fled from the syren smile of Johanna of Naples. A power was gone out from the walls of the Sistine, and a glory had faded from the Transfiguration. Not all the wonders of art, antiquity, or story had power now to hasten the pulses of my heart. I could wander among the colossal ruins of the Baths of Caracalla, or tread the chariot-worn pavement of the Appian Way, with an apathy at which I marvelled. Nothing moved me, save the remembrance of when, and with whom, I had first visited each well-known site. In the Colosseum, I no longer saw Commodus, "the Imperial Sagittary," with his crescent-shaped shafts, decapitating the ostrich as it fled round the arena. Amid the gigantic desolation of the Palace of the Cæsars, I no longer remembered Caligula dancing madly before the trembling Consuls, "in the second watch of the night," or Nero weeping on the bosom of his nurse. I thought only of Hugh, and of how we had wandered together in the shadow of these very walls and arches. I remembered how, for my pleasure, he used to ran-

sack the stores of his learning, people each ruin with the men of antique Rome, and "unsphere" the spirits of Suetonius and Plutarch. "In Italy," saith a brilliant Essayist, "we leave ourselves behind, and travel through a romance." Alas! it was so with me; but in a sadder and a very different sense. I had indeed left far behind my former self of youth and happiness; and now, a mere shadow travelled mournfully through the romance of my own fair and faded past. Every broken column, every mouldering architrave, recalled some half-forgotten passage from its pages. On this fallen capital I sat to rest, while he filled my lap with violets. At this fountain we stooped and drank, in the mid-day sunshine. In this mosaic-paven nook we read aloud the fourth canto of Childe Harold. It was all over now. He whom I had worshipped as a child, dreamed of as a girl, adored as a wife, had deceived me, wronged me, embittered all my past, and laid waste all my future. Yet I lived, and knew that I must bear the burthen, and set myself to the business of life. Life?—alas! what was life to me? Like the Campagna, on all sides a desert; at every step, a tomb. All the joy and the fulness of this life of mine had sunk, in one night, at a single blow; like a stately ship that goes down in the deep waters, with all sail set, and every hand on board. Still I lived,

and was calm;—so calm that I sometimes asked myself if my heart yet beat in my bosom, and the blood yet ran warm in my veins?

And thus the weary sands dropped, dropped, dropped daily, in the great hour-glass of Time.

CHAPTER X.

TIME PAST AND TIME PRESENT.

"Parvum parva decent. Mihi jam non regia Roma
Sed vacuum Tibur placet."—HORACE.

"Cypress and ivy, weed and wall-flower grown
Matted and massed together, hillocks heap'd
On what were chambers, arch crush'd, column strown
In fragments, choked-up vaults, and frescoes steep'd
In subterranean damps."—BYRON.

THERE was a tap at the door.

"May I come in?" said a well-known voice.

The voice was followed by the shaggy grey head of the Herr Professor, and the head was duly succeeded by the rest of his gaunt person.

"Are you not always welcome?" I replied, answering a question with a question. "I am making

the coffee, while Goody is gone to the Via Condotti for the rolls. Will you breakfast with us?"

"Breakfast! I breakfasted two hours ago, by candle-light."

"You are a Spartan, mein Professor."

"You are a Sybarite, *meine liebe Schülerinn*. Who ever heard of such an hour as eight for breakfast at the Zollenstrasse College? Madame Brenner would be ashamed of you."

"My dear friend," I said, smiling and sighing together, "that was at least fifty years ago—when I was young."

"Pooh! you are a child now," growled the Professor; "and because you are a child, I come to propose a holiday. Will you go to Tivoli?"

"To Tivoli? When?"

"To-day. It is still early enough, and will do you good. Yes, or no?"

I had no desire to go; but feared to disappoint him by a refusal.

"If you can spare the time," I began, "and would enjoy it . . ."

"I can spare the time," he interrupted; "but my stay in Rome draws to an end; and in another week I may be no longer here. Shall I order a carriage to be at the door in half an hour?"

"In twenty minutes, if you like, mein Professor."

"No, no—eat your breakfast in peace. And, remember, your friend Goody is a charming old woman; but she may as well stay at home, and keep house."

With this, he strode away downstairs, three steps at a time, and I presently saw him in the yard of the *remise*, several gardens off, inspecting the condition of an open carriage which was being cleaned by one of the stablemen.

The drive was less beautiful than most of those which lie round Rome, and the Professor was more than usually silent. Thus two hours and a half went by, dully; and I was not sorry when, turning aside from the castellated tomb of the Plautia family, we passed down a shady lane, and stopped at the gate of Hadrian's Villa. Alighting here, we passed into that wide and wondrous wilderness of ruin, through avenues dark with cypress, and steep banks purple with violets. The air was heavy with perfume. The glades were carpeted with daisies, wild periwinkle, and white and yellow crocus-blooms. We stepped aside into a grassy arena which was once the Greek theatre, and sat upon a fallen cornice. There was the narrow shelf of stage on which the agonies of Œdipus and Prometheus were once rehearsed; there was the tiny altar which stood between the audience and the actors, and consecrated the

play; there, row above row, were the seats of the spectators. Now, the very stage was a mere thicket of brambles, and a little thrush lighted on the altar, while we were sitting by, and filled all the silent space with song.

Passing hence, we came next upon open fields, partly cultivated, and partly cumbered with shapeless mounds of fallen masonry. Here, in the shadow of a gigantic stone pine, we found a sheet of mosaic pavement glowing with all its marbles in the sun; and close by, half buried in deep grass, a shattered column of the richest porphyry. Then came an olive plantation; another theatre; the fragments of a temple; and a long line of vaulted cells, some of which contained the remains of baths and conduits, and were tapestried within with masses of the delicate maiden-hair fern. Separated from these by a wide space of grass, amid which a herd of goats waded and fed at their pleasure, rose a pile of reticulated wall, with part of a vast hall yet standing, upon the vaulted roof of which, sharp and perfect as if moulded yesterday, were encrusted delicate bas-reliefs of white stucco, representing groups of Cupids, musical instruments, and figures reclining at table. Near this spot, on a rising ground formed all of ruins overgrown with grass and underwood, we sat down to rest, and contemplate the view.

A deep romantic valley opened before us, closed in on either side by hanging woods of olive and ilex, with here and there a group of dusky junipers, or a solitary pine, rising like a dark green parasol above all its neighbours. Interspersed among these and scattered about the foreground, were mountainous heaps of buttressed wall, arch, vault, and gallery, all more or less shattered out of form, or green with ivy. At the bottom of the valley, forming, as it were, the extreme boundary of the middle distance, rose two steep volcanic hills, each crowned with a little white town, that seemed to wink and glitter in the sun; while beyond these again, undulating, melancholy, stretching mysteriously away for miles and miles in the blue distance, lay the wastes of the Campagna.

The Professor pulled out his book, and made a rapid sketch.

"Why do you not also draw?" asked he.

"Because I prefer to be idle, and fancy how this scene may have looked eighteen hundred years ago."

"You cannot fancy it," he said, abruptly. "It's impossible. Who could reconstruct, to the mind's eye, a group of palaces, theatres, barracks, temples, and gardens, such as once were here gathered together? Why, the outer wall measured between eight and ten miles round."

"It was not a villa at all," I replied. "It was a model city."

"And can you 'fancy' a city?"

"Perhaps."

The professor grinned, somewhat contemptuously; shook his head; and went on sketching.

Now it happened that I really could 'fancy' these things with a degree of accuracy that would have been surprising had the knowledge been my own. I had gone over this very ground with Hugh, when we were living in and near Rome, many and many a time. It had been one of our most favourite spots, and I knew every site, every path, and every historical conjecture of the place by heart. To reconstruct these buildings; to people temple, and palace, and amphitheatre, with the life of eighteen hundred years ago; to identify each hill, and vale, and pile of ruin, had been precisely the object and the charm of our explorations. It was in studies such as these that Hugh's active mind found one of its highest satisfactions. They brought his vast reading to the surface. They exercised his imagination, stimulated his memory, and interested him on the side of poetry and art. I think I seldom knew him so communicative of his knowledge, and so happy in the exercise of his manifold powers, as when, strolling through these ruins, he used to think

aloud, and enrich my mind with the precious overflowings of his own."

Of all this, however, the Professor knew nothing; and so, being this morning in a particularly amiable mood, began presently to banter me on my "antiquarian spirit."

"Why so silent?" said he. "Lost among the Romans—eh? Perhaps you knew the Emperor Hadrian in some state of pre-existence—who knows?"

"Perhaps I was a handmaiden of Julia Sabina."

"Julia Sabina! Who was she?"

"His wife, mein Professor."

"Humph! I wish your antiquarian inspiration would move you to discover what all these places were, that I'm putting in my sketch."

"Will you confess that I am a genuine Sibyl, if I really tell you?"

"Oh, of course."

"Well, then, this spot on which we are sitting was probably the site of an Academy. The valley before us was called the Vale of Tempe, and laid out in imitation of the celebrated Thessalian pass. Down yonder, where you see that line of bushes and deep grass, there runs a tiny rivulet which the Emperor caused to be led through the valley in imitation of the Perseus."

"You have got this from the guide-book," said

the Professor. "False Sibyl! fill me this cup with water from your mock Perseus. I must just add a dash of colour."

I took the little tin cup, and filled it for him. When I came back, he desired me to go on.

"What is the use of going on," said I, "if you deny my inspiration? No Sibyl ever brooked incredulity."

"Tell me something worth hearing, and I will believe in you to any extent you please."

"Upon your honour?"

"Upon my honour—if your Sibylline leaves are not stolen from Murray's Hand-book."

"Be silent, then, while I invoke the aid of the gods."

The Professor mixed a great pool of cobalt, and laid a flat wash of cloudless sky over all the upper half of his paper. Then, humming an unmusical growl, touched in the shadow-sides of his ruins with a warm grey which seemed at once to put everything in its place, and harmonize the picture. I, in the meantime, strove to collect my thoughts, and arrange my already half-forgotten learning.

"Come, my pupil," said the Professor, "you are a slow prophetess."

"I have to travel back through eighteen centuries," I replied, "and that is no light matter. Now listen, while I summon up remembrance of

things past, and bring before your eyes the revels of the Cæsars!"

The Professor put his brush to his lips, and blew an imaginary trumpet. I proceeded with my narrative.

"Imagine, O learned Apelles, that it is now the tenth hour of the Roman day. There has this morning been a chariot race, followed by a show of gladiators, and the victors have just gone down through the valley crowned with palm leaves and ribbons. Now we hear a sound of flutes and clarions. A company of the Pretorian guard advances, followed by musicians and fire-bearers, after whom comes the Emperor, clothed in a long white robe and crowned with roses. He is followed by some two dozen Roman nobles, all in festive dress; and another company of guards brings up the rear. They are going to sup in the Imperial Banqueting-hall, of which the ruins are now before your eyes. Imagine that hall . . ."

"Stop!" cried the Professor. "Those are the ruins of the Thermæ."

"They are called so, O Apelles, by the ignorant who compile guide-books," I replied; "but I, the Sibyl, tell thee that those ruined arches once echoed to the sounds of feasting. See the stuccoed flutes and garlands, the amphoræ, the groups of revellers yet fresh upon the hollow of that vault.

To what end should decorations such as these be moulded upon the ceiling of a bath-room?"

"Humph! There's some reason in that," admitted he, now busy upon a cluster of dock leaves and a fallen trunk in the foreground.

"Let us follow the Emperor," continued I. "Let us pass, invisible, through the guards at the portal, and the crowd of Sicilian cooks, pantomimists, slaves, and dependants in the outer hall. Guided by the sound of music, let us penetrate to the cœnaculum itself. Here, on semicircular couches, recline the Emperor and his guests, their hair redolent of fragrant ointments, their fingers covered with rings, and their jewelled slippers lying beside them on the floor. Each man holds in his left hand a napkin with a gold and purple fringe. On the tables stand small images of the gods. At the lower end of the room is an elevated stage, on which a party of buffoons are performing a comic interlude. The visitors play at dice between the courses. Now and then, through revolving compartments in the ceiling, flowers and perfumes are showered down upon the feasters; while slaves stand by, whose duty it is to fan away the flies, and bring fresh towels and scented water to the guests, after every dish."

"By Thor and Woden!" exclaimed the Professor, "how do *you* come to know all this?"

"The feast begins," said I, taking no notice of the interruption, "to the sound of trumpets; and slaves carry round cups of Falernian wine, flavoured with honey. Then come oysters from the Lucrine lake, cray-fish from Misenum, mullets from Baiæ, lampreys, and perhaps a sturgeon, which is weighed alive at table, allowed to expire before the eyes of the guests, and then carried off to the kitchen, presently to appear again, cooked with a rich sauce of wine and pickles. Then come dishes of nightingales, thrushes, roasted shrimps, African cockles, Melian cranes, Ambracian kid, and a boar from the Umbrian forests, roasted whole, and stuffed with beef and veal. This is carved by the *carptor*, with pantomimic gestures, to the sound of music."

"But how do you know this?" repeated the Professor, fairly laying down his brush with astonishment.

"Next some jars of rare Massic and Chian wines are opened; a libation is poured out to the gods; and the Emperor pledges his guests. Then enter four musicians playing on double flutes, followed by as many servants crowned with flowers. They bring the royal dish of the entertainment—a peacock with all its plumage displayed, on a salver garlanded with roses. At this sight, the guests burst into murmurs of applause, and salute the

Emperor. The buffoons now retire, and a couple of gladiators make their appearance on the stage, armed with helmets, bucklers, greaves, and short swords. The serious business of supper being now over, and the dessert about to be brought on, the feasters have leisure to enjoy this more exciting amusement. Additional cushions are brought; spiced wines are handed round; the tables are cleared; fresh cloths are laid; the guests lean back; the Emperor gives the signal, and the gladiators begin their combat. Now pistachio nuts, dates, Venafran olives, Matian apples, pears, grapes, dried figs, mushrooms, sweet cakes, preserves, and all kinds of delicate confectionary moulded into curious and graceful devices, are placed upon the tables. Conversation becomes animated. A gladiator falls, mortally wounded; the spectators cry '*habet!*' a fresh combatant replaces him; and the Emperor himself deigns to bet upon the victor. Thus, amid bloodshed, dicing, wine and feasting, the hours pass by, and the entertainment draws to a close. Valuable presents are then distributed to the guests. One gets a precious ring, one a robe of Tyrian dye, another a sketch by Parrhasius, another a bust of Hadrian in coloured marbles; and thus each takes his leave, enriched and feasted, and pours a last libation to the health of the Emperor and the honour of the gods."

"Is that all?" gasped the Professor.

"O Apelles! the Sibyl hath spoken."

He jumped up and flourished his umbrella menacingly before my eyes.

"Confess!" cried he. "Down on your knees, and confess directly where you read all this! Name the book, the author, the publisher and the price! Tell everything this moment, you impostor, on pain of death!"

"I have nothing to tell," replied I, composedly.

"False! inconceivably false! Where did you read it?"

"Nowhere."

"Who wrote it?"

"Nobody."

"Have you invented it?"

"By no means."

"Nowhere—nobody—by no means! Sphinx! Monster of negations! Speak, and be intelligible. If thou hast neither read nor invented these things, whence thy knowledge of them?"

"Inspiration."

"Humbug! humbug! humbug!"

"As you please, mein Professor," I replied, quietly smiling. "Is the sketch finished?"

The Professor flung away his umbrella, and resumed his seat by my side.

"Seriously, *meine Schülerinn*," said he, "I want

the secret of your learning. I know you to be a sensible young woman, and a very tolerable painter; but a savant in petticoats, 'darkly, deeply, beautifully blue.' . . . Pooh! it's impossible!"

"Wonder of wonders! Apelles quotes Byron!"

"You trifle with me," said the Professor, frowning darkly. "You do not choose to speak. Eh?"

"Can you not guess why?" I asked, turning away that he might not see the tears in my eyes. "Can you not guess that I trifle, because it would cost me so much pain to be in earnest?"

"I—I don't understand," stammered he.

"Then I will tell you. You do not know, perhaps, how familiar this place is to me. I have been here over and over again, in—in time past. I once stayed at Tivoli for more than a week. I have sketched this very scene from almost the same point of view as yourself. I know every ruin in the place by heart—outwardly, in its form and colour; inwardly, in its legend and history. The outward, I gathered for myself. The inward, dear friend, I acquired from the lips of one who had

> '——made a general survey
> Of all the best of men's best knowledges,
> And knew so much as ever learning knew.'

One to whom all art, all poetry, all history was dear and familiar—one . . . ."

My voice failed, and I covered my eyes with my hand. The Professor coughed, fidgeted, and was for some moments silent. When he spoke, it was with a voluble embarrassment quite foreign to his ordinary manner.

"I beg your pardon," said he. "I—I was an ass. I ought to have guessed—I might have guessed. If I am a fool, I can't help it. You—you see, I forget. I always think of you as my little scholar. It always seems to me that we are still at Zollenstrasse, and—and when I look at you and talk to you, I never remember that you . . . perhaps if you wore a widow's dress, it would be different; or if you sometimes talked about your late . . . but I beg your pardon. Of course it's a very sad subject, and—and, as I said before, if I am a fool, I can't help it."

"You are my best friend in all the world," said I, putting out my hand.

He shook it, as if it had been a pump-handle, and blushed purple to the very tips of his great ears. Then, relapsing into sudden misanthropy, said—

"Nonsense! All men are fools, and all women are hypocrites. I don't believe you care a *groschen* for me. *Ei, schweigen Sie!* I won't hear a word

you have to say. Do you see that man on the top of those arches? I wonder how he got there. What a famous distance I should get for my sketch if I could find my way up!"

"I can show you the path," said I. "It lies round behind those bushes. You must, however, follow it alone, for it is rough climbing."

He gathered up his sketching traps, and I led the way, pausing at the foot of the ascent, which was even more wild and inaccessible than when I last saw it. Leaving him there to fight his way through the brambles as well as he could, I then strolled back into the valley, and followed the little rivulet, as it gurgled and sparkled through cresses and pebbles, till lost among the deep grass farther down. Little rivulet that had been flowing on thus for so many centuries, singing the same low song for ever and ever! For my ears that song had but one burthen. What to me were the Imperial feet that had once trodden its borders, and become dust? What to me were the ravages of Goth or Gaul? I remembered only Hugh, and how we had wandered there together in the sunlight of two short years ago. I plucked a little red flower from the bank, and watched it float away with the stream. "Is it not thus," I asked myself, "that a life floats down the stream of time? Is it not thus that those whom we love are snatched from our embrace, and

hurried away for ever? To what shore, oh flower? To what sea, oh stream? To what haven, oh my heart?"

It was one of those moments when I realised, in all its bitterness, the thought of how, on this fair earth, we two could never meet in peace and love again; and it smote me with a sense of pain "too deep for tears."

The Professor came back covered with dust and scratches, and looking much the worse for his excursion; but delighted, nevertheless, with all that he had seen and sketched from the roof of the Banqueting-hall. And now, as the day was advancing, and our time was fast ebbing away, we hastened back, found our vettura waiting at the gate, and drove on through the famous olive-wood, to Tivoli. As the town came in sight, the Professor pulled out his watch, shook his head, and sighed.

"All the inns are detestable," said he. "Heaven only knows what we shall get for dinner."

"Oh, never mind," I replied. "What does it matter?"

"Matter?" said he, sharply. "It matters everything in this infernal country. My dinner has been the misery of my daily life ever since I have been in Rome. The sight of the trattore's list each morning drives me mad. I never know what anything means; and when at length I mark off three

or four things, they generally turn out to be loathsome messes, unfit for any but a Caliban. Yesterday, when I sat down to dinner, I found I had ordered nothing but a few sauces, and some scraps of half-raw potatoe, swimming in oil!"

"Well, I promise you that shall not be the case to-day," said I, smiling.

"Then they eat such unholy things," grumbled he. "What do you think I saw on the price-list at the *Lepre* the other day? It ran thus:—

'Beef—the eye of.
Do.—the tongue.
Do.—the ear.
Do.—the feet.'

Fancy a people that can feed on such offal as this! What wonder that art dies out among them? What wonder that they are priest-ridden and degraded? Do you believe that Michael Angelo and Raffaelle nourished their mighty thoughts on the eyes and ears of Campagna bullocks? Faugh!"

We were by this time entering the dirty, ruinous alleys of Tivoli, followed by a lively crowd of beggars.

"What hotel, signore?" asked the driver.

"Hotel!" growled the Professor. "Say hovel. Take us to the Sibyl. There, if we are starved, we shall at least have something to look at."

So we drove into the yard of the Hôtel de la Sibylle, which was already crowded with carriages and coachmen, and were at once shown out upon the terrace overlooking the falls. Here, at a long table in the shadow of the loveliest of Roman temples, sat a merry party of ladies and gentlemen, dining in the open air. No sooner, however, had we made our appearance, than three or four started up from their seats, and, to my dismay, burst into exclamations of welcome.

"Why, it's Professor Metz!"

"What lucky chance has brought you here to-day, Professor Metz?"

"Just in time to dine with us, too!"

"Well, now, this is famous!"

"Couldn't have happened better!"

To all of which the Professor replied by shaking hands with nearly the whole party, and blurting out such commonplaces as first suggested themselves. This done, he came back to me, looking considerably embarrassed.

"What's to be done?" said he. "They want us to dine with them; and—and they've such a capital dinner there, furnished by Nazzari. Everything cold. Brought it with them from Rome. If we order a dinner at this vile place, we shan't be able to eat it. What do you say?"

"I say, do as you please, my kind friend."

"Humph! Ha! But—but you don't like strangers—I know you don't like strangers! Then you need not know them again to-morrow, you see, unless you choose. They're nearly all artists. Still, if it wasn't for the dinner . . . ."

"I won't condemn you to die by starvation," said I.

"I'm afraid I'm selfish," hesitated the Professor.

"I should know I was, if I allowed you to refuse on my account."

While we were yet wavering, a lady left the party, and came towards us. Her person was large; her complexion fair; her face square, massive, full of power and frankness, and lit by a pair of wondrous eyes that seemed to flash and vary with every word she uttered.

"Will it not be possible, Herr Metz," said she, "to prevail upon your friend?"

"Oh, yes—I—that is, she . . . . permit me to introduce Miss Dunham—Mrs. Carlyon," stammered the Professor.

Miss Dunham put out her hand with the sunniest smile in the world, and said:—

"You are very welcome. Our tables are 'but coldly furnished forth;' yet if you will balance our good will against our baked meats, both shall be heartily at your service."

I thanked and followed her, while the Professor whispered hastily in my ear:—

"Miss Dunham, you know—the celebrated American tragedian. One of the most charming women in Rome."

Miss Dunham resumed her seat at the head of the table, made room for me at her right hand, and introduced me to the rest of the company. The Professor found a place at the farther end; and thus I found myself, for the first time since the fatal night of the ball at Ashley Park, surrounded by strangers, and listening to a whirl of conversation and laughter. Confused, bewildered, feeling strangely sad and out of place, I sat silently by, replying in monosyllables when spoken to, and scarcely able at first to disentangle the separate threads of talk. Presently, as my embarrassment subsided, I found that my neighbours at the upper end of the table were chiefly occupied with the present state of Roman art.

"That which shocks me most," said Miss Dunham, "is the fatal influence of Rome upon our young artists. Men who in London or New York showed vigour and originality, here either sink into classical imbecility, or turn manufacturers of busts and medallions."

"Nothing more easily accounted for," replied a handsome young man with an open collar and long

hair, at the opposite side of the table. "A fellow can but choose between the antique and the modern. The antique drives him to despair; and all he does is miserable imitation. The modern is a market, governed by the almighty dollar."

"If the artist did his duty, he might make that market what he pleased," said a bright-faced girl, whom they called Charlie. "It is his business to elevate the public taste."

"All very well when he has a fixed public to deal with," replied the young man; "but the public of Rome is a mere fluctuating tide of tourists, most of whom know no more about art than about Lindley Murray—wretches who prefer a marble record of their own ugliness to the bust of the young Augustus; and see a finer study of colour in a yard of Tartan than in a masterpiece of Titian."

"Penwarne," said Miss Dunham, "you grow misanthropic. That unsold Eve that I saw in your studio yesterday will prove the ruin of you. Remember the fall."

"I'd rather put the Eve into the fire than sell her to some of your countrymen," said the painter, colouring. "A Yankee monster asked me the other day what I would take for—'the gal eating oranges.'"

"I can tell you a better story than that," ob-

served a quiet man at the lower end of the table. "An American capitalist came to me not many months since, and opened the conversation by saying—'Sir, your name is Robson.' I admitted that my name was Robson. 'And you air a Statuary,' said he. I admitted this fact also, substituting sculptor. 'Sir,' continued he, 'I will give you a commission.' I bowed, and begged him to be seated. 'Mr. Robson, sir,' said he, drawing a paper from his pocket, 'I am a re-markable man. I was born in the en-Vi-rons of Boston city, and began life by selling matches at five cents the bunch. I am worth, at this moment, one million o' dollars.' I bowed again, and said I was glad to hear it. 'Sir,' he went on to say, 'how I airned that million o' dollars—how from selling matches I came to running of errands; to taking care of a hoss; to trading in dogs, tobaccos, cottons, corns, and sugars; and how I came to be the man I am, you'll find all made out on this paper, dates, and facts correct. Sir, it's a very Re-markable statement.' I replied that I had no doubt of it; but that I could not quite see what it had to do with the matter in hand. 'Sir,' said my capitalist, 'everything. I wish, sir, to per-petuate my name. You have a very pretty thing, sir, here in Rome—a pillar with a Pro-cession twisting up all round it, and a figger up at top. I think you call it Trajan's

column. Now, Mr. Robson, sir, I wish you to make me one exackly like it—same height, same size, and money no object. You shall re-present my career in all my va-ri-ous trades a-twisting round the column, beginning with the small chap selling matches at five cents the bundle, and ending with a full length figger of ME on the summit, with one hand, thus, in my Bo-som, and the other under my coat-tails!'"

"Won't do! won't do!" laughed a chorus of sceptics. "A palpable invention, Robson! Too good to be true."

"Does anyb-b-b-body know what is to be done at the artist's fête this year?" asked a slim youth with blue glasses and a stutter. "I c-c-cant find out anything ab-b-b-bout it."

"There's nothing decided yet," replied Mr. Penwarne. "Murray was talking about a travestie of Sardanapalus the other day; but the notion didn't seem to be popular."

"Why not play the 'tedious-brief scene' of Pyramus and Thisbe?" suggested Miss Dunham.

"Why not play the whole Midsummer Night's Dream?" said another lady. "It needs no scenery that the Campagna will not furnish."

"Then Charlie should play Puck," said Miss Dunham, smiling.

"And yourself, Oberon," rejoined the young girl.

"I should wonderfully like to play B-b-b-bottom," stammered the youth in the spectacles.

"Yes, it would suit you capitally," said Penwarne; "and no expense for the head."

"It has always seemed to me," observed an intelligent-looking man who had not spoken before, "that there is a poetical inconsistency in the remarks made by Bottom, after he is 'translated.' When he is introduced to Mustard-seed he makes a pungent allusion to ox-beef. When Titania presses him to eat, he asks for a peck of provender. How are these to be reconciled? If he thinks as an ass, he would know nothing of beef and mustard. If he thinks as a man, he would not ask for oats."

"You can only reconcile it by remembering that he is both a man and an ass," replied Miss Dunham. "No uncommon phenomenon either."

"You might get up an annual exhibition, I should fancy, in one of the private galleries," said the Professor, in answer to some observation which I had not heard. "Where no comparisons can be made, the fire of emulation smoulders. A man ought to see his own works beside those of his contemporaries at least once in every two or three years."

"We would gladly do so, if we could," replied the gentleman with whom he was conversing; "but a thousand difficulties are thrown in our way by the government whenever it is proposed. We all feel the want of an exhibition room. We should be able to undertake larger works, if we had a large place in which to hang them. It is just this disadvantage that causes the historical school to be almost abandoned by our young artists, and drives so many into the realistic style."

"Realistic! historical!" repeated the Professor, impatiently. "Nonsense, nonsense, young man! All true art is a form of history. If you paint but a tree, or a face, or a boat, faithfully—that is history. Don't lose yourself in a maze of words. Painting big pictures of mediæval men and women from hired models in hired costumes, is not history. The real is your only historic; and all art, to be beautiful, must first be true."

"But the best critics . . . ."

"Critics be hanged!" interrupted the Professor, savagely. "God sent art, and the devil sent critics. Where were the critics when Raffaelle painted his Transfiguration, and Michael Angelo worked in the Sistine Chapel? In those days, there were no critics. The best pictures the world ever saw were painted before the brood existed. Critics, indeed! Vultures feeding on the

M 2

corpse of ancient art—fungi flourishing among ruins—ghouls!"

"Will anyb-b-body go down to see the falls?" asked the youth in the spectacles.

"No one who objects to being left behind," replied Miss Dunham, who was evidently the leader of the party. "It is half-past four already, and we have all our miles before us. The night-mists will have risen, as it is, before we are half across the Campagna."

"No danger of B-b-b-banditti, I suppose?"

"Banditti?" repeated Mr. Penwarne, carelessly; "why, I fear not. There are a few hordes about; but they chiefly haunt the Florentine and Neapolitan roads. Fancy falling in with a Fra Diavolo and his gang—wouldn't it be exciting?"

"I shouldn't f-f-f-fancy it at all," stammered the other, looking very uncomfortable.

"Nonsense! think of the romance of it."

"B-b-b-bother the romance of it," replied the stammerer, upon whose mind was dawning a dim consciousness of banter. "R-r-r-robbery and murder are acquired tastes, and I don't p-p-possess them."

The al fresco dinner was now over; the order was given for putting in the horses; and the gentlemen began gathering the knives, glasses, and unemptied bottles into two large baskets. In the

meantime we made the tour of the little temple, and looked down upon the plunging waters of the Cascatelle, the distant roar of which had accompanied our voices all dinner-time, like a concert of solemn instruments.

"I wish I had gone to the b-b-bottom," said the stammerer regretfully, as he leaned over the parapet.

"I wish you had, with all my heart," replied Penwarne.

A few minutes more, and we were all on our road back to Rome. Mr. Robson and Mr. Penwarne shared our carriage, and chatted of Italian politics, books, art, and artist-gossip all the way; and as we went along, the sun set, and the mountains changed from rose-colour to amethyst, and from amethyst to a cold and wintry grey.

CHAPTER XI.

THE PROFESSOR.

"Sweetest nut hath sourest rind."
As You Like It.

I had been all day copying in the Sciarra Palace, and was cowering over my little wood fire after dinner, when the Professor walked in, unannounced, and sat down at the opposite side of the hearth.

"The evenings are still cold," said he. "I am glad you have a fire."

"They are very cold," I replied, throwing on a couple of pine cones, which blazed up immediately in a wavering pyramid of flame.

"That's cheerful," said the Professor, approvingly.

"So cheerful that I only wish it were possible to bear it all through the summer. There is real companionship in a fire."

"You are lonely here?"

"Sometimes."

He stirred uneasily in his chair, and stared at the fire.

"I am not more lonely," I said, after a long pause, "than I should be elsewhere. You must not suppose, kind friend, that I do not like the place"

"That's well," he said; and sighed.

And then we were both silent again.

"Rome is a melancholy place," he observed, after some five minutes' interval.

"I am not sure that I think so. It is melancholy, perhaps, to the heavy-hearted, in the sense that all visible history is melancholy; but to those who are happy, it is one of the most charming places in the world."

The Professor looked up, sharply.

"Your definition?" said he.

"Of what?"

"Of 'visible history.' What do you mean by it? Ruins, monuments, records of past generations?"

"Yes, precisely."

"Humph! And do you suppose that a pair of

honeymoon lovers would find the Appian Way a lively place of resort?"

"We were speaking of Rome, Herr Professor. Not of the road from Rome to Heaven."

"A pretty idea," said he, smiling; "but of doubtful application. Not many of those old Romans, I fancy, went to Heaven. Quite the reverse."

And then the conversation dropped again.

"I—I must go, *meine Schülerinn*," he said, by and by.

"Not till I have made you a cup of coffee?"

He shook his head.

"That's not what I mean. I must go back to Germany."

"Alas! when?"

"The day after to-morrow; or—or, perhaps, to-morrow."

"So soon?"

"Aye, so soon."

"How much more lonely it will be when you are gone!" I said, sadly.

He stared gloomily at the fire, and made no reply.

"You—you will sometimes take the trouble to write to me, mein Professor?"

"Aye—surely."

Another long silence.

"I have one favour to beg from you," I began, at length. "That is to say, one more favour, in addition to so many."

"You have only to name it, child," said he, still with the same intent look.

"Then I—I want you to promise me something."

"I promise. What is it?"

"To keep my name, my place of residence, my very existence secret. To deliver over to no living soul the key of my seclusion. To deny me, if need be, to my own father."

He looked up with a startled flash in his eyes.

"To your own father?" he exclaimed.

"To my own father—my own sister—all who ever knew me. To—to Mr. Farquhar, if he should visit Zollenstrasse again."

"Mr. Farquhar?" said he, quickly. "The rich Englishman who . . . ."

"The same. Do you promise this?"

"I have promised," he replied, sinking back into his former attitude.

"Why I desire it," I continued, falteringly, "is—is of no consequence to anyone but myself. I am not happy. I look back upon a very dreary past, and forward to a very dreary future. My only prayer now is for solitude. Let me be dead to all the world except yourself—dead, and buried."

"Be it so," he said. "I will keep your secret faithfully."

"And—you are not vexed that I withhold my motive from you?"

"Not in the least."

I put out my hand to him in silent thanks. He took it; held it loosely for a moment, as if he did not quite know what he ought to do with it; and then dropped it.

"Do you really think you shall miss me?" he said, after another pause.

"Can you ask the question?"

"I'm but an old bear."

"You are the best friend—the only friend, I have."

"I would stay if I could," he continued, pulling contemplatively at his moustache. "If I gave up the Art-directorship and settled here in Rome, I might, perhaps, manage it."

"Gave up the Art-directorship!" I repeated, with incredulous amazement. "You cannot be serious?"

"Humph! the Art-directorship is more honour than profit, and more plague than either. The salary is only twelve hundred florins a year."

"But the Academy—the Grand Duke—what would they do without you? How could you endure to live out of Germany?"

"I should do more for my own fame," said he.

"True—you would paint more pictures."

"And I should not be leaving you alone here in Rome."

"For heaven's sake, put that thought aside! If you take such an important step, my dear friend, let it be in consideration of your own prosperity and happiness only."

"As far as my prosperity is concerned, I should do well enough, no doubt. Whenever I have time to paint a picture, it sells at once. Besides, I have a little money put by. Then as for my happiness, I—why, the fact is, *meine Schülerinn*, I'm just as lonely as yourself, and—and I have no ties—and . . . . why do you suppose I took you the other day to Tivoli?"

"To give me pleasure, I am sure; though I fear you could ill spare the time."

"Not a bit of it."

"Well, then, to give yourself pleasure."

"Not a bit of it."

"Oh, in that case I give up guessing."

"To—to ask you a question, *gnädige Fräulein*."

"A question? Nay, you are jesting."

He shook his head, and sat tugging at his moustache as if he meant to pull it off.

"I'm serious," said he.

"But what question?"

"One that I hadn't courage to put to you, after all. Can't you guess it?"

"Not in the very least; but if it be anything that I can do for you—anything in this wide world, no matter how difficult, or . . . ."

"No, no, no—nothing of the kind. Bah! what a fool I am!"

"But why do you hesitate?"

"Because—because something tells me that I had better hold my tongue. And yet . . . . I hate the thought of your toiling here year after year, with no one to work for you, or watch over you. You're young, and you're poor, and you're—you're pretty; and the world will come hard to you in many ways that you've not yet thought of. You want some one to take care of you. I'm—I'm a disagreeable old fellow—rough and gruff, and tough as a bear; but . . . . will you marry me?"

Marry him! Marry the Professor! Were my senses deceiving me?

"I—I don't expect you to love me," he went on, hastily. "I know that isn't possible. I quite understand that your heart is buried with the husband you have lost. But if you can esteem me, take me for what I am, and put up with my companionship for life, why—just say so at once, and let us make an end of the matter."

"If I thought that you loved me, my kind friend," I began, "and if . . . ."

"I do love you," interrupted he, with his eyes still fixed unwaveringly upon the fire.

"Yes, I know you do, as a dear friend; but if I thought you loved me as a lover . . . ."

"Well? If you thought I loved you as a lover —what then?"

"Then I should have one more bitter grief to bear; because I could never be your wife."

"I expected this," he muttered, more to himself than me.

"I cannot tell you why. It makes part of my unhappy secret; but . . . ."

"But I know why," said he, with an impatient movement. "Because I am old, and grey, and ugly."

"Before heaven, no!"

He shook his head.

"Do you not believe me?"

"I don't believe that the Beauty would ever have loved the Beast, if he had not turned into a handsome prince at last."

"Alas! you did not ask me for love, two minutes since. You asked only for my hand, and my esteem. My esteem you know you have—nay, more; my warmest gratitude—my friendliest affection."

"Then why . . . ."

"Do not ask me why! Is it not enough if I say that it is impossible?"

"Oh, it is quite enough," he replied, bitterly.

I started up, stung by his incredulity.

"Ungenerous!" I exclaimed. "Ungenerous and unkind! Know, then, if you *will* know it, that I am no widow. He whom I wedded, lives. He deceived me—I fled from him. I have neither hand nor heart to give. Now you know all. Are you satisfied?"

He looked up, for the first time; and his eyes met mine. He rose.

"I beg your pardon," he said, so softly that his breath seemed to tremble, and not his voice. "I beg your pardon. I was greatly in the wrong."

"You were, indeed!"

"You will forgive me before I go? You will shake hands with me?"

I put out my hand, somewhat reluctantly. He took it between both his own. They were damp, and cold, and trembled palpably.

"Good-bye," he said.

"Good-bye."

He went towards the door, paused half way, and stood irresolute.

"We part friends, surely?" he asked, almost in a whisper.

"Friends!" I repeated, the last shade of vexation vanishing in an instant. "The best and truest friends in all the world. Never doubt it, while we both live!"

"Thank you," he said; and moved a step farther.

"And you will not leave Rome to-morrow? You will come and see me again?"

"Well—I will not leave Rome to-morrow," he replied, after a moment's hesitation.

There was something strange in his manner; something that I could not entirely understand.

"You would not, surely, be here another whole day without seeing me?" I persisted.

He put his hand to his brow, as if in pain.

"No, no," he said. "I will not be in Rome another day without seeing you. Good-bye—God bless you."

He made but one step to the threshold—looked back with a face, oh, so pale!—moved his lips without uttering any sound; and was gone.

I listened to his footsteps going down the stairs, and then went back to my seat by the fire. His empty chair stood opposite. The pine-cones had long since burnt to ashes, and my little room looked lonelier than ever. I sat with clasped hands, sadly thinking.

"Alas!" I said to myself. "Is this to cost me

the only friend I had? Shall we ever be the same again? Will not something, henceforth, be gone from our friendship—something from the pleasant tenour of our intercourse? Poor as I was before this night, am I now poorer still? God grant that it may not be so. He did not love me. It is not possible that he should love me! Seeing me so desolate, he generously sought the right to protect me. Good, chivalrous, gentle heart! He knows now that that right can never be his; and he knows it without offence to his pride, or pain to his friendship. Then why can we not meet tomorrow, as if this interview had never been? If, indeed, he had really loved me . . . . but he did not. No, he certainly did not love me!"

Having reasoned myself into this persuasion, I alternately reproached myself for the anger into which I had been betrayed, and consoled myself by thinking of all that I would say to him on the morrow, before parting. In the midst of my reverie, Goody came in with the coffee.

"My blessed lamb," said she, looking strangely disturbed; "nothing's the matter, is there? Just tell me if anything's the matter, my deary?"

"No—that is to say, not much. Why do you ask?"

"Because—because, my dear lamb, it's given me such a turn, that I'm all of a tremble."

"What has given you a turn?" I asked, quickly. "Is anything wrong?"

"I—I don't know, my deary. I suppose so; else why should he be taking on like that?"

"He? Who? The Professor?"

"To be sure, deary. Who else? Then, you see, I didn't know him at first, coming upon him in the dark, at the foot of the staircase."

"When was this?"

"Not two minutes ago, as I was bringing in the sugar for your coffee, darling."

"Not two minutes ago?" I repeated, going towards the door. "Then he is there still!"

"No, no, my lamb; he's far enough by this time. He just pulled his hat over his eyes and ran away like a madman, when he saw me."

"But what was he doing, Goody?"

"Doing, my deary? Just leaning his poor head down upon the banisters, and sobbing fit to break his heart."

My own heart sank within me. I turned cold from head to foot. Oh, was it love, then, after all?

The next morning I found a note on my breakfast table, containing these words:—

"By the time this reaches you, I shall be many leagues away. I keep my word. I do not leave Rome 'to-morrow;' I leave to-night, by the courier.

I feel that it is best. I do not wish to see you again, till this dream has become a painless memory. I did love you. I do love you. It is the first, last, only love of my life. Let this truth excuse my presumption, and be then forgotten. To love you is now a crime, to be lived down and expiated. When I feel that I have conquered, and dare dwell in your presence again, I will return to Rome and watch over you till I die. I have left a balance of a few hundred scudi at Pakenham's bank, which I entreat you to borrow if you need money. I have entered it in your name, to save trouble; and you shall pay it back by and by, when you are prosperous. God bless you!"

CHAPTER XII.

THE SECRET THAT CAME WITH THE SUMMER.

> "May bien vestu d'habit reverdissant
> Semé de fleurs."—FRANCOIS I.

THE spring came; the languid, fragrant, joyous Italian spring, all sunshine and perfume, and singing of birds, and blossoming of flowers. The Easter festivals were past, and the strangers dispersed and gone. The snow faded suddenly from the summit of Soracte. The Colosseum hung out its banners of fresh green. The Campagna glowed under the midday sun, like a Persian carpet—one wilderness of poppies and harebells, buttercups, daisies, wild convolvuli, and purple hyacinths. Every crumbling ruin burst into blossom, like a garden. Every cultivated patch within the city

walls ran over, as it were, spontaneously, with the delicious products of the spring. Every stall at the shady corner of every quiet piazza was piled high with early fruits; and the flower girls sat all day long on the steps of the Trinità de' Monti. Even the sullen pulses of the Tiber seemed stirred by a more genial current, as they eddied round the broken piers of the Ponte Rotto. Even the solemn sepulchres of the Appian Way put forth long feathery grasses from each mouldering cranny, and the wild eglantine struck root among the shattered urns of the road-side columbarium. Now, too, the transparent nights, all spangled with fire-flies, were even more balmy than the days. And now the moon shone down on troops of field-labourers encamped under the open sky against the city walls; and the nightingales sang as if inspired, among the shadowy cypresses of the Protestant burial-ground.

A happy, gentle time, fruitful in promise and tender in peace!—a gracious time, full of balm for wounded hearts, and hope for troubled souls—a time when the weariest sufferer was for a moment at rest, and the bitterest questions were hushed on the lips of the despairing! A blessed, blessed time, never to be recalled without tears of prayer and thanksgiving!

It had been first a doubt—then a hope—now a

certainty. It had haunted me for months, by day and night, at my work, and in my dreams. It had flashed upon me, quite suddenly, when I was not alone, making my heart beat, and my cheek vary from pale to crimson. It had waked me, over and over again, in the dead waste and middle of the night, forbidding sleep from my eyes, and conjuring before me such visions of possible joy that I scarcely dared to let my thoughts dwell on them. I remember how I used to lie in bed in the darkness, with closed eyes and folded hands, centering all my being in the one supreme act of prayer; and how I sometimes broke down under an overwhelming sense of my own weakness, and wept till I fell asleep.

And now it was certainty—a wonderful, enrapturing, bewildering certainty; and the world was suddenly transfigured; and I walked upon roses; and the air I breathed was liquid sunshine!

It was my secret. I was a miser, and I kept it to myself. I loved to be alone, that I might exult in it, and dwell upon it, and repeat it a hundred times, and again a hundred times, and find fresh music in the words at every utterance! I could not work when the knowledge first became mine. I went daily to the Sciarra Palace; took my usual seat; mixed the colours on the palate; and then sat idle, lost in delicious dreams. As the day

advanced, I generally gave up the useless effort, and wandered out to some quiet place where I could sit in the shade of trees and dream again. Thus for several days in succession, I haunted the secluded alleys of the Quirinal Gardens, and the ruins of the Baths of Caracalla; sometimes roaming restlessly to and fro, but oftenest sitting still, in a kind of passive ecstasy, wondering how the world had suddenly become so beautiful. Nothing now seemed as it was before. A little while ago, and day followed day mechanically; and the sun shone, or the rain fell, and I heeded not; and the flowers blossomed by the wayside, and I passed them unobservant. Now I saw everything, as if for the first time; and drank in delight from each sight and sound of spring.

And all this arose out of my secret; and that secret—ah! that priceless secret lay close, close to my heart, doubling each fond pulsation in a tender, mysterious harmony; blending life with life, and love with love, and irradiating all the future with a light direct from heaven. My child—dear God! how the words thrilled my very brain, when I whispered them softly to myself! Was there ever such melody in words before? Was there ever such consolation? Was there ever such wealth? Only those who have lived with nothing to live for, only those who have worked with nothing to work for, can tell what my secret was to me.

It informed every thought, and influenced every act of my daily life. It revived the ambition of art which had so long been dead within me. It awakened the sense of beauty which had so long lain dormant. It created a new interest in every earth-born thing, inanimate or animate, and linked it with a thousand happy projects. I could not see the wild flowers in the grass without thinking how sweet it would be, by and by, to gather them for tiny hands to play with. I could not hear the lark's song overhead without some fancy of how I might train that baby ear to love sweet sounds, and all God's happy creatures. I even overleaped the chasm of years, and, sitting among the ponderous arches of the ancient baths, planned how I would study the history and language of this vanished people, and teach them to my child amid the scenes of their greatness.

Thus, building my fairy castles in the air, the sunny hours went by, and evening came, and I went home through the dusky streets with heaven in my heart. Sometimes I turned aside for a few moments, to enter the open door of some church and listen to the chanting. I remember that even the tawdry images of the Virgin and Child at the corners of the public thoroughfares touched me now with something of a poetical significance which they had never possessed before.

I always went home, at this time, with reluctance. I was in love with solitude, and, egotist that I was! grew impatient of dear old Goody's harmless prattle. Ah, how unwilling I was to share my secret with her! How I put it off from day to day, and dreaded lest she should discover it for herself!

Henceforth I was to be no more alone. Henceforth, the highest and holiest of all earthly love, and the tenderest of all earthly companionship, was to be mine. This thought was my crowning happiness—not a wholly unalloyed and unshadowed happiness, even then; for how could I, even in the first flush of my new joy, forget that my child must enter life legally dishonoured, and never know the father from whom its being came? Alas! the father—the father whom I still loved so dearly—whose portrait I should look for, presently, in a baby face—whose tone I should by and by listen for in a baby voice—whom I must try to love henceforward as a mere memory, dead, and forgiven, and passed away.

And this was my secret that came with the summer.

CHAPTER XIII.

AN OLD FRIEND.

"I have had playmates, I have had companions
In my days of childhood, in my joyful school-days."
C. LAMB.

THE summer went by in work, and hope, and tender expectation. My task finished at the Sciarra Palace, I found myself "passing rich," with a capital of two hundred scudi, and a fresh commission. This time it was a cabinet painting by Giulio Romano, and the original was entrusted to my care, to copy at home. I now made myself a little studio by partitioning off half my sitting-room, with a large folding screen; and used to paint there all day long, close against the partly-darkened window, with the warm orange-scented

air creeping in from the gardens beyond. Here Goody would sit by with her needle-work, or chat to me from the other side of the screen while she prepared our modest dinner; and on the outer loggia we loitered many an hour after dusk, watching the fire-flies circling to and fro, and whispering to each other of the guest to come. As the later heats drew on, a silence fell upon the Roman streets, and all who could afford to leave the city emigrated to the sea-side or the mountains. But I had no desire to follow the general example, and no means; unless by borrowing from the Professor's fund, to which nothing short of necessity should have compelled me. I loved Rome best in its season of solitude; and, less fearful of recognition than at other times, ventured occasionally into the public gardens and galleries, and sometimes indulged myself with an afternoon among the delicious glades of the Borghese grounds.

Thus July and August passed, and September came with rumours of the vintage on the hills—September, so full of hope, and promise; so rich in giving; so long in coming; so welcome at last!

The Professor wrote seldom, and very briefly. Early in September, while the hope of which he knew nothing was yet unfulfilled, I received a letter from him which informed me that my old friend and school-companion, Ida Saxe, was on

her way to Rome. Promoted to the sub-professorship which I had left vacant, and having been twice successful in competition for the medal, she had now received a small grant from the Academic fund, to enable her to prosecute her studies in Italy. "She has already spent some weeks in Florence," wrote Professor Metz; "and by the time you receive my letter, will probably have arrived in Rome. You can learn her address, if you choose, at the Hotel Minerva. I do not ask you to seek her. I have kept your secret faithfully, and it is for yourself to judge whether you will in this case depart from your prescribed line of conduct. If I might advise you, I should say 'Go to her.' A student in Rome, like yourself, traversing the same streets, frequenting the same galleries, and devoted to the same pursuits, it is impossible that she should not, some day, encounter you. It is not likely that she will stay less than three years; and it is most unlikely that for three years you can succeed in avoiding her. If, however, you prefer removing to Florence, by all means do so. I can give you an introduction to a dealer on the Lung' Arno, and may venture, I think, to promise that you will do as well there as in Rome. I shall be glad to know your decision by an early post. Ever yours, &c., &c."

My decision was speedily made. I put my work

aside; and, having first looked at a large, airy upper-room for which my landlady required a tenant, went at once to the Albergo della Minerva, and inquired if the Signora Saxe had arrived.

"Sì, signora, by the Siena diligence, about an hour ago," replied the waiter; and showed me up four flights of stairs, to a little gloomy room against the roof, where I found her sitting in the midst of her boxes, pale, weary, and disconsolate.

"Ida," I said, lifting my veil. "Do you remember me?"

She rose, looked at me, hesitated, changed colour, and then, with a cry of surprise and joy, sprang into my arms.

"Barbara!" she exclaimed. "*Meine geliebte* Barbara! Is it really, really thyself?"

And with this she wept and laughed, and kissed me over and over again, and could scarcely believe that it was not all a dream.

"Ah, what years have gone by!" she said, presently, as we sat hand in hand. "What long, long years! I never thought to see you again, Barbara. We heard that you had married; but we knew not even your name. Why did you never write? Why did you never come to see us again? Alas! you forgot us—you forgot your poor Ida, who loved you so dearly, and whose easel stood beside your own for so many years! Are

you living in Rome? Is your husband a painter? How did you know I was here? Who told you? How good of you to come so soon! I have not been here an hour, and I was so lonely!"

To which I replied—

"*Meine liebe* Ida, you ask more questions in a breath than I can answer in a day. Tell me first what your plans are."

"Plans?" said she. "I have none, except to study hard."

"But where do you propose to live?"

"I have no idea."

"Have you no friends in Rome?"

"I thought not, an hour ago."

"Would you like to live with me? My *padrona* has a room to let, and . . . ."

"What happiness! I would rather live with you than with anyone in the world."

"Then I can assure you, my darling, that you are the only person in the world whom I would take to live with me. Your boxes, I see, are not even uncorded; so, if you please, we will send for a vettura, and go at once."

"But your husband—are you sure that he will be pleased to—to have a stranger . . . ."

"My husband, dear, is not in Rome, and I have but my own pleasure to consult in taking you to

my home. Are you too tired to go with me now?"

"Tired? The sight of your face has banished all my fatigue. How far have we to go?"

"About half a mile. If you prefer to walk, we can send the luggage by a *facchino*."

"I would much rather walk, if—if you . . . ."

"It will not fatigue me," I replied, hastily. "I walk out every day at this time, when the dusk is coming on, and the heat of the afternoon is past. It will do me good to stroll quietly homewards through this sweet evening air."

So we groped our way down the four dark flights of stairs, and, having left the necessary directions, emerged into the piazza at the back of the Pantheon.

"And this is Rome!" said Ida, as we went along. "And this the Pantheon, where Raffaelle lies buried! And this Barbara, whom I thought I had lost for ever! I feel as if I must wake presently, and find myself in my own little dormitory at Zollenstrasse-am-Main. Tell me, Barbara, am I really awake?"

"Indeed, I believe so," I replied, smiling. "But I cannot prove it."

"It is not in the least like the Rome of my dreams," continued she. "I was not prepared for shops, and cabs, and modern streets like these. I

had pictured a sort of Palmyra—a wilderness of majestic ruins in the midst of the Campagna, with a kind of modern suburb, out of sight, where people lived, and slept, and ate, and drank, like other common mortals. Mercy! what strange creature is that, with the ruff and the striped stockings? He looks as if he had stepped out of a mediæval German picture."

"It is one of the Pope's Swiss Guard," I replied, amused by her naïve volubility. "And now we are in the Corso—the heart of modern Rome."

"How cheerful it is here!" said she; "how much fuller of life than Florence! I have just come from Florence—I was there five weeks, in a gloomy boarding-house, in a still more gloomy street. I was so miserable! I don't know what I should have done, if it had not been for a dear, kind, disagreeable old English lady, who liked me, and took me out sometimes for a drive in the lovely country outside the walls. She was such a dear old lady. She contradicted everybody, and she hated everything foreign, and she made me laugh so! They all detested her in the boarding-house—except myself. At last she went away to join her niece in Pisa; and then the place became so intolerable that I would stay no longer."

"But the galleries and the churches—surely those delighted you?"

"Delighted me? They bewildered me. I wandered through them, like Aladdin in the garden of jewels. If I were to tell you how I felt when I first saw Michael Angelo's David standing out in the open air against the Ducal palace, or how I almost wept for joy when I found myself in presence of the Venus and the Fornarina, you would laugh at me! Was there ever such a painter's Paradise as the Uffizii? Do you remember the first long corridor, full of religious subjects of the early Tuscan school? Do you remember all those sad-looking Madonnas, each with her head a little on one side; and those stiff golden-haired angels, that hold up their hands in quaint adoration, never bending a finger? Do you remember how wonderfully the velvets and embroideries were painted? Do you remember the queer old mediæval saints in court dresses, looking so like Louis the Eleventh; the St. Johns and St. Stephens in red velvet shoes, and jewelled baldrics, and elaborate doublets, each with a golden plate of glory miraculously suspended an inch above his head?"

"Indeed I do; and the amazing landscapes in the background, where uncomfortable red castles are perched on inaccessible peaks of bright blue rock, and the world seems made of nothing but coral and carbonate of copper!"

"And then the Niobe, and the Madonna della

Seggiola, and the frescoes of Giotto . . . . is it not something to have lived for, when one has seen all these? But there! one cannot take up one's abode in churches and galleries; and Florence is a dreary place after three o'clock in the afternoon! Every house looks like a prison; and a *pension* full of uncongenial strangers is worse than no society at all. I often wished myself back at the College, in spite of the Raffaelles and Giottos. But you have not yet told me how you heard of my arrival in Rome?"

"By a letter which I received to-day from Professor Metz."

"Professor Metz! Then he knew where you were, and . . . why, to be sure, he was in Rome a few months ago! So, I suppose he met you and—how stupid of me not to have guessed that at first! How strange of him, never to tell us one word about you! And by the by, *liebe*, I do not yet know your married name. I know you only as my fellow-student, Barbara Churchill."

"Then you must know me now, dear Ida, as Barbara Carlyon," I replied.

"Barbara Carlyon! What a pretty name! Ah, dear, I always thought you would marry the Herr Farquhar, and be a grand lady, ever so much richer and finer than our Grand Duchess. I am almost disappointed that you are Mrs. Carlyon, in-

stead. And now tell me something about your husband; . . . . but you look vexed! What have I said?"

"Nothing, dear—nothing, at least, that you could help, or I avoid. So—you like the name of Carlyon? It is one that has brought me much grief. We will not talk of my—my husband or myself, dear, just at present. The subject is a painful one, and—and . . . . this is the Piazza di Spagna, and the church at the top of that noble flight of steps is the Trinità de' Monti. This is quite the English quarter of Rome. Up yonder lies the French Academy. We have but a few yards farther to go now."

Ida pressed my arm affectionately, and made no reply. Her joyous flow of talk was all checked, and I could see that her kind heart was troubled. As we approached the corner of the Via della Croce, we came upon a little crowd gathered round a street singer, who was chanting some simple ballad to the accompaniment of a cracked guitar. The man's voice was deep and musical, and he wore a scarlet cap, and a long black beard, frosted here and there with silver.

"What a picturesque fellow!" exclaimed Ida. "How I should like to make a study of his head!"

"Then do so, by all means," I replied. "He would sit to you, no doubt, for a few pauls."

But she was shy, and would not speak before the bystanders; so, after lingering a moment, we passed on.

"It is strange," I said, more to myself than her; "but I seem to have seen that face before—somewhere—long ago—and yet there is something changed about it. When could it have been? And where?"

"Perhaps in a picture," suggested Ida.

"Very likely. I daresay he has sat as a model many a time; and yet . . . . well, Ida, this is the Vicolo d'Aliberti, and this little house with the green shutters is—home."

Thus I took my old school-friend to dwell with me in my humble lodging in the Vicolo d'Aliberti, and made her welcome; and by and by we had coffee together upon the loggia, and talked of old times till the moon rose over the brow of the Pincio. But that very night the angels of life and death stood on my threshold; and for hours it seemed doubtful whether the Almighty One would send a soul to earth, or gather two to heaven. But as suffering came with the darkness, so came joy with the rising of the sun; and as the morning light poured in at the window, a little tender blossom of life was laid in my arms.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE MODEL.

> "As mine own shadow was this child to me
> A second self, far dearer and more fair,
> Which clothed in undissolving radiancy
> All those steep paths which languor and despair
> Of human things, had made so dark and bare."
>
> SHELLEY.

MY little living flower, so fair, so placid, so fragile; to whom my love was providence, my life nourishment, my arms the world! I adored him; and he was mine—utterly mine. I was never weary of repeating this to myself, and whispering it upon his lips between the kisses—those rose-leaf lips of which I was so jealous, that, when another mouth had touched them, I hastened to kiss the

stranger-kiss away, and make them once more all my own.

I was almost ashamed, at first, to let them see how I worshipped my idol. If he smiled in any face but mine, I was ready to weep with vexation. I never yielded him from my embrace without a secret pang. Only to lie and watch him as he slept on the pillow by my side was perfect content; but to lean above him when he waked—to meet the wanderings of his tiny hands—to gaze down into the clear unconscious depths of his blue eyes, was ecstasy and joy unspeakable. Day by day I beheld the sweet mystery of his growth, and entered some fresh record upon the tablets of my memory. Day by day I watched the everlasting miracle of life unfolding itself for my adoration and delight, till my heart ached with the fulness of its love, and every thought became a poem, and every act a prayer. Thus the first weeks went by, and each week my "wonder-flower" bloomed into new loveliness and strength. His beauty at first was but that angelic baby-beauty of perfect fairness and purity that almost seems to give confirmation to the poët's theory of how "Heaven lies about us in our infancy;" but before the first month of his little life was all lived out, there came a change which spoke to no heart, and was visible to no eyes but mine—a dawning of the

father in his infant face, which made him, if that could be, more beloved than ever; and yet thrilled all my pleasure with a sense of bitter pain. It was not always there. When I looked for it, I could seldom see it. It came and went in flashes; an indefinable, inexplicable something, no sooner seen than vanished.

In the meantime Ida had become established as part of our little household. She tenanted the large room upstairs; Goody acted as cook and general purveyor; and we all three took our meals together without distinction of precedence, like King Arthur and his knights of the Round Table. For the first few weeks, Ida stayed almost constantly at home, surrounding me with loving cares, and indifferent to all the wonders of Rome. I with difficulty prevailed upon her once or twice to go as far as St. Peter's, or the Coliseum, or the little church of the Cappucini, where Guido's masterpiece lights all the sordid chancel, like a window opening to the sun; but I could not prevail upon her to visit the Vatican without me. She had promised herself, she said, not to see the Transfiguration, or the School of Athens, or the Communion of St. Jerome, or the Last Judgment, till we looked upon them together; and though it were three months hence, she was determined to wait for me. From this resolution I could not

move her. Meanwhile, she occupied my little studio, and painted from whatever model she could find. Of these there were always plenty haunting about the corners of the Piazza di Spagna, and the steps of the Trinità de' Monti—fierce brigands purchaseable at two pauls the hour; Trasteverini Madonnas with little brown babies; majestic patriarchs whose venerable heads were the common property of all the artists in Rome; and Pifferari who were willing, for a consideration, to "pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone," at the pleasure of the hirer. Better than all these, however, she one day chanced again upon the bearded guitar-singer of the Via della Croce, and brought him home in triumph. After a sitting of two hours, she dismissed him with an appointment for the following morning, and came to me with her sketch in her hand, and her head full of projects.

"See, Barbara," said she; "it is but roughly laid in, yet what an effect already! He has a charming head—so refined, so melancholy! I have the greatest mind in the world to undertake a large picture at once, and make him my principal figure. It would do to send over to Zollenstrasse for the competition next spring; and if I do not secure this model while I can get him, I shall lose him altogether; for he is going away, he tells me, before long. What think you of Galileo before

the council of Inquisitors; or Columbus laying his project before Ferdinand and Isabella? Both are good subjects; and I have studies for both in my portfolio. One is expected, you see, to do something ambitious in Rome; and—and if you do not think I should be venturing out of my depth . . . ."

"Who dares nothing, achieves nothing," I replied, smiling. "Let me see your studies."

She ran and fetched them, radiant with excitement. Both were unusually clever; but of the two, I preferred the Columbus.

"And you really think I may venture to undertake it?" said Ida, breathlessly.

"I do, truly."

"And my model?"

"I do not see how you could have found a better. It is the face of one who has thought and suffered; the very type of the contemplative, intellectual, heroic navigator. Strange! the more I look at it, the more familiar it seems. I am certain I have seen that man somewhere—a long time ago."

"I will run at once to Dovizielli's, and order the canvas," said Ida, and was gone in a moment.

The model came again next morning at ten o'clock, and found Ida waiting for him with a canvas measuring six feet by three. I was sitting out upon the loggia in a great lounge chair, enjoy-

ing the balmy October air and the shade of the flickering vine-leaves that roofed in the trellis overhead. An open book lay unread in my lap; my baby slept in his cradle at my feet; and Goody sat opposite, cutting beans for dinner.

"*Buon giorno, signore*," said the model, taking off his cap, and bowing to each of us in succession.

"*Buon giorno*," replied Ida. "I am going to put you in a large picture, *amico;* and I hope you will stay in Rome long enough to let me complete it."

"I hope so, signora."

"How soon shall you be leaving?"

"I do not know, signora."

"In six weeks, do you think?"

"I cannot tell, signora. It does not depend on myself."

"On what does it depend, then?" asked Ida, somewhat impatiently.

The model looked grave.

"On God's will, signora," replied he, and came to the open window, outside which I was sitting.

"*Che bello fanciullo!*" he said, bending towards the cradle: "*é la sua, signora?*"

"Yes," I answered, with a flush of pride and pleasure. "He is my baby."

"He is like a snow-drop," said the model, in his musical Italian; and sighed, and turned away.

In that instant I recognised him. It was the ballad-singer of the forest of Vincennes. He looked older, and sadder, and wore a beard reaching midway to his waist; but I knew him, for all that. The recognition came upon me like a shock, bringing with it a throng of associations. I closed my eyes, and the green woods were once more waving around me, and Hugh's warm kiss was glowing on my lips. Then I remembered how I had seen the same man a few weeks later in the Champs Elysées, the very evening before my wedding-day. My husband never explained his wild conduct of that evening; and till this moment I had forgotten it as though it had never been. Ah, *dolce tempo passato!* How much joy and how much sorrow had been mine, since then! The burning tears welled up, and dropped down, one by one. No one saw them. Ida had placed the model and begun her charcoal outline; and Goody was busy with her household task. Presently my boy woke, smiling, and turned his blue eyes to the light. I snatched him to my bosom, and covered him with kisses. My poor boy, who would never know any parent's love but mine—who had not even the right to bear his father's ancient name!

Her beans finished, Goody rose and went in, leaving me alone on the loggia. I plucked a bunch

of vine leaves, and, turning somewhat aside that I might not be disturbed by the sight of the model, played with my baby till the tears on my cheeks "took sunshine from his eyes." A burst of military music presently filled the air, and I saw a file of bayonets scintillating above the level of the road wall leading up to the Pincio. The tiny creature in my lap laughed and moved its little arms. I fancied he was listening to the joyous clang, and my heart throbbed tumultuously, believing that in these indications I beheld the first awakenings of the intelligent soul.

Suddenly, in the very flush of my rapture, I heard a name that seemed to stop my pulses and my breathing, and freeze the smile upon my lips.

"Capri."

Sitting there like one stunned, I lost what immediately followed. The next words which bore meaning to my ear were spoken by Ida.

"You are quite sure of what you tell me, *amico?*"

"*Certo, certo, signora.*"

"How is it that you know so much about the rigging of a vessel?"

"Signora, I have been a sailor."

"But this is a Spanish galleon of more than three hundred years ago."

"*Fa niente*, signora. No vessel lying in port

would be rigged like that vessel in your picture. It is impossible. Where did the signora see the ship which she has taken for her model?"

"In an old Spanish engraving."

"And was the ship at anchor alongside the quays?"

"No; the engraving represented a fleet of galleons at sea."

"*Eccolà!* If the vessel were under way, the signora would be absolutely right; but she may rely upon it that all these ropes would be slack, and these sails furled, in harbour. I beg the signora's pardon for my boldness in naming it."

"Pray do no such thing," said Ida. "I am sincerely obliged to you for your information."

And then they were both silent.

He was Italian—he had been a sailor—he had spoken the name of Capri! He might, perhaps, know something of the history of Maddalena—he might be able to tell me something—to make many things clearer to me . . . Who could tell? It was not impossible. It was worth a trial. What should I do? To question him would be to tell Ida all that my pride had hitherto kept sealed in my own heart. Yet not to question him would be to abandon a chance that might never again present itself. While I was yet confused and hesitating, Ida spoke again.

"How long is it, *amico*," said she, "since you have given up the sea?"

"About three years, signora."

"You find it more profitable, I suppose, to sit to artists as a model."

"To be a model, signora, is not my calling. I told the signora so, when she requested me to sit to her."

"True; I had forgotten it. You are a ballad-singer."

"Yes, signora."

"And why have you given up the sea for street-singing. Do you earn more money by it?"

"On the contrary, signora. Where I earn two pauls by music, I could earn a scudo at sea."

"Then why abandon the sea?"

"Because—because I wished to see foreign countries, signora."

"But a sailor sees foreign countries."

"É vero, signora; but he only sees the ports. I wished to travel over land."

"And where have you travelled, then?" asked Ida, evidently interested and amused.

"To Paris and London, signora."

"On foot?"

"Always on foot, signora, and singing for my daily bread."

"How singular! And now, I suppose, having

seen the world, you have come home to your native country for the rest of your life?"

"I know not, signora. The world is wide, and I have seen very little of it; and—and the purpose for which I travelled is yet unfulfilled. But I am going home for the present."

"Shall you go to sea again?"

"Yes, signora; I think so."

"You said you were a Neapolitan?"

"A native of Capri, signora."

"The inhabitants of those islands are mostly sailors, are they not?"

"Sailors and fishermen, signora."

"And you are a sailor."

"I am both, signora. That is to say, I am a pilot between Naples and the Grecian Archipelago; and when I am at home for a week or two, I go out fishing like the others."

I trembled—I turned cold—I laid the child down in the cradle, and bent forward with clasped hands and parted lips.

"Are you married?" asked Ida presently, in the abstracted tone of one whose thoughts are more than half engaged elsewhere.

"Yes, signora."

"Did your wife travel with you?"

"Yes, signora."

"Is she now in Rome?"

"No, signora. I sent her back to Capri some weeks since, in a sailing vessel that was leaving Livorno."

"You have no family, I suppose?"

"We had one child, signora," said the model, sadly; "but he died three years ago."

"Poor things!" exclaimed Ida, with ready sympathy. "That must have been a great sorrow for you."

"It was the will of the good God, signora," replied the model.

"Did he die in infancy?"

"No, signora. He lived to be ten years of age —such a fine, brave boy! It was very hard to part from him."

"Alas, how sad!"

"We took him to the best physician in Naples," continued the model, "and his mother made a pilgrimage to the shrine of our Lady of Loretto; but it was of no avail. The hand of God was upon him. The signora is very good to interest herself in our sorrows."

"I can only give you my sympathy, *amico*," said Ida. "I wish I could do more."

"No one can do more," replied the model, with a sigh.

"It is, however, some comfort to talk now and then of one's troubles."

"I never talk of them, signora. I—I sometimes wish I could. It is only the signora's great kindness and sympathy that have now led me to speak so freely."

Again the conversation dropped.

My agitation had risen to agony. My thoughts leaped from fact to fact, comparing dates, weighing possibilities, marshalling evidence, and uniting link to link, with a clearness and rapidity that seemed independent of my own volition. Maddalena's eldest brother was a pilot in Neapolitan and Greek waters—he was married—his child was born thirteen years ago, and Hugh was present at the baptism. Could all this be coincidence only? Were they never going to speak again? What would be said next? What should I do, if they remained silent! Every moment of suspense seemed like an hour.

At length Ida resumed the subject.

"You have only led this wandering life, then, since you lost your boy?" said she.

"That is all, signora."

"Ah, I understand. You travelled to forget your grief."

He made no reply

"And shall you now go back to your old home?"

"Yes, signora."

"Will not that be very sad for you?"

"*Sì, signora; ma che fare?* It was my father's house. His children were born there, and beneath its roof he and our mother died. It is sad, but it is sacred. We islanders do not abandon our homes because our loved ones are gone."

"Who has taken care of the place for you all this time?"

"No one, signora. It is locked up, and the priest has the key. Our neighbours will not suffer the garden to fall to ruin; and there are no robbers in the island. We shall find everything as we left it."

"But you spoke just now of your father's family. Have you no brothers or sisters to welcome you back?"

The model shook his head.

"I had one brother, signora," said he; "but he has been dead many years. He was drowned at sea."

"Alas!—and no sisters?"

"I—I have neither father nor mother, brother nor sister," replied the model, gloomily. "My wife and I are alone in the world together."

I rose up—sat down again—shuddered from head to foot. Every word that he spoke added confirmation to my suspicions. His very reserva-

tions were testimonies. He was Paolo—I *knew* he was Paolo—the beloved brother of Maddalena, whom Hugh had never seen; whom he twice met, therefore, without recognition. The one drowned at sea was the sullen Jacopo. But the wife—the wife to whom I had given the five-franc piece that evening in the Champs Elysées—Hugh had known her, and hence his agitation when the light fell on her face! I felt that I must question him, cost what it might!

The next silence was interrupted by the model.

"The signora is not Italian," said he.

"No," replied Ida, "I am Bavarian."

"Bavarian?" repeated he. "I never heard of that nation."

"Bavaria is a part of Germany," said Ida. "A Bavarian is a German; as a Neapolitan is an Italian."

"*Capito, signora,*" replied he, thoughtfully; and then, after a pause, added, "I—I thought the signora might be English. There are so many English in Rome."

"Yes, very many," rejoined Ida, absorbed in her work. "The head a little more towards the left shoulder, if you please. No—that is too much—there—just so."

"The signora has, perhaps, been in England?" pursued the model.

"No, never—do not move, pray—why do you ask?"

"Oh—it is of no consequence, signora."

"My friend here is English," said Ida, "and a Londoner."

I could resist the impulse no longer.

"Ida!" I said. "Ida, come here—come to me, *liebe*."

She laid down her brush, and came directly.

"*Ach, lieber Gott!* how pale you are. What is the matter?"

"I want to speak to that man, Ida—alone."

"To the model?" stammered she, amazed.

"To the model, darling. I—I think I know something of his family—his private history. Will you stay here while I speak to him?"

"I will go upstairs to my room, if you please."

"No need, *liebe*. Take care of baby while I am gone."

And with this I went in, closing the window after me, and, taking Ida's seat, said—

"I am English, *amico*. Can I do anything for you? Have you any friends in my country about whom I can help you to inquire?"

He coloured up, and paused a moment before replying.

"*Grazie*, signora," he said. "I have a friend who—who went to England—who may be in

England now, if she yet lives. But I have lost sight of her."

"Was she a relation?"

"Yes, signora."

"Your sister, perhaps?"

"Ye . . yes, signora."

"Then it was in search of her, I suppose, that you undertook the journey of which I heard you speaking just now?"

He bent his head somewhat reluctantly, as if annoyed at having to confess it.

"How long is it since she went to England?"

"I—I cannot tell, signora. I only know that she has been in England since she—left Capri."

"How long is it, then, since she left Capri?"

"About thirteen years. But it is of no use, lady. You cannot help us. She is gone, and we shall never see her, or hear of her again."

"You cannot tell. The lost sometimes re-appear when we least expect to find traces of them. How do you know that your sister has been in England?"

"She wrote to me, signora; and the letter bore the English post-mark."

"Did she give you no address?"

"None."

"How long since was this?"

"About five years ago, signora."

"Why did she leave Capri, and with whom?"

"Pardon, signora. Those questions I cannot answer."

"Nay, how can I hope to help you, if you will not freely tell me all?"

"I—I cannot, signora."

I rose, and looked out from the loggia. Ida had withdrawn to the farthest corner with my baby in her arms, and was playing with him as if she were a child herself. Satisfied that she heard nothing, I resumed my seat.

"Listen," I said. "I once heard of a young girl—the sister of two sailors whose home was in the island of Capri—as it might be your sister, and your home. One of these brothers was married, as you might be; and the young sister, and the young wife, and the two brothers, all dwelt under the same roof, and were one family. The elder brother was a pilot, as you say you were. He went to sea, and while he was at sea, his wife brought a little infant into the world."

The model lifted his head sharply, and uttered a suppressed guttural exclamation.

"There came to Capri about this time," I continued, "a rich English gentleman. The young girl fell in love with him, and . . . ."

"*Ah, Dio!* her name? Her name?"

"Maddalena."

He sprang forward—he fell at my feet—he kissed the hem of my garment.

"Signora—for the love of God! Where is she, dear signora, blessed signora, *la sorellina mia*—my sister, whom I have sought with bleeding feet and aching heart? Speak, signora, where is she?"

"Alas!" I said, almost as much agitated as himself, "that I cannot tell you. I only know that she was living and well, a year ago."

"Did you see her?"

"A friend of mine who had seen her, told me her story."

"Was she unhappy?"

"No—she was melancholy; very studious; very quiet; a student of many books."

"And poor, signora?"

"No, not poor."

"And that *maladetto Inglese*—what of him? Had he abandoned her?"

"Abandoned her? No—that could not be. She was his wife."

"His wife?"

"Yes—he married her."

Paolo sprang to his feet, and laughed bitterly.

"Impossible," said he. "She was married already."

My heart leaped up in my bosom—my whole being was flooded with a tide of inexpressible joy.

"Married already?" I repeated. "But—but perhaps a divorce . . . ."

"No, no, no, signora. Our church knows no divorce. Besides, her husband is still living in Capri."

I shaded my face with my hand, lest it should betray me. I was dizzy with happiness.

"No," continued Paolo, sternly. "He seduced her—he stole her away from a good man, and an honourable home. She might have been a happy woman now, but for him, with children's faces about her hearth."

"But are you sure that he stole her away?" I faltered.

"What does the signora mean?"

"I—I have heard that she fled to him of her own will, for protection—that he found her hidden on board his vessel after he had put to sea; and that, in short, she—threw herself upon his mercy."

Paolo struck a heavy blow upon the table with his clenched fist.

"I do not believe it," he said, violently.

"I also heard that she abhorred the man to whom she was married."

"I do not believe that either. I can understand that she did not love him. He was old—old enough to be her father; but she need not have

married him. I would not believe it, signora, unless she told me so herself."

"And supposing that she did tell you so herself?"

"Then I should despise her."

"Nay, you would forgive and pity her."

He paused, and passed his hand across his brow.

"Well—I suppose I should, signora," he said, slowly. "She was my darling. She was like my own child. Our father, with his last breath, bade me love and cherish her. Yes, poor Maddalena—I should forgive her, and pity her."

"And—and you would forgive him, too?"

"The Englishman?"

"Yes, the Englishman."

"I took an oath that I would be revenged upon him," said Paolo. "We are not mere peasants, signora. We are untaught, and we are poor; but our father's father could count back for generations, to the time when our name was noble, and half the island was ours. We prize our honour, signora, as jealously as if we were noble still; and I swore to avenge our disgrace upon Maddalena's lover, if I ever met him, face to face."

"But if the fault were hers?"

"The disgrace is still ours, signora."

"Then punish the one who brought it upon you—Maddalena herself."

"She is punished long since," replied Paolo. "*Povera* Maddalena!"

"But . . ."

"But my oath, signora."

"To keep that oath would be more wicked than to break it. Are you a Christian?"

"Signora, I am an Italian."

"Enough," I said, rising in anger. "You shall never find your sister."

"Signora!"

"I know who that Englishman is. He is the dear friend of my friend, and I will not betray him to your ignorant vengeance. I could have helped you. Now it is over. They shall be warned of you; and you will never see Maddalena's face again."

He turned pale, and the tears rose to his eyes.

"*Cara signora,*" he stammered, "*per pietà* . . ."

I turned to the window; but he caught my hand.

"I—I will promise what you please," he cried; "if—if she confesses that she fled to him unasked —I will forego my oath—I will do anything, if you but give me Maddalena!"

"I cannot give her to you," I said. "I can but cause inquiry to be made. I know no more where she is at this moment than yourself."

"Then will you inquire, signora?"

"I do not know. How can I be sure that you will keep faith with me?"

"I swear it, signora."

"That is not enough."

He took a little metal cross from his bosom, fell on his knees, and kissed it devoutly.

"By my belief in the mercy of God, and the intercession of the blessed mother of Christ; by my hopes of forgiveness in the world to come; by my faith in the holy Saint Paolo, my patron saint; and by the memory of my father and mother, whose souls I trust are in heaven."

The solemnity with which he uttered this pledge left no room for doubt.

"I believe you," I said; "and I will do what I can. In the meantime, go back to Capri, and leave all in my hands. If any living soul can help you to find your sister, I am that person. Be satisfied with this assurance, and be patient. It may be months before I succeed in even hearing of her; for I can only use remote and circuitous means. But such means as I can command shall be employed. This you may rely upon."

He rose, and kissed my hand.

"I will pray for you, signora, night and day," said he.

"Then we understand each other?"

"Wholly, signora."

"And you consent to all my conditions?"

"All, and absolutely."

I was about to open the window and recall Ida, when another thought occurred to me, and I paused with my hand upon the lock.

"What was the name of this Englishman?" I asked.

"Does not the signora know it?"

"I can—ascertain it; but it might save time if you could give it to me correctly."

"Alas! signora, I cannot. My brother and wife called him Signor Hugo; but that was only his baptismal name. His other name was harsh and difficult, and they could not remember it."

"Well, we must try to do without it."

"Stay, signora, I have this book—he left it at our cottage, and there is writing in it. I have always carried it about with me, in the hope that it might some day be of use. See—here are words in pencil!"

It was a tiny volume of the Georgics of Virgil, bound in old stained vellum, with the initials H. F. on the title-page, and a few explanatory notes in his careless hand, scrawled here and there upon the margins.

"Is this the only proof you have?"

"Yes, signora."

"You had better leave it with me. To one

who knew his writing, it might perhaps help to identify him; but you are not even sure, I suppose, that it is his writing?"

"I believe it, signora; but I cannot be sure."

"*Ebbene*, we must have patience."

"I have had patience for so many years, signora, that I can well be patient now. You have given me hope, *gentilissima signora*, and I was well-nigh despairing."

"Hope, then, friend Paolo; and believe that I will do all I can to restore your lost sister to her home."

"The saints bless and watch over you, signora!"

I opened the window, recalled Ida, took my baby from her arms, and with a hasty kiss and a whispered "thanks, *liebe*," ran to my bedroom, and locked the door. There my first impulse was to lay him down upon a sofa, fall on my knees beside him, and cover him with kisses and tears of joy.

No stain now upon his birth—no shame attaching to his innocent life—my boy, my darling, my own! Some day he shall bear his ancient name—some day, though I may not live to see it, he shall hold his own under his ancestral roof, and keep up the olden dignity of Farquhar of Broomhill! Oh, blessed, blessed certainty! What a bright world it had become within the short space of this last half hour; and yet .... and yet the tears, the

foolish, hot, rebellious tears kept raining down, as if I were not, even now, as happy as I ought to be.

Were they tears of joy?

A difficult question. They were not tears of sorrow; and yet there was sorrow in the joy, and bitter mingling with the sweet, and shadow with the sunshine. Possibly there may also have been something of self-questioning as to the past. At all events I wept, and could not stay from weeping.

CHAPTER XV.

THE TORSO OF THE BELVEDERE.

How was I to keep my promise to Paolo?

This question "teased me out of thought;" haunted me by day, and troubled my sleep by night. If the disclosure of my real position towards my husband had been productive of great comfort, it was also fruitful in anxieties. I had, in truth, undertaken a task which I knew not how to fulfil. I had no one to counsel me; no one to aid me. If I sought advice, I betrayed my secret. If I set inquiries on foot by opening a correspondence with any of my friends or family, I betrayed my incognito. My pride forbade that I should take any steps which might seem to pave the way towards a reconciliation with my husband. My poverty made it impossible that I should employ

expensive and secret means for the prosecution of such inquiries as were necessary. At the same time, I desired Maddalena's removal with a passionate eagerness that only made the powerlessness of my position doubly bitter. Tormented by doubts, and wearied out by vain thinking, I sadly needed some wise friend upon whose judgment I could rest. My own passions were my only advisers; and from such counsellors as pride, resentment, jealousy, and wounded love, what temperate verdict could be expected to result? In this painful incertitude some weeks went by; and still nothing was done. Anxiety began to tell upon me, and I grew daily paler and thinner. As for Paolo, I avoided him as though he were my creditor, and shrunk from his questioning face like a guilty creature. Alas! how—how was I to keep my promise?

About this time, when my boy was nearly three months old, and my perplexities were at their height, I fulfilled another promise, long-delayed, and went with Ida to the Vatican. We chose a private day, locked up our rooms, and took Goody with us to carry the baby.

It was a delicious day, mild and sunny; the date, I think, the second of December; the atmosphere May; the sky a cloudless dome of infinite blue, softened by a tender haze that melted into

grey on the horizon. We crossed the courtyard, in which three or four carriages were waiting, and began with the gallery of inscriptions, and the Museo Chiaramonti; neither of which possessed any attraction for my impatient companion. Her desires were winged, and flew direct to the Transfiguration, and the Stanze of Raffaelle. She longed to run, that she might be there the sooner. Thus we came to the vestibule of the Torso, and stood in presence of that grand fragment, the divine ideal of all physical power, which confers eternal glory upon the name of "Apollonius, son of Nestor of Athens." Here she forgot her impatience, and wandered round and round the wondrous ruin, silent in admiration. Then we talked of Michael Angelo, and his worshipping study of it, and of all he said he owed to it through life. And then I told Ida of how, when he was old and blind, he used to cause himself to be led into the room where it stood, that he might pass his wise hands over it and feel the beauty that he could no longer see.

"*C'est joli*," said a grave voice, close by.

"*Question de gout!*" replied something rustling past in silks and perfumes.

"Well!" ejaculated a third, "*I* call it frightful rubbish, and I don't care who says to the contrary."

"I declare, Barbara, it's my dear disagreeable old lady of Pisa!" exclaimed Ida.

But I had recognised her for myself already. Turning involuntarily at the sound of those well-known accents, I found myself face to face with—Mrs. Sandyshaft.

"Eh? What? Mercy alive! Hilda—Hilda, look here! Bab, as I live and breathe!"

"My dear aunt!"

"Dear aunt—dear aunt, indeed! Dear fiddle-stick! There, what's the good of kissing, when you've—you've—you've half broken my heart, you—somebody give me a smelling-bottle—I'm making a fool of myself."

We both made fools of ourselves, if to laugh, cry, kiss, and speak, all in a breath, be the way to do it. The truth was that we loved each other dearly; hardly conscious of how much till we were parted, and never demonstrating it unless under the influence of strong emotion. Now, however, we clung together as though we never meant to be parted again.

"Well, Barbara," said Hilda, wiping away a natural tear or two, "I must say I am very glad to have you found at last; but—but how *could* you do such a—such an excessively vulgar thing as to run away in this ridiculous manner?"

"Yes; my Goodness Gracious, yes! What on

earth made you run away, you little fool?" gasped my aunt, wiping her eyes with one hand, and holding me fast with the other. "Why, in heaven's name, have you made us all miserable for a whole twelvemonth?—costing us a fortune in advertising, and what not; and dragging me out of my comfortable home into all manner of filthy, barbarous, uncivilized foreign countries, where soap and water's an unknown luxury, and the beds mere sacks of fleas, if not worse! And at my time of life too! You ought to be ashamed of yourself, and I hope you are; and if you're not, you're worse than I took you to be!"

At which moment, the Count de Chaumont, who had discreetly retired into the background, came forward, solemnly polite as ever, and raising his hat a quarter of an inch from his head, said—

"*Madame, j'ai l'honneur de vous saluer.*"

"I'll tell you what it is, Bab," said my aunt, when the first shock of our meeting was somewhat over, "now I've caught you, I don't mean to lose sight of you. You must come home with me to my hotel, and there I shall keep you; and we'll go at once, too, and have our talk out; for I must have the whole story of your vagabondizing, you little idiot, from beginning to end."

"But I have a friend with me," I began, "and . . . ."

"You must give your friend her dismissal for to-day," interrupted my aunt, "and tell her you live in future at the Hôtel d'Angleterre, where she may come to see you, if she likes."

"But we live in lodgings together . . . ."

"Live in fiddlesticks together! Don't I tell you, child, you live with *me?* I won't be contradicted. Where's your friend? Oh, I see—that young woman over yonder. Well, go and tell her that I'm your aunt, and I've taken lawful possession of you, and you're going home with me straightway."

"If I do," said I, desperately, "I must bring the baby."

"The WHAT?" shrieked my aunt.

"The baby."

"*Whose* baby?"

"Mine."

My aunt said not another word, but deliberately sat down on an antique colossal foot near which she happened to be standing, and shut her eyes in silence.

"This is too much," she said faintly, after a pause of several seconds. "I had not expected this of you, Bab. To—to run away was bad enough; but to commit the additional folly of a baby . . . Ugh! is the monster here?"

"He's not a monster!" I replied, indignantly. "He's the most beautiful baby you ever saw in your life!"

"Bring him here," said my aunt, still with her eyes shut.

I beckoned to Goody to come forward.

"Now look, if you please, aunt, and see if he deserves to be called a—what I cannot bring my lips to call him again."

"Is he there?"

"Yes."

My aunt opened one eye cautiously; then the other; stared at him, as if he were some strange invention; touched his cheek with the extreme tip of her forefinger, as if she feared he might explode like a grenade; and said nothing.

"Really, a very fine child," observed Hilda, patronizingly. "How old is he, dear?"

"Nearly three months."

"*Madame*," said the Count, sententiously, "*je vous en fais mes compliments.*"

But still my aunt said nothing.

I felt piqued; and, not caring to linger there for her opinion on my darling, turned away, and went over to where Ida was sitting quietly in a corner, waiting till I should have time to remember her presence. A few words of explanation sufficed. We shook hands; said farewell for the day; and

—and behold, on turning suddenly round, I caught my aunt in the very act of surreptitiously kissing the baby, when she thought I was not looking!

CHAPTER XVI.

MRS. SANDYSHAFT IN THE CHARACTER OF A MEDIATOR.

"AND now," said my aunt, drawing her chair opposite to mine, and settling herself for a thorough cross-examination; "now that we are alone and quiet, be so good as to tell me, Bab, what you think of yourself?"

Sitting there, face to face with Mrs. Sandyshaft, in that dreary private sitting-room of the Hôtel d'Angleterre, with Goody and the baby banished to an adjoining bedroom, and a searching semi-judicial process coming on, I felt myself fortified by an unwonted spirit of resistance, and made up my mind on no account to say what I did think of myself, whatever the provocation.

"In what way do you mean, my dear aunt?" I asked, smiling.

"In every way. As a niece, for instance—as a daughter—as a wife. You did not suppose it would be very pleasant for me to have you run away, heaven only knew where, and be living, heaven only knew how—did you? You did not suppose your father would be particularly delighted to have a public scandal attaching to his daughter's name—did you? You did not suppose you were acting up to your marriage vows, or doing much in the way of loving, honouring, and obeying your lawful husband, when you took it into your head to desert his roof—did you? A pretty dance you have led all your friends, to be sure; and a pretty goose you have made of yourself, into the bargain!"

"My dear, dear aunt," I said, "that *you* should have missed me, and grieved for me, and sought for me—that *you* should have departed from the habits of a long life, surmounted the prejudices of years, and encountered all the discomforts of foreign travel for my sake . . . ."

"Discomforts enough and to spare, goodness knows!" ejaculated my aunt, parenthetically.

"— touches me to a degree that I hardly know how to express to you in words. It fills me with

so much gratitude—I might almost say, with so much remorse . . . ."

"Aye, you may say it, indeed. Plenty of room for it!" muttered my aunt.

"— to think that any conduct of mine (however justifiable on other grounds) should have been the cause of all this pain to you, that I feel I can only offer you, in compensation, the devotion and companionship of my life. I will never leave you again, dear, if you care to have me!"

"Humph!" said my aunt, softened, but dubious.

"As for my father," I continued, "his pride alone has suffered in my disappearance. He has loved me so little all my life, that I must confess I attach but trifling importance to any effect my conduct may have produced upon him."

"Well, so far that's all well and good," replied my aunt, "but as for your husband . . . ."

"As for Mr. Farquhar, aunt, you are, certainly, the last person by whom I should expect to be called to account in this question of separation."

"And why so, pray?" asked she, sharply.

"Because you never liked him—at least, never since he became my husband."

"I've liked him a vast deal better, poor fellow! since your misconduct towards him," said she, with a resolute shake of the head.

"And because you were so annoyed and disappointed, on learning the choice I had made."

"No reason why I should not wish you to conduct yourself like a respectable married woman, when once you had made it!"

"And because, whenever you found the opportunity, you said everything in your power to unsettle my faith in his stability, and my respect for himself."

"More fool I!" said my aunt. "I ought to have known better."

I did not contradict her. I had come to the end of my retort in all its clauses, and waited for what she should say next.

"And pray where have you been, these twelvemonths?" asked she, after a brief pause.

"Here—in Rome."

"Humph! and what have you been doing?"

"Well, I had a brain-fever, to begin with, and lay ill at Civita Vecchia for several weeks. Since then, I have supported myself by copying the old masters."

"Are you in debt?"

"Not a farthing . . . . stay; I must not forget that I owe my old servant fifty pounds, which were the savings of her whole life, and which she lent to me when we left . . . . Broomhill."

"She shall have them back to-day," said Mrs.

Sandyshaft, promptly. "And now, ma'am, may I make so bold as to inquire what your name may have been all this time; for if it had been either Farquhar or Churchill, I must have found you long since."

"I have called myself Mrs. Carlyon."

"Carlyon," repeated she, musingly. "Carlyon . . . . I'm sure I've heard the name somewhere. Bless you! I have had the passport books searched at all the principal ports, and the Lord knows what besides; but it was no good. Nobody could tell me anything about you; and here you turn up, at last, by chance! Just like your perversity."

"You would rather have hunted me down, I suppose, in fair chase," said I, with a laugh.

"I would rather have had something for my money," replied Mrs. Sandyshaft. "Why, Bab, you scamp, you've cost me—well, never mind what you've cost me. More than you're worth from head to foot, I can tell you. As for Hugh, he's spent hundreds in the search."

"Indeed?"

"Indeed!" echoed my aunt, angrily, "You may curl up your lip, and drawl 'indeed' as superciliously as you please; but he's worth a dozen of you, for all that! And you've never once asked for him yet! You don't know whether he's alive or

dead, I suppose? No—not you. He may be dead twice over, for aught you can tell."

"He may be dead, my dear aunt," said I, affecting a profound indifference; "but I do not really see how he could possibly be so twice over."

"We all die twice," replied she. "The first time is when we simply cease to be; the second, when we are forgotten."

"Dear aunt," I exclaimed, "that is very well said!"

"Well said, or ill said, it's nothing to the purpose," she retorted sharply. "You needn't trouble to compliment me. I don't value it one farthing. I value good feeling, and common sense, and principle, a mighty deal more than compliments, I can tell you."

"I hope," said I, turning red and feeling somewhat nettled, "that you do not think me wanting in either good feeling, or principle?"

"Indeed I do, though. A woman who runs away from her husband for no reasonable cause . . . ."

"I beg your pardon. I had what seemed to me an absolutely reasonable cause."

"Fiddlededee! you acted on mad impulse. Reason had nothing whatever to do with it."

"Again, I must beg your pardon . . . ."

"You'd better beg your husband's pardon," interrupted my aunt.

"You cannot tell under what impressions I acted, or what provocation I received."

"Then you're just wrong; for I know all about it, from beginning to end."

"How . . . ."

"Hold your tongue, Bab, and I'll tell you. The night you came home from Lord Bayham's ball, you overheard a conversation between your husband and —somebody else. You interpreted what you heard according to your own notions. You asked for no explanations. You sought nobody's advice. You 'reasoned' about as much as a child that's frightened by a shadow. The consequence was that you acted like a fool, and ran away. I dare say you thought it very fine, and heroic, and dramatic, and all that sort of thing. Nobody else did; that's one comfort."

"But how do you know that I overheard that conversation, and how can you tell what that conversation was about?"

"You goose, you dropped something down by the door at which you listened—some trinket or another, that was found there afterwards by the servants, and given to your husband. Of course, the mystery of your flight was at once explained. He remembered all that had been said, and guessed the wise conclusions to which you had jumped. It was as plain as a pikestaff."

"And then, I suppose, went to you with the story of his wrongs," said I, bitterly.

"He came to me," replied my aunt, very gravely, "believing that I knew where to find you —full of regret for all his past follies, and of self-reproach for every weak concession of which he had been guilty. Full of love and pity for you, also—which you didn't deserve. You heard her ask him to call her wife, and he was ass enough to do it. She was no more his wife than I'm his grandmother."

"I know that now," said I; "but I would not believe an angel from heaven who should tell me she was never his mistress!"

"Of course she was his mistress—he doesn't deny it; but that was twelve or thirteen years ago."

"He seduced her away from a good husband and a respectable home," said I, quoting Paolo, "and brought her . . ."

"He did no such thing," interposed my aunt. "She fell in love with him, and hid herself on board his yacht, like a bold hussy as she was!"

"Oh, of course you defend him, if only to blame me!" I exclaimed, working myself up to a pitch of genuine anger. "Perhaps you are of opinion that an English gentleman may with propriety maintain his wife and his mistress under the same roof?"

"I think nothing of the kind. I cannot so much blame him for having yielded to the first temptation, when he was young, and free, and the woman threw herself at his feet. No man could have helped himself in such a case—unless it was Saint Anthony; and I'm not one of those who believe in your miracles of virtue. But what I blame him for, was letting her remain at Broomhill after he had brought you home. There was his great fault."

"A fault which nothing can excuse."

"Humph! I won't say that, Bab. I won't say that. The poor thing was nothing to him but a woman who had loved him to her own cost and suffering—who had been nothing to him for years and years before he cared for you—who had given all her mind up to books and study; and whose only happiness in life was to live like a mouse under a corner of his roof, and take care of his library, and kiss the dust he trod upon, if he would but let her. He hadn't the heart to turn her out, Bab. It was weak. It was culpably weak; but the last straw breaks the camel's back, Bab—and the last blow sometimes breaks a woman's heart. She might have died, Bab; and that wouldn't have been a pleasant thought for Hugh Farquhar, all the rest of his life."

"Hugh Farquhar seems to have found an ex-

cellent advocate," said I, steeling myself against compassion.

"That was his first great fault," continued Mrs. Sandyshaft, taking no notice of my observation. "The second was just such another piece of weakness. When you found out that she lived in the house, he should have trusted to your generosity, and told you all. Half-truths often do more mischief than lies. If that's a proverb, it's one of my own making. It's true anyhow, and here's a case in point."

"Any other woman would have felt and believed as I did."

"Very likely; but she wouldn't have run away as you did, without waiting to ask whether her beliefs and feelings were founded on facts."

"I—I confess that I acted hastily," said I, reluctantly.

"The first word of sense you've spoken yet."

"I'm much obliged to you."

"Bab—will you listen to good advice if one takes the trouble to offer it?"

"Certainly."

"Then just sit down at my desk yonder, and write to your husband. You confess you acted hastily—confess it to him. Say you're sorry for your own follies, and ready to forgive his; and make an end of the matter."

"I'll do no such thing—I would die first!"

"And why, pray?"

"Because it is he who has been in the wrong from first to last. I committed an error of precipitation—he a deliberate offence. You seem to forget, aunt, how my pride has been insulted, and my trust deceived!"

"I grant he was a great fool to keep her there, and worse than a fool not to admit all while he was about it; but there! he's suffered enough for his faults, goodness knows."

"He deserved to suffer," said I; "but what have his sufferings been, compared with mine?"

"Pretty equal, I should say," observed my aunt, coolly.

"Nay, this is too much! Has he suffered jealousy, fever, despair, exile, shame? Has he believed our marriage illegal? Has he undergone the misery of toiling for his daily bread under every pressure of mental unrest and physical weakness?"

"He has been ill both in body and mind; and as for unrest, one would think the poor man had St. Vitus's dance, to see him always pacing up and down the room; getting up from his chair as soon as he has sat down; wandering about the park and the roads in all weathers; off to-day to London; back again to-morrow at Broomhill; off

to Dover, or Calais, or Marseilles the next day; coming back after having travelled day and night for a week, with his clothes all covered with mud and dust, and his hat so battered that you wouldn't pick it out of the gutter, and his neckcloth tied all on one side, as if he was going to be hanged by it! I'm sure I've often thought he looked more like a maniac than a man in his senses. And then he begins a sentence and stops, forgetting what he meant to say next; and then pulls a map out of his pocket, and begins to show you how his wife must have gone in this direction, or that; and how, if he had only thought of it sooner, he must have overtaken her! Then he looks twenty years older; for what with his bad nights, and his grey hairs . . . ."

"Grey hairs!" I exclaimed. "Hugh Farquhar grey?"

"As a badger," replied my aunt; "and as thin and pallid as if he had lived on opium all his life. Nobody who hadn't seen him within the last year would know him in the street. Why, the perpetual travelling would alone have killed most men. He's been twice to Zollenstrasse; ever so many times to Paris; once here, as far as Rome, even—and never with any reward for his pains. But what's the good of telling you all this? You don't care to hear it!"

"I do care, indeed," I said, unable to control the faltering of my voice, and turning away, so as to shade my face with my hand.

"Humph! if you did, you'd write the letter."

"No, Aunt Sandyshaft," I replied, struggling to speak firmly. "I would *not* write the letter. I—I cannot but grieve at the picture you put before me. It wrings my heart to know that the husband whom I have so much loved—whom I still so much love—should be so changed and shattered; but . . . but if my heart were to break for it, nothing should induce me to write that letter. Nothing—so it is mere waste of time to ask me."

"All very fine," said my aunt; "but what does it mean? I suppose you don't intend to stay in Rome all the rest of your days, and live by copying the old masters, as you call 'em?"

"I did not say that."

"What do you say then? Speak plain English, Bab; for I don't understand heroics."

"It means this, aunt—that before I touch his hand again in reconciliation, before I cross his threshold as his wife, that woman must be given back to her own people, and banished out of my sight for ever. As to tolerating her beneath my roof . . . ."

"Nobody's asked you to tolerate her," interrupted Mrs. Sandyshaft. "Of course she'll be sent away,

neck and crop. Do you think *I'd* let you go back, with that hussy in the house?"

"Let all this be done; and let him ask my pardon for not having done it before I ever passed the gates of Broomhill, and then . . . ."

"And then, when there's nothing left to write about, and he's probably rushed off to Rome as if he'd been shot out of a cannon, you'll condescend to write. Is that it, Bab?"

"Yes."

"Oh, very well; then we understand each other. But in the meantime somebody must inform him that your ladyship is found, and communicate your high and mighty conditions—eh?"

"Clearly; but I must dictate the letter."

"Who's to write it?"

"Nobody so fit as yourself."

"Then I write it my own way—that's flat."

"Nonsense, my dear aunt! In a matter so utterly concerning myself . . . ."

"I'm not a puppet," said Mrs. Sandyshaft, with an obstinate jerk of the head. "I've capacity enough to write a simple letter, I should hope; and I won't write at anybody's dictation, if I know it."

"But this is not a 'simple' letter. It is a very important letter; and a great deal depends on the

way in which it is worded. My own dignity and self-respect demand that . . . ."

"Bother your dignity and self-respect! Think a little less about both, Bab, and more about that poor, miserable fellow, who's never known a moment's peace, day or night, since you left him. And as for the letter, tell me what you want said, and I'll say it; but I won't have it dictated."

"Then I won't have it written."

"Oh, very well! Please yourself."

"And, remember, Aunt Sandyshaft, that it is you, now, who are raising up obstacles."

"Fiddlededee!"

"And—and some day," sobbed I, "you'll, perhaps, be sorry that—that you re—re—refused . . ."

"Bab, this is temper—temper and nothing else. It won't do with me. You may write your letter yourself, if you like; or you may get Hilda to write it. But if I do it, I do it my own way, and there's an end of it."

At this moment there came a gentle tap at the door, and Goody looked in.

"It's past three o'clock, deary, and asking your pardon, ma'am, for the intrusion, but the dear blessed little angel is very restless; and it's getting dusk already; and out after dark, my lamb, he should not be."

"That's quite true, Goody, and I was a cruel,

thoughtless creature to forget it. There, you see, I've only my bonnet to put on, and I'm ready in a moment. Good-bye, Aunt Sandyshaft—here is my address, if you care to come and see me. It's close by—not a quarter of a mile hence; and—and if, after I am gone, you think better of your decision, and like to come round and take tea with me at seven o'clock, we can talk over the subject of the letter. I am sure you will think differently when you have time to reflect. Give my love to Hilda, and tell her I hope to see her again to-morrow. Here, Goody—give the darling to me. I will carry him downstairs myself."

And with this, I hurried away, down the great stone staircase, and home by the back streets and short cuts, as fast as I could walk; pausing only once, for a couple of minutes, at the English baker's in the Via Condotti, to buy some English muffins for my aunt's tea.

For I felt certain she would come.

How slowly the hours of that afternoon went by! How restless I was, and how my certainty faded away and diminished as seven o'clock drew near!

"She is so obstinate," thought I. "She never can see that she has been in the wrong. But then she is just, after all; and she *must* admit that I have a right to the principal voice in a matter

so vitally concerning myself. Will she come? Or will she pique herself on staying away, and making me go to her first? If she meant to come, she would surely be here now! and yet . . . ."

I went to the bedroom window every moment. I heaped fresh logs on the fire; placed her chair ready in the warmest corner; trimmed the lamp; peeped at the muffins; solaced myself every now and then with a cautious glance at my darling sleeping in his little cot; and listened, with a beating heart, to every sound upon the stairs. At last, just as my watch pointed to a quarter past the time, and I was ready to sit down and weep for disappointment, the door opened and my aunt walked in.

I sprang to meet her with a cry of delight—kissed her—helped her off with her cloak—ran to fetch a stool for her feet—poured out our first cups of tea, and, having helped her to a slice of muffin, took her by both hands, and said—

"Now, you dear old thing, since you have been so nice, and kind, and good, and have yielded this point so sweetly, I'll yield a point too. You shall write the letter your own way, while you're here to-night; and I'll just look over your shoulder, and put in a word here and there."

"Humph! the post went out at four, my dear," replied my aunt, drily, "and my letter with it.

But I thought I'd come and tell you—and, upon my word, this is the first drop of tea, deserving the name of tea, that I've tasted since I left England."

CHAPTER XVII.

SUSPENSE.

HUGH, it appeared, was on the point of starting for Chambery when my aunt last heard from him, and had requested her, in case of emergency, to write to him at that place. He was led thither, it seemed, by some vague report, hoping against hope, but prepared for the inevitable disappointment which always awaited him. "I go," he wrote, "but I know beforehand that I go in vain. She is lost to me for ever. Some day, perhaps, when I am quite worn out with long seeking, I may find her grave in some solitary spot, among the graves of strangers. God grant it! I would fain die there, and be laid beside her." My aunt gave me this letter. I carried it in my bosom by day; slept with it under my pillow at night;

blistered it all over with my tears. Mine was a mere make-believe stoicism, surface-deep and sadly transparent, after all.

From Rome to Chambery:—I looked in the map, and was dismayed to see how far apart they lay, and what a world of mountains lay between. I went down to the post office, and was told that letters to Chambery might be despatched *viâ* Turin or Marseilles. In either case they would take from five to six days—as long as if sent to London! I then made my way to the Hôtel d'Angleterre, to ask Mrs. Sandyshaft by which route she had directed her letter to be forwarded; and received for answer that she "hadn't troubled her head about routes, or branches either. Not she. She had just put Post Office, Chambery, Savoy—and quite enough. The Where was all that concerned her; the How she left to those whose business it was to convey it."

Thus poorly comforted, I could only sit down patiently, counting out each lagging hour of the six long days, and feeding my imagination with conjectures of every possible calamity that might befall my aunt's letter.

Supposing, now, that the address was illegible! A hand more essentially crabbed and distort, when written in haste, it would be difficult to conceive. And she must have written in haste; for it was

past three when I left her, and the letter had to be posted by four o'clock. Supposing, on the other hand, that it went *viâ* Turin, and the mail was robbed among the mountains—or by sea, and the steamer were lost? Supposing, even, that it arrived safely at Chambery, and Hugh were gone before it came? Would it, in that case, be forwarded to Broomhill; or would it lie there month after month, dusty and unclaimed, with its words of hope and comfort all unread?

Thus five days went by. On the fifth, I said, "To-morrow he will receive it." On the sixth, "To-day it is his." I fancied him calling listlessly at the post-office as he passed by; or finding it in the morning on his breakfast-table. I pictured to myself the impatient sigh with which he would toss it aside, incredulous of any good it might contain—the reluctance with which he would presently break the seal—the sudden flash lighting up his poor pale face—the bound that he would make to the bell; the ringing voice in which he would call for post-horses; the instantaneous transition from apathy to energy, from that state of hope deferred which maketh the heart sick, to hope fulfilled, glowing, radiant, and instinct with vitality.

As the day advanced, and the evening drew on, I said to myself, "He is on his way. He will

travel day and night. Every mile will seem a league to his impatience, and every hour a week." Then I calculated how long the journey would take him, if he came by Turin, Genoa, and the sea; and found that he might quite possibly arrive by the evening of the third day. At this thought, I trembled and turned pale.

Only two days more! I could not believe it. My aunt came to sit with me in the morning, while I was painting; and Hilda brought her carriage to take me for a drive, later in the day. I forget where we went, or what was said or done by the way. I thought of nothing but Hugh.

Only one day more! I went through my morning's work mechanically, breaking off, every now and then, to kiss my baby, and whisper in his little uncomprehending ear—"to-morrow, to-morrow, my angel, thou shalt lie in thy father's arms!" To Paolo I said, "Wait with patience. We shall soon have news of Maddalena."

The last day passed as if in a dream. I could neither paint, nor talk, nor sit still; and so stole away quietly to the gardens of the Pincio, and wandered about the sunny walks alone. At dinner, I literally fasted. In the evening, my nervous excitement became so painfully uncontrollable that if only the ashes collapsed on the hearth, or the windows shook, I trembled from head to foot. He

would go direct to my aunt, at the Hôtel d'Angleterre; and she would send him on to the Vicolo d'Aliberti. Fancy his footsteps on the stairs! Fancy the joy of being folded once more in his arms, and weeping out the last of so many bitter tears upon his bosom! Then came the painful remembrance of how altered he must be; and I tried to prepare myself for the cruel lines channelled on his brow, and the grey hairs sprinkling his dark locks, once so free from change. Thus the evening hours trailed slowly by, and midnight came, and no Hugh. At one o'clock, Ida stole downstairs, entreating me to go to bed; but of what avail would it have been to do so, with every nerve of body and brain strung to the keenest wakefulness? Finding persuasion useless, she sat up with me, prepared to retreat at the first intimation of his coming. Thus the night wore on, and the expectations which, a few hours since, had been certainties, turned to doubts and apprehensions. At length six o'clock struck; and, worn out with watching, I waked Ida, who had fallen asleep in her chair, and we both went to bed.

I slept heavily for a few hours, and woke to find Mrs. Sandyshaft at my bedside.

"Is he come?" were the words that sprung instantaneously to my lips.

"No, child. He hasn't wings."

"But it is now three days and three nights since he received the letter!"

"You goose! Suppose he finds the mountain roads blocked up with snow between Chambery and Lyons? Suppose, when he gets to Marseilles, he finds no steamer ready to start? Suppose he had left Chambery for some other place—say Paris—when the letter arrived, and it had to be forwarded—what then?"

What then, indeed! I sank back upon my pillow with a weary sigh, and said—

"Well—any of these things might be; but in such case, when—when will he come?"

"Impossible to say—but within a week, no doubt."

"A week! Another long week!"

"And in the meantime," added she, "I'd advise you not to make it your practice to sit up every night. It won't bring him one bit the sooner."

"How long is it, Aunt Sandyshaft, since you last saw him?" I asked, presently.

"Not since I made up my mind to join Hilda and her precious Count out here in Italy. He came with me as far as Marseilles—and I'm sure I don't know what would have become of me on the way, if he hadn't—and saw me safe on board the Leghorn boat before he left me."

"That was kind of him!" I said, warmly.

"Humph! it was civil; but nothing wonderful," replied my aunt, with a sharp side-glance at me.

"And then what did he do?"

"Went back to England, I believe. At all events, his first letter to me was dated from Broomhill."

"And you have only had two from him, you say?"

"Only two, one of which you have."

"And the other you destroyed. Are you *quite* sure you destroyed it, aunt?"

"Bless my heart, yes; and saw the sparks fly up the chimney. I only kept this one, for fear I should forget the name of the place. Rubbish-storing, Bab, has never been a failing of mine."

Rubbish! She called his letter rubbish!

"I suppose," I said, after another pause, "he concludes you are in Rome by this time?"

"I don't see how that's likely, for I hadn't concluded it myself when I replied to his letter. The De Chaumonts, at that time, talked of spending the winter in Naples; but Hilda, as usual, changed her mind at the last moment, and came here instead. To me, one place was the same as another; and you were as likely to be found in Rome as in Naples, if in either. As for Hugh Farquhar, if he supposes anything, he supposes I'm in South Italy, scrambling up Mount Vesuvius.

By the by, Bab, did I tell you that your father had settled in Brussels?"

"No—you had not mentioned it."

"He has, then. They have taken rooms in a fashionable quarter; and go to court; and drive out every day in their own barouche (jobbing the horses), and give fortnightly receptions, with nothing to eat; and are mighty fine folks, indeed, in a small way. That just suits your father. Edmund Churchill, Esquire, was always a grand man, in his own opinion. But you don't listen?"

"Yes—oh, yes—I listen."

"Like the man in the song—'My body's in Segovia, my heart is in Madrid.' Oh, Bab, Bab, you're made of the same stuff as other people, in spite of the airs you give yourself when you're dignified. Mercy on us! don't cry. What good can crying do to you, or anybody?"

"I—I feel as if he wouldn't come now at all!" sobbed I, fairly breaking down, and hiding my face in the pillows. "I was so full of hope all these ten days; and now the hope is all gone—all gone!"

"Because he is twelve hours after the time you had fixed upon, out of your own wise head! Bab, don't be a fool. Suppose he is a week after the time—what then? He's sure to come at last."

"A week—what shall I do for a whole week,

not knowing where he is, or whether he's had the letter? He—he may be ill—or gone all the way back to England—who can tell?"

My aunt rose up, very deliberately, and put on her gloves.

"If you ask me, Bab, what you are to do for a whole week," said she, "I'd advise you to do what he has done for a whole year. Bear it."

"You're—you're very cruel!"

"Perhaps I am. It was your turn last, and it's mine now. However, to show you that I'm not a miracle of wickedness, I'll tell you what I'm now going home to do—to write three letters; one to Hugh Farquhar, addressed to his own house at Broomhill; one to his housekeeper, desiring her to forward that letter to him, wherever he may be; and the third to the postmaster at Naples, requesting that anything which may have arrived for me there shall be at once sent on to Rome. Now, what d'ye say to that?"

"My dearest, kindest aunt . . . ."

"Oh, I'm kind now, am I? I was cruel two minutes ago. There, cheer up, Bab; and make haste to dress and have your breakfast, and be all right by two o'clock, when I'll bring a carriage round, and take you and that infant monster for a drive. Good-bye."

I did cheer up, by a great effort, for that and

several succeeding days; but my heart was heaviest when I smiled most, and my nights were spent in tears. Thus the prescribed week went by, and then another week; and still he neither came nor wrote. There had been time, and more than time, for the letter to be forwarded from Chambery to Broomhill, and from Broomhill back to Chambery. At length the suspense became intolerable, and I made up my mind to bear it no longer. I went to Mrs. Sandyshaft, and announced my determination to start for Chambery the following day.

"The stupidest thing you could do, Bab," said she. "That's precisely the way to miss him. Where two people are looking for each other, one should always stop still."

"How can I tell that he is not that one? How can I tell that he is not lying on a bed of sickness?"

"If he were, he would have had his letter; and either have written himself, or caused somebody to write."

"Well—these are but conjectures; and I mean to go. I shall at least have the satisfaction of hearing whatever there is to hear; and at all events I shall not be breaking my heart in idleness here in Rome."

"Your mind's made up?"

"Firmly. I am now going to secure my place to Civita Vecchia."

"No need. If you *must* go, I'll go with you—under protest—and we'll take post-horses. What about the monster?"

"Baby and Goody must go, of course."

"A pretty piece of folly, to be sure; and the day after to-morrow, the first of January! Bab, Bab, you're a greater idiot than I took you to be—the greatest idiot I ever knew, except myself."

CHAPTER XVIII.

WHITHER?

> "I thank you, valiant Cassio.
> What tidings can you tell me of my lord?"—OTHELLO.

FROM Rome to Civita Vecchia with post-horses; from Civita Vecchia to Marseilles by steamer, with a bitter wind blowing from the north-east, and brief but sudden storms of snow and rain sweeping over the sea; from Marseilles to Lyons by railway; and from Lyons by post-chaise to Chambery. A dreary journey of many days' duration, intensely cold and comfortless, and made doubly difficult by the helplessness of my companions. The last day was the worst of all. We were fifteen hours on the road; six of which were spent in snow and darkness, struggling slowly up among mountain

roads rendered almost impassable by several days of bad weather. Worn out with fatigue and cold, we reached Chambery an hour after midnight, and were driven to the Hôtel du Petit Paris. Here my first inquiry was for Hugh. The sleepy waiter knew nothing of the name. I described him; but he was confident that no such gentleman had been there. I asked what other hotels there were in the town. He replied that there were several; but none so good as the Petit Paris. There was La Poste; and there was L'Aigle Noir. Madame might inquire at both to-morrow; but it was unlikely that any English traveller would prefer either to the Hôtel du Petit Paris. As for the other inns, they were *auberges*, and out of the question. With this I was obliged to be content till morning.

I was so weary that I slept heavily, and never woke till between nine and ten o'clock the following day. The sunlight met my eye like a reproach. It was a glorious morning, cold but brilliant, with something hopeful and re-assuring in the very air. I rose, confident of success, and went to the post-office before breakfast. A young man lounging at the door with a cigar in his mouth followed me into the office, and took his place at the bureau. I asked if he could give me the address of an English gentleman, Farquhar by

name, who I had reason to believe was staying, or had been staying in Chambery.

The clerk shook his head. He knew of no such person.

"There are, perhaps, some letters awaiting Mr. Farquhar's arrival?"

"No, Madame. None."

"Nay, one I think there must be; for I know that it was despatched nearly a month since. Will Monsieur oblige me by looking?"

Monsieur retired, reluctantly, to a distant corner of the bureau; took a packet of letters from a pigeon-hole in a kind of little cupboard between the windows, shuffled them as if they were cards, tossed them back into the pigeon-hole, and returned with the same shake of the head. There were no letters for Madame's friend. Absolutely none.

I turned away, disappointed, but incredulous. At the threshold, I paused. It might be a mere mistake of pronunciation, after all. I took out my pocket-book, pencilled the words "Hugh Farquhar, Esquire," very plainly on a blank leaf, and handed it to the clerk. His face lighted up directly.

"Ah, *that* name?" said he. "*Mais, oui; je crois qu'il y a des lettres*. I beg Madame's pardon a thousand times; but Madame said an English gentleman, and this name is surely Polish or Russian?"

"No, no, English," I replied, impatiently, my eyes fixed on the pigeon-hole.

He returned to it; took out the letters; sorted them, oh, how slowly! laid one aside; sorted them again, to make sure that he had omitted none; replaced the packet; paused to dust the letter before bringing it to the counter; and then, instead of placing it in my eager hand, said—

"Madame has brought Monsieur Faquaire's passport?"

"No—how can I bring it when I do not even know that he is here?"

"Then I cannot surrender the letter."

"But, Monsieur—I am his wife."

"The postal law does not permit letters to be delivered unless on exhibition of the passport of the individual to whom they are addressed."

"Then, Monsieur will, at least, permit me to see the letter?'

He would not trust it across the counter; but held it jealously, in such a manner that I could read the address. It was directed in Mrs. Sandyshaft's handwriting to Hugh Farquhar, Esq., Broomhill, and re-directed to Chambery by Mrs. Fairhead. The back was almost covered with English, French, and Italian postmarks of various dates. It was evidently the second letter, written

on the tenth day after the first. Where, then, was the first?

"Are you sure, Monsieur, that there is no other?"

"*Madame, j'en suis bien sûr.*"

"And there have been no others?"

He hesitated.

"I cannot say, Madame. If so, they have been delivered."

I felt myself flush scarlet with impatience.

"But, good heavens! monsieur, this is a matter of deep importance. Can you not remember what letters you have given out, or to whom you gave them?"

He shrugged his shoulders, and replied, with a half-impertinent smile—

"Madame asks impossibilities. I do not say that there may not have been other letters. I believe there were; but I cannot undertake to remember them. Perhaps my colleague may recollect having delivered them. Madame had better inquire of him."

"Where is monsieur's colleague to be found?" I asked, haughtily.

"He is at present gone out to breakfast—*ah, le voilà!*"

At this moment another young man entered the office, short, brisk, black-eyed; a thorough man of

business. They exchanged a few words in an undertone. Then the new comer came forward, and took the other's place at the little counter.

"Madame demands if there have been other letters delivered from this office to Monsieur—Monsieur . . . ."

"Hugh Farquhar."

"Precisely. *Eh bien*, madame, there have been others. I cannot tell how many. Three or four —perhaps six. They have all been delivered; except the last, which has been shown to madame, and is yet unclaimed."

"Delivered to himself?"

"To himself some; and some to his messenger, on exhibition of monsieur's passport."

"How long since, monsieur?"

"Three weeks, I should think—or a month."

"Then he has left Chambery?"

"It would seem so, madame; but if you will take the trouble to inquire at the Hôtel de la Poste . . . ."

"At the Hôtel de la Poste! Was he staying there?"

"I conclude so, madame, since the garçon from La Poste came once or twice for letters."

"It would be in vain, I suppose, to ask if monsieur can remember whether a letter directed in the same handwriting as the one now lying here,

was delivered to Monsieur Farquhar on, or about, the twelfth of December?"

The clerk took up Mrs. Sandyshaft's letter, carefully scrutinised the superscription, and said—

"So many letters pass through our hands, madame, that I should be unwilling to hazard a decided opinion; but I think I have observed this writing before, and on a letter addressed to the same party. If so, it was somewhere about the time which madame specifies, and . . . ."

"Was it delivered to himself, monsieur?"

"I was just about to say, madame, that, in that case, I rather incline to the belief that I delivered that letter to a lady."

"To a lady?"

"On exhibition of monsieur's passport."

I leaned upon the counter for a moment, quite faint and speechless; then, pulling my veil down upon my face, said, quickly and tremulously,—"Thanks, monsieur,"—and hurried out of the office.

A little way up the road there stood a clump of trees, a fountain, and a stone bench. I made my way to the bench and sat down, feeling very giddy. My mind was all confused. I felt as if some great misfortune had befallen me; though I scarcely comprehended the nature of it. Presently some young girls came up, chattering and laughing, to

fill their pitchers from the fountain. I saw them look at me and whisper together. I shuddered, rose, and turned away. Walking on, as it were, instinctively, I crossed an open space surrounded by public buildings, and entering a street which opened off by one of the angles, found myself immediately opposite a large white house, across the front of which was painted the words "Hôtel de la Poste." A respectable-looking man was standing at the door, with his hands in his pockets. I paused, advanced a step, and asked if I could speak to the landlord. To which he replied, with a bow—

"*Madame, je suis le maitre d'hôtel.* Be pleased to walk in."

"No, thank you, monsieur, I—I only wish to make an inquiry."

"At your service, madame."

"I am anxious to know, monsieur, whether an English gentleman named Farquhar has been staying lately at your hotel?"

"Not very lately, madame. He has been gone nearly a month."

"May I ask how long he remained here?"

"About a fortnight, madame."

"Can you tell me if he is gone back to England?"

"If madame will take the trouble to accept a

seat in the bureau, I will refer to the visitor's book, and see if monsieur left any address."

I stepped into the landlord's little parlour and sat down, while he turned over the pages of a large book that lay upon a side-table. Presently his forefinger, which had been rapidly running down column after column, stopped at a certain entry, like a pointer.

"No address left, madame," said he. "But monsieur, I think, took post-horses from here. I will refer to my books, and see in what direction he travelled."

And the obliging maitre d'hôtel took down a ledger from his bookshelves, and resumed the same process of search. Again the swift forefinger came to a sudden halt.

"Monsieur F—*numéros quatre, trois, cinq, et six,*" said he, running rapidly over the items of the various entries. "*Appartements,* so much; dinners, breakfasts, wine, &c.—*post-horses to Grenoble* . . . . Monsieur went from here to Grenoble."

"To Grenoble?" I repeated. "Thanks, monsieur—and left no address?"

"None, Madame."

"Monsieur Farquhar travelled—alone?"

"Monsieur arrived alone, Madame—*c'est à dire,* accompanied by his coloured servant; and was joined here by Mademoiselle his sister."

"By . . . . by his—sister?"

"Yes, Madame. Mademoiselle arrived the day before they started for Grenoble. *Mon Dieu, Madame! Vous—vous trouvez malade?*"

"Thank you—" I said, pressing my hand to my forehead. "I—I feel somewhat faint. A long journey—and—and the fatigue of walking before breakfast . . . ."

"Allow me to call for a glass of wine . . . ."

"No, thank you—a little water. You are very good."

The landlord ran himself to a filter standing in the hall, and brought me a tumbler full of fresh water. Refreshed and steadied by the cool draught, I rose, and bade him good morning. He attended me to the door, and, seeing me hesitate, asked in what direction I desired to go.

"To the Hôtel du Petit Paris."

"Straight on, Madame, till you come to the end of the street, and then turn to the left. The Petit Paris will be straight before you. You cannot miss your way."

"I am much obliged, Monsieur; good morning."

"Madame, I have the honour to wish you good morning."

"Bab, my dear," said my aunt, "we can do no

more than we have done. We must just sit down now, and be patient."

"Patient!" I echoed, with a bitter sigh.

"Well, what's to be gained by impatience? Here's Grenoble; yonder's the railway station; and to-day is the eighth of January. Six-and-twenty days ago, a traveller leaves this hotel, bag and baggage; goes to that railway station; takes tickets for somewhere or another; and disappears. Who's to tell in what direction he went—east, west, north, or south? The cleverest detective in Bow Street couldn't track a man on such a clue as that. I defy him. Much less three women and a baby."

"Yet it is so hard to give up, now that we are on his very footsteps . . . ."

"Fiddlesticks, Bab. Footsteps don't help one six-and-twenty days after date. One might go to New York and back in the time."

My aunt was sitting in an easy chair by the fire; I was standing by the window, looking over towards the Alps and the sunset. We had followed on as far as Grenoble, and here all traces of Hugh and his companions disappeared. They had left by railway, the morning after their arrival, and were gone no one knew whither. Reluctant as I was to admit it, I knew that my aunt was right, and further search useless.

"Well?" said she, presently. "What's to be done?"

"What you please," I replied, listlessly.

"Humph! if I did what I pleased, I should go back to Suffolk at once, and take you with me. Will you go?"

"To Suffolk? Oh, no—never, never again, unless . . . ."

"Unless what, pray?"

"Unless with him."

"That's a ridiculous condition, Bab."

"Let him make everything clear to me—let him . . . . let him explain how it is that this woman is again with him . . . ."

"That's easily explained. She has followed him, I've no doubt, like a dog."

"Perhaps; but that is not all. That's not enough."

"Well, Bab—your fittest home, for the present, is my home. Decline it, if you please; but that's where you ought to be. In the meantime, we can't stay in this out-of-the-world place—can we?"

"Certainly not. We must go back to Rome. Perhaps he is already there, awaiting our return."

"I'll be bound, if so, that *he* won't be such a fool as to run off to Chambery after *us*," said my aunt. "But I don't believe we shall find him there."

"Nor I," I replied, hopelessly.

My aunt stood up, and came over to the window.

"Shall we trudge off again to-morrow, then?" said she, laying her hand kindly on my shoulder. "Do you feel strong enough—eh?"

"Oh, yes—quite strong enough."

"And you'd rather go to Rome?"

"Of course. It is our only chance."

"Very well—Rome it shall be. And as for that letter—well, well, I've my own suspicions; but never mind. Time will show. We must play the game of patience, now; but we hold all the best cards in our own hands, my dear, and win we must —some day. Poor Bab!"

We stood there for several minutes quite silently, and watched the round red sun sink slowly down behind the farthest peaks. The broad plain lay below, all dusk and mysterious. The lowest mountains became violet in shade, and the loftiest crimson in light; and the great glaciers flashed like fire on the remotest horizon. I thought of the time when Hugh and I travelled together in the mighty Oberland, and my eyes grew dim, and my heart heavy, with the remembrance.

"How grand it is," I said sadly.

"Yes, it's grand; of course it's grand," replied Mrs. Sandyshaft. "But the truth is, my dear, I've

no taste for the sublime. Mountains are all very well in their way; but give me Suffolk!"

The next morning, we took the railway back again to Marseilles, and embarked on board the French boat for Civita Vecchia.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE OLD, OLD STORY.

> "He is but a landscape painter,
> And a village maiden she."
>
> TENNYSON.

JANUARY, February, March went by; April came; and still there was no sign or word from Hugh. Hilda went off to Naples with her obedient husband, for the fashionable season. Ida completed her large picture, and despatched it to Zollenstrasse for the approaching competition. Paolo, after lingering in Rome week after week, lost faith in my ability to help him, and went back to his wife and home in Capri. In the meantime my aunt came to live with us in the Vicolo d'Aliberti, and we engaged all the upper portion of the house, and a

couple of good servants for her accommodation. In the meantime, also, my darling throve like a young plant in the sunshine, drinking in strength and beauty from every fragrant breath that stirred the opening blossoms of the spring. He knew me now—held out his little arms when he saw me from afar off—smiled when I smiled; and testified his love in a thousand fond and helpless ways, scarcely intelligible to any eyes but mine.

> "Methought his looks began to talk with me;
> And no articulate sounds, but something sweet
> His lips would frame."

Heaven knows I needed all the unconscious comfort his baby-heart could give! I was very wretched.

It was the mystery that made my life so miserable—the painful, oppressive, entangling mystery, that haunted me perpetually, sleeping or waking, till my brain ached, and my very soul was weary.

The letter had been delivered—that was certain. Immediately after its delivery, Hugh had left Chambery for Grenoble—that also was certain. From Grenoble he had taken his departure, after one night's delay, by railway; and from this point all trace of him disappeared. He had left no address. He had neither written to Mrs. Sandyshaft, nor to any of his own people at Broomhill. He had totally, unaccountably, mysteriously

vanished; and with him had also vanished Tippoo and Maddalena. Sometimes I thought he must have been murdered by banditti, and buried where he fell. Sometimes I asked myself if Maddalena could have poisoned him in some fierce passion of jealousy and despair? She was Italian, and her black eyes had in them "something dangerous." Again, I questioned if he had ever received Mrs. Sandyshaft's letter. The clerk believed that he had delivered it to a lady. That lady must have been Maddalena; and what if she had destroyed it? Supposing this, would he not have marvelled at my aunt's long silence, and have written to her at the Neapolitan office?

These questions tormented me; pursued me; poisoned the very air and sunshine around me; and made my life one long, sickening, heart-breaking suspense. In vain those around me preached the wisdom and necessity of patience. I could endure, and I could suffer; but there was no patience for such a burthen of anxiety as mine.

Thus the slow weeks dragged past, and hope gradually died away, and I made up my mind that I should never see him more.

And now my turn had come to grow pale and absent—to pore upon the map, and say "If I had taken this direction, I should have met him;" or "If I had gone at once, I should have found him"—

to rack my brain with suppositions, and my heart with bitter reproaches. It was retribution, literal, terrible, torturing. Retribution dealt out even-handed; measure for measure; cup for cup, to the last drop of the draught. My aunt never reproached me now; but my self-condemnation was enough. In every pang that I suffered, I remembered those which my flight had inflicted on him. In every dark conjecture that sent a shudder through my whole being, I recognised his anguish. It was a woful time; and any fault that had been mine in the past was expiated to the utmost.

One afternoon, very early in April, Ida came to me in my little painting-room, and sat down on a stool at my feet. I was alone, and had been brooding over my grief for hours in silence. She took my hand, and laid her cheek upon it, tenderly.

"My poor Barbara," said she, "you have been solitary. Where is Mrs. Sandyshaft?"

"Out, dear. She dines to-day at her banker's, after accompanying them in a drive to Antemnæ and Fidenæ."

"Had I known that, I would have stayed at home. It is not good for you to be alone."

"Nay, dear, it makes little difference," I replied, sadly.

"You have not been painting?"

"No."

"Nor reading?"

"No."

"Nor walking?"

"I walked on the Pincio this morning before breakfast, with Goody and the child."

"You must not always call him 'the child,' and 'the baby,'" said Ida, coaxingly. "You must accustom yourself, dear, to give him his own pretty name. I should love to call him Hugh, if I were you—little Hugh—Ugolino."

"No, no—not yet. I cannot."

"Well then, may I?"

"No, darling—I cannot bear it yet. By and by, perhaps—when I am stronger . . . ."

"Enough—I will not tease you. And now—and now, do you not wonder where I have been all day?"

"Ay, dear," was my listless answer. "Where?"

"Well, I went first to Plowden's to inquire if there were yet any news from Zollenstrasse respecting the safe arrival of my picture. I told you I was going there, when I went out."

"I had forgotten it."

"And then I thought I would step in at Piale's, to see if he had yet procured that Hand-book of Rome for Mrs. Sandyshaft, which she ordered several days ago."

"That was thoughtful and kind, my Ida.

"And—and at Piale's, I met the gentleman, dear, whom I told you I had encountered once or twice before . . . . do you remember?"

"To be sure. The English artist who lodged in your father's house in Munich; and who was so good to you when you were a child."

"To whom I owe my first beginnings of art, and who procured me my presentation to the Zollenstrasse College," said Ida, warmly.

"He has been, indeed, a good friend," I replied, trying to fix my wandering attention. "So you met him again to-day at Piale's?"

"Yes—he was in the reading-room; but—he rose up when he saw me, and shook hands so kindly; and—and asked me if I would like to go to the Campana Museum, for which he had a permission of entry. Now, you know, dear, the Campana collection is one of the great difficulties of Rome. It is almost impossible to procure admission, and . . . ."

"And you went, I suppose?"

"I was very glad to avail myself of the opportunity—and I thought there could be no objection to the escort of a—a gentleman whom I had known since I was a little girl . . . ."

"Surely not, my dear Ida. I am glad you have seen the collection. It is very beautiful."

"Indeed it is," replied Ida. "He asked me with whom I was living. I find he knows you, Barbara."

"Knows me?" I repeated. "How should that be?"

"He has met you, dear—at a picnic."

"Ah—that is possible. I have forgotten his name?"

"Penwarne—Alfred Penwarne. Is it not a grand name?"

"Yes—it is a good name. I remember him now. He is very satirical."

"He is very witty," said Ida, colouring up, and speaking somewhat emphatically.

"Nay, dear child—I mean no unkindness of your friend. So he remembers to have seen me at Tivoli?"

"Yes; and he asked me if you were one of the Carlyons of Pen—Pen—something, in Cornwall; and then he said that Carlyon was a Cornish name, and that he himself was a Cornish man. I was so confused, Barbara; and yet I could scarcely keep from laughing."

"Poor Ida! it was very annoying for you."

"Oh, it was nothing. Well, dear—we went all through the Campana gallery; and then, on coming out, Mr. Penwarne proposed that we should take a turn on the Pincio. And—and then . . . ."

She paused; and I was startled to find how her hand trembled in mine.

"Why, Ida," I exclaimed, "you are nervous, child! Your cheek is flushed—you tremble—what is it?"

"I—I scarcely know whether to laugh or cry," faltered she; "but—but it is all so strange—I seem as if I could not believe it . . . ."

"Could not believe what, my darling?"

"What he told me in—in the gardens."

A sudden light flashed upon me. I stooped over her where she sat at my feet, and taking her pretty head between my hands, turned her face towards me.

"What did he tell you, my little Ida?" I said, smiling. "That he had never forgotten you, all these years—and that Ida Penwarne would sound far prettier for a lady's name than Ida Saxe?"

She flung her arms round my neck, and buried her blushing face in my bosom.

"He said that—that he had always thought of me with kindness," whispered she, "and that—since the first day he met me here in Rome, he—he loved me!"

"And you, *Liebe*—what did you reply?"

"I hardly remember . . . . I—I think I said I was very glad not to have been . . . forgotten . . . by him."

"But, my dear child, is not all this strangely precipitate? You have not seen Mr. Penwarne more than twice before to-day, and how can you tell whether . . . ."

"I have seen him a great many times," said Ida, guiltily. "I—I couldn't help it. I suppose that, knowing where I lived . . . ."

"He contrived to meet you, by accident—eh?"

"Perhaps; and then . . . ."

"And then, what?"

"He lived in our house for more than two years. It is not as if we were strangers."

"That is true."

"And—and besides, Barbara, I—I think I loved him a little, before I came to Zollenstrasse at all!"

Pretty, artless Ida! Her long-hidden secret was told at last, and all the rest of her life's innocent romance was soon poured out. It was the old, old story, of which the world is never weary—the old story of how admiration and gratitude became love in a simple maiden's heart, dwelling there, an unwritten poem, year after year; unfostered by a single hope; untainted by a single regret; pure as her own soul, and sacred as her religion. She had so much to tell, and yet it was so little when told! How he first came to live at her father's

cottage by the banks of the Isar; how he took kindly notice of her from the first; how she loved to linger near when he was painting, and with what eager wonder she watched the daily progress of his work; how he took her, one day, to the museum of pictures; how, another day, he made a little portrait of her in oils, and gave it to her mother; how, at last, he offered to teach her something of drawing; and what a happy time it was when she used to go out with him into the fields behind the house, and sketch the pine rafts that came down the river, the great elms that fringed the opposite bank, and all the homely subjects round about—these, and the like simple incidents, made the substance of her little story; yet every detail interested me, and I listened to it from first to last with a tender sympathy that caused me, for the time, to forget my trouble in her happiness.

Thus we sat talking till the early dusk drew on, and the red glow of the embers on the hearth became the only light by which we saw each other's face; and then Ida went up to her own room, and I was alone again.

The wind had risen within the last hour, and came, every now and then, in sudden gusts against the window. I rose, and looked out. A few stars gleamed between the rifts of ragged cloud that

drifted across the sky, and an occasional blot of rain came with the wind. I turned from the cheerless prospect with a shudder; and, resuming my former seat, fell back upon the old train of thought, as if nothing had occurred to interrupt it. Presently my boy waked in his little cot, with that sweet, impatient, inarticulate cry that was so eloquent to my ear. I hastened to throw on a fresh log and a couple of pine-cones, to make the room bright for him; then took him in my arms; danced him to and fro before the fire to the tune of a quaint, old-fashioned Italian lullaby; kissed him; talked to him; and watched how his great blue eyes were turned towards the leaping flame in wonder and delight. These were my happy moments—my only happy moments now—and even these were often overcast by sudden clouds of anguish.

All at once the door opened, and Goody, with a startled look upon her face, peeped in.

"My deary," said she, "there's a lady waiting to see you."

"A lady?"

"And—and she asked for Mrs. Farquhar, my deary," added the old servant, apprehensively.

"My name?" I stammered, seized with a vague terror. "Who knows my name?"

"She's quite a stranger," said Goody, "and . . . . she's here!"

I rose as my visitor appeared on the threshold. She came in—closed the door—lifted her veil.

It was Maddalena.

CHAPTER XX.

MADDALENA'S CONFESSION.

" Face to face in my chamber, my silent chamber, I saw her!
God, and she and I only."—MRS. BROWNING.

MY first impulse was one of terror—unmixed, overmastering terror. I turned cold from head to foot, and my heart failed within me. For a moment, we stood there, face to face, in the firelight; both silent. Maddalena was the first to speak.

"At last we meet," she said, in a low, distinct tone. "At last!"

I shuddered. I so well remembered that vibrating, melancholy voice, with its slightly foreign intonation.

"Whose child is that?"

I clasped my boy closer to my bosom. My lips moved, but uttered no sound.

"Whose child is that?" she repeated.

"Mine."

She took a step forward; but as she did so, I sprang back, laid my baby in his cot, and stood before it, trembling but desperate, like some wild creature at bay.

"Keep off!" I cried, vehemently. "You shall not touch him."

She looked at me with eyes that dilated as she spoke.

"Fool!" she said, scornfully. "Do you think I would harm your child?"

Then her face grew gentle and her voice softened, as she added—

"Is it not *his*, also?"

"His!" I echoed, my terror rapidly giving place to indignation. "Do you presume to name my husband to my face?"

"I come here to-night for no other purpose than to speak of him."

"In that case," I said, controlling my voice to a steady coldness as I went on, "you will be so good as to remember that you address Mr. Farquhar's wife."

She smiled, disdainfully.

"His wife?" she repeated. "Aye—I am not likely to forget it."

"What have you to say to me?"

"Much," she replied, leaning against the table, and pressing her hand to her side, as if in pain. "Truths bitter to tell—so bitter that, three weeks ago, I would have torn my tongue out, sooner than utter them. Yet I am here to-night to tell them to—*you*."

She paused again, as if for breath, and I saw that she looked very ill. I pointed, almost involuntarily, to a chair that was standing by; but she took no notice of the gesture.

"Listen," she said, in a voice so resolutely defiant that it seemed to mock the quivering of her lips; "listen, you, his lady-wife, to a peasant who was his mistress. He never sought me. It was I who fled to him, and laid myself at his feet. He never loved me. The love was mine; the pity and indulgence his. He never married me. Such was the chivalry of his nature, that he would have made me his wife if he could; simply because I was a woman, and had given myself to him. But I was already married; and so that could not be. Yet, in the rashness of his generosity, he gave me a solemn promise that he would never wed another. It was a promise that he should never have given. It was a promise that he had not strength to keep. He has told me since how he suffered and struggled under temptation; how he even fled from that

temptation before he yielded. You know that, better than I can tell you."

Indeed I did know it. I bowed my head in silence. I could not speak—I could only listen. It was as if my life and all my future hung upon her lips; while, at every word she uttered, some cloud seemed to roll away from the past.

"I never knew that promise was broken," she continued, "till a few days before he brought . . . his wife . . . to Broomhill. It had been my home up to that time, and he had vowed it should be mine while I lived. I then learned that I must either leave the shelter of his roof; or dwell beneath it a voluntary prisoner. I chose the latter, and for his sake endured . . ."

She checked herself, and flashing a hasty glance at me, said—

"No matter what I endured. I loved him—and love him. A hundred wives could do no more. Not one in a hundred thousand would have done so much."

"Hush," I said, gently. "These are comparisons which it neither becomes you to make, nor me to hear."

She waved her hand, impatiently.

"My precautions," said she, "were in vain. Fate guided you. Step by step, you discovered all. You, however, rejected some truths; and too

literally accepted the purport of words which . . . which were not for your ear. Do you understand me?"

"Perfectly. But my husband—Mr. Farquhar . . . tell me where. . . ."

"Patience. I have a confession to make first."

"A confession?" I repeated; all my fears flooding back at once upon my heart.

She turned even paler than before, and fiercely clenched the hand that rested on the table.

"You fled," said she, in a deep, low tone; "and your flight sealed my fate. Sooner or later you must return—I knew that. I also knew that the day of your return would be the day of my banishment. I had hated you before, but from that hour I hated you with tenfold bitterness. Aye, you may well shrink! We Southerns hate as we love —to madness. There was a time, and that not long since, when I could have taken your life without pity."

I listened, as if in a terrible dream.

"You fled," she went on to say, breathing with difficulty, and speaking in short, sharp sentences, like one in pain. "You fled, and I was again free. But my peace was gone. He suffered; and his sufferings were my sufferings—his restlessness, my restlessness. Life lost its last charm for me. I loathed even Broomhill—Broomhill,

once so calm and pleasant! Thus a year passed."

Again she broke off abruptly. Her brow contracted, and the veins rose like cords upon the back of her thin, resolute hand. It was as if she could not bring herself to utter what she had next to say.

"He went abroad," she continued. "He wrote to me. It was his wish that I should remain no longer at Broomhill. He—he had resolved to provide me with a home far away; and he bade me join him . . . at Chambery. That letter came to me like my death-warrant. I had expected it; but the blow fell none the less heavily. I obeyed without a murmur. Had he bidden me die by slow poison, I should have obeyed as literally. I went. He told me that I was to live, henceforth, at Nice, where he had bought a villa for me by the sea. He thought kindly for me, even in this. It was my own climate, my own sea, the land of my own tongue. But it was banishment. Banishment!"

"But when you left Chambery," I began, trembling with eagerness to know more, "when you left Chambery, in what . . ."

"Patience," she said again. "You shall hear all in its course. I joined him at Chambery. He made it appear there that I was his sister. I arrived on the Sunday afternoon. It was arranged that we should begin our journey the following day. I rose early the next morning, and went out

before breakfast; for I was very restless. He asked me to call at the Post-office, and leave directions that all letters should be forwarded to him at the Bureau Restante, Nice. He also gave me his passport to show, in case any should have arrived by that morning's mail. I made up my mind, as I went along, that I would not leave his address. There was always danger that news of yourself might come at last, and my only hope hung on your absence. They were just opening the bag when I went in, and at once handed me a letter for him. I recognised Mrs. Sandyshaft's writing. I had often seen it at Broomhill. I had no sooner taken that letter in my hand than I felt a presentiment of evil. I wandered out beyond the town, and sat down in a solitary place to examine it. The more I looked at it, the more I was convinced that it contained some fatal intelligence. My destiny trembled in the balance. It was in my own power to turn the scale. I . . . I hesitated long. The temptation was all-powerful, and yet I . . . I struggled against it . . . "

"You destroyed the letter!" I exclaimed.

"I was desperate," she replied, starting into sudden energy. "It was my only stake—and I played it. Yes, I confess it—I opened the letter—read it—tore it into a thousand fragments, and sent it floating down the stream that hurried by.

There, you know it now—all the black and bitter truth."

"Alas, poor Hugh!" I faltered, tearfully.

Maddalena opened her dark eyes full upon me, half in wonder, half in scorn. She had expected a torrent of reproaches. She could not comprehend how grief and pity should take precedence of resentment in my heart.

"We left Chambery," she resumed hastily, "and went to Nice. There he consented to rest awhile, and repair his shattered strength. It had been agreed that Mrs. Sandyshaft should only write in case she had something definite to communicate. Day after day, he waited and hoped. At last he wrote to her at Naples. I intercepted that letter also, and it remained unanswered. At length the climate, which at first had done him good, began to fail of its effect. As the spring advanced, he fell gradually more and more out of health. I saw him declining daily—not from disease; but because he was too weary of life to bear the burthen of living. Then my punishment began."

"Wretch!" I cried, "you let him die! You let him die, when a word would have saved him! Oh, it was murder—murder!"

She smiled—a strange, agonised, terrible smile.

"You have been well avenged," she said, "in all that I have suffered."

I fell on my knees beside the little cot, in a paroxysm of despair and horror. I could not weep. I could only struggle for breath, and grasp the woodwork frame with both hands, convulsively.

"My child!" I gasped. "My poor, fatherless baby! Dead . . . . oh, God! dead . . . . dead!"

Maddalena came over swiftly and silently, and laid her cold hand on mine.

"Be comforted," she said. "Your husband lives."

I looked at her. My lips moved, but my tongue was dumb. I felt as if her words had some meaning which my sense failed to compass.

"He lives," she repeated. "I have come to take you to him."

The reaction was too much. I had not strength to bear the sudden joy. I uttered a faint cry; felt myself falling forward, powerless to put out a hand in self help; and lapsed into utter unconsciousness.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE OSTERIA DELLA FOSSA.

"Quite dumb? Dead, dead."—SHAKESPEARE.

"WHERE is she?"

They were the first words I uttered, when my memory came back and I had strength to speak.

"Hush, Bab," said my aunt, putting her finger to her lip. "You mustn't talk. What's-her-name's gone this three-quarters of an hour, and . . . . mercy on us! you mustn't try to sit up, child! Lie down and be quiet, or we shall have you going off again, as sure as fate."

"Gone? Gone without me?" I cried, struggling to an upright posture, in spite of my aunt's well-meant efforts to pin me to the sofa.

"Without you?—well, I should think so. Here

you've been in a dead faint, ever since they fetched me home. You wouldn't have had her put you in a coach and carry you off like that, I suppose? But do lie down, Bab, and hold your tongue, and be rational."

I fell back, silenced and exhausted.

"Besides, we've got the address," added my aunt. "Ida has it all written out upon a card. Hotel—hotel . . . . whatever is the name of the place, my dear? I'm sure I can't remember."

"Osteria della Fossa," replied Ida, smoothing my hair back, tenderly.

"Where is it?" I whispered.

"Some little way beyond La Storta, *Liebchen*, on the Florence road—not far, I believe, from Veii."

I closed my eyes and lay still for several minutes, during which my aunt insisted on prescribing sal-volatile and water, while Goody busied herself in the preparation of some strong "English" tea.

"What o'clock is it?" was my next question.

"Nearly ten, darling; and a wild dreary night."

My aunt looked up, sharply.

"It's of no use, Bab," said she. "I know what you're thinking of; but it can't be done. You don't stir an inch before to-morrow, I promise you—and not then, unless you're a vast deal better."

I made no reply; but I pressed Ida's hand significantly, and she returned the pressure.

"And Hugh won't expect you, either," continued my aunt. "She'll tell him you're not well; and it won't kill him to wait twelve hours longer!"

"He will not wait till to-morrow," I said, confidently. "He will be here himself before midnight."

"Here himself? No, no, my dear—love can do a good deal, I've no doubt; but I don't believe in miracles. Love won't give a man strength to rise from a sick-bed, on which . . . ."

"A sick-bed?" I cried, starting upright in a moment. "Merciful heaven! he is ill, and you never told me!"

"Never told you?" stammered my aunt. "But she . . . . didn't she tell you?"

"Not a word. Oh, speak—speak quickly . . . . the truth—let me have the truth!"

My aunt hesitated, and looked as if she would fain recall her words.

"He—he was ill when he started, you know . . ." she began.

"I did not know it!"

"But he would come, when he once knew you were in Rome. He was too ill to venture by sea, so they travelled post . . . ."

"All the way from Nice?"

"No, from the baths of Lucca, where he had

gone for change of air, about ten days before."

"Go on—go on!"

"Well, my dear, there's not much more to tell. He ought to have been in his bed when he started; but nothing would keep him. He knocked up half-way, at a place called . . . . called . . . ."

"Bolseno," suggested Ida.

"Where he was obliged to put up for half a day, and a night," continued my aunt. "But the next morning he would go on again. He got worse and worse, the farther he went; and at this place —what dy'e call it . . . . Fossa?—within twelve or fourteen miles of Rome, was forced to give in, and do what any sensible man would have done at first; namely, take to his bed, and send for you and a doctor."

"And she told you all this?"

"After a deal of cross-examination; but you know, my dear, when I question folks I will be answered. Mercy on us, child! what are you about?"

"I am going to my husband," I replied, firmly. "Nay, aunt, no opposition can stay me. I will go. Let a carriage and post-horses be sent for instantly."

"But you're ill yourself, Bab, and . . . ."

"I am well—quite well, now."

"It's midsummer madness, I tell you!"

"Let it be madness, then—I mean to be at the Osteria della Fossa by midnight."

My aunt threw up her hands in indignant protest, while Ida glided quietly from the room, to see that my orders were obeyed.

"Mind this, Bab," said Mrs. Sandyshaft; "if any harm comes of it, remember I set *my* face against it. Why, you may be waylaid by banditti on the road! Who ever heard of such a thing as a lady going across that horrible desert outside Rome, at night, and unprotected? Besides, how can you leave the child?"

"I shall take him with me."

"Oh, if you want to kill the child, I have no more to say," exclaimed my aunt, very angrily. "You know better than I do, what effect the pestilent night-air of the Campagna is likely to take upon a poor little infant like that. It's a wicked tempting of Providence—God forgive me, that I should say so of my own niece; but that's what I think. Please yourself!"

I did please myself. I knew that on a night when the atmosphere was purified by heavy rain, there would be no danger from miasmata; and I also knew that I could carry my boy from his bed to the carriage, and so, most probably, all the way, without once awaking him. I said so, briefly but very decidedly, and left Mrs. Sandyshaft to cool

down while I dressed for the journey. When I came back from my bedroom, I found her with her bonnet on, and a ponderous old horse-pistol lying before her on the table.

"There, my dear," said she, nodding very good-temperedly, and taking up this weapon with an air of great satisfaction, "that's to keep off the banditti. It always hung over my bedroom chimney-piece at Stoneycroft Hall; and when I came abroad, I brought it in the drawer of my dressing-case, where other folks carry jewellery. None of your foreign spies thought of looking there; and catch me travelling about the world without some means of self-defence!"

Night; darkness; the wind howling round the empty piazzas; the rain dashing against the carriage windows; the blurred lamps flaring at the street-corners; the long, lonely thoroughfares echoing to our wheels as we rattle past—every revolution of those wheels, every clatter of our horses' hoofs on the wet stones, every lagging second of every minute carrying us nearer and nearer! Now we cross the Piazza del Popolo, with the solemn old Egyptian obelisk dimly seen in the midst; and are stopped for a moment at the gate, where some half-dozen soldiers and a customs official are loitering inside, by a blazing wood-fire.

Now we are out upon the walled road beyond; and overhead all is pitchy darkness, and around us the driving, blinding rain.

Mrs. Sandyshaft sits beside me, and my baby sleeps sweetly in my arms. We are both silent. The postillion shouts to his horses and cracks his whip. Once we meet a travelling carriage with blazing lamps, and once overtake a lumbering diligence escorted by a couple of dragoons. These are the only incidents of our journey. By and by the walls and outlying villas are left behind; and we traverse a black, mysterious expanse of open country, over which our road seems sometimes to rise, and sometimes to fall, as if the ground were hilly. Thus the weary minutes ebb away; and still every turn of the wheels carries us nearer and nearer.

Now we reach La Storta, the first post from Rome, and take fresh horses. The change is effected, no doubt, as quickly as usual; but the delay, to my impatience, seems interminable. I throw a liberal *buono mano* to the last postillion; the new one springs into his saddle; we dash away at a gallant pace; and through the gloom of the night, something like the outlines of near hills are now and then vaguely distinguishable. More than two-thirds of the distance are now past. In about twenty minutes more .... I turn hot

and cold by turns. I can scarcely breathe. The wildest apprehensions flit across my mind. What if he were dead when I arrive? What if he should only live to sigh out his last breath in my arms? What if Maddalena knew that he was dying; and so brought me hither to gratify a last, subtle, pitiless, profound revenge? I strive to recall her face as I saw it just before I fainted. It looked pale, and strange, and full of meaning. She said, "your husband lives;"—not "he *will* live." Alas!

The road takes an abrupt turn. Then comes a break in the stormy canopy of clouds, and a faint gleam shows that we have entered a steep ravine. The brawl of a torrent mingles with the hoarse murmuring of the wind.

"Just the place for banditti," mutters my aunt, peering suspiciously from side to side.

All at once, a light is seen gleaming some little distance ahead. Our postillion spurs his horses—shouts—cracks his whip—pulls up before a low, wide-fronted wayside inn . . . . the Osteria della Fossa!

The landlord (a mere peasant in a sheep-skin jacket) comes hurrying out with a lighted pine-torch in his hand, and bows us into a tiny, comfortless parlour with a paved floor, and a handful of smouldering ashes on the hearth.

"I'll wait here, Bab, and take care of the child," says my aunt, flurriedly; "and, for mercy's sake, keep as cool as you can. Remember, he's very ill, and excitement can only do him mischief. There now, keep up a good heart, and God bless you."

"Is he awake?" I ask, tremulously.

"*Dimanderò*, *signora*," replies the landlord, moving towards the stairs.

I sprang after him.

"No, no," I cried, snatching the lamp from the table. "Show me the way."

"Upstairs, signora—the second door to the right. *Permetta* . . . ."

"Enough—I will go up alone."

I went alone. At the landing I paused; dreading, longing to go forward; a wild fluttering at my heart; a weight of lead upon my feet. Another two or three steps, and the first door is passed. Before I reach the second, I pause again. Is it only shadow, or do I see something dark against the threshold?

The shadow moves—moans—lifts a white face to the light, and, crawling towards me along the sordid passage, grovels in piteous supplication.

"If you have a woman's heart in your breast—if you hope for God's pity in your last need, speak for me!"

"Maddalena?"

"Only to see him once more . . . to
hand . . . to hear his voice, and know myse
given! Only this! only this!"

"Poor soul! what has happened?"

"He will not see me—he will not speak to me! I lie at his threshold, dying—dying—dying, because he hates me!"

"Nay, you are not dying, and he does not hate you. Be calm. You shall see him, and he shall forgive you—for my sake. There, rise—rise and go down to the fireside. Your hands are like ice."

"You promise?"

"I promise. It shall be my first prayer to him, and I know he will grant it. How long is it since he refused to see you? What have you done to anger him?"

"Confessed—confessed everything! Till this evening, I had never told him all. I did not dare. I pretended I had news of you from a stranger. It was to save his life . . . I knew he would die without you. But I could not bear to deceive him longer. I told him; and when I told him, he . . . *ah, Dio!* he cursed me!"

"He will recall the curse. Let me go to him, Maddalena, and, by the love I bear towards my child, he shall pardon you.'

"God in heaven bless you!"

... must go down to the fire, and be ...while. It may be an hour before I call

"An hour? Oh, no—no—not an hour!"

I comforted her with such assurance of speed as I could give; helped her to rise; saw her totter feebly down the stairs, a step at a time; and then turned to the door of the second chamber; opened it softly; and went in.

I saw a bed, screened by a single curtain; a table, on which a small oil-lamp was burning; and a young peasant woman dozing in a chair beside the window. I hesitated a moment, considering what was best to be done; then crossed the room noiselessly; woke her by a gentle touch; laid my finger to my lips; and pointed first to my wedding ring, and then to the door. She opened her dark eyes—looked startled—then puzzled—then intelligent; whispered "*capisco;*" and crept out of the room.

I sat down in her vacant chair . . . alone with him.

His watch lay on the table—his dear familiar watch; and with it a little plain gold locket that I had once given him, containing my portrait. It seemed so strange to see them here! I held my breath, and listened for his breathing. I could not hear it. My terrors rushed back upon me. I had

meant to sit there quietly till he woke; but it was impossible. I felt that I *must* look upon him, be the risk what it might!

I rose, shading the lamp with my hand, and stole over to the bedside. His face was turned to the wall; his hair fell on the pillow in long, wild locks; and he lay with one arm above his head, and the other thrown carelessly back. What a wasted hand it was, and how the veins throbbed on it, as I gazed!

The blinding tears welled up from my heart to my eyes, and dropped heavily, one by one, upon the coverlid, like drops of summer rain. He stirred; and I moved back, quickly.

Then he sighed; muttered something to himself; stirred again; and said—

"*Che ora è?*"

I stammered—

"*Mezza-notte, signore.*"

He drew his breath quickly; seemed to listen for a moment; then sat up all at once—tore the curtain aside—cried "Barbara! my wife!" . . . and we were once more folded in each other's arms.

Once more, after so many bitter, bitter months of parting. Oh, the joy of that moment! the bewildering, overwhelming, intoxicating joy; never to be forgotten, and yet never to be perfectly remembered. Tears, kisses, questions, sobs, broken

exclamations—who can recall or record them? They are sacred, and dwell vaguely upon the memory, like a half-forgotten perfume.

* * * * *

* * * * * *

"I am better—I know that I am better. The dead weight is gone from my heart, and the springs of life are renewed in my veins. Ah, Barbarina—my little Barbarina, how sweet to live again! How weary the world has been without thee! Methinks I hardly knew all the depths of my own tenderness for thee, till I had lost thee."

"We will never part again, my beloved."

"Never, till death . . . but we won't talk of death, my darling. There—let me lay my head upon your bosom; let me feel your breath upon my forehead. God be thanked for all this happiness!"

"Amen, husband."

"Hast thou missed me, my little one?"

"Day and night; sleeping and waking; in every act, and thought, and effort of my life."

He smiled, and closed his eyes. An ineffable peace stole over his features, and he fell asleep.

I dared not move—I scarcely dared to breathe; for his head was resting on my bosom, and my

arms supported him. Alas! how weak he was—how weak and pale, and sorrow-worn, and wan! A long time, or what seemed a long time, went by thus. He slept like an infant; and, as he slept, I saw with rapture the faint colour returning to his parted lips, and the deadly pallor fading from his cheeks and brow. Then my position began to grow intensely painful. My limbs became cramped; my head swam; my hands and feet lost sensation; and I felt as if I might at any moment make some involuntary movement which would wake him. But my strong self-control prevailed. I bore it, agony as it was, till it ceased to be agony, and became a mere physical numbness, easy to endure.

The house all this time was profoundly quiet. I could hear the horses pawing now and then in the stable outside, and every tick of a clock somewhere on the ground floor below. Once I fancied I heard a footstep on the stairs; but it was only for an instant. At length, when my eyes were beginning to close, despite my efforts to keep them open, he awoke.

"Then it is true!" said he. "No dream, after all!"

"Utterly true, my husband."

"And I have been asleep, sweet heart—asleep in thy dear arms! Such sleep is life. I feel well—quite well, already—and quite happy. Another

kiss, my Barbara—let me hold your hand . . . . . so! . . . ."

And he fell asleep again.

As he slept, his grasp relaxed, and I was enabled gradually to disengage my hand. His head was now resting on the pillow. His breathing was gentle and regular. His hands were cool; and the smile with which he had last spoken yet lingered on his lips. Such sleep was life indeed! He was saved—I knew that he was saved; and I knelt down by his bedside, and offered up a silent thanksgiving to Him who "giveth his beloved sleep."

Then I rose, took the lamp, and stole across the room. I opened the door. Something dark lay stretched across the threshold. It was Maddalena, crouched in her old place, with her face buried in her hands. Poor Maddalena! I had almost forgotten her.

Fearing to rouse her while the door was yet open, I stepped cautiously over her feet; closed the door behind me; and then touched her on the shoulder.

"Maddalena," I whispered. "Wake, Maddalena!"

She neither stirred nor spoke. I stooped, and took her hand. It was cold, like marble, and as

heavy. An icy shiver ran through me at the touch.

"Maddalena!" I repeated, "are you asleep?"

She still made no reply. I held the lamp to her face . . . . . . she was dead.

My story is told. I believed, when I began to write, that I had "the labour of many months" before me. That was just six years ago. Wealth and happiness are no friends to industry. I have loitered over my task till its latest incidents have already become things of the far past, and more than one of the actors who figure in its pages have passed away for ever from the stage of life. Who are those vanished ones? Nay; I will assume the story-teller's license, and be silent. What need to jar our viols with the echo of a passing bell? What need, indeed, to follow farther the fortunes of any of those who, having played their parts, now make their exits as the curtain falls? Paolo sailing sadly homewards over the sapphire fields of the Tyrrhene sea, bearing his sister's body to its last rest in the little lonely graveyard of her native Capri—the good Professor merging his whole life and pouring his whole soul into his work; climbing steadily on towards ever loftier aims and

broader views; less anxious for personal fame than for the development of truth in art, yet winning the one for himself and the other for his disciples by the force of his own rugged, resolute genius—Hilda ruling her dull husband as if he were a lackey in her service; carrying her imperious beauty from court to court; dissatisfied at heart, and weary of even the wealth and homage for which she had staked all the freshness of her youth—Mrs. Sandyshaft exulting once more in English roast-beef and the society of her hundred pigs; hating foreigners and the fine arts with an undying bitterness; quarrelling with Dr. Topham, playing piquet with Hugh, and persisting in calling all babies monsters, without exception or favour—Ida and her husband leading their pleasant artist-life close against that spot where "the antique house in which Raphael lived, casts its long brown shadow down into the heart of modern Rome" . . . . . . what are all these but pictures which each reader will long ago have conceived for himself, and which no colouring of mine can bring before him more vividly?

For my own part, in the golden years that have gone by since these times of which I have been writing, I can add nothing. Great happiness, like deep grief, is sacred. Words mock it. Its peace is too profound, its joy too perfect, to bear the

gross translation. Let those who love, realise the poem of our lives. To all other ears, its music would be discord; its language unintelligible. The hazel wand that brings to light the treasures of the earth, hath no magic save in the hand of the Diviner.

THE END.

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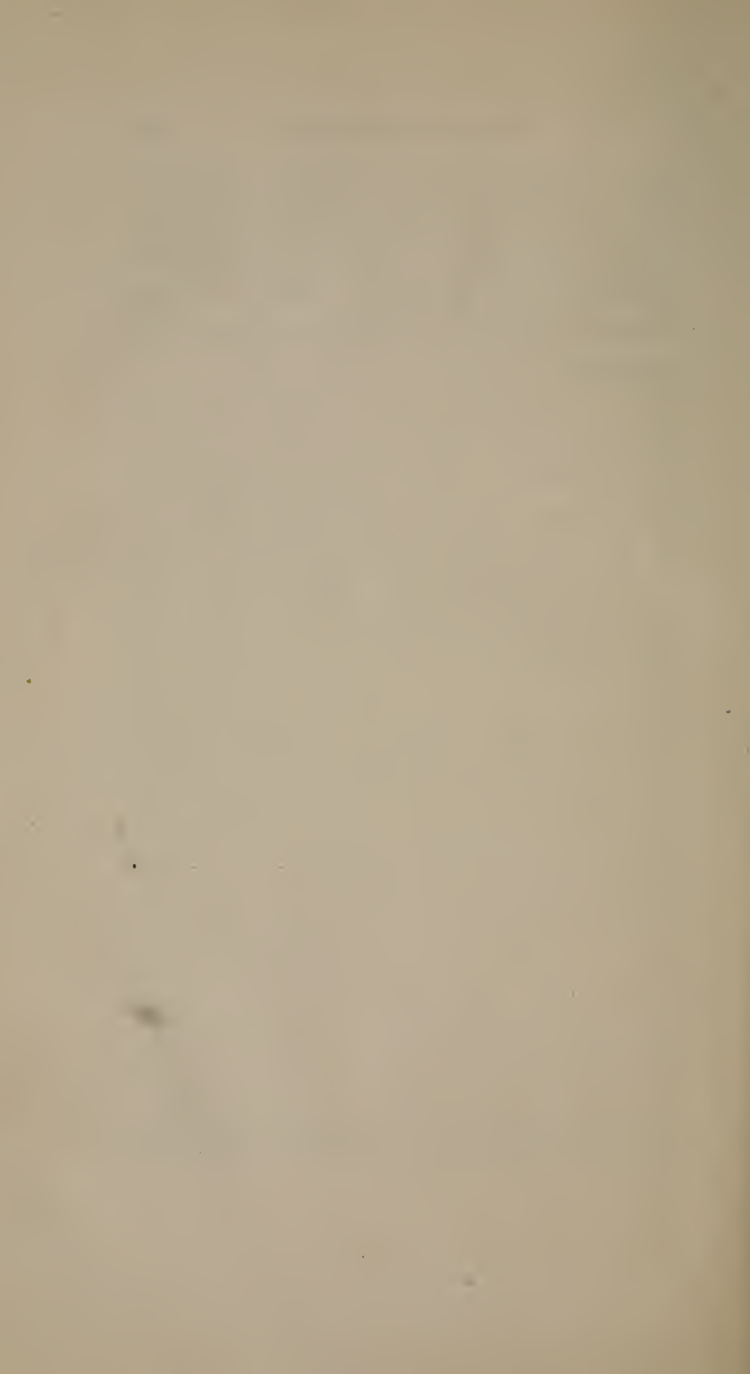

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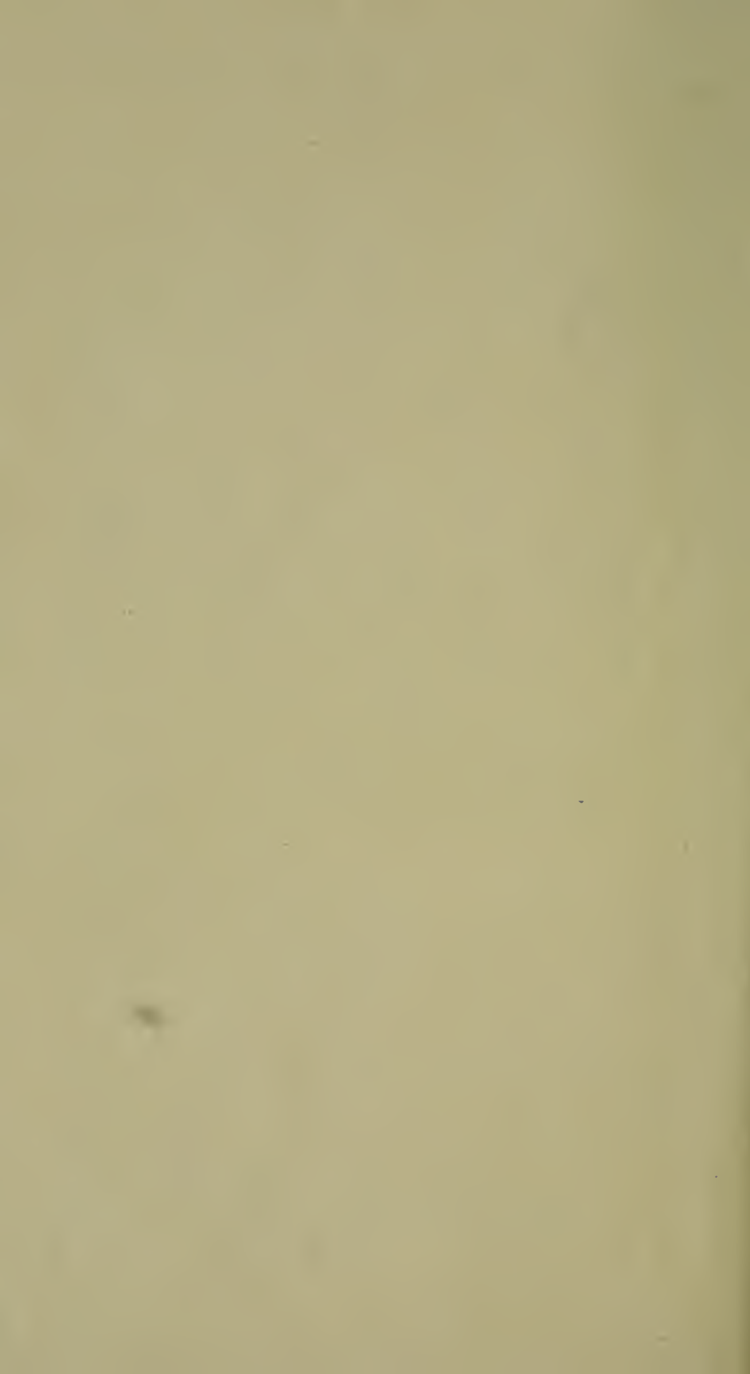

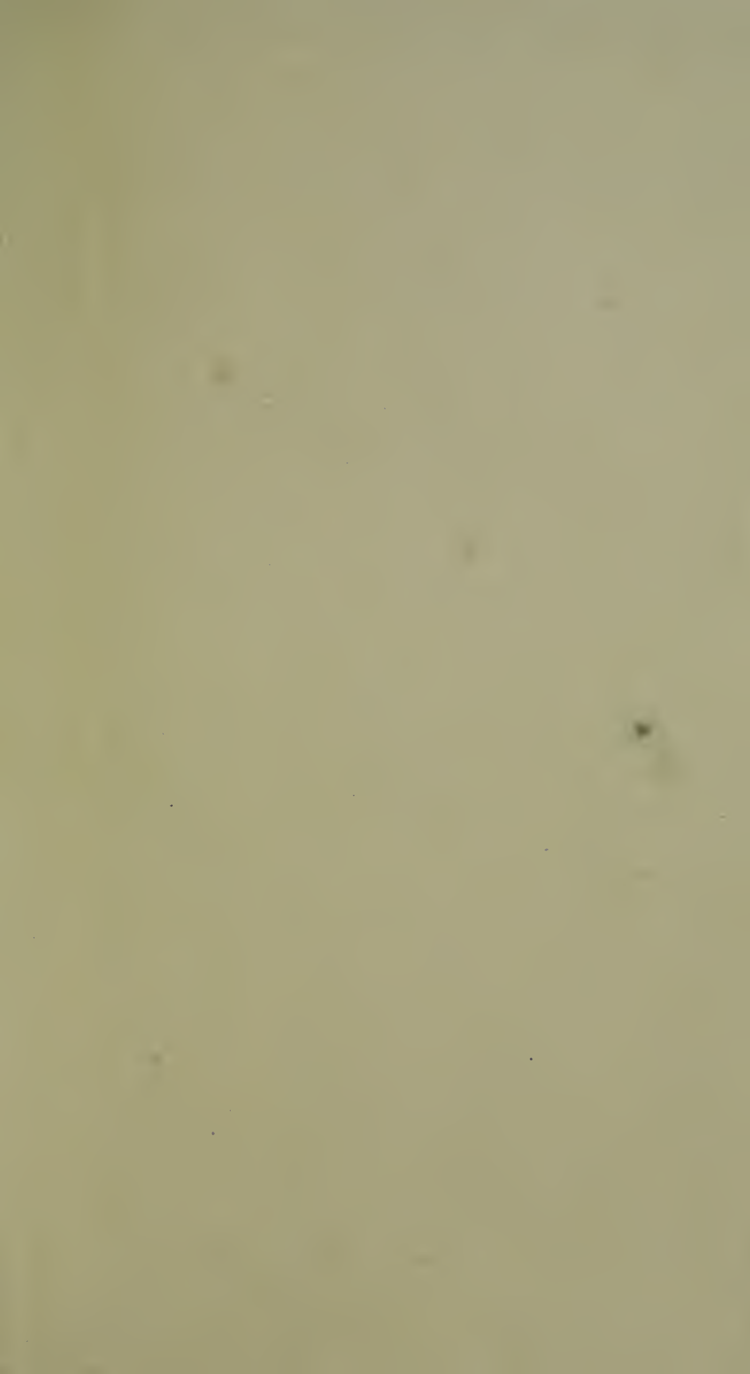

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