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Wall of the *Neptune* Apartment, and concealed by the Tapestry, are two Closets from whence may be both seen and heard what passes in the Chamber. In these Closets, which have frequently been useful for State Purposes, I intend to place you and *Claudio Bertazzolo*—”

“ Ah ! ” ejaculated I.

“ —Who will each give me, separately, an Account of what you see and hear ; and by the Correspondence of your Reports I shall be enabled to judge of your Veracity.”

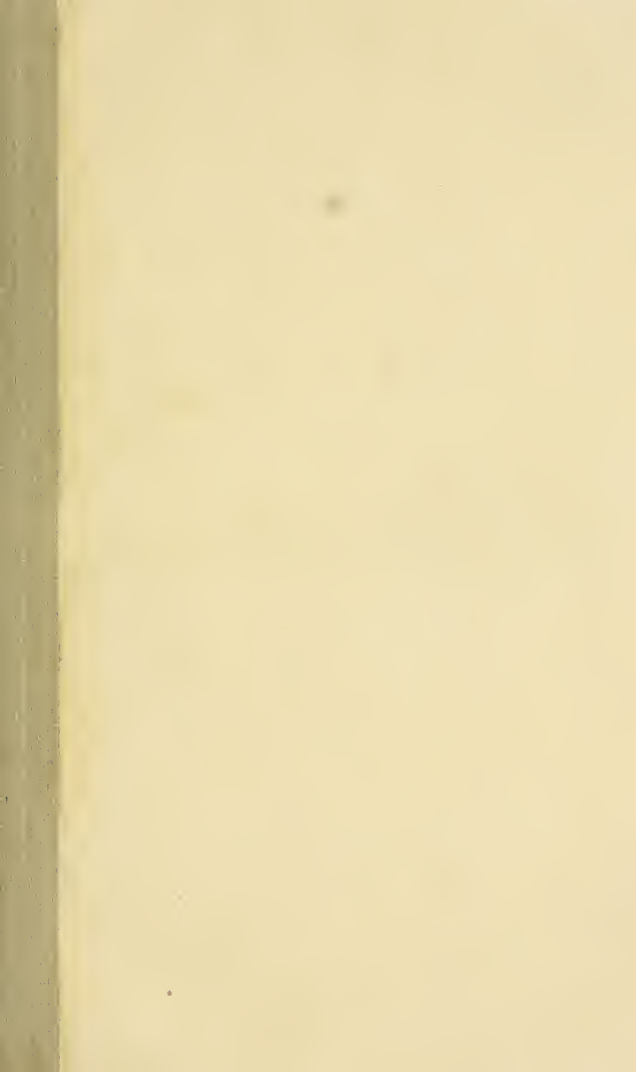
My Soul recoiled from the Office. The Duke, seeing me about to remonstrate, sternly said, “ *Operibus, non Verbis* ; are you preparing to disobey me ? ”

Thereupon I remembered how futile it would be, as *Bertazzolo* would have the Game in his own Hands ; and I replied, “ No, my Lord,” though I inly winced. Without another Syllable, his Highness coolly banded my Eyes himself, with his own Handkerchief, and led me some little Distance, when, without the smallest Notice, I found myself shut into a tight little Box, softly

padded. Thereupon I took the Liberty of removing the Bandage from my Eyes, and found my Cell dimly lighted by a Couple of little Eye-holes, which I instantly availed myself of, and found myself overlooking a Chamber which Madama *Leonora* occasionally, but not very often, occupied. She herself was fitting on a Sofa, almost immediately beneath me, so close that I could tell every Breath she drew by the soft, gentle Rise and Fall of her Lace Tucker, and count every Mesh in the Gold Network which enclosed her beautiful Hair. She was stringing Pearls on a fine Silver Thread, taking them one by one from a little Tortoise-shell Box which stood beside her on a small Ivory Table: her little Foot, slippered in white Satin, rested on a Footstool of crimson Velvet; and, as she strung her Pearls, she hummed a little to herself, "Come leggiadra, come vezzosa," &c., then paused, rested her Face a little while on her Hand in pensive Reflection, then resumed her Work, with an Air more serious, without being sad.

I felt like a dreadful Villain, thus lying in

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Anne L. Manning

TASSO AND LEONORA.

The
COMMENTARIES
OF SER PANTALEONE
degli Gambacorti,

Gentleman Usher to the august
MADAMA LEONORA D'ESTE.

*Hæc scripsi
Non otii abundantia, sed amoris.*

BY
THE AUTHOR OF "MARY POWELL."

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Sublatam ex oculis quærimus invidi.

CHAPTER I.

*Of Ser Pantaleone's encountering a Friend & some
Enemies.*

 WAS travelling Vetturino between *Vicenza* and *Padua*, when a pretty young Gentleman, likewise travelling Post, came up with me. He appeared about eighteen Years of Age, was tall and well-shaped, with an oval Face and Head, stait and beautiful Nose, Eyes of a vivid blue, Hair of a Mezzotint betwixt brown and fair, white and even Teeth, a Mouth of most sweet Expression, and a winning, engaging Address. He cheerfully accosted me, and we fell to talking of indifferent Matters, which served to beguile the Monotony of the

Road. I soon found him to be a University Student, returning to *Padua*; and as we became more familiar, we got upon the proportionate Merit of Arms and Letters; whereupon my young Gentleman, warming with his Subject, and unable to tell from my peaceable Habit that I had once been a Soldier, exclaimed, "Away with those who would place Letters below Arms! For, whether is the more dignified and worthy to be praised, the Labour of the Mind or of the Body? The latter may be had any Time in the Market, of the Peasant that delves as well of the Ox that draws; and a Soldier will engage himself for a *Giulio* a Day, to slay or be slain, without caring for what State or Prince. The General whom he obeys exercises his Mind, indeed, in Stratagems and Assaults of War,—how to circumvallate this City, how to carry that Fortification; but all this which he practises in the Field, he has studied in the Closet; wherefore I still maintain that the Work of the Head is superior to that of the Hand, since a prudent

Commander needs not to strike a Blow, but only to overlook and direct his Soldiers as so many Puppets."

"That being the Case," said I, who was willing to put him up a little, and divert myself with his Talk, "is not the General, after all, to be placed above the mere Man of Letters, since he turns his Knowledge to practical Account?"

"No," replied he warmly; "for the highest Use of Letters is not that which teaches a Man the Rules of Defence and Attack, but that which raises and conducts his Soul to Heaven. To determine the comparative Value of two Pursuits, we must consider their Aim and End. Where there is no Strife, there can be no Need of Soldiers; and Strife came into the World with Sin, and is a Disgrace to Humanity. But, since Sin and Strife have entered the World, it has come to pass that numberless brave Men, who would otherwise have done better to keep quiet, have been impelled to redress Injuries, and assert Right by Might, opposing Force to

Force. But what Renown, I pray you, would have been the Portion of these Heroes, without the Bookmen? Who would hear, now-a-days, of *Nestor*, *Ulysses*, *Agamemnon*, *Achilles*, or *Diomed*, but for *Homer*? Or of *Æneas* but for *Virgil*? Wherefore I say and maintain that so useles a Thing as a Sword . . .”

At this Moment, three Banditti rushing out upon us from a little Thicket of Chestnut-trees, fell upon my young Squire and me, who, without another Word whether Swords were useles or no, out with our Rapiers, and began to use them to such good Purpose that the Villains presently made off, none the better, but all the worse, for the Encounter. As for our two Vetturini, they had disappeared at the very Beginning of the Fray.

Though the whole Affair only occupied a few Minutes, I could not but notice how smartly the Youth laid about him; and, indeed, it was my involuntary Attention to the pretty Use he made of his Weapon that put me for a Moment off my Guard, and

permitted one of the Rascals to give me a Slash across the Forehead, which made the Blood run over my Eyes.

As soon as the Gang had disappeared, the Youth, seeing me reel on my Horse, sprang from his own, and caught me in his Arms, my Weight nearly bringing him to the Ground.

“Soho! gently, gently,” says he, haling me up a little on the Bank. “How fares it with you, Signor Cavaliere?”

Instead of answering him, I burst out a laughing.

“One would think you were not hurt,” says he; “but yet your Brow has a pretty deep Gash in it.”

“Who could choose but laugh,” said I, recovering, “to see you attack the Rogues as you did, when the Conclusion was scarce out of your Mouth that Swords were useless?”

“Ah, I was speaking of comparative, not of absolute Values,” said he merrily, “and had not Time for my Peroration. But let me

draw the Sides of your Wound together, and stanch the Blood with some of the Felt off my Hat. First, though, I must wash your Brow a little."

And, going to a Fountain hard by, he dipped his Handkerchief therein, and forthwith cleansed, dressed, and bound up my Wound very cleverly. I then noted some Blood trickling from his Sword-arm.

"You are hurt, too," said I.

"A mere Scratch," replied he gaily. "You know, according to my own Rule, the Head should take precedence of the Arm; and now that you can use your Eyes once more, you can twist this wet Handkerchief round above my Elbow. The Rogues needed not to have fallen on my useful Side, neither. How shall I write with my left Hand? There's no Courtesy to be looked for from such Knaves; but the old Laws of Chivalry forbade a Man to strike at the Arms or Legs of his Opponent."

Having bound up his Wound, which was not very deep, as carefully as he had done

mine, we remounted our Horfes, and were prefently joined by the two Vetturini, whom we rallied well for their Cowardice.

“And now that we have bled in each other’s Company,” faid I, as we purfued our Way, “I fhall be glad to know the Name of my valiant young Brother-in-arms.”

“I am too young,” faid he, “for my Name to have made any Noife in the World—it is *Torquato Tasso*.”

“What!” exclaimed I, “the Son of my eftemed old Friend, Meffer *Bernardo*?”

“The fame,” returned he with Surprife; “but who, then, are you?”

“Ser *Pantaleone degli Gambacorti*.”

“Ah! Ser *Pantaleone*,” and drawing up our Horfes, we cordially embraced one another.

“Pardon me, Ser *Pantaleone*,” faid he with the beft Grace in the World, “if I recognifed you not at the firft; but your Habit is different, though your Appearance is wonderfully little altered fince I laft had the Pleafure of feeing you, which was, you know, when I was a very little Boy.”

“And a very clever little Boy, too,” said I. “It seems but yesterday that I beheld you on your Father’s Knee, chopping Logic with him, and then flipping down to recite a String of his Verses to me with the prettiest infantine Grace. Your little Sister *Cornelia* promised to marry me, though I understand she is now a younger Man’s Wife. A lovely little Girl she was! the miniature Prototype of your admirable Mother.”

“Ah, don’t name her!” said he, with Tears trickling down his Checks. “The bare Sound of her Name makes her Loss seem ever new! She was driven to her Grave by Cruelty, if ever Woman was! My Uncles were perfect Tyrants, and deprived her not only of her Inheritance, but of the Company of her Husband and Son, which she valued much more.”

“And your Sister?”

“They have compelled her into a Marriage which may be a good or bad one, for I know not which. To me she is lost.”

“Your Father?”

“Is at *Venice*, printing his ‘*Amadigi*.’ Ah, Ser *Pantaleone*, what a Poem is that! What a Noise it will make in the World! What Imagery, what Character, what Action! Allow me to repeat to you one or two Stanzas.”

And, with the Tears yet wet on his Cheek, he began spouting with exactly the same Fervour as when he had amused me at seven Years old. I can’t say I paid much Attention to the Substance of the Verses, though they seemed to scan well enough; for my Mind had fled back to the Scene of noble Simplicity presented in his early Home, before the excellent Messer *Bernardo* had been banished from the Neapolitan States for his Adherence to his Benefactor Don *Ferrante*.

Many a youthful Escapade had I been delivered from by the brotherly, I might almost say paternal, Kindness of that beloved Friend, when, as an idle young Soldier, far away from domestic Influences, I was exposed to many Temptations. Well did I remember

his feelingly pointing out to me the Danger of young Officers and Courtiers indulging in Games of Hazard, partly from Facility and false Shame, partly from Idleness, and too soon from Love of the Excitement itself;—ending with “The best Throw of the Dice, Ser *Pantaleone*, is to throw them clean away.” I remembered, too, his warning me of the abominable Coquetry of *Madonna Silvia*, and averring that no Widow of thirty-two could have real Delicacy of Mind who would accept Love-gifts from a Youth of nineteen; nay, broadly hint to him that such and such a Toy would be to her liking.

Stars! what Sums did I expend in Serenades and Morning-Concerts beneath her Window! in Nofegays of the choicest Flowers! in Effences for her Toilette! in iced Peaches and candied Apricots for her Table! in Gold-fringed Breast-knots! in Treffilas of Silver Twist!—to say nothing of a Set of coloured Stones, comprising Comb, Necklace, Cross, Heart, and Bracelets; which, though not indeed real Rubies and Sapphires, (as how

should they be for ten Ducats?) yet were fet in real—that is, Jewellers' Gold, and looked extremely well for the Money. There did, indeed, seem some Cause for apprehending that what, in this Instance, was intended for the Lady, was appropriated by the Maid. True it is that Madonna *Silvia* appeared in them in Public; but, in After-times, when our Day of Recrimination came, she declared and averred to me (which I could not be so injurious to her as to doubt), that they had been sold to her by her Maid *Floretta*.

Anyhow, I was cheated, despoiled, and laughed at; which I needed not to have been, had I heeded Messer *Bernardo*. However, I then knew little of the World, and suffered myself to be led by the Nose by a heartless Woman, who even persuaded me to abandon the Profession of Arms and sue for Court Patronage, because, she said, she preferred Men of Peace; and yet, after dancing Attendance on the Great for many good Years, the Man I most trusted stepped

in and got the Place and the Wife I was toiling for.

However, while biting my Nails on this double Disappointment, I obtained, through the Kindness of Cardinal *Ippolito*, the Situation of Gentleman Usher to Madama *Leonora* of *Este*. This removed me from my old Sphere of Action altogether; and here was I, a Man little past the Prime of Life, falling in with the Son of my old Friend when he was just about the Age at which his Father had been so useful and kind a *Mentor* to me.

“Is not that fine?” said he, when he had finished his Recitation.

“Doubtless,” said I with a competent Air. “However, I would rather hear of my old Friend, just now, than of his Poem. What are his Intentions respecting yourself?”

“Ah,” said he, shaking his Head with a ruefulness that had something comic in it, “I wish I could tell you they were agreeable to me. He says Patronage and Painfulness are twin Brothers, and he would by no Means have me dependent on the Great;

wherefore, in Pursuit of an honest Independence, he destines me to the Study of the Law."

"How!" said I, "would you dance Attendance, then, at Court?"

"Quite otherwise," replied he; "my Tastes are much simpler, I assure you.

*Rura mihi et rigui placeant in vallibus amnes
Flumina amem sylvasque inglorius—*

that is to say, I should like to write Verses in a Country Cottage. Jurisprudence has neither the Dignity of Philosophy, nor the Charm of Poetry; and, to tell you the Truth, my favourite Reading is in Romances."

"Soho!" said I, whistling softly, "all your mighty Eloquence just now was in Defence of *Cynthio's* Nouvelle and the Decamerone!"

"Signor, you may laugh," returned he, biting his Lip to avoid doing the same, "but, rely on it, the Imagination requires its daily Meals, as much as do our Bodies.

I am not eating Cakes and Gingerbread all Day, neither am I always reading *Boiardo* or *Ariosto*; but yet I sit down to my Repast on the Writings of these divine Men with pretty keen Relish, I promise you! I think my loved Father, whose Will to me is Law, (and quite as much Law as I want!) would be wiser in letting me follow the Bent of my Inclinations, which run precisely in the same Channel as his own, than in directing me to Studies I abhor. Jurisprudence I hate, whereas Poetry I love!”

“And Music too, I doubt not?”

“Hum,—I touch the Lute a little.”

“And are not indifferent to Dancing?”

“Aha! ‘Come si ballono a *Comacchio!*’”
flipping his Feet out of the Stirrups, and gavotting, or rather pivoting on his Saddle, till I wondered he did not fall off.

“Doubtless, you have also been in Love?”

“*Ser Pantaleone!* your Inquiries become rather too searching—” and he coloured extremely.

“Your Pardon,” said I. “And how go Affairs at *Padua*?”

“Furiouſly. The Pupils of two of our Profeſſors, *Sigonio* and *Robertello*, are at Daggers-drawing, and have frequent Street Frays. For my Part, I ſide with *Sigonio*, who is an amiable Man, and a profound Ariſtotelian. Give me the Pleaſure of your Company this Evening, and I will make you acquainted with him. *Annibale di Capua* and I, who lodge together, are engaged to meet him in the Apartments of our mutual Friend, *Scipio Gonzaga*. Will you come?”

As I heſitated a little, he preſſed me more urgently, ſaying, with a gay Laugh, “You know what a poor Scholar’s Portion is,—a bare Larder, a Bed without Sheets, Walls without Hangings, Shirts without Buttons, and Shoes that want mending. Concerning which, my only Reply is, give me an empty Larder, and a Cloſet full of Books; let me read a Romance while I dine, and I know not what I am eating. I need no Sauce but Salt;

and if my Bed be small, I can go to it the earlier and lie in the Middle.”

In short, he won me over to accept his Invitation, which, after all, was to another Man's House. When we entered *Padua*, *Dondi's* great old Clock in the *Piazza de' Signori* was just striking the Hour at which one of the most popular Professors concluded his Lecture; and the vaulted Footways were crowded with Students, not only from every Capital in Christendom, but from *Turkey*, *Arabia*, and *Persia*. My young Companion nodded gaily to one and another among the Crowd; and presently we reached a very handsome Lodging, where, having discharged our Vetturini, we ascended a wide Staircase and entered a lofty Apartment furnished with Opulence, at the upper End of which a handsome young Man lay carelessly flung on some Velvet Cushions, intently reading, while Wine and Fruit stood near him on a Silver Salver.

I raised my Eyebrows and said softly, “Is this the poor Student's Lodging?” On which,

Torquato burst out laughing, and said, "All is one. We Bookmen know both how to want and how to abound. I owe all to my dear Friend here—"

And, embracing the young Man, who rose to receive him, he introduced him to me as the Signor *Annibale di Capua*. He it was that has since been made Cardinal.

CHAPTER II.

Of Messer Torquato's first Introduction to a Court Life.

SINES, Cosines,—Angles, right, obtuse, isosceles Triangles, right-angled Triangles—Rhombs, Spheroids,—Cycles, Epicycles,—Things that are and are not, that appear to be, and appear not to be,—Judgments, contradictory, contrary, distributed,—Ideas, simple, complex,—Definitions, Propositions, Syllogisms, — Examinations, Degrees, — Stars, Satellites, circumjovian Planets,—Fees, Regulations,—Gowns, Caps, Sizes,—Prefects, Vice-prefects, Almoners—Professors of Canon Law, Protonotaries—Ices, Jellies,—Flesh-wounds, Rapiers,—Man found stabbed.

I believe all these and a great many other Things made up the disturbed Dreams that infested my poor wounded Head, my first Night in *Padua*.

We had both had our Wounds featly enough dressed by a dapper Barber-surgeon, who, while applying his Strapping Plaster, had told us the last Piece of News, to wit, that a Street Fight had occurred between the Partizans of *Robertello* and *Sigonio*, in the Course of which, *Sigonio*, coming up, had got his Face slashed with a Poniard.

My young Friend, who was one of his warm Disciples, became much excited at this, and talked loudly about it afterwards when we joined an evening Party in the Rooms of Signor *Scipio Gonzaga*. Here, Philosophy, Poetry, and local Politics were strangely jumbled in Discourse, and canvassed with much Heat. *Annibale di Capua* read a pungent Pasquinade on *Robertello*, the Author of which he would not give up, but which elicited Roars of Laughter; and I guessed from young *Tasso's* self-satisfied Look that he knew more

about it than he chose to tell. Afterwards he, at the vehement Instance of the Company, recited pretty nearly a whole Book of his Father's forthcoming Epic, respecting which *Italy* was bursting with Curiosity; but in spite of the Plaudits it elicited, I confess I found it heavy, and thought it infinitely less agreeable than a Fragment of the "*Rinaldo*," which my young Friend even then had privately in Hand, and of which the *Signor di Capua*, having possessed himself of a few Sheets, gave us a Sample. Though immature and imperfect, there was a Fervour and Harmony in it which the Verses of Messer *Bernardo* altogether wanted; and when I ventured to express my Opinion to this Effect, aside to Signor *Cesare Parese*, he gave it unqualified Approval, saying it was the Production of Youth, but of a youthful *Homer*.

The following Day I visited my Kinsmen, transacted my Affairs, was nobly entertained, and, at five the next Morning, was on my Passage down the *Brenta*, in a convenient Barge drawn by Horses.

While at *Venice*, I fought out Meffer *Bernardo*, and found the excellent old Gentleman a good deal broken since our last Meeting, but full of his Poem, the Importance of which he could hardly be accused of over-rating, since all who had seen it in Manuscript were accustomed to think of it as he did. When I mentioned my Rencontre with his Son, and spoke of the Figure he made in Society, the Colour rose in the old Man's Cheek, for he loved the Youth dearly; but when I broached the Subject of his Poetry, he heard me with evident Dis taste, and said so many sage Things against the Pursuit of it, that I could not but be amused at his Disposition to crush in his Son the Inclination which he, a Septuagenarian, was following to his Bent, though it surely was a more excusable Predilection in a young Man than an old one.

I saw no more of my young Friend till two Years afterwards, when, to my no small Surprise and Pleasure, he made his Appearance at *Ferrara*, as under the Patronage of Cardinal *Luigi d' Este*.

He was now twenty Years of age, a most beautiful Youth, tall, slender, and supple in Person, graceful in Action, dignified in Demeanour, full of Life, Hope, Merriment, and of dazzling and acknowledged Genius. For, during the two Years I had lost sight of him, he had published his "*Rinaldo*" at the Instance of the most eminent Judges in *Padua*; and while yet inspirited by the immense Sensation it created, he had conceived the Idea of what afterwards became the finest Thing he ever did, to wit, the "*Jerusalem*." From *Padua* he had gone to *Bologna*, where he lectured on heroic Poetry, and made a rough Draught of the first three Cantos of his immortal Epic. Thence to *Padua* again, to win new Laurels, and lay them at the Feet of Messer *Bernardo*; who with Rapture confessed himself as happy a Father as *Diagoras*, when he saw three Sons crowned at *Olympia* in one Day. He consented to his abandoning the Law, and procured him an Appointment among the Gentlemen of Cardinal *Luigi*, which would afford him the

Competence and Leisure necessary for him to improve his Vein.

Well do I remember his first appearing among us! Returning one Day from the *Belvedere* Palace without the Walls, where Madama *Leonora* then lay sick, to my Lodging in the *Piazza Grande*, I there found awaiting me a young Man genteelly dressed in Black, who was contemplating very closely a small Nativity of *Garofalo's* which I had lately bought, not because it was by any means one of his first-rate Works, but because it was a Specimen of our first Master that came within reach of my Purse. Turning about, he falls upon my Neck, and cries,—

“Ser *Pantaleone!* here am I, you see, come to be one of you, after all that my Father said, and that I have myself said against Courts!”

I replied,—“Since it is so, you are welcome. *Ferrara* cannot but be honoured by the Reception of such a Guest as yourself. You come, moreover, at a busy Time, for our Duke's Marriage with the Archduchess

Barbara is to take place in a few Days, and we are preparing to receive half-a-dozen of our greatest Cardinals, besides the Ambassadors of *Poland, Venice, Florence, and Lucca*, the Duke and Dukes of *Mantua*, the Counts of *Mirandola* and *Novellara*, and a Host of other distinguished Personages. This being the Case, I fear you may have some Difficulty in procuring a Lodging; for such Throngs of Satellites and Underlings are drawn together on this Occasion, that even the inferior Accommodations, which are paid for dearly, are already bespoken."

"I had some Apprehension of this," said he, "for, of course, the Rumour of this Solemnity has spread far and wide, and I was eager to be in time for it."

"Well," said I, "you shall dine with me, and afterwards we will see what can be done. Meantime, I am about to repair to *Madama Lucrezia*, and if you will come with me, we will chat as we go along."

"Am I fit to go as I am, think you?" said he, somewhat eagerly, twisting his Head

over his Shoulder, as if he would view himself all round if he could.

“You are *point-de-vice*,” said I, “and must, I think, have come by the Canal, for you have not a Speck of Dust about you. I will present you to her Excellency as one of the Cardinal’s Gentlemen, and, after that, you will make your own Way.”

“Tell me something about this Princess,” said he, running lightly down the Stairs after me; “I have written Verses of Ceremony to the whole House of *Este* at a Distance, but know nothing personal about them, save that they are great Patrons of Arts and Letters. Princesses are always beautiful, are not they? Will she do to write Verses about?”

“Her Excellency is a most admirable and charming Lady,” replied I, “and you cannot do her a more appropriate Grace than by addressing to her some elegant and laudatory Sonnet. She and Madama *Leonora* may fitly be compared to twin Roses on one Stalk; they are equally courteous, erudite, beauteous, and replenished with womanly Perfections.

My august Mistress, I am sorry to say, is at present drooping in Health, and unlikely to be able to take Part in any of the Wedding Festivities."

"There's the grand old Castle!" cried he, stopping short, and gazing at it with Earnestness. "Some awful Tragedies have been enacted in its Dungeons!"

"We don't talk of those Things here," said I quietly.

"Well, but which is the *Lion's Tower*?"

"That at the End of the Street. Come along, you will have plenty of Time for all our Lions hereafter."

"Aye, and among them, *Ariosto's* House and Manuscripts! Dear old *Ariosto*! I wonder if I shall ever make my Name ring in the World like his. I want to see your famous Library, and School of Painting, and Cathedral, and Churches—"

Here, the Throng in the Street prevented our keeping together awhile, and when we reunited, we were close to the Palace Draw-bridge.

The grand Court-yard was in a high State of Confusion, in Preparation for the Tournament which was to take place in it on the fifth Day of the Espoufals. The Centre was being thickly strewn with Sawdust, and Carpenters were busily erecting the Scaffolds for the temporary Theatre at the upper End. Everywhere Pages, Servants, and Workmen were running to and fro and jostling one another; Soldiers were relieving Guard, Stable-keepers lounging about, talking to Grooms and Falconers, while here and there some Personage richly plumed, with Velvet Cloak, Gold Chain, and white Gauntlet-gloves, passed to or from the ducal Apartments.

As we went through the Suite of Rooms hung with Family Portraits, and choice Specimens of the early *Ferrarese* Masters, my young Companion continually plucked at my Cloak, with an energetic half-whispered "Whose is this?—whose is this?"

"Oh, that's a *Gelasio*.—That's *Garofalo*.—That's *Galasso Galassi*.—Those Frescoes were

painted by *Giotto* on his Way through *Ferrara*."

"This beautiful Woman!—"

"*Lucrezia Borgia*,—come along."

"And this curtained Picture.—Some rare Masterpiece, surely! The Transfiguration, maybe?"

And reverently, but ardently, he laid his daring Hand on the Curtain.

"*Pian*,—*piano*! What are you about? That must not be touched!"

"What is it?"—

"Our last Duchefs. The Duke does not choose to have her Picture removed,—though *she* was! . . . you understand? Hush, hush—"

He gave a quick, alarmed, intelligent Look, dropped the Curtain, and passed on. We found Madama *Lucrezia* surrounded by a Circle of Ladies and Gentlemen, some of whom were of high Quality. Her Excellency, who, like her Sister, was a blonde Beauty, which gave her the Air of being much younger than she really was, wore a Suit of rich corn-

coloured Satin, flashed with white, and guarded with Silver. She had a fine Jewel in her Breast-knot, and a small Tuft of white and coloured Feathers in her fair Hair, the Treffes of which were braided with Pearls. Altogether, her Appearance was magnificent and imposing.

I could not but be aware that the Person and Carriage of my young Friend, seen beside one so much his inferior in Externals as myself, must be highly advantageous to him; as, indeed, it proved. As we approached, he was eyed by several Persons with Curiosity and Interest, which were not lessened on my pronouncing to Madama *Lucrezia* the Name which he, though so young, had already made famous. His being little conversant with Court Life imparted an agreeable Deference and Modesty to his Address, without any awkward Embarrassment; and I could perceive by the encouraging Smile of the Princess on my presenting him to her, that she was favourably impressed. She complimented him on his early Reputation, and avowed her Hope

that *Ferrara* might fee the Fruits of his riper Genius mature beneath its fostering Rays. To which he replied with some fuitable *concetti*, and then fell modeftly back.

She foon, however, called him forward again, and engaged him in agreeable Converfation; and being fo intimately acquainted with her Excellency's turn of Mind as I was, I could difcern that ſhe was at the Pains of ſhining before this gifted young Man, and of letting him perceive that her Mind was well ſtored with Learning and Knowledge. I need not ſay, that, when the Conference ended, which was not till ſhe had bidden him to her Converfazione, he retired with me to my Lodging, highly elated with his Reception.

During Dinner, I difcourſed with him on many Matters reſpecting his new Life, concerning the Details of which, no one could be better able to give him valuable Information than myſelf. I told him who was who, and what was what; whom he ſhould conciliate, whom beware of; and, above all, recommended to him Prudence, Circumſpection, and Economy,

without expecting to be much heeded. For the young will still be young : who will profit by the Experience of a graver Man ?

*Youngsters hate
What old Men prate.*

After Dinner, we went in quest of fuitable Apartments for him ; but Inns, Lodgings, and private Houses were full to overflowing ; so that it ended in my offering him, and his accepting with the best Grace in the World, such sorry Accommodation as I had for him, till he could find Quarters elsewhere. We took my good-humoured Landlady, Monna *Onesta*, into our Councils ; and, as I generally tabled at the Princesses' "*tavola ordinaria*," it was agreed that a light Bedstead should be introduced for his Use into a Recefs in my Sitting-room, for which at present I had very little Demand. We made very merry upon it ; and he apologized a thousand Times for the Inconvenience to which he was putting me ; howbeit, I grudged it not, for the Love I bore to his Father. After-

wards, he went out by himself, and, returning towards Dusk, told me he had found his Way to *Ariosto's* House, and seen his Bust, his Manuscripts, his Chair and Inkstand, and had also attended Vespers in the Cathedral, and heard the famous Echoes.

Then we went to the *Conversazione*, which, for Friendliness of Tone and Diversity of Subjects, proved one of the most agreeable I ever knew. In the first Place, there were none but picked Visitants; for her Excellency was very choice and fastidious in her Intimates, and matched or contrasted them like the Colours of her Dress. Secondly, these favoured Visitants included several newly arrived from foreign Courts, who gave Zest to the Conversation; thirdly, there was infinite Interest excited about the Details of the approaching Jousts, Tournaments, Masquerades, Concerts, and theatrical Performances which were to enliven the Marriage Rites. Characters, Groups, and Dresses were discussed, Jewels brought forth and exhibited, Draperies cast, Disguises suggested,

Dances walked, Tunes hummed and thrummed. All this was perfect Enchantment to young *Taffo*, who, if he were charmed, certainly charmed Others by the Readiness of his Fancy and amazing Fecundity of his Wit and Imagination. I remember Madama *Lucrezia* asking him if he could sing, and his answering, "Oh no, Madama!"—yet immediately taking up a Lute, carelessly running over its Strings, and then warbling (for I never knew Singing that could more fitly be so described,) some impromptu Verses on his first Sight of her in the Morning, when she appeared to him as beautiful and glorious as the Sun. Good or bad, the Verses pleased; and so I remarked to him as we went Home by Moonlight.

I was so busied, during the ensuing Festivities, as to have little Leisure for my young Friend, save at Night, when we were almost too tired to talk; however, through my Means, he went everywhere and saw everything. I say, through my Means, but it shortly became at the express Command of

Madama *Lucrezia*, for she took a kindly Interest in the young Man, and was much amused at the Fervour with which he described his new Impressions of a Scene so dazzling. He for his Part was in Fairyland or Dreamland, Day and Night, for I can certify to his talking and singing in his Sleep loud enough for me to hear him through the Wall. Still, there were so many New-comers in *Ferrara*, of vastly more Importance than himself, that he was but one among a Crowd, and if he had suddenly dropped out of Existence, it would scarcely have been noted save by myself. For me, I was well pleased to have such a frank, cheerful Creature in my Lodging, and troubled myself less than I might otherwise have done to get rid of him. However, as the Feastings waned to their End, the City began to empty; and through my Recommendation, or rather, that of Monna *Onesta*, he got a pretty Apartment enough, consisting of Bed-chamber and Sitting-room in the House of *Jacinta Golosa*, Widow of the Duke's late Pantler, a

Man much given to Greed and Peculation, who was thought well to pass, and yet managed to die poor; of whose Delinquencies the less said at this Time and in this Place the better. There was no Need to carry on his Faults to the Account of his Wife, a stirring Woman as ever was, with good black Eyes of her own, and three small Children. The Sitting-chamber overlooked the Canal; and, with its striped Sun-blind flapping over the vine-covered Balcony, looked cool and pleasant enough. There was a heavy carved Table, and an Arm-chair almost equally immoveable; also a worm-eaten but curiously inlaid Bureau, with many Drawers in it, which took my young Friend's Fancy at once, because he said it would be so convenient for his Papers. In short, when Monna *Jacinta's* Litters, including a Child's Go-cart and sundry Hampers of keeping Apples, were cleared out, the Lodging seemed habitable enough, and I was glad to secure the poor Woman so eligible an Inmate. Indeed, during his Abode with me, I conceived a Regard for him which

never decreased, but, on the contrary, went on increasing to the End.

I remember that one Night I was awoke out of Sleep by hearing him give one or two Groans, and then rap smartly with his Fist against the Wall. Understanding it for a Signal of Distress, I hastily went in to him, and found him sitting up in Bed looking quite aghast.

“I'm a dying Man!” cries he.—“Fetch a Doctor!—fetch a Priest.”

Instead of which, I fetched him a good Dose of Cherry Brandy, which he hastily swallowed without knowing what it was, till he had taken a good Gulp. Giving a deep Sigh, “I'm better now,” says he, “but positively I thought I was dying; and I felt so unwilling!”

“Life is dear to the Young,” said I; “you should not have supped on Peach-ice, so late in the Season.”

“It can't be all right with me,” resumed he, much perturbed, “to be seized with such a Panic at Death;—but Life seems so pleasant

to me juſt now! everything I ſee, ſo beautiful!—every Sound, Melody!—every Smell, Perfume!—every ——it can't be all right with me, I ſay! hey, Ser *Pantaleone*?"

And in leſs than a Credo, the young Fellow was aſleep!

“ Ah,” thought I, as I lay awake afterwards, (for it was December, and I had got chilled and could not get warm again,) “ he and I ſee different Sides of the Tapeſtry. What to him is now all rainbow-hued, and rayed with Gold, will ſome of theſe Days appear, as it does to me, nought but Fag-ends and Fuſtian.”

And then I thought how ſubdued to what it worked in, my better Part had become; how all the trivial Details of Court Dinners, Dreffes, the Length of a Sword-knot, the Pile of a Velvet, the Fall of a Plume, the Cruſt of a Paſty, were the Impertinences that even diſtracted my Thoughts from my Prayers, without my taking the leaſt real Intereſt in them. And ſo I kept painfully pondering on the Vanities and Frivolities of

Life, and thinking I would some Day become a cowled Monk, till at last I began to consider whether too heavy a Supper of Wild-boar might not be as provocative of distressful Images as Peach-ice.

All this Time, the gracious and excellent Madama *Leonora* kept her Chamber, confined thereto by severe Indisposition. Her Name was frequently mentioned in the ducal Circle, in the Way of Inquiry and Regret; many lamenting that the Festivities were deficient in the Presence of her who would have been their fairest Ornament. I am not aware that *Taffo's* Curiosity was at all excited about her, till one Evening, happening to approach him where he stood a little apart from the Rest, hanging over Something that lay on a Side-table, I heard him utter in a low, emphatic, almost passionate Voice, the single Word "Divine!"—and, casting my Eye on the Object which thus absorbed him, I saw it was the Miniature Portrait of Madama *Leonora*, taken when she was a young Girl of fifteen or sixteen.

“Who is this?” cried he hurriedly to me.

“Is it possible,” said I, “that you can ask?—Madama *Leonora*.”

“Ha!—How should I have known?”

“Why, she is as like to her royal Sister as one Star to another.”

“Stars differ from one another in glory.—Pshaw! she is no more like Madama *Lucrezia* than I am like you!”

“That Likeness was taken a long while ago. Wait till you see her Excellency.”

“Was she ever at *Comacchio*?”

“Certainly—Why do you ask?”

He did not appear to hear me, but continued gazing on the Picture, like one entranced; drumming on the Table with his Fingers as if hammering out Rhymes to some mental Tune.

A Day or two after, all the gay Pageantry melted away as if at the Wave of a Magician’s Wand, on the News arriving of the Pope’s Death. Cardinal *Luigi* immediately hastened to *Rome*, to take Part in the Election of the new Pontiff, accompanied by some of his

oldest and most trusted Attendants; but young *Torquato* was left behind with the inferior Members of his Suite, to employ or misemploy his precious Leisure in any Way he chose. His Fancy, being warm with the Whirl of Pleasure in which he lately had lived, found Vent for itself in a Variety of graceful Rhymes and Sonnets, inspired by the merest, most trivial Occasion; so that Madama *Lucrezia* could scarcely change Colour, or have a slight Cold in her Head, or lose her Thimble, or break her Needle, without finding the Event verified and embellished with a thousand classic Conceits; which, I am bold to say, were in the main solely worked out for the Purpose of mental Exercise and sleight of Hand; but which Madama *Lucrezia* began to value somewhat beyond their Deserts.

CHAPTER III.

Of Madama Lucrezia and Madama Leonora.

MADAMA *Leonora* being now convalescent, quitted her private Apartments as soon as the Wedding Guests had dispersed, and reappeared among us in the *Belvedere* Palace. The Languor of recent Indisposition had imparted additional Delicacy to her Complexion and Softness to her Eyes, while it excused the Negligence of a Toilette which boasted not a single Ornament, and consisted of a simple white Robe of some flowing and soft Fabric and a Treffila of green and gold Network over her Hair.

Torquato, as soon as he saw her, whispered eagerly to me, "The very Counterpart of her Picture!" I made no Reply, knowing that the Judgment of a Boy, (and he was not much more,) is worth Nothing, and that the

excellent and still lovely Madama had exactly doubled her Age since the Portrait was taken. It was notorious that she had the sweetest Mouth in *Italy*; and as a conventional Matter, of course, it would never have done for any one of her Suite to have implied or admitted that there was the least Diminution of her Bloom; nay, there were those who would probably have defended the senseless Question with their Swords; but I, for my Part, had long become a Man of Peace in the minute Affairs of Life, and held my Tongue respecting many Matters which my Eye could not but note. Hence I betrayed not by the slightest Movement of Lip or Eyebrow my Amusement at the Fervour of Young *Taffo's* Declaration, but waited till Madama *Leonora* was settled on her Couch with her various little Invalid Comforts about her, and till Madama *Lucrezia* had kissed and greeted her, and seated herself at her Side. I then, at the first encouraging Look, stepped forward and presented my young Friend, who kneeled and kissed the Princess's Hand with the profoundest Respect.

She sweetly expressed to him the Pleasure she had experienced in perusing his "*Rinaldo*," and desired to know on what Theme his Genius was now developing itself. With a Flutter of mingled Modesty and gratified Vanity, the young Man replied that he was now engaged on the "*Jerusalem Delivered*," which was as yet but roughly sketched out. She requested to have an Outline of the Plot; he detailed it, and she greatly admired the Conception of the Characters of *Clorinda* and *Erminia*, so beautifully opposed. She desired to know whether their Love-stories were to have fortunate Terminations; he replied in the negative; she pleasantly chid him for this, and said young Poets found such a Luxury in imaginary Woes that they had no Mercy on the Feelings of tender-hearted Readers. He said that sooner than cost her a Tear, he would recast his Poem or throw it into the Fire. She sweetly begged him to do neither, but to be guided solely by the Bent of his own inimitable Genius, or *Italy* and the whole civilized World would sustain a Loss.

To all this did Madama *Lucrezia* listen with manifest Pleasure; and, opening a small Casket, she drew therefrom several of the complimentary little Pieces *Torquato* had addressed to her, and gave them to her Sister to read. At this Epoch, the Duke and Duchefs entered to congratulate Madama *Leonora* on her Recovery; we Courtiers fell back; but before the Circle broke up, our Sovereign Prince's Eye rested on *Taffo*, whom he beckoned forward to inquire how he got on with his Poem. With great Reverence he replied, that since his Arrival in *Ferrara*, he had been so transported and carried out of himself by the dazzling Festivities of the Court, as to have been little able to make Progress; but that his Intention was, under favour of the illustrious Prince he had the Honour to address, to make *Rinaldo*, the Ancestor of the House of *Este*, the romantic Hero of his Poem, second in Place only to *Godfrey*. The Duke appeared pleased with this Notion, and made some Remarks on it ere he dismissed him. In Fact, his Highness

liked well to think himself a second *Augustus*, with *Virgil* on one Hand, and *Horace*, which is to say *Guarini*, on the other.

The next Time I met *Taffo*, which was when I was full dressed and on my Way to a state Dinner, he eagerly seized me by the Arm, and drew me aside to hear him read some Stanzas he had written on the Occasion of his Eyes first resting on the beautiful Serene of Madama *Leonora's* Countenance, when, if Reverence and Wonder had not turned his Heart into Stone, he would have perished with a double Death.

Dreadfully afraid of being too late for Dinner, I hastily exclaimed, "Double Death! why double Death?—excuse me, my dear *Taffo*, I have no Time just now for Explanations and Rejoinders, but will talk it over with you another Time."

"How does it strike you at the first Hearing?" persists he eagerly; "is it too forward? too presumptuous? Can she forgive it, think you?"

"Aye, aye, Women forgive every Thing in

their own Praise," said I; "let it be ever such Nonsense."

"You think it Nonsense then?" cries he, still holding on to me.

"My dear *Taffo*, it is capital, capital! I shall be too late for Dinner. Adieu for the present."

And I escaped from him, hardly able to help laughing at his rueful Look.

Of course the Verses were forgiven, as well as plenty of others that followed, sometimes addressed to one Sister, sometimes to the other. They seemed equally charmed with his smooth Versings; and continually engaged him, whether together or apart, in Discourses on Poetry, Friendship, Love, Sympathy, Heroism, Self-sacrifice, Fame, Glory, and such-like Casuistries, some of which I listened to with Pleasure, while others appeared sentimental and profitless. They took up so much of the young Man's Time, however, that it was wonderful how he got through the amount of Writing he certainly did, in the Way of Lyrics, Epistles, Dialogues, Dif-

courses, to say Nothing of his great Poem, and Heaps of familiar Letters to his Intimates at Padua. He was industrious, that Youngster ! I should have wondered when he slept, had I not had him in my own Lodging, and known that he took out as much Rest from an Hour's profound Repose as most Men would get in Half a Night. Such Learning, too, as he would pack into his mere occasional Effusions for the Hour ! he must have stored his Cells with Honey and Wax when at the Universities, for there seemed no End to what he could draw out, little as he now replenished them.

Thus, I say, he went on, to the infinite Content of both the Princeesses, of whom he was now the chosen Friend ; and their Esteem for him went that Length as to induce them to cause him to be admitted to the *Tavola ordinaria*, which made many of the older Courtiers ready to split with Envy. They were already prepared to accuse him of Pride, Vanity, Presumption, Conceit, Pedantry, Taciturnity except towards his Betters, and a score of

other Faults, besides despising him for the scantiness of his Wardrobe and the shallowness of his Purse.

Indeed, this tabling with the Duke and Princesses carried serious Disadvantages with it, independent of the Envy it occasioned ; for, simple and unostentatious as were the Youth's Habits, he yet needed to have finer Linen, either laced or fringed, than would otherwise have served his Turn ; nor was it always possible to escape Invitations to Games of Chance without giving Offence. The Princesses stood his Friends, however, in this Matter ; frequently calling him from the Players to converse with them, or giving him a small Stake to venture in their Names.

It may be asked, were they not already so surfeited with poetic Adulation as to be sick of Sonnets and Laudations ? Of the common Staple they were ; but *Taffo's* Verses, besides their uncommon Beauty and Harmony, had the magic Charm of Truth ! His Raptures and Ecstasies were *real* ; too real, unfortunately, to be safe.

I soon noticed that a good many more of his Sonnets were addressed to *Madama Leonora* than to *Madama Lucrezia*: she seemed to occupy his Thoughts from Morning to Night. If *Madama Leonora* appeared in a Mantle of myrtle-green Satin, straightway she was compared to a Lily-of-the-valley sheltered by its dark green Leaf; if in a rose-coloured Brocade, to the Pride of the Garden, a Mofs-rose,—if in Jewels, to starry Night, more beautiful than Day!—if in Saffron-colour, to *Aurora*; if with Flowers in her Hair, to *Flora*. If her Head ached, the Heaviness of her Eyes gave them a heavenly Languor; if a Catarrh made her pale,

Non era pallidezza, ma candore !

and I almost think if it had likewise made her Nose red, he would have found some classic Parallel for it.

One Day at *Belvedere*, on his showing me a Copy of Verses, and asking if I could suggest any Improvement, I coolly took his Pencil from him and substituted the name

of *Lucrezia* for *Leonora*. He looked hard at me when he saw what I had done.

“You will get into a Scrape, if you don’t take Care,” said I.

“Do you think so?” said he with Surprise, as if the Idea were presented to him for the first Time.

“My dear *Taffo*, I not only think it, but am sure of it. You are young and unversed in Courts. I have lived in them long, and seen much as a Bystander. The Envy and Rancour to be found in them are enormous, and you are drawing them on yourself, even by what is harmless and laudable; beware, then, of increasing your Dangers by what is heedless and reckless.”

“But I cannot transfer these Verses to *Madama Lucrezia*, for they are inapplicable to her.”

“Suppress them, then, and write her some that are applicable.”

“But she doesn’t inspire me.”

“Wait till she does, then; only don’t send these.”

“ Ah, Ser *Pantaleone* !—here are some good Lines !”

“ Pish ! you can make good Lines when you will.—Don’t be foolish. Be guided by your Father’s old Friend.”

He tore them in Half with the utmost Good-temper, and flung them over the Balustrade ; then cast his Arm round my Neck and walked off with me, talking of his Father.

As we quitted the Terrace, I happened to look round, and saw *Claudio Bertazzolo* walking along the Path beneath the Terrace, and earnestly endeavouring to piece together two Fragments of Paper, which, the next Instant, he thrust into his Pocket. I stopped short and said, “ *Claudio* has your Verses ! He’ll make Mischief !”

“ I’ll run after him, and get them of him !” says *Tasso*.

“ Stay,” cried I ; “ he could not see you and me on the Terrace above him, and the pencilling was so cramped, I don’t believe he can identify it. Better leave it alone — he *has* read the Verses, and your reclaiming them.

would only make him suspect you thought them dangerous.”

Torquato here began to chafe, and said, “Dangerous or not, they’re *mine*, and he has no Right to keep them.”

“Well,” said I, “I know not that you can make a Grievance of it, when they were torn and thrown away. You or I might have picked up Fragments of Verses in that Way with perfect Innocence.”

“But not to turn them to Account and make Mischief of them!”

“How do we know that he will?—Our own Misgivings shew there was Something unsafe in them. Let the Matter be: only take Warning by it to be more cautious in future.”

“Besides,” rejoined he, “where was the Harm in them, after all? What scores of Verses have I avowedly written to *Madama Leonora*, that have been read and praised by all the Court!”

“Yes; only these were a little too warm for conventional Feeling.”

“Mine is not conventional Feeling!”

“ Pshaw, my dear *Taffo*!—”

“ It isn’t, I vow!”

“ Then it ought to be.”

“ Why?”

“ *Why?*”

“ Yes, Ser *Pantaleone*. I suppose you have heard of the old Adage, that a Cat may look at a King; and I humbly hope a Poet may love and admire a Princess, be she who she may, as long as he does not expect her to love and admire him in return.”

“ Dangerous Work, my dear *Taffo*.”

“ As long as the Danger is only mine, it signifies not; and I do not believe there is any. By-the-bye, I want to show you the new Episode I have sketched out for my first Canto,—*Olindo* and *Sophronia*; will you come to my Lodging, and hear it?”

“ Oh no, I have to audit all the Princesses’ Butchers’ Bills for the last Twelvemonth!”

“ Ah, what Bathos! Farewell, dear Ser *Pantaleone*. I am about to write to my Father, and will tell him you are as well and as profaic as ever.”


“Tell him, also, I wish I could impart a little of my Prose to his Son.”

He laughed and ran off, singing as gaily as a Bird; and I went my Ways musing in my Mind whether Poetry or Prose have the best of it in the long Run.

For, look you, Prose pays his Bills, and keeps his Credit, and keeps his Friends, and lulls his Enemies, and digests his Meals, and enjoys his Rest, and lives in Quiet. But Poetry cares for none of these Things, if so be he may pursue his own wild Fancies, that serve him for Meat and Drink and Fuel and Bedding; and as for his Foes, he bites his Thumb at them all!

CHAPTER IV.

*Of Laura Ariente, and of the Fifty Conclusions, or
Points of Love.*

 HERE was a very lovely Girl, named *Laura Ariente*, at this Time in Attendance on *Madama Leonora*, whom every one liked and admired, and who being well nurtured, modest, goodnatured and cheerful, I heartily wished might become the Object of *Torquato's* Devotion in place of her exalted Mistress. There had been a good many Pastorals acted this Year at Court; as "*Lo Sacrifizio*" and "*Arethusa*"; poor Things at the best, yet which, with splendid Decorations and Music, had passed muster; and *Laura* had taken inferior Parts in these, and appeared in them to great Advantage. When I praised her, perhaps somewhat too broadly, to *Tasso*, he burst out laughing, and said, "Are

you, then, caught in the Toils at last? If I had waited so long, I would have at least selected some one better worth waiting for than that chubby-cheeked Damsel."

I said, "Her Eyes are a good deal like Madama *Leonora's*."

He said, "You might as well say an Owl is a good deal like a Porcupine;" and walked off.

However, I soon found that Count *Annibale Turchi* was in love with the Girl, and meant to marry her; so it was as well I had not further entangled the Web of *Torquato's* Affairs by getting him into Odium in that Quarter. Just after we had parted, as mentioned in the foregoing Chapter, I suddenly came upon *Claudio Bertazzolo*, with his Arm linked in that of *Pigna*, the Duke's Secretary, with whom he was in earnest Confabulation. *Claudio's* Eyes looked uncommonly round as they met mine, but I took no Notice, though I could not help fancying that my imprudent Friend's Sonnet was the Subject in Hand. This worried me; and instead of going Home, I proceeded to

his Lodgings, where I found him, not in his Sitting-room, but heard him making a prodigious Bustle and Stir in his Sleeping-chamber, where he seemed to be alternately stamping on a new Pair of Riding-boots, cording a heavy Box, and practising a Coranto with the Box for his Partner. On the Table lay a confused Medley of his Papers, open to the inspection of any impertinent or mischievous Chance-comer: and, as I knew that *Claudio Bertazzolo* or any others of that Clique would have glanced at them without Scruple, I just made free, as his Father's old Friend, to do the very same Thing, in order, look you, to see how far the Boy's Imprudence would carry him. First I came to a Knot of stale Violets; then to a Bit of watchet-coloured Ribbon I recognised at once for Madama *Leonora's*; then to a Lock of Hair, which I was sorry to see was hers too, or so like that I could have sworn to it—how he came by it, he best knew, since it was hardly to be thought she would give it him. After this, I inspected some half dozen Madrigals and Canzone, which were

chiefly remarkable for this, that the Name of *Leonora* was scratched through wherever it occurred, and *Laura* substituted, with the Addition of *bella, cara*, or some other epithet to make it scan. This tickled my Fancy, the Artifice seemed so shallow; I thought I would touch up his Verses a Bit, so took up a Pencil, and substituted for every Word that could be construed *dangerous*, another of the same Sound but of safer Import; as for Example, instead of “Ardire, fofpiro, delirando, fuoco, amiamo,” “Udire, respiro, ambulando, gioco, pranziamo.”

I was just contemplating my Performance with a silent Grin, when *Taffo*, hastily entering, cries,

“*Cospetto!* what are you about with my Papers?” then, sweeping them hastily up without observing what I had done, he thrust them into the Bureau, and withdrawing one of them, showed it to me with great Glee, saying,

“See what a capital Device I have hit upon for escaping Danger, if my Papers should be seized in my Absence!—I am off immediately

to *Padua*, on the pressing Invitation of *Scipio Gonzaga*, and am going to take the six finished Cantos of my '*Jerusalem*' with me; but I shall leave these Personalities behind, now I have made them safe under Lock and Key." Saying which, he replaced the Paper with the rest, turned the Key and put it in his Pocket. I thought the Lock a better Security than the Emendations, so let the Matter rest; and was right glad to hear he was going to *Padua*, where he would undoubtedly be carested and run after so as to put all his Love-fancies out of his Head. I said, "Have you Plenty of Money?"

"Well," said he, pulling out a few Scudi, "this is all. But *Scipio* won't let me want."

"Nay," said I, "don't begin your Visit by borrowing of him. Rather than that, you shall be welcome to all I have about me, and we can settle it some future Time. As *Pliny* said to *Quinctilian*, 'The Smallness of the Present will make it acceptable.'" So I gave him a few Lire, for which he thanked me most cordially, and then wished him a plea-

fant Journey. The Vetturino was at the Door when I went forth, and, before I reached the End of the Street, *Taffo* trotted past me and merrily waved his Hand.

A few Months had passed, when, one Day, I saw some one in advance of me in the Street, whom, if it had not been for a somewhat more staid and dignified Gait than was his wont, I should have concluded to be *Taffo*. He it was, however; for, on entering the Princesses' Reception Chamber, I found him bending his Knee to Madama *Leonora*, and kissing her Hand with Ardour; while she, on her Part, was receiving him with a heightened Colour which showed anything but Indifference. The next Moment he had risen, and she began to ask him many Questions concerning his Stay at *Padua*, *Pavia*, *Milan*, and *Mantua*; at which last Place, it appeared, he had visited his Father, whose Joy at seeing him, he said, had been far more delightful to him than the flattering Attentions he had received from his old University Companions.

The next Day, I met *Manzuoli*, the Cardinal's Secretary, who shook off *Il Farfallone*, with whom he was walking, and joined me. I chatted with him for a While, and asked him what Progress young *Taffo* made in the Esteem of his Patron and the Gentlemen his Attendants. His Reply was, "Everybody likes him; as how should they do otherwise? Howbeit, the young Fellow has just gone to the Duke, foaming with Rage, because he says some one has been meddling with his Bureau in his Absence, and rummaging among his Papers, and he is resolved to have Redress."

I said, "Redress? what Redress can he get? He cannot make the Thing undone, if any one has been so shabby as to search and read his Papers."

"It is an unpardonable Offence, however," said *Manzuoli*, "and I cannot wonder at his Anger, even though he gets no Good by it."

I said, "He will get Harm instead of Good, and only make himself Enemies. Whom does he suspect?"

Manzuoli shrugged his Shoulders, and said,

“He has Enemies, as you know as well as I do; but 'tis ill mentioning Names.” And so passed on.

It never occurred to me at the Time, that I might have created the Impression the Bureau had been broken open, by the ridiculous Alterations I had made in his Verses, for the Sake of making him laugh when he joined me; instead of which, having other Matters in his Head, he had locked up his Papers without looking at them, and the Thing had passed from me.

At this Time, the Pastoral Comedy of “*Lo Sfortunato*,” which had been for some Time in Rehearsal, was to be represented in the Duke's private Theatre; which was merely a Saloon fitted up with a Stage, Curtain, and a few Scenes. *Taffo* fate at Madama *Leonora's* Feet to witness it; and, as the Poetry was very poor, she asked him if he did not think he could do Something better in the same Way, in Consequence of which, he some time afterwards wrote the “*Aminta*.”

Meantime, however, the Court was con-

tinually in Admiration of the pretty Pieces he was producing in Honour of *Laura Ariente*, which were circulated from Hand to Hand, and on every Lip. She herself took the Homage mighty little to Heart, being full of her Engagement to the Count; and the worst of it was that I knew, all the While, they were really written for Madama *Leonora*, and offered to her and read by her with that Knowledge, while *Laura's* Name was only used for a Colour. This was both wrong and highly dangerous; and the Matter was made very little better by his using precisely the same Artifice with Madama *Lucrezia*; writing Verses to her from Time to Time which were currently supposed to be addressed to Signora *Lucrezia Bendidio*. This nearly got him into a Scrape with one who was not too well disposed towards him already, *Pigna*, the Duke's Secretary, who was paying his Addressee to *Lucrezia Bendidio*, and who, being a Poet himself, though a very bad one, conceited *Taffo* to be his Rival in more Ways than one.

Now, these Verses to the Signora *Bendidio* had so very little Impress of real Feeling in them, that they might just as well have been inscribed openly to Madama *Lucrezia*, without the least Offence in the World; and my Opinion was, that they would never have been concocted *at all*, whether to this *Lucrezia* or that, but to serve as a Kind of Counterpoise to the Verses to *Leonora* and *Laura*. And this argued a Kind of Subtlety and Subterfuge in our young Poet, by no Means natural to him, and which I was very sorry to see. Because, where there's Mystery, there's Something to be hid; and where there's Something to be hid, there's Something that had better not see the Light. And that's my plain Thought, for as old a Courtier as I am.

Approaching within Earshot of them one Day, I heard Madama *Leonora* say, laughing, "You will certainly make him your Enemy if you pay her such open Attention. Take my Advice, and make him your Friend and Partizan instead."

“ But how is that possible ? ” says *Taffo*.

“ Oh ! praise his Verses.”

“ *His Verses !*”

“ Yes, his Verses, bad as they are—he is very easily flattered about them. Do try to conciliate him.”

Taffo shrugged his Shoulders ; but in the Course of a few Days, we were made the Auditors of a mock-laudatory Criticism on *Pigna's* Poetry, so delicately and cleverly written that he and his Friends took it for real Compliment, and were highly gratified by it, while in Fact it was Irony from Beginning to End. Again I saw Danger ; but he was blind or reckless, and either could not or would not admit any.

At this Epoch, however, *Taffo* could do no Wrong, for he was the Darling of so many Hearts and the admired of so many Eyes, that even his Enemies were obliged to be at Peace with him. There was a fine Show of Wit, one Evening, between him and the Signora *Orsina Cavaletti*, a Woman of Gifts as rare as her Beauty, who provoked him by

faying that Women were capable of deeper and more constant Love than Men. He took up the Glove with great Spirit, to the Delight and Recreation of all present, till at Length a Circle closed round them, hanging on the Lips of each in Turn. Madama *Leonora* took a fine Emerald from her Finger, to bestow on the Victor; but neither would give in, nor could the Question be decided by Vote; and even the royal Sisters were divided, Madama *Leonora* siding with *Taffo*, and Madama *Lucrezia* with Signora *Orfina*, who, with a great many Words, which Ladies always use, and with very pretty Action and ingenious Application, cited *Dido* deserted by *Æneas*, *Ariadne* forsaken by *Theseus*, *Argia* slain for burying *Polynices*, *Artemisia*, who drank the Ashes of *Mausolus*, *Laodamia*, who burnt herself for *Protesilaus*, with many other Instances more than I can count. To which *Taffo*, after picking Holes in the Sleeves of most or many of the before-named Heroines, as that the Idolatry of *Artemisia*, the Impatience of *Laodamia*, the Suicide of *Ariadne*, the Jea-

lousy of *Medea*, were no true and infallible Signs and Parts of Love, did proceed from History (wherein I must say I thought Signora *Orsina* had the better Ground,) to Logic; and winnowed and sifted the Causes of Things, with such consummate and masterful Art, that opinions were divided as to which the Meed should be awarded to. Signora *Orsina*, like another *Clorinda*, came down upon her Antagonist the Moment he stopped to draw Breath, with the notable Example of *Alceſtis*, self-sacrificed for *Admetus*, and withdrawn from Hell by *Hercules*. *Taſſo* met her with *Orpheus*, voluntarily entering the Gates of Hell to save *Eurydice*. Signora *Orsina* said, that was only one Instance to set against many, and that either his Memory was bad or his Cause was bad: that everybody present knew he had a good Memory, and therefore it must be that he had a bad Cause. *Taſſo* laughed and said that was a disjunctive Syllogism; and he would give her another: Either Women could not be proved to love better than Men, or Signora *Orsina* was no

Reasoner. Signora *Orsina* was a Reasoner. Women could not be proved to love better than Men.

I noted Madama *Lucrezia's* Colour vary a good deal during the Controversy, and at length, when *Taffo* received the Ring, she abruptly said, "I wonder at you, *Leonora*; I had thought you truer to your Sex;" with which Words she rose and swept away from the Circle, followed by some of her Suite, myself among the rest. On my restoring to her her Fan, which she had dropped, she said to me in a low voice, "*Taffo* would almost persuade my Sister that black is white;" and bit her Lip pretty sharply.

The Duke and Duchefs were at Play, and challenged her to stake, which presently engaged her Thoughts in another Direction. On my returning to Madama *Leonora*, I found her and her Party arranging with much Zeal the Preliminaries of a Defence of fifty Conclusions or Points of Love, which *Taffo* declared himself ready to make publicly against all Comers. It was at length proposed


that this Encounter of Wits should take place in the Academy, which should be turned for the Occasion into a Theatre of Ladies and Cavaliers.

Ill would it become me, a Man without the least Eloquence or Imagination, to give the Details of this fanciful and extravagant Performance, which, for the Time, occupied every one of the smallest Pretensions to Wit or Sense. Ladies as well as Gentlemen took up the Gauntlet, sentimental Discussions were going on from Morning to Night, Precedents and Allusions hunted up from old Histories and Poets, till Nothing but Love, Love, Love, was heard of from one end of *Ferrara* to the other. It is enough to say that *Il Farfallo*, the Butterfly of the Court, had his Finger in the Pie and made the most of it. I was sick of it, for my Part, and esteemed it Folly. I don't remember one of the Conclusions, not I, nor took any Pains to get up any of the Arguments at the Time; I remember lending *Taffo* the Money to get his best Coat out of Pawn, and giving him

a new Pair of fringed Gloves, for I could not bear that those who could not call him silly should call him shabby. And I remember Madama *Leonora* wore a pale lilac Suit shot with Silver, and looked extremely beautiful; and that Signora *Orfina* kept her Ground so well on the Question whether Women loved more deeply and constantly than Men, that it was looked on as a drawn Battle, and *Taffo* called her his fair Enemy ever after. In the Main, I am minded to think the Lady was in the right on't, but in the particular Instance, I consider *Taffo* to have supported his Cause with Health, Liberty, and Life. But he was one of a thousand, and Heaven forbid there should be many to run the same sad Course!

CHAPTER V.

Of Ser Pantaleone's being placed in an exceedingly embarrassing Situation.

HE third Day's Controversy having ended, with great honour to *Tasso*, I hastened, while the Academy, the Court, and the very Streets were ringing with his Praises, to congratulate him in his own Lodgings, where I expected to find him in a perfect Tumult and Ecstasy of gratified Pride.

Instead of which, there fate the poor young Fellow with his Arms cast upon the Table, and his Head upon his Arms, crying and sobbing like a Child.

“Who's there?” cries he, looking up with his Face all smeared with Tears, “Ser *Pantaleone*? Oh, Ser *Pantaleone*! my dear Father

is ill and dying at *Ostia*; neglected, pillaged, and deserted by his Servants, far away from his Children and his Friends!—Here's a Sequel to my Conclusions! Instead of chopping Logic and bandying fantastic Speeches with all Comers, I would I had been many Miles on my Road to him ere this! I am about to repair the Evil as soon as I may, and have already sent for a Vetturino."

I waited to see him off, consoling and cheering him all I could, and doing him the most substantial Service in my Power, by giving him a little ready Money. He embraced me heartily, bade me convey his Grief and Duty to the Princesses, promised to write to me, and charged me to write to him.

In Place of a Letter from him, I got one shortly from the Doctor he had called in to his Father, telling me that Messer *Bernardo* was dead, and that his pious Son, after tending him with a Woman's Duty and Affection, Day and Night, was now experiencing so severe a Reaction as to be sick in Bed, without Power to move Hand or Foot, but hoped

soon to be sufficiently restored to return to *Ferrara*.

I shed Tears for my excellent old Friend, and felt drawn all the more towards his Son, by the filial Duty with which he had smoothed his dying Pillow. I remembered them in my Prayers, and thought a good deal on the Subject of Death; how that all must die, whether in Courts or Cottages, and some a good Deal sooner than they look for or like; how that we are all growing older Day by Day, whether we look in our Mirrors or not, or are told of it by our Companions, or have it carefully concealed from us; how that, next to the Power of Death and old Age is the Power of Habit, which makes us fancy ourselves the same to-day we were yesterday, and able to do the same and be the same this Year as a Year ago, or the Year before that; whereas it is quite otherwise; and every little stiffening of the Joints, or attenuating of the Limbs, or stooping of the Shoulders, or dulling of the Faculties, which we are so apt to think accidental and vexatious, ought rather to be

accepted as merciful Hints that we are getting on towards being not quite so young as we were.

Having charged Monna *Jacinta* to let me know when he returned, a little Lad dropped in one Morning, to tell me he had come back overnight. I therefore sought him immediately, and found him wan, worn, and utterly spiritless. He wept on my Shoulder, and I mingled my Tears with his, and had a long Talk with him about Messer *Bernardo*, he giving me all the Particulars of his Death, and I recalling many little Traits of him in early Life, which it solaced us much to dwell upon. After which I pressed him to go out with me; but he held back. "Come," said I, "we are reversing the Parts of *Pliny* the elder and *Pliny* the younger; for I want you to walk, and you want to read." So he went with me to Church.

About a Week after this, the Duke summoned me to his Closet, where I found his Highness alone, and seemingly much chafed. He bade me close the Door carefully; and

then, summoning me close to him, showed me a Scrap of written Paper, and said, "Whose Handwriting is that?"

I screwed up my Eyes, and looked narrowly at it, this Way and that, though I knew well enough whose it was all the Time; and at last said,—“It’s a Question to puzzle the Sphinx.”

“You may at least hazard a Conjecture,” said the Duke, with impatience.

“Well—it has the Appearance of being—either—*Claudio Bertazzolo’s*, or *Torquato Tasso’s*—unless, indeed, it be *Pinza’s*.”

“Who writes not like either of them,” cried the Duke, impatiently, “neither do they write like one another. You name truly the right Man along with the others—it is *Tasso’s*.”

“Indeed!” said I, with a Look of Surprise.

“Evidently,” said the Duke. “Now read what he has written, and say what you think of it.”

I read the unfortunate Sonnet, which had been torn and thrown over the Balustrade,

but had been carefully pafte'd together again, and faid, quietly,

“ Here appears to be a fort of Allegory.”

“ Allegory!” cried the Duke. “ How make you out that?”

“ It feems to be a Sonnet in praife of Honour,” faid I; “ he avers that he thirfts, he pines for Honour—”

“ For *Leonora*,” interrupted the Duke.

I looked astonished.

He fnatched the Paper from me, impatiently, and faid,

“ How elfe render you?”

Coſtei Leonora co'l bel nome?”

“ Aha!” cried I, as if the Pun firſt dawned upon me, “ an ingenious Play upon Words! —and truly, more ingenious even of your Highnefs to make out, than of the Poet to frame! One of thoſe witty Conceits, worth little or nothing in themſelves, on which young Authors are ſo fond of exerciſing their Invention—and a graceful Compliment, beſides, to Madama *Leonora*, who has been

pretty nearly forfeited with such Incense from Childhood.”

“Hark you, Ser *Pantaleone*,” said his Highness, sternly, “here is Something a good Deal worse than mere Compliment: this Youth, inflated and spoilt by the Condescension with which we have treated him, has dared to raise his audacious Affections to an Object whom it is next to Treason for him to think of, save as his Liege-lady—”

“On my Life, no,” cried I, hastily.

“Silence, Ser *Pantaleone*! You are attached to the young Man, and are ready to defend him at any Hazard; you are, however, a tried and faithful Servant of our House, and I am about to enable you to give Proof of your being so. It is of import to our Honour that this Matter should at once be seen to; according to the Result, the young Man will be dealt with severely or kindly. He is now about to repair into the Presence of Madama *Leonora*, who, according to my Arrangement, will see him alone. The Nature of the Interview must be watched: in the

Wall of the *Neptune* Apartment, and concealed by the Tapestry, are two Closets from whence may be both seen and heard what passes in the Chamber. In these Closets, which have frequently been useful for State Purposes, I intend to place you and *Claudio Bertazzolo*—”

“ Ah!” ejaculated I.

“ —Who will each give me, separately, an Account of what you see and hear; and by the Correspondence of your Reports I shall be enabled to judge of your Veracity.”

My Soul recoiled from the Office. The Duke, seeing me about to remonstrate, sternly said, “ *Operibus, non Verbis*; are you preparing to disobey me?”

Thereupon I remembered how futile it would be, as *Bertazzolo* would have the Game in his own Hands; and I replied, “ No, my Lord,” though I inly winced. Without another Syllable, his Highness coolly banded my Eyes himself, with his own Handkerchief, and led me some little Distance, when, without the smallest Notice, I found myself shut into a tight little Box, softly

padded. Thereupon I took the Liberty of removing the Bandage from my Eyes, and found my Cell dimly lighted by a Couple of little Eye-holes, which I instantly availed myself of, and found myself overlooking a Chamber which Madama *Leonora* occasionally, but not very often, occupied. She herself was sitting on a Sofa, almost immediately beneath me, so close that I could tell every Breath she drew by the soft, gentle Rise and Fall of her Lace Tucker, and count every Mesh in the Gold Network which enclosed her beautiful Hair. She was stringing Pearls on a fine Silver Thread, taking them one by one from a little Tortoise-shell Box which stood beside her on a small Ivory Table: her little Foot, slippered in white Satin, rested on a Footstool of crimson Velvet; and, as she strung her Pearls, she hummed a little to herself, “Come leggiadra, come vezzosa,” &c., then paused, rested her Face a little while on her Hand in pensive Reflection, then resumed her Work, with an Air more serious, without being sad.

I felt like a dreadful Villain, thus lying in

Wait behind my august Mistress, to take Advantage of her in her apparent Privacy, and felt it Sacrilege to be looking on, even while she thus in Silence pursued a trifling Occupation. How horrible did it seem, then, that I was necessitated to overhear and privately report what might be of the most fatal Consequence to the two Persons I most cared for on Earth!—and how yet more horrible to know, that even if I shut my Eyes and stopped my Ears, *Claudio Bertazzolo* was within a Stone's Throw of me, with equal Facility to see, hear, and report all, be it much or be it little.

On Reflection, I was as glad I should be there to be a Check on him, as sorry he should be there to be a Check on me. For, glad as I should have been to suppress or gloss over Anything to the Disadvantage of my royal Mistress and my Friend, I knew *Claudio's* Truth to be much less to be relied on than mine, and that for his own malicious Purposes he would make the Harmless appear bad, and the Bad appear worse.

Likewise, knowing the high Tone of Feeling of both the Parties, I was greatly in Hopes that Nothing could occur to the Detriment of either.

Meantime, Madama *Leonora* continued stringing her Pearls so long (or at least it seemed long to One in my Position), that I began to doubt whether she would be interrupted at all, or would not rather finish her Employment, and retire to some other Apartment, like a Bird escaping from the Snare of the Fowler.

Just as Suspense was becoming next to unbearable, I heard a tapping or scratching against the outer Door, which was the Mode whereby any Courtier signified a desire to enter; and immediately Madama *Leonora* said, in her sweet, calm, gentle Voice, "Come in."

Taffo immediately entered, bowed profoundly, then approached, then kneeling on one Knee, presented her with a Nosegay of choice Flowers, saying,

"Madama, his Highness commanded me to convey these Flowers to the excellent

whiteness of your fair Hands, with his loving Greeting."

"I accept them with Pleasure," replied she; "and thank my good Brother for sending them by you."

"Madama," rejoined the young Man, "you enrich by your Goodness One who in all Things but Gratitude is a poor Beggar."

"Why, are you going?" says she, cheerfully; "cannot you stay and chat a little? I have Something to say to you."

He instantly paused, in an Attitude of profound Respect. I should premise, that in what followed, his Voice, always harmonious, was mournful Music.

"Sit down, *Taffo*."

He sat down on a Cushion at her Feet, a few Paces off.

"Is there any News stirring to-day?"

"Indeed, Madama, I know not."

—"Taffo, how changed you are! Instead of being the cheerful, entertaining Companion you used to be, you now deal only in Monosyllables."

“Madama, I have lost my Father.”

“It is an irreparable Loss, and one which it does you Credit to feel so deeply; but yet one that was liable to befall you in the Course of Nature.”

“I find Nothing in my own Mind, Madama, that can receive Consolation under a Loss, from the mere Consideration that it was in the Course of Nature.”

“*Taffo*, what shall I say to you! I want to cheer you, but you deprive me of the Means. What should you yourself say to me if our Positions were reversed?”

“For Mercy’s sake, gracious Lady, do not present such a Reversal of Positions to my Mind for a Moment! I cannot stand it.”

“Nay, I *will* know.”

“I would say—”

“Come, proceed—What do you fear, *Taffo*?—you need not fear *me*.”

“I would say . . . ‘*Taffo*—’” He burst into Tears.

They were both profoundly silent for some Minutes. It was not difficult to judge how

they felt. For my own Part, my Eyes became so full of Tears, that I was obliged to wipe them repeatedly, and I listened with intense Interest for what should be said next.

“Go,” she said at length, in stifled Accents, “this becomes too affecting to me. I am no longer capable of offering you the Consolation I desired.”

“Madama — you are mistaken — your divine Sympathy is the most exquisite Consolation my Soul is capable of receiving. For every heavenly Tear you are shedding for me, I would willingly shed the last Drop of my Blood.”

“Go, *Taffo* . . . go, dear *Taffo*; I beseech, I command you. I am not very well today, and have been too easily overcome. I would not have any One find me thus,—go, excellent young Man, and be assured that no Monument raised to your Father's Worth can be so precious as his Son's Tears.”

Saying which, she rose in Agitation from the Couch, and, in so doing, overset the little Casket beside her, the Pearls in which rolled

hither and thither; while those which she had been stringing fell from the little Table to the Ground a Pace or two off. Mechanically she caught at them at the same Time that *Tasso*, with an eager Spring towards them, would have saved her the Trouble. Involuntarily, his Foot touched her Hand, not so as to tread on it and mangle it, but still so as to touch, and perhaps even slightly to hurt it. His face became suffused with the deepest Blush, he cast himself on the Ground before her, caught her Hand with both his own, and kissed it passionately again and again, as though in Contrition for the Hurt he had unintentionally given it. Not a Word was spoken by either, but I could tell from her Attitude, and the varying Colour of her downcast Face, that she was deeply moved. The next Instant she drew her Hand from his, and with a Gesture of Farewell quitted the Apartment. Being still on his Knees, he was no sooner alone, than he flung himself all along on the Ground, with total Self-abandonment, and remained so for a Minute or two—then hastily rising, stood with folded Arms

a little while, as if to regain his Self-possession, and then rapidly walked off.

My whole Heart was so engaged in the Scene and the Actors, that I forgot, for the Time, the Reason of my being placed where I was, and only gazed, listened, and wept, as a sympathizing Spectator. I had scarcely come to myself, when some One behind me whispered, "Replace your Bandage," which I immediately did, and was again led forth. In a couple of Minutes, the Duke uncovered my Eyes, and I then found myself with him, not in his Closet, but in the Gallery adjoining it. He pressed his Hand heavily on my Shoulder, as if for Support, as we proceeded to his Closet; and on the Way thither, we passed *Claudio Bertazzolo*, who glided by, looking as if Butter would not melt in his Mouth, though I was pretty sure he had seen and heard all that I had, and reported it too.

Arrived in the Closet, the Duke cast himself into a Chair, and then said, "Now, tell me all that passed."

I said, "My Lord Duke, allow me to reflect a little."

He smiled grimly, as though suspecting I was going to prepare a garbled Account. I had no such thought in my Head, however, knowing it to be useless; but the real Fact was, that having listened, not as a Spy, but as a deeply interested Party, Feeling had, for the Nonce, overpowered Recollection, and I could not, at the Instant, recal a single Word.

A Minute or two, of intense Effort, restored to me the Whole, verbatim; and I at the same Time became aware that, apart from Tone, Gesture, and dumb Show, there was Nothing that could give Umbrage.

I told off the whole Dialogue, literally, from Beginning to End, without the least Inflection of my Voice, just as a Schoolboy would run off his Lesson.

The Duke shaded his Eyes with his Hand while he heard me, with what I feared was a sinister kind of Smile on his Lips. Then, after a Pause, he raised himself from his half recumbent Position, looked up at me, and said,

“ Well,—so far correct—as far as bare Words,—without any Mention, however, of the Kissing.”

“ My Lord,” cried I, “ if *Claudio* said the young Man kissed her Lips or Cheek, he lied like a Traitor and Villain !”

“ He said neither one nor the other,” replied the Duke, drily ; “ neither did *you*, Ser *Pantaleone*, make any Allusion to the Passion with which he kissed her Hand.”

“ Something got into my Eye,” said I.

“ It was well, then, that I kept mine open,” said the Duke. “ I changed my Mind afterwards, about putting *Claudio* into the other Closet, and thought it as well to make Use of it myself. I find you, as I expected, a faithful, though somewhat dry Reporter. Had *Leonora*'s Heart been assailed only by Tones as monotonous as yours, I should be in little Fear for her, Ser *Pantaleone* !—But the Youngster has the very Soul of Love in every Accent of his Voice—it is genuine ! it is real !—”

“ And it is restrained,” said I.

“ Y—es,” said the Duke, doubtfully ; “ but

it is dangerous. Ser *Pantaleone*, you may now go."

"Have mercy on him, your Highness! He is young! he is good!—"

"He is the Honour of our Court!—But we must also look to the Honour of our Family."


"My Life on *his*!"

"Enough. I will care for him. Have no Fears."

And he waved his Hand, which was as much as to bid me retire. I did so, with a full Heart. And he assumed a reflective Air, which was occasionally his Wont, when he was about to meditate something Cruel.

CHAPTER VI.

Of Ser Pantaleone's Breakfast al Fresco.

HEN a Prince, and that Prince an Italian, gets it into his Head that the Honour of his House is affronted, or in any Way endangered, there is no knowing what may come next. You lose Sight of your Man! What has become of him? No One knows. Peradventure he is sick, or sulky, or has absconded from his Creditors, or has been sent on some secret Mission of importance. No One knows, for no One inquires; till, some Day or other, he is found at the Bottom of a Well; or a Fish-pond proves to have its Secrets as well as the Lake of *Lerna*; or a Bit of his Hair or

his Cloak is perceived sticking out of the Ground, and People search and find his bloody Corpse, and shrug their Shoulders, and go their Ways.

Besides, there are other and quieter Ways of settling these Matters. Drugged Wines, poisoned Gloves, poisoned Fruits, Ices, and Sweetmeats, *Acqua di Toffania*, Trap-doors, Chests with Spring-locks.—

His Highness's first Duchefs had been *removed*. That had not hindered him of winning a second; a young and beautiful Archduchefs, too! What a mere Trifle, then, would be the removal of a young Poet, with no Family or Faction to support him! *Taffo* was, indeed, well born, his Connexions were excellent, but they would not take up his Quarrel. Besides, *quarrel?* with a *reigning Duke?* Psha!—

Altogether, I felt very uneasy about my young Friend. He was endeared to me by his pleasant Ways even more than by his noble Gifts; he was agreeable to me, interesting to me,—I loved him. Besides, my

Nature was tender ;—though bred a Soldier, I had never drawn Blood in a private Quarrel, being of a placable and amiable Disposition ; had never bit my Thumb at a Man, never lain in Wait, never hired a Bravo. We had had no Occurrences of the Sort in our Family, which, indeed, made its Annals rather tame, but was agreeable to its Representatives ; since if we were not arrogant, we had certainly never given Reason for our Neighbours to call us cowardly. We were of the younger Branch of the *Gambacorti*, who had sided with the *Este Guelfs* ever since the Days of *Eccelino da Romano*, and had never swerved in the least Degree to the *Ghibellines* ; yet were not, for that Reason, always trying to pick a Bone with them, treading on their Heels, or plucking their Beards. My Great-grandfather, *Gentile*, had even overlooked having his Head nearly broken by a Flower-pot being cast down upon it (purposely), from the third Story of the *Palazzo Discaduto*, by the Heir of that House, then in his sixth Year ; and had merely remarked, “ By a Child's

being pert no Honour is hurt," instead of rushing into the House, striking off the Offender's right Hand, and burying it in a Flower-pot ; and yet he had so boldly fought the Turks that no Man dared accuse him of Pusillanimity. It may be said that I inherited his Disposition—which likewise came to me, through my Mother, from the *Soavi*, who were chiefly Men of Peace, and addicted to the Patronage and Cultivation of Letters.

Now, as I came forth from the Duke's Closet, I noted without noting, if One may say so, a Fold in the Curtain over the Door that looked uncommonly fat and full, which I afterwards extremely regretted I had not pricked with my Sword, for I was persuaded that if I had, I should have heard a little Squeak. In fact, Events gave me Reason to suspect that it was highly probable the Duke, who had been playing the Spy, had in his Turn been spied by that Monkey Page *Maddalo*, or him whom we were accustomed to call *Brunello*, on Account of his mischievous,

impish Tricks. How else should what was known only to the Duke and to me, who had every Motive for keeping our own Counsel, creep out and become the Theme of Court Gossips, *Il Farfallo* and others, maliciously distorted and exaggerated?

Thus, it became whispered about, that *Taffo* had kissed the Princess in the Duke's Presence; which was and yet was not true; the Duke being behind the Tapestry, which was not as though the Liberty had been taken before his Face; and, besides, he had but kissed her Hand, which was done twenty Times a Day by one or another.

However, I no sooner heard the Story from the sneering Lips of *Ascanio Geraldini* than I contradicted it flatly to his Face, averring it neither was nor could be true; and, having put him down, I posted off to *Taffo* himself, whom I found scribbling with all his Might.

He coloured up when he saw me, concealing what he was writing under some other Papers, so inartificially that if my Curiosity

had made it worth my while to examine it, I could have drawn it forth with the utmost Ease, the Moment his Back was turned. It was this awkward Way of attempting to hide a Mystery when he had one, just so as to draw One's Attention to it, which so much provoked me with him. He was too guileless for a Courtier; being as transparent as *Montefino's* glass Castle, while he fancied himself as impenetrable as the said *Montefino's* Subterrene: and this was incessantly taken advantage of by those who had not a Quarter of his Sense.

He said, "Ha, Ser *Pantaleone!* you are early this Morning."

I replied, "I am, purposely, for I wanted to find you at Home, and when People are hawking, fowling, or in Church, so that we shall not be interrupted. An awkward Report of you has got about, which may do you great Damage, unless you take care to prove, even ostentatiously, by the scrupulousness of your Conduct, that it was, as I am sure it must have been, unfounded."

He said, somewhat excited, "What can you mean?"

"The Story goes," replied I, bluntly, "that you have kissed Madama *Leonora*."

He turned red, and burst out laughing. "Who has dared set that about?" cried he.

"Nay," said I; "I'm not going to give up Names. I heard it just now, and I suppose you don't doubt my Word."

"Ser *Pantaleone*, you are Truth itself. You must name the Man, however, for I must drive the Lie down his Throat."

"First,—*is* it a Lie?"

"Ah! how I wish it were not!"

"*Taffo*! your Imprudence literally petrifies me! How *can* you be so mad? so foolish?"

"What did you question me for, if you did not want to hear the Truth? I should not have said so to Everybody, but I thought I might to *you*."

"Ah, *Torquato*, my dear Fellow, I don't want such Confidences as these. You ought not to whisper them even to your own Heart."

“Love is a Tyrant, my good old Friend, and will not be fettered.”

“You talk like a Boy and a Coward; every human Passion may be fettered by the *Will*.”

“And *you* talk, my dear good old Ser *Pantaleone*, like One who has never known what Love is, nor seen him except at the Top of a Valentine, or in a Stage Play, tricked out in Spangles and Gold Paper. But tell me, for I am on Thorns to know,—has Madama *Leonora* heard this infamous Fabrication? Ah, what Pain it must have given her! Nothing but Blood can wipe it out.”

“Just as if that would make her one Whit happier, she who is all Humanity and Kindness! I have no Reason whatever to suppose she has heard it; but if, as I suspect, that little Imp *Maddalo* has picked it up, he may convey it to Madama *Lucrezia*, who gives him only too much Encouragement; and she, stung at the supposed Indignity, may carry it to her Sister, and—”

“Ah, horrible! you annoy me beyond

Endurance! I will myself go to Madama *Leonora* and tell her—”

“What? Nonsense, you cannot. Leave the Matter alone, and let it die out; only taking wholesome Warning by it to quench a Predilection as absurd as it is dangerous for a Lady, who, however adorned with every Virtue and Grace that can embellish a Woman and a Princess, is old enough to be your Mother.”

“Old enough to be my Mother!” repeated he, crimsoning exceedingly. Then, quite nettled,—

“*Ser Pantaleone*, let there not be another Word between us. You have done it, now. Though my own and my Father's Friend, you and I must have a deadly Quarrel upon this. Choose your Weapon, and meet me at Day-dawn To-morrow, in the *Pra de' Fiori*, just by where the great Hawthorn and old Dog-rose intermingle—”

“Hawthorn! Dog-rose!” interrupted I, bursting out laughing. “My dearest *Tasso*, what a Place! I will meet you there, I

promise you, but it must be to eat Curds and Cream !”

“ Ser *Pantaleone*—”

“ Not another Word ! Do you bring Appetite, and I’ll bring Cates conforming. I am quite in earnest, and shall like it beyond Measure, for I have a thousand Things I want to talk over with you. If you love me, though, bring your Lute.”

“ You are treating me like a Child,” (still very huffy.)

“ Nonfense, I love you too much. Let it be as I have settled it, I entreat you. I am engaged every Day of the Week and every Hour of the Day, and can make no Arrangement with you, if not this.”

And, flinging my Arm about his Neck, I looked eagerly and good-naturedly at him ; till, bursting out a laughing,

“ Let it be so, then,” cries he, with restored Good-humour. “ A singular Character you always were, Ser *Pantaleone*, and a singular Character you always will be !”

“ Aye, that I shall, I dare say,” said I

merrily; "I'm full of Faults and Foibles, I very well know, and the only Reason people put up with me is that they know I've good Intentions."

"Something more than that, my old Friend."

"Oh no, Nothing more, Nothing more. Adieu, adieu—I am off to the Barber-furgeon's to buy some Freckle-water for Madama *Leonora*."

And waving my Hand gaily to him, I ran off, laughing in my Sleeve.

I might as well have said the excellent Princess was old enough to be his Grand-mother while I was about it; for, in Fact, she was ten Years his senior and no more, so that he had been reasonably provoked by my Exaggeration, which had solely resulted from my Desire to laugh him out of his dangerous Predilection at any Price, without my having had sufficient Respect for the Person of my august Mistress.

It was remarkable that the Duchesse *Renée*, herself the plainest of Women, should have given birth to two Daughters singularly

beautiful, and also singularly youthful in their Appearance as they advanced in Life; so that both of them became Objects of sincere Passion to Men much younger than themselves. For, not only was Madama *Leonora* the unquestionable Object of *Torquato's* profound Idolatry, but Madama *Lucrezia*, her senior by a year, was about this Time sued for in Marriage by the young Prince (soon afterwards Duke) of *Urbino*. And though State Reasons, wholly independent of real Preference, undoubtedly caused this Overture to be made in the first Instance, when, indeed, his Highness had not so much as seen our Madama, yet directly he did so, he immediately fell in Love with her, being charmed with her Person, her Manners, and her Gifts. But this by the Way.

When I reached the Place of Appointment the next Morning, attended by a Foot-page bearing a Basket, I found my young Gentleman there before me, and his Lute too, cast under the Hawthorn.

“A fair Morning, my dear Friend,” said I.

“A fair Morning,” returned he, leaving off biting his Nails; “but, do you know, Ser *Pantaleone*, the more I reflect on that ugly and very untrue Saying of yours Yesterday—”

“Hush, hush,” whispered I, “don't let's quarrel before the Boy—keep that to the last; I've a score of Matters to settle first.—Mind that Pie, *Rosalvino*!—My dear *Torquato*, do you happen to have a Clasp-knife or two about you?”

“*One* I have,” says he, “but not two. Here it is, at your Service.”

“Then we must ‘turn and turn about, as the Tail laid to the Snout.’”

“Whence got you that?” says he, grinning.

“I made it,” said I. “What a Shame that such a *Pasticcio* as this should be invaded by such a Knife!”

“Send *Rosalvino* for another.”

“No, I want him, to wait. And *I* don't want to wait.”

“Ser *Pantaleone*, you are quite overcoming this Morning!”

“The Air inspires me—so fresh and cool! I should like to bathe somewhere. Now I have made an Entry, at last, into this formidable Cruft, the Gravy-spoon comes into Play. Let me give you some Truffles and Morells. Here’s an Egg. And a Bit of Ham. What will turn up next? The Liver-wing of a Chicken. There, that will do to begin with!”

“You are giving me too much.”

“Nonfense! Now then, *Rosalvino*, take that Roll and Sausage to yonder Bank, and don’t let me see you within Ear-shot till you have finished both. Fill the tall Jug, first, at the Spring, and put that and the narrow-necked Bottle within reach. Now depart; and if you look this Way till you are bidden, look to have a Bone or a Stone thrown at you.—My dear *Torquato*, you are fond of Romances; I am now going to relate to you a true one, while you eat your Pie.”

“Pray begin,” said he, “I am all Attention. But why not have your Breakfast first?”

“Because it would stick in my Throat,—or

else my Story would. I am going to relate to you a Love-story of mine, which occurred when I was a very young Man, and considered not ill-looking by the Ladies."

So I told him my unfortunate Affair with *Madonna Silvia Millamanti*, and the Dance she led me for Nothing, to which he listened with profound Attention.

"Now, see," said I in Conclusion, "what Trouble, Expence, and Disappointment this Attachment led me into! and see also, how indifferent to her I am at present. I thought I could not live without her—I find I can do so perfectly well. I thought I could never forget her—on the contrary, I very seldom remember her. I fancied the main Object of my Life was gone; whereas its real Business had not even begun."

"*Ser Pantaleone*," said *Torquato*, after a Pause, "all this is exceeding well, but what has it to do with me?"

"Your Case somewhat resembles what mine was."

"On the contrary, I cannot perceive the

least Likeness between them. You fixed your Affections on a weak, worthless, worldly Woman; I have anchored mine on One who is all Virtue, all Sweetness, all Purity, all Constancy. Your Object was to win your Prize. I have never had the smallest Hope of doing so from Beginning to End; I may have wished much, but I have hoped little, and asked Nothing. As soon as you found you were slighted, you grew restive, broke your Chains, and diverted your Thoughts to another Channel. I love my Chains, and would not break them if I could."

"Which is very wrong and very senseless of you," said I.

"I must be Judge of that. I hurt Nobody but Myself; and if I prefer the Pain to being without it, where's the Harm and where's the Wrong?"

"There is both Harm and Wrong, and you may hurt Somebody besides yourself."

"Never. This is no Affair of yours, dear Ser *Pantaleone*. You are no Poet."

"No," said I, "and you make me glad I

am not one. For if a poetic Genius of the finest Order only serves to lead its Owner astray, or at any Rate does not keep him from being so led,—plain Prose for me!”

“Prose has nothing whatever to do with it. One may be as prosy as you please, without being one Whit the better Man.”

“Granted; but is it not to be deplored that so divine a Light should be only a Beacon to warn us of Breakers on the Coast, instead of a hospitable Fire to warm and cherish us?”

“It both warms and cherishes me. I can assure you, Ser *Pantaleone*, that if I could not tag so much as *amore* to *ardore*, I should love the divine *Leonora* all the same; only I should then be a miserable, grovelling Wretch, fit only for her to crush with her Foot. Whereas, my divine Gift (for I *receive* it, therefore may praise it!) is the greatest, the only Solace my unfortunate Case can know; it cheers me in Heaviness, is my Companion in Loneliness, Wakefulness, and

Painfulness, makes me indifferent to Want of Money, Want of Kindred, Want of Friends, Malice of Enemies, purifies me, ennobles me, exalts me !”

“ *Does it purify you ?* ”

“ It does. Imagination is the one Talent I have received from my Maker, and I try to sanctify it to his Service.”

“ Well, my dear *Taffo*, if you are presumptuous in one Respect, you are modest in another, to talk of having only *one* Talent—”

“ I’ve no other, Ser *Pantaleone* ! ”

“ You are a capital Fellow, there’s no denying. But, forgive me, you nourish and foster this unfortunate Passion instead of trying to suppress it.”

“ No, I don’t.” (Tears running down his Cheeks.)

“ I think you do.—You think it tells well for a Poet to be a Prey to a hopeless, ungovernable Love. You think it makes an interesting Feature in your fabulous Hero, and you have no dislike to be a little Bit of the Hero yourself,—hey, *Taffo* ? ”

“Ser *Pantaleone*, eat your Pie.”

“Well, I will, now you are laughing. What an April-day Fellow you are! You think, because I can't make Verses, I have no Respect for Poetry. You are mistaken: I have a very great Respect for Poets who make a religious and ennobling Use of their Art. I had the greatest Respect for your Father, and I consider you infinitely the better Poet of the two—”

“Ah, don't praise me at his Expense! I never like that.”

“I will not, for I like your Feeling. All I would say is, that while I respect and admire the legitimate Use of the creative Power, I deprecate the excessive and exclusive Cultivation of the Imagination, which, unless kept under very strong Control by Reason and Religion, becomes a Power that delights but destroys. And now, fall to, like a Man that is a Meal or two behind-hand!”

We then diverted the Talk to Subjects which we could discuss with Harmony; after

which, we cheerfully parted, I finding myself constrained to acknowledge to myself, that if he had a somewhat perverse Will, he had at all events a very sweet Temper.

CHAPTER VII.

Of the advantageous Marriage that Ser Pantaleone proposed to his Friend.

ABOUT this Time, the young Prince of *Urbino* made his Appearance among us. He looked even younger than he was, being nigh as little as the famous *Dolabella*, whose Father-in-law so ingeniously complimented him on being so neatly tied to his Sword. Perhaps it may have been owing to this, that on his Excellency's being presented to the Princesses, who were dressed precisely alike—that is to say, in azure Velvet looped and fringed with Silver—we could perceive that his Eye rested with most pleasure on Madama *Lucrezia*, who was lower of Stature than her Sister, even before he knew her by name; and thenceforth the Predilection

continued increasing in a most satisfactory Manner, during the whole of his Visit.

All that Time, Nothing was thought of but hawking or fishing Parties, Concerts, Dances, and theatrical Entertainments. The Consequence was, that Gossip and Slander held their Tongues for a While; Everyone, even down to *Maddalo* and *Bertazzolo*, being more agreeably occupied than in picking Holes in his Neighbour's Doublet. The Sisters, who had hitherto scarcely lived out of each other's Sight, and who were now about to be permanently separated, grudged each Moment between the Betrothal and the Espousals, that was not spent together; and so much Time was necessarily occupied in Arrangements for the Marriage, that *Taffo* either was, or appeared to be, only one in a Crowd.

In the Course of the Summer, the young Prince arrived to receive his Bride; and the Nuptials were celebrated with every Pomp imaginable. Then followed Balls, Banquets, and Entertainments, which, whether for the Beauty of the Ladies, the Nobility of the

Cavaliers, the Richness of their Dresses, or the Costliness of the Receptions that were given them, entitled *Ferrara* to be justly celebrated as the Sovereign Mistress of the Arts and Luxuries of Peace.

Among the host of minor Minstrels who piped their Lays on this Occasion, *Torquato* naturally appeared like a Nightingale among Sparrows, or a Turbot among Sprats . . . hum! I am not good at these metaphorical Tropes; suffice it to say that the Canzone he composed in Honour of the Wedding gave the greatest Satisfaction to the august Party, who graced him with many Tokens of their Approval. Nor did the Princess of *Urbino* fail to tell him she hoped he would visit her princely Husband's Court; to which he replied with suitable Expressions of Gratitude and Pleasure.

But my Impression is, that in Spite of the Compliments that passed between them, *Torquato* was thoroughly glad when the bridal Train departed. At any Rate, I found him, the following Morning, in one of the Garden

Pavilions of the *Belvedere* Palace, seated at the Feet of Madama *Leonora*, and reading a new Portion of his *Jerusalem* to her with great Spirit, while she and a Couple of her Ladies pursued their Embroidery.

This Way of spending the Morning soon became a System; and as the Afternoons and Evenings were chiefly wiled away in Conversation or Music, I conclude he wrote at Night. Thus, the Autumn insensibly stole upon us; and it came to pass that one Day, we were all sitting in the *Belvedere* Gardens, pretty much like a Group in the "*Decamerone*," when suddenly the Earth rocked beneath our Feet, the Sky became darkened, the River surged and rushed with a terrible Noise over its Banks, dreadful Rumbings were heard underground, and all Nature seemed reeling from her Seat. The Shrieks and Cries that would ensue on such an Occasion may be supposed; and when the Darkness began presently to give Place to a dismal Twilight, five-sixths of the Company were on their Knees or wholly prostrate; while *Tasso*,

pale as Death, was supporting the fainting Madama *Leonora* in his Arms. If our first Thought had been of Ourselves, our next was for her; we gathered about her, and would have relieved him of his Burthen, but he mutely repulsed us, and carried her himself into the Palace; there, deeply sighing, he consigned his precious Charge into the Arms of her women, but remained, cast on some Cushions near her Door, with his Face resting on his Hands, till assured she had recovered her Conscioufness.

I dreaded this Display of Feeling, but every One was too much troubled and terrified to notice it; indeed there was so much selfish and slavish Fear betrayed by many of the Men, that it was well there was at least One amongst them who took no Thought for himself.

The whole City was full of Wailing and Confusion, for Houses and Church Towers had fallen and crushed many People, so that those who had sustained no personal Hurt were in Trouble for their Relations. Add to

which, a Feeling of Infecurity remained among us after the Shock had fubfided; nor was this without Reason, for during the enfuing two Months, repeated Earthquakes took Place, fo that we never felt fecure of a Moment's Safety.

You may believe thefe providential Warnings fent us all to our Knees; and in Spite of the Hazard of being buried under the falling Ruins of Churches, never were the Churches more crowded. Among the foremoft of thefe pious Supplicants was our excellent Madama, who indeed almoft lived in Church, making Prayers and Interceffions at one Shrine after another in behalf of the afflicted City. She alfo beftowed Candlesticks and large Tapers on various Saints, paid for fpecial Services for the Dead, vifited, clothed, and fed the Poor, fo that fhe became regarded as little lefs than a Saint; and it was the Opinion of many that fhe ought, after her Death, to be canonized. And it is my Opinion that many have been fo who lefs deferved it.

I usually accompanied her on these Occasions, when, as we passed through the Streets, the reverent and grateful People fell back on either Side to let her pass between them, following her with their Benedictions. But, on one Occasion, having breakfasted with *Taffo*, I was too late for my Duty, and was hurrying with him towards the Church, when we saw Madama *Leonora* approaching us from the other End of the Street. Certainly she looked like a heavenly Votress, as she was; her white Veil, gently wafted by the Breeze, flowed round her angelic Lineaments like a fleecy Summer-cloud; while her Attire, though of the simplest, was so truly becoming that it could not have been improved by the utmost Artifice and Study. She came along, thoughtless of her Appearance, winning her gentle Way like a light Bark among the smooth Waves, neither courting nor shunning Notice, but with her sweet Regards fastened on the Ground.

I heard *Taffo* murmur, “How heavenly!” as she approached; and a Day or two after, he

brought me some Stanzas which he told me he meant to interpolate into the second Canto of his *Jerusalem*, and that he wanted me to tell him my Opinion of them. One of them ran thus:—

‘ *Alone amidst the Crowd the Maid proceeds,
Nor seeks to hide her Beauty, nor display;
Downcast her Eyes, close veil'd in simple Weeds,
With coy and graceful Steps she wins her Way
So negligently neat, one scarce can say
If she her Charms disdains or would improve,
If Chance or Taste disposes her Array;
Neglects like hers, if Artifices, prove
Arts of the friendly Heavens, of Nature and of Love.’**

Directly I read this, I perceived it was the exact Description of Madama *Leonora*, and charged him with it. I told him *Guarini*, *Pigna*, and in short every One would recognise it: at which he only laughed, and said he did not care if they did.

After this, the Cardinal carried him with him to *France*; and, after their Return, sent him with *Manzuoli* on a special Mission to

* Wiffen's Translation.

Rome, where he was honourably received. I now found that he corresponded with Madama *Leonora*, and indeed, with the Dukes of *Urbino* also; but, whereas the latter was merely a Correspondence of Kindness and friendly Offices, the other was of pure Friendship, not to say reciprocal Affection. I learnt that he was discontented with Cardinal *Luigi's* Treatment of him, and desirous of exchanging his Service for that of the Duke. To this End, the Princesses exerted their Influence with their Brother, it may be supposed with good Effect; and the Conclusion was that *Taffo's* Attendance was transferred from the Cardinal to the Duke, with the Promise of his receiving from the latter a Salary of fifteen golden Crowns per Month—no bad Pay for One who had returned from *France* in the same Coat which he had worn when he went there!

In Truth, he now lived in Clover,—dining daily with the Duke, sunning himself in Madama *Leonora's* Eyes, and jogging on with his great Poem; in Addition to which, he now

wrote the "*Aminta*," which was forthwith put in Rehearfal.

"How comes it," I faid to him one Day, "that you who have fo nice a Tafte in Drefs, fhould now always wear plain Linen, neither laced nor fringed?"

He smiled rather fadly and faid, "Tafte is one Thing and Principle another. A Man who cannot even fet up a Stone over his dead Father without pawning his few Moveables, has no Right to Lace or Fringe."

"Is that it?" cried I; "why, *Bertolazzi* fays it is your Humour, — your cynical, fatirical Way of faying, 'Drefs fine, ye who can win no Attention by other Means: I am loved and careffed, you fee, without it.'"

"Let *Bertolazzi* fay his Say. He muft needs be barking or growling at Something. I would wear my Coat infide out if that would keep him from meddling with higher Matters."

"But, my dear *Taffo*, you have now fifteen gold Crowns a Month: no bad Salary."

"Not if it be regularly *paid*, Ser *Panta-*

leone. Besides, I had contracted some small Debts; and I hate Debt like Dirt."

"I have thought of an excellent Way for you to repair your Fortunes!"

"Aye? Pray name it!"

"*Rachaella* the beautiful Jewess, who inherits the Wealth of her Father the famous Physician, is going to be baptized next *Sunday*. Make Suit to her, my dear *Taffo*! '*Domus et placens Uxor!*'"

"Truly, Ser *Pantaleone*, you oblige me by your very Christian Proposal! I happen to be Anything but fond of Jews and Jewesses, and shall certainly not seek a Spouse in the Ghetto."

"She is superbly beautiful, and as good as she is fair."

"I am glad to hear it. *Fair*, indeed!—with a Skin as yellow as an Orange!"

"Have not you yourself settled it that

'il bruno il bel non toglie?'"

"Brown is not yellow. Besides, I object to the Hebrew Persuasion."

"She is converted."

“I object to the Hebrew Extraction.”

“My dear *Taffo*, it was the Extraction of the bleffed Virgin!”

“Hufh, Ser *Pantaleone*!—you are now bordering on the Profane.”

“I affure you, my Meaning was Anything but Profanity. By the Way, *Taffo*, did you ever happen to read the Bible?”

“I am a good Catholic, Ser *Pantaleone*, as far as the reading prohibited Books is concerned, though, alas! far, far from being as good as I fhould be.”

“Well,—I fhould have thought the Cardinal would have given you a Difpenfation for the asking.”

“I never did ask him.”

“Nor ever feel any Temptation to read it?”

“Permit me to ask, Have you ever read it yourfelf?”

“Well,—my Mother was about the poor Duchefs *Renée*, who, you know, got into Trouble through her Calviniftic Predilections; and I felt fome Curiofity to read the Book

which had been the Means of casting the Duchefs into Prifon and feparating her from her Daughters. I have perufed Portions of it, and certainly it is very fine,—very wonderful—carries mightily the Air of Inspiration with it.”

“Of Courfe, only the Ignorant doubt its Inspiration; but Man cannot eat of the Tree of Knowledge with Impunity.”

“Well, I am furprifed to hear you fay fo—you, a Student of *Padua* and *Bologna*!”

“Are you furprifed I never meddled with the occult Arts? never fought the grand Arcanum?”

“That’s another Thing.”

“Do you think that *Leo* . . . that Madama *Leonora* has ever read the Bible?”

“You have fo much more literary Converfation with her than I have, that you are the likelielt to know. This much I am aware of,—that fhe poffeffes a Copy of the Scriptures which belonged to her unfortunate Mother; but I believe fhe only treasures it as a Keepfake.”

“Ha!”

A Day or two after, I surpris'd him in earnest Conversation with Madama *Leonora*, and heard her say in a low Voice,

“No Matter—it is only Ser *Pantaleone*, who is somewhat hard of Hearing”—(which I was not—); “take it, my dear Friend, but use it with due Caution.”

And pressing a small Casket to her Lips, she wrapped it in a Piece of green Silk and placed it in his Hands. He kissed her Hand, and reverently took the Casket, which he concealed beneath his Mantle, and then withdrew.

Shortly after, on calling at his Lodgings, I found him immerf'd in Study, and heard him mutter,

“This is wholly unfit for *Leonora* to read—her divine Faith will become clouded. Ha, Ser *Pantaleone!* you stole upon me unawares—you tread as stealthily, sometimes, as *Maddalo.*”

“My dear *Taffo*, I see no Merit in wearing creaking Shoes. What curious little Casket is this?”

“Leave it alone, I pray you!”—

“ Well, I think I have seen it before.”

“ Possibly—though not very likely.”

“ It looks to me for all the World like one which Madama *Leonora* received from poor Duchefs *Renée*, and which . . . ”

“ I see you know all about it. You are right; it contains the poor Mother’s dangerous Gift to her devoted Daughter, who, however, like an Angel as she is, has hoarded it like a Talisman, without bewildering herself with its Contents.”

“ What *are* its Contents ? ”

“ The Holy Scriptures . . . See—”

And he showed me a thick little Volume, (brazen-clasped,) and bound in red Velvet, that was interspersed with Notes, References, and Quotations, in the Hand-writing of the poor Duchefs, whose Cypher was on the Fly-leaf. I looked at it over his Shoulder with Interest.

“ See,” said I, “ here is a Lock of her Hair between the Leaves,—and here, a dried Sprig of Myrtle,—and here, a Strip of Ribbon embroidered with her Initials. How interesting a Keepfake to Madama *Leonora* ! ”

“ Yes, but a very unsafe one for her to study. I have almost bewildered myself with what I have been reading in it.—*If* this be the Word of Truth—”

He paused, and looked upwards with a troubled and perplexed Expression.

“ What, then ? ”

“ Why, then, Ser *Pantaleone*, our Churchmen have committed some strange Blunders—I will not puzzle my Brains about them any more at present ; let us go forth.”

And, carefully enclosing the Bible in the Casket, he locked the Casket in his Bureau, threw on his Cloak, and sallied out with me, chatting on indifferent Subjects.

As we entered the Street, Count *Turchi* passed us, and responded to *Taffo's* courteous Removal of his Hat by a very flight and negligent Inclination of his Head. *Torquato* kindled at this, and muttered to me,

“ That's what I cannot brook ! Who is *he*, that neglects to salute me as an equal ? Surely, my Family and the reputation of my Father entitle me to that much, without saying Any-

thing of the Position in which the Duke's Condescension places me, which I candidly acknowledge is above my Deserts."

I said, "You are not vain, but you are Proud. Nobody takes less on himself for his own acknowledged Merits than you do, but you fire up if a Noble neglects to treat you as if you were on the same Level. You take Pepper in your Nose too soon. This gives the Ill-natured an Opportunity of which they continually avail themselves, of wounding you at a Point where they know you are vulnerable. Set one Thing against another. Set the Overestimate, if you will have it so, of the Duke and Madama *Leonora*, against the petty Ill-breeding of those who have nothing but their Titles to boast of. Is it not well purchased at such a Price?"


"Ah, indeed is it!" said he gladly; "but this same Pride, which has Something honest in it after all, is my besetting Sin, and the one for which my Confessor ofteneft puts me to Penance. Nor can I be so insincere and so base as to affect Respect, which I feel not, for

thofe who have only a Purfe and a Pedigree to value themfelves upon. As for the Arro-gance of Men of Letters, let him laugh who wins! Why, now, there's *Guarini*, as proud, between ourfelves, of his very ordinary Poetry as of his very ordinary Wife—!”

Turning a fharp Corner, who fould we come upon but *Guarini* himfelf, who looked as black as Night at us. I laughed as we paffed on, and faid, “ You have now made an Enemy of him, and he was not very friendly before. When will you learn to keep a prudent Tongue in your Head? ”

CHAPTER VIII.

Of Ser Pantaleone's getting into Jeopardy.

 ridiculous but highly dangerous Adventure occurred to me on my Return to the Palace. I was passing through the Gallery adjoining the *Neptune* Apartment, when it occurred to me to wonder whereabouts the Closet could be in which I had been concealed. The Gallery had on one Side a Range of Windows, overlooking the Moat, and the opposite Wall was hung with stamped Leather, over which were suspended a dozen or more full-length Portraits of the Princes of *Este*. I could give a pretty good Guess as to the Part of the Gallery which corresponded to the Position

of the Couch on which Madama *Leonora* had been sitting, and was passing my Hand somewhat curiously over the Leather Hanging thereabouts, when suddenly I felt the Panel behind it give Way, the Spring having been imperfectly snapped. I lifted the Flap of the Hanging, and perceived, sure enough, the Entrance to the Closet; when, at the same Instant, as ill Luck would have it, the Door of the Gallery at the other End opened, and I caught a Glimpse of a crimson velvet Shoe, with large white Rosette, which I knew full well for that of the Duke. To spring into the Closet and shut myself in was the Work of a Moment; but the next Instant the Thought occurred to me, how I was to let myself out again, since I had not had Time to observe the Position of the Spring inside. I instantly began to feel for it, but, to my immense Dismay, could not find it! Here was a position for me Ser *Pantaleone!* The Duke had already quitted the Gallery, for I had heard him close the Door opposite to that by which he had entered; so that.

even had it been safe to cry out, Nobody would have heard me.

I now, in considerable Agitation, surveyed the *Neptune* Apartment through the Eye-holes, but it was empty. A Lute and Music-book on the Couch, however, showed that it had been recently occupied, and I hoped Madama *Leonora* might return, and that I might be able, without frightening her, to make her privately acquainted with my ridiculous Situation. What a pretty Story she would have against me, though, of finding me occupying a Spy-closet overlooking one of her private Apartments! What a hateful System is Espionage! thought I; how degrading, how subversive of Confidence! I wonder whether *I* have ever been listened to and spied upon by Anybody, when I least suspected it? Well, they never found me about much Harm, that's one Comfort.

See the Blessing of a good Conscience! Happy those who have never said or done aught that could not stand the Light of honest Day! However, Dinner-time was

coming on, and my Appetite was not very bad, and I began to wonder whether I had any Chance of having a Dinner, or were to be pent up like a Rat behind the Waincot for the short Remnant of my Days.

I began, somewhat nervously, to renew my Search for the Spring-lock, when I suddenly heard Voices in the Gallery. I listened eagerly to hear whether they were of Friend or Foe, and found, to my Chagrin, they belonged to the latter. In fact, *Claudio Bertolazzi* and *Ascanio Giral dini* were discussing, after their mischievous Fashion, the approaching Performance of the "*Aminta*."

"He will be Pet of the Court, more than ever," says *Ascanio*, "and all for what? Some ridiculous Flatteries of the Duke that he has introduced into the Speeches of his *Tirsis*, whom he means for himself. Fancy *Taffo* in a Shepherd's Hat and Cloak, representing himself as welcomed to *Ferrara* by a Man of most divine and august Presence, by whom, of course, he means his Highness!

'I saw,' says he, '*Phæbus* and the *Muses*; and amongst the *Muses*, *Elpino* fitting.' Psha! pish! who could not write better Poetry than that? *Guarini*, and even *Pigna*, might outdo him any Day. '*Inter strepit Anser olores!*'"

"He has propitiated *Pigna*," rejoined *Afcanio*, "by a tinkling Compliment."

"He won't propitiate *Guarini*, though," said *Claudio*, "by any such shallow Artifice. What a Blight, what a Mildew is this Fellow! I only wish he were safe clapped up by the Inquisition!"

Here I sighed in a low Voice, which the Hanging sufficiently muffled,—"*O Claudio! Claudio!*" which, being prolonged to a dismal *softenuto*, made him ready to start out of his Skin, and I presently heard them both scampering out of the Gallery.

I shook with suppressed Laughter, but then became aware that there were Voices on the other Side of me. I peeped through my Spy-hole, and perceived the Duke and Madama *Leonora* seated on the Sofa beneath.

“Sister,” he was saying in his gentlest Voice, “this aversion from Marriage is very singular, to say no worse of it. You have Nothing to urge against this very advantageous Alliance but simply your preference for a single Life.”

“Is that so remarkable?” returned she, in Tones equally gentle. “I am no longer young; I am perfectly happy, my dear Brother, in your Society, and in that of the distinguished and intelligent Circle you gather round you. My Health is delicate, my Tastes are quiet, and my Spirits, as you know, have been tender ever since my Separation from my beloved Mother and my dear Sister.”

“Still, these are no Reasons, my Sister, why you should not carry out all your own Tastes and Wishes in a Home so desirable as that now offered to you. Your Court will still be distinguished for its Love of Letters, your Health will be cared for by a fond Husband.”

“Ah, cease, dear Brother, I pray you—I am no longer young and sprightly enough to inspire real Fondness.”

“Nay, is not *Lucrezia* a Year older than you are? see how beloved she is by a Husband fifteen Years younger than herself!”

“Dear *Lucrezia* is one in a thousand, but I have always considered the Ages of the Parties terribly disproportioned.”

“Well, *Leonora*, your Mind seems invincibly made up; but allow me to tell you, my Sister, that this Resolution strongly argues the Existence of a prior and concealed Attachment.”

“Fie, Brother! at my Age, one might expect to be safe from such Suspicions.”

“You make your Age a mere Bugbear; in Reality it is Nothing more, for you are still the handsomest and most graceful Woman in my Court, and are blushing, this Moment, in the Consciousness that my Accusation is true.”

“Only at your excessive and unfounded Praise, I assure you, Brother. Ah! let us continue to be happy as we are now! Dear *Barbara* is gone, you are hardly likely to replace her; you need a Woman to take the Lead in your Court; I am popular among

your People, I love your Society, I love my happy Home."

"Enough, *Leonora*," tenderly kissing her Hand, "I will never urge you to Aught against your confirmed and known Wish, be assured of it, my Sister! Continue to be the Praise and Ornament of my Court, where every selfish Feeling naturally prompts me to retain you."

At this Moment, I astounded myself as much as the royal Pair by a loud Sneeze. Courtiers ought never to Sneeze; it is quite contrary to all good Manners; and I was sufficiently punished for my Breach of Propriety by the Dismay it occasioned.

"What is that? who is that?" cried Madama *Leonora*, rising in Alarm.

The Duke, starting to his Feet, with his Hand clapped on his Sword, darted a fierce Look up towards the Place in which I was enclosed, but wherein I was, happily, totally concealed from View.

"Be at Rest,—I will see to this," he hastily said to his Sister; and, with a muttered Curse,

he hastily quitted the Chamber. Ah! I knew he would come immediately to the Gallery and open the Closet!—I remembered with a Shudder the miserable *Ercole Contrario*, who had entered that Gallery and . . . never came back; and I seemed already to feel the Duke's Sword between my Ribs. I made a second and desperate Effort at the Door, which, as Luck would have it, yielded to me at the first Touch—I hastily sprang forth, closed it after me, slipped beneath the Hanging, and rushed from one End of the Gallery just as the Duke was entering the other.

As *Taffo* said afterwards of his *Erminia*,

“*Non scese, no, precipito da Sella,*”

so might it be said of me, that I ran not, no, I darted down the Stairs, along a Labyrinth of Stone Passages, into a low, vaulted Guard-chamber that happened to be unoccupied, where scarcely had I paused to draw Breath, when the Sound of

“*Ser Pantaleone! Ser Pantaleone!*” filled me with fresh Consternation. Well I knew

the Voice for that of one of the Duke's Pages! I flung myself into the deep Embra-
sure of a grated Window in the Wall, and
composed myself into the Attitude of one who
had been soundly sleeping for many Hours.

Enters to me *Angelo*, the Duke's Page.

"Ser *Pantaleone*," says he, "his Highness
wants you immediately. Why, how now?"
shaking me by the Shoulder.

"Hey? what?" said I, waking reluctantly,
and opening first one Eye and then the other.

"How come you to be so drowsy," said he,
"when I saw you just now darting down the
Stairs like mad? The Duke requires you in
his Closet, Ser *Pantaleone*!"

Most unwillingly did I rise and walk off
with as good a Grace as I could. Proceeding
towards the Duke's Closet, I passed the cur-
tained Portrait of the Duchess *Lucrezia* with
an inward Shudder, and thought, I too might
be about to be removed.

I saw by the sinister Expression of his High-
ness's Countenance and the Twitching of his
Moustache that he was exceedingly irate.

“Ser *Pantaleone*,” said he, “look to the Door, Sir! and let us have no Eaves-droppers! —Draw near. You know the Clofet in which I placed you for a particular Reason some Time ago?”

“Certainly, your Highness—That is, I know that you placed me in it, but the Way to and from it you concealed from me.”

“Well—the Veracity which you displayed on that Occasion assured me of your Fidelity. To you, therefore, I confide that its Secret has been discovered.”

“Is it possible?” (with a well acted Start.)

“Yes, Sir—I was in Conference with Madama *Leonora* on private Affairs of Moment, when some one who was in that Clofet sneezed!”

“What Perfidy! what Ill-breeding!” ejaculated I.

“Ill-breeding, Sir?” repeated the Duke, twisting his Mouftache. “That Man's life, could I find him, would not be worth a Day's Purchase!”

“Ah!—who could it be?”

“That I desire to ask you, Ser *Pantaleone*.”

“My lord Duke, so many Persons come and go—and I, unfortunately, have been but just summoned by *Angelo* from the lower Guard-room, where I was taking a Siesta. But, what a perplexing Circumstance! The more I think of it, the more it perturbs me! Who knows what may have been overheard in that Closet! Ah! what Mischiefs our Ancestors prepared for us in contriving such Places! What Conversations may have been misinterpreted,—what Actions may have been vilified,—what Characters may have been destroyed,—what Lives may have . . . ”

“Silence, I pray you, Sir!” said the Duke, rising in extreme Perturbation, and taking a Turn up and down the Closet with folded Arms and knitted Brows.

Presently, stopping short before me, he said abruptly,

“Can it have been *Taffo*?”

“Impossible, your Highness—I called at his Lodging this Morning, and found him immersed in Study.”

“ *Giraldini ? Bertolazzi ?* ”

Here was an Opportunity for me to get two troublesome Foes out of the Way ! But I did not avail myself of it.

“ Ah,” said I, “ if your Highness could but have condescended to repair instantly to the Gallery, where you alone knew the exact Position of the Closet ! ”

“ I did ! ”

“ And found it— ”

“ Empty and close-shut. ”

“ Hum ! *Could* any one have sneezed ? ”

“ I can credit my own Ears, Sir ! ”

“ And Madama *Leonora* ? Did *she* judge the Sound to issue from the Closet ? ”

“ Madama *Leonora* knows Nothing of the Closet. ”

“ Hold ! a Thought occurs to me. Madama's favourite Greyhound, *Fidelio*, sneezes precisely like a Man, and may have been under the Sofa. ”

“ Psha ! this sneeze, I tell you, came from over the Sofa, not under it. Ser *Pantaleone*, you grow old and stupid—you may go ; your Suggestions are worth Nothing. ”

I retired, devoutly thankful for having escaped the Duke's Vigilance, though he was down upon me as sharp as an Awl;—and thinking that if *Taffo* had been amenable to Suspicion, I should have been almost as much dismayed as if it had fastened on myself.

From this Time, however, he became the Object of silent but dangerous Scrutiny—the Duke's Eye was on him. This did not produce any evil Consequences at first; on the contrary, while the brilliant Success of the "*Aminta*" was fresh in the public Mind, *Taffo* was the Darling not alone of the Court and City, but of all *Italy*. But his Cup of sweet had bitter in it.

I noticed about this Time that Madama *Leonora* became very shy of him. This might have been in Consequence of the Duke's having expressed Suspicions of a secret Attachment. She knew he never forgot a Thing of this Sort, till he had tracked it out like a Slow-hound. *Taffo* himself also may have given her some private Umbrage. Certain it is, she publicly neglected him for *Guarini*, whose

Conversation she cultivated, whose Adulation she encouraged, whose Verses she listened to and commended.

Taffo was nearly crazy with Jealousy, Rage, and Mortification. I met him coming from her one Morning in a Tumult of Angry Feeling; he passed me without speaking, and the next thing I heard was that he had departed from *Ferrara* on a Visit to the Dukes of *Urbino*, who, having been unable to witness the Representation of the "*Aminta*," had desired to hear him read it himself.

I hoped this would change his Current of Thought, but have Reason to believe he only chafed, fumed, and bit his Chain during his Absence. My Reason for thinking so is this —I received a Letter from him, inscribed to me, but, directly I opened it, I saw he had addressed it to me by mistake. It was to Madama *Leonora*, and, being so fairly (or perhaps unfairly) placed in my Hands, I could not deny myself the Gratification of greedily reading it; for our Family have always been fond, to excess, of reading

interesting Letters, or Letters that perhaps might prove to contain Something interesting, —whether addressed to ourselves or to other Persons.

CHAPTER IX.

Of Ser Pantaleone reading a Letter that was not intended for him to see.

MADAMA," he began, "I have been thus long without writing to your Excellency, more from Want of Subject than of Inclination," (a false Excuse, always, since when we incline to talk to our Friends we can always find Plenty to say to them; but this was written in great Bitterness, as well as all that followed.) "I send your Excellency a Sonnet, *as I think I recollect* having promised to send you all my new Compositions. It has little Resemblance, indeed, *to those beautiful ones* which I believe you are daily in the Habit of receiving," (he means from *Guarini*, of whom he is desperately

jealous,) “and, indeed, it is as poor in Wit and Art, as I myself am in good Fortune. In my present State of Mind, it is impossible for me to do better, and I send it, as, whether good or bad, it will effect what I desire. Do not think, however, that I have at Present such a Dearth of Thoughts as to have any Room in my Heart for *Love*,” (of Course not!) “it expresses not my own Feelings, or it might not have been so bad, but was composed at the Request of a poor Lover,” (poor *Taffo*! one of your shallow Feints!) “who, having for some Time past quarrelled with his Mistress, can hold out no longer, but is forced to capitulate and sue for Mercy.”

And then a Sonnet, the very Soul of passionate Entreaty and Self-upbraiding, far too real in its Grief to have been written for another Man.

Of Course I was not going to be base enough to injure my Friend, or to withhold his Letter from the Party for whom it was designed. No, no! his Secret was as safe with me as in his own Bosom; and, though she had perhaps

got his Letter for me instead of her own, that should not interfere with my immediately putting her in Possession of what she was likely enough to prize but too dearly, even at some Risk to myself.

The Matter required delicate handling; I had broken the Seal quite innocently, had perused the Contents not so innocently, but still she would never know whether I had read them or not, since, even if I had *not* done so, she might not have believed me. I resealed the Letter with a Head of *Virgil*, a Keepsake of my Father's that I had never had Occasion to use before—it was not, therefore, known for mine, and might well, from its Subject, pass for a Seal of *Taffo's*, or for one that he had borrowed at *Casteldurante*.

I placed the Letter, privately, where I knew Madama *Leonora* would see it, close beside a Posy of Lilies of the Valley which her Page had laid beside her Gloves, and left Things to take their Chance.

In Spite of my Disaffection for petty Intrigues, I was beginning to find that they who

live in Courts can scarce keep clear of them. Hardly had I left the Madama's Chamber, when *Angelo* met me, with Anxiety on his Countenance, and told me the Duke required me immediately. My Heart palpitated like that of a Culprit, just because I was Conscience-stricken; and on entering the Duke's Closet, my Alarm was not allayed by seeing him standing with his drawn Sword in his Hand, in a threatening and terrific Posture, while *Maddalo*, trembling like a Leaf, was kneeling at his Feet.

This *Maddalo* was as thoroughly bad a Boy as I ever knew about Court, where at the best the Training is not very improving. He was about sixteen, but looked two or three Years younger, being dwarfish in Stature, slim and supple as an Eel, of olivander Complexion, narrow Brows, black, impenetrable Eyes, and thin Lips; and whereas he might lay some Claim to *i Pensieri stretti*, he could make none whatever to *il Volto sciolto*, having an Expression as sly, subtle, and malign as his Character. This Lad, not worth his Macca-

roni, was the Pest of the Palace, always for Malice even if he got Nothing by it, and it was regretted by all but those who made him a serviceable Tool that the Duke and Madama *Lucrezia* had always been partial to him, whether aware of his Baseness or not I cannot aver. This I may say, that I always considered he had had Something to do with the Removal of our first Dukes, because I found that Impression to exist when I first was of the Household, though that was after her Demise.

The Duke, in a low, quiet Tone, which he always used when dangerous, said,

“Come, Ser *Pantaleone*, here is News. We have found the Spy in the Closet.”

“Indeed?” cried I, my Heart leaping to my Lips.

“I found him there myself, Sir; and how often he has been there already, what he heard while there, and how he discovered the Spring, he is about to relate to us immediately.”

“Or his Life is not worth an Anchovy,” said I, involuntarily uttering what I believed

the State of the Case, rather than playing into the Duke's Hands by frightening the Boy, who, however, took it so completely in Earnest that he could for a while only gasp,

“Altezza! Altezza!” holding up his clasped Hands for Mercy. The Duke, still frowning, commanded him to begin confessing at once, or he should have the Truth pressed out of him with iron Weights; and sat down with his Sword, still unsheathed, in his Hand. I fancy, from the incoherent Medley of household Scandal that the Page now ran off his Tongue, he thought the more he confessed the more acceptable; and at the same Time he forgot not his own private Enmities, for scarce a Member of the Household did he omit to say Something scandalous of, save *Brunello*, *Ascanio Giral dini*, and *Claudio Bertolazzi*. As for *Madama Leonora*, he seemed afraid of meddling with her, but *Tasso* he spared not; yet all he alleged of him was so inconclusive or manifestly fabricated as that I valued it not at a Walnut. From the Duke's immoveable Countenance it was im-

possible to gather whether he believed one Thing more or less than another. When the Page paused, he remained silent and meditative awhile; then said to me,

“Ser *Pantaleone*, you perceive we are now spared the Trouble of making further Search for the Spy, and I will detain you no longer;” on which I, bowing, withdrew, but only into the adjoining Ante-chamber, where I remained Half an Hour before *Maddalo* came out and passed on without appearing to see me. The result of this Conference, though I say it not of a Certainty, was, in my Opinion, malign, and fatal to the Interests of *Taffo*, whom *Maddalo* was instructed thenceforth to spy, to report upon, and to betray. I may be mistaken, but I think I am not. Soon after this, I met *Taffo* running up the Palace Steps. I cried, “So soon returned!” which was a stupid Speech, for he had been absent several Weeks.

“Soon?” he repeated, “I seem to have been absent long enough for little Boys to grow old Men,” and ran up the grand Staircase.

When we were next together, he showed me a fine Ruby the Duchefs *Lucrezia* had given him, and fundry other valuable Tokens of Friendship he had received from her and her noble Husband; but he looked pale, thin, and careworn, and spoke with little Pleasure of his Sojourn at *Casteldurante*. He now cast himself into the Labour of Composition with the most intense Zeal and Perseverance, writing Day and Night, scarcely pausing for Food or Rest. I told him he was overdoing it. He said sadly, “It is the best Thing for me—the *only* Thing for me. My Pen is my only Mistress—I love her! she is true to me, employs me, elevates me, consoles me—I only wish I had always been true to *her*.”

I said, “You talk now like a good and reasonable Man. Only practise what you profess, and you will be as happy as you already are great. You will be no loser, even in a worldly View, for the more you shut yourself up from the World, the more the World will follow you.”

“The World’s a Fool!” said he abruptly.

“ A great, big, bloated Bubble. I value it at what it is worth. But we have each a little World of our own, that is *all* the World to us, like the Landscape around us reflected in a single Drop of Water. In that little World of mine, Women have ever held a large Place. They are better than we are, Ser *Pantaleone*; kinder, truer, purer, more unselfish, more imaginative, with quicker Fancies, with readier Intuition, with more Tact, with finer Perceptions, with holier Aspirations. I consider it the greatest Privilege of my Life to have known my Mother, my Sister, and Madama *Leonora*.”

“ Thus formed for domestic Life, my dear *Taffo*, I regret that you do not marry.”

“ Suppose I say the same to *you*, Ser *Pantaleone*! — Basta! I am now in the Middle of a Combat between *Tancred* and *Argantes*, and must no longer leave them idle.”

The soothing Kindness of Madama *Leonora* to him at this Time was extreme, and doubtless proved Balm to his Heart. Had it been less, he would probably have lacked Com-

posure to finish his immortal Poem; which being at length wound up, to the infinite Admiration of all but his Ill-wishers, was submitted by him, with his usual Modesty and Good-temper, to the Criticisms of his Friends at *Rome*.

In Truth, I believe not there ever was a humbler-minded or gentler Man of Genius. Ah! what Irritations and Vexations did he not meekly take from captious Cavillers! What senseless Objections! what absurd Emendations! He, the Darling and Glory of all *Italy*!

One professed to find Impiety in connecting Fiction with a religious Subject, and thought the Poem had better be suppressed altogether. Another recommended him, as a Friend, to leave out all about Enchantment,—it was dangerous to have any Dealings with the black Art. A third would have Nothing whatever to say on the Subject of Love; oh no! *Clorinda*, *Armida*, *Erminia*, and *Sophronia* were all to be scratched out. A fourth considered the Unity of the Fable would be

improved by the Omission of the principal Hero, *Rinaldo*. A fifth would be content with the Suppression of the Incident of the buried Person ; a sixth requested in the coolest Manner imaginable that he would omit the wonderful Ship ; a seventh, that the Garden of *Armida* might be made more of a Gardener's-ground, devoted to Onions, Carrots, and Cabbages, instead of so dreadfully romantic ; an eighth, that there might be no Allusion to Kisses.

And these were your professional Critics, I warrant you ! Men who held their Heads altogether above poor original Geniuses ; Men who knew what ought to be done and what ought to be said according to this Rule and t'other, and yet could not for the Life of them write Anything themselves that any One but themselves would take the least Pleasure in reading !

I think all this worried him a good Deal, sweetly as he took it. He consented to one Alteration after another, and even to making *Erminia* not only a Christian but a Nun ; and

saw one after another of his sweet Fancies stripped of their Blossoms and robbed of their Bloom, their Boughs, and their Branches, till Nothing but a dry arid Trunk remained. He went, sad yet not furly, to Madama *Leonora*, and told her to what he had yielded.

She would not hear of it! would not part with an Incident! a Line! a Syllable! praised All and Everything with a generous Woman's Warmth, and fatirized his Critics with a Woman's Irony. "Ah, Madama!" he said, "you have overpaid me"—and there were, if I mistake not, Tears in his Eyes as he said it.

But he had other Sources of Disquietude. He told me in great Perturbation that during his Absence from *Ferrara*, his Bureau had certainly had the Lock picked, and his Papers had been examined—Papers which in malicious or ignorant Hands might bring him under the Suspicion, not only of the Duke but of the Inquisition: Notes and Comments, in Fact, on sundry Passages in Madama *Leonora's* Bible which had appeared at Variance with the Doctrines of the Church.

I thought this a ferious Matter, and helped him to sift it out. We found that one Day when *Jacinta Golosa* was gone to Mafs, and had left the House in Charge of a little Girl, a Locksmith and another Person, who wore a Doublet of shamoy Leather, had come and desired access to *Taffo's* Sitting-room, alleging Orders from himself which the Child was too simple to doubt. We proceeded to hunt up all the Locksmiths in *Ferrara*, and at length found one, an honest, poor Fellow, who admitted without any Hesitation that he had, on such a Day, at the desire of a Man he had never before seen, who wore a shamoy Doublet, gone to such a Street, and such a House, where, at the Direction of the Man, whom he concluded its Owner, he had picked the Lock of a Bureau, of which the Man said he had lost the Key. He added that, having done so, the Man paid him and said, "You may go now," which he did, and had thought no more of the Matter, nor had he seen the Man since.

On getting him to describe him to us, he

said he was wall-eyed, had yellowish Teeth, and a Nose somewhat flattish; in short, the Description no ways tallied with that of *Giraldini* nor *Bertolazzi*, though he might have been their Agent.

We therefore paid the Locksmith for his Trouble, and begged him to look about for the Man, whom if he could find, and enable us to identify, we would gladly make it worth his While.

The Locksmith retreated with a good Assurance that he should be able to hunt him up; but, however, Nothing came of it. *Taffo* was grievously perturbed, because some of his Papers had been withdrawn; and he also mentioned to me incidentally, that a Letter to Madama *Leonora*, which it wounded him to think should have met any Eye but her own, had reached her with a Seal different from that which he had set upon it,—*Virgil's* Head, which neither of them could identify as that of any of their Acquaintance.

I could have explained this to him; but

however, as he said it would wound him so to know that it had met any Eye but hers, and as it *had* met mine, all through his own Inadvertence, I let it pass, for why should I want to wound him? I wanted *not* to wound him, and he had said it *would* wound him, and so, as he said it would wound him I said Nothing about it.

There were so many other and greater Things to vex him, manifestly the Work of an Enemy, that I would not add to them this little Thing to vex him, coming from a Friend. Besides, I did it inadvertently, and for his own Good, that is to say, for my own Information, I only desiring Good to him; and a done Thing could not be undone, as we know was said long ago by *Mosca Lamberti*; and it would be stupid and shameful to say Anything about it so long after, and so I let it pass.

Meantime, Madama *Leonora*, witnessing the Perturbation and Trouble of *Taffo*, and considering that after such exhausting Study, and such harassing Controversy, and such

Self-discipline in keeping down his too immoderate Affection for her, he was ready to die of Trouble and Grief,—did, of her heavenly Kindness and Commiseration, carry him and me and two or three others with her to her delicious Country-seat of *Cofandoli*, where, remote from the Bickerings and Backbitings of an envious Court, in a Palace and Gardens as delightful as those of *Armida*, we led a Life more innocent and improving than *Armida's*, rising early, hunting, hawking, fowling, snaring small Birds and Fishes, floating in a gilded Gondolet with silken Awning on the sweet River, playing Lutes, Flutes, Tabrets, and Dulcimers, (I myself could touch the Triangle indifferent well,) making Verses, reading amusing Tales, gathering and eating of Fruit, straying among Beds of choice Flowers, dining on the Grass, supping in the fancy Dairy-house, warbling Canzoni, writing Letters to this Friend and the other to say how happy we were,—and, in short, enjoying ourselves in a most delectable Fashion.

I have always thought the Air particularly fine at *Cosandoli*, and the Water particularly wholesome. The Fish, too, which one catches there in the River, is singularly well-flavoured, and the Poultry and Dairy-produce and Fruits, Legumes and Esculents are, or at least were, the best of their Kind. I never saw such Medlars or Mulberries anywhere else. We had Milk warm from the Cow, and delicious little Milk-rolls hot from the Oven, and broiled Fish fresh caught, and Eggs just laid; and it is wonderful how much my Appetite improved while I was at *Cosandoli*. And so did *Taffo's*.

CHAPTER X.

Of the Proceedings of the Duchefs of Urbino.

I know not if I can fay it was as wifely as kindly done of Madama *Leonora* to give my poor troubled Friend this Haven of Reft in the Midft of his tempeft-toft Voyage. True, he was overwrought, weary, and fick at Heart; true, he had Enemies without, and Trials and Temptations within: but where there's no Strife, there's no Conqueft; God does not willingly grieve nor afflict the Children of Men, nor submit them to any Temptation that has no Way of Escape.

Taffo loved Madama *Leonora* with all the Purity and Fervour his Soul was capable of, and that her exalted Goodnefs was calculated

to inspire. *Taffo* knew he could never win *Madama Leonora*, and fought manfully with himself to conquer a too engrossing Love; *Madama Leonora* saw him striving, wearying, waisting, and had Compassion on him, and did her best to recompense him by the sweet Solace of her Companionship among a little Circle of select Friends, all in Amity with him, and revering his Genius; but was this the Way to cure him? Ah, was it not bidding the poor Moth play round the Candle?

As I have said, all our little Party were in Amity and Harmony, and no hidden Foe was among us to breed Rivalry and Jealousy, and carry back an evil Report of us to the City. But, of Course, those who were excluded were envious of us, and set about spiteful Reports of our ten Days at *Casandoli*. However, these, being baseless, deservedly fell to the Ground.

How close and noisome is the Atmosphere of a great City, when one returns to it from the gentle Gales, trickling Waters, Myrtle

Shades, Jafmine Odours and enamelled Pastures of a delicious *Villeggiatura* ! Juft fo does the tainted moral Atmosphere of the City offend us after the purifying Influences of Seclufion, though I fay not there is never a Snake in the Grafs, nor an Asp among the Fruit, nor a Scorpion under the Mofs-grown Capital. There was a lying Serpent even in the Garden of *Eden*. It is not every one that can, like *St. Paul*, fhake off a Viper into the Fire. Howbeit, our Ancestors did wifely to raife Altars to *Feronia*, Goddefs of Woods and Groves, and fable that her Votaries could walk unhurt over red-hot Coals ; which was only faying, in their veiled, pretty Way, that the Lovers of calm Seclufion and Retirement could abide, unharmed, the fiery Ordeal of the World.

No fooner in the City, than a Clash of Swords ! I heard a Boy, running along the Street, call in an excited Way to another, “ Four Men have fallen upon one, and he has beaten them ! ”

“ Who is it ? ” cries the other.

“*Torquato Taffo!*” cries the first.

And so, surely enough, it proved.

—The Thing fell out thus. *Taffo*, returning from *Casandoli*, found his Bureau had again been invaded: the Duke, also, looked on him coldly, and treated him with less Consideration than usual. *Taffo*, meeting unexpectedly *Brunello* and *Claudio*, heard them uttering some Words which led him to conclude they were Authors of the Mischief, and were rejoicing in it. He stopped short, and sternly asked *Brunello* what he meant by it.

Brunello, merely muttering “*Al foccorfo*” to *Claudio*, who passed on, faced about and said, “What do I mean by it? What do I mean by what?”

“By what you were just saying,” said *Taffo*.

“What was I just saying?” says *Brunello* evasively.

“You know well enough. Had it or had it not Reference to me?”

“Hem!—Had it or had it not Reference to you?” says *Brunello*, just to gain Time,

and squinting over his Shoulder to see if Succour were coming. “Well, that’s an odd Question for one Gentleman to ask of another. How if I answered—it had not Reference to you?”

“Then, though I had strong Reasons for supposing otherwise, I must accept that as the Truth.”

“How if I said it had Reference to you?”

“Then I should insist on your recalling your base Words, or eating them.”

“How if I chose not to eat them?”

“No more of this paltry Evasion, Sir! To the Point!”

“Nay, an’ if that be what you are driving at, take it with a Vengeance,” cries *Brunello*, whipping out his Toledo and making a desperate Lunge at *Tasso*, who, having his Back to the Corner of the Wall, alertly parried the Stroke at the same Moment that three Men, Kinsmen of *Brunello*’s, came suddenly up and drew upon him.

“A *Tasso*! A *Tasso*! A *Brunello*! A *Brunello*!” rang through the Air at every

Clash of Swords; and People coming up, running from various Parts, faw to their Admiration *Taffo* keeping his Ground againft all four till their Approach caufed the Ruffians to make a hafty Retreat through the narrow Paffage they had iffued from, about three Houfes from the Corner; juft over-againft where the Cat's-meat Shop and the Maccaroni Stall have ftood ever fince I was a Boy.

The People raifed a “Viva!” as *Taffo*, merely breathing a little fafter than ufual, wiped a few Drops of Blood from his Sword with his Cloak, fheathed it with a Smile, and nodded to them as he paffed on. The People followed him down the Street, and one of them, an Improvifatore, who had been interrupted in the midft of “The Generous Turk,” cried out with Animation—

*Con la Penna e con la Spada
Nessun val quanto Torquato!*

—which was eagerly caught up, and has remained a Proverb among us even to this Day. To my Mind, he was worth two of *Horace*,

and would never have difgraced himfelf at *Philippi*.

If I heard of this Occurrence with mixed Emotions of Pride in my Friend's Courage and Concern for his Danger, it is not furprifing that the fame Feelings fhould be experienced by Madama *Leonora* in a ftronger Degree. The Duke, alfo, was highly incensed at the Outrage, and the Confequence was that *Brunello* and his Partizans dared not fhew their Nofes among us for a While; fo there was Peace in the Land. For the Reft, thefe little Outbreaks are always occurring in Cities; and of courfe the judicial Inquiry into the Affair came to Nothing.

It had for fome Time been bruited among us that our Madama *Lucrezia* had not bettered her Condition much by Matrimony, but was living uncomfortably with the young Duke; and though I looked on this as one of the bafelefs Scandals always rife among us, the more fo as *Taffo* had faid Nothing about it on his Return from *Casteldurante*, yet now, when I mentioned it to him, he fhugged his

Shoulders and said 'twas ill meddling in the Affairs of Man and Wife—he believed there were Faults upon both Sides: they had been kinder to him than they were to each other.

Rather suddenly the Duchefs appeared among us when we were least looking for her, —came to stay; impelled thereto, it would seem, by the Apprehension that Means for her Removal by Poison had been concerted. As it could not be made clear to the Duke that this impression resulted from Aught but her own too vivid Fancy, and as, moreover, his Highness had his own peculiar Views of the occasional Necessity and Innocuousness of withdrawing a Comfort from Connexion with mundane Existence, he did not esteem it necessary to make a Scandal of it, but, nevertheless, kindly welcomed his Sister back to *Ferrara*, and made an amicable Arrangement concerning her with the Duke of *Urbino* on the ground of Incompatibility of Age and Dispositions.

Certainly we all felt very much aggrieved for our Madama in the first Instance, and

welcomed her back as a Dove efcape from a Hawk ; but after ſhe had been a little While among us, we began to have our private Mifgivings whether the meek Dove were ſo much her Prototype as the contentious Sparrow. Unqueſtionably ſhe lorded it a good Deal, now, over Madama *Leonora*, with “ Me, a married Woman ! ” which, I have obſerved, always goes very much againſt the Grain with Spinſters ; and, as all married Women were once Spinſters too, of Courſe they ſin with full Knowledge. Aforetime, the two Siſters had ſo much held together, that I, for one, had thought there was ſcarcely a Pin to chooſe between them. True, Madama *Leonora*’s Eyes were violet-blue, deep, ſoft, and angelic, and Madama *Lucrezia*’s were of that clear, cold, greeniſh-blue which is ſomewhat cat-like ; true, Madama *Leonora*’s Hair was profuſe, filky, and of as lovely a colour as if dipped in *Scamander*, and Madama *Lucrezia*’s was yellower, and lank, and without any Curl in it ; true, the latter always took the Lead, and the former always was content to follow it ;

the one loved Admiration, and the other preferred Affection; the elder could do polite Unkindnesses, and the younger was known for her gracious Kindnesses—but still, somehow, the reflected Light of one Sister's Beauty and Goodness shed a Lustre on the other, which no one discovered to be borrowed as long as their Tastes, Habits, and Inclinations were the same.

Now that they had each acquired a Habit of living apart, they were no longer inseparable, though still continually together in Public. But the Duchefs had her own Attendants, Partizans, Correspondents, and Favourites, to occupy the Morning Hours, which the delicate Health of Madama *Leonora* occasioned her to pass in comparative Seclusion.

I may have done the Duchefs Injustice, but, shortly after her Return to *Ferrara*, I thought I perceived the distinguishing Regard with which she at first honoured *Taffo* gave Place to Stiffness, to Coolness, and finally to concealed Enmity. I thought I perceived that

ſhe exerciſed an injurious Influence over the Duke, which made him more and more diſtruſtful of *Taffò*. I thought they watched him, ſet Spies upon him, and that ſhe tried not only to detect him in Evil, but betray into it, or into its Appearance. None but a Man of ſpotleſs Integrity could have walked unharmed, blindfolded, among the cunning Pit-falls now dug in his Path. As it was, he became ſo conſcious of a myſterious Web ſpun all about him, and of ſnares ſpread for him, that his Life became Miſery to him. One Evening, being at Supper with the Duchefs, at her flattering and preſſing Invitation, he ſaw, or thought he ſaw, *Mad-dalo*, who was now her Cup-bearer, caſt a Pinch of whitish Powder into his Goblet; and exclaiming—

“Ha! Villain!”

—he ſprang up, and throttled him with his left Hand, pinning him back againſt the Tapeſtry, while he drew on him with his right. The Duchefs ſhrieked, and, ſtarting up, overturned *Taffò*'s Cup, whether by Chance

or otherwise, I know not, and then fell back, as if swooning, in her Chair. While her Ladies rushed to her Aid, her two Gentlemen collared *Taffo*, and dragged him from the Apartment, while *Maddalo* rushed to relate the Outrage in his own Way to the Duke, who immediately ordered *Taffo* to be kept under Arrest.

I was carving for Madama *Leonora*, who was not very well, in her private Apartment, when *Olimpia*, a Girl who was her favourite Attendant, entered pale and in Tears, and related that *Taffo*, seized with sudden Madness, had fallen on the Duchess's Cup-bearer and nearly slain him, and was now, by the Duke's Command, under Arrest.

I thought Madama *Leonora* would have fainted. She tried to rise, but could not; and, after a Moment's Struggle for Breath and Voice, waved her Hand, and said feebly—

“All of you go out, save Ser *Pantaleone* and *Olimpia*.”

The other Attendants immediately withdrew. Then, with Tears in her Eyes—

“ Oh, Ser *Pantaleone*,” faid ſhe, in a Voice ſcarcely above a Whiſper, “ I am ſure this is *Lucrezia*’s doing. I have no Concealments from you, my old Friend, for you are truthful and faithful to me, and ſhrewd enough to have long ſeen how Things were going. You have heard her little Hints and dark Sayings about her ‘ Fears that poor *Taffo*’s Senſes were not quite as his beſt Friends would wiſh them. She did not know—ſhe feared to ſay—ſhe hoped ſhe might be miſtaken—but, indeed, there were many who thought as ſhe did of him; he had been very ſtrange at *Caſtel-durante*—and even the Duke, who had not her Safety uſually much in his Thoughts, had ſaid it might be well not to have him too much about her, as *Accesſes of Frenzy* ſometimes came on when leaſt expected.’ All this, you know, Ser *Pantaleone*, and you know, *Olimpia*, ſhe has ſaid; and now—”

Here paufing, ſhe hid her Face in her beautiful Hands, and wept bitterly.

“ My Life on’t, Madama,” faid I, “ ’tis all

a Mistake, and will be cleared up To-morrow. *Taffo* is as sane as I am; great Wits don't go mad—'tis unsteady Brains, not full ones, that rattle. *Maddalo*, who deserves to be hanged like a Cat, has been caught in some of his evil Practices, and *Taffo* has given him the summary Punishment he deserved. I trust he has not beaten the Boy within less than an Inch of his Life, however, for so far I would joyfully undertake his Correction myself. I'll go, however, and inquire into it on the Spot, beseeching your Excellency to have Care for your dear Health, and to compose yourself during my Absence."

I found *Taffo* beyond my Reach, being shut into the Guard-room, guarded by one of the Duchefs's own Attendants, in addition to two of the Duke's Guards, whom I might otherwise have induced to admit me. I then sought his Highness, who was playing with Dice, and informed him that Madama *Leonora*, being much indisposed, was greatly shocked to hear of *Taffo*'s Arrest, and begged the Thing might be inquired into, and his

Liberation granted without Delay. The Duke replied—

“ It is fimply impoffible ; but tell my good Sifter he fhall be treated with all Lenity, and the Cafe adjudged To-morrow Morning. At Prefent I have no Leifure for it, nor any Defire to fee him while the Mania is on him. I have Reason to think the Fit has been impending for fome Time, and a Night’s Solitude and Darknefs will cool his Brain and purge it of ill Humours. Tell Madama *Leonora* I hope fhe will fleep refrefhingly.”

A vain Hope! thought I, as I retired ill at Eafe. In the Ante-chamber, I encountered *Antonini*, one of the Duchefs’s Gentlemen, whom I knew to have little Affection for *Taffo*; and therefore inquired of him the Particulars of the Affray, without much Hope of hearing them impartially ftated. He feemed little minded to fatisfy me; faid he was carving a Pheafant, and the Duchefs was inquiring whether *Abram* the Jew Phyfician had yet returned from *Cyprus*, when fuddenly *Taffo* ftarted up like a Maniac, pinned

Maddalo to the Wall, and drew upon him. He and *Guerazzi* seized each an Arm, and had the utmost Difficulty in getting him to loosen his Hold of the Boy, who was growing black in the Face; and the Ducheſs screamed, “Don’t let him go! Difarm him! Remove him, but don’t hurt him!” and then went off into a Swoon.

I ſaid, What offence had *Maddalo* given? He ſaid he had not heard the Boy utter a Word—it was not his Place to ſpeak at Supper, unleſs ſpoken to. He had filled for the Ducheſs, and was juſt filling *Taffo*’s Cup, when the Fray occurred.

Here *Bertolazzi*, who had come up, muſt needs put in, that Nobody would be ſurprized—many had noted great Strangenefs in *Taffo* for ſome Time paſt, and, indeed, many Things in his Conduct were wholly indefenſible, ſave on the Suppoſition of a diſordered Mind. The Duke had noticed more than one ſtrange Vagary, and had been heard to mutter, “Crack-brained.” Signor *Maffei* had asked *Bertolazzi* who and

what the Epithet referred to ; and *Bertolazzi* had faid—

I did not want to hear *Bertolazzi*'s Commentaries and Gloffes, fo moved off. Juft outside the Door, I met *Venieri*, the Phyfician. I faid,


“ Doctor ! they may fwear *Taffo* is mad, if they will—but he's no more fo than you or I. He has had enough to make him fo, though, long ago !”

The good Phyfician, who was much in Attendance on Madama *Leonora*, fmiled and fhook his Head without any other Anfwer ; and then turning back, after paffing on a few Steps, faid,

“ Bid *Olimpia* give Madama her Henbane-draught the laft Thing, when All is hufhed and ftill.”

CHAPTER XI

Of Tasso in the Guard-room.

HEN I lay down in Bed, I could not sleep for thinking of my poor Friend, pacing with impetuous Steps that gloomy Guard-room looking out on the Court. As I could believe *Maddalo* bad enough for Anything, it was Nothing incredible to me that he should have cast Poison into *Tasso's* Cup, provided it had been made worth his While to do so by some one sufficiently powerful to protect him. Nay, he had Malignity enough to do it on his own Account; but would he then have dared it at the Duchess's Table, under her very Eye?

How was it that she sided with him rather

than with *Taffo*, at the Moment? causing *Taffo* to be difarmed and dragged out, instead of having the Cup examined and the Boy arrested? I did not like to think of it.

I fell asleep only to dream of lighted Halls, and Banquet-tables, and beautiful Women, and Spies in Clofets, and Bravoës in dark Doorways, and Pages drugging Goblets, ending with *Taffo*'s wild Cry of "Ha, Villain!" which woke me up in a Panic.

Then I lay me down again and thought, with clofed Eyes and a Smile on my Lips, that he for whom I was thus in Trouble was very likely at that Moment enjoying far better Dreams than mine had been; of fortunate Love and Fairy Enchantments and heroic Deeds fuch as he had fung in noble Verfe, or wide awake purfuing Themes of high Philofophy, and calm, original Thought, fuch as his Enemies could not deprive him of.

Thus placidly, but, alas, quite untruly representing him to myself, I fell into a dreamlefs Sleep.

Next Morning, I repaired to the Guard-room. “*Taffo* still under Arrest?”

“Yes, Ser *Pantaleone*.”

“But how!” (chafing) “this cannot be with the Duke’s Orders; he only meant him to remain for the Night. Admit me to him.”

“Your Pardon, Ser *Pantaleone*. It is by the Duke’s Order he is detained, and by the Duke’s Order that he is to see None but the Court Phyfician, who is even now with him.”

Just at this Moment, good Dr. *Venieri* came forth. I took him by the Arm, and passed on with him towards Madama *Leonora*’s Apartments.

“How have you found him, Doctor?”

“Distracted, my dear Ser *Pantaleone*, by imaginary Fears of Poison, Accufations of Herefy, the Duke’s Difpleasure, the Duchefs’s Enmity, and I know not what all.”

“*Are* they imaginary?”

“Hush! we dare not doubt it; these Fancies spring from the black, bilious Blood

gathered upon the Heart, and fuming up to the Brain,—a lamentable Fact when we consider his Worth and Genius.”

“Ah, Doctor! do not, I implore you, adopt that Impression! do not convey it to the Duke, or to any Ears but mine! It cannot, shall not be!—Ah, dear Doctor, don’t ruin him, I beseech you!”

“What Idea are you running away with, my dear Ser *Pantaleone*? I shall merely tell his Highness that *Tasso* is feverish and excited at the Idea of having acted intemperately in the Duchess’s presence, and of having thereby incurred her and his Highness’s Displeasure.”

“Ah, that will do! Say Nothing else, I beseech you.”

The good Doctor looked at me with a little Reproach, as much as to say, “Can’t you trust me?” then, significantly tapped his Head and Heart with his Forefinger in Silence.

“You mean he has Something wrong there?”

“Not in his Heart,—he has *lost* it.”

“Ah, don’t believe every Court Gossip?”

“My dear Ser *Pantaleone*, I should not hold the professional Estimation I do, if I drew my Inferences from Court Gossip. *Taffo* is raving at this Minute to see the Girl *Olimpia*.”

“*Olimpia!* he cares not for her!”

“Of Course not, save that she might impart to him Tidings of her Mistrefs. By more than one Person he has been supposed to court the Maid, and, between you and me, it is as well to give the foolish Fancy Currency; but we know too well it is not so. Farewell; I fear I shall not find Madama *Leonora* very well this Morning.”

I parted with him full of Trouble, and *Olimpia*, presently coming out of Madama *Leonora*’s Bed-chamber, gave me a little Billet, which she desired me to carry to the Duke. His Highness, who was breakfasting, and feeding his Dogs, ran through it, and coolly told me to assure her Excellency, with his kindest Affection, that the Thing she

desired could not be done at Present, but that it was his Wish as much as hers that all should go well. I ventured to ask, of myself, whether Access to *Taffo* might be permitted to his Friends; but was drily answered, "Not at Present. *Coccapani* is with him."

Coccapani was the Duke's Treasurer, a timid Man, but not unfriendly to *Taffo*. I fought him out, being assured any News I could obtain of him would make me the more welcome to Madama *Leonora*.

"I am going to him again even now," said he, with obvious Dislike for his Mission, "he has over-persuaded me to grant him the Means of writing to the Duke, and I am about to take Charge of his Letter, though not without assuring his Highness, I promise you, that I have had Nothing to do with its Contents. Come with me, if you will."

So, as he invited me, I did not think it necessary to mention that I had already been denied Access to him, but took what Fortune offered.

The Moment we entered the Guard-room,

Tasso, who was pacing it like a caged Lion, turned about, and, seeing me, exclaimed,—“Ah, Ser *Pantaleone!* Ser *Pantaleone!*” and throwing himself on my Neck, wept. He was burning with Fever, and his Tears were like scalding Water.

“See!” said he, raising his Head from my Shoulder, and looking me piteously in the Face, “see, I weep! can Madmen do that? If they wanted to make me mad, could they have devised a better Method than to shut me up here, without the Means of defending and justifying myself, while my Enemies are ransacking my Papers, discovering and fabricating I know not what?”

“Hush, my dear *Tasso*; an innocent Man fears no Discoveries; and Fabrications fall to the Ground.”

“How can you, how dare you say so, in the Face of all human Experience?”

“Eventually, almost always they do; and meantime—”

“Ah, that meantime!—”

“Must be borne with dignified Patience,

such as I am sure your richly stored Memory can supply you with a hundred classic Examples of, and such as your own Heroism will surely enable you to exert. What! overcome by one Night's Solitude and Darkness?"

"Ah, but how busy may my Foes have been during that single Night! 'Tis *that* which racks me, Ser *Pantaleone*. Had they not already been busy, the Duke would not thus keep me in Durance—"

"His Highness only detains you for your Recovery," interrupted *Coccapani*. "His Motives are most kind."

"Induce him then, dear *Coccapani*, in the Name of Everything that is gracious, to accelerate my Recovery, if I have indeed Aught to recover from, by permitting my immediate Return to my own Apartments, where I promise to keep quiet and submit to whatever Measures he wills for my Cure. But tell him that I have never in my Life been able to endure Solitude and Confinement, and that if he keeps me here, I shall fall into Despair."

“I will, I will,” *Coccapani* replied good-naturedly, “and now, farewell. Give me your Letter, and keep yourself quiet in the Assurance that your best Friends are caring for you.”

Taffo shook his Head ruefully, but wrung *Coccapani*'s Hand; and finding that I must depart with him, he embraced me and whispered, “How fares it with Madama? Oh, commend me to her with the utmost Devotion and Tendernefs, and bid her be assured I have done no Wrong.”

“She would be the last to think you had,” returned I in the same Way, “I wish you had no worse Enemy.”

An April Gleam shone on his sad Face; he said, “I thank you, dear Friend, for a Word in Season—” and let me go. My Heart ached when the heavy Door closed upon him. How joyfully would I have taken his Place! Because, look you, my Mind was quiet and my Body without Disinclination to Rest; and I could have sat immured there for a While quite imperturbably, knowing it

could not last long, and going over the last Month's Bills in my Head, and thinking over many pleasant Dinners, Balls, Hunting-parties, and other Diversions, and saying my Prayers, and, at the worst, taking a Nap; whereas

I suoi Pensieri in lui dormir non ponno.

CHAPTER XII.

Of a Balcony by Moonlight.

A FEW Hours later, I had the great Satisfaction of learning that *Tasso* had been permitted to return to his own Lodgings, on the Condition that he should submit himself to very strict medical Regimen, and be constantly attended by the Duke's Physician and the Duke's Servant. These Conditions I made free to attribute to the Dukes of *Urbino*; since, what Man lives in *Italy* who would not have drawn upon *Maddalo*, on the Supposition, whether groundless or not, of his having drugged his Cup?

Madama *Leonora's* Mind was much relieved, however, by this Arrangement, as she took it

for granted that *Taffo's* Restoration to Calmness would soon render the Restrictions now imposed unnecessary; and she made me the Bearer of a kind Message telling him so, and praying him to be docile and patient.

As soon as I saw him, I knew by the mild, steady Light of his Eye, that he was so already; and this kind Message was of great Comfort to him. *Luigi*, one of the Duke's Pages, was in waiting, coming in and out, but he was a quiet Youth of whom Nobody was afraid, and his flitting to and fro was of little Moment to us. *Taffo* told me in an Undertone, that he believed he had found his Bureau as he had left it.

"But why preserve dangerous Papers in it?" said I in the same half Whisper.

"You are right, yet it would cost me a severe Pang to destroy them—however, it must be done; but not under the Eyes of the Duke's Servants."

"Certainly not; but avail yourself of the first safe Opportunity."

“ Yes, yes,—well, what’s the News at Court?”

“ Oh, this Affair of yours is still the Talk.”

“ What say they of it?”

“ They think you must have been crazy to spring upon *Maddalo* as you did.”

“ My dear Friend!” in an excited Whisper, “ I saw the Powder he cast into my Cup as plainly as I see you!”

“ Unluckily, no one else saw it, and the Contents of the Cup were spilled, and hastily wiped up, so that no Proof remains.”

“ He ought to have been searched!”

“ No Doubt of it; but when will Things be done that ought to be done?”

“ What does Madama *Leonora* say?”

“ She says very little, except to Dr. *Venieri*.”

“ Is she ill?”

“ You know she is always ailing.”

“ Ah! . . .” he clasped his Hands on his Knee, and sat in painful Thought a little While. “ Ser *Pantaleone*, I fear me, she will die, one of these Days.”

“So shall we all.”

“Yes, but prematurely.”

“That’s as God wills.”

“I think it will be his Will.”

“She is no longer in the Bloom of Youth, even were she to be cut off to-morrow. How short is even the longest Life, when we reach its End!”

“Mine appears but a Span long, when I look back upon it! How little have I done! How much remains to do!”

“I think you have done a great Deal.”

“*Nothing* is done, while Anything remains incomplete. Ha! a Letter from dear *Scipio Gonzaga!*” — taking it from *Luigi*.

As he ran through it, his Look of Pleasure became exchanged for one of Pain, Surprise, and Indignation.

“Read that!” said he to me. “There’s your true Friend for you!”—and hid his Face in his Hands.

I hastily perused the Letter, which was a most bitter Invective. Whilst turning in

my Mind what to say of it, he suddenly exclaimed—

“ Let me see it again !”

And having eagerly re-examined it, “ This is no authentic Letter,” cried he, “ but an audacious Fabrication. It wants one or two Tricks of *Scipio's* Manuscript which his Letters are never without. I will show you.”

And taking a Key from his Bosom, he unlocked the Bureau, and drew forth a Letter of *Scipio's*, which he compared with the other, to our mutual Conviction that the Latter one was indeed a Forgery.

“ To whom am I indebted for this, I wonder ?” said he, smiling meaningly ; “ to some kind Friend, no Doubt, who, fearing Dr. *Venieri* did not find me mad, tried this Means of making me so.”

He replaced the Letter carefully, and the other with it, saying, “ This shall, if needful, be shown to the Duke.” As he glanced over the other Contents of his Bureau, I saw him turn pale. I said, “ What is the matter ?”

“ Nothing,” he replied evasively ; for *Luigi*

had just glided in. He came to announce Dr. *Venieri*; and as he entered, I retired.

What was my Chagrin to learn, the same Afternoon, that *Taffo* had been examined by the Inquisition for imputed Herefy!

On repairing to Madama *Leonora*, who I trusted had not heard this Piece of News, I found her trembling exceedingly. She said, "My Brother wants me to accompany him and *Lucrezia* to *Belriguardo*, but I cannot! I feel sure Something terrible will happen in my Absence."

I said, "What kind of Thing, gracious Lady?"

"Oh," she said, clasping her Hands in Trouble, "I dare not whisper, even to myself! No, no, I cannot go! Dr. *Venieri* shall certify that I am not well enough to leave Home at present."

Which Thing was done. Ah, dearest Lady! you overreached yourself! The Duke and Duchefs repaired to *Belriguardo* a few Days afterwards, leaving Madama *Leonora* behind, and took *Taffo* with them.

I saw him two or three Times in the Interim, and noted a pale Abstraction that had come over him. He seemed always trying to control a haunting Thought with stern Resolve; to be living in the Absent rather than the Present, and to be constantly pursuing two Chains of Ideas; one of which, that which occupied him most, never appeared above the Surface. He saw his Confessor daily, was not content with that, but continually sat with his Head buried in his Hands, repeating the general Confession to himself, or absorbed in mental Prayer; he gave largely to the Poor—for so poor a Man, that is; sighed frequently and deeply, and often appeared not to hear what was said to him. On my asking him, with great Concern, what ailed him, he put his Arm about my Neck, and, in a low Voice, (though no one, to the best of my Belief, was within ear-shot,) said—

“ I am spied, I am betrayed; fatal Papers have been seized; my Life has been attempted; it will be attempted again, and I have only to make my Peace with God.”

“ I trust,” said I, “ Nothing has been seized which can compromise an excellent Lady—”

“ How should there ?” cried he ; “ unless, indeed, their fiendish Malice should induce them to garble and forge, as they have not scrupled to do already. But oh ! who is ready, who is fit to appear abruptly in the Presence of Him who is of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity !—flushed with angry Passion !—with the Blood, it may be, of a Fellow-sinner on his hands ! Hark ! the Church-bell is ringing—Farewell, Ser *Pantaleone* !”

And he hurried away to Vespers.

The Evening before the Duke’s Departure to *Belriguardo*, he gave rather a brilliant Reception, at which Madama *Leonora* was present, though in the simple Attire of an Invalid. Neither she nor *Tasso*, who was also of the Company, were aware how soon they were to part. He was pale, thoughtful, and harassed, and kept much aloof from the Circle, occupying himself with a choice Collection of Medals on one of the Tables. To see whether they really engaged his Attention,

I asked him whether one which he appeared to be intently examining were an *Antoninus* or *Severus*. He looked up at me with a bewildered Expression, as if he had never heard either of the Names before. I said cheerfully, "What makes you so absent?"

"Absent?" repeated he, clearing up, "no! Abstracted, if you will! Absence is the Characteristic of a vacant Mind, as Abstraction is of a full one."

And, smiling, he re-examined the Medal, and gave his Opinion of it and of others, and spoke on general Subjects; then, when a third Person joined us, he went out into the Balcony.

Later in the Evening, I threw myself into a Chair near an open Window, and being rather Drowsy, took a little Nap. Before I closed my Eyes, I noticed *Taffo* still leaning over the Balcony, with his Eyes fixed on the Moon, which was brightly shining on the Water. The Pier between the Windows threw him into deep Shade, and he was as

immoveable as a Statue. When I next looked up, it was because I was roused by the light Step of Madama *Leonora*, who was passing into the Balcony. The Heat of crowded Rooms often overcame her and made her pant for Air, and she did not know that *Taffo* was there already, for I heard a flight Exclamation of Surprise. I stretched out my Legs again, pretty nearly across the Window, so that no one could pass without stumbling over them, and resumed my Nap. That is, I put myself in the Way of resuming it, by closing my Eyes, and reclining my Head on my Chest, but as it would not immediately be resumed, I did not fail to hear certain Words spoken in the Balcony; good Words, kind Words; true, tender, ennobling, encouraging and pure. Then Words of Sadness, of Sorrow. Then Words of Comfort, and Counsel. Then Words of Gratitude, of high Resolve. Then Words of high and holy Incentive to Trust in Heaven. Then Words and Tears of Devotion. Then Words and Tears of Sympathy and Pity. No Words or Thoughts or

Tears that a listening Angel might not have approved.

Accidentally he laid his Hand on hers, and withdrew it hastily, asking Forgiveness. Sweetly, benignly she answered him, "Not for touching my Hand, but for asking to be forgiven, do you need Forgiveness!"

Just out of the Corner of my Eye, I saw him give her a Look of such Tenderness and Sadness!—Just out of the other Corner of my Eye, saw I *Maddalo* the Page stealing on them like the Serpent on *Eve* in the Garden of *Eden*. He, supposing me asleep, was lightly stepping over my stretched out Feet, when, by raising one of them a little, I sent him sprawling, with his Head, bang! against the Marble. Giving him an angry Glance accompanied by a low Growl, as if just waking up, I had the Satisfaction of seeing him rub his Forehead as he scrambled up and retired, darting at me a Look full of Ire; while Madama *Leonora* and *Taffo*, disturbed by the Fall, looked round, and broke off their Conference. She returned to the Apartment, where all, busied in their

own Amusements, seem'd never to have miss'd her; and *Taffo*, having watch'd her retreating Figure, resum'd his Moon-gazing, and after a While, began writing on his Tablets by Moonlight.

Presently I went out to him and began to speak of the Beauty of the Night. He smil'd, and said, "You know who was with me just now. As a Reward for keeping off *Maddalo*, you shall see what I have written on what occurred." And he shew'd me the pretty Lines beginning

Stava Madonna in un Balcon.

which I have always thought as pleasing as any he has written, and which, with his Permission, I made a Transcript of in my Pocket-book. Here they are.

My Lady in a Balcony

One Eve was standing, when that I

By Chance on her fair Hand my own Hand laid;

Pardon I begged of her, if so

I had offended her; but no.

'Not by your Hand approaching mine,' she said;

'But by its shrinking thence,

As dreading such Offence,

Could I be hurt, to see you so afraid?
 Oh blessed Words! so innocently spoken!
 Of such pure Love the Token!
 If they were true, might I not still be driven
 The Offence still to repeat, again to be forgiven?

The next Day, after the Duke and Duchefs had departed, with a great Equipage, to *Belriguardo*, we learnt not, till some Hours afterwards, that *Taffo* had been fummoned to attend them. He probably knew not till he reached *Belriguardo* that Madama *Leonora* remained at *Ferrara*, nor that the Attendants who formed the Duke's Cortége were without exception thofe who were adverfe to him. Thus, Dr. *Venieri* and *Coccapani* were left behind, but Dr. *Bartolo*, the Duchefs's Phyfician, was in Attendance; he who prefcribed Heat when *Venieri* prefcribed Cold, High-feeding when *Venieri* forefaw Fever, and lowering Regimen when *Venieri* was for keeping the Patient up. Indeed this Phyfician was a Man fo infinitely inferior to the other in Science, Skill, and Succels, that Nothing but an oily Tongue and convenient

Conscience made him a Favourite with the Duchefs, who rarely was indisposed enough to require Aught beyond Sugar-Water or a few Slices of Lemon. The Duke, on the other Hand, who was subject to dangerous Attacks in his Head, would never have had the virtuous *Veneri* near him, save for his high Opinion of his Skill: and, on the present Occasion, when Madama *Leonora* needed the good Doctor and the Duke did not,—Dr. *Bartolo* did quite as well.

What occurred during that fatal Visit, the Actors best know. *Taffo* found himself in the Toils, treated by the Duke with rough Harshness, with threatening Looks and Words, in the Endeavour to wring from him some Cause for reasonable Accufation. He was bullied, baited, brow-beaten; told that Papers of his were in the Duke's Possession, the Contents of which were sufficient to bring him to the Rack or to Death. Then the Duchefs endeavoured to entrap him into Confession as a Friend; then the Duke insisted on it as a Sovereign. The end was, that the unhappy Man, refusing to

criminate himself or others, was pronounced of unfound Mind by Dr. *Bartolo*, and sent back by the Duke's Command, under Guards, to *Ferrara*, there to be confined in the Convent of *San Francisco*, with two Friars to watch him incessantly.

“And because,” so ran the Duke's Orders, “he is used to utter Everything in Confession, and to break out into a Mountain of Frenzies so that he is far worse than ever, the Superior is to choose for his Keepers Persons fit to admonish him of his Madness.”

The Duke having returned to *Ferrara* a few Hours after *Taffo*, I was standing at his Elbow the next Morning, waiting while he read a few pencilled Lines Madama *Leonora* had written to him from her Bed-chamber, his Highness's Measure being at the same Time taking for new Buskins by *Scarpa* the Court Shoe-maker. To him enters *Luigi*, with a Packet of Letters on a Salver, the Envelope of which he hastily tore off, when four Letters fell to the Ground, three of which, as I picked them up, I noted to be

directed by *Taffò*, to the two *Gonzagas*, and to the Duke himself. His Highness broke the Seals of the two first, perused the Contents and tossed them into his Waste-paper Basket, then read his own, which followed the same Road, coolly remarking,—“There is no End to his writing of Letters.” Then, while he perused the fourth, which was probably from the Superior of San *Francisco*, my Eye rested on the open Letter which lay uppermost in the Basket, and I read,—

“I confess I may require medical Treatment for my melancholy Fancies, and I thank your Highness for assigning it to me. But in many Things I do assure you I am not fanciful. You believe not that I have had Persecutors in your Service, but I have had many and bitter ones. You believe me in no Danger from the Inquisition, but I am entangled in its Meshes. I beseech you by the Bowels of CHRIST to believe that I am not so much Mad as you deceived. I will not venture to write to the Dukes without your Permission, but if——”

Here the fourth Letter was flung upon the others, while his Highness desired *Scarpa* to give him sufficient Space across the Toes, and the next Moment bade me carry his Affection to his Sister, and assure her that he would give her full Satisfaction hereafter for her Request not being complied with.

I carried back my Message sadly enough, knowing the Pain it would give. Madama *Leonora* was by this Time in her Dressing-room, looking flushed and heavy-eyed; and her Hand was frequently pressed to her Side, where she now had much pain. When I repeated the Duke's Words, her Eyes filled with Tears, and she said,—“Cruel! he might at least have just written. I begin to wish, Ser *Pantaleone*, that I were dead.”

I said, “I am sorry to hear your Excellency utter a Wish I cannot echo. Life is, or ought to be, dear to all, and I neither can wish you dead, because you are ill and unhappy, nor do I wish myself so. Trials are sent to test and prove us, and they bring out the Graces of our Characters, just as Friction

brings out the Veins of a Piece of fine Wood. Which are the Heroes and Heroines that command your Excellency's Sympathy in Poetry and Romance? Are they those who but love, to marry and be happy? On the contrary, are they not those who go through much Tribulation and experience many Dangers? Likewise, in History, whether sacred or profane, the Characters we love and admire are those who sustained much Evil. And though all Chastisement is for the present not joyous but grievous, yet, in the long Run, which of those Personages, I pray you, would have wished their past Sorrows and Trials unfelt and unconquered? No, no, they found it a Privilege to suffer, and would less willingly have parted with their Cross than a King with his Crown."

She said, smiling faintly, "You talk like a Sage. Go on, I like to hear you."

"Why now," I said, "wherein has *Tasso* shown truer Art than in enlisting our Sympathies in Behalf of *Tancred*, of *Erminia*, and even of *Armida*, by Reason of their

Sorrows? Nay, is not he himself endeared to us by the Persecutions he sustains? At this Moment, probably, his noble Genius is carrying him upwards into some Region of Philosophy or Romance, enriching him with Pleasure that the most prosperous of his Enemies might envy."

"It may be so," said she, reclining back on her Pillows and closing her Eyes, while a peaceful Smile stole over her Face. "Do you think, Ser *Pantaleone*, that Men of Genius, despite their characteristic Sorrows, are on the whole the most happy?"

"Whether the most happy or not," rejoined I boldly, "my Life on't, Madama, they would prefer their own Web of mixed Happiness and Unhappiness to the Prosperity of the veriest Nincompoop that is petted and spoiled by Dame Fortune. And as touching *Tasso*—"

Here I was checked by the unexpected entrance of the Duke, who came in as he oft loved to do, unannounced. I was sorry the last word I had uttered should have been the Name it was.

“You do not affect much Variety in your choice of Subjects,” said he, drily, after kissing Madama *Leonora's* Brow.

“We were talking of the comparative Happiness of Fools and wise Men,” said she, blushing.

“If you placed *Taffo* in the latter Category,” said the Duke, after regarding her a Moment in Silence, “you were somewhat deficient, it seems to me, in your usual Judgment. *Taffo* has fled.”

“Fled!” cried she, colouring all over, and half raising herself up.

He eyed her with the same quiet Scrutiny as before; and then, in his usual impassive Manner added, “and has left Everything behind him—Books, Manuscripts, *other People's Letters*—”

“They should be sealed up, Brother,” cried she eagerly, “sealed with your Seal.”

“Or with *yours*?” with a mystic Smile.

“Oh no! yours would do.”

“I mean it to do, I can tell you, Sister.”

“I mean, it would be best.”

“Certainly it will be best. I am glad you think so too.”

“I? Why should I not?”

“You should best know, *Leonora*.”

“If you think I ever wrote a Line to *Taffo* I should regret your seeing, you are quite mistaken.” Her Tone and Look were of noble Truth.

“Why write to him at all!”

“Nay, where was the Harm? I have had a hundred pleasant Discussions with him on literary Subjects.”

“For all that, Sister, there is Something detrimental to the Character of a Woman and a Princess in maintaining such Correspondences. Familiarity with designing Persons, beneath you in Position, whatever may be their native or acquired Gifts, impairs your true Dignity, tarnishes your Mind, nay, perhaps corrupts your Heart . . . ”

“Brother! cease these cruel, these needless Words! How do they apply? and to whom? Can you call *Taffo* designing? The Man you have considered an Honour to your

Court, have graced with your Conversation and Protection, have associated with at your Table?"

"And would gladly continue to do so, *Leonora*, but for the Dread of his repaying all these Benefits by tarnishing the Dignity of my House."

"Through *me*, never!"

"Well said. Do you promise it?"

"Certainly."

"I accept this Promise, my Sister, and in Consideration of it, overlook all the Past."

"What has there been to overlook?"

"Your marked Preference for one Person, your descending from your Position to a social Equality with him, your secret Correspondence . . ."

"Secret! fie!—"

"Hush, I *will* be heard! Your Permission and Encouragement of Approaches that only a recognised Lover would dare to make—"

"Brother! Brother!"


"Yes, *Leonora*! cover your Face with your Hands if you will! I am glad to see

such a Signal of penetrative Shame. No Answer, no Defence, I insist on't!—Madam! I choose to be heard, to be obeyed! *Tasso* has fled, but will be recalled. To you he must henceforth be as a Stranger. On that, his Fate, his Liberty depends. Before the Year's End, I trust to see you a happy Wife. That is a Circumstance with which a Man moving in a different Sphere *can* have Nothing to do.

“Let her have Air and Water, Ser *Pantaleone*.”

CHAPTER XIII.

Of Ser Pantaleone's Conference with the Duke of Ferrara.

 WITH *Tasso's* Flight to *Naples* and Stay with his Sister, I have no Concern. He remained with her about a Year; happy if he had never left her! But he was not allowed to rest; nor, peradventure, had he Rest in himself. If we make not ourselves happy in what ought to make us happy, Nobody else can make us so.

During this Time, Madama *Leonora's* Health declined visibly. I had my own Theory about it, which had no Reference to *Tasso*, and I proved to be right.

Meanwhile, two or three advantageous Offers of Marriage were pressed on her by the Duke, who was himself thinking of

Matrimony for the third Time in his Life : but by her were they uniformly rejected.

One Day, I was fummoned to the Duke's Bed-chamber. He was in Bed, not from Illness but Laziness, sitting half up, with his Breakfast and Letters all about him in Confusion. *Luigi*, who was in Attendance, was dismissed; and the Duke then signed to me to sit down beside him.

"The Marquis still presses his Suit," said he abruptly, "does Madama *Leonora* show any Sign of Change of Purpose?"

"None, your Highness."

"This Obstinacy can proceed but from one Cause. Ser *Pantaleone*, you have formerly carried Letters from her to *Taffo*."

"Never but twice, your Highness."

"Tut! twice or twenty Times is all the same."

"There was no Secrefy enjoined, your Highness."

"Well,—we'll drop that. Does she correspond with him now?"

"No, my Lord."

“Do you speak positively?”

“I mean, as far as I know, she does not.”

“Do you think you should certainly know if she did?”

“My Lord, I can't say—However, I think, —yes, I think I should.”

“If you find she does, let me know.”

“Very well, my Lord.”

“And bring her Letters to me.”

“My Lord Duke—”

“Proceed, Ser *Pantaleone*.”

“You think her Excellency refuses Marriage on account of *Tasso*. . .”

“What Matter is it of yours, Sir, what I think?”

“True, your Highness.”

“However,—I *do* think so, Ser *Pantaleone*.”

“Good. And that her Excellency's Ill-health is caused by her fretting for him?”

“Hum—I do.”

“I have quite another Theory for it, your Highness.”

“Let us hear it.”

“I believe she has a mortal Complaint.”

“Ha!”

“I believe some vague Presentiment of this, or, at any Rate, the indefcribable Languishing which accompanies it, (I had a Sister who died so,) causes her Repugnance to the Offers you pres on her; and that *Taffo* has Nothing whatever to do with it.”

“Ha! How long have you thought this?”

“It occurred to me a Year ago; but I have been persuaded of it the last two Months.”

“How is it Dr. *Venieri* has said Nothing of this?”

“I believe he is watching her, but is anxious not to alarm her.”

“Hum—poor *Leonora*!—I am sorry for this. I hope Nothing has accelerated it.”

“No, my Lord, Nothing could accelerate or retard it materially, though I believe Sorrow of Heart aggravates the Symptoms. It did in the Case of *Viola*. If it be as I think, Nothing can save her.”

“*If it be as you think!* I cannot take your Opinion of it—I must hear Dr. *Venieri*.”

“So best, your Highness.”

“ You had a Sister, you say—How long do you suppose Madama *Leonora* has to live ?”

“ Ah, your Highness, I cannot prognosticate within a Year or six Months.”

“ A Year is not long—we must make it easy to her.”

“ Then, if I might presume, I would say, do not let Dr. *Venieri* alarm her by his Measures.”

“ Certainly not. Hum ! Then if it be as you say, *Taffo* could do no Harm here.”

“ Neither Harm nor Good, that I know of.”

“ Nay, a Man of his Reputation always lends Lustre to a Court. And the House of *Este* has always been noted for its fostering Patronage of Genius. Therefore,—yes,—you may tell Madama *Leonora* he will be recalled.”

“ Very well, my Lord.”

“ Or, stay,—it is hardly consistent with our Dignity to do so otherwise than indirectly. You may tell her from me that she has Permission to recall him.”

“ Yes, my Lord.”

“That is all. Bid *Luigi* come to me now, about the Hawk's Jesses. And, hark you! fend me Dr. *Venieri*.”

I bowed, and withdrew; scarcely noting Something trundling before me from under my Chair to the nearest Curtain. However, it was the Duchess *Lucrezia*'s ugly Hedge-hog of a Dwarf.

I fulfilled my Mission with mixed Feelings. I expected it to give Pleasure to my dear Mistress, whom I now loved with the Tenderness of a Father (not that I was quite old enough for that, neither!) and I doubted the Expediency of recalling *Taffo* from a Home where he was now happy. However, that was none of my Business. I delivered my Message, and thought, from the impassive Manner in which it was received, that it gave little Pleasure; but, in the Course of the Afternoon, Madama *Leonora* cleared up so surprisngly, that it was plain to me she had only concealed her Gratification out of modest Shyness; and Dr. *Venieri*, who came to see her, was agreeably surprisng at her having so

brightened. As he came forth, I advanced from the Window of the Ante-chamber, where I was skimming over a Pamphlet, and said,

“Is she better, Doctor?”

“Surprisingly so,” he answered.

“Will the Improvement be permanent, think you?”

He sighed, and shook his head. It was quite enough for me.

However, the Improvement lasted for several Days, with trivial Intermissions; even till her Excellency received *Taffo’s* Answer to the Letter she had written him without Delay. It seemed to disappoint her a good Deal: she wrote again; and her Health again drooped. His second Reply produced fresh Perturbation; she did not write again for some Time, and evidently fretted upon it. The Duke sent for me. “Has *Taffo* answered Madama *Leonora’s* Letter?—her *second* Letter?”

“He has, your Highness.”

“Is he coming?”

“I understand he has excused himself, your Highness.”

“ Infolence ! The Invitation will not be repeated.”

“ I rather think her Excellency has written yet a third Time, your Highness.”

“ I am sorry to hear it. She has lowered herself by so doing. If he return to *Ferrara* in consequence, his Reception will be such as he deserves.”

“ Alas, my Lord ! his Excuse is that of Ill-health.”

“ Psha ! Ill-health is a false Plea both with him and Madama *Leonora*. They use it when it serves their Purposes. She cleared up, directly she had Licence to recall him.”

“ How soon to droop again, my Lord !”

“ She has been out.”

“ Twice to Church, and once along the Terrace on her white Mule. At Church she fainted ; I carried her out.”

“ Because she was vexed at *Taffo's* Contumacy.”

“ If your Highness will ask Dr. *Venieri*—”

“ Dr. *Venieri* is growing old and stupid. I mean her to see Dr. *Bartolo*. The Duchess

is certain he will understand her Case much better.”

I bowed, and retired; persuaded in my own Mind that Madama *Leonora* would not see him. She did, however; but refused to give up Dr. *Venieri's* Treatment for his. So Dr. *Bartolo*, much affronted, carried his own Report of her to the Duke and Duchess, and saw her no more, save as a formal Visitor, in which Character he persisted in waiting on her, though she was another Man's Patient.

Taffo's third Letter was accompanied by one from his Sister to Madama *Leonora*, imploring her, in the most moving Terms, to desist from tempting him back to a Place that had been fatal to his Peace; beseeching her to compassionate the Feelings of a widowed Sister, whose only Solace was nursing him into Health; and praying, that after having been separated from him so many Years, she might at least retain him with her till quite restored to his former Self.

When Madama *Leonora* read this Letter, she wept. After giving it to me to read, she

wrote a few Lines to *Taffo*, releasing him from any Obligation to return to *Ferrara*, and promising to abstain from urging what she now plainly saw was injurious as well as distasteful to him.

This lured back the escaped Bird. It is impossible to tell whether she expected and meant it to have that Effect. For, note you, Lovers often act by the Rule of Contrary, and bid one another forget them when they desire Nothing so much as to be remembered all the more. *Taffo's* Answer was short, and impetuous enough, I warrant you; he would, he must return to a voluntary Prison! Perhaps he meant that, too, to be taken by the Rule of Contrary. If he did, I can only say that it proved too true.

At a brilliant Reception given by the Duke in Honour of the Austrian Ambassador, I saw, unexpectedly, one whose Look and Mien marked him out among a Thousand, in his simple black Suit, among Velvet Mantles, waving Plumes, and golden Chains. His Eye was wandering anxiously round, as if in Quest

of some one he did not see. I hurried up to him. "You here? Have you seen the Duke?"

"Not yet."

"Did he invite you?"

"Surely, as of old, I have the Privilege of the Household."

"But—did he invite you to *Ferrara*?"

"Certainly — on Conditions. Where is Madama *Leonora*?"

"Alas, she is very ill."

"*Dying*?"—with a sudden Thrill.

"Hush! we dare not say so."

"You suspect it! Does she know her Danger?"

"Apparently not."

"Ah!—" He clasped his Hands, and paused.

"But, my dearest *Taffo*, was it quite safe to come among us?"

"I thought it more noble to put my Life into the Duke's Hands than to deny Madama *Leonora's* wishes."

"Be on your Guard, however."

“ I *must*. But you know his Highness has my Poem and all my Papers in his Possession. I have written repeatedly for them in vain. If any Evil befall my Poem, it will drive me frantic—just what they want !”—smiling sadly.

“ I believe *Coccapani* has it in Charge.”

“ Yes, but he won't give it up without the Duke's Orders. See, the Crowd opens—I may go and make my Bow to him.”

I stood watching him, and beheld in Dumb-show a very cool, almost mortifying Reception. His Highness looked full at him, but scarcely inclined his Head, and turning about, addressed himself to another Person. The Crowd closed in between us, and I saw no more.

About an Hour after, he came up to me in great Agitation. “ Did you see the Duke ?” said he hurriedly ; “ he all but turned his Back upon me, and the Courtiers have taken their Cue from him, and treated me with absolute Indignity. I cannot stay. I spoke a Word to *Coccapani*, who denied he had my Poem or any other of my Papers, and referred

me to Count *Scipio*. I spoke to the Count, and he replied with absolute Contempt. This, in the Duke's Presence, cannot be resentèd ; but I must either speak to his Highness or write to him in the Morning ; and if this goes on, I—I fear the Consequences to myself !”

And pressing his Hand to his Brow with a Look of extreme Anguish, he left the Apartment.

On my relating his Return to Madama *Leonora*, who had gone to Bed early, and did not rise till very late the next Morning, she was full of Grief to learn of his cool Reception, and would have written a few Lines instantly to the Duke, but that Dr. *Venieri*, who entered just as she was attempting it, strongly urged her desisting, and keeping herself quiet. The Entrance of the Duchess *Lucrezia*, who now took a very high Tone in the Sick-room, settled the Matter without another Word ; for Madama *Leonora*, knowing how usefess it would be, closed her Desk with a Sigh, and gave it to *Olimpia* to carry away. The Duchess, when she left her Sister, gave

Orders, on her own Authority, to the Attendants in the Ante-chamber, to keep her perfectly quiet, and admit no one to her, however urgent the Business, as it was of the first Importance to her Health that she should have some undisturbed Repose. Her Highness had, indeed, prevailed on her Sister to take, though reluctantly, a Confection prepared for her by Dr. *Bartolo*, which produced Drowsiness, Sleep, and finally a wakeful Stupor accompanied by Nausea. While this was in operation, it was, indeed, highly expedient that she should be kept perfectly quiet; and I regretted not, on her Account, that *Tasso*, among others, was denied Admission to her; but that was no good Reason why the Duchess's Doors should likewise be closed against him, or that the Duke should deny him Permission to open his Lips in his Presence, which I afterwards learnt to be the Case. *Tasso*, adhering to the Letter of the above Prohibition, stood in his Highness's Path with Hands clasped and stretched towards him in the Guise of Entreaty; which was considered so contuma-

cious an Act that an Attendant was sent to bid him roughly, (just as you might chase a stray Greyhound from your Gate,) to desist from Applications to the Duke altogether, whether by Letter, Speech, or Posture; and to submit himself with Docility to the Directions of Dr. *Bartolo*, who would purge his noxious Humours out of him. It is not very surprizing that, on such Treatment as this, the unhappy Man should again leave *Ferrara*; scarcely knowing whither to flee from the Foes that pursued him as the Furies did *Orestes*.

During the few Days before his Flight, I, being in close Attendance on Madama *Leonora*, saw and heard Nothing of him. It was from the Duchefs's Communication of the Fact to her Sister, that I first learnt it. As his Turmoil of Soul was exaggerated, so were his Offences expatiated upon, and the bare Circumstance of his Flight mentioned without any of the Aggravations that had induced it; no Wonder, therefore, that his Conduct appeared unreasonable and hasty, even to us

who loved him best; while the Duchess *Lucrezia* dwelt on it as the Proof of actual Phrenesis, and inveighed against his Ingratitude to the Duke, who would kindly have put him under the best medical Treatment.

I believe that many salt Tears were shed for him by my sweet Mistress. She would have me sit beside her Couch in an easy Chair, (for the great Toe of my left Foot manifested arthritic Symptoms at that Period,) and lament to me what a grievous Thing Madness was, whether Hypochondria, Mania, or by whatever other Name the wise Ones would call it; how inscrutable an Infliction of Providence on Some that were good and great and wise above their Fellows. She wondered where he had gone; whether he had any Money, any Friends, and wished I could obtain Tidings of him. This I at length did, in the following Billet from him at *Mantua*.

“The Doors were shut against me, with every Mark of Insolence, even by the Grooms and Porters of the Palace. I was expected to

consent to be a third with *Solon* and *Brutus*; that is, to feign or lie under the Imputation of Madnefs. Sooner than that, I abandoned my Home, my Poem, my Love; and, after thirteen Years of Service, departed, as a new *Bias*, on Foot and alone, to seek with some other Prince a secure Afylum. I have come to my Father's Friend, the Duke of *Mantua*, but he will neither hear nor see me, and no Wonder, for I learn that the Duke of *Ferrara* is making Suit for Madama *Margherita*. Having fled without Money, I have been obliged to part with the Ruby I had from the Duchefs, and the gold Collar given me by the Duke of *Urbino* when I was their Guest at *Casteldurante*. I have an Emerald from another and dearer Hand, from which I will never part! I go hence To-morrow; whither, I know not. Commend me to your and my loved Miftrefs. *Sta sano ed amami.*

“ P. S. I hope his Highnefs won't burn my Poem ? ”

“ Burn his Poem ! ” repeated Madama

Leonora, as she read the Letter, "Is it not enough of itself, *Ser Pantaleone*, to drive him out of his Mind, to think that such a Calamity may happen?"—

"Madama," in an under-tone, "her Highness is coming in."

"Ah!" and with a little Smile at me, half sad, half imploring, she dropped her Handkerchief over the Billet, which I never asked her for afterwards, nor did she ever restore it unasked.

The Duchess *Lucrezia*, then sweeping in, accosted my dear Mistress with, "How fares it with you, Sister?"

"Sister, I am perturbed at what I have just learnt. *Tasso* is at *Mantua*, and in Distress. Ah, if you love me, send after him! Induce *Alfonso* to recall him!"

"*Leonora!* how often must I tell you that you never will get well while you continue to disturb yourself in this Way about a worthless Man? Your Illness has no other Foundation, and it is not very creditable to you. Your stupid, time-serving old Dr. *Venieri* may be

blinded by your saying you have this and that Malady, and play into your Hands, but *we* know very well that your Symptoms are neither more nor less than factitious and simulated, and that if you ceased to molest yourself to Death about *Tasso*, you would become perfectly well."

"Oh, cease, *Lucrezia*, cease! You know not the Anguish you are giving me! Anything else I can suffer; but this—"

And she covered her pale, quivering Features.

"Your Highness will excuse me," said I bluntly to the Duchess, "but Dr. *Bartolo* as well as Dr. *Venieri*, prescribed the Absence of all exciting Emotions, and we know very well that this Subject naturally excites her Excellency. I was to blame, I only, for dropping, like a Fool as I was, a Hint of what I took to be simply the common News, which I am always the last to hear."

"Certainly it is no News to me," said the Duchess, "for the Duke no sooner heard it than he bade *Clementillo* ride Post to *Mantua* for the Purpose of recalling *Tasso*."

“Did he? that was very kind,” said Madama *Leonora*, wiping away her Tears.

“Certainly it was very kind, *Leonora*, though I wonder you admit it to be so! Very kind, and very gracious, and very condescending, but entirely thrown away on an Ingrate and a Madman. *Taffo* had left *Mantua* and proceeded to *Urbino*, whether to report the latest Intelligence of me to my lord Duke or not, I cannot say. However, the Duke had the Grace not to receive him, which is more than I should have expected, considering the Way they used to go on together at *Castel-durante*—bandying Flatteries and Protestations of Friendship till I was quite nauseated with them, I can tell you!”

“And is he there now?”

“No, he spent a few Days with the Duke's Secretary,—just long enough to write an Elegy or Eulogy, whichever you prefer hearing it called, on the Secretary's Wife, whom every one is just now crying up to the Skies, merely because she has happened to die young—at the Age of twenty-six, that is,—

not so very young, neither. . . You and I have had enough of such Effusions tagged to our Names to know their real Worth,—though I believe *you* care for them even now.”

“And where is he?”

“Ah, we must always be reverting to the old Theme, then! You know as much as I do. He has strayed away from *Pesaro*, somewhere in the Direction of *Savoy*—no one knows what has become of him. I shall not be surpris'd any Day, to hear he has laid violent Hands on himself. Madmen often do.”

After this kind Observation, the Duchess sat quiet a little, and then said, “It is Time to go to Church, I believe. Adieu, dear *Leonora*. I thought you would like to hear all the News I had collected of your Favourite before I went, and came on Purpose. There will be a Water-party after Church, and a grand Reception in the Evening, so I will not disturb you again, dear, unless you would like to see me dressed. I will remember you in my Prayers.”


And, lightly kissing her Sister's Forehead, she withdrew; turning back at the Door, to ask if she should send her Dwarf for her Amusement, which Madama *Leonora* declined with Thanks.

I never can think how Women can bear such human Monstrosities about them, myself. Fitter far, in my Opinion, to create a Shudder, and to be recoiled from by their tender Natures, than to be made alternately their Butts and Pets—either being the Signs of a cruel or a weak Mind. Perhaps, in the first Case, the Tendernefs that reigns in a true Woman's Heart was called forth by some Instance of Oppression exercised towards one of these revolting little Unfortunates, and so in her Pity she caressed and humoured him till she became really fond of the Object of her Humanity, and found Amusement in his grotesque Ways of showing his Gratitude; and so they came to be in Fashion. But in the Main they are not grateful, nor even good-tempered. Their Affliction cuts them off from Fellow-feeling with their Kind, on

whom they love to wreak their petty Malice for possessing Advantages themselves are denied; and they seek Compensation for their Infirmities in Gluttony, Humourfomeness, Caprice, Mischief, and Malice. This Beast of a Dwarf—for I really may call him such—belonging to the Duchess of *Urbino*, was as gluttonish as a Pig, as ugly as a Toad, as mischievous as a Monkey, as sly as a Fox, as long-eared as an Ass, but a good deal sharper witted, for what his long Ears received, his long Head retained, and his long Tongue imparted to his Mistress; but to Others he was as close as a Marmot. For the Rest, he was always under Somebody's Chair, or beneath the Table, or in some Corner where one would least expect him; and, as I have said before, he could trundle along the Floor like a Hoop.

CHAPTER XIV.

Of the Duke's third Wedding.

 WITH the opening Year, we celebrated his Highness's Marriage with Madama *Margherita*, with all the Pomp and outward Festivity that it is possible to conceive; but to me there seemed to be little Hilarity in it. I was growing in Years, or at least not so young as I had formerly been, and was beginning to be sick of Hunting and Hawking, Water-parties and Tourneys, Concerts and Play-acting; all the more so because the best and dearest and fairest of the House of *Este* was drooping like a Lily of the Valley that the Noonday Sun has burnt up.

One Day, having left her with her Women in a fainting State, I entered my own Apart-

ment, which was now in the Palace, and shut the Door upon myself, uttering a deep Sigh. The Sigh was echoed by another as deep; and, starting, I looked round, and saw a Man in a black Cloak, raising his Eyes, which were red with weeping, from his folded Arms, on which his Head had been resting. I mutely held out my Arms to him; it was *Taffo*.

“You weep!” cried he, looking eagerly into my Face. “Kind Friend! blessed Sympathy!”

“Psha!—a Moment's Weakness—I never gave way so before. I have been a little upset this Morning, and did not expect to see you. Dear *Taffo*! my long-loved Friend!”

“Oh, dear old Friend, these Tears honour you! they are Balm to my Heart. But why, why have Madama *Leonora*'s Doors been closed against me ever since I returned to *Ferrara*?”

“You amaze me! Have you been long here? I concluded you had but just arrived!”

“I have been here these five Days, driven from Court and Lobby, denied Admittance to

the Duke and Princeffes, treated by my old Acquaintance with cold Neglect, or abfolute Cruelty. I begin to fear my Head will not ftand this much longer. I am as fane as you are, but I feel Something working *here*—”

And he clasped his Head with his two Hands, and ftood looking at me, the Picture of Woe.

“ My deareft *Taffo*, fit down—I have offered you no Refreshment.” And I took a Bottle of *Lacryma* and two *Venice* Glaffes from the Cupboard.

“ *Cibabis nos Pane lacrymarum?*” faid he, quick as Thought; “ *et Potum dabis nobis in Lacrymis in Mensura?*”

“ If this Wine be poisoned,” faid I fmiling, “ the Glaffes will crack.”

“ There are many Ways of murdering a Man befides drugging his Cup,” faid he, after pledging me. “ Have you never heard of Pouncet-boxes that fhould flay thofe who fmelt at them—gold Collars that fhould contract round the Neck and produce Strangulation — envenomed Gloves — Air-piftols —

Down-pillows from which leapt a Knife to pierce the Cheek that sought Repose on them? How met the first Duchefs of *Ferrara* her Death, I pray you?"

"They said—Dr. *Bartolo* said—she had a putrid Fever."

"You *know*, however, it was not so. The Thing will go down in History! What killed the Archduchefs *Barbara*?"

"Nay, confider her Connexions! *There*, at least, was no foul Play, poor Thing!"

"It may have been so; yet I have feen Jewel-cafes and Bracelet-clasps contrived as Vehicles for fubtle Poifons. They *fell* them, Sir, in *Venice*! What became of *Ercole Contrario*, in this very Palace? He entered, and never went forth!"

"Too true, my dear *Taffo*, but you muft not conjure up thefe Phantoms of Evil. Neither you nor I can forefee what fore Tests it may please the Almighty to put us to before we die, or in Death—and, let us remember, Nothing can happen without his Knowledge and Periffion;—but fhall we,

then, embitter every previous Hour by considering all the Casualties which may befall us? That would be neither wise nor brave. We should 'die daily,' in a different Sense from the Apostle. You spoke just now of Madama *Leonora's* Doors being closed against you. This has not been with her Knowledge, or with mine; on the contrary, her Heart is full of Kindness and Sympathy for you, but you are perhaps unaware that she is declining under the sad Influence of a slow but mortal Malady—"

"Poison!"—

"No, no, not Poison; a direct Dispensation from Heaven; more painful even in its Progress, perhaps, than the fearful Instruments of Destruction you have been speaking of."

"Ah! God be her Aid!"

And he clasped his Hands over his Eyes, which overflowed with trickling Tears.

"Still, it is better to fall into the Hands of God than of Man," said he, cheering up. "Shall I, then, never see her more? I have only stolen up into your Chamber when the

Porters happened to be off Duty, and may never have such an Opportunity again."

"*Taffo!* if I gave you an Opportunity would you abuse it?"

"As I am a living Man, no!"

"Do you think you could command yourself?"

"I am certain."

He raised his noble Figure to its full Height, cleared his Brow, and stood looking full at me in calm, serene, Self-control. Ah! what a Man he was!

"Well,—I am going to do a very bold Thing,—and perhaps may fail after all. The Duke, the two Duchesses and their Train are from Home,—or you had not found the Entrance so negligently guarded—Madama *Leonora* is only with her Women, and has been very much indisposed all the Morning, but I think an Interview with you would cheer her, if you would sedulously avoid whatever could excite, and only aim at spending a calm and cheerful Hour with her."

"I will meet her as if we had parted but

Yesterday! It shall be like one of our old Chats at *Cosandoli*."

"Exactly! That will be the very Thing. I may depend on you?"

"Rely on me, my dear old Friend!" He wrung my Hand, and then, clasping both his own, looked up to Heaven with Thoughtfulness and high Resolve.


"Wait a Moment, then. I will see if the Thing can be done."

I left him, and in a few Minutes returned.

"Follow me. And remember your Promise."

CHAPTER XV.

*Of the Interview in Madama Leonora's
Dressing-room.*

 HE mild Light of a sunny Winter Morning was so tempered by Sun-blinds and Mosquito-curtains of pale rose-coloured Gauze, that the waxen Features of my dear Madama appeared less wan and faded than they would have done in a full Light; and her graceful, wasted Form, draped in the softest Muslin, with a long Veil of fine black Lace falling from her Head over her Shoulders in full Folds, betrayed little of its Emaciation except to the Eyes that daily watched her and the Arms that daily lifted her. A Rosary of Pearls with ruby Credo-beads, and an Agnus-Dei of exquisitely carved Ivory, was her only Ornament; an ebony

Crucifix and illuminated Missal were on the little Table beside her, together with a perforated Ball of silver Filagree-work filled with Effence, and a Vase of Venetian Glafs filled with Hyacinths, Narcissuses, Violets, and Snowdrops, which perfumed the Air. At her Head stood *Olimpia*, sedulously arranging the Pillows of her Couch, which when she had done, she sat down on a high Stool just apart from her, gently fanning her now and then with a Feather-fan.

Tasso, advancing quickly yet gently towards her, knelt beside her, kissed the thin Hand she extended to him, and said cheerfully, "The Blessing of God be upon you, dear Lady!"

She betrayed more Emotion than he did, and lay quite silent, with quivering Lip and fluttering Bosom. Pointing to a low Stool, on which he could sit facing her and close to her, she said in a Whisper, "Sit there."

He did so, and immediately took her Hand again in his, and continued regarding her fixedly, with a sweet and affectionate Smile.

The Effort to him must have been immense, but there was no Sign of there being any Effort at all.

Almost voicelessly, she at length said, "You find me much altered. And you are altered too."

"Have not I had Enough to alter me?" said he cheerfully. "If you think me altered, after eighteen Months' absence, what must my Sister *Cornelia* have done, when we met for the first Time since our Childhood? She did not know me at all! I guessed it would be so, and played her such a Trick! Oh, such a Trick!"

"Tell me about it, *Tasso!*"

"So I will, but where shall I begin? Oh, from the Night I ran away from you all, when you had spoken those kind, sweet, inspiriting Words to me *in the Balcony.*" (He had not left *Ferrara* that Night, but it was the last Time she had seen him.) "Ah well, that was a sorrowful Time with me; I will not much dwell upon it. I longed for my early Home, for my native Country, for

my Sister's sweet Voice and loving Eyes—you know, Madama, how I have always clung to the Sympathy of Women——”

Madama *Leonora* here mutely held towards him a little Medallion of the Blessed Virgin. He smiled, bowed reverently towards it, crossed himself, and went on.

“Having started almost without Money, I made my Way as I could, chiefly on Foot, sometimes sleeping in the Cafali of lone Vineyards, sometimes in Shrines and Hermitages, at the Foot of a Cross, or in the Hollow of a Tree. The Contadini let me share their Polenta and Maccaroni, and now and then gave me delicious Grapes and Figs, or a Draught of Goat's Milk and a Lump of black Bread.”

“Ah, poor *Taffo!*”

“Not poor at all, dearest Madama, I liked it very much, and rewarded them with Stories of Enchantment. When I got to *Rome*, I found Friends, who supplied my Needs, and would fain have had me tarry with them. However, I must needs push on, to see my

dear *Cornelia*. Between *Rome* and *Terracina*, the Banditti were committing terrible Ravages, the whole Country rang at Night with hoarse Cries of Men, and Screams of poor, fearful Women. I longed to have a Cut at them. Suddenly I found myself surrounded, seized, and carried off to the Brigands' Strong-hold. I was searched, and the Little I had was taken from me. They came to my Pocket *Virgil*, wherein my Name was written. The Captain of the Band, a swarthy, stalwart Fellow, with a Picture of the Blessed Virgin round his Neck, was the only one who could read. 'What! *Tasso*?' cries he, 'the Man whom *Italy* delights to honour?' (funny *Honour*, Madama!) 'Come, tell us a Story, and you shall have back your Money, and sup with us into the Bargain!' What could I do? I spun the Rogues a mingled Web of Romance, Poetry, and History, dashing in a Moral here and there,—a Moral of the rough, manly sort, about Valour, Constancy, and Compassion towards Women,—and so we sat round the Watch-fire till Midnight, and

the next Morning they sped me on my Way. The Captain being desirous of bestowing on me some Mark of his Friendliness and Munificence, I begged of him a rough Goatherd's Suit of Sheepskins, with Leggings and flapped Hat complete, which he willingly bestowed on me. Then, with my own Clothes in a Bundle at the End of a rough Staff I carried over my Shoulder, I trudged away towards *Sorrento*, a very Picaroon in Appearance, I assure you, Madama !”

“How I should have loved to see you ! Go on, dear *Taffo*.”

“Arrived at *Sorrento*, I sought out *Cornelia*'s House, which overlooked the Bay, and was of modest but agreeable Exterior, betokening Affluence, though hardly Opulence. I sought and obtained Admittance, on the Pretext of having a Letter, which I must entrust only to her own Hands. I was ushered into a pleasant Summer-chamber, perfumed with Orange-blossoms, and having a Balcony overlooking the Bay. Here fate *Cornelia*, rocking the Cradle of her youngest Infant ; she was more

like my dear Mother in her Prime than like the little Girl who had last kissed me at the Gate, when Don *Angeluzzo* carried me to *Rome*—a young and beautiful Matron, Madama.

“Well, she looked at me strangely,—I blundered out a few Words in a feigned Voice, and took from my Bosom a Letter I had written her in the Brigands' Cave, mysteriously describing myself in Danger and as a Fugitive. She recognised my Hand at once, tore open and hastily perused the Billet; and, I confess to you, I experienced sweet Emotions on seeing her bedew it plentifully with Tears.”

“*Taffo!* I think all Men like giving Women Pain! Fie on you! How *could* you?”

“Well, she examined and cross-examined me. I led her a fine Dance, Madama! and just as she was ready to wring her Hands and burst into Tears, giving me up for lost, off flew my Cap and shaggy Coat,—her Brother stood confest! There were we, laughing, crying, kissing!—Ah, Madama!”

“ Well! And then? and then?”

“ Well, and then, and then——*She* scolded, I laughed, she upbraided, I grew penitent, she questioned, I made Answer, gave her a long Catalogue of Woes, set her crying, kissed away her Tears, asked for her eldest Boys, was told they would presently return from School, and so we agreed to eat, drink, and be merry together, and read, and talk, and laugh, and make Verses, and look at the Sea, and be as happy as the Day is long, while Fate would let us. And so we went on, for nearly a Year, till you, *you* tempted me away.—Ah, Madama!”

“ *Tasso*, I never knew till now how wrong it was! Oh, forgive me!”

“ Wrong! Ah, Madama!”

He kissed her Hand, and smiled; she smiled too, (it is well known she had the sweetest Mouth in all *Italy*,) and we fate a little While silent. Meantime I noted with fatherly delight how soft and equable her Breathing had become, how the harassed Look had disappeared from her Face, and a faint,

delicate Colour had risen on her white Cheek. She lay blifsfully quiet awhile, and then said,—
“Go on, *Taffo*.”

Olimpia here interposed with a little Jelly, of which she prayed her Lady to take a few Spoonfuls. She did so, readily, and with Refreshment to herself, and then again said,—

“Go on, *Taffo*!”

While this Interruption occurred, he had probably been turning in his Mind what to say next, for when he resumed, he made a great Skip over the more painful Events of his History, and said,—

“Lately, when I was journeying towards *Savoy*, a pleasant little Adventure occurred to me, which I think you will like to hear of. I was riding from *Novara* to *Vercelli*, when suddenly the Sky darkened with Clouds apparently brimful of Rain, and almost at the same Time, I heard a violent Barking of Dogs, intermingled with Shouts. A poor, trembling Fawn sprang into the Road, chased by a Couple of strong Hounds which pulled

it down juſt before my Horſe's Feet, and at the ſame Time there came up a handſome, graceful Youth of eighteen or thereabouts, who, beating them off, took up the Game, and handed it to a ruſtic Fellow at his Heels. He accoſted me, and ſeeing me to be a Traveller, warned me that the River I was approaching was ſo ſwollen as to be unſafe to croſs, and invited me, Stranger as I was, to partake the Hoſpitality of his Father's Houſe. Being unwilling, at firſt, to avail myſelf of his Kindneſs, I ſaid I would ſatiſfy myſelf of the Condition of the River, which he let me do, ſtill keeping at my Side; and on my finding the Paſſage to be really impracticable, I ſaid ſmiling, 'Neceſſity now compels me to accept that Invitation which Inclination prompted me to already.'

"A little ungracious, *Taffo!* You needed not to have been ſo loth to accept a Favour."

"Well, he ſeemed to think ſo too, and ſaid, ſmiling, 'I would ſooner have been indebted to your Inclination than your Neceſſity, but

rejoice that you are on any Terms constrained to accept it!"

"He seems to have been a pretty-spoken Youth, and to have taken a Fancy to you at first Sight. Did you tell him who you were?"

"He kept eyeing me over his Shoulder as he led the Way, as though desirous of making out who I could be. It was a wild secluded Neighbourhood, where Strangers are probably not very rife. I had already given up my Horse to my Vetturino, and was following my new Acquaintance on Foot, when we came in Sight of a pretty House near the River. It stood in a little Courtyard, shaded by some fine Trees, and seemed to have good Orchards and Gardens attached to it. A double Flight of low, wide Steps led to the hospitable Portal, which admitted us into a large, cool, lofty Hall, nearly as wide as it was long, paved with Diamonds of black and white Marble, and hung with old Arms and Insignia of the Chase. From hence, my young Friend led me into the Dining-room, which was hung with stamped

Leather; the Table-cloth was already laid for Dinner, and the Beaufet spread with Dishes of fine white Ware, heaped with Abundance of choice Fruit."

"*Taffo*, how prettily you describe! Go on, I like so to hear you!"

"'Beautiful and commodious is your Dwelling,' cried I, 'and, I doubt not, its noble Owner finds Nothing to regret in his Remoteness from Courts and Cities.'

"'I can assure you, however,' returned the Youth, 'that my Father is not unacquainted with them, though he passes the greater Part of his Time here. And he has a Brother at *Rome*, who stands high in the Confidence of Cardinal *Vercelli*.' This was said with a little innocent Self-importance, Madama! as much as to say, 'I would have you to know we are not altogether such Clowns as you might think!' 'Ah!' cried I, 'who is there that knows the good Cardinal and does not esteem him?'"

"Why, *Taffo*, do you know him so particularly well?"

“Hum! let that pass, Madama! Just then, a Lad younger than my Companion, but of equally pleasing Exterior, joined us, and said that his Father was just coming Home. At the same Time, the Gentlemen rode up to the Door, followed by a Couple of Grooms, and, alighting, ascended the Steps. He was a Man nearer sixty than fifty; with a hale, healthy Complexion; large, brown, penetrating and benignant Eyes, deep-set under a firm Brow; and Hair and Beard of silvery whiteness. On my being presented to him, he saluted me with a little Surprise, and then said smiling to his eldest Son, ‘Whence comes this good Gentleman, whom I do not remember to have before seen, either here or anywhere else?’ The young Man replied briefly, on which, his Father with great Kindness and Urbanity said, ‘Whoever you may be, you are heartily welcome to such a plain Reception as I have it in my Power to offer.’ I made some suitable Answer, and we then washed our Hands and sat down to Table, the good Master of the House making me

occupy the Place of Honour. The Fruits were from his own Orchard, the Pigeons from his own Dove-cot, the Game killed by his Son, the Bread made of his own Corn, ground in his own Mill; and the Conversation naturally turned on domestic Affairs, in which, I assure you, Madama, I knew not whether to be most pleased with his Simplicity or his Wisdom. By-and-by, we were joined by his Wife—”

“How old was she? Was she pretty?”

“Nay, Madama, she *might* have been so, some twenty Years ago, but I shall only say for her that she was a graceful, benignant, highly respectable old Lady.”

“How was she dressed?”

“Now you puzzle me! Let me consider—She was certainly not in white, nor yet in scarlet,—no, nor in pea-green,—nor yet in orange. No, no; she must have been in black!—Black, full, ample, heavy, with a little white round her Throat. That would be all right, would it not, for an old Lady?”

“Ah yes, that will do.—Go on.”

“After the Lady had withdrawn, dutifully supported by her two Sons, who presently returned to us, the old Man fell into Reminiscences of his early Years and the Precepts he had received from his Father, which I think he was not sorry my Presence gave him a Pretext for repeating in the hearing of his own Sons. They went to prove a hereditary Worth and plain Sense in the Family. He dwelt a good Deal on how to choose a Wife, how to educate Children, how to govern Servants, how to regulate Expenses, how to lay out one's Fields and one's Garden, how to invest Capital, and so forth,—Details which might not much interest you, Madama, but which agreeably wiled away the Evening, interspersed as they were with harmless Pleasantries, and apposite Quotations from our best *Latin* and *Italian* Poets.”

“Did he quote *you*, *Tasso*?”

“Madama, he did not!”

“And did you not give him the Gratification of knowing who you were?”

“To what Purpose? No, he will only

remember me as ‘*the illustrious Stranger*, who talked about the Signs of the Zodiac!’ Once, when we got upon Astronomy, and were speculating whether the World had been created in the Spring or the Autumn, he gazed on me awhile with fixed Attention, and, after a Pause, said with an Air of old-fashioned Politeness that became him well, ‘I suspect I am entertaining a more honourable Guest than at first I had any Conception of.’”

“I am glad of that! What said you thereupon?”

“That I was less signalised by Merit than by Misfortunes.”

She smiled and sighed. He smiled and did not sigh.

“When do you think the World was created?”

“In the *Spring*, Madama, when He who created the World redeemed the World!”

“*Tasso*, what a Blessing it is that He who created us also redeemed us!”

“Madama! it is the only Comfort in Life.”

“The most painful Life is but a Span, and is felt as such when we approach its Close.”

“And, even then, seems o'erlong, Madama!”

“*Taffo*, there is only one Thing worth living for,—to work out our Salvation, even though it be with Fear and Trembling.”

“What a Blessing, Madama, that Another has worked out for us what we could never work out perfectly ourselves!”

“We can recline our tired Souls on his Merits and be at Peace!”

“We can lie down on his Redemption and look up to his Atonement.”

“I am not long for this World, *Taffo*.”

“Madama, if I could, I would fly away to the Land where you are going, and be at Rest.”

“We shall all be there soon.”

“‘*Ecce mensurabiles posuisti Dies meos.*’”

Here there was a Pause. I, beginning to fear she would become exhausted, and also that he might stay too long for his own Safety, quietly remarked,

“It appears to me that we must dismiss you shortly, Messer *Torquato*; for, if his Highness return and find you where you are, his Moustachios will work like the Sails of a Windmill.”

This occasioned them both to laugh, and *Tasso* made a Show to rise, without doing so however; but Madama *Leonora*, signing to *Olimpia*, said, “Offer him Refreshment.”


Bread and Wine stood on a Salver. He broke off a Fragment of Bread and ate it with Quietness and Deliberation; then raising the Cup to his Lips, inclined his Head gravely to her as he drank. She mutely bade *Olimpia* bring the Salver to her, and put the Cup to her Lips and ate a Fragment of the Bread. Looking towards me, she said kindly, “Take some, Ser *Pantaleone*.” I did so, reverently, feeling Something almost sacramental in it. She had closed her Eyes and folded her Hands, and I could tell by her whitening Lips that it was Time for *Tasso* to depart. I signalled to him, and he slowly and reluctantly rose, made the Sign

of the Cross over her, crossed himself, and gently took her Hand. She re-opened her Eyes and smiled as he kissed it, twice, thrice, —then, yet smiling, waved it to him as he withdrew. When I returned from seeing him forth, Madama *Leonora* was in a balmy Sleep.

Dederit dilectis suis Somnum !

CHAPTER XVI.

Of the Progress of Madama Leonora's Illness. And of Ser Pantaleone's becoming weaned from the World

FTER this, Madama *Leonora* declined rapidly—so rapidly that for an entire Month I and her few personal Attendants were all whom she saw; nor did she nor did we take any Cognizance of Affairs without, nor interest ourselves at all about Anything beyond the Suite of Rooms in which the last pathetic Scene of a Christian Life was enacting, while all the Rest of the Palace was devoted to the Festivities in Character with the Duke's recent Espousals. *Verumtamen universa Vanitas, omnis Homo vivens!* There were two Worlds under one Roof. In one of them, faint Odours of medicinal Herbs and of Incense, hushed

Footsteps, watchful Looks, silent Tongues, smothered Sighs, shaded Lights,—and now and then the grateful Entrance of the Physician or the Confessor;—from the other, were now and then faintly borne to us the distant Sounds of Music and the Dance, the Buzz of many Voices, the Smell of roast Meats, the Flourish of Trumpets, the Neighing of Steeds, the Applause of the People,—muffled by intervening Walls and closed Doors. I often thought, as I dropped the green velvet Curtain between the outer Ante-chamber and the Staircase, “ Thus we shut out Life!—And to this will every one of those merry Revellers come at last.”

Thus, I neither saw nor heard Aught of *Taffo*,—till, inquiring of him somewhat anxiously one Day of Dr. *Venieri*, as I showed him forth, he whispered Something that petrified me.

I said, “ For Heaven's Sake, let not this reach our Madama ! ”

“ He said, “ Certainly not. You yourself must be cautious, and her Women need not

know it. The Duchefs *Lucrezia* will be fure not to tell her.”

I flood like a Statue when he was gone. I felt I could not at once return to Madama *Leonora*: my Looks would betray me, and my Heart was furcharged with Woe. I repaired to my own Chamber; and there flood *Rosalvino*, who gave me a Billet crumpled up into a Pellet, faying, “ This was thrown to me through the Bars of a grated Window.” Directly I faw the Writing, I recognifed it, though it was ftrangely marred, and blotted. Thus it ran:—

“ I who loved Renown, Sympathy, Companionship with my Kind, the Song of Birds, the Difcourfe of Men, the fweet Looks and Voices of Women,—am fhut up in *Santa Anna*! I, who loved the dear Face of Nature, and panted for fresh Air, am in a clofe, dark-fome Cell, from which I cannot even fee the Sky. I, who was delicate in my Apparel, faftidious in my Cleanlinefs, nice in my Food, fare like a Felon, have not Water enough to

quench my Thirst, much less for Ablution ! I who, like many imaginative Persons, am unable to support Solitude, am now lonely Day and Night, and Day after Day, without even seeing a Physician or a Confessor, and only hearing the dismal Sounds of Chains and Lashes. O tell me, you who love me ! instead of seeking to cure me of being mad, are they not striving to make me so ? Writing Implements, indeed, I am allowed ; but alas ! Fancy and Imagination are stifled in this close Cell, my Mind refuses to form Images, and I doubt whether my Letters, full of sad Complaints, ever reach their Destination. O Earth, Earth, Earth, cover not this Injustice ! Testify against it, O Time, to all Duration !”

I sat stupified over this Letter. Without considering how I might embroil myself, I hurried off to the Duke's favourite Courtier, Count *Scipio del Sacrato*, and exclaimed to him—

“ *Taffo* is in the Lunatic Asylum of *Santa Anna* !”

“ He is.”

“ Oh ! is this the Faith pledged to him—the Issue of all the fair Promises held out to him ?”

He shrugged his Shoulders. “ If a Man will go crazy, what is to be done with him ? The Duke has Care for his Health.”

“ No Physician has seen him.”

“ How do you know that ?”

“ His noble Faith in the Duke has been despised and set at Nought !”

“ Psha !”

“ Posterity will talk of this, Count !”

“ We will leave the Affair to be settled by Posterity.”

“ Ah, Count ! I never yet solicited a Grace of you ! Prevail on his Highness to grant me an Order to see *Tasso*.”

“ His Highness has just gone to *Belriguardo*. Besides, you are in close Attendance on *Madama Leonora*, and cannot be spared.”

“ Do not deny me, I entreat, I implore you.”

“ The Thing is simply impossible. No one

has seen him, nor would the Duke grant me the Favour if I asked it for myself."

"Why this unnecessary, this unheard-of Rigour?"

"It has not been unnecessary. *Taffo* either is mad, or has acted as a Madman. Unless Madness palliate his Conduct, it has been unjustifiable."

"In what Respect?"

"Can you ask?—you, who know his Passion for Madama *Leonora*?"

"It has never betrayed him into the least Excess."

"Unfortunately, he stands committed by his own Pen. What think you of these Verses?"—handing me a Paper, which, at first Sight, I concluded to be in *Taffo's* Hand.

Having perused a very presumptuous and passionate Effusion, with little that deserved the Name of Poetry in it, save the Rhymes, I returned it to him, saying,

"*Taffo* never wrote this, it is forged."

"How mean you!"

"I mean what I say. I know the Trick of

his Hand; and of his Style. At first Sight, there is a great Resemblance, but there are Letters there which are not framed as he always frames them, and Expressions which the Nicety of his Ear would never permit him to use. As for the Sentiments, they have a Grossness of which he is utterly incapable.”

“The Duke, however, is persuaded of their Authenticity.”

“I wish I could undeceive his Highness. Such atrocious Frauds have already been perpetrated in *Tasso's* Name, that the unknown Framer of them, whoever he may be, has only taken one more Step in Guilt by committing this Forgery.”

“Whom do you suspect?”

“Alas, Count, what is the Use of mentioning Suspicions unless I can bring them Home?”

“Quite right; therefore do not mention them to the Duke. It will be Time wasted.”

“I *must*, if I can find Opportunity, or my Heart will burst! What! shall these Verses go down to Posterity as *Tasso's*, to blast his fair Fame?”

He took them hastily from me, as if afraid of my destroying them on the Spot, and truly I am Sometimes sorry I did not do so at all Hazards, for I knew, to a moral Certainty, they must be *Brunello's*. But I was growing old and disinclined to personal Quarrels, see you, and had no Leisure for them, now I was so much needed by my dear Madama. So I only reiterated with increased Positivity my Conviction that *Tasso* had had no Hand in them, which I will believe and maintain, yes, yes! to my dying Day! Count *Scipio* heard me with a well-bred Smile of pitying Incredulity, and at Length said, "You admit, that supposing the Verses authentic, the Duke would have Cause for condign Displeasure?"

"Certainly; though not for immuring the Writer in a Madhouse."

"*Orsù!* . . . our Punishments would be light, dear Ser *Pantaleone*, if we had the Choice of them ourselves! *Santa Anna* is better than the drugged Cup or the Stiletto, at any Rate. The Duke's Judgment is in Mercy, and will be remitted, doubtless, when

your Friend has cooled a little. I am going to try some German Hawks—will you like to see them? ”

And so I was bowed out, with a Heart ready to break.

I resolved to appeal to the Duke, the very first Time I had the smallest Pretext for doing so, and, to this End, to wear a sorrowful Countenance whenever I should meet him, such as *Nehemiah* wore before King *Ahasuerus*, that he might of his own Accord ask the Occasion of my Trouble. But alas! his Highness was too much preoccupied with his own Affairs to be very likely to consider the Looks of so unimportant a Personage as myself; and, even had he regarded them, the Illness of my august Mistress was sufficient to account for them, without any asking of Questions. Moreover, the Duchess *Lucrezia* now took upon herself to report her Sister's Case daily to the Duke, assuring him that her illness was too great for his Visits to her to be expedient, and Dr. *Venieri* daily gave his Bulletin, so that I had not the Office of

carrying News of her to his Highness in his Closet as heretofore, which was the only private Opportunity likely to occur. One Day, passing through one of the Antechambers, with a Heart full of Sorrow, I saw *Guarini* coming along, and got out of his Way, having no Mind to speak to an old Enemy of *Taffo's*; but, to my Surprise, he took me by the Sleeve and drew me aside, saying with an Air of great Trouble, "What is this I hear of our Friend? Can his great Mind indeed have given Way? or has he, as some of his warmest Admirers dread, committed some fatal Imprudence?"

"Neither one nor the other, believe me," said I emphatically, "his Enemies, and they alone, have to answer for it." And was hastily moving off, but he still detained me.

"You lay an Emphasis on Enemies," said he, "as if I were one of them, but God forbid I should feel Aught but Concern and Sorrow for a noble Mind so cruelly oppressed. Rivals we once were, I grant you, but the Race between us has long surceased, and even

if it were not so, my Heart would at this Moment be melted with Pity."

"Signor *Guarini!*" cried I, "these Feelings do you Honour!" and I grasped his Hand with Energy. A Tear shone in his Eye, and I felt my own moisten.

Just then, the Duke passed by, with several Gentlemen, and catching Sight of me, paused a Moment and said, "What ails you?"

"Sir! sir!" cried I, almost carried out of myself, "have mercy upon *Tasso*, in Captivity and Solitude!"

"In Captivity, but not wholly in Solitude," replied he, with something like a little Kindness in his Eye, "*Giulio Mosti* now has Access to him, and spends whole Hours in his Cell, listening to his Recitations and writing to his Dictation; in short, doing all that can mitigate his Sorrow. He has also been removed to a Cell above-ground, where he can stretch his Limbs and see the Sun, and flourish like a Geranium in a Pot!"

The Admissions as well as Solaces contained in these few Words, filled my Heart so full,

that I could not proffer a Word, and the Duke, smiling, passed on. He, in the Plenitude of Health and Prosperity, to whom Air and Liberty were such common and vulgar Things as hardly to seem worth remembering, to speak of One to whose very Existence they were essential, and who had been so ruthlessly deprived of them, as flourishing like a Geranium in a Pot!

For my part, I wonder how People can put Flowers in Pots, or Birds in Cages, or snare Fishes with Hooks, or set large Birds to pursue small Ones, or in short, find Pleasure in any Cruelty whatsoever. But I know my Sentiments are peculiar.

'Veloces Pedes eorum ad effundendam Sanguinem.'—

All this While, strange to say, dear Madama *Leonora* never made one single Inquiry about *Tasso*, but desisted entirely from Anxiety about him, as well as concerning all mundane Things, and stayed her Thoughts entirely upon God. It was a blessed Thing for her that her Mind took this Turn, since there

was no good News for her, and I never ceased congratulating myself on having brought about that Interview, so soothing and beneficial to them both, which Anything turbid and tumultuous within themselves might so completely have robbed of all Comfort, but which, under the chastening Influences of Sanctity and Self-control, shed a mild Ray of Light on their last terrestrial Intercourse.

She had now a thousand pretty Thoughts about the World to come, and told me how she dreamed of Angels and of CHRIST, and how she beheld the heavenly Mansions already occupied by this and that Saint, and saw others busily erecting and fitting up by eager loving Hands, for those that would soon need them, the Lord JESUS superintending all;—and how there were Clusters of little Children flocking about in every Quarter of Heaven, and, as they grew up in spiritual Stature, being instructed by guardian Angels in all heavenly Knowledge; and what joyous Parties were setting forth

on Explorations to this and that Planet, and how others were harping and hymning Strains impossible to describe, such was their exquisite Melody! and others, deep studying Books of divine Lore written by Angels, under the immediate Dictation of the HOLY SPIRIT, and others, plunged deep in Thought, revolving eternal Mysteries, and learning the why and wherefore not only of the minutest Events of their own Lives, but of Things that had occurred from the Foundation of the World. Others, in Attitudes of Adoration, seeming as though every Faculty and Sense were absorbed in beatific Raptures; others, eagerly waiting at Heaven's Gate for the arrival of some loved Spirit on Earth; others, just re-united, in an Ecstasy of Bliss. I declare it made my Head spin Sometimes to try to follow her, and at last I gave it over, contenting myself with the Conviction that GOD gives his dear Children superordinary Supports and Revelations under superordinary Trials, which we must not aspire to under the common Events of Life. Notwithstanding which, the

hearing these Matters so continually unfolded and expounded by one who seemed not only to believe in them but to see them, gave me such a Relish and Savour of the Things of eternal Life, and made Things terrene appear so vapid and flat in Comparison, as that I frequently thought in my own Mind that as soon as she had departed this Life, and winged to her native Skies, I would settle my Affairs and become a cowed Monk, that I might wholly dedicate myself to GOD.

I heartily wish now I had done so! instead of which, putting it off from Day to Day, my Sorrow gradually wore off, and my Spirituality with it, and I became just as much as ever entangled in the Affairs of this Life. However, various Events, including the gentle Decay of my Health and Strength, have of late revived the Impression within me, which a violent Attack of Sickness has confirmed, and the Review of my personal History has consolidated; so that I now am really intending to set my House in Order, and join myself to the Monks of *St. Olivet*,

among whom I have several old Friends, and whose Convent I particularly admire for the purity of its Air, and the Beauty and Salubrity of its Situation.

CHAPTER XVII.

Of a Deathbed, of a Prison, and of glorifying God.

HOWEVER, this is a Digression—the Scene has not yet closed on her I loved. It was now my daily Care to carry her from her Bed to her Sitting-room, and my nightly Care to carry her from her Sitting-room to her Bed; for she was minded to keep up as long as she could. The first Time this Office fell upon me, she proposed it with Bashfulness, saying, “I feel too weary even to crawl, and my Women might let me drop. Do you think, dear Ser *Pantaleone*, you could carry me?”

“Certainly, Madama!” said I; and, lifting her gently up, “Ah,” said I, “you will not need very large Wings to carry you upwards—you are as light as a Feather already.”

“Gently, gently,” said she, “stop one Moment.” And looking wistfully about the Room as we were ready to leave it, she appeared to be taking a silent Farewell of each familiar Object. However, it was not the last Time, by many Times, that I carried her from it; and the Office seemed to endear us to one another as though we were Father and Daughter. “Good Night, good Night!” she would say, smiling even while struggling for Breath, “you shall be remembered in my Prayers.”

“And you, dear Madama, in mine.”

One Day, in passing along the Gallery, I again met *Guarini*, who stopped me to inquire with Solicitude after Madama *Leonora*. “I suppose you know,” said he in Conclusion, “that the young Duke of *Mantua* has visited poor *Taffo*?”

“I hear nothing now, Signor *Guarini*! But I rejoice to hear it, since it may have imparted a Ray of Joy to my poor Friend, even if it lead to no Intervention.”

“But what a Mind is his, Ser *Pantaleone*!

He has now recovered himself sufficiently to abstract himself from surrounding Objects; and the Amount of Composition he gets through is immense! To say Nothing of Appeals to Princes, Cardinals, and Sovereigns that might rouse the very Stones, he pours forth Verses of inexpressible Beauty, composes Treatises and Dialogues of high Philosophy, and Meditations full of heavenly Devotion. He is also busy revising his immortal Epic, which he can never polish highly enough to please himself, and which he desires may never see the Light till it has attained all the Perfection of which it is capable. But what will be his Grief to learn, that surreptitious Copies having been obtained of his first ten Cantos, the Printers are preparing already to forestall him with a lamentably incorrect Edition, pieced out with Prose and ragged Rhyme where the original Copy is wanting!"

"You throw me into a Fever," said I, "my Blood boils at it. Ah, what Injustice! what Infamy! The Harvest of a Life stolen

from him by these Wretches not worth a Pumpkin-peel ! What will he say ?”

“One Good of his Confinement,” said *Guarini*, “is that the News may, for a While, be concealed from him, since he can get no Redrefs. For myself, it would drive me mad. *Aldo* is also getting his smaller Poems through the Prefs as fast as possible ; and, as you and I well know there are many Pieces among them in which the Reality of his Love for Madama *Leonora* is but too plainly betrayed for his Safety, I am ready, for the Fellow-feeling I bear him, to edit another Edition of them myself, which shall be beautifully printed and contain Nothing obnoxious. What say you ?”

“That he will be eternally indebted to you, generous *Guarini* !”

“Nay,” said he good-naturedly, “now you make me feel ashamed. I know not that I could be as sympathizing with him in Prosperity as in Adversity. But you may rely on my doing my best for his Safety as well as his Reputation.”—Which, indeed, he did.

Fra *Panigarola* was preaching in *Ferrara* this Lent, with great Acceptance. The Duke heard him as readily as King *Herod* heard *John* the *Baptist*, and served him nearly as ill a Turn in the End. However, as yet he was much run after; and *Taffo*, hearing of him through the Friends who now had Access to him, sent him a moving Entreaty that he would visit him in Prison, with which he complied. The good Priest came to me afterwards, and told me that *Taffo* besought me to kiss Madama *Leonora's* Hand for him, and tell her that he was most deeply grieved for her continued Illness, which he had not lamented in Verse from a secret Repugnance of his Genius to that Way of commemorating and bewailing it; but that she might rest assured he prayed for her Day and Night, and that he had sent her one or two of the most cheerful Compositions he had been able to make, in the Hope that they might wile away some heavy Hour. Thereupon, the good Father took a Packet from his Bosom, containing

ſome paſtoral Verſes, and that charming Dialogue, “*The Father of a Family.*”

I received them, but informed him that, owing to Madama *Leonora’s* declining State, we never ſpoke to her of *Taſſo* at all, nor had ſhe once named him, nor was ſhe aware of his Confinement. He ſhook his Head, and ſaid, “So beſt”—and I then begged to retain the Compoſitions for my own Peruſal; to which he conſented on Condition of my returning them to him afterwards.

But I had no immediate Opportunity of keeping my Promiſe; for our dear Madama very ſuddenly grew much worſe, and the laſt Offices of Religion were performed for her. I ſhall never forget the Scene—the ſolemn adminiſtration of Extreme Unction, the chanting of Pſalms, the waving of Incenſe, the ringing of the paſſing Bell, the Glare of waxen Tapers; while the dying Princeſs, with her Hands meekly croſſed on her Breaſt, looked like ſome beautiful monumental Effigy of the pureſt Alabaſter. When the Duke and the two Ducheffes had quitted her, and only her

personal Attendants remained about her, she opened her Eyes from what had appeared a death-like Stupor, and said, "Put out the Lights!"

There was a great Wax-candle burning at the Foot of her Bed, as well as many Tapers about the Room. Seeing we did not obey her, she softly smiled and said, "Ah! you think I know not what I am saying; but to me the whole Chamber is so full of supernal Light, that your waxen Tapers, in Comparison of it, are mere Darknes."

Presently after, she whispered to *Olimpia*, who was hanging over her, that she thought she heard a great rustling of Wings in the Air, of Angels that were come to convoy her released Spirit. Whether this were Delusion or not, I cannot say; but she shortly lapsed into the most peaceful Sleep, which lasted the better part of an Hour; and then, suddenly opening her Eyes with a bright, dazzled, astonished, delighted Look of Recognition towards Something invisible to us, she closed them the next Instant, and drew her last Sigh.

I can never choofe but weep when I think of that Event; and yet it was moft blessed—

Vattene in Pace, Alma beata!

I fhall fay nothing of the pompous Obfequies enfuing, the lying in State, the midnight Maffes, and fo forth. Her blessed Spirit had Nothing to do with them. *Olimpia*, her faithful Attendant, to whom *Aurora* and *Maddalena* only played inferior Parts, broke down completely after the Need for her Exertions was over, and went to recruit among her own Friends. A few Months afterwards ſhe married well; her Husband being one of the Court Pages; by name, *Vittorio Leti*.

As for myſelf, after diſpenſing certain private Charities and Kindneſſes in Accordance with the Directions of Madama *Leonora*, whoſe Confeſſor had likewise much Bounty of hers to beſtow, I prepared to indulge in a thorough Change of Scene, by viſiting ſome of the *Gambacorti* in *Rome*.

But, firſt, I obtained Acceſs to my loved

Friend in *Santa Anna*, whom I had not, till now, had Heart or Leisure to see. I found him alone, pale, wan, and in threadbare Attire, but meek, patient, and self-collected. As soon as he saw me, however, he flung his Arms about my Neck, and burst into a Flood of Tears. I, remembering his former Exclamation, "Do Madmen weep?" and softened by the recent Loss we had mutually sustained, mingled my Tears with his.

"Tell me all about her," said he, drying his Eyes, and eagerly drawing me to a Chair. So I did; and went minutely into every devout and pathetic Saying of hers that I could call to Mind, to all which he listened with frequently recurring Bursts of Grief.

"I dare say plenty of Elegies and Monodies are being written on her," said he, "but I,—I cannot! Grief cannot find Vent in Poetry, in its first Excess, though it may when it has subsided into Sorrow. Did she leave me any last Message? any Word of Kindness?"

"Strange to say, she never mentioned you after your last peaceful, cheerful Interview.

Nor had ſhe the Pain of knowing your ſad Fate ; but, one Day, when we were alone together, ſhe cut off this long Ringlet, and gave it to me with a ſilent Smile, and I conclude ſhe meant me to give it to you. It could not have been for me, becauſe ſhe had already given me ſome Hair in a Ring.”

“ It *muſt* have been for me,” ſaid he, taking it eagerly and kiſſing it. Then, murmuring, “ *Voluptas ſolamenque mali,*” he put it into his Boſom.

“ They tell me,” he preſently began, “ that my *Jeruſalem* has been infamously pirated ; but the News fell on a dulled Ear, juſt after learning that I ſhould ſee *Leonora* no more. Perhaps I ſhall feel it more, ſhortly. Juſt now, it ſeems to me that all the Earth contains is not worth an Egg. And, after all, *Ser Pantaleone*, what is Fame, what is Succeſs ? The *Purſuit* is the Thing ! I only wiſh I had been as faithful to my Vocation as it has been to me ! Say, is it a mean Thing to have the Power, in a Place like this, to people my

otherwife horrible Solitude with Shapes and Voices of Beauty and Grandeur? ‘*Me quoque Musarum!*’ I have attained fuch a Power of embodying what I conceive, that the Creatures of my Imagination come and go at my Will with every Semblance of Reality, and I can converfe with *Plato* or *Socrates* as pleafantly as I now converfe with you.”

“You muft beware of carrying this too far, though,” faid I, “or your Imagination may lead you to the Verge of an Abyfs. As long as you fummon and difmifs your Phantoms at your Will, they may ferve to beguile your Solitude; but, if they fhould come to be introduced without your own Volition, they might turn your Brain.”

“Perhaps they may do fo at laft,” replied he fadly, “but Meanwhile I take with Gratitude the Alleviations a kind Providence affords to my hard Fate. After all, who knows whether *Alfonfo*, the worft of Men, may not effect the beft of Purpofes? My Soul is being ftrengthened and annealed under the Blows of the Armourer’s Hammer.”

“ In that Case, my dear *Taffo*, you will have Reason to bless your Captivity.”

“ I can't do that, yet ! ”

And so, after some more friendly Talk, we parted ; but not before he had told me some such beautiful yet wild Fancies, that I, a plain, profy Fellow, could not help having some dreadful Forebodings of his going mad. However, it was only owing to the high Pressure of Solitude and Inaction on a vivid, active Mind.

Shortly afterwards, I proceeded to *Rome*, and thence, after some Months, to *Naples*, where I sojourned a While with my Friends the Monks of Mount *Olivet* in their delicious Retirement. It stands on the north Side of the City, on a precipitous Height crowned with Pines, Firs, and Cypresses, detached from the World beyond by a deep but narrow Ravine with a rapid Rivulet at the Bottom of it—typifying, I think, the spiritual Chasm which separates the Monks themselves from the World so little removed from them that they can see and hear much of what passes in

it. The rippling of the Rivulet, the Murmur of the Sea, blend with the Convent Bells and choral Services; within the Walls is the Perfume of holy Incense, without them the Fragrance of innumerable Flowers. Moreover, the good Monks (who have an incomparable Way of dressing Beccaficoes) possess a rare Library and keep an excellent Table. Their Soups, especially, are perfect.

While I was here, the *Jerusalem* came out. It ran like Wildfire over *Italy*, nay, over *Europe*. Two thousand Copies sold in two Days. In six Months it was reprinted seven Times. The Author, meanwhile, sane and innocent, known by all the World to be in a Mad-house! Such is Fame: such is Justice: such is Life!

Our Monks of *St. Olivet* had early Copies, I warrant you! Oh yes, it was a religious Subject! All about *Jerusalem* and the Crusades; a sacred Allegory of the History and Mystery of Man's Fall and Salvation—not a Word about Love and Romance and Enchantment, of Course. The Christian Army,

comprising different Nations, typified Man, compounded of various Faculties and Passions. *Godfrey* was the Understanding; *Rinaldo*, the Imagination; *Tancred*, the Affections; *Armida*, Luxury; *Sophonra*, Martyrdom; and so on to the End of the Chapter. I think they liked the Story, though! We used to have many a Talk about it in the green Alleys of the pleasant Garden, which, as far as white and red Rosés, Myrtles and Jessamines went, could hardly have been outrivalled by the Gardens of *Armida*. It was curious to hear us praising the simple Diet of *Erminia* and the Shepherds, while eating the best of Fish and drinking the best of Wine.

On returning to *Rome*, I found my Uncle, who was in his ninety-eighth Year, sick of a Fever. There could be no Indelicacy in supposing, at that Time of Life, that the Issue might be fatal. I tarried to await the Result, which was what I had prognosticated. He left his Fortune, which was liberal, in equal Shares, between my Cousin and me. Unfortunately, my Cousin wished to have the

Whole of it; and, as I wished to have my Half, we went to Law.

This Lawfuit laſted a long While, and was at Length decided in my Favour. On my Uncle's Affairs being ſettled, however, the Reſidue was extremely moderate. Before the Buſineſs was finally arranged, it was neceſſary I ſhould go to *Mantua*.

Meantime, a great and ſimultaneous Effort by the Princes of *Europe* had been made for *Taſſo's* Release, without Effect. The Duke was keeping him in Charge only out of Kindneſs! Even the Duchefs *Lucrezia* was now among the Interceſſors, but all in vain. So the Affair ſtood over.

Then, after a While, it was ſtirred up anew by the Pope, the Duke of *Tuſcany*, and the Duke of *Mantua*. At the Inſtance of the latter, Duke *Alfonſo* at length relented. The Duke of *Mantua* was to be reſponſible for his Harmleſſneſs; he was never to uſe his Pen againſt the Houſe of *Este*, nor to ſhow himſelf again in *Ferrara*; all which the Duke of *Mantua* gladly engaged for. After

some vexatious Delays, the Release took place, but *Taffo* was not permitted to kiss the Duke's Hand on his Departure; which did not break his Heart.

I was present the Evening he reached the Duke of *Mantua*. I remember his dazzled Look as he came into the lighted Saloon out of the Dark. He passed on to his kind Friend and Patron, who cordially embraced him; and cheerful, thankful Words were spoken. Afterwards, he came round the Circle, and, to his Surprise, came to me. I believe I was a good Deal less changed than he was—he knew me directly. Certainly I had also known *him*; but his Hair, once so beautiful, was cut short, and had some Threads of Silver in it; his laughing Eye was sunk and quenched; Care sat on his thin Cheek. But there was the old Smile; the old Tone!

“O, loved Friend!” said he, twining his Arm in mine, and drawing me out into the Balcony, “Life is still sweet, Liberty is precious! They have kept back my Books, my Letters, my Manuscripts, every little

Property belonging to me; but I am free!
And my Country rejoices in my Name. As
I came hither, I met a Shepherd singing

“*Intanto Erminia infra l'ombrose Piante*”—

as he led his Flock.—I heard a couple of
Travellers quoting *Armida*.—I saw a Girl at
an Inn stopping her Ears while she read the
Death of *Clorinda*. I am popular among
the People!

“What are you doing here? what are you
about to do?” he presently added.

“I am going to devote the short Remain-
der of my Life to God.”

“So am I.—One by Contemplation; one
by Action; both, perhaps, by Suffering!—
Anyhow, let us glorify God!”

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