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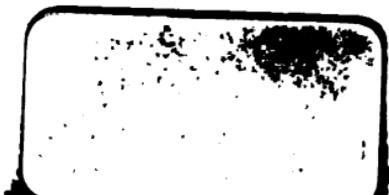
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THE

# SIEGE OF FLORENCE:

An Historical Romance.

BY

DANIEL M'CARTHY, ESQ.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



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TO

**THE HON. GEORGE IVES IRBY,**

**THESE VOLUMES**

**ARE DEDICATED,**

**AS A TRIBUTE OF FRIENDSHIP,**

**BY THE AUTHOR.**



**THE**

**SIEGE OF FLORENCE.**

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**CHAPTER I.**

A COLD north wind, drifting the chill mists over spire and dome, ushered in the dawn of the twenty-sixth of April, 1527, to the good city of Florence. No one of its multitude of busy bells had yet begun its morning calls ; and of whatever character might be the scenes apportioned for the day's accomplishment—and scarcely any day of late had passed without its excitement—none of the actors were yet abroad. The sentinels, in the uniform of the republic, paced drowsily on their beat, in front of the palace of the Signori, humming the ribald rhymes of Berni

and Burchiello, as they trod athwart the shadows of those gigantic statues, whose marble limbs then sparkled with the unstained lustre of recent youth—with the snowy brightness of their birth-place in the sunless quarry; like the miraculous offspring of the Cadmean teeth, they had known no infancy, but started up in their vast grandeur, solemn guardians, who from those days to our own have shared with nearly twenty generations of sentinels the custody of that venerable building. The same uniforms moved upon the batteries over the city gates, which had not as yet opened to the day's traffic.

There was but one other spot within the city which manifested any signs of wakefulness; this was the gloomy yet grand façade of the Palace of the Medici. There also sentries paced their cheerless watch, unenlivened by any sound but that caused by their own footfalls; for the snatches of dissolute and licentious pasquinade that were heard beneath the batteries were

hushed under the windows of the Cardinal of Cortona, and his two hopeful and grave wards, Hippolito and Alessandro de Medici.

The eye least experienced in military matters might perceive at a glance as great a difference in the mien and carriage of these men-at-arms, from that of their fellows in front of the palace of the magistrature, as there was in their badges and accoutrements. Those in the city's service were selected for their unpalatable functions from the classes of the more substantial burghers, whose habits of life gave them little taste for night-vigils or stiff-clothing. Their dress was of a material selected by civic indulgence, as consulting, as much as was consistent with some shew of military service, the personal convenience of men whose amplitude and obesity had advanced *pari passu* with their stake in the country they were called upon to serve. The more cumbersome defences of helm and cuirass were replaced by doe-skin, and over their ample bosoms, swelled out by patriotism, undu-

lated the device of the republic, the red giglio, or lily, on its white ground.

This comfortable simulation of the warrior was a source of infinite mirth to the hired soldiery of the Medici, and was not without its association with the grotesque, in the minds of the chroniclers of the time. In what way the merriment of the former at least was terminated, the progress of this true tale may serve to shew.

Far different was the aspect of the grim sentries who guarded the portals of the palace, within which slumbered the hopeful scions of the house of Medici. They were men of one piece with their iron clothing; cheek and brow, and their vast angular frames, appeared cast in the same mould as head-piece and corslet. Above their heads, swelling pompously in the breeze, was that celebrated banner whose golden balls had become the emblems of vicissitude;—so few years had sufficed to see it scouted with Cosimo; borne aloft through an agitated city, to the war-cry of “The Palli for the

Medici!" by Lorenzo ; then drooping over the abased plumes of the recreant Piero ; and again, borne in the van of the condottieri of the church, and placed where it now was.

As morning advanced, the fitful efforts of a changing and gradually subsiding breeze, swept away the early mists like volumes of thin smoke, and the first beams of a dim sun fell with doubtful promise upon the steel corslets and the banner above them. The various sounds of a stirring populace then gradually mingled their dissonances ; and by the time that the bells of some hundred churches had broken out into sonorous unison, none, save the dead who dwelt within their vaults, slept in Florence.

Had the slumbers of his Eminence, who governed the city, been as light as those of the thousands who were honoured by his rule, he might have perceived, in the unusual multitudes thus early abroad, and in the busy faces, and significant interchange of uneasy salutation that passed between the

crowds of cloaked figures that had chosen this early hour of a raw, disagreeable morning to hurry to their devotions, some inducement, perchance, to postpone the intended pursuits of that day. But the slumbers of youth and of light consciences are proverbially sound; and his Eminence and the scions of the noble house, whose will was law in Florence, slept on pillows of down, under golden canopies, long after the dawn had broken, and the doubtful struggles of sun and cloud had ceased. And when their delicate lids at last, like the leaves of lilies, unfolded, the glorious sun had left but a scarcely perceptible mist, between them and the preparations of the intriguing city, for a day of enterprise. A tide of warm, rich light poured into the gorgeous chambers of their dwelling when the heavy shutters were thrown back; and then commenced, with befitting leisure, the solemn duties of the levee, previous to another day added to the roll of a facile and luxurious reign.

By midday the brief mass was begun, and

his Eminence had prayed for grace to govern, and for humility to a stiff-necked people.

That people to all appearance had gone about their usual avocations ; and, whatever evening might bring about, the noon had been spent, as was fitting by a thrifty people, in the duties that undoubtedly held the first place in their estimation. The commonalty had provided for the day's wants, and the patricians had bustled through the Exchange and the Custom-house ; had paid homage to the day-book and the ledger ; had corresponded ; and having set their house in order, were ready for the secondary cares which devolved upon every individual alike, high and low, of that turbulent commonwealth,—to wit, the government of their fickle city and their most ungovernable selves.

The change of sentries, and the gradual grouping of armed retainers about the palace of the Medici, gave the earliest signs of some intended forthcoming. At last came the stirring sounds of a military band ;

and the spectacle which that music heralded was one rarely seen in Florence. A troop of horse, barbed and panoplied, first wheeled into view, and their high-floating plumes, and the hereditary bearings of the various noble houses of the republic, worked upon the silken scarfs that crossed their shining corslets, or raised in silver upon various parts of their accoutrements, plainly told the rank of the noble youths who thus volunteered their escort, to one with whom all that was splendid was prized.

Immediately following them, and taking precedence as they approached the palace, was the fancy body-guard of the magnificent Hippolito ;—Ethiopians, Numidians, Tartar bowmen, and the grave Turk, mingled, for the gratification of their youthful and learned leader, their various and gorgeous costumes, their arms, their languages, and their contrasting physiognomies. But the joy of his heart were their splendid Oriental dresses and their barbaric music. Gifted beyond most of his house with talents, which he

misapplied in all ways that were whimsical, and wasted in the pursuit of unprofitable acquisitions, it was his boast that he could himself converse in the dialects of all, and rival their ablest performers on the various instruments of their national music.

Led horses were in readiness for the immediate friends of the young princes, and for their august selves ; and a sleek and sanctified-looking steed, which as yet bore none of the more cumbersome splendour of its companions,—whose crimson housings were decorated with raised work of gold, bearing the mingled emblems of high family consequence and exalted church dignity, with sandaled stirrups, crimson trappings, and a feathery seat,—awaited with meek solemnity a rider with whom it had evidently compounded for reciprocal amity.

Such was the immediate suite of the slumberers within. But whilst the interior arrangements of the palace were forming with becoming tardiness, a more numerous array was wheeling into view, from the

various openings about the building, of armed horsemen, whose iron clothing had lost its brilliancy, but retained that grim and ferocious aspect which gives joy to the timorous, for whose service they are indued.

Such displays had of late become not uncommon, and although familiarity had much diminished the curiosity which their splendour and chivalrous effect had originally excited, it had, as indeed it could scarcely fail of having, a directly opposite effect upon feelings of a more stirring nature. These feelings had more than once of late been too strong for a sage and patient silence; and though the ears of his Eminence of Cortona had been spared any of the inharmonious sounds, or uncourteous salutes of a proverbially jealous and excitable populace, such had not been uniformly the case with the mounted and mailed band of strangers who mainly composed his escort.

These grim warriors were not deficient in the mere instinct which the horses they rode

partook of in common with themselves, of distinguishing friend from foe; and consequently the evil will of the citizens was returned a hundred fold. Opportunities were not wanting for the interchange of such offices as their mutual feelings delighted in; and day after day fresh bitterness was added to the already overflowing cup of deadly hate, which the city of Florence quaffed to the prosperity of its tyrants.

Time wore on, and every avenue opening upon the front of the palace was at length closed by the assembled guard, and at last the trumpets gave signal for the throwing open of the portals. A crowd of gaily apparelled nobles ushered forth the two youths in whom all the hopes of this proud family centered.

The elder of the two, distinguished by the style of "the Magnificent"—a title justly earned, and universally yielded to the head of the family whose taste, even in their minutest pleasures, was splendid—was the youth Hippolito, intended at that time

for the future ruler of the city. He was a tall, thin stripling, scarcely more than fifteen years of age, with a sallow cheek, and a restless, keen eye, which betrayed at a glance the unsteadiness and fickleness of the mind beneath. His movements were dignified and easy, his brow lofty, and his aspect generally, though aspiring, not wholly free from an expression of craft and suspicion.

Most singular was the contrast afforded by the features of the youth who bounded past him with the agility of an antelope, and sprung into the saddle of a light barb, whose limbs were scarcely more agile than his own. His bridle had been held by a youth a year or two his senior, of a grave mien and a downcast eye, and features marked in every line with characters of craft, dissoluteness, and cowardice.

The youth to whom he tendered his services had addressed him as "Lorenzino, his grave cousin:" he was one destined to seek fame in after life by a single deed; but it was one which sufficiently revenged itself upon the

contempt with which his cousin now treated him ; for scarcely had that youth reached his saddle, than a touch of his heel made his high-mettled barb rear, and fling the esquire many paces backwards amongst the men-at-arms.

Alessandro de Medici was somewhat younger than his cousin Hippolito, yet of a frame of far more robust and mature outline. His limbs were long and muscular ; his feet and hands large and clumsy ; his hair, like his cousin's, was black ; but whilst that of the latter was glossy, and fell in heavy curls upon his rich velvet vest, all that could be perceived of his whom we are describing was short, woolly, and tightly adhering to a skull of a shape the most animal that imagination can depict. His complexion was dusk, yet relieved with tints of an unhealthy yellow.

Whatever suspicion might be excited by traits so little resembling those of a family as familiar to the memory as the moon and stars in Florence, the remainder of his features little tended to allay them ; for

his clubbed nose and thick lips offered even stronger grounds for the general report, which attributed his birth to an African mother, whose charms had numbered amongst a variety of conquests that of Pope Clement himself.

Such was Alexander de Medici whilst the Cardinal of Cortona had the care of his tuition. What he afterwards became, many a ribald song, and many an execration, still exist to inform the reader, who may not as yet have drawn a moral from his career. With our immediate narrative, it has little further import.

When his glance had for a moment wandered over the escort of armed cavaliers who saluted him, it turned with somewhat of impatience to the doorway at which his Eminence of Cortona had not yet made his appearance. A movement of his bridle brought his high-blooded barb to the side of the patient palfrey which awaited the Cardinal, and the effect was an immediate and sympathizing restlessness, which ap-

peared to excite no small mirth amongst the cortège.

An increased bustle, and a cloud of ecclesiastical robes, ushered forth, at last, the presence of the guardian governor of the city. The Cardinal of Cortona stood upon the threshold of the palace, and a clash of blades sounded his salute. The sunbeams flashed from the helms and cuirasses of his followers, and revealed, as their blaze fell upon his heavy and ample features, an expression not altogether of unruffled calm. There was little that attracted notice at any time to his countenance. There was not one of the many men of battle thus marshalled to attend him, nor indeed in the whole city, but knew him as a poltroon, or who attributed his abrupt manners and arrogant discourse to any tutoring of the camp, which was the usual school of princes in those days.

His first impulse, when the honour of his salutation was obtruded with those unwelcome sounds upon his notice, was to raise

his gemmed hands in benediction ; but this ceremony was scarcely over when a volume of phrases, of far other import, fell upon the careering Arab of the youth Alessandro. Harmony was however restored, his Eminence was conveyed into his saddle, and the cavalcade was put in movement.

The orders given were, to proceed forth of the city, to the villa of Castello, the headquarters of the army of the league, and the residence of the Duke d'Urbino. Their pace was grave and reasonable, and a few minutes beheld them sweeping in glittering column through the broad streets, towards the gate of San Gallo.

## CHAPTER II.

THOUGH the appearance of the cavalcade had met with no greetings from the populace, it will scarcely be supposed that the singular circumstance of this insane withdrawal of the whole of the troops from the city, on a party of pleasure or compliment, had excited no sensation. As for acclamations, the inharmonious uproar of popularity, they expected none, and they received none; yet their progress was neither the less stately, nor the less decided, on that account. The countenances of the few citizens who had followed them had not met with more than usual scrutiny, nor had the

wild beating of hearts bounding with scarcely suppressed exultation betrayed the interest with which their movements had been followed, whilst they passed outwards, under the dark arch of the city gate, without hesitation or suspicion.

Very different from the spectacle we have thus described was the one now enacting in front of the palace of the Signori, and beneath the very windows of his Eminence's gonfaloniere. The appearance, at short intervals, of breathless scouts in the piazza, as they brought intelligence of the movements of the escort, had been the signal for the closing of the shops about the centre of the city; and the expedition with which this necessary precaution was carried into effect sufficiently proved that the prudent burghers were not unprepared for the signal. Groups of the better order of citizens had long clustered about the great square, and anxious faces and hurried whisperings had early announced some matter of more than usual interest.

As the day advanced, such groups multiplied, and the whole square gradually filled with a tumultuous throng of citizens of all orders ; every street opening upon this busy centre became literally choked with a condensed and struggling mass of eager beings, from whom, as yet, no cry had escaped, to betray the cause of their deep interest.

The palace of the Magistrature, otherwise called of the Signori, or the Priori, had early closed its portals, and a detachment of the city guards had taken possession, with lighted matches and loaded cannon, of the terrace at its base. There was something sufficiently unequivocal in this appearance of preparation to repel insult, which made the foremost masses pause, as long as the crowds behind permitted, at a respectful distance from the Marzocco, or black Marble Lion,—so called, the effigy of the republic's greatness,—which kept its placid guard where it does to this day, on the parapet, at an angle of the esplanade, by the quarters of the guard. The dark gorges of the tier of

guns, as they reposed on the topmost step of the terrace, and nearly on a level with the faces of the increasing multitudes, afforded convenient opportunity for contemplating the consequences of proceeding further; and the decided aspects of the soldiers, who had replaced the less martial sentries of the morning, and who now stood with their blazing matches within a few yards of the persons of the foremost of the crowd, added consequence to the tones of their warning.

The square still continued filling; and notwithstanding the most strenuous exertions of the nearest spectators, to resist further approach to the dreaded engines before them, the impulse from behind was irresistible; and step by step was yielded with an execration, until the stone barriers alone prevented further advance.

No voice had yet been heard, except the cries wrung from the trampled and the timid,—when a murmur, rising from the very outmost ranks of this immense throng,

was at length heard, craving "place and passage for the good citizen, Niccolo Capponi." The cry was taken up and responded to by fresh cries from the crushed and trampled.

The individual in whose favour this claim was made was at a period of life, and of a frame of body, little suited to contest with a crowd, whose local movements depended upon impulses given by turns from its centre and its extremes, as the cry gradually reached and acted upon its masses. Every exertion was, however, made; the popular citizen was admitted into the mass; the momentary vacancy closed up again; and his path was as undistinguishable as before.

Had the progress of this aged citizen depended on his own unaided exertions, it is questionable whether, even with the wishes of the crowd, he would have reached the palace, towards which his steps were directed, before the emergency had gone by, and the square emptied. But fortunately, he was heralded throughout his struggles

by an attendant who, besides that portion of strength which belongs to youth, possessed—even as so ordinary an occasion served to manifest—a keen eye, presence of mind, and, what was even more available, an extended acquaintance amongst the rabblement, whom his exertions could not fail singularly to incommode.

This youth was habited in the dress of a student; a costume not unfrequently adopted by the youth of the city, who, born of respectable or even humble parentage, might not yet have chosen a career possessing its own peculiar garb, or who were of circumstances too straitened to admit of competition in dress with the sons of the wealthier citizens, with whom their education entitled them to associate. The youth, whom all saluted, as he passed, by the name of Francesco, led on the elderly citizen by the hand,—urging his way by gentle means when they were available, and by activity, and no small force, when they needed,—till the guard of the palace was visible; and

then calling out for pathway for his Excellence, one of the Signori, to whose council he was summoned, he succeeded in placing him on the topmost step of the terrace, immediately in front of the crowd.

Never, perhaps, was the popularity of this worthy citizen greater than at this moment, when he interposed his own person between the multitude, and the formidable cannon, before which they had been compelled to take their uneasy position.

Once placed in safety, Niccolo Capponi turned his glance over the dense masses beneath him, and raised his arm for silence. The face of the old man was agitated, and white as the snowy locks which the lightest breeze now sufficed to bear streaming back from his lofty and commanding forehead. An unmoved spectator might have judged from his first appearance, when he met the gaze of so many thousand eyes centered upon him, that he had undertaken an enterprise beyond his powers, either of mind or body ; for there was a slight tremor upon his limbs,

and the muscles of an usually sedate and calm countenance worked with the inward impulses of a soul evidently in extreme commotion.

The words of a brief address, which every citizen before and around him could have syllabled before his voice had the power of utterance, seemed choked within his throat.

The young student who had hitherto so well piloted him, looked up into his countenance with an expression of surprise and pain. Men's observation was already beginning to discern the true actor of the stirring scene before them. The contrast was indeed far too striking, between the two individuals to whose guidance so much was confided, long to escape notice. The one appeared to think and act as if the reputation of a whole life were placed on a doubtful hazard; as if station in the world, wealth, family, and life itself, were trembling in the balance of a most questionable adventure. The other had a brow as calm, an eye as bright, as if all that his companion feared

losing he felt sure of obtaining by the unaided exertions of a bold spirit, which feared nothing, and grasped at all things.

Had disloyalty found any place in the bosom of the young student, he might doubtless have availed himself of the indecision of his friend at the moment of trial. Such, however, was manifestly not his purpose; he whispered a few words into the ear of the elder citizen, and then came the overwhelming change of revulsed emotions. His eye flashed, his bosom heaved, and in a voice whose full tones reached even to the crowded roofs that girded in the piazza, he exclaimed—"Florence may regain its freedom, for the Medici have fled!"

"Che vadino in mal ora!" shouted his youthful companion.\* He then raised his arm in rapid signaling, and in an instant broke over the whole city the booming of that mighty bell whose tones were usually the death-knell of no small number

\* May the devil take them!

of the crowds, over whose heads it rolled its portentous summons. An universal cry of the surrounding thousands then broke out, in simultaneous and fierce clamour, of "Liberty!"—"The People!" and "Death to the tyrants!"

So rapidly, and with so little appearance of violence, had this brief and solemn scene been enacted, that no resistance had been offered; indeed, no overt act of turbulence could, as yet, have justified interference, and the guard stood in uncertainty, with their matches above the touch-holes of their guns, awaiting, as legitimate signal for their discharge amongst the crowds, some deed of open violence which might come within the letter of their instructions.

Such act could not be long delayed; but it proceeded from a quarter in which it was least looked for. No sooner were the first tones of the alarm bell of the palace heard, than the slight figure of the student, whose signal had been thus promptly answered, was seen bounding with the speed of

thought, from the side of Niccolo Capponi, and in an instant his dagger gleamed at the throat of the soldier before the very mouth of whose gun that venerable citizen was standing.

A panic, whose control even brave men have at times yielded to, and whose empire the timorous bow to as to legitimate sovereignty, seized the hesitating minds of the handful of soldiery, thus exposed upon a platform sufficiently elevated to command a full view of the vast multitudes, and their wild gesticulations. They dashed their lighted matches to the ground, and joined in the universal shout for the people and for liberty.

In an instant more, hundreds upon hundreds were pouring over the parapets, and thronging the platform; the gates of the palace were dashed open, and the courts, stairs, halls, and even the very council-chamber of the Priori, were filled with dense masses of an infuriated mob, clamouring for an instant remodelling of their government.

Daggers, and the long sharp blades of the various instruments of every mechanical calling practised by these energetic patriots, flashed in the pale faces of the aged Priori. Their garments were torn, their persons hustled, and their ears stunned with a thousand outcries, when, in obedience to the scarcely intelligible mandates of the mob, they proceeded to legislate.

Their first decision was a declaration of outlawry, once more, to the obnoxious family of the Medici ; and their next was the re-establishment of the great council, as it was modelled by the famous Girolamo Savonola, by which eight hundred of the rioters were declared councillors and lawgivers.

What further decrees they might, in the first moments of their terror, have promulgated, it would be venturesome to conjecture ; but a proposition, originating with one who knew well the elements of the stormy populace, which had hitherto by a miracle been withheld from bloodshed, diverted their minds to an occupation on

which they might harmlessly expend their unsafe excitement.

“To the hall of the great council, my friends,” exclaimed the young student, in the tones of a deep rich voice, and with an air of calm triumph, as though he had ruled mobs from his infancy.

The chamber to which these few words now turned the whole tide of the rioters, was that vast hall erected for the meetings of the council now re-established, but which during the last few years, when their ancient masters had regained their ascendancy, had been converted into quarters for the city guard, and whose ample area had been built up, with several score of party-walls, into small tenements adapted to its new destination. No sooner had this proposal met the apprehension of the many, than the audience chamber at once emptied itself of its throngs, and the trembling and astonished Priori found themselves again in solitude.

Petrified with the rapid shifting of scenes so alarming, it was some minutes before they

regained either the courage or the power to withdraw their gaze from the doors through which the rioters had gone out. Niccolo Capponi had taken his place, which had till now been vacant, and though ostensibly the chief actor in the day's drama, he was evidently not prepared for the extent of the movement to which he had given the first impulse. A bolder and a calmer spirit was still his attendant. Raising a small white hand in the attitude of listening, the youthful student, whom we have already noticed, leaned over the seat of Capponi directly facing the chair of state of the Gonfaloniere, and directed their attention to new sounds, that were now echoing harshly through the palace, and mingling with the wild screams of the multitudes in the piazza below them.

“ You hear, my lords,” he exclaimed, in tones of a composed yet decided voice, “ that they are spending their rage and strength against the stone walls of the chamber of the Great Council. The present moment you may count upon with some security, to pre-

vent mischief to yourselves, and ruin to our country. Your decisions must be brief and bold. You have already re-established the Council of the Eight hundred,—a measure which, should the Medici re-enter the city, must cost you your heads. It will be the part of prudent men to provide now for your own safety. Your particular position, most noble prince," he continued, addressing the Gonfaloniere, "is one of most imminent danger, and it cannot fail to occur to you that it will be wise, without further delay, to resign it. Let him on whom the whole responsibility of this day's scenes devolves have the power, at least, of meeting effectively the danger which he has voluntarily defied in his country's service. You have little time for parley, my lords; proceed at once to the scrutiny for a new election; or rather let your choice be by acclaim:—the republic demands the noble citizen Niccolo Capponi for its chief magistrate."

Suspense had till now kept every member of the council mute, and the young student

had been suffered to proceed, uninterrupted, in his harangue, till he chose to conclude it with this startling demand. It was then that the minds of the Signori first turned from the matter of the discourse to its speaker. He could scarcely yet have numbered more than two or three and twenty summers ; he was of a slight, frail figure, but of a brow so lofty and so calm, whilst all around him were in dismay, that the eyes of the Signori glanced from one to another, as though questioning what youthful member of their own body had thus remained so long unknown to them.

Niccolo Capponi could alone have enlightened them ; but his mind was too busied on the reflection of his own singular and perilous position, to respond to, even had he noticed, the appeal.

The last tones of the youth's voice were still ringing in the ears of the astonished and overawed council, when Capponi raised his eyes to the face of the Gonfaloniere, to gather his reply. That dignitary, like his

brethren, had remained till now a passive spectator of the political hurricane that raged around him. The last appeal, which contained a demand so personally degrading to him, put an abrupt termination to his musing. He leaped up from his chair of state, and for an instant his cheeks and temples became scarlet, and throbbed with a rage which impeded his articulation. His eyes glared upon the calm cheek of the young man, who still remained standing behind the chair at which he had first placed himself, and it appeared his intention to pour out the vehemence of his wrath upon his head. A deathlike stillness had succeeded to the din of distant voices, the trampling of rushing multitudes, and the crash of falling masonry. It would seem that some interval had intervened in the operations of the mob, both within and without the palace.

The feelings of the aged magistrate were too violent readily to find words to express them, and before he had yet spoken, a change

tint was troubled, whilst the bravest and the boldest hearts of the surrounding nobles held their breath for his audacity. And this is that man's son! the elect of the rabblement of our markets,—of liberated criminals,—of bloodthirsty men from the dungeons of the Bargello! For very shame's sake, my lords, I would have Niccolo Capponi tell us how great has been his share in this day's disorders!"

Perhaps at no moment of his undertaking had the citizen thus addressed felt more vividly, how little the novel part he had assumed was in character with the tenour of his past career, than he now did, when the estimation of those whom his birth, station, and education had made most dear to him appeared utterly annihilated, by the dignified reproof of the venerable magistrate. But retreat was impossible; and the ever watchful spirit of his attendant saved him a reply. Evidently stung to the core by some portion of the address, or perhaps by the little notice deigned to himself, and piqued by the at-

tempt to wrest from his management the influence he had assumed, the youth sprang up to the steps of a window which opened upon a small balcony, waved a part of his dress as a signal to the crowds below, and then turned, with a calm sneer upon his pale face, to the Signori, and once more assumed his station behind the chair of Niccolo Capponi, in whose ear he whispered tidings which seemed to carry little satisfaction to his listener.

“I have given you warning, most excellent Signori,” he then said; “your privacy has been undisturbed during your deliberations. That you have not chosen to adopt counsel offered with humility, for your own protection, I regret, for the risk is great. The people who gave you power are the fittest judges whether, and when, they may choose to withdraw it. It would have been more considerate to your own feelings had you voluntarily resigned it; but the process you appear to require for your decision is too tardy for the impatience of the electors.

They come, my lords, and be they the proclaimers of their own wishes.”

A sound like the coming of an eruption told too plainly of the approach of the populace, and in a few minutes more the full tide rushed once again into their presence, and the wildest tumult that imagination can picture succeeded to the imposing calm which had prevailed throughout the address of the Gonfaloniere. Personal violence was not spared, and a band of the very lowest citizens, reeking with their exertions in the great hall, covered with lime and dust from the walls they had been demolishing, with the dirt and ordure of the dens in which was their usual dwelling, now mingled, without much regard for their rude and unsavoury contact, with the decent robes and shrinking persons of the Magistrature, yelling out threats, imprecations, and blasphemies, such as even in the present day their descendants excel in.

The youth, whose signal had evoked this ungovernable spirit, stood by without an

effort to interfere or direct the rage of the frenzied multitudes. He had whistled on his bloodhounds, and the prey was at their mercy. But when the tumult was at its highest, and the sacrifice of the trembling senators appeared inevitable, a new change opened in the shifting scenes of this stirring drama. An individual whose appearance betokened his belonging to the order of more respectable citizens, forced his way, with a blanched cheek and a troubled aspect, to the spot to which Niccolo Capponi had withdrawn himself, and whispered in his ear intelligence which left the old man's cheek bloodless and agitated.

“ Francesco,” faltered out the aged citizen, “ we are lost ! The Medici are again within the walls, and the forces of the Duke d’Urbino are amongst us ; their foremost ranks are already within the piazza.”

An expression of deep disappointment passed over the features of the youthful conspirator ; he was for a moment staggered by the intelligence ; but his was a mind

ready in resources, and prompt in his decisions. His countenance regained its calm, and though he spoke quicker, it was with the same composure that marked his manner throughout the day.

“ Dear friend,” he exclaimed, “ you must fly ; this day’s scene must be again enacted, and to better purpose. If the fools have forgotten to close the city gates, be the consequences on their own heads.”

The chamber was by this time blocked up by a mass of bodies, whose dense compact was the only check upon their violence.

“ Make way, my friends !” exclaimed this youthful leader of the mob. “ The council meets in the great chamber, and our right is a voice in its debates.”

“ To the great hall ! To the council of the people !” became then the cry, and the tide once more rolled back its turbid waves with increasing clamour. The young Francesco had hitherto contended with an irresolute mind, when all depended upon decision ; but his own promptitude had supplied the

deficiency. He had now to struggle with an obstacle which was less easily overcome. The general rush had thrown back the infirm person of his friend amongst the hindmost ranks of the retreating crowd ; whilst others were contending for places in the chamber of their tumultuous senate, Capponi felt that his safety depended upon his flight. The very extent of his peril lessened his powers of contending with it. Notwithstanding the repeated exhortations of the youth, who was vainly spending his strength in attempting to open a path before him, he remained passively where the swaying of the crowds cast him, abandoning all hope of escape, and seeking in the retrospection of the part he had that day played, the only chance of defence when placed before the tribunal he had outraged.

The keen eye of Francesco soon perceived that notwithstanding the rapid outpouring of the populace from the chamber, the crowd scarcely diminished ; a counter current struggled within the doorway, and dresses

of a more respectable order of citizens began to replace those which had retired. No voice had yet openly proclaimed the arrival of the troops within the city, but it was sufficiently manifest that the fact was not unknown to those who were now crowding the chamber. Still the young student struggled with all the powers of his frame for his friend's liberation. The press of the throng still kept the doorway open, and he had contrived to place Capponi within a few paces of its threshold. No attempt had yet been made to oppose them ; but even in his struggles the youth had not failed to remark the arrival of many friends of the Gonfaloniere, and the families of the other magistrates, who had formed a circle about their persons ; whilst after a moment's whispering, there ensued a fierce rush to secure the doors.

Niccolo Capponi had at length roused himself for his freedom ; the last rioters had retreated, when the voice of Luigi Guicciardini called upon him by name to stop.

“Close the portals!” exclaimed the excited magistrate; “if they attempt flight, slay them; I will be answerable for the deed, for their lives are forfeited to their country.”

The hand of Francesco already grasped the door-posts; his path was open before him, but he turned to secure his friend. At that moment the hand of Guicciardini was upon the collar of his vest.

“Yield thee! yield, traitor!” he exclaimed, angrily, and he raised his dagger with no hesitating hand above the youth’s head; “yield, or I slay thee!”

Had the young student yielded, his friend had perished; his own person blocked up the sortie, and when he turned to cede to Capponi the place he had with so much difficulty occupied, he beheld him vainly struggling in the hands of a captor whose strength far exceeded his own. With a violent effort he flung off the grasp upon his own vest. He, too, had a dagger, and it gleamed for an instant before the eyes of the Gonfaloniere; and when the shrinking ma-

with a ponderous iron lever in his hand, and the huge keys of the gates at his girdle, he took his stand at his post, amidst the vivas of the mob.

For the remaining purposes of defence, the populace found a leader in an individual of far higher rank in the republic—Jacopo Nardi, the historian, one of those shrewd and generous spirits who can relinquish, and even bestow upon their neighbours, the honour, along with the peril, of an achievement likely to be better viewed by posterity than by their own generation—halloed on the mob to the roof of the palace, and pointing out behind the parapets an apparently solid wall of immoveable masonry, bade them scrape away the external covering of plaster work. This was speedily effected, and they beheld, piled up in admirable readiness to their hands, inexhaustible heaps of huge blocks of stone, which, hurled down for two hundred feet and more, would be no contemptible obstacle to assailants, even were they cased in the armour of Orlando.

An universal and stunning yell, and all uncourteous epithets of defiance, broke out as this welcome spectacle met their view. From the elevated spot they occupied, every portion of the city lay exposed before them; and though the array, moving with lance and mail amongst the unarmed citizens, scattered all before their path, they had no terrors for them. Cannon might indeed shatter the battlements behind which they had taken shelter; but upon that vast wilderness of roofing they had thousands of resources, free from the reach of the artillery then in use.

The crowds without had been up to this moment unassaulted by the soldiery. A few dropping shots, picking off some twenty or thirty of those who fled slowest, began at intervals to break upon the ears of the captive Priori; and when the signals of the Gonfaloniere appeared to become intelligible, an opening was formed in the ranks of their deliverers, and presently several of the dark guns of the army of the league

were wheeled into the piazza. The signal alone of his Eminence of Cortona was wanting to send their contents amongst the multitudes, or against the gates.

A council seemed evidently holding amongst the leaders, who clustered around the churchman ; and to do the good man that justice which his historians have denied him, we must add, that the earnestness and the frequency of his gesticulations betrayed that he took a warm interest in the matter of debate. It was plain to be seen that his veto was upon the proposition of a French knight of fortune, who wore the uniform of the army of the church. What his proposition was it is not difficult to conjecture, for the mouths of the cannon which were ranged before them yawned voraciously upon the multitudes, and the position of the officer who was so energetic in his suggestions was quite as secure as that of his Eminence himself.

The decision of the Cardinal triumphed ; a stir took place amongst the knot of officers ;

their ranks opened, and a knight, on whose glittering corslet were blazoned in gold the united devices of the church and the noble house of Urbino, spurred forth his charger to the troop that guarded the sortie of the Vacchereccia, the most spacious of the avenues which centre in the square, and presently the serried ranks of the soldiery fell back, and a path was opened through their mass for the retreat of the populace.

As though the floodgates of some mighty lake had burst before an inundation, the vast tide of human beings thundered through the opening now made for them, and in an inconceivably short space of time there remained not a single creature in the vast area in front of the piazza.

“ Now for the cannon, Monsieur de Bozsoles,” exclaimed his Eminence ; “ sweep me down the doorways of the palace, if you will ; a few rioters hanging from yonder balcony will be a more becoming spectacle and example, than a hundred thousand poor citizens blown to pieces here in the piazza.”

The officer thus addressed was even now nothing loath to indulge in the experiment ; but there were others around his Eminence who reminded him that they had sons and brothers within the walls, and at the mercy of the mob, and that the more humane method would be to try at least an attempt to conciliate, before having recourse to so indiscriminating a conclusion.

Signals of truce were accordingly made, and the patriots within were not so utterly insane as to refuse them. A party of the loyal citizens attached to the Medici, and headed by Francesco Guicciardini the historian, and brother to the Gonfaloniere, who was still under custody of the rioters, were admitted to conference. The emergency was pressing ; the dark tiers of cannon added emphasis to the arguments of the emissaries ; and the terms of surrender were dispatched with as much promptitude as the other acts of the day. It was resolved that the views taken of the government of the Cardinal had originated in a pardonable misconception ;

that the reforms suggested were immature ; that the damage done within the palace was easily repaired by so wealthy a municipality ; and that upon second consideration, it was judged expedient that the state should remain as it had been at sunrise ; that the doors of the palace should be thrown open, the legislators be invited to descend from the roof, and that all should return unmolested to their homes.

Thanks were returned for the benevolence of the Cardinal, and the many-headed council finished their brief labours.

Thus finished the movement of the 26th of April.

## CHAPTER III.

LET us turn awhile from the scenes of strife,—from the heart-burnings, the humbled pride, the insulting triumph, and the deep-felt, though lowly muttered curses, of a baffled populace,—to the calm and sunny solitude of a hill-side not far distant from the busy city, yet sufficiently remote to be beyond the reach of the clamour of its turbulent passions.

The smile of spring was over every feature of the fair face of nature,—softening, enlivening, brightening all things; the infant leaves shone in every tint of their first verdure, over the infinite tracery of the tender twigs, curving with the gentle bur-

den of their abounding clusters, every branch whose birth had but just preceded their own. A new impulse had entered into the stem and sap of the sombre pine, the cypress and the juniper tinting with a brighter verdure the feathery fringes of their undying foliage, mingling with admirable device shade and light, till each vast and aged tree stood out in its towering altitude, distinct from the thousands of its giant offspring, each one of itself a picture, yet harmonizing with the stupendous design of its parent forest. The voice of spring, infinite in its harmonies, floated through the soft air redolent with odours; it warbled in the soft notes of rejoicing birds; it swelled grandly as it careered over the bending pines. The cascade leaped joyously from the sunny slopes, flinging the sparkling waters of its snow-sources in sportive music from ridge to ridge.

Spring withheld none of its loveliness from the hills above Carreggi; for the memory of one of earth's noblest offspring dwells for

ever upon the hills and valleys of that favoured spot, and the music of his song is never mute. The tame yet cheerful scenery of the valley in which Florence is built here partakes of a mixed and bolder character ; the fertility of the gentler slopes borders abruptly upon the barrenness of the stony Apennine, where the sinuous hollows afford shelter from the winds ; the olive bends over the rugged ravines formed by the winter's watercourse ; and the graceful vine flings its arches over many a chasm, and twines its tendrils around the stems of the stunted shrubs, which at some seasons need all their powers of tenacity to maintain their hold in the infirm soil. There are other spots where the bared crests of the mountain rise up in unyielding rock, bidding defiance to wind and storm, and maintaining, at the cost of all fertility, the majesty of its grand and rugged outline. A rich carpet of moss, wild thyme, and lavender feeds the winds with eternal fragrance, and tempts the peasant at times to climb its summit.

In a sheltered nook, high up on the sides of this mountain range, and covered in by a cluster of dark pines, there stand to this day the ruins of a cottage, of such humble dimensions as to evade the notice of those best acquainted with the scenery we have been describing. At the period at which this tale opens, that humble dwelling had its tenant ; and to judge from its immediate exterior, he was one who took no small pains in its neatness and its comfort.

A mountain stream, leaping in cascades from the fragments of rock which its winter fury had hurled down from the impending summits, and which the cessation of its anger had stranded in their mid descent, afforded moisture for a garden, of some flowers and many plants, on which the cultivator chiefly depended. The limits of a most spacious bed for the stream's capricious and wayward range were not encroached upon ; but where the aged and gigantic pines stood guardians of the more sheltered recess, and where the barriers screened off a precipitous and bay-like

hollow, the cottage leaned its roof against the rock, and a narrow slip of garden smiled beside its doorway.

It was an hour or so before sunset, on the day on which our tale opens, when the slight figure of a young maiden might have been seen passing out from this secluded home. She turned her face to the steep hill, and springing with the elastic and swift step of mountain childhood, scrambled, with the aid of root and stone, up the pathless ascent.

A few seconds brought her to the highest ridge of the mountain, and she then paused. Her face was turned towards the city, and she gazed long and earnestly upon every feature of the intervening country. She was clothed scantily and poorly, but in a dress that was not unpicturesque. Her vest was in its fashion scarcely different from that of the Tuscan peasant to this day. It was of the warm woollen for which her country was in that day celebrated, and of a bright crimson die ; behind, it was stiffened into a corslet, and laced from the shoulders

to the waist. It should have been gathered above the hips in full plaited folds ; but poverty, whilst it robbed that part of her dress of its fitting amplitude, had prevented the screening of a taper waist, and a figure that Diana might have smiled upon amongst her wood nymphs. Her extreme youth threw a brightness and modesty around the limbs and bosom which her garments failed sufficiently to protect.

She could scarcely be more than fifteen or sixteen years of age, and even had she numbered as many, the outlines of her fragile and girlish figure were less advanced towards womanhood than are usually those of maidens of the plain at that period. She was bareheaded and barefooted, and the breeze, which never slept in those regions, tossed the thick foliage of her voluminous hair in golden waves around the snowy shoulders, and over the kerchief which crossed her bosom. Her face was small, exquisitely featured, and of a complexion whose whiteness, tinted with a delicacy

rarely belonging to a dwelling so elevated, defied alike the hot suns and the withering winds. Her eyes and their long heavy lashes were dark as the small grapes of her own mountains ; but her glance, as she thus gazed over the spires and domes of the city below her, was overcast and sad. Premature thought, perchance forced upon her young mind by the hardships and the solitude of her mode of life, had suppressed the joyous fire that still seemed but to slumber within its liquid and deep mirror.

As she thus stood, outtopping the keen ridge of that exalted pinnacle, with her garments streaming outward upon the breeze, she might well have seemed to the wayfarer in the regions below, some winged creature, from a home where loveliness and light are the vestures of the starry limbs of its messengers.

She stood long tracing the various mountain pathways, which glittered in the horizontal sunbeams, like threads of silver, whose lines were drawn out to nearly im-

perceptible fineness, from where she stood. What sought she? The atmosphere was clearer than it ever is when the heats of a more advanced season have set in; and she almost fancied that her glance could penetrate into the recesses of every slightest deviation of that long road; yet no moving object broke the unity of the line her glance dwelt upon.

A tear stole, unnoticed by herself, silently down her cheek; and when her aching sight became dimmed, she shook the drops from her lids, and turned slowly to pursue an occupation which had little sympathy with her present mood of mind. She stooped down, and picked up a small basket which had dropped from her hand, and moved with a resolution which, as it took her glance for a few moments from its long search, had so much of hope and soothing, that when she looked forth again, all was not a blank, until she had once more surveyed the whole long and solitary pathway.

She bent her steps somewhat lower down

the mountain, for there was solace in the intervals she thus forced herself to prolong, and she cropped and arranged into small bundles the harvest of odorous lavender, whose sweets contributed by their sale to furnish the scanty pittance by which the lamp at the shrine of so much loveliness was daily nourished.

After a few brief minutes spent in this occupation, she again started from her task, and as her glance fell downwards towards the mountain's base, so speedy was the change made in all things by the parting light, so gloomy was the contrast of the dusk and shadowy fields with the regions above, where the sinking sun pillowed its ruddy splendours, that she felt her heart beat more faintly, for it seemed that night was already over her. She turned again upwards, springing with swiftness and fear from stone to stone, till she once more stood upon the brow of the mountain, and sent forth hersorrowing glance over the fading scenery, again to return like the wearied dove which found the waters of

disappointment still over all the earth, and found no spot on which to take its rest.

The sun had not yet left the western heavens, though its orb was partially below even the extended horizon which that lofty eye commanded. Few charms had the smiling and calm scenery on which her eye rested, for her aching and desolate bosom. She noticed not the oxen that had toiled through the long day, and were now turning homeward to their rest; nor the thin column of curling smoke, the poor man's domestic telegraph, which rose up from the many cottages far away at the mountain's base. Thousands of bright birds flitted past her, on wings unwearied by their day of joy, unscared by the statue-like figure thus sorrowing across their path; their song rose up in various tones, in which the melancholy of some, the joy of others, harmonized in one general voice of gentleness and music. But sight and sound, full as they were of calm and gladness, had no power to divert her mind from her vain search.

At last, there came sweeping upwards upon the evening breeze, the warning peals of the convent bells, mellowed by the distance of intervening hill and hollow. The rich melancholy of their tones appeared to sympathize with her mood of mind ; and when their last vibrations had floated past her, the maiden plunged into the pine woods that overhung her dwelling. A few minutes brought her home to its threshold, and her hand trembled upon its latch.

“ Come in, child,” exclaimed the tones of a gentle and tremulous voice ; “ you come, I hear, alone ;—enter, and tell me if his form is visible on the hill’s side.”

“ He comes not, mother,” exclaimed the maiden ; “ I had ventured to hope that his figure might have escaped me in the evening’s mists, and that I might have found him here before me. There is no speck within an hour’s journey that I have not explored. He comes not, my mother ; some harm has surely happened to him.”

The full and pent-up torrent of so many

fears and sorrows now broke from its restraint; she buried her face in the bosom of the aged female she had addressed, and gave way to the full paroxysm of her grief.

“Fear not, child,” said the friend who had herself but small confidence in her own consolations; “fear not; he has oftentimes before now tarried far later than this. We must not expect that our wants can be provided for in the few hours that we so grudgingly allow him; he must toil that we may live, and hard as our portion is, we must learn to bless those who hire his life, and keep him from us. When the debt of his day’s toil has been fairly paid, we may expect him, and I would not willingly see him earlier. The ways of the hills are familiar to him in darkness as in day; no peril can befall him.”

Some part of the speech of this aged dame had touched a delicate and powerful chord in the finely constructed spirit of her listener. She raised her head from where she had pillowed it, and tossed the streaming

hair backward from her face ; and when she again spoke, it was in a voice of deep and touching plaintiveness.

“ That he does toil for us, mother, and that he so must toil, I know, oh, how well ! and that he does it without repining, well merits for him his mother’s blessing. But what right have *I* to eat in idleness bread so hardly, so bitterly laboured for ? Scanty as the pittance is, the long hours of the silent night, which others spend in rest—how are his spent ? Oh ! mother, how often have I watched the lamp flickering in his chamber, till the grey light heralded in the dawn ; and if his thoughts burn as mine do, when I think over such a spirit born for such a career, on how aching and fevered a brow must the night dews settle ! How often have I overheard those broken mutterings of his unconscious talk, and how have I trembled when I heard their unvarying theme to be, ‘ Were it not for them, any danger, any deed, were better than this.’ Yes, mother,” continued the fair girl, and

her dark eye flashed brilliantly, and she shook away the tears from her cheeks, "he says well—any peril were better than this. It were better that we both ceased to cumber his strength in his exertions, than that we should hold him down to the slavery of the life he thus reluctantly breathes and toils through. But for us, he might take that place amongst his fellow-citizens which a soul so gifted, so daring, so aspiring, must infallibly achieve for him. Who knows, in times like these, what career an hour of decision may open for him? and though his safety be dearer to me than my hopes of Paradise, and my life less—oh, far less than his slightest pleasure, I would cheer him on, as I have ever done, through risk and irksomeness, trusting to his Maker to bear him harmless, and fearing little from those with whom he must compete in his career."

A tear stole down the cheeks of the aged parent, as she listened to the eulogy of her only child; she folded the excited maiden to her bosom, and the beating of

her heart told how earnest was the blessing she could but murmur brokenly.

The young girl tended her companion to her rest ; she then poured fresh oil into the cottage lamp, gathered together the scattered embers, and flinging fir cones and the resinous logs into the spacious hearth, prepared for a night of watching.

A long evening passed away ; her companion retired to her couch ; and the maiden passed into an inner room, accessible only through that in which her aged companion slept, and here she began her vigil. This room was the study of the youth who was now away, and it was her joy and her pride to give it an air of comfort ; but poverty still triumphed in spite of love. Such furniture only as unskilful hands could construct for indispensable service, a few books, and many shreds of scribbled papers, were all that it contained. Placed at a rude table were two settles of chesnut wood, and an open volume lay on the table between each.

On that spot had passed away many hours

of happiness, so untroubled that its remembrance, like the shadow of one we love, communicated a feeling akin to its actual presence. She remembered the arms that had encircled her waist from infancy ; the kind and eloquent voice ; the patient smile that encouraged her young intellect through the toils of her early learning ; and the joyous smile of an irresistible impulse again shed its light for awhile over her childish features.

A dim twilight had settled over all things, star after star became visible in the heavens, and gradually the heralding radiance of a moon near its full silvered the pines around her dwelling. The glorious luminary itself next rose, bathing in its soft light her own youthful figure, and the objects of her contemplation.

Thus passed away the early hours of the first night of his absence ; but when midnight was long gone by, and the bitter thoughts of the unknown future had dispelled the beautiful imagery of her remembrances, she turned hopelessly once again,

to a blank and desolate reality. Moving from the rude seat she had occupied so many hours in her musing, she threw open the casement to let in the cool air upon her aching temples. The moon shone brokenly about her as its beams glanced, like arrows, from the intervening boughs of the shadowy pines. She listened to the many sounds that mimicked the footsteps she was longing for ; and, above all, to the voice of the gentle breeze, cheerful till it fell upon those dark branches and their heavy foliage, and then changed into a low and prolonged moaning.

Wearied by her long and sad watching, she passed into the room in which her aged companion took her repose, and moving noiselessly to the side of the couch, she bent over its tenant. A troubled sleep, and apparently painful visions, weighed down her eyelids, but brought no rest. She turned away silently, lifted the latch, and once more stood upon the mossy grass beyond its threshold.

Once abroad, some new and sudden cause for conjecture had apparently entered her

mind, for she sprung away fleetly along the mountain ridge, climbing the pathless steep which the pines clothed ; and even when she had emerged into the open and unshadowed pinnacle, where no object averted the full stream of moonlight, she still continued her flight till she gained the outmost point of the hill, where a new scenery, and a wide extent of country, lay spread out in unbounded plain below her.

Very different from the calm moonlight silvering the mists of the extended valley, was the spectacle which her eager glance was sent in search of. She well knew that a numerous force of the army of the church, under the command of the Duke D'Urbino, lay encamped below her; and many a time returning from her rambles by starlight, it had been the pleasure of him she now mourned for to point out to her notice the many watch-fires gleaming along the horizon, and to conjecture their movements from the fluctuating radiance of those beacon lights.

Thither her glance first wandered, and it

became instantly evident to a mind alive to suspicions of all vague evils, that some change of a decided character had taken place since she last looked from the same spot ; for the fires which had occupied a circle of several miles, were now narrowed into so small a focus, that they resembled rather one of those vast blazing furnaces which the charcoal burners light nightly upon the distant hills, than the bivouac of an extended army.

Following the line which lay between that spot and the city, she perceived an unbroken continuity of flashing and moving light, one end of whose chain reached back nearly to the gates of the city, and the other was progressively verging towards the spot on which they had for several nights been stationed.

The worst of suspicions broke upon her mind, and a cold clammy dew stood upon her forehead, and struck chillingly through her very bones. That vast array was evidently on its return from the city, and the lumbering sound of the gun-carriages, dis-

tinct from the measured tramp of the horse-men, too plainly proved that their journey thither had not been for the mere purposes of display. To pursue her course down the mountain, and thus endeavour to gain any knowledge which might alleviate her fears, was her first impulse ; and she was of an age which rarely awaits the coming of a second.

Leaping from point to point of the projecting rock which lay loosely upon the hill-side, the young girl sprung so lightly that she scarcely displaced the pebble which hung arrested by the shrubs ; her light scant dress fluttering backwards upon the breeze ; her bare feet scarcely feeling the prickly shrubs which wounded them, she fled from her mountain home, urging her fleet course to the spot from which the nearest torches beamed.

Away, away, as though pursued ! the mountain was already descended, and she fled breathlessly over the plain at its feet. The moon accompanied her, suiting its pace to hers, rushing through the plain of the pathless heavens, leaping over the

jagged masses of intervening cloud which grew bright as silver as she passed them, lighting the uneven ground beneath her feet, and cheering on to an almost maddening rapidity her headlong flight. The distance swiftly melted beneath her limbs, the lights deepened in their intensity, the torches grew distinct in their separation, and the voices of the foremost troop were audible before she paused.

So impetuous had been her course that she had not yet arranged any scheme for gaining the information she had ventured into so dangerous a neighbourhood to obtain. Another most important consideration had escaped her, namely, that the same bright moon which had made her pathway visible might also have revealed her movements. It was not until she had drawn considerably nearer to the line of march, that this fear flashed at last upon her mind, and made her falter. She sank down upon the earth for a moment's rest, and for reflection. The bands were not yet near enough to dis-

tinguish their voices, but it had not escaped her that the foremost torches suddenly paused in their advance. Had she waited long enough to consider the nature of the danger she was thus rashly encountering, it would have been well ; but after a second or two more, her impatience again urged her to resume her progress. She took, however, instinctively, the precaution of looking about her, for a covered pathway to hide her advance. Not a single shrub offered its friendly screen ; an open heath lay immediately before her, every step of which was bright with the moonbeams. Skirting, however, the immediate road along which the armed column was moving, she could perceive, by the broken and scattered rays of the torchlight, that there intervened between her and them a scanty fence, which separated the road from the fields ; and her knowledge of the general aspect of the country led her to conjecture that behind it was a deep and steep ditch. Could she only gain this, she might crouch down beneath the very steps

of the danger, and gather from the conversation of the men somewhat of the general nature of affairs within the city. She sprung again to her feet, and directed her steps once more to the lights.

No sooner had she resumed her movement than the torches again became stationary. She still pushed onward, trusting that their doing so was unconnected with her; and she had nearly gained the shadow of the barrier, to which her safety might have been entrusted, when the voices of the men at arms became audible, and fearful indeed were the tidings they conveyed to her.

“It is there again!” exclaimed a voice, in a subdued quick tone. “By the holy Virgin! it is either a spectre or a spy.”

Deprived of energy to proceed or to retreat, the unhappy girl crouched down to the earth, but her movements were still evidently observed. The next sound that met her ear was a call to halt, and the further progress of the column was arrested.

“Send in a dozen balls from your cara-

bines," exclaimed a voice ; " it is the readiest exorcism for either." But before this formidable order could be carried into effect, the tramp of a fresh body of riders was distinctly heard, at a full gallop, advancing to the head of the column.

" What means this ?" said a voice, in the quick tones of youth, and with the impatience of command.

" A spy dodges us, my lord," exclaimed the first speaker. " I have long seen him skimming along the plain, and he now lies hiding thereabouts, under cover of the bushes."

" A spy !" replied the youthful leader, in tones of infinite indifference ; " where is he ?"

The man at arms pointed through the scant bushes, to the crouching figure of the young girl. The youth followed with his eye the direction of his arm, and after gazing intently for a minute or two upon the object thus pointed out to him, burst out into a loud and merry peal of laughter.

" A spy, man !" he exclaimed ; " by my father's faith, then is it a spy in petticoats !

Thanks to the gods for so cheering a termination to our night's march! After her, Lorenzino," he continued, and setting spurs to his horse, urged him against the fence.

Thanks to greater sagacity in the animal than in his rider, he cleared at a bound the loose brambles and the masked ditch beyond it. Such, however, was not the good fortune of the two or three companions who considered themselves privileged to follow him. The unseen hollow on the opposite side received most of them, horses and men; one only arrived with his leader safely on the open field.

"The game is fairly started," exclaimed the young man; "and now away, my good steed, for we have never had a fairer chase."

Fully aware of her danger, the maiden sprung to her feet, and with the energy of despair dashed across the open plain, without further thought of concealment. Away, away, once more towards the distant mountain, whose steep sides were her only hope, heedless of the thundering bound of the

chargers upon the plain, as they cleared the ditch in their leap ! away, in the face of the bright moon whose treacherous smiles had lighted her first flight to the danger, and whose dancing beams now seemed to gleam in mockery upon her path ! away, with the fleet step of the startled hind, this young girl fled before her pursuers !

The spirits of the youth who followed her rose, as his horse, wearied as he was with a march and a busy day, sprung before the spur. His exulting laugh rung out on the still air, and his voice, as it reached the terrified fugitive, urged her to efforts so unnatural that the firmest limbs could not long sustain them.

As though the glad moon had a pleasure in the chase, or perchance pity for the young frail limbs thus urged beyond their powers, it whirled on its luminous orb towards a mass of dark clouds, and as the speed of the horses gained upon their victim, it plunged for some minutes behind their dark and impenetrable screen.

Every step of the country was familiar to the wretched maiden, and the darkness

which was thus briefly around her delayed not her speed. She turned as confidently in the darkness as she would have done at midday, from the line she had pursued in her coming, and bent her steps towards a part of the mountain where a dark gorge was wooded down to its very base. The deep curses of her followers, as they wandered they knew not whither in the darkness, fell fainter upon her ears, and gave her fresh courage. Her eye instinctively turned upwards to the mass of clouds behind which the moon still tarried, and she blessed those clouds even more earnestly than her pursuers cursed them.

Her stag-like flight had not yet faltered, and as she marked the deepening brilliancy that again began to fringe the skirts of the cloudy and surge-like barrier between her and the inconstant moon, though her heart beat more wildly, her bare feet sprung over stone and stem with unabated swiftness.

Gradually all around her brightened, and the full splendour of a cloudless moon was once more on the chase. A faint and dis-

tant halloo told her that she was again visible to her pursuers—the sounds neared her—the heavy tramp of the excited horses went harshly to her heart; and though the plummy foliage of her own pine forests waved their arms in encouragement, and offered their bosom for her safety, she still felt that danger was too fleet behind her, that the race had been too unequal, and that her exhausted limbs had well nigh spent their astonishing energies. The pitying moon once more came momentarily to her succour, and before its all-revealing glories broke again from behind their screen, the shadow of the pines was gained. The darkness was, however, so brief that it scarcely checked the speed of the whirling horses thus remorselessly urged upon her track.

Her hope, if so could be called the faint flickering up of her last efforts, must evidently consist in concealment; for to ascend many yards of a pathway so steep, with limbs already staggering with over effort, was utterly beyond her power. Still it would

seem that she intended making the attempt ; for though at a pace scarcely beyond a walk, her feet still followed the direct and perpendicular pathway.

Her pursuers had latterly followed on this cruel chase in silence. Astonishment, indeed, at a flight so incredible, and an endurance that appeared superhuman, had more than once appealed touchingly to the hearts of the youths behind her ; but baffled hope and the excitement of the pursuit had conquered all emotions of pity, and when the dark barrier of the mountain rose up like a wall before the fugitive, there broke from one of them a wild shout of ribald triumph, as he sprung from his saddle and leaped up the hill's side.

The reeling steps of the maiden still carried her on ; his pace quickened as hers diminished, till he was near enough to stretch out his hand to seize her. So intent was he upon his prey that he took no heed of the nature of the ground over which he sprung so impetuously.

The path which the young girl had chosen in her ascent skirted the very borders of a deep ravine, from which, at the last moments of their flight, but a step or two divided them, and to this, as to a voluntary death, the last energies of her frail limbs were bearing her. The dark pine branches still screened the chasm over which they drooped, and from the opposite side, forcing their hardy and tenacious roots into the fissures of the solid rock, and around its jagged projections, they bent down to meet them.

To this unfathomable cleft, which the storms and the angry torrents of ages had ploughed up, from the summit to the very base of the mountain they were both approaching,—they stood upon its brink—when a single bound whirled the young creature midway across the void—she seized a bough whose extremity reached thus far, and a fresh impetus bore her in safety to the opposing ledge. Her footing had lost its tenacity; she balanced for a moment upon the brink; nature had spent its last

energies, and she sank down motionless and senseless to the earth.

Near as her light frame had been to its destruction, the peril of her pursuer had been scarcely less imminent. The yawning abyss opened beneath his very feet without a warning, and limbs less elastic than those of robust and springy boyhood had surely whirled him the next instant to an inevitable grave.

Had such been the fate of that youth, it would have been merciful to himself, for he would have shunned a death far more horrible, and a proud city and a whole people would have been spared years of shame, and a tyranny as harassing as it was utterly degrading. But such was not the handwriting of his destiny. His feet stamped their prints deeply into the earth on which he was balancing; he regained his equilibrium, and sprung back sickened and faint with his escape. The object of his pursuit lay without motion within a few yards of him, and even should her consciousness return,

there was no earthly chance of further exertion.

He contemplated his fallen prey for some moments, with mixed feelings, from which self-reproach was certainly not excluded ; but his dark spirit regained its empire ; a fiend-like and foul smile distorted his youthful countenance, as he once again drew near to the chasm's brink, to glare upon his prey. He then called loudly to his companion—" Hither, Lorenzino, hither—the game is down !"

He was answered by a laughing and ribald jest, and his companion, a youth about his own age, of sallow, saturnine, and ill-omened countenance, well disposed to be his tempter, promptly joined him.

" There she lies," said the youth, pointing to the prostrate form of the fair girl, whose garments in her fall had clung modestly round the palpitating limbs. " Over with you ! she cleared this precipice at a bound, and your long legs are surely as agile as hers !"

“ Is the game for me, then, my fair cousin ?” said Lorenzino. “ I am much your debtor, and will lose no time in seeking out some means of gathering it up, without periling my own precious life by a moonlight leap of so untempting a character ! Look over the ravine, Alessandro, and see if a scramble might get us across.”

A flash of withering and dark suspicion glittered up into the eyes of the youth thus addressed, and his hand passed like lightning to his side, to seek his dagger. A struggling gleam of the moonbeams fell upon his working features, and revealed the action, whose signification was not lost upon his companion. After a moment’s silence, however, the demon appeared quelled, and the youth replied recklessly—“ The reconnoitering might be as dangerous as the leap I proposed to you. I have looked down it once to-night, and am not anxious to pursue my curiosity. We may find a pathway without throwing away so much valour !”

The two youths then turned to retrace

their steps down the mountain ; and when once at its base, they found, without much difficulty, a pathway leading upwards on the opposite side of the ravine.

Lying as she had fallen, her limbs still quivering, the veins of her face and temples swelled in elevated lines of deep blue, yet with that face itself pallid as though death had already triumphed over the very extreme of buoyancy and vitality ; with her long hair tangled and heaped about her shoulders, and with a thin and scarcely perceptible creamy foam arching over her blue lips ; this young girl, whose flight had thus sadly terminated, was at last, like the netted bird, within the power of one whose passion was destined never through life to know one moment of pity or self-control, till it led him hood-winked into a snare more sanguinary than usually falls to the lot of the betrayer and the ravisher.

When both these young men had for a minute or two bent over the prostrate figure, and raised the white, warm, throb-

bing arm from the earth, the youth whom we have heard addressed as Lorenzino,—to which, as to the Christian name of his cousin, we may add that of Medici,—looked up into the dark and repulsive features of his cousin, and asked him with a leer, whose depraved insinuation there was no misinterpreting, what it was his pleasure to do with the prey thus within his grasp.

The meaning of that look was not lost upon the acute observation of Alessandro. The proposition, which had so much startled him but a few minutes previously, when they stood upon the brink of the ravine, had dwelt with a singular vividness in his recollection; and the recurrence of his suspicions at that moment was the saving of the helpless being whose fate was in their hands.

“Step down to the horses, Lorenzino,” said his companion, “and unstrap the cloaks; it would not be well to give her a hard seat on a trooper’s saddle, or to take her in this tempting scantiness of apparel

through the night air, after such a run as we have given her. It will be time enough to examine our prize when we have her safe in the Poggio Cajano."

"Now, Heaven forefend!" exclaimed Lorenzino; "would you think of thus bestowing her, to the manifest scandal of the hosts of his Holiness, your respectable uncle, and to the high displeasure of his most potent Eminence of Cortona, your excellency's guardian?"

"And to the imminent risk of losing my night's labour to boot, you would add," said Alessandro. "But his Eminence, and our sage cousin Hippolito, have a fair country and a rich city to prey upon; and, to judge from this day's pastime, they are likely to have occupation enough, and to spare, for some time to come; and they are little likely to venture beyond the walls again."

Lifting the young girl from the ground with as much ease as if her limbs had been as feathery as her flight, Alessandro turned

to descend the mountain, and in a few minutes reached the horses, whose necks were protruded till their noses reached the earth, and whose flanks panted audibly with their exertions. The still motionless girl was placed on the saddle before her captor, and a brief while longer saw them again scouring, with what speed they might, over the face of the country.

“Would it not be wiser, my fair cousin,” asked Lorenzino, “to take the direct road to the Poggio, than to carry your treasure amongst the priests and prelates of the army of the church?”

“And what horses, think you,” replied his companion, “after a day’s work such as this has been, and with sides heaving in this way, could reach Cajano? What have the priests or the troopers to do with my pleasure? Besides, my cautious cousin, is she not a spy, captured by my own valiance, and by every law of chivalry redeemable only by compounding with me? One would think you had been prime counsellor to

our politic cousin Cosimo ! Hold up, good steed," he exclaimed, bearing up the staggering steps of his over-strained courser, " thou wouldst scarcely flounder on at this pace, as our cousin says, to Cajano."

Further on their way we need no longer accompany them. The sinking moon shortly withdrew its chaste light from their iniquity, and the first streaks of dawn were already visible before they reached the escort which had awaited their return.

## CHAPTER IV.

THE astute machinations of his Holiness Pope Clement VII. had, shortly before the period at which this story opens, achieved a notable stroke of policy, to which, as connected in some measure with our story, we may briefly advert. This was a league between the Venetians, the King of France, and himself. What ends the two former of these powers had in view, matter not much to our present business. The schemes of his Holiness had of course for their primary object the weal of the holy church committed to his guidance; and although neither the historians of that period, nor posterity at any

period subsequently, have been able to discover the precise manner in which the interests of the church could have been thereby advanced or protected, nor the exact nature of the interest which the church had in the matter, we have, nevertheless, the word of his Holiness to attest the circumstance, and the unquestionable veracity of that respectable pontiff will be readily admitted as proof sufficient of the fact.

The minor and secondary considerations of Pope Clement were, the securing in his family the domination of a city which several generations of the house of Medici had laboured, with various success, to convince of the indispensable necessity of their dynasty, for its good rule and perfect freedom. No spider had ever returned to knot up the torn meshes of its web, with a title of the perseverance with which this indefatigable family struggled on for power, from father to son, in all periods of its descent, whether through individuals within or without the pale of legitimate progeny.

All alike offered their shoulders to the burdens of government ; satisfying themselves with the barren wages of men's gratitude, or, at most, cropping the scanty flowers of an uncertain pasture, that grew on the soil over which they toiled ; nay, even squabbling amongst themselves for the honourable labours of their ungrateful office.

The burden had lately with no small difficulty been hoisted on to the shoulders of a youth of fifteen ; and that no failure of strength might cause his limbs to totter, the supernatural powers of his Eminence of Cortona had, as we have seen, been associated in the undertaking, together with the whole military forces of the church.

The last inducement of his Holiness to acquiesce in that famous convention was, some fears gathered, it must be acknowledged, from hints of no equivocal character, from the brigand generals of the Emperor Charles V., who had already made an inroad upon the Eternal City, poured their Spaniards into the Borgo San Pietro, sacked

his palace, and occasioned a change, more speedy than dignified, of his Holiness' residence from the Vatican to the castle of St. Angelo.

In joining the league we have spoken of, Clement was quite aware that many feelings of a private nature must be sacrificed to his more important projects; and the promptitude with which this necessity was bowed to will not fail to impress on the mind of the reader the disinterestedness of this estimable, though often calumniated, churchman. Not the least unpalatable of his concessions was the nomination of the hero of the Bande Nere for his general-in-chief. Proceeding, however, with that astute policy which some sage counsellor suggested as infallibly triumphant, he instituted a system of checks upon the personal consequence of the various leaders of the league, which, conjointly with a few other causes, was rapidly hurrying on his policy to its only natural conclusion,—when casualty undertook in part better to

adapt his means to the ends he had in view. John de Medici, the Captain of the Bande Nere, was shot in a skirmish near Mantua, and thus was removed the gallantest and best warrior that his Holiness' forces possessed.

The admirable policy of Pope Clement had brought two armies about his ears ; one, composed of all hireling nations in the pay of Venice, France, and Rome, which we have seen was quartered upon the good people of Florence ; and another, of whose movements we shall soon give more particular notice.

The reader may remember that after the busy day recorded in the first chapter, the valiant captors of the Palace of the Priori surrendered their prize, making no charge for their feats of manual labour, on promise of undisturbed egress, and as the Cardinal added, somewhat indelicately, with free pardon for all the mischief they had done and the ill they had intended.

This conclusion was brought about, says a grave historian, by the astonishing clemency of the Cardinal, and of the young Hippolito,

and by the great tone of equity and quiet of the Duke d'Urbino, and the other chiefs of the league. This singular love of repose in his commander-in-chief turned strangely to the account of his Holiness in the sequel, when the army of the church lay encamped for several months, under the walls of Rome, during the pleasant sackage of that city, and the second residence of his Holiness in the castle of St. Angelo.

One portion of the day's work done within the palace of the Priori in Florence, had been executed in a truly prompt and artisan-like style—to wit, the demolition of the many partitions which had for several years previously outraged the proportions of the stupendous hall of the Great Council. Scorning all ideas of a mercenary nature, the laborious band of patriots had, in a marvellously short space of time, battered down hundreds of partition walls; and, but for the unexpected arrival of the Cardinal, would have borne away the rubbish, swept the pavement, and furnished it with all

fitting array for a legislative assembly. The trumpets of the piazzzi, however, stopped their further proceedings, and they were compelled, with the grime and chalk-stains on their ragged garments, to evacuate the palace.

The sortie of this troop of uncouth patriots excited infinite merriment amongst the various noble leaders of the league, and pre-eminently of the facetious Monsieur de Bozzoles, whose pleasant suggestion about the artillery had shortly before promised little enough of mirth to the labourers.

Weltering in a pool of blood, on the spot on which he had been struck down, lay the unfortunate student, whose experience in the meddling with governments had received so severe a lesson at its outset. No exceptions had been made in the stipulations for surrender, and as three stabs in the body might have satisfied the offended dignity even of a gonfaloniere, the removal of the youth by his friends was permitted.;

A long stupor, and very nearly a suspen-

sion of all the animal powers, had impeded the current of blood after a time, or every vein must have emptied itself in the palace, where many a brave man's blood had been spilt before and since. His body, however, with what blood remained in it, was removed, and the palace was swept, washed, and ventilated; for the odours of patriotism are more fragrant than those of its worshippers; and his Eminence of Cortona made his entry into the vacated residence of the Signori.

About dusk, the same evening, a litter, moving with a quick, cautious, and nicely balanced pace, was seen to glide under the superbly arched entry of one of the lordliest palaces of Florence. The portals closed behind it, and a body of armed men in the liveries of one of the oldest families of the city, took their station within, as though in expectation of visitants on no peaceable or welcome errand.

When the next day's sun arose, the whole city presented an aspect of perfect calm.

Twenty thousand warriors had passed outwards from its walls with little bloodshed and without booty; and excepting that a more than usual force and a few cannon, cumbered the entries to the Via Larga, and to the great square, and that the standards of the Medici, in front of both palaces, towered above the gonfalon of the republic, no trace remained of the turmoil of the preceding day.

Once freed from the apprehension of the consequences of their late chivalrous feat, an apparent calm settled over the whole city, and men's minds turned for stimulants to the great events that were acting abroad, and preparing to crown the policy which had set the league and its antagonist force in motion. Seldom had a deeper current of all-absorbing interest eddied under a deceitful and placid surface than the acute observer might now detect in the state of things in Florence. Yet every citizen carried on his commerce with unvarying industry, and his Eminence of Cortona

dispatched his couriers daily to Rome, bearing the comfortable assurances of a profound and unruffled calm.

The cheerful rays of a warm May sun were breaking beautifully into a heavily curtained chamber of one of the many sumptuous palaces of the city. This lordly residence was situated at a part of the town remote from the ever busy centre and its turmoil. It was, as to its exterior, a mansion partaking, as most buildings of that period did, of a mingled character, of fortress and palace. A pile of rough masonry, whose lower windows were barricaded with immense iron fences, presented its vast façade to the street, defying, it would seem, any power that man or time could bring against it. Its portals were closed, and though the courts within daily resounded with the clang of armed retainers, no appearance of life betrayed to the world without any fears, or preparation, or insecurity in its tenants.

In a spacious chamber whose furniture few royal houses could equal, none in those

known before now to be scarcely beyond the gifted and wonderful genius who was standing before her. But her embarrassment was transient ; she knew too well the dove-like gentleness that was mingled with the unnumbered gifts of that great man, and by which her conduct was ever judged by him.

She shook away her tears, leaped up from her seat, and took his hand playfully, yet reverently, into both her own ; she then opened its palm as though to study its lines, for she had not yet the courage to meet his glance.

Had she possessed the power to dive into the mysteries of that ingenious science, she could never have had a fairer opportunity of testing its veracity. The heavy hand that lay passively in the grasp of the young maiden's taper and wax-like fingers was large, full of deep hard lines within, and covered with an infinity of hard spots, and the marks of cicatrized bruises and cuts without, bearing incontestable evidence of a long life's familiarity with manual labour of no effeminate character.

The elevated brow of her friend forgot its stateliness, and his eagle glance its scrutiny, as her examination brought into such singular contrast his hand and hers. He appeared to take a delight in the comparison himself, and it was not till she raised her eyes, with much timidity, from her musing, that he raised the small snowy hand he had been so long admiring, to his lips, and whatever shade of doubt had till now lingered on her bright and sunny cheek disappeared, and a smile, like a sunbeam, glittered from her tear-laden and long lashes.

“Look ! bold intruder,” said the damsel ; “my day has not been wholly idle !” and she lifted up the paper whose drawing she had partly transferred to her tapestry.

The noble individual thus addressed bent for a minute over the frame-work, but still held prisoner the fair hand that had been given him.

“We will sketch you a more stirring picture, my fair one,” he said, with a look affectionate, yet searching, and which pierced

deeply into her secret ; “ what think you of the storming of the palace of the Priori ? ”

An expression of pain and fear sent the colour from the maiden’s cheek with a suddenness which for a minute made both silent. “ Oh do ! do so, my kind, my dear friend ! ” she exclaimed, eagerly ; “ it would be a gift beyond price to me and to my father, and surely it was to all men a scene of stirring and deep interest, and to me— ”

She paused to conquer an emotion which made her heart beat so rapidly as nearly to impede her utterance, and then added, “ and to me that day’s memories (if I may have no secret to make you judge amiss of the tell-tale tears with which since childhood I never before met your coming) have been the cause of more pride and sorrow than I could well tell you.” She looked up earnestly into his eyes, and still urged her request.

“ Are you anxious, my sweet girl,” he answered, “ to see your old friend and playfellow entombed amongst the muments of that ancient palace, and the name

of Michael Angelo Buonarotti added to the roll of illustrious heroes who have gone to Paradise through its portals ?”

“ Hard hearted and false knight, who would refuse a damsel, with the tears on her cheek,” said the maiden, playfully forcing him into the seat from which she had herself risen. “ I will not be refused ! Are your drawings so wonderful that no one else should pay the penalty of so treasonable a deed ? There is Bandinelli and his crew, all of them far more worthy of the honours of the Bargello ; do for me but this sketch, and my copy shall be rich with pearls and gold, fit for an offering to the Madonna of St. Miniato.”

“ I am losing my time, chatter-box,” replied her friend ; “ my visit was only for a kiss of these fair fingers, and thence to a sick couch. You have spirited away a young friend of mine who, I understood, was hurt at the palace in the affair of the 26th of April. He had admirers, sweet girl, before you knew him, and they have been wringing

Oh, embitter not the first hours of his return to consciousness with tidings so base of his countrymen ! Do they not add, also, that he is lowly by birth, and that his life or death can matter little to the noble families for whom he suffers ? If Heaven spares him through this illness, there will be glorious inducements for him to resume his labours.”

“ It was, indeed, my young friend,” said Buonarotti, “ a sad mischance, and few know as well as I do how much promise, how many of nature’s best gifts, had fallen like unripened fruit to earth, if that youth had perished. But judge not too hastily or too harshly of his fellow-citizens ; their peril has been equal to his, and the undertaking was timed against their judgment. It was, as I said before, a rash adventure, immature in its explosion, and, if I may speak the truth, conducted with less prudence than I should have expected from one whose mind was held to be prompt, indeed, in deciding, but given, from long habit, to a nice balancing of probabilities, and the very coolest fore-

sight. Those who know the rapacity of the soldiers of the league, and the licence to which the suppression of attempts against established authority too often give rise, must from this time forth pardon many weaknesses and many abruptnesses of manner in his Eminence, Silvio Passerini, in gratitude for the manner in which that force was used whilst within our walls. The day will come round again when our fortunes may befriend us more, and our movements may be governed by cooler heads ; and then will the sentence of the Medici be milder for his sake. Adieu, my young friend ; you make a chatterer of one who has seen enough of the world's changes to teach him both silence and sorrow."

From this interview that benevolent and great man turned his steps to a chamber in which lay the wounded and fevered body of the young student, whose health had at first, to the astonishment of all who attended him, singularly improved ; and then, when reflexion and agitation of mind accompanied

awakened consciousness, had as suddenly relapsed into a fearful and melancholy state, which for several days threatened hourly dissolution.

When Buonarotti entered his sick chamber, the slant rays of sunset had shed a soft subdued light over the bed on which he lay. Yet a most fearful contrast did their cheerful radiance offer, to the deathlike hue and the rigid features of the face on which they fell. A gilt dome of glorious carving was above his head, and the heavy silken curtains were partly closed against the light, warding off the less gentle beams which might have wounded a vision enfeebled, like every other corporeal function, well nigh to death. Every convenience, nay, every luxury, which profuse wealth could administer to the wants of the sufferer, were around him, and far better than them all, there was the affectionate and friendly presence of one who watched every movement that could need a soothing word or an administering hand.

When Buonarotti entered, a nod of

friendly greeting passed between him and the aged friend who was seated by the sick couch, and after a grave and significant glance to the bed, the latter—who, as the reader may have conjectured, was Niccolo Capponi, whose safety the scarcely animate form before him had purchased with his blood—moved aside, offering his own seat to his visitor.

Buonarotti proceeded at once to the bed side, and, drawing away the curtains, bent down over the youth, and looked into the fixed and glazed glance as though questioning the spirit which had as yet manifested such feeble symptoms of intelligence.

A smile, but one so faint and sickly that it seemed the mockery of all joy, stole across that pale countenance, lighting languidly for an instant his pallid and pinched features. His friend pressed his hand with the affection of a parent, but raised his finger to his lips, to repress the words of welcome that arose to meet him.

“I shall live for another venture yet!” said the youth; and these were nearly the

first words he had used deliberately since his ravings.

Michael Angelo once more signed to him to spare the little strength he possessed, and then whispering in the ear of Niccolo Capponi, who watched, with deepening interest, the first promise of returning saneness, that aged citizen retired from the chamber, and Buonarotti again bent down over his young friend, and with all that gentleness and kindness which, scarcely less than his other astonishing gifts, distinguished that great and good man, took the hand that was offered to him, and tempering the tones of his voice to sounds fittest for nerves shattered by pain and feebleness, answered him.

“ With Heaven’s blessing, my young friend, you may be spared yet, to serve and raise your country’s cause, and it was to speed your recovery that I made this visit. You have known me nearly from infancy as your friend, and you will readily believe that my errand, at this moment, can be none other than to serve you. You have

been hurried from the sphere of your usefulness, without time for the warning or the providing for those who have claims upon your love. I would willingly be myself your messenger, and account tenderly for your absence, which must long ago have given pain."

"Ever good, ever kind and noble, as you are wise and great," exclaimed the youth; "you have wonderfully divined my sweetest and speediest cure. There is a cottage on a hill, where eagles build, on the mountain ridge which faces Carreggi to the east, and at sundown a thin column of smoke will direct you to its hearth. Thither bear my tidings. In some fold of my student's tunic, if it have not shrunk away for very shame from these browbeating stuffs of velvet and gold, you will find a small coin—so small,"—he continued, with a smile upon his cheek, and a light in his bright eye, and with an expression in which there was no symptom of either shame or concealment, but that still and *espègle* gleaming up of mirth within the

glare, which an acute perception of the amusing so often evokes, even in the most solemn of mortal meetings,—“so very minute, that you may, perchance, fail in your search for it. That coin, should it fall beneath your fingers, carry with my love and your own comfort, and then let me know what faces look upon you for your tidings.”

Buonarotti pressed his hand, and would neither speak nor listen longer; his caution was understood, and the youth closed his eyes, without further attempt at exertion.

From this hour his health mended; his mind, like a vessel lightened of its cargo, righted; and his spirits returned with a buoyancy which made inactivity irksome. Once enabled to leave his bed, his colour began again to warm the lips and cheeks from which it had been so forcibly expelled.

It was on a warm sunny evening, in the second week in May, when the invalid had first learned in whose abode he had been thus tenderly nursed, and whose hands had ministered to his wants, during his long

dream of utter helplessness. He was alone, and a low silken couch had been drawn to an open window, through which entered the genial and soft breezes, fanning his pale temples with perfumes, as if with a fan of flowers. Many tenements were clustered about the palace; but with fitting humbleness, none reared wall or roof to intercept the prospect of the free country; and the student's glance was now wandering far away over the lofty ridge of hills, on which was his mountain home. A warm, rich, purple light bathed the wavy bosoms of the whole ridge, with the glories of sunset; the barren and stony soil was clothed with brilliancy and beauty; and those favoured and sheltered spots, where the pines waved their eternal verdure, alone looked gloomy, for they were spread out in deep masses of shadow, which the sunbeams that played about their edges brought out indeed, into relief, but which, to the distant observer, they could neither tint nor vary.

The features of the young student as he

life that you preserved to us, and to assure myself that his deliverer is beyond the danger over which we have all mourned."

"Nay, lady," replied the youth; "had you come to reproach me for the peril into which my precipitancy had plunged him, you would have used only your perfect right; though to one so gentle, the office might have been painful. That the noble Capponi has thus allowed you to gladden the heart of a poor invalid, and that you have spared every harsh word for my rashness, is an additional kindness, for which my gratitude is due. Had no friendly hand gathered me up from the feet of Luigi Guicciardini, an ambitious, but no very bright career had been briefly terminated. I am grateful to my Maker that I have been preserved, and next to him, to your noble house, and more especially, dear lady, am I, beyond expression, deeply and cordially grateful to yourself. Once having expressed my thanks to your excellent father, whom any citizen would have died nobly, had he

died to serve ; it will be fitting that I cease to cumber your hospitable home, lest, enjoying the state and the luxuries of this mansion, like the hero of the fable, I fancy my whole former life an unpleasant dream, and forgetting that I am a poor and unknown peasant, persuade myself that I was born a noble."

" Surely," answered the maiden, " as good a right as his own children have, you must have henceforward, to consider my father's house your home. I would not that my presence should suggest to you thoughts of so painful a nature, that you talk of thus going from us. When you are restored again to health and strength, you will be free to do your pleasure ; and if you then go, be assured that you carry with you his own and his children's blessing."

There was tenderness and a depth of feeling in the tones of the maiden, as she spoke, which was not in the words she used, and which was not lost upon the mind of her listener. With that freedom which

sprung from a guileless and pitying spirit, he raised her hand and pressed it to his lips.

“Forgive me, lady,” he said, “if any unguarded word should have made you judge my feelings other than those of gratitude and the sincerest thankfulness. Look yonder,” he continued, pointing to a spot on which the last sunbeams lingered smilingly; “upon that bare and desolate mountain-top is a cottage so small, so utterly destitute, that, probably, the kennel in which your dogs slumber would be a palace to it. In that hovel was I born and nurtured, and there still, if harm has not come to them, dwell an aged parent and a young fair creature, beautiful and tender-hearted as you are; and imagination need not be very powerful to fancy that young girl, to whom from infancy I have been as a brother, taking her stand on that spot from which this city is visible, and weeping as another sun goes down, and her brother’s steps are still not seen upon the hill. If then I ventured to mingle with my earliest thoughts, which I know should

have been of unmixed thankfulness, some remembrances of them, you will find, lady, in your heart, forgiveness for an offence so natural."

He turned his glance from the mountains to which he pointed, to the face of the maiden by his side ; and though sadness was for the moment at his own heart, and must have appeared natural if portrayed on her features, yet was he struck by the ashy paleness of her cheek, and the rapid rising of the fair bosom, which concealed a secret it was well for her no eye could penetrate.

"Are you ill, lady?" he asked, mournfully; "or are my words each more unfortunate than another, that they are destined to displease when I would most wish to ensure your favour?"

"I was wrong," she replied, "to persuade you to tarry in person when your heart is away. But I had been informed," and her voice wavered, "that you had other thoughts than of spending a youth of promise in an inactive solitude. My father's house, to my

great sorrow, has become the centre of all that is busiest and most aspiring in this city, and I thought that with the spirits you would meet here your plans might have found participators, and your boldest thoughts, agents, not perhaps as bold as yourself, yet available to your most elevated aspirings."

"You forget, lady," said the youth, "as, to say truth, I sometimes am apt to do myself, that I am unknown, and of an origin that men scorn; and that yonder mountain with its obscure cottage is the friendliest and sagest monitor I can have before my eyes. Yet, lady, you have been well informed, and I can well guess by whom. I have ambition; an ambition in whose pursuit life itself, and all the susceptibilities of this fragile tenement in which life dwells, are as willingly risked as a noble would peril his velvet robes or his week-day baubles. Yes, I have worshipped ambition—phantom as sages have called it—and never did circumstances fashion a votary with a heart more freely offered to a divinity who will claim all, or yield nothing.

I have neither name to forfeit, wealth to lose, nor family to degrade ; I have a bold heart, a courage that has never failed me, and I value my life quite as lightly as others can value it. If I have not the advantages which start others so prosperously on their fortunes, I have at least what will avail me when my career is once begun."

Whilst the young student thus spoke, his eye lighted up with enthusiasm, and as the maiden listened, the smile of a silent joy crept over her features, remote indeed from the enthusiasm of dreamy schemes for his future, but springing from emotions of a very different feeling, gathered up from the portrait of his heart which he thus unreflectingly laid bare ; and a slight and tremulous tint announced the presence of hopes which broke like a bright sunrise before her, bringing gladness, if not peace, in their train.

"You have much strength to regain," replied this fair girl, "before you can resume the labours of a calling to which you seem thus fervently devoted ; and, if I mistake not,

some great and stirring plot is at this moment thickening about us. I have urged my father to keep such rumours from you, at least until you are better fitted to mingle in their schemes ; but my advice has been overruled, for Buonarotti, our prime counsellor, has some notable plan which he designs for your enaction, thinking probably that the risking your life a second time is the most scientific manner of repairing the mischief of your first forfeit."

"I am greatly his debtor," replied the youth; "and though your sweet smile, lady, is so incredulous, his medicine may succeed more speedily than means less exciting."

"Hark! they come," exclaimed the maiden, and her colour mounted. "I am no fit auditor for their dark and selfish conclaves. Oh! do nothing," she exclaimed, eagerly, drawing nearer to where he stood, and raising her full beaming eyes till their glance met his imploringly—"do nothing which others, whose family interests might save them, shrink from ; for though they

counsel boldly, they are adroit in throwing the danger from their own shoulders ; and deeds which frighten them must be tenfold perilous for you. My father is not selfish, but he is old, and too easily overruled. We owe you too much already ; and believe me, ours is not a gratitude of sunny words and hidden snares. Adieu," she added, and with an impulse which the nearer sounds of coming steps deprived of its resistance, and partly of its embarrassment, she extended her hand at parting, and vanished with the kiss warm upon its palm, at the instant that a door opened, and a few of the most intimate friends of Niccolo Capponi entered.

There was a cloud upon the brow of the venerable citizen, although there was much warmth and tenderness in his manner, as he threw his arms about the young student's neck and embraced him.

"I sent my beloved child," said the old man, "to bear you my grateful and heartfelt thanks ; for in the life you preserved, you

conferred upon her a blessing as great as upon me."

"The Lady Eugenia Capponi has been with me, and but now left me," replied the youth; "and she bore me the kind wishes and the thanks which I should rather have given than received, for all your care and kindness. She furthermore prepared me for your honoured coming, and of one other who I see is not with you; one, however, who can have made no promise for me which I have not the will, and, I trust, in a day or two more, shall have the physical strength, to carry into deed."

"It is against my better judgment, young man," replied Capponi, "that I have consented to carry the cares and schemes of our patriots to the couch of a wounded man; but I have given way, the less reluctantly, that the deed that is contemplated requires so much of bodily exertion, that these prime movers of the plans and plots of our party may see with their own eyes that you are

too feeble for the task they would assign to you. What think you, my friends?" he continued, turning to the noble citizens grouped around him ; " are political schemes fitting subjects for the ears of one who has but just risen from a bed of sickness, and with a frame so shaken and a cheek so colourless as that ? And, above all, do you think so arduous, so perilous a deed as we have been speaking of is within the accomplishment of his physical powers ?"

An inarticulate murmur of much doubt, and then a dead silence, ensued, plainly betokening the surprise of the attendant citizens, at perceiving to how frail and reed-like a frame it had been proposed to entrust the first and most important movement in the perilous drama in which they were engaged. But there was one man amongst that small knot of daring schemers who ever accounted, and, until the last stage of his career, ever proved, that difficulty was the most powerful stimulus to success. He too, like the young student, was in the

very flower and pride of his days ; with a frame of body built as though for the toils of Atlas ; a lofty, scornful, and deeply-thoughtful brow ; a cheek already bronzed with the suns and storms of a camp life and the battle field ; yet, with somewhat of the reckless, and perhaps dissolute disregard at once of the lives of others and his own which such scenes as he had been nurtured amongst could scarcely fail of imparting. His name was a spell on the spirits of those for whose cause he combated, and it has descended to us blazoned with deeds that his country may well reckon amongst the most startling of her annals. This man was Francesco Ferrucci, the rumoured suitor of the lovely daughter of the aged citizen to whom he now spoke.

“ Our toils,” he exclaimed, with a voice whose tones were abrupt, and fell scarcely pleasantly upon the ear, “ have been well apportioned, and are too important at this hour to admit of change ; we can allow this youth three days yet to recruit his strength,

for no speed can bring Bourbon with such a force as his across the Apennines earlier. And, after all, what is the great bodily exertion needed? A quick ride of some score or two of leagues! If he but acquit himself of the remainder of his enterprise as easily as he may do of this, I will answer for our success; and a success, young man," he said, emphatically, addressing the student, "which will make your country speak of you as a brave man loves best to be spoken of—a success which will earn for you the post which, as I live, none but a brave man shall have—a command in the black bands that called John de Medici their leader, and which your return will be a signal for marshalling under my banner."

"It is more honour than any risk may claim," was the reply. "Give me but the three days, and you shall find me ready!"

In the service thus urged upon him, and thus unhesitatingly accepted, we shall shortly accompany him. Their commission

was then minutely detailed to their envoy, and the party separated.

There was an expression not altogether of satisfaction on the features of Capponi, as the imperious brow of their self-chosen leader was bent to salute him as he retired.

“That youth is impetuous, and presuming to the full extent of his abilities!” he exclaimed, after a few minutes’ musing, when alone with the student. “I had promised my daughter,” he added, thoughtfully, “that no such service should be urged upon you, my young friend, in a way to preclude your perfect freedom in its acceptance; and I fear I have scarcely kept my word. You are now compromised; and Heaven, in whose hands are all our fortunes, only knows whether the result, even if it be success, will compensate for the throwing away thus wantonly of your young life, having no stake in the parties which rule our city;—for it would be insanity to imagine that we shall do more than change our masters, and

the iron truncheon of Ferrucci may chance to be heavier on our necks than the sandal of Clement, or his Deputy Cardinal of Cortona. Did my daughter tell you of the speech whispered into my ear, by a countryman, as I left the palace, following the train that bore your bleeding body? 'You would change the old and leafless bough,' he told me, 'that waves as a sign before the tavern; but the sour wine in the old butts you would leave for our drinking, as before; and there go,' he said, pointing to the litter, 'the first fruits of your honest efforts.' The witty clown was scarcely wrong; and if the vintage corresponds with the first fruits, bitter, indeed, will be the strainings of the wine-press! They have allowed you three days," he continued, "and whatever be the result of them, let them, at least, be spent calmly amongst us. I go to meet my child, as best I may, and she will find but small proof of my discretion, in your pale face and infirm steps."

"Two days of the three," replied the

youth, " my kind friend, I will spend with you, and they must suffice to call back all the strength I shall need ; but my mother, my aged, infirm, and sorrowing parent, must surely claim one day, which may chance to be our last together. I say not this despondingly," he continued ; " if I desponded not in inaction and obscurity, judge if I am likely to do so with so glorious a scene before me ;—but that you may not see me forgetting, in the sweet and happy bosom of your family, all the cares of my past life. The friendship of the Lady Eugenia Capponi has been a star across my path, the first and therefore the most lovely that lighted a way which till then had been dark and irksome. Two more days with her and you will, doubt it not, give me new strength—ay, a new life—and herald in, in spite of your misgivings, a series of happy and proud events, which to have only contemplated at their dawning were worth more than the life devoted to their undertaking."

How those two days were spent, how

jealously their hours, nay their very minutes, were counted, it is not our present purpose to picture. It would, however, be useless to conceal the fact that the happiness or misery of a whole life was compromised in their brief space.

It was arranged that the third day was to be given, by the young student, to a visit to his parent's cottage ; and thither, in spite of his feebleness, he determined on proceeding on foot, as he had ever done before, and in the same dress with which her aged eyes were familiar ; in order that no suspicion might disturb, further than was necessary, the peace of mind which had already suffered but too much.

The first parting with the lovely and high-born maiden whose presence up to that moment had excited in his bosom no other sensation than that of unalloyed gladness, awoke an observation of surprise and doubt. The separation was, however, but for a few hours ; he was to return at nightfall, and receive his credentials for his mission,

and then to leave Florence the day following.

An early hour beheld the young student climbing the mountain, on whose summit stood his mother's dwelling. He missed now, on his approach, the slight figure whose eyes had ever of old watched his coming from afar. He came now as he had never come before, with unsteady and wearied steps, and he looked vainly for the waving of those white arms which had ever beckoned him from the regions at the mountain's base to the paradise above. He felt as he had never yet done, a craving for the snowy arms which had encircled his neck long before his midascent was achieved, and for the bounding of that childish bosom against his own which from infancy had known no thought, given birth to no feeling, which had not been reposed with a sister's confidence on his own. Dark shadows of indistinct forebodings seemed to descend to meet him, from the path she used to spring down with the step of a young

fawn. He called loudly on her name, and was mocked by the eternal echoes of the mountain, which took up his voice in harmony with its own sounds, with the moanings of the waving pine branches, the musical streamlets, and the voices of their glad birds.

The solitude was appalling, yet it nerved his wearied limbs and quickened his pace, till he stood on the summit of the mountain, and at his parent's door. The change that greeted him in that home we may well conjecture. She that had been the joy, the pride, the life of that humble dwelling, was gone, without having left a trace of her flight. His parent had suffered, and was utterly broken in mind and health, by the shock. All that he could gather from her recollections was, that she had retired to his room to watch for his coming; she had heard no sound either of voice or footstep on her cottage floor, till a few days since, when there came a noble gentleman with a lofty brow, but withal of a soft kind voice;

he had left her a purse which she had not opened. The nutriment of a fly would have sufficed to her wants ; and thus, since they parted, she had lived on, sorrowing away her mind into almost utter imbecility.

The youth Francesco passed that night in the small study in which his adopted sister had watched, the last night she passed beneath that roof. His farewell to his mother the following morning seemed to cause but little pain, and his notice of a protracted absence apparently met not her comprehension.

Shortly after sunrise, he was at the palace of Michael Angelo Buonarotti, in the Via Ghibellina. That great man, he was told, was absent, his servants knew not whither ; and the youth then turned his steps to the dwelling of Niccolo Capponi. His coming was like a soft shower after drought. But even the sweet smiles, the changing colour, the bounding bosom of the lovely daughter of that noble house, had not the power to banish the gloom that hung heavily about

his heart, and that saddened his still pale wan cheek.

That day wore away rapidly to its term ; accident had added one day more to his stay ; its evening was occupied with the necessary preparations for the morrow ; and when more exhausted than he would have ventured to confess, came the ceremonial of his farewells. It needed all his powers of self-control to bear up through that scene ; yet, worn down in strength and spirits as he was, Eugenia Capponi bore it less well. A silent pressure of the hand, a look of embarrassment and pain, passed between the maiden and the student. Niccolo Capponi folded him to his bosom.

“ You go upon a mission, my young friend,” he said, “ which, if it prosper, will soon restore you to us, full of honour, and high in your city’s favour. How cordially we shall pray for such a result to this undertaking, Heaven shall bear us witness !”

Thus finished his brief sojourn at the palace

of Niccolo Capponi. Much of his time whilst beneath its roof had necessarily been spent in the retirement of a sick chamber ; and when able to join the casual parties round their hospitable hearth, he had been so engrossed by the kindness and simple manners of that family, that he had failed to observe an incident which affected them not slightly—it was the re-appearance of the haughty and imperious Ferrucci, on the evening preceding his departure. There was something unusually cold and stern in his address on that occasion. Restraint universally accompanied his presence, and when he bent his handsome yet lofty brow to bid the maiden adieu, his salutation was met by a bearing as cold and little less commanding than his own ; and when his tall figure had passed over the threshold of the apartment, a look full of expressive meaning was exchanged between the father and his daughter.

Thus closed the evening. An hour before

sundawn, the hoofs of a single horse fell hollowly in the court-yard of the palace, and the dull sound fell on the wakeful ear of at least one person in the silent household.

## CHAPTER V.

How exquisite a volume would the varied annals of the villa of the Poggio Cajano furnish, to the curious in matters of taste and morality! Could the walls of palaces speak there would be few story-tellers whose legends would have a more mixed or more interested audience. How racy would be the transitions of its miscellaneous chapters from the grave and whimsical philosopher who met to celebrate the revived banquet of Plato, round the table of Lorenzo, to the licentious caricatures of those anti-sensuous dreamings by the Bianca Capello.

Most curious indeed is that picture which

imagination, the great and resistless magician, can at its pleasure evoke from the realm of past realities ! We should have to go back but a quarter of a century from the period of which we are writing, and we behold Pocetti upon his scaffolding, painting in fresco those charming lunettes whose colours to this day are as bright as his fame. We should see Michael Angelo, then barely entering into manhood, carving out from the inert block the wonderful models of his original genius. We should see Giulio delle Medaglione multiplying the wonders that added tenfold value to the precious gems beneath his fingers, enriching cabinets which from his day to our own have formed for the fair admirers of the belli arti links between vanity and taste. We might have seen in some of its chambers the fantastic Granacci, labouring, with as much importance as the other ministering architects of this fairy palace, upon the mock solemnities of some approaching revel. Meanwhile, flitting from chamber to chamber, was

the undignified figure, the dusk low brow, or the magnificent Lorenzo, the gentle magician for whom all laboured ; mingling in the interests and the pursuits of each and all ; tempering his address to the peculiarities of his listeners : at one time, reciting canzonets for the ear of his master of the revels ; and at another, entering into questions of criticism on the swelling limbs of undraped beauty and the sweeping robes, the dignity of lip and forehead, of those sages of antiquity whose physical portraits, lost in the wreck of ages, his imagination knew how to fashion out afresh, from the volumes which bore the impress of their immortal spirits. Till, at length, with the dust and chips of marble on his simple citizen's robes, he threw open the doors of his small library, and stood with a beaming eye, the master spirit among a group of sages :—Politian, with a genius nearest of all akin to his own, and perchance for that very reason, whilst admitted the most intimately to his familiarity, the least gravely saluted ; Pico of Miranaula

who was called the Phenix; Marsilio Ficino; and a small band of others, whose names are written with his own on the scroll of immortality.

As he enters, they arise to greet him.

Alas! that such an assembly, within so few years, should have ceased to think and live! Their cold remains were scattered far apart,—some beneath the pompous domes of temples, some in unknown, unmarked spots, in rustic burial-grounds, amongst peasants:—all sundered, all in voiceless solitude.

A new generation succeeds; Plato and his visions are forgotten; the halls are ventilated, after the musty rolls of time-eaten and mouldy manuscripts and their perusers have left them; and a new life, a new youth, introduce pursuits of a far other nature. A small band of the retainers of the house of Medici now guarded the immediate approaches to the building, and clanked their iron-sheathed swords and halbards over its once peaceful pavements; for the youth

Alessandro held his mimic court within its walls. Revels of the most licentious character, which astonished even the very soldiery in his service, wiled away the hours of this youth's initiation into the craft of government. He was prodigal of the gold wrung from the reluctant purses of the most thrifty of citizens, and there was not a trooper in those courts or stables but looked to his turn for a foray amongst the scared peasantry, as a sure source of profitable catering to the insatiate appetites of a youth of scarcely fifteen years of age.

Some unwonted annoyance, of a conjectured yet scarcely intelligible nature, had of late clouded his swarthy cheek, and rendered petulant and even savage the youthful leader of that horde of unscrupulous bandits. Many a disdainful captive had passed unheeded from his inexplicable fastidiousness, and was subjected to the outrages and appetites of a disappointed soldiery; and his purveyors began to murmur, as though deprived of an equitable and lucrative per-

quisite. Many conjectures were hazarded to account for so sudden and perverse an inconsistency; and the hints of Lorenzino de Medici, whose interests had much in common with their own, pointed to a sentinelled and jealously guarded chamber, as containing an easy solution to the mystery.

That chamber was one immediately adjoining the sleeping-room of Alessandro. Day and night a guard paced up and down before its entry; and when the youth had been known to enter it, loud screams and violent struggles had lasted through the whole term of his stay. And more than once he had come forth with the fury of a demon in his bosom, and marks of uncourteous contact upon his face, which, whilst they excited mirth within the mind of the dissolute veteran who admitted him, well nigh drove the youth himself mad with rage and ridicule.

The interior of this chamber was furnished with all that could administer to luxury, and the passions it tends to stimulate; licentious paintings, and sculpture, and books of

gross legends, and far grosser illustrations, — even the very furniture, with its unchaste and coarse devices, told but too plainly the deity to whose worship it was devoted. Barred windows admitted the light ungraciously, and thus, whilst the most degrading violence wrestled with every sense, retreat even at the peril of life and limb was cut off.

Seated upon a low stool, with her gaze fixed upon the doorway, was crouched the slight figure of the mountain girl, whose flight and capture have been narrated in a previous chapter. Her dress was of materials very different from any she had ever known before her forced entry into that abode of foulness; but its rich velvets were rent and in disorder; her long and voluminous hair, streaming from her shoulders to the ground, was tangled thickly about her, and her small white hands were clasped upon her knees. No tear was on her cheek, but round her eyes were deep, hollow, black circles, and in the orbs themselves there

was an expression of wildness and fierceness. Protected by her extreme youth, and a deep inward sorrow, the foul images about her were unheeded, or if noticed, little understood.

The day was verging towards sunset, and she had just battled through a stormy and violent interview, in which her persecutor, forgetful even of the allurements of the base passion that maddened him, had assaulted her with all the strength his youthful frame commanded. In the moment of her extremity, the maiden had snatched from her bosom the dagger whose possession she had till then most jealously hidden,—having kept it for the moment when she was resolved her life's sacrifice should free her from her peril,—and had waved it upwards as though to strike its point to her heart, when she saw the cheek of her persecutor blanch, and the malice of a demon light up his startled and baleful glance. “Alive, or dead, or dying, fool!” he muttered, “your limbs——”

He had time for no further speech; a

bound brought the hitherto shrinking maiden to his side, and the steel struck him with all the force that frail arm had the power of imparting to a blow given with a full willing hand. Uttering a groan of intense pain, her persecutor staggered to the doorway. The sentinel caught him in his arms, and still mindful of his orders, staid a minute to secure the fastenings of her prison; he then bore the youth to his own chamber, and the young maiden, agitated with her triumph, sunk back to a stool at the further end of the apartment, as we have described her.

She had not long retained this position when a sound, like the sliding away of the panelling of a part of the wainscoat, which surrounded the room for two or three feet from the floor, roused her from the musing into which she had fallen. Fearing further violence, she sprung up from her seat, determined that her own bosom should sheath the next stroke.

To her surprise a youth, of demure yet ill-omened countenance, emerged from his

lurking-place, and motioning with his finger to his lip to implore silence, whispered in a voice of the very softest tones, "Maiden, fear not! if you have courage, I will deliver you from this debasing bondage."

Catching at any hope, however suspicious, the young girl clasped her hands wildly together. "Oh, let me fly!" she exclaimed, "let me fly from this accursed chamber!— I *have* courage; for any death were far better than this."

She sprung forward towards the opening; the youth delayed her but to caution silence, and in another instant the panel had closed behind her, and they were threading a narrow and masked passage in utter darkness.

The fugitive felt her hand grasped; the pressure was more significant than mere guidance rendered necessary; yet though trembling in every limb, and alive to every suspicion, she offered no resistance. Their flight for some minutes was as speedy as circumstances would admit, and then was suddenly arrested, and she could perceive that

her leader was feeling for the descent of stairs. They had scarcely found them, and she was about to advance, when the sound of steps fell upon her ear so vividly that she imagined them in the very same passage with herself; and presently she heard a rough growling voice, almost at her very ear, exclaiming, in tones that mingled strangely with the clang of steel harness—"Heigho, friend Concolo, prince of the chained ankles and branded back, send hither your master! his highness needs his honourable company."

"My master," exclaimed a voice in reply, "is within, in his chamber, and I will make known his Highness's pleasure; but hark you, you foul-mouthed ravisher, if you don't wish to be answered next time with a few inches of my pocket-knife, teach your tongue fairer speech. It has drunk better blood than yours before now, and for a slight provocation."

"I nothing doubt it, sweet bravo," said the first speaker, "and will do so again; but

do: my bidding, and we will be more cautious hereafter."

At this moment the maiden felt her hand released from the grasp of her conductor, and presently a door opened within a few paces of her. The light from a chamber, on whose windows the last rays of the sun were falling, penetrated her retreat, and she perceived the slight figure of her guide glide swiftly into it; the door then closed as noiselessly as it had opened, and she was again in darkness. She listened, and could distinctly hear the voice of the youth, in earnest whispering with one of the speakers who had first disturbed her. The name of Lorenzino, who she now felt convinced had been her deliverer, awakened no increased confidence. What she heard, however, threw no light upon his intentions or her ultimate destination.

"If I join you not before dark, lead her —" and her most breathless listening could not catch the next few syllables— "and I will assuredly join you there," he added more audibly.

A series of doors then opening and shutting announced the separation of the speakers, and no further voice, step, or breathing, reached her. An hour which seemed an age was then allowed to pass away; no fresh step had broken the stillness. When, nearly worn out with suspense and weariness, she was meditating an attempt to find the door, it suddenly again opened, a dark broad form filled up its space, and a voice harsh, grating, and sepulchral, whispered to her to join him.

“What have you got, child,” he asked, “to repay a man for risking his neck to set you free?”

“I have nothing,” was the reply, “save my prayers, daily and nightly, for your behalf.”

“Come along, child,” he answered; “we can see to that when the doors are past. Say no more, but keep behind me; but stay,” he added, “here is a weapon, a fair-hilted toy of Lorenzino’s, with a blade like a serpent’s tongue. It is never too early to learn to strike; and now move on.”

Her new guide moved in darkness as confidently as other men move in broad daylight, and withal with a footfall soft and noiseless as that of a cat. The stair-head was found, and descended; another and another flight followed, all of which were constructed between two walls, so narrow as barely to admit their persons, and without aperture through which, at least at that hour, a single gleam of light could penetrate.

A door at the edge of the last step yielded to a key which revolved so noiselessly, that even the maiden was not aware what delayed them. Utter darkness was still about them. Another exit let them out from this chamber; and she perceived, by the cool fresh air that blew upon her face, that she was out of the building.

Her first impulse was to fly, but the heavy dull pace, and the clanging arms of a sentry, evidently at no great distance, suppressed so rash a movement. It was well for her that she paused in time, for she was not, as she imagined, beyond the limits of the building.

The dark, square walls of a quadrangle rose on every side of the court, and on one of them the piled arms indicated the quarters of the guard. Loud laughter and snatches of ribald song broke upon the alarmed senses of the maiden, as she followed closely upon the heels of her conductor, whose dark form moved on without hesitation. He passed under a dark archway, which led to a range of offices, and emerged into a second court. The measured tread of the sentinels was still heard in contrary directions, and to her surprise, it was directly across the beat of one of them that her guide now bent his steps.

The simple child of a solitary home little knew that the fluttering dress of a woman was ever a sufficient passport with the outposts of that dwelling. Scarcely a night but fresh challenges admitted them within its gates, and opened to cast them forth as refuse, when they had sated the various appetites, to which, in privileged gradations, like broken viands, they had admi-

mistered, from the table of the prince, to the mess of the guard-room, and the scramble of the stalls. The sentry, across whose path they were now moving, stopped on his beat, to cast a look of disdain both upon the girl and her conductor, allowed them to open and pass forth from the wicket of his guard, and then at last they stood free upon the open plain.

Once more the fleet limbs of the maiden prepared for flight, but the memory of her first sad failure, and her utter ignorance of the country, at once shewed the imprudence of the attempt. There appeared no hope but in a temporary obedience to the directions of her leader; and he now struck out with a quick pace into the open country. Her back once turned upon that hateful abode, no journey could weary her, no pace be too quick for her impatience.

The course he took was towards the foot of the hill on which stood the Villa of Cajano. A busy and neat village now borders the road which leads to Florence; in

those days cornfields, separated from the highway by a bank topped with reeds, lay immediately below the mansion. A bright starry heaven was above their heads, and the balmy air of an advanced spring breathed bracingly, yet not rudely, over her worn and shaken frame. A thrill of joy passed through her when she perceived that, after making a considerable circuit, their path fell into some general and beaten road ; and small as was the chance at such an hour of any wayfarer straying thither, hope still upheld her. It was possible that relief might be at hand, as long as they kept to the common roadway ; and once, indeed, she fancied she could hear the sounds of a horse's gallop not very remote from them ; and so apparently thought her guide, for he paused and bent his head to listen.

No word passed between them ; he again moved on, and the young girl now observed that their pace was greatly quickened ; they still, however, kept along the common highway, and as it occasionally

winded aside to avoid the natural obstacles of elevated ground or sedgy swamp, a distant glimmer caught her notice, and to it evidently their course was directed. Every step brought her nearer to it, and it was apparent that it was no accidental light, but the signal marking out the whispered spot at which Lorenzino was to meet her.

A few minutes of the rapid pace at which they moved brought her to an old and seemingly ruinous building,—half fortress, half farm,—which stood a few hundred yards aside from the road they had come; and was surrounded by a clump of ancient and gloomy cypresses. The maiden perceived, as she drew nearer, that a horse already saddled stood fastened to the iron window frames, and presently the figure of a young man emerged from the shadow of a deep recess, and stood across their path.

A signal notified the approach of the guide, and the young Lorenzino de Medici, her captor and her deliverer, stood beside her.

“I have been as good as my word, fair maiden,” he said. “You must be wearied with your night walk, and the fears that haunt the fugitive. . . Come in, and if I cannot offer you spiced wines, and the report of my libertine cousin, I can at least find you wherewith to appease hunger, and perchance a bed to rest your delicate and over-wearied limbs.”

If the youth meant mischief, it was surely never harbingered by a manner more placid or tones of voice more equable. Reluctant as the young girl was to enter a second time beneath a roof in company she had such small reason for confiding in, she still felt that her position could scarcely be worse within the ruined and robber like building than it had been in the mansion from which she had escaped. Lorenzino spoke and promised fairly, and she had yet to learn the unchaste motives that interested him at no small personal risk, in her favour.

A low Gothic archway admitted her into a vast, damp chamber, whose only furniture

scattered a few ghastly busts and chalk models, which had probably been discarded from the studios of the villa of the magnificent Lorenzo, and whose only tenants seemed some score of bats and birds that love damp and darkness, and rats and reptiles that share the inheritance of man's works.

Lorenzino bore in his hand a brass lamp, which he held down near the broken and unripped pavement, casting the light before her steps, and warning her of the many inequalities against which he had himself staggered. The manners of this young man, which in his after-life mystified a whole people, were now studiously calm and frank, not intruding more attention than a young country girl might be supposed to need, or than one whose delicacy had but recently been so atrociously outraged might be supposed to receive without rousing suspicion.

From the gloomy and ample hall by which they had entered, he led her through a chamber equally ruined and similarly tenanted, and pushing open a door at its

extremity, ushered her into the only room which retained any appearance of comfort or habitation.

One extremity of this chamber contained a bed, and opposite to it was a table spread with food and wine, and two seats. Lorenzino closed the door behind him, and led her to the upper end of the room. Pale and scared, she obeyed mechanically, for there was a power of control in the calm, orderly, yet decided manner of her young conductor, which, whilst it by no means inspired confidence or allayed her apprehension, still compelled her to submit.

“ You must need refreshment, maiden,” he observed, as he placed her at the table. “ eat, ay! and drink wine also, for you may have occasion for a hasty flight before daybreak. You will easily believe that the deed you have done is not likely to be passed over as if you had struck an insipid clown. It was rumoured, as I learned from Cajano, that you had slain him; but it matters little, for he well earned it!”

“ He did well earn it ! ” replied the maiden, setting down a goblet of wine, of which she had drunk not sparingly ; “ he did infinitely well earn it ! ” and her eyes flashed wildly as she spoke ; “ but he is not hurt, far less is he slain. Would to heaven that my power had been equal to my will ! I know that the cowardly boy still lives, and that you have seen him since I left his accursed dwelling ! Beware ! this weak arm may not be so sluggish in defending me another time ! ”

Astonished, and for an instant thrown off his guard, the eyes of Lorenzino turned to the goblet from which she had drunk, and then to her excited and glowing countenance.

A bright crimson spot burned like a living fire in the centre of each cheek ; a black hollow circle surrounded her eyes, adding to the blaze and the prominence of the flashing orbs themselves ; and the remainder of her face, her brow and neck, literally glittered like snow from the contrast. Her glance was intently fixed upon him, and she ap-

peared to watch like a tiger for the certifying of some dark suspicion, to dart at her throat. Lorenzino was less of a coward than his cousin, but he began to fear that he had evoked a spirit whose presence was full of peril, and whose expulsion was beyond his power ; for slight and youthful was that young girl's figure, her late severe and well-nigh maddening trials had kindled frenzy within her fiery spirit, which made her as prompt to act as she was fearless of consequences.

The rapid glance of Lorenzino to the goblet had not escaped her, and probably conscious of some high stimulant which made her blood and brain dance within her, she bent every effort of remaining consciousness to repel the singular and fearful effects which she began to feel operating within her. Lorenzino had not withdrawn his eyes from her changing countenance ; he had too well noted the first access of rage which had attended the working potion, and he continued trusting to the stupifying i

fluence with which he knew it must be succeeded. Gradually he perceived drowsiness relaxing her features, and the unfortunate girl began to feel numbness creeping through her flesh; her eyelids became heavy and stiff, and the long, dark lashes more than once drooped over the still sparkling and languid eyeball. To the very last, as long as its powers lasted, her glance was upon him; and though its fires became gradually dimmed, it retained the power to make him cautious, and to keep him motionless. There was, in the confidence with which the youth, hypocrite and libertine as he was, now contemplated the gradual drooping of his victim's strength, and the quivering of her eyelids, as they fell and rose each time more languidly, a species of satisfaction which mastered his impatience, and strengthened though it dallied with his passions.

Remote as they were from any human habitation, or any chance of surprise, the house itself inhabited by himself and his

menial only, he felt that his prey was in the net, and that though it might flutter feebly as he extended his hand to seize it, such efforts were the last, as brief as they must be useless.

By degrees her lashes drooped more frequently, and were lifted less lightly. She made a movement nearer to the table, folded her arms, and laid down her head upon them to take her rest. When the head breathing proved beyond a doubt the efficacy of the drugs she had swallowed, a smile broke over the tured brow of Lorenzino as he approached, and insinuated his arms gently round her slender waist.

“ You are mine, my fair one ! ” he whispered ; “ mine, past struggle and past help. We will give this taper form, these flexible limbs, and this young bosom, a more suitable resting place than this hard table ! ”

The helpless girl gave no signs of consciousness ; her arms fell to her side, and her head drooped upon her bosom, as he raised her. Her senses were not, however, as

had imagined, wholly overpowered ; a few minutes more had inevitably rendered her resistless, feelingless, unconscious, as a stone ; and Lorenzino, though endowed with more than the craft of manhood, had yet but the sinews and force of green years, and slight as her figure was, it yet required all his exertions to lift her as he attempted. The pressure of his arms roused her from her stupor ; a momentary glimpse of consciousness flashed through her brain ; the shock was violent, and its effect appalling. Every scene through which she had passed within the last few days swept like a whirlwind of flame across her brain. Her features swelled, her eyes protruded with alarming wildness from their orbits, and the powers as well as the incoherence of a maniac burst like a thunderbolt over her.

The arms of the youth were flung from her like withered reeds ; she darted upon him, swung him from the earth above her head, and dashed him to the floor of the apartment, where he lay without sense or

motion. A wild laugh rung out over him—what might well seem a fitting knell for such a doom. She then seized the small lamp, which still burned dimly beside the half-drained goblet, and tossed it among the bed-clothes. In a minute more the whole room was one universal blaze.

Roused by the violent concussion of the falling body against the floor, Concolo, his grim guide, (that monster of a thousand crimes and one virtue,—if so may be named the most devoted love, the most unquestioning obedience to the merest wish, of the boy he had held upon his knee in infancy,) burst into the room. The thin and spectre-like figure of the maiden darted past him as he entered, and laughing, wailing, and shrieking by turns, she fled away through the darkness.

The old building glowed like a vast furnace, rolling forth from every aperture vast columns of hissing flame, and tossing its luminous gusts of fire through the darkness as the drier and lighter materials of the

stables and outhouses became ignited. With the blood gushing from his ears and mouth, Lorenzino de Medici was borne through the flames; the blazing rafters of the roof crashed behind him, and his faithful attendant stumbled more than once over the flaming brands that were whirled about him. The wild shrieks and the more startling laughter of the maniac maiden still fell upon his ears, as the light that shone about him made his efforts and his peril equally apparent.

Depositing the body of the senseless boy at a distance from the flaming ruins, he again entered them; and seeking out the stable, blindfolded the horse, which he had but lately fed and tended, led him out over the embers, and, placing his burden before him, leaped into the saddle, and turned his head in rapid flight across the country away from Cajano, which he knew before long would have poured out its troopers to the spot.

## CHAPTER VI.

SPRING was verging into summer, and every tree, plant, and flower was rejoicing in the fulness of its promise. The hills smiled with their innumerable olives, the valleys waved with corn, and the heart of the husbandman was glad, for before him all around him was the promise of abundance. But these who lived in the cities of Italy had other hopes than the harvest of the vintage, and fears from which bright sun and a teeming soil had no power to relieve them. From the towns and plains of Lombardy, for so long the great battle-field of the Christian powers, each day brought

desolating rumours to the cities further south. But when the sad tidings came floating downwards, of the death of John de Medici at Governuola, and of the scattering of his famous Bande Nere, all further barrier seemed swept away from the path of the desolating torrent, which, rolling down with the impetuosity and ravage of the hurricane, threatened the whole land with ruin.

It was in the first days of May, and the hills and valleys of the Apennines literally swarmed with men-at-arms and their attendant followers, the vultures and sharks of all armies, rapacious gleaners in the great harvest of plunder. Never since the days of the Carthaginian had these rugged mountains beheld so miscellaneous a herd of nations, and their various costumes and weapons, as was formed by the thousands of unprincipled marauders who now crowded under the standard of Charles of Bourbon. Adventurers from every nation which acknowledged the wide sway of Spain; the sweepings of the armies of Italy; hordes of

those wandering and unattached brigands who were known by the expressive appellation of Bisognos; in short, all who had a mind to join in a bold adventure, daily poured into the track of that rapid and irregular march, which, halting for no one, turning aside for no impediment, scorning all the unimportant considerations of commissariat, presented the stirring spectacle of every man in a general race of plunder; German, Spaniard, Sicilian, Fleming, and Bisogno, striving who should follow nearest to that mighty robber, of whom the eyes of all Christendom were fixed in wonder and dismay.

The vanguard had reached the confines of Tuscany and the Romagna, and then for the first time paused to doubt. It was not from fear, nor was it from any scruples of late visitation of conscience; but, in truth, two fair cities, tempting and rich, and abounding in all their hearts coveted, lay spread out below them. Had they both been laid in the same line of march, there would

have been no question of their route ; but the Arno separated two lines of country, whose capitals were far remote, and it became at once apparent that one or other, Florence or Rome, must be abandoned. So fully was this understood by each of these unfortunate cities, that it was on the lips of every one, that the ruin of one was the only chance of safety for the other.

The halt they now came to served the double purpose of affording time for considering well before their decision became irrevocable, and of allowing the straggling bands to fall together. Accordingly, the imperial standard, once planted, became the point of rendezvous to the forces of these adventurers ; and Bourbon himself, the sternest disciplinarian in Christendom when need required, blushed as he beheld assembling about his banners the ragged marauders belonging to no one ; dark-visaged ruffians, speaking all tongues, scarred in all wars, wielding all weapons, and thirsting with the passions of demons after every species of

rapine and violence to which their rebel leader hourly promised to cheer them on in their march.

They had had artillery in their outset, but it was soon found no easy matter to convey it, at the pace at which the army moved, up the mountains. The difficulty was suggested to Bourbon, in reply to his continued orders for increased speed. The remonstrance was not palatable; he paused, and after a few seconds' musing, answered with a smile of irony and mortification—"Leave it! you will find that also where you are going."

The cannon was accordingly left, or rather, like everything else which cumbered their march, was hurled over the precipices of Alp or Apennine, till the whole array became in that admirable state of marching order which moved with the velocity of a torrent, and trusted to the daily seizure of distant villages to administer to their wants. They, in effect, carried nothing save a few tattered and weather-beaten banners, heaps of rusty armour, and their weapons.

This singularly constituted force halted, as we have said, on the brow of the last range of mountains which looks down on the Val d'Arno ; and here Bourbon resolved to wait till at least the nearest of his straggling bands should join him, in order that a council of war might then be held to decide on his final movements.

Every hour brought up hordes nothing willing, to say truth, to be left behind, to the retribution of outraged peasants. It was about noon, the heat was intense, and that morning before sunrise De Bourbon had been in the saddle. His tent was already pitched, and the heavier part of his armour was laid aside. Gifted by nature with an iron frame, which no fatigue could subdue, it would appear that the intense toil of such a march under a blazing sun was undergone with impunity.

As he stood leaning upon his long sword, watching the arrival of his ragged regiments, the sweat stood in bubbles upon his brow, and his body was bent till the floating plumes

nearly touched his sword's hilt. His countenance was drawn, and the paleness of weariness and thirst contrasted strangely with the dark bronzed tint which the sun of an Italian May had burned into his cheek.

Troop after troop wheeled into view, and banner after banner took their stations on the plateau marked out for this rallying place. By his side stood Philibert de Chalons, Prince of Orange, a young man of about eight-and-twenty years of age, of laughing eye, blonde cheek, and a mien of reckless gaiety, which triumphed over fatigue and suffering, and communicated itself to his sterner and haughtier companion.

Many a merry jest was passed at the expense of the assembling bands ; the haughty brow of the Constable was unbent, and he looked upon the irregular and unsoldier-like scrambling of his warriors with an indulgence which a spectacle of the kind rarely experienced from him. The platform became crowded ; the confusion increased ; horses and men quarrelled for a resting-place ; when

the gaze of the leader was diverted from the *mêlée* to the approach of a scout, who, urging his horse to no commodious speed, dashed through the crowds, into his presence, and announced the coming of Don Carlos della Noia, the Viceroy of Naples, who claimed separate quarters for a small body of men-at-arms, his personal escort.

An expression of annoyance settled upon the brow of de Bourbon as the tidings were announced to him. "Philibert," he exclaimed to the Prince, "see and get these rascals into some sort of order before this pompous Fleming comes amongst us. What can he mean by journeying hither to meet us?"

"He bears your Grace, no doubt, a message from his Holiness, the Pope," was the reply. "The Don has been of late in the Eternal City himself, and, probably, thinks we bring too numerous a troop of guests to the repast he there saw spread out for us."

"By St. Denis," said the arch-robber, "we have an ill name in France, and our

estates of Bourbon, so lovingly given up to us by our fair cousin at Pavia, are little likely to be of much profit; one or other of these good cities, whichever be the richest, must and shall, with Heaven's aid, be sacked to supply our treasury. The Don must travel with a heavy exchequer, to buy our ruffians northwards again. Bid his Highness join us at his convenience," he added, to the emissary; "his wishes are law with us; and, hark! Orange," he said, in a lower tone, "muster our honourable knights to council; it will be curious to see how the soldiers of the Bisogno will be edified by his Holiness's paternal advice."

The two leaders of the host separated; Bourbon to busy himself for the resuming his march at an hour's notice, and the Prince of Orange to obtain some appearance of order, and to summon together whatever leaders of name or command might aspire to a voice in the direction of the force.

A broad circular space was marked out around the tent of Bourbon, and a band of

personal attendants, picked men, of iron frames, and the stature of giants, men bronzed by campaigns beneath blazing suns till they became vivid images of the warriors of Palestine, was appointed to keep off the unceremonious crowds of craving soldiery, amongst whom a sensation of no satisfactory nature had been produced by the rumoured arrival of a general of the Emperor, without whose consent it was presumed this expedition had been planned and was carried on.

Preceded by an imposing escort of cuirassiers, whose glittering steel corslets and admirable equipments contrasted singularly with the rusty and broken armour of the hungry-looking and irregular multitudes, came the Emperor's friend, Don Carlos, Duke della Noia, Viceroy of the kingdom of Naples. His small band of highly disciplined veterans cast many a look of covetous curiosity upon the free bands of their lawless countrymen, who thronged about them to announce their destination, and gather tidings of the City of Promise.

Stern, haughty, and rigid, as though he were formed of the very same material in which he was encased, came the soldier of a life of battles. His cheek was burned to a colour nearly as dark as an African's ; his swart beard, as it fell over the collar of his cuirass, seemed scarcely darker. His look of disgust and scorn, as he glanced from troop to troop of the ragged brigands herding confusedly about his path, was not lost upon those about him.

When the summit of a small knoll was gained, which commenced the plateau on which the force of Bourbon was assembled, this iron veteran halted his men. A score or two of lances rapidly cleared a space sufficient for his purpose, and a trumpet was sent to announce his arrival. Greatly to the annoyance of this arrogant representative of royalty, a messenger brought him word that the rebel prince of the blood-royal of France, the Constable de Bourbon, would receive him within his tent. A stern struggle of pride and necessity, whose workings were

sufficiently manifest on every lineament of his dusk features, passed through his mind, during the few seconds that he sat motionless in his saddle without deigning a reply. Mastering, however, his feelings, whatever they might be, he at last put his steed slowly into motion, and rode, attended by a single officer, to the tent of Bourbon. His stern order in thus separating himself from his troop was, that no intercourse be held, either by word or sign, between them and the main body of the adventurers.

As far only as the entry of his tent De Bourbon advanced to meet him. Every trace of displeasure and suspicion had passed away from the handsome and lofty features of that bold warrior, and he now received his guest with the unceremonious and frank greeting of a brother-in-arms, yet with much of the courteous warmth for which his nation was not less then than now celebrated.

“You are welcome to our wild host, most noble Don Carlos,” said the Frenchman; “your coming may cause some show

of order amongst your countrymen, for, to say truth, most of them that honour me leading have as little discipline as ducats. You have, doubtless, come to shew us the way to mend our case in both particulars."

"I come neither to meddle with their wants nor their supplies, noble Duke," said the Fleming; "their discipline I have ever heard to be more the thought of their leaders than themselves. As for their finances, soldiers' purses, my Lord Duke, as we have both known before now, are seldom weighty. Your followers seem, as far as I could observe whilst passing amongst them, to have coined their cannon into money. Or have they," he asked, with a sneer, "dispatched them, with their other light and more valuable baggage, in advance?"

"Faith," replied the Frenchman, "I think it likely the guns and the baggage may be found together; and should your Highness come across them, you will do well to seize them for the Emperor's service."

vice. But in the meantime, if you have ought of consequence to advise us, we have our knights and gentlemen in presence to receive your wishes."

La Noia cast his eyes about the circle of assembled leaders of this ribald host, and, to his surprise, beheld and recognised many nobles and warriors with whom he had served in campaigns and battles without number; and in all probability, had his own career been less gilded by the lucky accidents which fall to the lot of few in a soldier's life, his chance would have been cast amongst them.

"I had little thought, my noble brothers-in-arms," said the stern veteran, relaxing from his reserve, "as I made my way with so much difficulty amongst your riotous and disorderly rout, that look more like galley-slaves than the soldiers of our Lord the Emperor, to have found so many noble gentlemen amongst their leaders; and I am yet at a loss to comprehend the utter scorn

of all discipline amongst them. Were it not that the fame of our noble profession is perilled in their persons, their present plight would be rather ludicrous than aught else. But passing over such matters, I am in hopes, my Lords, that the tidings I bear, and the arrangements I have made in my Emperor's name with his Holiness, may, in some sort, give time and means for rectifying the errors."

The last words of this very innocent good wish excited a sensation which passed like electricity around the circle of his listeners. The Prince of Orange alone received the announcement with a smile. Pledged, as he knew were the most solemn promises,—nay, the very hopes of rescue from utter beggary, of all that eager crowd of pennyless leaders,—it would have been difficult, indeed, to one who could look calmly on, and contrast the pompous manner and the cool assumption of the Sicilian dignitary, with the bankrupt nervousness of his audience, to

have witnessed this scene without a feeling of amusement. There was no smile, however, upon the brow of the Constable.

“Craving your Grace’s pardon for interrupting you thus early,” said the chief, with much impetuosity, “I am unwilling that these noble gentlemen about me should, during your communication, suffer pain from imagining, whilst I listen with that patience which courtesy requires, that the promises I have made them are about to be brought into doubt or question.”

A murmur of applause succeeded this open avowal of an unchangeable purpose ; and La Noia was allowed again to resume his communication.

“With the promises your Grace has made to these noble and needy gentlemen, my Lord, I presume not to meddle ; and indeed, as I assume not to have been made acquainted with their nature, there is the less danger of my purposely interfering with them. Charged as I have been by my Imperial Master with the care of the government of

Lower Italy, I have lately found it to his Majesty's interests, in conjunction with the noble Lord Don Ugo di Moncada, Marquis of Pescara, to proceed further against the temporal ruler of our holy church than one of a delicate conscience would, but under imperative necessity, willingly consent to do. Having, then, shut up his Holiness in the Castle of St. Angelo, and possessed ourselves of his palace and the free entry to his city, we were enabled to persuade him to a fitter sense of the church's interests; and he eventually subscribed to certain terms of agreement with the noble leaders of our forces, and with me in behalf of our Sovereign Lord, Don Carlos the Fifth, whom heaven long prosper. The purport of this convention, my Lords, as it may materially tend to influence your movements, I will, with permission, proceed to lay before you."

"Tush! my Lord Duke," exclaimed De Bourbon, abruptly; "what have your conventions to do with our present purpose? Clement offended you, and you entered his

city, and there stayed till you thought fit to leave it. These tidings we had from our couriers before we left Bologna; and the ins and outs of the business have lost all zest for us. We shall expedite our affairs more to our satisfaction now that you have made us aware of your entertaining adventure, if you will listen to our only present subject of doubt, and then honour us with your good counsel,—which, as one practised in these wars, and possessing, no doubt, an intimate knowledge of the cities which lay somewhere away in the smiling country below us, may be of singular service to your Emperor, and of no small personal convenience to this host of gallant, honourable, and somewhat impoverished gentlemen.”

Thunderstruck by so bold an interruption and daring questioning of what he had announced as his Emperor's pleasure, the Fleming cast a look about him, as though doubting whether sentiments so disloyal could meet with sympathy in the bosoms of those about him. As for the speaker

himself, he was one in whom, after all, he had little right to expect aught but a traitor's counsel.

“ You bear his Majesty's commission, and I have also the honour of doing,” replied the astonished Viceroy; “ and though I have been only instructed that the general tenor of your Grace's orders were to counteract the views of the army of the League, and I am, consequently, wholly unenlightened as to what you can propose by a speed which far more resembles a flight than any order of military enterprise, I am still fully aware that, in furthering your views, I am obeying the will of my master. Your Grace has only to point out in what my advice can assist you, and I am quite ready to afford it.”

“ To propose, then, our doubts to a very simple solution, my good Lord,” said the Bourbon: “ this gallant army has hurried thus far, and arrived in the plight you were pleased to remark upon, for the purpose of seizing by assault, and sacking, o

or other—if both be out of the question—of the cities of Rome or Florence ; and we pray of your Highness's experience to inform us which of the two will conduce the more essentially to the purposes of the Emperor, seeing that both of the said cities have joined the League ; and further, which of them offers the best means of compensating these worthy gentlemen for their hasty and uncomfortable march. It is but reasonable to add, that our prepossessions are in favour of a visit to his Holiness."

" Had your Grace listened to me to an end some few minutes since," said La Noia, " I was about to satisfy you that I have myself come but now from Rome, and that, on certain conditions highly advantageous to his Imperial Majesty, I have undertaken to avert the scourge of such an army as this from that city. If you are, indeed, so straitened for the aids and appliances of march and maintenance, and nothing less than the sackage of a city will suffice to the present state of the Emperor's

finances, and the discipline of his forces, I can only add, that I am not aware that his sacred word is pledged, either by himself or his deputies, to consult in any degree the convenience of the pampered and riotous city of Florence."

"Well, noble gentlemen, knights, and brothers-in-arms," said the Constable, "you have heard the suggestion of our Emperor's Viceroy, to seize and sack the capital of the plebeian republic. It contains, I doubt not, a remedy for most of our evils, and promises a speedier term to our march. It is matter of supreme indifference to Charles de Bourbon which it be. Do you think of it, my Lords!"

At this moment, and whilst a murmur of the amicable conflict of opinions respecting the choice of one of two nearly equally good things was busy within the tent, tidings were whispered in the ear of the young Prince of Orange, and by him communicated to De Bourbon. The eloquent glance of the latter brightened with an expression

of mixed joy and humour, as he exclaimed aloud—

“ Usher him in ! usher him in, man, with all speed ! Hark ye, gentlemen,” he continued, “ we have a visiter to our camp who may throw some further light upon the wisdom of our choice ; an emissary, if I understand aright, from the reverent burghers of Florence on their own account.”

All eyes were fixed in eager curiosity upon the entry of the tent, expecting to see some comfortable citizen in his warm civic robes,—the creditor perchance of half the hungry nobles whose all was in this last venture, and who reasonably might be expected to point to the Eternal City, as his only chance of ever again seeing the ducats he had in an evil hour been persuaded to part with.

To the astonishment of the assembled council of warriors, a young man, scarcely out of boyhood, splashed with travel stains from head to foot, staggering with fatigue, with a face on which there existed not a

trace of the very faintest colour, yet withal of a shrewd, calm aspect of eye and brow, and a bearing which no presence of noble, whether warrior or robber, could abash, was led up to the Duke de Bourbon, and his errand—"Private communication from the citizens of Florence"—was announced.

The Duke, and indeed most of those around him, were struck by his extreme youth, and even more by the deplorable state of fatigue with which he was struggling.

"Bring the lad refreshment," said the Constable, "if our camp possess any; you can pursue your deliberations in the interval, and decide also, if so please you; and when the youth regains his powers of speech, we will hear whether his citizens object to the advice of the noble Viceroy."

The murmuring, accordingly, still continued, without any heed of the presence of the youthful emissary from the city,—the lives, liberties, and honour of whose sons and daughters were discussed by one of the

ar codes of morality. A crust  
d some diluted spirit recruited  
rces of the young Florentine,  
few minutes' conversation with  
f Orange, who held in his hand  
als, De Bourbon made a signal  
and then asked if they were  
receive the tidings from the  
he Tuscan republic? A general  
consent was the reply; and the  
then, turning to the youth with  
nien of indifference and banter  
had maintained throughout, and  
far to convince those who best  
that his own mind was fully made  
him if he bore any useful advice  
govern an over-numerous army  
quarters within the city.

it be your Highness's pleasure to  
pitality," replied the youth, who,  
er may have already conjectured,  
esco the student, and who now  
with a look of arch simplicity  
ed the gravity of Philibert of

Orange, and was not without its effect upon the brow of De Bourbon, "I trust, we should be able to give you that welcome which would be most suitable to so honourable and chivalrous a following. The citizens of Florence, hearing by daily rumours that your Grace was in direct march for Rome, were anxious, notwithstanding their domestic troubles,—harassed as they are by the griping avarice of his Eminence of Cortona, their crops preyed upon by the legions of the League, and their exchequer drained by the exactions of the Medici,—could not fail to direct their attention to so numerous a force of noble warriors, and to send timely warnings of the straits which must inevitably befall them, should their march be directed through the states of the republic, impoverished as I have described them."

"By all the saints, young man, you could not raise a bugbear greater than the phantom of poverty and empty purses; and, to listen to your tale, the burghers of Florence are scarcely richer than ourselves; in which

a better credit in Christendom  
it."

"dit, my Lord Duke," replied  
s by no means small, as many  
able leaders of this host may  
eir actual exchequer is scarcely  
at of his Holiness. In addition  
beg to suggest that the army of  
es encamped within a stone's  
walls, provided with all the fur-  
that an army needs, and that  
ance to prove as great a nuisance  
e as they have long been to the  
they would therefore hint the  
always with deference to your  
ent, of hastening, as much as  
journey to Rome."

y knightly faith," exclaimed the  
the burghers of Florence have  
essenger that may teach us better  
e it has yet been our fortune to  
excepting his Grace Don Carlos  
the very essence of diplomacy.  
and God's speed if we go on our

way in peace, and the army of the League well furnished with all the equipments for war, about our ears, if we tarry or turn aside in our march. This youth's wit may quicken your counsels, my Lords!" eyeing the countenance composed and somewhat humorous countenance of the youthful emissary with a glance between which warriors and leaders were wont to quail. Don Carlos della Noia could no longer curb his passion.

"Who or what is this youth?" he exclaimed disdainfully. "From whom does he bring credentials? or what right have we in the rabblement of this city to send embassies to princes and gentlemen in his Majesty's commission? There are noblemen, my Lords, in Florence allied to the blood-royal of France, the family of his Holiness, the lawful governors of this unruly commonalty; and if advices are to be sent, it is fitting that the emissary should be *theirs*. Who is this boy, that comes here with his story of the army of the League? an army, be it so called, disposable at his Holiness's will, and which

consequently, were it even as formidable as he who has probably never looked upon an armed array before would fain represent it, can do nothing to oppose forces acting in convention with Pope Clement. Were I one of this host, my Lord, my voice should be, to carry your banner to the Palace of the Priori ; to go where, if there be some risk, there may be also some hope of glory. Tell us, young man, who heads this army of the League, and of whom it is composed, that a threat of it should turn aside an array like this ?”

“ Your Highness,” replied Francesco, “ can scarcely be ignorant that our citizens sympathize little with the forces of that convention ; nor can it have escaped your hearing that Francesco Maria, Duke d’Urbino, is its leader. The forces, if I am well informed, are the same which, under their late leader, John de Medici, discomfited, nay, utterly routed, the lances of Bayard and the legions of France, when fell that noble knight and mirror of chivalry.

And as such I thought myself not presuming too far in hinting that a needy city guarded by such a power, might offer a less tempting prize than an open country, thick peopled by busy and opulent cities, the treasury of the Pontiff, and the residence of the wealthiest citizens in Europe."

"Under favour, gentlemen," exclaimed De Bourbon, abruptly, "in the reasoning of this youth, excepting, perchance, the chapter of the poverty, there is much wisdom and fit matter for our guidance. The army of the League, my Lord Viceroy, is by no means a subject of contempt; we remember well the deeds of their bands, and their late gallant leader, Bigrasso, Garlasco, and elsewhere; and though we have no more objection than others to fighting when it comes in our way, yet, if the truth must be confessed, fighting is at this moment only a secondary pleasure and altogether subservient to the prime and indispensable object of replenishing an exchequer which has suffered overmuch

these wars and marches. Fighting is not likely at any time to be beyond the reach of those who dwell in this land, and, for ought I know, Clement may do as many of his predecessors have done before him, and give us glory as well as tribute. But as we are wasting time, of which we have least of all to spare, let us speak frankly with this ambassador from our calculating and good friends of Florence. You have been, no doubt, young man," he continued, addressing Francesco, "commissioned to drive a fair bargain with us, and to subscribe to reasonable terms. We quite well perceive, as it is necessary to enhance the price of our services, that if we once turn our steps to the Vatican, the army of the League decamps from before the walls of Florence, and your citizens once more send the Medici on one of their periodical travellings. Now, if we are willing to do this, and to help you to the unmolested enjoyment of self government, it is not unreasonable to expect some few thousand ducats to speed us on our march."

“My Lord Duke,” replied the youth  
“it would be an ungenerous thing to deny  
that any cause which relieved our state  
from so grievous a burden as an army of  
so many thousand hungry Lombards, Swiss  
and Sicilians, would be a lasting benefit to  
our city; and it would appear equally  
certain that, disencumbered of all obstacles  
to a rapid movement, the forces of the Duke  
d’Urbino in following, would relieve us, and  
in no way incommode you. Your Grace, by  
casting your eye over the credentials I have  
the honour to place in the hands of the  
Prince of Orange, will perceive that I am  
no envoy of those who govern in Florence  
but only of the illustrious individuals whose  
names are therein signed; that any stipulation  
which their eagerness might induce  
them to make for their countrymen must  
depend upon a ratification by a free govern-  
ment, which they may never, perchance  
establish, and that, certainly, such offering  
would under the circumstances be scarcely  
worth tarrying for.”

A signal of impatience from Bourbon put a stop to further reply. "You may leave our presence, young Sir," said that disappointed leader; "and these noble knights will decide upon their march. An hour hence the camps are struck."

The young emissary of the Florentines was led out from the tent; and such was the general disorder, the total absence of all restraint, that he was allowed to mingle with the various groups that lounged about the tents, and to join his word in the topics which were agitating all minds. All were anxious to question of their destination, and of the cities of the south. His answer was universally the same, namely, that so stern was the rule of the Medici in Florence, and so griping the avarice of the Cardinal who ruled them, that their city was utterly drained of its last ducat, to pour into the coffers of the Pope.

The debate still continued in the tent of the Constable,—the leader himself affecting utter indifference as to the choice of the

assembled officers; and Don Carlos dell'Noia, urging vehemently his word, pledged to his Holiness, and pointing to the banks of the Arno, the metropolis of Tuscany, and its rich guilds, the palaces of its over-wealthy citizens, and hinting in terms sufficiently intelligible the untold treasures of its sumptuous temples.

The pennyless leaders of that host were now becoming nice calculators, and the only subject of debate, if honestly acknowledged, was the greater or less value of the prospective booty.

At a point of their doubts, when the question was about to be put to the vote, there broke upon the ears of the astonished council, first, the sound of a confused murmuring, and then one general universal uproar, in which thirty-thousand voices mingling in a wild, fierce clamour to Heaven called upon the name of the Eternal City. "Rome, Rome!" "Death to the Viceroy!" "Come forth, noble Bourbon, let us march!"

Such was the startling and thundering cry

*which terminated in an instant the sitting of the council.*

A smile of triumph, and a flash of unsated ambition, broke over the countenance of the leader of this tumultuous host, when the sound first became distinct. "Then to Rome be it!" he exclaimed.

The enthusiasm of without communicated itself to those within the tent, and all joined in the wild inspiriting cry of "Rome, Rome!" The tents were struck, and within an hour the whole of that lightly equipped rout was once more in full flight. The little remnant of order that had been observed in their march hitherto was now destroyed; and Rome, the city of the Cæsars, their sons the offspring of heroes,—as much, says a modern censor, as worms were the offspring of Brutus,—became the prize of Bourbon and his brigands.

Lingering on the verge of the plateau, on which so vast an array had been just encamped, sat the slight figure of the youth Francesco, whose breath had set them in motion as easily as if it had been spent

upon a feather floating on a summer calm. There was a smile of contented triumph on his cheek, as he watched band after band mingling their banners and hurrying in heedless confusion down the mountain. He was spent with his exertions, and he stretched himself along the turf, still following, with a glad glance, the troubled downward torrent, as it fell in a dense column on the plain. The clang of their shrill trumpets was borne past him on the still air; that sound grew fainter, the vast crowds became less distinct, and in an hour more not a form, save his own, kept watch on the deserted hill, nor was perceptible on the plain below.

The last gleam of the receding weapon had been lost in the distance, and the last banner confused with the dusk shadows springing from behind each stone and tree through which they had slumbered throughout the heats and glare of midday, and yet the youth, in a fit of weariness and moralizing, mused upon the victory he had achieved.

and the promising yet misty future, and, perchance, at times of the not inglorious hour of his return to his native city. The sun was fast setting, and the sinking beams came horizontally, yet without dazzling his vision.

Another hour and he was aware that darkness must be over all things ; yet such was his fatigue, the violence of his late exertions, and the feebleness of an exhausted frame, that he continued to sit immoveably gazing upon the vacant space through which so glorious a vision had but lately passed,—when his attention was for a moment arrested by the rustling of the foliage about him, and the heavy tread of steps behind him. He turned, and at the same moment his hand sought his dagger. He had not passed the last few hours amongst robbers and murderers to little purpose ; for blood remained behind their bivouacs, as frequent as the charred soil and black embers behind a gipsy's halting-place, and corpses marked their track, scarcely less frequent than broken branches. Behind him came with

a quick and striding pace a figure so colossal, and arrayed in garments of so singular a fashion, that he was at a loss to conjecture either the character of his profession or of his intellects.

Standing on the brow of the mountain, and in the full blaze of the descending sun, the vast stature of this solitary wanderer appeared far to exceed the most liberal proportions of human nature. His frame was broad and angular, and his chest herculean ; his arms long and muscular ; his feet and hands jointed cumbrously, as if, like the statue of the Assyrian's dream, brass and iron had been modelled into the construction of that superhuman frame. His head was bare and partly bald,—his face full of millions of minute wrinkles ; but his eyes, though not large, were blazing like the orbs of the Alpine vulture.

This huge and solitary man was clad in robes of the coarsest texture of the poorest order of mendicant friars. A solid chain of ponderous iron was rivetted round his

waist, to which was appended a rosary that hung below his knees ; in one hand he held a club, knotted and jagged, of rude oak, and the other grasped the saddest of all tokens of mortality, a human skull, polished like ivory by constant handling.

This singular traveller far surpassed all of the grotesque and the terrible that the imagination of the youth who now looked upon him had ever pictured. A few moments and a few strides devoured the distance between them ; and as he approached, Francesco perceived that his steps were unsteady, and that his vast limbs staggered ; that there was the foam of great fatigue creaming his lips, and that his mouth and cheeks gave evident signs of what his muscular limbs and robust figure had well concealed,—namely, an extreme old age. No sooner had he reached the spot on which the youth stood to receive him, than he threw himself prostrate upon the earth, and groaned as though flesh and spirit were about to part.

“ Water ! water ! young man, and a crust of bread for Christ’s love ! ” he exclaimed. “ Have the locusts eaten up every living produce of the fair earth ? It is plain to see by the vitality trampled out of the ruined soil, that they have passed here but lately. Heaven pardon me that I think of these movements when life is flitting for very emptiness ! Have you food ? ”

“ Take your rest, my friend, and tighten your girdle, ” replied Francesco, “ and I will step aside and bring you what refreshment I have in store for my own journeying. ”

The aged giant spread out his vast limbs upon the trampled earth, and murmured over his lot, whilst the youth withdrew, and from his saddle-bow brought forth a spare morsel which, he truly said, was no abundant provision for a single rider. When he delivered it into the open palm of the famished man its minuteness appeared pitiable : the fingers clutched it, and the glittering eyeballs started ravenously, as though it were prey slain after

a combat. Before it touched his lips, he raised his glance to the pale thin cheek of the youth, and paused.

“ We are far from human habitation, boy,” he exclaimed, “ and, if I judge aright from your meagre cheek and hollow eyes, you have fed scarcely less recently than I have ; one of us must famish before another sunrise. Three days and three nights have I strayed upon these mountains, and, save snow water, nothing has passed my lips. I might have fed upon human flesh till my bowels were gorged, could I have eaten such foul carrion ; for Bourbon fattens the banquets of kites for a thousand miles round. Answer frankly, have you more in reserve ?”

“ I have not,” replied the youth ; “ but I am less nice in my appetite than your Reverence, and could eat my horse before I would starve.”

“ Horse !” exclaimed the monk, or whatever he was ; “ then Heaven be praised ! we may share this scanty crust, good youth, and yet hold out till we reach human aid.

Which way have the robbers taken,—  
Florence, or to Rome?”

“To Rome, my father,” exclaimed  
Francesco, smiling; “whither, to say truth,  
my business does not at this moment lead  
me. They do not tarry on the road, and  
your Holiness accompany me on my journey,  
you will scarcely overtake them.”

“Bring forth the steed, good youth,”  
replied the wanderer; “our journey may last  
together some miles yet, and I may chance  
to do you a service worth the one I am now  
asking of you. Know you in Florence  
Zonara the apothecary?”

“I do, father,” replied the youth; “a thin  
man, of grave mien and good reputation,  
reckoned amongst the most learned of his  
learned profession in our good city.”

“You shall bear him a line from Fr  
Brandano,” said the traveller; “he practises  
more professions than that of mediciner.”

“And the service your Reverence mean  
to do me,” replied the youth, with mock  
solemnity, “is the honour of an intro

duction to this learned personage? To horse ! to horse ! at once, my father ; the boon leaps mightily with my present business, so let us begone.”

The horse was led out, and received with but slight good-will the double burden, of which the share not legitimately his own was by far the weightier. Their course lay by an indifferent pathway down the mountain. Dusk met them on the plain, and shortly a darkness, dense and moonless, closed around them.

Whatever might be the nature of the converse during that long and lonely ride—and it was not without its influences on the career of both—it signifies not at present to mention. The first service of Brandano, and it was of no small consequence, was the piloting of their way through the desolate country over which they were travelling. Once in the plain, their pace quickened, and after an hour or two of quick riding, they saw, at no great distance, as their road wound, the blaze of a thousand watchfires.

“There is the encampment, my good friend,” said the youth ; “they will tarry for two hours, and you may join them as you propose.”

“And I will join them,” replied Brandano ; “but before doing so, the least good office I can render this gallant steed and yourself is, to conduct you where you may both find food and rest ; that is, provided always that you have the money to purchase it. I shall still be in time to join those light-limbed reprobates before the vanguard is in motion.”

The horse readily obeyed the new direction of his bridle, and a few minutes more brought them to a small hamlet, whose few straggling cottages stood apart, in all sorts of inaccessible positions. To one of the meanest of these most miserable dwellings Brandano turned the horse's head, and the clatter of the hoofs speedily brought its tenant to meet them. He was an old man, who appeared to have outlived double the duration of the years usually allotted to human life. One-half of his body was bent horizontally, and every mortal

that could settle upon a frame more than half a century had long overdue to the clods had been crushed upon his overburdened shoulders.

The wretchedness of the tenement had vividly reminded Francesco of his father's home, but never yet had his eyes rested upon so decrepit, so utterly pitiful a wreck of antique humanity. His dwelling was open to every wind and storm, and floated above the earth's surface.

The roof covered but a single room; a miserable donkey, whose condition was a daily shame to his master's wretchedness, shared this unenviable abode. Could the bones ever pierce the skin of a man, or could the feeble arm of the master have bruised the unhappy beast, he would have strove to do, the unfortunate animal would have been transparent to the sun, and as broken in limb and as aged as his master.

Fagots were strewed about the courtyard, and such appeared the food of both.

Such cheer offered little hope of recruiting the over-worked appetites of a healthy steed and a youthful rider ; but a few words whispered by Brandano had the effect of producing some mouldy chesnut bread and a few pine nuts.

Far more wearied than famished, Francesco drew together the dry fagots, and threw himself upon them, to snatch a brief repose, whilst his fellow-traveller undertook to tend and stable his steed. Sleep came not, however, so readily or so soundly as he wished, and the long querulous mutterings of the old man tended little to promote it. From time to time the hoarse tones of his singular guide, controlling the eager suggestions of the old man, roused him. The effect of the few broken sentences that reached him awakened his curiosity, for it would appear that there was some idea floating through the old man's brain, of a profitable use of the stranger thus unexpectedly fallen under his keeping. He continued, however, still struggling with

the stupor of his weariness, till the door of the hovel was opened and then closed, and he perceived that his guide had gone forth.

Presently, the self-colloquy of the old man was resumed, and Francesco felt the full necessity of keeping his own watch. Moving about the hut, and wrangling from time to time with the patient quadruped, sole companion of his old age, the old man at last threw himself down upon the litter, and scraped from an obscure corner under the trampled and sodden straw a small chest, which his trembling fingers had much difficulty in finding. A scanty light fell upon its contents, and the youth, forgetting that it possibly contained the hoardings of a hundred and ten years, was astonished at beholding a heap of the very smallest coin in currency (ten of them would have gone to a modern farthing), but in quantities that would have defied calculation. The old man plunged his shaking and withered fingers into the heap, and turned them over and over. Seated beside his treasure, he

thus continued muttering and chuckling, regaling his eyes with the only vision of life retained of any worth to him.

This amusement continued, without note of time, till the door again opened, the miser was surprised by the reappearance of Brandano. Deafness was of course added to the other infirmities of the man, and he was not aware of the presence of the intruder, who stood over him with eyes gleaming with an expression of doubtful import. Had these two weaknesses combined to rob their guest to his last farthing, it would have made little difference to Francesco; for all the worldly substance he could call his own consisted of scarcely more than an equivalent for one of those minute coins which the miser still held in his hand. But such would not have been the case, had the copper store of the miser been laid under contribution.

A cry broke up feebly from the crack of the door, the voice of the old man, when his eye rested upon the figure that stood over him;

scrambled up with what speed he might, clutched his hoard, and prepared to defend it with his life.

“Dotard !” exclaimed the giant, “hide away your hoard of pitiful savings, and begone !”

Murmuring unintelligible threats, the wretched being threw the rags of his garments about him, and hurried forth from the hut. Francesco rose up without further summons, placed a slender coin under keeping of the quadruped, who alone remained, and prepared to leave the hut. Brandano accompanied him, and walked by his side till their roads lay asunder.

“Think not harshly of the old man,” he said, compassionately, “for my sake, for he is my father ! He is in his dotage, and is preparing masses for his soul hereafter. Let us think of him no more. You have seen two generations of us ; wait till you have seen the third ! We shall meet again, and now adieu !” Brandano left him, and the horse of Francesco sprang lightly

on his way. When the clatter of his hoofs was no longer audible, and Brandano found himself alone, he turned his face towards the still blazing watchfires of the camps of Bourbon, and hurried on his journey.

## CHAPTER VII.

SINCE the return of the Cardinal of Cortona and his wards from their promenade to visit the chiefs of the army of the League, and the welcome they had met on their return to the city, it will naturally be supposed that they felt small inducement to the repetition of a similar visit of ceremony. It would appear also from the aspect of the city that the commotion of that day had not wholly subsided. The partial and menacing outbreaks were, it is true, visible, like the smouldering and nearly spent embers of some conflagration, only after dark; but the inflammatory materials of

which that stubborn and stiffnecked people consisted offered every hour fresh cause of alarm. Any one of those riotous knots of young idlers was capable of igniting at a moment's notice a flame quite as fierce as had been the original fire. Every precaution was accordingly taken which the fretful vigilance of a most timid governor could devise. Every avenue leading to the Palace of the Priori was day and night guarded by numerous bands of soldiery. The Palace of the Medici had become like a vast garrison; and the gates of the city presented a spectacle of bustle—of the mingling of armed men, and the vexed and harassed peasantry, amongst whom hourly squabbles ensued; and of the departure and return of couriers, which made Florence far more resemble the centre of a state at war, than one in subjection within, and with an unresisted army without its walls.

It was about noon of the day following the events recorded in the last chapter, when an unusual herd of flying peasantry began

to pour into the city, and spread abroad rumours of some vague and appalling disaster, which set the whole city in a ferment, and shook the timid spirit of the Cardinal of Cortona nearly to its dissolution. Rushing out from every roof, whether of the palace or workshop, there swept from all parts of the city thousands of eager and terrified citizens, towards the usual rendezvous under all periods of excitement, the square of the Palace of the Priori. Whatever was the cause of the panic, it seemed equally to paralyze all ranks, and followers of all parties. All that could be collected from the affrighted peasantry were wild histories of the sudden pouring over their plains of a deluge of half-naked and sun-scorched warriors, whose stay was so brief as scarcely to outlast the stupor of their unlooked-for coming, and yet whose track was marked by all the atrocities which the tongue most skilled in picturing human miseries could portray. Their property was seized in an universal scramble, without

even a voice raised to spare what could be of no avail to the spoilers. There was they said, no attempt made at division, no appropriation, either by general orders or by mutual compact, but a simultaneous rush for the temporary possession of all things.

The sudden appearance of this band of miscreants had been the signal for as general a flight as so extended an array made practicable. Those on whom the vast wheeling bodies had closed, like an extended net, told of the natural yet terrible sequel of this visitation; their wives and daughters had been subjected to as general an appropriation as the rest of their property; all seemed animated by the same insatiable and unrestrained passions. Such were the terrible tidings that were murmured from tongue to tongue of the assembling multitudes. Every hour fresh throngs, pouring into the town brought tales of similar horrors, and the city swarmed with frantic crowds, wailing over their violated daughters and their ruined homes. Every sentinel had long been swept

away from the city gates, and the calamity was of so astounding, so debasing a character, that men's thoughts seemed to have no topic in common with governments or their mutations.

Posted by the gate of St. George, and searching with a keen eager glance amongst the crowds which poured past him, apparently for some one whose coming he awaited with impatience, stood the towering figure of Francesco Ferrucci. The crowds which his eager glance thus minutely scrutinized continued the same, and the extravagance of their cries and gesticulations seemed to excite in his mind neither attention nor sympathy; his glance travelled from one convulsed and agonized countenance to another, with one single intent—that of the scrutiny which occupied him. His search had long been fruitless; the tide of fugitives still increased; when, at last, flying on the outskirts of the stream, he distinguished the slight form of a single rider, who, drooping to the saddle-bow from weariness, still urged

on his foaming steed towards the gateway. As the gallant horse was spurred amongst the crowds struggling for admission, the hand of Ferrucci was laid rudely on his bridle; the rider turned his head, and the recognition was instantaneous; he bent down, and whispered the word "Rome!" Ferrucci's hand fell from the bridle; both turned, and the rider again spurred on within the gates. The city was silent, for though every class of its inhabitants were abroad, and grouped in knots throughout the squares and streets, all idea of tumult seemed merged in the general panic. The tramp of that single horseman resounded hollowly through the streets; but before he had gained his destination, a humming sound, like a multitude put in agitation, reached him; and presently, an outcry, deafening and startling the senses, broke forth in one astounding voice behind him. "To the palace, to the palace!" was now as general and as simultaneous a shout as had lately been that which rolled in echoes

of thunder from Apennine to Apennine, of  
"Rome, Rome!"

The rider quickened his pace, but before he descended from his horse there came a general rush of the still clamorous multitudes into the piazza. To add to the now awakened uproar, the huge bell of the palace, surnamed "the Thunderer," sounded the signal for the assembling of all classes beneath the respective standards of their crafts. No summons was ever more promptly obeyed than this in Florence. Banner after banner was seen fluttering over the heads of the crowds; and the citizens, separating themselves as well as they were able, assembled about their different leaders. The voice of wailing, that had so lately rung through the city, now swelled into a shout for vengeance; and this thirst once excited, there seemed men amongst them ready still further to irritate. Glancing from banner to banner were seen the emissaries of those who, having raised the tempest, now toiled to direct it. Not a single soldier had been seen to attempt

interference ; for the panic from which the city was awakening by some highly inflammatory stimulant was still over them. Without instructions, lost in the immense crowd and scarcely comprehending the meaning of this new and singular impulse, they remained inactive for a time, till, finding themselves disregarded alike by their rulers and the populace, they joined as others did in the general stream to the piazza.

To the surprise of all men, a herald brought forth from the Signori a summons to the chiefs of the various trades, amounting to many hundreds, from all quarters of the town, to present themselves instantly at the palace ; for the hall of the great council was preparing for the great popular assembly. An astounding national acclamation—a prolonged and thundering shout of triumphant jubilee—received this virtuous declaration of exile to the Medici, a success to the cause of liberty. The moral effect was instantaneous and highly curious. When the first bursts of wild exultation

had subsided, from a tumultuous band of most lawless rioters, the assembled throngs were converted into important and orderly personages, with the solemn demeanour of citizens, who, if not actually legislators to-day, may become so to-morrow; and whom such an opening to civic distinction makes wisely appreciate the blessing of private wealth, and the sanctity of hard-earned gains. Accordingly, whilst the deep and solemn tones of the huge and stirring bell, the proclaimer of all changes in the state, rolled over the heads of the excited multitudes, their outcries were hushed by the majesty of its thunders, and shortly its deep solemn voice alone disturbed the stillness of the coming sunset. In the meantime the hall of the Eight Hundred was rapidly filling, and it was easy to perceive that the more prominent portion of its assembly, on this occasion, was far otherwise constituted than it had been on the last tumultuous entry to the palace. It was now, as though by popular accord, thronged principally by

citizens of the higher order, men who had carried on for years, under the rule of the Medici, the actual government of the republic. The Gonfaloniere of the city was not the fiery Guicciardini, whom we formerly saw occupy that distinguished post, but an illustrious citizen of the family of the Neri ; and he now assumed his seat at a council purposely assembled to re-model the government.

Seated opposite to that dignitary, and in the very same position he had formerly occupied in the council before described, sat the most popular senator of that day, the most honourable in the character history bears of him to our own ;—Niccolo Capponi—and still, as formerly, leaning for support on the back of his chair, bent the fragile form of the youthful student. His cheek was languid and pale from faintness, and looked the more startling from the singular brilliancy, the wild and fever-like glare of uncontrollable triumph, that flashed from his prominent and unsettled eyeballs ; and

men were seized with unfeigned wonder, when, after silence had been obtained, and the chief magistrate had invited the deputies of the city to make known the people's will, this youth, raising his trembling frame as well as he was able, craved to be allowed to proclaim the tidings he had borne them.

“ I might even yesterday, fellow citizens,” he said, “ have borne hither the glad tidings of Bourbon's march to Rome. May Heaven spare the Eternal City from his rapacity ! But I bent aside from my direct route homewards, to scatter the intelligence amongst our obliging guardians, who have so long pleasantly quartered themselves in the plains of Empoli. I waited till I saw D'Urbino's banner in motion. Heaven grant that he may overtake the ruffianly hordes of Bourbon ! And should both hosts be annihilated, the better for this afflicted city, which both would prey upon. I am but now from the abandoned camp of the army of the Medici ; and had it not been a duty to bear the tidings earliest to your excellencies, I should

have announced to his Eminence of Cortona and his youthful princes, that their friends were marching. Our meeting this day to establish our own government, and our first thoughts will naturally be directed to enlisting in our service the paternal counsel and care of the first, and wisest, and best of our fellow citizens. Let us not in our necessity weaken our decisions by the semblance of a doubt. The scrutiny will be for the election of those on whom our most anxious cares devolve, when our leisure is greater. Our first great act has been by acclaim,—and for thus the council of the Eight Hundred has been re-established,—and so let our second be. I propose for our city's Gonfaloniere, Niccolo Capponi, the people's friend, the son of a citizen who saved his country, one whose only ambition has been the redemption of his native city, and whose wisdom will be its best safeguard !”

So rapid had been the transitions which within the last few hours had swayed the minds of the citizens, that, carried away by

the impetuous feeling of this confirmation of all their hopes, no calmness remained to them to consider either about right or expedience, and this singular proposition was carried through the assembly, like the former, by acclaim. But in the universal shout that caught up the name of Capponi, and amidst the gesticulations of delight which accompanied its utterance, it escaped the observation of most, that the herald of this public triumph, the youth who had risen from a sick bed to achieve this feat, and who had for days spent scarcely an hour out of his saddle, had exhausted the last remnant of his strength in the accomplishment of his purpose, and had at last fallen, behind the chair over which he had leaned.

There are few chapters in the annals of this mutable people more highly dramatic than that which records the peaceable re-assumption of their rights, and the dismissal of the Medici once more from Florence. In the first council assembled by the newly elected Gonfaloniere, whose office was to

last for three years, and whose powers were of a far more extended nature than those confided to the magistrates under the domination of the expelled dynasty, it was decided that a deputation should wait upon the Cardinal of Cortona, and request him to go out peaceably, and without loss of time from the city; suggesting the expediency of his instant cession of the fortresses of Leghorn and Pisa, receiving in return the city's guarantee for the security of the persons and properties of the obnoxious families, and even (an act of clemency never before under similar circumstances imagined) the enjoyment during their absence of the rights of citizenship, and such eligibility to the different offices of the republic, even to the highest, as was possessed by others. While the friends and faction of the Cardinal were thus reaping the fruits of that act of leniency which had been designated as cowardice at the time, but by which the lives of so many citizens were spared, when the cannon had been planted against the masses during the

the effort at revolution, there rose  
at them, and amongst their an-  
d and contemptuous reproaches,  
accusations of his imbecility. But  
ridiculous may not be supposed  
then connected unjustly with the  
concerns of his Eminence, the  
moniker must acknowledge, that  
noble citizen Philippo Strozzi  
to make known the decision of  
to the princes, and had stated,  
courteous and eloquent harangue,  
result of the united wisdom and  
the Eight Hundred, there ensued  
derable argument amongst the  
rested; and when these deliber-  
ast seemed to exceed that mode-  
which a sage prudence might  
the circumstances to require,  
ry of the council, having ex-  
eloquence, deputed, to accele-  
decision, an illustrious lady, no  
on than a daughter of Lorenzo  
icent. And as the arguments

and style of her persuasion are highly characteristic of the speaker, the reader may be amused to see them copied from the pages of a contemporary historian :—“ This lady,” says Segni, “ as famed for her prudence as for her loftiness of spirit and generosity, with a countenance full of contempt, and features beaming with decision, entered into the chamber in which these young princes were consulting with their guardian, and elevating her voice to a pitch that carried its accents into the room adjoining, and were heard by all, exclaimed—

“ ‘ Even I, who am but a woman, would become a laughing-stock if I were to delay so long as you have done to accept an offer, which, if not the most creditable, is at least the safest and the most indulgent which, under the circumstances, you have any right to expect. You should, before matters came to this pass, have so conducted yourselves, so governed this state, as to have made against your hour of misfortune friends who would have maintained their fidelity

towards you. You should have copied the gentleness and benevolence of my ancestors, who governed with discretion, and not as you have done, with tyranny. They had friends in their adversity. But you, with your mode of ruling, have made known to the whole world that you come not of the blood of the Medici! You,—and Clement, who has fitter claims to a jail than to the tiara—why should any of you be astonished that you are become objects of scorn to a whole city? To the devil with the greatness of our family, as far as I am concerned or care for it. Get you gone out of this house, and out of this city, to which you have no claim, either by birth or merit; be quick and put an end to this hesitation, for I will be the first to declare myself your enemy, and I will no longer endure your stay beneath my father's roof!"

The result of this mode of reasoning was, that the Cardinal and his young friends made all speed to begone. "It was in vain," exclaims the sedate Giovius, "that Messer

Hippolito told the lady, courteously, that she was utterly insane and mischievous ; no terms would move her. And thus by the *villanie di una Donna* were the fortunes of this great family pushed to extremity."

Adieu, then, to this generation of the house of Medici ! They had learned already by experience that exile by no means implied ruin ; and this departure from a city they had misruled, if not altogether palatable, was so far not without consolation, that it afforded them the opportunity of bearing away with them the remembrance of their countrymen's courtesy. The young princes have occupied some few pages of our narrative ; and although their deeds have not been edifying, it may not be courteous to refuse to accompany them a stage on their journey. The ears of his Eminence of Cortona and of his wards, doubtless, tingled with their valedictory address ; and finding, probably, a more ready reply to the husband than they had been able to do to his lady, they must have made the honour of their escort more

distinguished than pleasurable to the renowned citizen Filippo Strozzi.

Merrily pealed the bells of every church through the reformed city, for never had any change in this most changeable state been less bloody and more complete. The deep tones of the temple bells of Santa Croce, whose every toll broke over the graves, and shook the very coffins and bones, of the immortal band of patriots and statesmen, warriors and sages, who slumbered in its vaults, challenged their brothers of San Lorenzo, which responded mournfully over the tombs of Cosimo and Lorenzo! "Joy, joy!" for a mine had been sprung which had annihilated their enemies; and though the sons of liberty themselves stood on the very brink of the abyss into which they had hurled their tyrants, they could still contemplate and provide against their danger in freedom.

No fairy scene was ever brighter than that which broke over the astonished vision of the young student, when first his eyes

opened from the long dream of his study. The face of his friend, full of sorrow, looked before him ; but the glorious roof above his head, the walls beaming with gorgeous frescoes, were not those of the Palace of the Capponi. They were the first external evidences of the change of things which he had laboured with so much bodily suffering and so much risk to bring about. The enviable emblems of temporary sovereignty—the robes and the baton of the Gonfaloniere—were about him. The historic achievements of departed heroes beamed in the glorious and sunlike colouring from wall and ceiling. An unsteady brilliancy of the eye, a sparkling, like the uncontrollable flash of the spirit's inebriation, of pride, triumph and tenderness—betrayed his instant consciousness of the change. There was in the mute appeal of that first glance to the decorations of the state apartments, as frequent a congratulation as any words could have expressed. There passed rapidly over the pale cheek of his aged friend, when

beheld this first gleam of intellect and health, an emotion which he felt he could not have controlled, and he yielded his place by the couch on which the youth lay to one who, though feeling deeply, even too sensibly for her peace, he knew had a right to be the eloquent medium of his gratitude and her own.

Bending her superb and graceful figure over his couch, with a pale face and a heaving bosom, Francesco beheld the noble lady, Eugenia Capponi. When his glance had regained composure, after its first roving around that scene of his triumph, and turned to meet that of the fair girl bending timidly over him, the deep intense look of violent and overstrained feelings that beamed upon him, awoke, in the bosoms of both, feelings of embarrassment allied to pain. The emotions of that young fair creature were wrought to their very highest pitch, and the long intense gaze of mingled admiration of his gallantry, and his devotion to her parent,—of pity for the feeble state of

overthrown energies which kept him the speechless and prostrate before her,—and the truth may be acknowledged, of homage to the power of that lofty brow, that snow-tintless cheek, and the dark beaming eyes over which the lashes drooped languidly. She had exhausted her powers of self-restraint. The colour passed rapidly from her cheeks, the tears leaped from their fountains ; and she buried her face in her hands ; till at length, an impulse to which she had nearly yielded, her head drooped, as though its more fitting pillow would have been the bosom which lay so still that it scarcely seemed to harbour life. Exhausted as he was, Francesco found it less difficult to take her white fingers from her cheek and press them to his lips, than to find language to utter consolation or encouragement. It was several minutes before a word was spoken, during which the youth closed his eyes, in pity to the embarrassment of the agitated girl. When the first feeble tones of his voice fell upon her ear, the colour rushed back into the cheek of the

maiden in blushes that deepened till her very flesh burned; whilst his own, in melancholy contrast, became, if possible, even ghastlier than before.

“Dearest young lady,” he said at length, slowly, “it is not in pity, far less in coldness of heart, that I would counsel calm. Were your tears for my infirmity, I would bid you be comforted; for an hour’s calm after scenes of such joy as this will bring speedy remedy for ills so insignificant. We have achieved a triumph which will cover the name of your honourable house with fresh glory; and that I have been the happy instrument of such an event, is of itself sufficient object to have lived for.”

The maiden listened to these first tones of a voice tremulous from excitement, without the power or the attempt to reply. There were at that moment, in the feelings which heaved her bosom, some which had nothing of sympathy with the triumph of which he so deservedly boasted.

‘Were I a member of your noble and

ancient family, lady," he continued, "I could not be happier, nor indeed prouder, than I now feel, though of lineage as unexalted as that of the poorest and lowest of those who aided in our triumph."

"You dwell more upon the accident of birth," replied the maiden, "than it merits, in a commonwealth where each year nobility of station is achieved by deeds far less noble than yours. Had you toiled thus arduously for yourself, your reward had been as brilliant as are now my father's fortunes; the burden of our gratitude had been lighter; and though I must have honoured you as all do, I should not have——"

"Watched thus, like a guardian spirit, over my sick couch," added the youth. "Had I done so, fair maiden, my blood would have ebbed away unheeded on the pavement of this palace, and your tears had never flowed over my wounds or my memory. Other eyes might have streamed with tears, as they strained their dim glance from the summit of the rugged Apennine,

for the form of a beloved friend that was to return no more ; and another heart might have broken, when the tidings came that an unknown student had poured out his blood, the cheap purchase of his country's liberation. Oh ! I have been too long stretched upon silken couches ; my limbs grow enervated, and my very soul, from luxuriating upon your sweet presence, your looks and words of pity, grows selfish and faithless. I have other duties, lady, besides the stern service I have paid my country ; and every hour I thus dream away goes heavily charged with tears and sorrow, to hearts that have beat for my encouragement through life."

The youth paused, and a tear stole silently down his cheek. " I must go again to my mountain home," he added, impatiently ; " I must search all places where the miserable find refuge, or it may be too late. Intense sorrow and wounded love may not long bear up against desertion."

The young student tossed restlessly upon his couch, and, seemingly unconscious of the

presence of the affectionate and fair  
who still bent over him, groaned in  
anguish.

“ You are unfit, as yet, to move her  
said the maiden, timidly. “ Is there  
message that I can bear?—any sec  
she added, mournfully, yet with a firm  
and averted eyes, “ that may be con  
to the bosom of one who would do  
bidding, though life itself were to be  
forfeit?” The tenderness, and yet  
earnestness of the appeal, roused the y  
to an excitement which made her tre  
for the revelation she had had the hard  
to solicit. He took her hands into bot  
own ; his cheek brightened ; his eye kin  
his very lips fluttered. But the terr  
that young creature’s glance, as it me  
eye, turned aside his purpose at the  
moment that the speech trembled upo  
lip. He gazed for a moment upon  
working of her excited and pale feat  
and the impetuous current of his arr  
impulses were rolled back icy cold upo

turned away his face in silence. Confidence to impart, maiden," a pause; "none, at least, that is good, or fitting for your hearing. I desire you to be calm, and to resign yourself to what only I can do, and you will find charity where it may restore

Capponi made no further reply, but rising with a strong exertion the next day, with a nearly bursting heart, she returned to her seat and left him. Once in the privacy of her own chamber, she exercised further restraint upon the violent emotions. "It is too true," she said, "it is too true! his senses may be deadened; the springiness and vigour of his heart may be trodden down with the weight of sorrow. But the image is too plainly there, and when his strength returns it will be again before me! He may pity me, he may love me; but he loves another better!" She wept and heaved with sobs, till her dress was drenched with tears, and she was frightening about her, and the very

affectionate parent had now come to solicit the presence of his daughter. Pained and for the first time alarmed for the peace of mind of his child, he folded her to his bosom, and instead of pressing the invitation, as had been his intention, to accompany him, the expression of his first wish gave way to a recommendation to calm and rest.

“ Our spirits, Eugenia,” he said, “ have had enough to shake them, and a day or two of privacy will fit us better for the duties of our new life. Or, if not, the cares of our office are not for you. If it please you better to cheer the sick couch of one to whom your father owes life and distinction, who shall prevent you ?”

“ No, no, my father,” exclaimed the sorrowing girl ; “ I am ready to share, as a daughter should do, equally in your toils and your triumph. I have been hitherto the confident of your hopes ; it is but my due to be the sharer of your success. I have before now trembled for your life ; let me witness and exult in your glory ! But at

this moment, my father, the summons comes suddenly, and to say truth somewhat gratingly, and I fear me that red eyes and a swollen face might furnish matter of jeers to some of your audience, who may chance to be not of the most polished order of our commonwealth. A day or two of repose is all I ask for, and thenceforth your lieges shall meet with dry cheeks and a smooth brow.

“So be it, then, Eugenia,” said the fond parent; “we will name to-morrow for our first meeting with our friends. It shall be the first scene of our new honours, and I would that that, at least, should be a cordial one. I dream not that our young friend has gained us a couch of roses, nor indeed that my life will have many scenes so bright as the one with which it is about to open. We are in stormy times, and among stormy spirits, and I know well that when the gala of a week’s novelty has gone by, Niccolo Capponi will be the least of all citizens a subject of envy.”

“Hush, hush, my father!” said Eugenia, “you are speaking treason against our city’s chosen ruler, and as little in harm as are my tears with all the clamorous voices and wild shouts that shake these old walls and with the busy bells of our city churches.”

“Keep for me, at least,” said the old man with prophetic solemnity, “a refuge from public cares if they should come; keep for me a calm and smiling home, Eugenia; let not sorrows eat their way into this gentle and fair bosom. An upright conscience may bring balm for the wounds which the ungentle contact of public cares must necessarily hourly inflict; but for a parent’s heart wounded through a child’s happiness, believe me, sweet girl, there is in this world no solace.”

“A happy home, dearest and best of fathers,” said the maiden, “shall indeed be yours whilst your daughter lives, and, with Heaven’s help, a smiling brow and a lively heart also. No, no! fear not, my father.”

that the sanctity of your retreat shall be invaded with unfilial sorrow,"—and the tears again coursed down her cheeks,—“fear not that your image shall be disturbed in a loving and dutiful heart. We have been much tried of late, and, to say truth, have been through all our lives better tutored to meet happiness than sorrow ; but even that too, if it come, we will learn to struggle with. Your home *shall* be a happy one.”

Such was the termination of the first interview in which Eugenia had ever met her parent with a tear upon her cheek. Tears were the harbingers of the happiness she was promising, and a long and affectionate embrace the first earnest of its reality.

## CHAPTER VIII.

THE month of May was drawing to close before Francesco the student had gained strength enough to rise from the bed to which a tedious illness had so long confined him. Agony of mind, springing from the most harassing of all doubts, that of the welfare of those in whom every interest of life has been staked, had prolonged his extreme feebleness, and at times awakened serious alarms for its fatal termination ; and when he was at last enabled once again to admit the cheering light of Heaven to his couch, there was a shade of melancholy on his brow, which yielded not to the gen-

of friends whose tender studies for his solace, and which the voice of Eugenia Capponi, that had watched daily and nightly, listening to the melancholy of an overtoiled spirit, made dark and gloomy. When at last his longing for the fresh air, heaven, and all the stirring sights of life, there was in his manner and fretfulness at his restraint, would have been difficult to attribute to his fettered liberty; nor was it difficult to distinguish how much might be due to the eyes and persons immediately about him. No obstacle was made to his wishes, and his gentle nurse fell as sweetly, as ever upon his ear, when, mindful of caution with prayers for his strength, she timidly counselled day more, and a day more, till the tint might at least colour the like hue of his thin cheek,—in which he might not carry alarm where

The power of a scene like this was wholly lost upon him. An expression of pride passed over his features, as he remembered that he had influenced the destinies of all on whom he gazed. When once the energies of his youth were again awakened he was enabled to look more fairly upon the future and the present. He was about to go out once more, unconscious of the fortune that might await him, and with only words to offer, in gratitude for the unceasing watchfulness of the gentle and lovely girl whose devotion had hitherto received but small thanks. He had been long domesticated in the house of Eugenia, and though the eyes of men were not by to press into the tender cares and confidences of his sick chamber, he felt that it could only be his utter inability to carry his infirmities elsewhere that could excuse the long series of services he was exacting, and, above all, the prolongation of a luxurious residence which he must eventually leave, to reassume the homely garb of a profession on which his

depended, for the dwellings of the  
which he daily taught, and for a  
humbler than any—that in which  
reared, and in which his mother  
f, indeed, she lived at all,) the  
of all paupers. There had been  
en such contemplations would  
ed small consolation under suf-  
l stimulus to wrestle back health;  
uggles and events of a few days  
to sever him from all attach-  
e moderate ambition of personal  
and proportionably had the  
ve for those whose lot was like  
engthened about his heart.

ce of the student was still fixed  
city and its crowds spread out  
when the door of his chamber  
d Eugenia entered. Her aspect  
ed; her cheek was without the  
gaiety which had been its glory  
ood; and the long lashes drooped  
ver eyes whose gaiety was gone.  
turned as his door opened, and

the well-known footfall reached his ear, and the fixed, softened, and affectionate look with which he met her, and the gentleness yet the warmth, with which he raised his hand to his lips, for an instant repaid him for days of doubt and nights of weeping.

“ It is a cheerful and sunny day, Eugenia,” said the youth, “ that I have chosen for my entry amongst my fellows.” It was a day like this, when I was first thrown upon your sisterly care ; and how many sad ones have intervened since, during which, but for your charity, the long and sweet patience with which you have sat by me, and with your gentle voice gave me courage, the powers of endurance must have utterly failed me.”

“ If I have, indeed, helped to cheer you under your afflictions,” said the maiden, “ to wile away the irksomeness of the hours you have spent against your will beneath my father’s roof, I have acquitted myself of a small part of the debt we all owe you. You have been, indeed, too long kept aw

in a home which I can well believe you  
will be happy. When the early days of your  
trous meeting shall have gone by, and the  
happiness that awaits you shall have restored  
your health and calm of mind, I would fain  
hope that you will, as you once promised,  
come again amongst us, for my father's sake,  
not for mine; though I, too, would not  
willingly be forgotten."

"Not until the life which you have  
preserved shall cease will I forget *you*,  
Eugenia," replied the youth, "and those  
sweet hours when your soft voice has soothed  
my best bodily sufferings and mental torture,  
and those gentle tears that have fallen like dews  
in paradise upon an aching brow! Nay,  
do not, lady; such are memories that, as  
long as they are entwined about the heart, can cease  
to exist when it ceases to beat. I have many  
things to tell you; yet have we accidentally  
fallen into a train of talk, as though we  
were to meet no more. Such, Eugenia,  
may well need not be our destiny. When  
our father's halls are crowded with richly

arrayed courtiers and clamorous suitors, you will not be wearied by the importunities of one who could add little to the brilliancy of such a scene ; but you may yet occasionally see the humble garments of the poor student who will come at times, as heretofore, to gladden his eyes and heart with your loveliness and goodness ; bringing a grateful heart to pay his homage ; seeking nothing but the gentle looks which have been too prodigally lavished, whilst other thoughts shared the influence, but which, when the cold intercourse of an abrupt and selfish world is about me, my heart will at times yearn after. You have been already too generous, lady, to make me fear that when I am away you will cease to remember me. I go forth into a world that I shall scarcely know again after the scenes I have of late been familiar with ; but sooner or later we must both have awakened to reality, and an abrupt waking will fit *me*, at least, better for the duties that await me." He extended his hand to bid her adieu, but she covered her face, and

When she again withdrew her hands no longer before her ; so noiseless was his step, or so deep her abstraction, she only then became aware that he was gone. Without a word of farewell, and without that commonplace salutation which danger would have imprinted upon her mind at parting, the youth she had loved and grieved for had left her. The tears upon her cheek, and the blush scarcely faded, she was alone !

In the spacious chambers of the palace, passing sentinel after sentinel, the youth went hurried, with infirm step, and with a heavy load, into the crowded city. It was as if he had advanced fairly into the heart of the busy piazza, that he felt the abruptness of the transition : from the quiet chambers of romance he had passed into the rugged realms of reality, and he mingled in the crowd, and his individuality scarcely less left to his own perception than to the multitude of which he was a part. He had achieved power and

station for others ; but when once his footstep crossed the threshold of the palace he became again the poorly clad and penniless student that he had been before. The reflection that had of old taken the sting from poverty had now lost its power ; the glorious post of amanuensis to one whose pages he well knew were for immortality had now fled utterly from his mind, as had the wonderful writings themselves, and the divine author. Yet was there, in the crowd of memories that held his soul in bondage, a support, of a nature not hitherto known to him ; and though he was passed by and jostled, as his garb had been from infancy, he submitted with a smile, and passed on his way in peace.

His first visit was to the house of Buonrotti, and he was welcomed with the kind warm welcome of a parent. But of the tenants of his mountain home he could learn no fresh tidings. That benevolent man had made a second visit to the wilderness ; but excepting that he had found the aged fema

re shaken and imbecile than before, he  
nothing new to impart. The youth then  
ed his steps towards the mountain.  
continued absence of the girl Teresa  
ht indeed well seem inexplicable. Her  
inal disappearance he attributed to the  
erness of a deserted heart, to go on such  
arch as he was now making ; but her pro-  
ed abandonment of the only spot in the  
e world she could call her home, too  
ily suggested its motive as compulsory.  
he spring was drawing to its close,  
the glorious fruit of the golden har-  
was quickly ripening ; gentle breezes,  
a succession of sportive waves, bent  
n the heads of the heavy grain, and it  
ed hither and thither, as with a welcome,  
ne who was familiar with its bright and  
ous undulations. The elasticity of his  
ntain childhood entered once again into  
limbs, as he bounded over the sunny plain,  
n smiles, as of old, for all that met his  
Cornfield and vineyard, stream and  
x, had their greeting, and were passed

by ; he was rapidly nearing the home of his infancy. And then when the monarch pines that bent their sombre branches above the cottage grew into distinctness, belting the ridge of the distant Apennine with deep blue, all the misery of that home, as he had just witnessed it, recoiled upon his heart like a desolating blight. He paused for awhile, and when the hope that upheld him receded like a bright vision, the nearer he approached his home, his strength too failed, and he threw himself for awhile on the warm earth as on to the bosom of a parent, till the moment of temptation passed away.

A single thought had sufficed to prostrate his energies ; a hope indefinable, yet so powerful, again roused him ; he sprang on his feet ; he was again in rapid motion ; his steps were on the hill's side ;—when a sound like a distant scream reached his ear. He paused, and his whole frame trembled. When he looked upwards he beheld the flutter of a female dress, upon the ridge of the hill on which *she* of old used to await and w

is coming; and then, darting downwards, uttering scream upon scream, waking a wild echo of the undulating hills, came a figure—there was no mistaking it—it was the fair girl, whose return was now as unexpected and singular as had been her absence. His bosom beat too tumultuously for a few minutes to allow him the power to move and meet her. He was still chained to the spot on which those wild sounds had first reached him, when the maiden was before him, and in his arms. Her bosom heaved as though the heart within was bursting. He would have given to move her from him, that he might have gazed into her beautiful features, and assured himself of the recovery of his treasure; but then it was that her voice returned to him, and she uttered a succession of shrill, piercing screams, and emitted cries so incoherent that the cheek of her amazed lover became cold and white as marble. He folded her again to him, and then, as though regaining confidence, she somewhat relaxed the convulsiveness of her grasp.

For the first time he was enabled to catch a glimpse of her features, and that one momentary glance sufficed him. He staggered and would have fallen, but that she supported him ; his arms dropped, and she bore him up with as much facility as manhood might expect in up infancy.

“ Let us sit here awhile, Teresa,” said the youth ; “ for I have been ill, and have journeyed far, and I feel faint and weary.”

The maiden laid him down, with as much gentleness as that with which the leaf drops from the tree in Autumn, seeking its winter sleep in the bosom of earth, its mother. She took his hands, and knelt down beside him, but the youth turned away his face, for the shock was too terrible and too sudden.

“ Will you not look on me, beloved,” said the young girl, plaintively. “ If you knew how patiently I have stood on the mountain’s top, watching from dawn till starlight, through the dews and the scorching suns of noonday, for your beautiful face between the pine-branches, closing my eyes

oice of the mocking winds, as  
d of the folly of my hopes, you  
rn your face thus away from  
eck is pale, beloved,—pale, and  
! Have they borne *you* away  
e regions which the monks  
the dwelling of unclean spirits?  
are loathsome, and dark, and  
Look up at me, dearest; is *my*  
and changed as yours is? Are  
lamp and stony cold as these  
them in my bosom, dear one;  
ay have breathed over my cheek  
but there is a fire burning here  
How the wild horses chased me,  
emons plucked at me, and the  
c up at me!”

phrensy again seized her, and  
to him, twining her arms about  
rieking, “Shield me, shield me!  
y! the moon is hidden; there is  
o find a hiding-place before the  
s her; let us fly! But, alas!  
she said, changing tone and

manner, with a plaintive and startling pidity ; “ alas ! you are already weary, my limbs were ever fleetier than yours, even they are well nigh spent. He can no further,” she murmured ; “ and the tramp of their accursed hoofs is ringing each instant louder in my ears ! Frances beloved ! I will carry you ! ”

No persuasions, no resistance would avail. She raised him in her arms, and strove to ascend the hill.

“ I am now rested, sweet one,” said the youth ; “ place me down, I can fly with thee whither thou wilt. Thou hast told me tidings of our mother ; — how fared she during my absence ? ”

“ Alas ! poor soul ! ” said the fair girl ; “ she has been ill-cared for whilst I was away. Her intellect is so shaken that at times scarcely knows me : she sits by the cottage door, where falls the sunshine, she listens to all stray sounds, and trembles with the winds and the waterfall, of I know not what. She takes little food and no rest.”

at sunset the tears flow over her  
very heart aches to see them.  
To speak to her about you, she  
sobs so pitifully that I weep as  
often as she does. I took her  
to my chamber; for I thought that if any  
one could be awakened, those dear  
ones surely waken it; but she only  
sobs dead and gone hence; why  
should I be a body cumber the earth, when  
the comely are taken away?"  
The angels have pity on her! I fear that  
nothing for this world!"

His arm round the young girl's  
neck, Francesco climbed up the hills, till he  
reached the branchy pinnacle of the  
tower, whose brow was the humble  
garden, the joyous water-  
fall, his most melancholy home.  
"Come here, Francesco," said the  
girl, "your sudden coming would be  
a shock for her infirm frame. I  
will go before, and tell her that you are

Astonished at the incomprehensible blessing of tenderness, of thoughtful love, and a terrible wandering, Francesco did as his companion bade him, and waited whilst the light and childish figure sprung down the deep descent, and went upon this errand of love. Utterly without any means of conjecturing the cruel cause of the wreck of a pure and high an intellect, he naturally attributed to his own absence the withering change. And then how bitterly came to his memory all those hours which he had spent listening to a sweet voice whose thrilling accents had lulled memory into a soft slumber, and had been ever bordering on a subject which maidenly simplicity could alone have hesitated to call love, and gazing with delighted eyes upon a face so stately, voluptuous, and queen-like.

The light garments of Teresa again fluttered upon the door-way of the cottage, and she beckoned to him to descend. To his surprise he found his parent in a state of mind much improved since he had

her. As she pressed him to her  
m it throbbed as though the heart  
in were bursting; and the mute elo-  
quence of her look conveyed instantly a  
comprehension, to its full extent, of the  
calamity that had fallen upon them, in the  
obscure infliction of one so dear to both.  
Indeed, the shock of the poor girl's re-  
appearance had produced an effect directly  
opposite to that which he had feared. It  
ought to have been expected to complete the  
overthrow of her remaining intellect; but it  
only recalled it suddenly from its wander-  
ings. One of those singular trains of ideas  
which so capriciously governed the conduct  
of Teresa, led her to busy herself in the  
father's chamber that was called his own;  
and Francesco seized the opportunity of her  
absence, to question his mother respecting  
the sad events which had changed the  
aspect of his happy home into such an  
abode of desolation. All that she could  
tell him threw little light upon the mystery.  
“When you returned not to us at even-

“as usual,” she said, “the heart-bruised girl watched and wept, and, I imagine, wandered out, whilst I slept, to seek you on the mountains. How long she lingered without food on these desolate mountains I know not; but she has never reverted to the scenes of her night. Day after day I looked vainly for her return; I fancied that she must have wandered to the city to seek you, and I prayed that no evil might betide her among a corrupt and heartless people. When I had lost all hope of ever again seeing you, I found her one morning, at waking, bending over my bed as of old, and sending the daylight from my eyes, as she has done thousands of times before. But Francesco! the awful wildness of those looks—the fearful convulsive starts, shudderings, and mutterings of foul sighs, shrieks! You will soon be as familiar with them as I am. Yet in all things else, that concerned my comforts, I could discern no change in her. She weeps as I weep, and she has tried to comfort

the promise of your returning. Each  
at sunset she went out, as she said,  
watch for you. Alas! how beautiful,  
how holy a spirit has been overthrown!  
as gentle as ever; and could the hideous  
images of foul visions be plucked from her  
memory, I think she might still be calm."

"We must watch over her, my mother,"  
said the youth; "she is so young that we  
must still win back the poor and shattered  
house to its beautiful, its lovely tenement.  
There are many topics which struggle with  
an unsettled intellect, and wisdom, amongst  
many wonders, may achieve this also."

Francesco glided softly into the adjoining  
chamber, and he saw the two chairs side by  
side, as of old. The open volume was spread  
between them, and the poor maiden was  
sitting with a smile to his gathered papers.

"We must resume our studies, dear  
mother," she said; "we have long left them;  
I will have half your toil to begin again."

"We *will* resume them, sweet one," said  
the student; "but they shall be holier and

wiser ones than these. I will leave you more ! you shall go no more to the hill's side to wait for me, but we will wander out in the golden fields together ; we will listen to the sweet music of the solemn pines, whose birds, innocent and beautiful as you have their happy homes, and will converse with us of nature's works. Our hills have starry caverns, where the waters dance joyously for ever, and sheltered walks, and beds of all odorous plants ; they, too, have their voice, my beloved, and whilst they give their harmonious songs to heaven, I will interpret them for thee ! Come home to my bosom, poor child ! I have ever been a brother to thee from thy infancy : what art I not to be now ? You shall hear and see, and feel, with my senses, till our intellects become blended, as our hearts and affections have ever been !"

The poor girl sprung into his arms, and the tears dropped from her long lashes on his neck, whilst her heart sobbed and heaved against his bosom.

“That this should have one day become  
our resting-place, sweet one,” he con-  
tinued, “I had long promised you, even  
my immature nature comprehended not  
at home that this heart was to have formed  
for thee; and now that such knowledge is  
removed from thee for ever, it shall still be  
the chaste pillow of thy maiden affections.  
I will indeed resume our studies, and  
every form in which life breathes shall be  
our teachers. Oh! the bitter, bitter fruits  
of that brief absence! This mountain sum-  
mit shall be our world, and together we will  
sit out and behold how lovely are all its  
scenes, and they that tenant them!”

Francesco looked into the tearful eyes of  
the poor girl, to see if any chord of the un-  
ruffled intellect responded to his touch.  
As! as she shook away the tears from her  
pale cheek, the flash of joy that suc-  
ceeded them told only, by its extreme wild-  
ness and brilliancy, that the charm which  
moved her spirit was in the tones of the  
voice she heard, in the eloquent gaze of the

eyes that had filled with tears, and were fixed mournfully upon her,—and in the pursuits he planned for her continuation. All possibility of immediate decided change seemed hopeless; he felt none of the weakness of despair he had risked, and well nigh lost his life; what now seemed to him a poor prize deed; and he poured out, silently, his vows, to cherish life, to avoid all temptations to personal enterprise, more carefully he had hitherto sought it—to bend all the energies of his soul to the new study of healing a malady whose nature was intractable.

From that day begun his task of love; never surely was one more diligently assisted in. He soon found that books had no power to control her attention; he accordingly closed them all, and turned his mind wholly to new scenes, and to a new science. From youth upwards he had known and known the gentle power of love's taming, and he was not deceived in the e-

that he had well judged must spring from it  
young mind, unscathed by the solitudes  
long communication with hearts trained  
artificial wants, before nature's voice had  
been heard within them. That summer was  
one of universal brilliancy, and promised  
a harvest of rare abundance. From that  
mountain and speck-like cottage he led his  
young charge forth at sun-dawn, when the  
fertilizing dew-drops still glittered upon the  
earliest plants, sparkling like diamonds on  
the intricate webs the gossamer had sus-  
pended from tree to tree, and bathed each  
leaf and tendril of the forming grape.  
From the music of the lofty hill he de-  
scended with her into the teeming plain,  
pointing out to her notice the beautiful and  
daily changes of the advancing season, and  
the gentler operation of the husbandman,  
whose wants had taught him the philosophy  
of toiling in harmony with the earth, and all  
the elements that labour for the common fertility  
which feeds its children. Even when the  
patient and laborious oxen shrunk from the

goad that urged their powers, he did not conceal from her that they also shared the fruits of autumn; and that man, the driver, too often shrunk beneath a far more cruel stimulant. Noonday saw them reclining, side by side, under the shadow of the branches of the stately pine, where it copied the pictured tracery of its infinite foliage over the sparkling waters of the refreshing brook; watching the untiring insects, whose labours his patient glance had learnt to distinguish from their seeming sportiveness, and listening to the joyous voices of the weak ones of their race that cheered their industry. When their steps turned once more homewards, beneath the starlight, guided by the glancing of luminous insects which abounded in every bush and furrow, Francesco each day noted the success of his labour of love, by the progress which that stricken heart had made towards calm.

Summer had yielded to the joyous dawn of autumn; they had witnessed the labours of the reaper; the harvest was

the earth, but every plain and  
ed with the glad voices of the  
ing holiday from toil ; and Fran-  
ot yet turned his mind backward  
world of the city, which lay so  
that on still evenings he could  
y he heard the mingled hum of  
y voice. In the meantime, a  
change had come gradually over  
of his frail companion ; her nerves  
tortured the frail frame with their  
remours ; and the glance of her  
es was subdued to a mournful, yet  
come calm. If any unexpected  
awakened the train of past terrors,  
were ever ready to receive her ;  
d bury her head in his bosom, and  
murmur out the sad story of her  
ness. The warm embrace of those  
ms, that formed her resting-place,  
full of glad reality, not eventually to  
over the terrors of her imagination.  
accesses daily shortened their fierce-  
and their duration, and then lost their

frequency, till at last a glance from the eloquent eyes that so narrowly watched her acquired the power to turn away the visitation.

Glorying in the triumph his tenderness and vigilance had achieved, yet vividly alive to the danger of a surprise, or a sudden impulse, which might at an unguarded moment throw all back into darkness, Francesco never let her stray from his side. The high bleak winds, and the autumn rain, now, of necessity, kept them much within the untempting walls of the poor dwelling; and he then ventured, as an experiment, once again to lay a volume open as of old between their seats; and it was not till then that he learned the extent of his triumph. She gazed upon the long lost sight of those symmetrical characters which the ingenuity of man have made the medium to portray the mental imagery of undying minds, as upon the lineaments of an old friend; and her perception, whose power had been of late strengthened by the contemplation of the beautiful in external

cts, now readily comprehended those  
al beauties which her preceptor opened  
er view, and was as easily conducted  
ugh the mazy realms which sages have  
t lives in exploring, as she had been  
st in her probation through the mountain  
udes, in whose gentle slopes and starry  
ties their summer had so peacefully  
ed away.

## CHAPTER IX.

IN cares such as we have described somewhat, perchance, too minutely—in the last chapter, Francesco had now passed away several months, in utter and contented ignorance of the affairs of the ever-changing world below him ; yet not, if the truth may be averred, without a passing thought to the Palace of the Priori, and to that sweet girl who had watched over his sufferings, as he was now watching over another. Her fair image passed at times so vividly before his mental vision, that he started, though the illusion had the powers of reality, and then a foreboding followed it, which

uld never wholly divest of substance. ever once had that sweet face shone upon s memory with the smiles and joyousness hich it had ever had during the early days their acquaintance ; but it seemed, as it cted past him, thin, wan, and tearful. He ove to picture her to his reproachful irit, as glittering in the gay and splendid cle, which at all times, and under all anges of the city's rulers, thronged the lls of the Palace of the Priori. He could sily, indeed, imagine how regal, how alted, that fair and snowy brow might ve shone, amongst the nobles of any land ; t a feeling, which he could not conquer, ctured her as shrinking to solitude and rrow, with a pale cheek, and the glory of r beaming glance saddened and humbled. From such scenes of painful thought he rned for solace to the altering features of e fair creature beside him. If other cheeks ew paler, hers, at least, were brightening ; tint, though of the very faintest hue, was eginning to visit them ; and the playful

light would at times flash over her sparkling eye, waking a thousand memories of happy days.

Several months had now rolled over the high office of Niccolo Capponi, and his hair had blanched more during their brief current than they had done for years before. Of the many annalists of those days, whose works have reached us, and whose perceptions were guided by their own interest and prejudices in the descriptions they have transmitted, there is none who has dared to cast a shade of doubt upon the flourishing and brilliant state of the commonwealth, under the sage and mild government of this illustrious citizen. Niccolo Capponi was not one of those cool, yet daring spirits, which are born for the emergencies of sudden and fearful changes. The fires of his youth had been long spent, and the impetuous impulses that hurry states beyond their discretion he had never known. There had been trying periods in his career, when the energies of a less temperate frame of mind

l have served his glory better. We  
seen that, in the great hazard at which  
ad been placed to obtain for him his  
nt post, he had rather acquiesced in  
old counsels, and followed under the  
d, of a fierce spirit, than placed himself  
e front of the forces which claimed him  
heir leader ; but in all that appertained  
e judicious and honourable government  
e state, the city possessed no one who  
his equal. All who loved order, all  
o fully understood the vast and various  
rests now contending throughout Italy  
their country's fall, rejoiced in the sage  
conciliating spirit of his government,  
d assembled about him in honourable and  
werful aid.

It will not be supposed that the Medici  
re, or would be, contented exiles. They  
re powerful in alliances ; powerful in a  
ong faction within the city ; and powerful  
the prospective riches of all the lucrative  
ices of the commonwealth, when it should  
e again conquered.

Pope Clement had recovered from rheumatisms of his unpontifical residence seven months in the Castle of St. Angelo, his nerves had recovered their tone, the daily and nightly music of the drum conquerors of his city, as they mingled the wild screams of slaughtered citizens, ravished maidens, and of honest burghers whom they tortured till the secrets of stores of hidden gold were howled amidst screams, and the creaking of bones, and the mockery of their torment.

The famous army of the League had (as was the love of equity and repose of Excellence, the illustrious Duke of Urbino) at last shewed itself without the city walls. When the male inhabitants had been exterminated, half the city burned to its foundations, the very convents desecrated, and the seeds of a new generation, not unlike the Sabine origin, had been sowed in the ruins of this Christian city, and when, finally, ten books of Messer Paolo Giovio's history had shewn the fate that attended lesser treasures,

leader of the League had at  
d his army within sight of the  
y. It would be a curious digres-  
aside from our story, to picture  
d circumstances of those noble  
hose council of war we attended,  
r chapter, up in the barren pin-  
e Apennines ; and it would be not  
fying to trace the happy success  
ulation which had united in that  
prise all the scattered bands of  
nd other brigands, whose stock  
d been thrown into the scanty  
s lucratively laid out, in rusty  
ancient arquebusses. But enter-  
such a page of antique registry,  
it would lead us too far from our  
office it to mention, that the Duc  
on had laid his bones beneath the  
adders and crumbled rubbish of  
ost walls of Rome, and the further  
his promiscuous host had devolved  
libert of Orange, who worked out  
nal plan of the fallen chief with no

tremulous hand. But, as we said above, these days had passed away, and Clement was once more enthroned in the Palace of the Vatican. The city still presented many a void where there had stood palaces, and many a mountain of rubbish where there had towered to heaven churches, which the contributions of all Christendom had built.

There were at this time, under the superintending keeping of his good friend the Emperor Charles V.,—who had, like a dutiful son of the church, called off his troops when the city was sacked, and an extra million of gold had been paid down by his Holiness, who was fain to pawn or sell all the jewels of his departed predecessors, and, above all, the curious relics of the taste and splendour of his uncle Leo,—three individuals, on whose destination mainly turned the question of the internal government of the cities of Rome and Florence. One of these individuals was an illustrious lady, the Princess Margaret, his imperial majesty's natural daughter, the stain upon whose birth was acknowledged

the world by the very moderate settlement that awaited her; for, of all the hundred crowns that he held in his gift, a simple coronet was intended to screen the shade upon her brow.

Her position had gained little by his admirable policy of the league with France, and he turned his thoughts to seek his safety with the fortunes of the Emperor's daughter. He suggested a matrimonial alliance between her and his hopeful nephew Alessandro de Medici, whom we have already introduced to the reader. *His* birth could not shame the descent of the lady, for the honours of his paternity were shared by others besides his Holiness; and as for the settlement, there was one most opportunely in hand, in which both could claim co-partnership; this was the city and republic of Florence. The other two individuals whom we mentioned as sharing the court and cares of the Emperor were two sons of the gallant Francis, King of France, who were hostages for the redemption of his own

person after the rout of Pavia. These youths, whose father their parent was naturally anxious to see restored to his bosom; and, to obtain such an object, he thought it the smallest part of the sacrifice demanded of him, to give up his friends and countrymen, Florentines, to the management of his imperial majesty. Thus, then, was it arranged, that the royal youths of France were to join the affectionate parent, and the Lady Marguerite was to be the wife of the illustrious Alexander, who was to be Duke of Florence. All that remained was, to convince the citizens of the expedience of the settlement;—the rest would follow as a matter of course.

But the citizens of Florence were the most difficult to manage of the whole negotiation. As to the liberation of the sons, their good friend, the King of France, had declared themselves full of joy, and had sent emissaries ready to dispatch, to bear their congratulations, and to transact the necessary loans. And with respect to the marriage of his imperial majesty's illustrious daughter with a subject of the state, the emperor was flattered and grateful, and letters of na-

the lady should be prepared  
ay. But to the consequent ar-  
transmuting their republic to  
ere existed, they declared, insur-  
obstacles. It was alien to the  
eir municipal policy, and though  
t, Gualtieri, Duke of Athens, had  
that novelty into their govern-  
d been found not to correspond  
nius of the citizens; they there-  
sted that his Holiness should  
n the youthful couple any one of  
in the Romagna, or elsewhere;  
leave to the good city of Florence  
gement of its own affairs.  
lopted, this resolution would yield  
aties, and when its reconsideration  
upon them, and a hint thrown out  
army of the Prince of Orange,  
experience in the sacking and  
f cities, the amity of the negotiating  
as considerably overclouded. To  
men whose minds were excited by  
inual renewal of his Holiness's

overtures, by the rumour of the descent of the Emperor into Italy, and the accomplishment of another part of the Pope's obligations, namely, the coronation of the Emperor at Bologna, was found by the men of Florence a task more honourable than easy. Then shone forth the power of a true genius for government; of conciliation and endurance that shrunk from no disgrace and courage that, while it perceived the eminent peril which lay around him, distinguished the sage and the patriot who took the helm of the government, and enabled the state to hold on its way through the stormy seas, whose angry waves deafened them with their roar, and threatened death to burst over all things. Yet there were times when the experienced spirit of Niccolò Capponi trembled. The horrors of the Roman slaughter were not lost upon any who had wealth or honour to forfeit; and more acutely was it dreaded by those who had young and chaste maidens to protect, and happy homes to tremble for.

With the responsibility of a succession of unpopular missions, to appease the various powers whose interest made them foes ; trembling with daily dread of extreme measures from an unreasonable populace ; the hair of Niccolo Capponi might well grow whiter than snow, and the strength of a robust old age might well be broken. But, added to all his public cares were others, which contributed even more rapidly to break the constitution of this good old man. But these met not the eye of the indiscriminating multitude ; and when they watched the caution and the fore-thought of his counsel, and listened with anger to his reverent mention of the Pope and the Emperor, they saw only a timid and time-serving policy, which they judged void of energy, and began to murmur that age had subdued the vigour of his mind as well as of his body, and that in the person of a certain Francesco Carducci, the demagogue of his day,—a man of rash projects, intemperate speech, and a constitution of iron,—they

discerned accomplishments far more a their own hearts. As Niccolo Capponi daily stronger reasons for conciliation, heady multitude became more intemperate notes of defiance resounded through the against the Emperor and the Pope ; hard names were applied to the latter, all his race. The wisdom that had saved them in the hour of their danger was now held lightly, and the tide of popularity ebbed away more rapidly from the Gonfaloniere and his government than it had ever flowed towards them. Everything betokened a coming storm from abroad ; and by way of mending the matter, everything augured a crisis at home.

Such was the nature of the changes which had taken place while Francesco, in his mountain home, had forgotten the world and its turmoils, and devoted his whole life to the purpose he had so solemnly undertaken. It was towards the early close of a winter's evening when Francesco proposed to his companion to turn their steps hom-

ward, to seek shelter from the cold winds. The advance of the season had brought an unfavourable change over the exquisitely sensitive frame of the young maiden ; for an unusual symptom began then for the first time to declare itself, in long fits of silence and abstraction, varied at intervals by floods of tears and accents of despair. His love was not to be wearied ; his watchfulness increased ; every precaution was taken to nurse her bodily health, whilst every varied power of his soul was called upon in turn, and exhausted, to cheer or divert her thoughts. Fearful of the inclement breath of the bleak gales, he turned her steps home before the sun threatened to withdraw his rays. As they entered the cottage, and Francesco had placed his fair charge under the chimney-nook, and was busy heaping the pine-branches on to the blazing hearth, his parent beckoned him into his inner chamber, and placed in his hand a letter which had been left at an early hour by one from the city. Jealously guarding against

any apparent departure from the ordinary calm of their every-day life which might to the slightest degree disturb the extreme nervous health of their common care, had taken the precaution of placing it in other hands in secret; and the same precaution urged him to peruse it where he stood. He glanced first at the signature, and the initials M. B. took a weight of inexplicable foreboding from his mind. It was the hand of Buonarrotti that, in the plan of life to which those characters strove to rouse him, pointed out a path which he had long ago resolved to renounce.

“My dearest young friend,” thus ran the epistle, “in abandoning all your friends whom you have done, you richly deserve their forgetfulness. You would be, if I guess aright, sufficiently punished. If I were to tell you that you are easily pardoned, I should not, however, tell you the exact truth. You are, indeed, much out of favour in quarters where favour should be, to men of honour like the light of life. But turn we at o

to your own affairs. The path you nobly started in, you have as suddenly turned aside from. Your excuse may be, that you did so when our first difficulties had been surmounted. This would be the excuse of age, but it is inadmissible in youth. Things have gone from bad to worse, and we are now upon the verge of some catastrophe, which may, I fear, utterly destroy all that is noble, honourable, and free, in this afflicted country. There is but one man who, if any can, may now, even at the eleventh hour, save us. This man, who, to a whole life's experience of affairs, adds the most intimate knowledge of the human heart, who can move its most delicate springs as easily as he can discern them, is—not yourself, my young friend—but one over whom, if your silence has not estranged him from you, you have much power,—the power of an adopted child, for your mind at least is the offspring of his forming. This man, you will immediately understand, is the shrewd magician who has so long hidden himself

from mortal cares in his den in the dei Guicciardini, where, with an incredible levity, whilst this city rocks to its foundations with a moral earthquake, he sits in gloomy study, spinning out comedies as the fittest caricature of all human concerns. It is to awake once more, for his country's redemption, the powerful interference of Niccoli Macchiavelli, that I thus break the spell of your solitude. We are no longer to be rescued by a popular movement. It is no longer question of imposing a Gonfaloniere on the mutable populace, or how he might give us so much of your solitude as would occupy from dawn to sunset ; the diseased intellect of a whole people to be restored to sanity, and no one but the I have named could achieve a task like this. Our chief magistrate is much shaken by the cruelty of his position, and I fear by another cause, of a more personal and afflicting nature.

“ Such, my young friend, is an epistle dictated at various and anxious intervals ; and looking it over, I fear its style is more

cheerful than the heart of its writer. If you tarry longer in idleness when all good men should be busiest, you may have to regret, without the solace of having done your duty, the ruin of our liberties, and the invasion of our homes. In all love, yours, &c.”

Francesco raised his glance from the paper, and as he did so, they met, fixed upon his countenance, the eyes of Teresa. Their expression was of mingled wildness and terror. She made no attempt to address him, but stood motionless and apparently breathless, with her features fallen as with incipient idiocy; a damp dew was upon her brow, and an expression, as of the conflict of the stillness of death, with the outbreaking of ungovernable insanity. Francesco gazed upon that appalling spectacle for a minute with a calm brow, although he felt a cold terror at his heart, and a sensation as though the fingers of death were busy there. Yet he betrayed not by a single feature his emotion. His first movement was to tear up into small pieces the paper he had held

in his hand, and throw them carelessly from him. The lips of the young girl moved, and, in a voice so very faint as to be formed only by the moving of her lips, she said—

“ You leave me ! I, too, have my voice here !” she signed to her bosom and then continued her gaze so wildly that each instant seemed to threaten some falling of the slight remains of her shattered intellects.

“ I leave you not, Teresa !” he exclaimed. “ Our mother waits us, and this room is dark and cold.”

A faint yet desolate and incredulous smile broke over her features, as she listened to his calm voice. “ Francesco,” she said, “ your bosom is as clear to me as crystal, and I see the serpent nestling at its corner as plainly as I see in the mirror of your eyes my own corpse, and the men who are burying it : and I see even more than that ; Francesco is at his wedding, and his heart is as cold and as dead as I am.”

“ And is this, then, the termination of all my watchings, poor girl !” said Francesco, whilst the tears broke from his eyes, and he turned them away from her face, not any longer to look upon a sight that made his blood icy cold. Even at that instant, when he thought the evil irremediable, and his hopes fled for ever, the tears upon his cheeks had a power to arrest life already on the wing. She fell upon his neck ; the evil was for the time averted ; their tears mingled, and they flowed like healing balm over her bosom.

“ Beloved one, we part not till death,” she said ; “ it was a false and hideous vision, like the rest ; but it is over. I am weak and trembling. Oh, the blessing once again to feel thus ! My limbs felt bounding with a craving to grasp something—to do I know not any longer what. Help me, bear me in these dear arms to my seat ; let the bright blazing pine-wood light us ; there is life enough in its sparkling flames for my spirit now.”

Francesco bore her in his arms under projecting masonry which they called chimney ; it was the only nook of the chamber where the searching winds entered not at will. Much shaken by the stern he had gone through, he turned away thoughts from that nearly fatal letter, an aversion amounting to disgust. Yet the contents sink not the less deep in his heart ; for the hints it contained, which way he would, were ever present in his memory. A thousand vague and terrors, yet perhaps none so melancholy as the reality, haunted him through the night and peopled his slumbers with horrible phantasms, when the unaided mind had the least power to struggle with them.

In the meantime, the old man of the Via Guicciardini went on multiplying his verses, and satirising the affectations of the world, as skilfully as he had already amused the human mind, their parent ; but less how rapidly the city drew nearer to the catastrophe which that letter had foretold.

A month more rolled by, and another letter reached Francesco, by a chance so singular that it appeared miraculous; it came to him unperceived by any one, for the messenger met him on the hill, when he had strayed out the only time for many months unaccompanied. He buried himself in the deepest solitude to read it, and even then he trembled as he opened it. The handwriting was one he knew too well, it was signed "E. C." "Not for my own sake," said the writing, "for you have, doubtless, long ago forgotten me, but for the sake of one who was once dear to you, and who even now has not ceased to love you as one of his own children; for the sake of that dear old man whom you once risked life to save, come to us, if only for an hour. His life is trembling in a balance held by his enemies, men of blood and falsehood. All is confusion here, for they have borne him to a dungeon, and the whole world has abandoned him and me. If you come not before to-morrow's sunset, you will never see either

again in this life. Whatever you may choose to do, you have the blessing of one who has thought of you even in her desolation."

This letter was enclosed in an envelope which was inscribed this short notice in the writing of Buonarotti:—"The executioner attends in the palace the decision of the Council now sitting. Heaven help the innocent!"

The decision of Francesco was instantly formed. He returned to his home, to wait till its inmates should retire to their rest and then to fly, with what speed he might to the city. He perfectly well knew the consequences should his absence be perceived; yet, confiding all events in the hands of *Him* who is the ruler of all, he trusted by daybreak to be again in his chamber. This letter was placed in his bosom, and he hurried homewards.

How endless seemed the intervening hours of that most anxious evening! The door of the cottage was secured, and at last all did retire to rest. With the low murmuring of Teresa's

voice, long after all else was still, he was familiar, and he this night listened till its very faintest tone was hushed. He then raised his window, and sprung forth upon the grass beneath it ; he paused to listen ; all within was still, and he sprung away on his anxious enterprise, like the leaping water-course, over precipice and rock, till he reached the plain at the mountain's base. Bounding onward, as only one had fled over part of the same plain before him, an hour saw him within the city walls, and at the gate of the private Palace of the Capponi.

He was admitted: the silence of the tomb is not more profound than that which prevailed throughout the building, and the gloom of death was on the features of those he met. He sprung up the spacious staircase, without pausing to reflect for what purpose he had come thither. A low murmuring of the voice of misery, as it reasoned against hope with its consoler, at last fell upon his ear, and he stood at the door of Eugenia Capponi.

His hand had touched the handle, and the door for the first time, he hesitated.

“It is *his* step!” said a rapid yet choking voice from within. The door flew open, and the majestic figure of Buonarroti stood across his path.

When his eye fell upon the figure of his visitor, his countenance assumed a sternness, and his glance a fire, which Francesco had never witnessed before, though he had known him from his youth upwards.

“You are then come at last, young man,” he said; “far too late to be useful, but timely enough to witness, in one hour, more of wretchedness than the accumulated years of my whole life have seen till now!”

“Had you known,” replied the young man, “how my last few months have passed, you would be the last of my friends to meet me with a reproof.”

“Oh! reproach him not, dear friend,” said the tremulous voice of Eugenia, in her very sweetest tones; “he has no fault;

left us in our prosperity, when others crowded round us ; he comes back in our desolation, when all save you have left us.”

“ Lady,” said the youth, “ until your letter reached me I knew not, indeed, of any misfortune to your family, or any trials greater than all must encounter who are charged with the government of an insane and ungrateful people. When I did learn it, I came, and I am now here to give you but a word of courage. That word shall not be a less true one than any other my lips have uttered to you. Niccolo Capponi shall be safe in life, in property ; nay, as I live, he shall be safe in honour, which he values more ; and when I redeem my word, I will come back for my forgiveness.”

“ Save him, save him, Francesco !” exclaimed the maiden, clasping her hands in agony ; “ none but you can do it. Wealth, treasures that may well move his judges, he has to give ; only let me once again see that dear and good old man in safety, and the remains of life that lingered only

till I saw you, I will give up with joy to my Maker."

Struck as Francesco had been with the change that had come over the face and form of that fair creature since he had last seen her, it was not till she thus addressed him that the awful nature of her seemingly total break up of all the energies of youth flashed fully upon him.

"You will live, lady, to bless his old age for many years to come," he answered "and to restore calm to hearts that have suffered as your own has done. Fear not for him; that virtuous and noble citizen shall come back to you with honour. Think not that I have toiled in the foul labours of a base populace so long, without knowing that which gives the power to save as it does to revenge. Gherardi is his accuser, and Carducci has the power which his fortunate star has given him; but I have more power with the Eight-Hundred than either, and a simple story told to that assembly would consign them to destruction before sunrise. But

lady, I am tarrying, while the time flies." He raised her cold and marble hand to his lips, and passed out of the chamber.

"Can he, can he indeed do this?" said the maiden, when the last sound of his step ceased on the staircase. "Once he saved his precious life, and if Heaven help him,—but, oh! the time, the brief, the fitting minutes!—had he come to us but one hour sooner!"

"Had he, indeed, done so," said the soother of her afflictions, "it might have been better; and if he have the power he hints at, the calamities of this house will cling to him for ever, if aught of evil happen. None ever knew the sources of his influence or his power; his name has ever been with the clamourers of the piazza a watchword to good or evil. May Heaven help him!"

"You speak harshly, dear friend," said the maiden, trembling. "He knew not of our misfortunes; he is shattered in health, yet how unbroken in spirit! In him alone, under Heaven, is my hope. I will now beg

of you to leave me. I have obtruded my sorrows upon you more than is seemly. It were better that I carry my supplications to the foot of my Redeemer's cross, and there pray that I may not leave this life until I am at least assured of my poor father's fate. Though, to say the truth, I feel, at times, as if life were already on the wing to leave me."

Buonarotti left her at her request, and she retired to her oratory. To one who could have seen that young maiden on the night of Francesco's return, it would not have been difficult to conjecture in what state of mind her last few months had passed away. A complete wreck in health, her fine form fallen away in the roundness and beauty, if not in the stateliness, of its proportions, she presented that most pitiable of all sad sights, a young and most lovely girl perishing of a breaking heart. Since the awful tidings of her father's arrest had reached her, she had spent the whole of her time in her oratory, in preparation for her

departure from this world ; for upon so slight a thread she felt that her life depended, that she judged this calamity, in some of its later stages, must have severed it. Utter desolation of all hope in this world had accompanied her voice to Heaven ; and yet in the very midst of her afflictions there came solace, though she could trace it to no source that gave hope for the future ; and it came at a moment when she had ceased to dream of its possibility. She had seen *him* ; he had flown from the side of one whom she felt was more loved than *she* was ; and he had come back with the countenance not of one who had revelled in the inebriating joys of love returned, but pale, haggard, and infirm of step ; and when he met her glance, how manifest was the expression in those fine features, of deep sympathy, of tenderness, and of determination to risk life, as he had more than once already done, for her sake ! Most inexplicable, indeed, had ever been his calm assurance of power,—the decision with which his purpose was formed

and effected,—the unfailing courage, familiarity with the passions of other men, and the spirit which controlled them,—that resided under a brow so young and so composed. “And if he succeeds, he returns me,” she murmured. “Oh! can I have been all this time pining away and perishing under some fatal error? or can he be again awaked to a feeling he once surely had? Oh, gracious Providence! is his health too far ruined for him yet to save me?”

An hour passed away in reflections alternating from despair to hope. It was already midnight, and the utmost stillness was over all things. She rose from the crucifix which she had been kneeling, and drew near to the window which looked out upon the street, and threw it open to cool the fever of her brain. The glorious stars shone out with their cold, unsympathizing brilliancy, and she listened vainly for any sound that might betoken the public results of the awful council which she knew to be sitting,

or death, in judgment on her father. She had listened long, and was about once more to retire to her pious vigil, when suddenly there came, sullenly booming through the midnight stillness, the awful tones of the great bell of the Palace; and presently a sound of mingled voices from afar, and then a tramp of multitudinous footsteps from all parts of the city. The bell tolled with singular violence and rapidity, and from every street and offstreet thousands began to pour forth, hurrying by her windows, uttering exclamations of surprise and alarm.

Tempted by a sudden impulse to rush out from her home, and mingle with the populace, to learn if that awful voice was indeed the knell of all her hopes in life, she sprung away from the window; but her excitement was too violent, and her frail limbs far too feeble for the execution of such a purpose. She tottered, and well nigh fell, before she could advance many steps, and, sinking upon a couch, covered her face with her hands, and shut out from her view the hideous phan-

tasms that danced mockingly before vision.

Painful as this suspense may well be judged to have been, we must leave it for awhile, to follow the steps of the youth who had thus boldly declared to a daughter to whom the sentence must bring life or madness, his undoubting confidence of escaping, from the very jaws of a disgraceful death, her father, though a state prisoner and arraigned at the tribunal of his acknowledged enemies, for the unpardonable crime of treason to the commonwealth.

END OF VOL. I.

T. C. Savill, Printer, 107, St. Martin's Lane.

THE  
HISTORY OF THE  
CITY OF FLORENCE:

An Historical Romance.

BY  
DANIEL M'CARTHY, ESQ.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THE  
SIEGE OF FLORENCE.

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CHAPTER I.

FROM the Palace of the Capponi, Franco rushed out, with the flight of an eagle, to the Palace of the Priori, where the Supreme Council of the Ten were still assembled, in earnest debating whether the criminal should be executed in the palace itself before sunrise. So unalterable seemed the determination of the ambitious foes who met in judgment, that, before half an hour had elapsed after they had met, an order had been dispatched to the Bargello, for the executioner's last functionary of the law to be in attendance.

The council chamber presented one of the scenes which must ever be frequent

in states governed by a democratic knave  
of unscrupulous adventurers, to whom  
every change is a fresh scramble, and every  
honest man removed a place nearer to the  
summit towards which all are striving. The  
principal personage, he on whom all eyes  
were fixed,—most, with an expression  
gloating eagerness, of gratified cruelty, and  
some two or three with the pale aspects  
alarm,—was a very young man, of diminutive  
stature, but singularly ferocious aspect. He  
had risen from his seat, and was addressing  
his companions, in a tone of mingled defiance  
and entreaty,—at times menacing an appeal  
to the people, at times not unadroitly stimu-  
lating the ambition of those on whom  
could least rely. In his hand he held  
a letter; it was the fatal secret of the  
sender's crime; an intercepted letter from  
an emissary of the Pope, treating, as he  
interpreted it, of a surrender of the liberties  
of the state to the family of the Medici.

This letter he waved above his head, and  
whilst he recited and commented upon

nts, the usually sallow tint of his dis-  
countenance gave way to a deep  
t, whilst every vein in his high-pointed  
ad was swollen nearly to bursting.  
e intemperance of his harangue might  
seemed to vouch for his sincerity,—  
at too many expressions escaped him of  
nal hatred, of unslakeable animosity,  
st the individual they were called upon,  
o judge, but to condemn. Niccolo  
oni, it would appear from his discourse,  
been already heard, and his faltering  
h and abashed mien, his trembling limbs  
raven appeals to the compassion of his  
s, had already, could any further proof  
that self-condemning letter have been  
ed, evinced his guilt.

rectly opposite to this orator sat an  
idual whose hair was already blanched.  
was short and robust in person ; bull-  
ed ; of a swollen and blotched face ; of  
umsy and clownish structure ; with á  
l, quick, grey eye, full of covetousness  
cruelty. This person occupied a seat

next to the empty chair of the Gonfaloniere, and it was to him that the harangue of the youthful speaker seemed principally directed. This man was Francesco Guicciardini, the popular agitator of his country; one who, by a fearless liberalism, had elevated in station, virtue, and wealth; and by a coarse fluency of tongue and of eloquence best suited to the ears of the citizens from which he had derived his origin and his training, not to the education; and, finally, by openly opposing and scoffing at all restraint of expression and personality, continually violating the spirit of all right, yet with sufficient care in keeping within the letter of the law, had attained an eminence scarcely second only in the republic to the Gonfaloniere himself.

This man had listened with a delight which his serpent-like eyes had no power to conceal to the inflamed address of the orator. He had already made a signal to be heard, and a slip of paper was laid, by an usher, on the portfolio before him.

barely glanced at the single line it  
ained, when his flame-coloured visage  
; he made another signal to the orator  
ontinue, rose from his seat, and re-  
an ante-room, awaiting the arrival of  
arty his signature had summoned, stood  
individual clad in garments rarely seen  
ne chambers of the great: it was the  
ent Francesco; with a brow more dis-  
posed than ordinary trials had the power  
aking it. He had passed the various sen-  
s on duty in the palace, and in an ante-  
, in which he had been for a moment  
ned, he had seen the blood-red dress,  
aked arms, and the leathern belt of a  
ionary who needed no other indications  
eclare his office; he had, however, by  
de, a large sharp axe, against which he  
d; and while the sentry who guarded  
walked at the extreme of his beat, and  
him from time to time with a visage of  
st, not unmingled with something of  
stitution, he was calmly and contentedly

enough awaiting his summons to the inner chamber. At the sight of this man, Francesco for a moment recoiled; his eye brightened, and, drawing close to him, he whispered a single sentence in his ear, and passed on without waiting for a reply. A small lamp, the first that had come readiest to hand, had been placed on a table in the room in which the youth waited, and its light scarcely reached to the spot on which he stood, gazing impatiently on the door. Scarcely had the summoned demagogue made his entry, when the youth sprung to meet him, and by an irresistible impulse laid his hands on the collar of his dress, and dragged him rather than led him to the light.

“How is this, ruffian!” he exclaimed, in a voice whose tones hissed through the very brain of the pale senator. “Have you taken leave of your love of life, and of your sense, since last we parted? Are such as you sitting in judgment on the noblest, and best, and wisest of the citizens of this republic? Do you dream that because I had ceased

ou the counsel that made you what  
re, I had ceased to live? or that,  
I would allow you and your ruffianly  
rs to judge away the existence of one  
to me than life and high fortunes;  
hom, in elevating, I but placed where I  
have been myself?"

originated nothing against Niccolo  
oni," said the individual thus ad-  
d; "he has plunged himself into ruin  
oolish correspondence with the enemies  
e state; and men feel that, whilst he  
ined for their betrayal, he bargained  
or more power than he has yet got,  
consistent with the freedom of the  
nonwealth and their safety. I but  
gled as others did, and as you did of  
or honourable distinction; and I thus  
d his hate; and, hating me and others,  
ok this insane means of seeking ven-  
ce. If he has fallen into his own snare,  
my doing?"

Man of deceit and lies!" said the youth,  
ning with rage. "That Niccolo Capponi

hated you, and those who toil with you readily believe, for you and they are fair subjects for the hate of all honest men, and he is, as God is his witness before men, a model of an old age of honour, earned by a long life of virtue and wisdom. Do not lose time in unprofitable railing. You have the power to save him, as you know that *I* have the power to give *your* neck to the functionary you hold in readiness to cut out. Time flies, and as others hate him as bitterly as you do, they may, marking your absence, as none trust you, dispense with your voice, and proceed to judgment. Hurry back to your council of assassins, and finish this monstrous wickedness, without further outrage to the feelings of this good old man and his family, or our reckoning will be a short one."

"But the letter, my young friend!" exclaimed Carducci, "Gherardi has it, the original document, undeniable and plain, and he waves it above his head, as though it were the very sword of the executioner."

"Tut, man!" replied the youth, "a wise man like you to talk about a letter! It is a very, I tell you!—have you so very little experience in matters of the kind, as to feel about the authenticity of a handwriting?—and were it even true, is he the man in this city who has corresponded with Clement, with the Emperor, ay, and with the Medici themselves? Begone, before it be too late! I would be the bearer of the tidings of his safety to his family."

"It is too late—it may not be—it is very impossible!" was the reply; "if you come in amongst us yourself, you may see of the state of excitement in the council."

"I have foresworn further commune with a manslayer," replied the youth. "I will not listen to harangues that would be more fitly answered with the dagger than with a reasonable argument. Begone, I say, do my bidding whilst there is time, or your repentance will be brief."

The demagogue paused for a moment in deep thought ; his colour came and went, his grey eye lighted up with a baleful glint, and he exclaimed, " You have lost the use of your senses, young man, and you shall be dealt with accordingly ; here you shall remain a prisoner, till the dungeons of Bargello are ready for your safe keeping. The executioner will be at liberty in an hour, and will then find time to remove you from the further keepers of unsafe secrets from the path."

The face of the youth crimsoned, and a rage within distorted his features till they were as those of a maniac, as he heard the bold and unmasked defiance thus delivered in tones of a calm yet firm resolve, from one who was all-powerful with the tyrant that took life without appeal. He resisted, however, the power which was so far beyond his control, and the violence of the emotion required to retain it sent back the blood to its fountain.

" Hark ! monster and idiot that you

Giuseppe Spada is no longer in your call ; were he so, I would even present this dagger to your heart as

He is already in the tower of the and at my signal will summon the y hitherwards, and will transfer from your assassins to the Council ht Hundred ; and the first criminal judge shall be Francesco Carducci, an accusation that will speedily idle fantasies, about letters, from ights. Such a course I am at least for, and should I fall, proofs of eness are in other hands. You know

h love Girolami bears you, and he te eloquence enough for such a

But listen further, most discreet —you are next in station just now lo Capponi ; he may well be supposed gusted with his office, and the peace- t procures him ; he shall resign it, and ll be Gonfaloniere, when I hold the e of his acquittal in my hands, and nd is safe. Such, methinks, are fair

terms ; do you agree? no talk of difficulties ; no talk of delay ; I am not one to submit to subterfuge ; none ever yet deceived me ; and you last of all men should think to attempt it. Now for your answer."

" You will aid to place me where I would fain be?" asked Carducci ; " and every paper of mine you will deliver into my hands before sunrise ? if such are your terms, I shall be saved."

" Saved!" exclaimed Francesco, " saved without hints about pardon, or consideration of his services, and false flourish about his age and past sacrifices ; saved without honour ; declared without reproach or stain on his fair name. Such are my terms on the one hand, and your certain and speedy delivery from the cares and patriotisms of this world on the other. Supreme rule of Florence, or death before sunrise."

With such extreme alternatives before him for choice, Francesco Carducci took leave of his visitor, and went again to join his fellow judges ; whilst, with that exquisite calm

of the expedient, Francesco went at  
with an order from Carducci himself,  
the place of confinement of his friend.  
It was a small chamber called the room of  
the clock-turret; the same in which the first  
who had so nearly experienced the wreck  
of fortunes, and in which the far more  
numerous of the unhappy victims of that  
despotic state—Girolamo Savanorolo, the  
tyrant—had passed the last night of his  
life in captivity. It was that enthusiastic,  
generously gifted, and pious patriot who had  
presided at the democratic assembly, called  
the Great Council of the Eight Hundred,  
and who, being in it, for the safety of persecuted  
citizens, the right of appeal, with power to  
revoke the decrees of the select tribunals of  
the state; and apparently with a view of  
extending, to even a far greater number of  
citizens, the right of a voice in the govern-  
ment; and had built that vast hall which  
second only in magnitude to the temples  
of the Supreme Judge of all earthly deeds.  
When Francesco entered, he found the

illustrious and fallen Gonfaloniere, tethered like the superannuated ox to the shambles with his head drooped down on his bosom which heaved at long intervals with struggling sighs. One might have judged that all the functions of animation were suspended. He raised his eyes as the door of his chamber opened ; but it was not until the youth had approached him, and taken his hand, that he recognised him. When he did so, a convulsive shudder shook his whole frame.

“ Such is the end of earthly honours, my young friend,” he said, at length. “ You did well to abandon a struggle in which the wary and the skilful stumble. There remain but one scene more ; and, perchance, the lips that first greeted me in my brief elevation are deputed to announce to me its approach. If so, it is more kindness than I thought remained amongst my enemies. But tell me first, before the awful judgment sever my thoughts from all things of this world—have you seen my child ? She will not long survive her old father. I feel that this

nity will surely send us both, with brief  
val, to the same grave. Oh Francesco !  
you not thus long staid from us, my  
l's health had not perished ; and there  
been moments when a bolder counsel,  
a loving heart, might have so aided me,  
this bitter cup had been put away.  
see me broken down to the earth,—my  
gies already dead. A fate like mine has  
ed down before now far younger and  
r spirits. I saw the blessed Frate even  
e humbled, on the eve before his mar-  
om, than you now see me. I held water  
s lips, at a moment when I thought his  
t on the wing, and that his executioners  
cheated of the prey they had so sacri-  
ously hunted down. If he, that holy  
whom angels are said to have visited  
is cell, shrunk from a shameful death,  
small wonder that an old and infirm  
as mine is, and a soul in its sins,  
ld thus tremble to face its Maker.”  
e tears were upon the cheek of the  
h, as he listened to the weakness of a

spirit that prosperity and age had unfitted for so stern a trial; he had made no effort to interrupt or to cheer, and the very tears that flowed fastly down his cheeks seemed to bear the most melancholy of tidings.

“Cheer thee, dear old man,” he said in length; “those who have injured thee would not have sent *me* to bear their merciless decrees; they have neither the humanity nor the courage to do so. I come to minister to thee words of hope and comfort. Not the very humblest citizen of this free republic could thus be hurried from life by a handful of his enemies, far less the irresponsible head of the state. I have the right of appeal to the people, I have the means, at least, to secure your power of that appeal. Your position, even then, would be painful, and undignified before a whole people; and this, I trust, I will spare you.”

A hurried step—one that Francesco knew full well—was heard at the door; it was thrust open, and Carducci stood before

his face was pallid ; his whole mien  
his limbs trembled, and he tottered  
at from which the aged citizen had  
seeing him.

inevitable !” gasped out the trem-  
essenger of evil tidings ; “ it is  
remediable ! Gherardi has drawn  
r, and threatened to strike the first  
shall dare to advocate the proposal  
and they all shrank from his vehe-  
that seems insanity.”

en, indeed, is there no time for  
The bell shall toll, and to-morrow’s  
es both you and him on the scaffold  
I would fain raise for the innocent.  
his Highness, you craven and faint-  
fool ! Death you have chosen, and  
I can tame the madness of your  
leader, death most assuredly you  
meet.”

cesco sprang to the door, and before  
ci was aware of his movement, he  
himself alone with the prisoner.  
tly, the small chamber in which they

were shook, and seemed to rock beneath them ; and then came the deep tolls of the awful bell, summoning all men at dead of night from their homes, to meet beneath their various gonfalons, to resist or counter imminent danger to the state.

Roused from his torpor, as though the hand of death grappled with him, Carducci bounded from the chamber. Upon the threshold he was met once more by Francesco, whose brow was now calm, and even mirthful ; but the flashing of his dark eyes as it fell upon the astounded demagogue withered his very heart. " Come along, most admirable senator," said the youth, " we shall want your voice to decide upon your own fate ; for the few minutes now to intervene before the people come to judgment, will decide whether your select tribunal, before it merges into one far juster, will acquit the Gonfaloniere, or will accompany you to the block within an hour or two. I am yet willing to keep my terms."

Rushing from chamber to chamber

ing by the sentinels, they burst at last into the council room, where the select Ten were sitting. It was a most stirring scene of alarm and confusion, which they entered upon. All had arisen from their seats, and every voice was suspended; deafening peals of the bell above them shook with its vibrations the very chairs they had occupied; a confused murmur of trembling citizens was already heard in the piazza below them; and all further business appeared merged in personal alarm. The master-spirit of the whole assembly seemed even more paralyzed than his fellows. His fatal letter was still in his hand, but his hand flourished no longer before the eyes of an astonished audience; it had fallen by his side; and when the door opened, Carducci rushed in, accompanied by several whom all recognised as the leading spirits of the last change of the state, there was not one amongst them who had the courage to move, to expel him who thus violated the privacy of their tribunal.

Francesco had sprung to the side of Gherardi, and whispered but few sentences, and then, turning to the astonished audience, he exclaimed, "You have but few minutes to spare, most excellent Priori, to do an act of signal justice. Your Gonfaloniere, the elected magistrate of the great council of the people, in a few more seconds be again in his place, presiding over a tribunal which renders null any decision you may come to. When the great bell has summoned the standards of the people to council, your Excellencies are aware that my coming here is no longer an intrusion. An order for your arrest is now preparing, and as a friend to so illustrious a class of gentlemen, I am anxious to give you this warning. My companion Gherardi, and my most excellent friend Carducci, will advise you, O Signori, to be prompt and prudent. Say I not vainly to noble Senators? Is not Niccolo Capponi hereby acquitted—wholly exonerated from all cause of suspicion of dangerous practices against the state—of all deeds that would

me so exalted a station as he lately  
? He is aged, and broken by his toils  
the state service, and will find in Fran-  
Carducci a stronger and a younger  
essor, and one more according to your  
s.”

The palace was already agitated by the  
of arms and the tramp of multitudes.  
pale faces and trembling hands every  
ber of the council placed his signature  
document of most glowing eulogy on  
whole life of their late chief magistrate.  
o citizen,” said this instrument, “had  
exceeded him in personal intrepidity  
s country’s cause ; none had, since the  
of Aristides, so well merited that sage’s  
ellation of ‘ the just ;’ none had ever  
cised his prudence in the guidance of  
state in times of difficulty ; none ever  
ted or possessed in a greater degree  
esteem, the honour, the personal love  
nose whose happiness it had been, in  
ing his labours, to partake of his re-  
n. He was free in his person and his

property; and on retiring to the calm domestic life, he bore with him the gratification of his country, and the love of all good men. He was the second of his name who saved his country—the first whose fair fame had been assailed by slander.”

Such was the document which Francesco Carducci read, with his powerful lungs, and his regained assurance, to the Council of the Eight Hundred, as soon as, amidst the turmoil of all things, it was assembled, about three hours after midnight.

## CHAPTER II.

THE most memorable day of the long life of Niccolò Capponi was that which succeeded his acquittal. Not even that in which his emancipated country had elected him its fittest guardian of their recovered liberties, had been so glorious;—for on that day the whole city rocked with its own tumult, and their gratitude to the noble citizen whom they had been unanimous in appointing to the highest post of distinction and honor among them, was shared by those who had contributed to work out their redemption. But now he was the sole object of their minds; the triumph of suspected

virtue awoke all the noblest sympathies of human nature ; and there are times and circumstances when such emotions agitate the political frame of a whole people, with as much enthusiasm as they can do in the bosom of an individual. Men's minds had been stupified by the suspicion of treason against one to whom their liberties had been confided ; and when the cry of alarm had been once raised, it seemed but a brief prelude to the ruin of those institutions on which depended their existence as a free people.

The haste with which the Council of Ten had been called to sit in judgment seemed to leave small doubt of the discovery of some heinous treachery. So amazed and grieved had the whole people been at the falling away of one thus trusted, and whose whole life had been spent in a series of struggles for the freedom of the city, that the accusation was heard with painful silence, as an omen of evil days at hand.

His acquittal was received, not merely as a circumstance affecting one whom t

red, but as a public benefit, and the  
of all were elated accordingly.  
When Niccolo Capponi went out from the  
, (which it may be supposed he lost  
me in doing,) the whole Council of  
Eight-Hundred accompanied him to his  
dwelling. Every gonfalon of the dif-  
quarters of the city preceded his march  
triumph; thousands of torches blazed  
e and around him, and every voice of the  
bled multitudes gave out, in prolonged  
s, the joy, the triumph of his cause  
their own. Thus preceded, and thus  
ed, the old man, who but an hour or  
ince had been drooping almost to his  
from terror, reached the gates of his  
e. Upon the very threshold his  
ater met him, and was borne up in his  
to the privacy of her chamber, where,  
ne remaining hours of darkness, they  
ed out the fulness of their hearts in  
ude to their Maker, and in embraces  
ich tears were the silent evidences of  
happiness. Forgetful of the danger

of the topic with which his release connected, Niccolo Capponi entered into every particular, as well as he was acquainted with them, of the last few momentous hours.

“He wept over you, my father?” said the maiden, smiling even through her tears. “then indeed has his been a tender and love equal to your own child’s. *That* I would have done, and only that; and I might then have died with you. But it needed this to restore me to life, and hope, perhaps, to health again. What amazing courage, what cool energies, what power *he* seems to possess over all men equal to me! Oh, my father! when I saw the tear upon his pale cheek, it was not for us, and I thought we had not the power thus to move him. I have hitherto kept my word to you, when I promised you compensation for all your trials, in a happy home. I have left you with a breaking heart, with perished health, embittering and weakening, instead of soothing and strengthening, your old

t shall not be so in future ; smiles,  
st father, renewed hope and mending  
a—which, as the mind ruined, the mind  
restore—shall henceforth be your wel-  
to your home. You will, from this time  
rd, leave to others the dangerous and  
erous honours of a fickle people ; and  
hall daily see how your daughter keeps  
romise which she now renders. Your  
will be spent amongst us as they used  
, before these evil times had altered  
of us ; and the pursuits which then  
life like a long summer's day will have  
come for us like old friends !”

nicolo Capponi pressed his daughter to  
som ; and though her pale and altered  
enance, and her nervous and fluttering  
, had seemed like a warning, yet did  
e wholly disbelieve that flattering  
ect. He left her to take a few hours  
ose, and went to meet his friends, who  
now as numerous as the starry hosts  
were shining above his dwelling.  
en a new day broke, a far different scene

commenced, and deputations, of an very different from the veering popu flocked to his home. Niccolo Cappon no longer a public functionary ; he had ferred all but death, for an accusation of friending the Medici, and it answered purposes of the adherents of that asp family to parade him as a convert to cause. It is certain that, when the ne the last few days' proceedings reached Vatican, Clement declared aloud that family was, from that hour, secure in rence ; and the Pontiff calculated shrew that such an outrage to such a citizen, w moderation and high character had been bulwark of the republic, would do more than open force to reinstate his family. Once removed from power, the mere individual became to him rather an object of complacency than dislike, and he was nothing loath to profit by appearances when he could not do so by realities ; so his agents in the city were instructed to be behind hand with their congratulat

ded to these, representatives of opposing interests, were the ambassadors residing in the city, from the various European states, who, from motives directly opposite to those just enumerated,—that is, the desire of shewing their respect to a valiant and high-born citizen, who had bravely resisted the ambitious views of the Emperor,—came eagerly forward, to congratulate him upon his acknowledged success, and to announce the absence of all change of views, respecting the policy he had pursued hitherto; so that these contending views, harmonizing in result, combined to render the levée of the retired statesman the most brilliant that the annals of the commonwealth have on record, as waiting on a private citizen. The portals of the Palace of Capponi were kept open, from dawn till midnight, to a continuous stream of the parties we have mentioned. They were received with an expression of surprise, and with somewhat of alarm, by the old man, who knew the cause of his delivery, and the ever-

wakeful jealousy of his enemies, whose  
was now excited to tenfold virulence  
becoming themselves the reluctant insti-  
ments of the singular honours that all classes  
combined to shower on him. Faces that  
had been averted from him in his days of  
power, now beamed with smiles, and were  
radiant with compliments, on his retirement.

Viewing this reception as the last act of  
his father's public career, Eugenia Capponi  
wound up her resolution to the effort  
receiving them in person. There was  
in her countenance none of the timidity which  
her father evinced, as fresh numbers thronged  
his chambers ; yet withal, there was a quiver  
in the nervous recurrence of her glance to the  
doorway, each time it opened, as though  
in expectation of some welcome visitor ; and  
a gleam of disappointment and pain, as it lighted  
upon the different official or aristocratic  
personages, whose visit she considered  
wholly ceremonious. Thus passed away  
the whole day, and some hours of the night  
and when the last visitants disappeared

remained up till then) she threw herself  
her father's arms, dispirited and wearied.  
"It is over, my father," she said, "at last,  
thus drops the curtain upon the last  
of our life's parade. But where is *he*  
his time? Would it not have been a  
and a consoling sight to him, to have  
witnessed this triumph, which himself  
deceived? and oh! would it have been un-  
satisfying to him to come and hear from our  
how greatly we have all cause to love  
you? It would have been a relief to your  
children to have embraced him as a brother,  
and to me, at least, to have thanked him upon  
my knees for the boon of a life so pre-  
cious. My Creator, at least, will not refuse  
my gratitude, and to him I will go to make  
my offering. Our prayers, my father, may  
reach *him*; for he, too, has had his trials. We  
thought he was too happy to remember us;  
his cheek, usually so calm, revealed a  
very far different, even in the momentary  
review that he spared me before he saw  
me."  
"To the youth himself let us now return.

Once assured of the safety of his friend, turned his thoughts and his steps again homewards. Disentangling himself, with what speed he might, from the compact masses that thronged the halls, passages and courts, and even to the outermost limit of the great square, he fled away with unabated speed to the city gates. But here he met with the greatest obstacle of all to his progress; for the cry of alarm, and the mustering of the citizens, had made many of the timid turn their thoughts to flight. The city gates were reluctant to open, and it was not until every one had given satisfactory reasons for the wish to pass onwards, that they were allowed to go forth.

Foaming with impatience, he had to pass through the tardy ceremonial of authenticating by register that his place of abode was without the city, before he was permitted to pass free. The various clocks in the town had struck, and he had counted five by each, and all before he was finally clear of further obstacle. It was still dark for it was yet winter; one hour was

his reaching his home, and before he trusted, would have stirred the cottage. With all the speed of young limbs were capable, he in steps he had trod scarcely more than a few hours earlier. A prey to which his calm reason told him were the foundation, each dense mass of rocks across his path, each sigh of the wind amongst the bare branches of the trees magnified his apprehensions, lest any terror, to which the fair girl to whom he was hastening was at times subject, might have roused her earlier than usual to flight.

But for the reason which so many years of such delicate fostering had prepared him for total overthrow. Such things added wings to his speed: his goal was at last in view; the steep hill had moderated the rapidity of his course; the cottage was as calm as he had once more sprung within his open door, and then threw himself on a seat,

in order that the violent beating of his heart and pulses might subside.

Silently he waited for a short period, then thought of seeking his bed, to snatch an interval of sleep before daybreak. There was an uneasiness, a chilly foreboding of evil about his heart, which made him hesitate; he turned to his door, determined to creep softly to the chamber of Teresa to assure himself that all was well, before resigning his couch. Moving with the utmost silence, he crossed the chamber in which the form of his aged parent lay in a calm and deep slumber, and passed on to the chamber of Teresa. He listened:—all within was still as death—far more still than sleep. He listened long, till the rapid beating of his own heart confused him; for the sound was so audible that he doubted whether or not it proceeded from within himself. Unable longer to bear the suspense, he gently raised the latch, and entered.

The slumbers of the aged woman in the cottage were suddenly broken, by a sudden

and awful that her senses, on  
g, were bewildered. Raising her  
me from her bed, she naturally  
her steps to the chamber of their  
solicitude; she pushed open the  
l beheld before her an empty bed,  
form of her son stretched upon the  
he raised his head upon her knees;  
ne utmost effort of which her aged  
ere capable; and he again became  
s; he asked her in a low plaintive  
a cup of cold water, and then rose,  
hout speaking, retired to his room.  
in leaped from his window into the  
r, and called aloud to the straying  
with a cry whose plaintiveness the  
took up in mockery; then, turning  
opmost ridge of the mountain, which,  
light was on the earth commanded a  
f miles of open country, he called  
and again, in rapid answering to the  
of his own voice. Into every hollow  
woody recess that they had visited  
er he then rushed in his search. All

was calm. No voice came, in search similar to his own, no signs of recent footsteps in his prying glance. Through the whole of that day, from early dawn till darkness again hid all things, he continued his hopeless search. Thus was *his* day passed while the Palace of the Capponi was thronged with visitors.

“It is useless,” he exclaimed bitterly. “her reason must be utterly extinct; she is lost to me, and to herself for ever. Frail as the hope is, she may, perchance, wander back to her home; it is all that is left me.”

And thither, broken in strength and courage, he once more returned. A severe illness followed his night and day of anxiety and fatigue, and he remained long an unconscious prisoner, fostered upon the bosom of that mother that had suckled him in his infancy, and attended only by an infirm creature, who forgot weakness and age, in watching by his couch, a long vigil of love, that admitted neither of faintness nor of slumber.

Teresa was gone, and during his long

a sleep little different from that which it so long threatened to, she came no more near them.

aged and afflicted parent she was gotten, and, except when the melan-  
choly murmuring of the helpless object of  
seemed either communing with her  
as he did more frequently, when  
d out for her encouragement the  
ded treasures of a life of thought  
y, she had utterly ceased to re-  
er flight, or even her existence.

weeks had thus passed away, and  
woman still shrunk not from her  
; when, one evening, when the  
had already made the enshrouded  
ark, steps were heard ascending  
bank under which the dwelling  
ered, and presently a deep rich  
med admittance. The aged woman  
e eyes to the doorway, but made no  
the latch was lifted up, and a young  
lovely as light to look upon, yet  
worn, leaning upon the arm of the

same dignified old man who had before brought the solitary woman help in her extreme need, stood before her.

“ We are come, dame, to inquire for your son,” said Buonarrotti. “ This young lady is his friend, and has long been anxious to see and thank him for a service he rendered to her father. Can we see him, or he without ?”

The aged woman gazed at them for some moments in doubt, and then beckoned them to her. “ He is there,” she muttered hollowly ; and at the same time drew aside a wretched curtain, composed of added remnants of many rags, formed of the scanty dress of the maiden that had clothed them. Both visitors stood aghast at the spectacle that now met their eyes. Emaciated and worn down to the meagreness of a skeleton, yet with his powerful black hair protruded, not in wildness, but in languor, he lay on a mattress, on the earthen floor, in a motionless form of the young student.

It was some moments before any s

like the death-like stillness of that sad contemplation. At length the mournful voice of the youth was heard, murmuring through the silence—"Not yet, my mother she comes not yet; but she surely *will* return; for in the wide world she has no end but ourselves. But life is fast ebbing, and she will come too late. There will be none to shield her when I am gone; no home in which to bury her flashing eyes, when the foul images are before them. Should it chance, when she wanders back, and finds my place empty, and none to cheer her, none to care for her, that the clock may recall her reason, tell her that there is one who would cherish her for my sake; one whom I loved as I love her; a fair, sweet maiden, of gentle manners, and whose known sorrow, springing, if I judge right, from a source which should make kindness between them. I may have length yet to write to her my farewell ere I leave this world; and surely I will remember

her in the only earthly boon I have quest."

His voice then died away in so faint and indistinct a murmuring as to be inaudible.

"I knew it," whispered his female companion to her companion; "a scene like this I have witnessed in my dreams for many weeks; no other cause would have kept him from us. Go, dear friend, fetch your father, and let him send hither a litter to convey him from this desolate dwelling to his home which he may by so many rights call his own. I will watch by him till he can bear him hence. O God! how unjust have been my complainings! Haste, haste, he may depart hence before morning."

"Dear young lady," said her companion, "such a care is scarcely fitting for you. Return you rather to your home, and let me take the charge of transferring him here. I can be a tender nurse, and when he has gained some strength, and, what is more important, the repossession of his in-

ing him, no unwilling patient, for  
e.”

ave left him long, far too long  
replied Eugenia Capponi ; “ I will  
side no more, till he shall again  
go from us in health and strength.  
is aged parent give us some tidings  
riend whose loss has thus affected  
he must be found ! ” she added,  
er eyes were bent downwards to  
and a blush fluttered upon her  
“ His life may depend upon her re-

r expostulation was of no avail, and  
panion turned reluctantly from the  
to provide means for conveying  
who yet lingered beneath its roof.

oor had scarcely closed upon his  
form, than the emotions of that  
ill then controlled, broke forth in a  
of tears and sobs, which shook her  
e a fever. With her face buried in  
, she continued long heedless of the

aged sharer of her solitude and her griefs and it was not till the uneasy writhings of him who was all to her in life, recalled her attention to his wasted form, that she seemed aware of his melancholy proximity. Then flinging aside the braided hair which had fallen unnoticed in her wretchedness, she threw herself upon her knees by the side of his humble couch, and essayed, struggling with her sobs, to whisper words of comfort to his bewildered spirit.

“ I am with you, dear Francesco,” she said ; “ all will yet be well with you and those you love ; no selfish hopes flatter me in my vigil ; no terrors, no despair will shake my tenderness !” She moved aside the tangled folds of his long, raven hair from his forehead, and raised his head toward the light. “ Do you not know me, unhappy one ?” she continued ; “ a sufferer like yourself ; one whom love for you has rendered thus altered, thus broken in heart and health ; one whom love unrequited ha

not humbled,—nay, has elevated far above the dread of a cold and selfish world. Look up! turn not away those eyes, though their glance is so mournful!”

The sufferer had started convulsively when the tones of her voice fell upon his ear, and had striven, with a momentary effort, to ascertain who addressed him; but his intellect served him but a moment, and he relapsed once more into stillness and unconsciousness. When he again spoke, though it was not of *her*, the remembrance of her seemed yet to mingle with the subject nearest to his mind.

“ It was for her sake that I left my home for those few, yet fatal, hours; it was with her that I lingered, when *she* fled away from the home she had shared with me from childhood, innocent and happy. She was fated, poor girl, to be thy destroyer,—gentle, holy, lovely, as she is; her beauty, her goodness, have been thy ruin! Oh! who, save the One Searcher of hearts, knows by what dark

deed, or hideous vision, thy reason was overthrown? If man's wickedness have injured thee, surely the God of purity will be thy avenger. I, who could have protected thee as I cherished thee—who could have warded off the very shadow of the knowledge of shame—I was away, mingling in the strife of evil passions—toiling to raise the very fabric which I was called a second time from thy side to demolish;—and then came the destroyer, and thou art lost, lost! and a few days more there will be none to seek for thee, none to nurse thy sickening spirit, wert thou to return, save that gentle maiden to whom thy very existence is unknown!"

Heavily and slowly wore away the remaining hours of that dreary and anxious night, and the early streaks of a wintry morning were in the heavens before strange steps were again heard, trampling the drift-leaves of their solitude. In the course of that day, Francesco and his aged mother w

conveyed away from the humble dwelling in which they had resided for so many years, and from that day forth the mountain fox sought the shelter of its hearth, and the swallow built her nest beneath its eaves.

## CHAPTER III.

WHILST the world without had been busy with preliminaries of most immediate consequence, and had taken no overt measures against Florence, the busy world within had time for that gratifying diversion of remodelling again and again their plans of commonwealth, and selecting from among the more ardent lovers of liberty those who, combining with some small share of regard to their own interests a confidence of their personal aptitudes to serve the country, distributed amongst them the offices of the state which, not wholly unprofitable, afforded the best stimulants

industry and enthusiasm in the  
e.

brung up that famous school of  
atory, which proclaimed to the  
e admirable and eloquent prin-  
free policy which glow in the  
their historians, and which, after  
g for three centuries in the  
nd unfrequented council chambers  
historic Palace of the Priori, have  
n awakened in the halls of modern  
astonishing the world with their  
shrewd and singular novelty, and  
for these orators wreaths of fame  
o come, and renown amongst gene-  
e be born hereafter.

ter day the sonorous eloquence of  
rolled forth its billowy tide, through  
ous halls in which he now presided  
a rival. Council after council met  
to admire, and to legislate ; a re-  
s carried into every order of the  
deputies from every class of the  
assembled, each possessing that in-

timate knowledge of the wants of his constituency which formed the popular admired orator. Good, sound, domestic government became the outcry, and universally absorbing topic of all minds and all concern with the troubled and enslaved world without was utterly expelled from the lips and hearts of the multitude of senators.

These were glorious and happy days, alas! too nearly approaching perfection to be long in the possession of human government. Unprepared to admire in others what they possessed not themselves, neighbouring powers viewed not as it deserved this mortal elysium,—although the rulers and senators of the republic did not to notice their turmoils and their action. The armies of his Imperial Majesty marched, fought, and sacked cities, with perseverance and taste not unworthy of a great robber who had led them to their essay under the walls of Rome.

It was with much regret that the h

city was at last roused from its domestic improvements, to attend to the strife of the contending powers which raged around them. The gallant Lautrec was in movement in upper Italy, and proposed honouring the Tuscan states with an amicable visit. The eloquent Gonfaloniere deputed orators to meet him, and avert, to a subsequent period, this inopportune ceremony. An oration, a large sum of money, and a subsidy of troops, victuals, and artillery, were eminently successful ; and the forensic heroes returned to the hall of the great council, crowned with laurel, and rewarded with their country's thanks. The army of Lautrec turned its march aside from the territories of the republic, and all further concern for him and his followers was dismissed for more interesting discussions.

In the course of a few more months, Lautrec and three-fourths of his gallant troops had left their bones in the trenches around the walls of Naples. The pestilent vapours of marshes of their own making,—

for they had broken the arches of the aqueducts that supplied the city with water, and thus flooded the country,—had swept away the flower of his chivalry, and spared but a few ague-shattered spectres, to complete the scenic imagery of the spectacle which the whole of Italy afforded at that period.

From the walls of Naples, Filibert of Orange once more led out the bands of the Bourbon, refreshed by their campaigns, ready to work out the paternal project of the Father of Christendom. His Holiness raised his pastoral staff, and pointed it towards the city of his inheritance.

“Wolves,” he said solemnly, “had broken into the fold, and the innocent sheep had been slaughtered. The sacred emblem of the power and beneficence of his family had been torn down from the temples which their piety had erected, and vile revolutionary novelties, the ambitious and impious projects of base men, (thus he spoke of the reforms and reformers of Florence,) had outraged all decency and sane toleration.”

Therefore should these valiant hosts  
with his blessing, and consecrated  
and heal the bleeding wounds of an  
country."

t's interview with the Prince of  
on this occasion must have been  
with interest, to one studying the  
character. At whatever part of the  
had held their parley, the smoking  
ruined ruins of palaces and churches  
extended in sad memorial before  
and there was scarcely one of those  
buildings but covered the un-  
burials of fathers and brothers, who  
witnessed the unholy violation of their  
sons and sisters, and which lay long  
and breeding pestilence, to re-  
vive their wrongs on their aggressors.

Monument, indeed, reared over illu-  
strations, might have added eloquence to  
the speaking of the Pontiff, had this inter-  
view with a deputy of the renowned  
sculptor for on that mausoleum were sculp-  
ture achievements of the illustrious

Don Carlos di Lanoia, whose solemn compact had bound him to arrest the scourge of barbarians, and who had been amongst the earliest swept away by the pestilence, raged long before the invaders had left the city.

The Prince of Orange received his commission, and some few thousand crowns, the hard wringings from usurers and churchmen,—and then turned his legions towards the fertile lands of Tuscany.

Scarcely less exciting was this second march towards these rich cities, than had been his first towards Rome ; and had his movements affected none save the cities of Florence, he might have moved as surely as his appetite for plunder would have allowed him. But the States of an individual whose thoughts were less occupied with popular reform than those to which he was directed, lay in his route, and these were included within the Pontifical commission. Malatesta Baglioni, the tyrant of Perugia had long had a vigilant eye upon the march.

ments of this army of unscrupulous adventurers, now proceeding northwards, charged with the plunder, and blackened with the smoke, of the southern cities ; and as soon as their homeward route was decided, he strove to rouse the torpid Tuscans from their Utopian slumbers.

His emissary was a certain antique musketeer of humanity, who had figured at various times on the troubled stage of Florentine changes ; his name was Giovacchino della Vecchia. Excepting that his hair was somewhat more grey, and his visage somewhat more furrowed, and tumid with so many more years of prosperous vintages, the aged survivors of a past generation noted little change in him since the day when he headed the guard that stood about the scaffold of Savanorolo. His rude speech and abrupt address had little power to conciliate the reception of unwelcome tidings.

When he announced the approach of the hordes of the Prince of Orange towards Perugia, he was told that the direct road

through Perugia northwards lay not the road to Florence ; that the presence of a foreign army so barbarous was indeed a calamity, but that it was one which had befallen richer and more powerful states than those of Florence ; that patience under the affliction would evince his wisdom.

“ And is patience all that your Highnesses are prepared with, against their march to the Piazza of the Priori ? ” asked the aged veteran.

The reply of the Signori might even have been temperate ; but Francesco Guicciardini had a spice of the emissary's abruptness, and he rose at once to utterance to one of those powerful nervous harangues which had established his renown. He hurled defiance alike at the Pope, the Emperor, the Prince, and the brigands. Never had his Holiness been the subject of a similar philippic ; and should polite ears been astonished with so bold an exposition of an irregular origin.

Gratifying as this naturally was to

whose mission was for the express purpose of exciting evil feelings against an invader, it was not entirely all that was sought. The emissary agreed with him in the style and truth of his vituperation, but suggested the propriety of considering of some means of meeting the coming danger. He observed that the admirable militia of Macchiavelli had long been organized, and it was desirable, if only as a political experiment, to put their efficacy to the proof. The black bands of Giovanni de Medici had been for some time idle, and their very existence was an anomaly in a well-ordered state, unless they, like the other members of the political body, were kept in health by appropriate exercise.

Once convinced of the expedience of these suggestions, the authorities gave orders to enrol troops, to prepare banners, to burn the palaces of the Medici, and to pasquinade the Pope. All and each of these ordinances were punctually carried into effect; the excitement of the latter com-

pensating for the unpalatable nature of the former proceedings.

In the meantime, courier upon courier dashed through the gates of Florence, charged with fresh tidings and more urgent advices from Perugia; and last of all came the astounding news that the dignity of the republic had been outraged, that the armies of the invaders had already taken possession of Macerata, Montefalco, and Asceso, and finally, of Cortona and Arezzo.

Things were now becoming serious, and a new spirit entered into the councils of the republic. No longer were heard the exciting shouts of "Liberty and the People" but a wild and ferocious howling, from dawn to darkness, of "Death to the Medici! extermination to their adherents!" Carducci, who had fitted with marvellous dignity in the seat of the Gonfaloniere, was necessarily in the rostrum, and his oratory was remarkable as having acquired an entirely novel and more exalted character. He flourished away about Saguntum and universal con-

flagration—anything sooner than a recurrence to the hated reign of the bastards of the house of Medici, and the removal of the Gonfaloniere of the city's free election. His own hand, he declared, was ready to place the torch to the magisterial palace, to burn the city rather than suffer the degradation of submitting to Clement and his barbarians.

The envoy of Baglioni was called into the august presence of the assembled Priori, and charged to bear to his principal an invitation from the city, to enter into the pay of the republic, as leader of the armies they were about to enrol, and director of the fortifications they would forthwith commission the illustrious citizen, Michel Angelo Buonarotti, to erect.

The envoy departed, and the wonderful genius of the public engineer was employed to surround the city with trenches and bastions. Batteries were erected over every gate of the city, and when all within the walls appeared sufficiently secure, and the

property of the citizens mulcted to meet emergency, they were allowed the diversions of seeing to the equal distribution of public burdens, by themselves executing the mandates of the active senate. The suburbs were to be swept away. They who possessed palaces and villas without the gates were invited to transfer their furniture into the public squares, where they would be secure from the plunder of the State's enemies. Their homes, vineyards, and churches were to be laid low; they were invited with their own hands to aid the work of patriotic sacrifice. The vaulted heavens, sonorous with songs of liberty, and radiant with banners, they were welcome to, as the magnificent roof that a free citizen could cover.

Loudly and fiercely rung up through the excited city the wail over the demolition of those long, populous, and wealthy lines of residences, thus declared without the protection of authority to instant overthrow. Heedless of the feelings that might attend the sacrifice

wealth, the eager crowd hurried  
hands to their work of patriotism.  
Some the miniature palaces of the  
n of the suburb; down came the  
villas,—the homes of childhood;  
captured tombs,—the hitherto quiet  
of their departed parents; the altars,  
silent witnesses to Heaven of each  
testament of piety and repentance that  
stolen from a life of calculation and  
the convent,—about which ever  
the mysterious and solemn doubt  
mutations of the frame with age—  
the duration of the existence of  
r and modest maidens who had  
within their doors with the innocence  
purity of girlhood in their hearts  
weeks. Down came the hive-like  
ery, on whose records even the  
might boast to see his humble  
exalted to a species of nobility, arising  
the possession of offices of authority  
in the busy commonwealth;—down they  
came, in an inconceivably short space of

time, mingling their ruins with uprooted vines and olives, which had fallen with the abundant promise of their future fruit upon every branch and tendril.

Let us not charge it to their shame, men thus made homeless wept, while the rabble bore more stoically the ruin of property not their own, and which they unhesitatingly offered up to their country's service. A few tears over the sudden severing from all the memorials of life, may be pardoned to the sternest republican.

In a few days the city of Florence raised up its towering dome and its lordly palaces in a desolate and burning wilderness ; cannon projected grimly from a circle of batteries, and arms gleamed along the turret walls ; and when all was thus far in readiness, the first scene of the stirring drama was exhibited, with a pomp and circumstance worthy of the dignity of so resolute a people.

The town of Perugia had already surrendered by compact, and the forces of Mal

testa Baglioni began to pour into the capital thus vigorously fortified. There was a grim smile upon the weather-beaten visage of the emissary, who now returned at the head of the troops which his own diplomacy had subjected to his command. The rear of the forces was brought up by Baglioni himself; a short, broad-shouldered, sinister-looking warrior, with a face of suspicion, timidity, cruelty, and craftiness, and inflated with a pride equalled only by his infirmities. He had been borne to the very gates of the city in a litter; but had then, to his great personal inconvenience, mounted upon a mailed charger, to meet the Signori in a state becoming the great trust and the high honour in store for him.

Entering the city simultaneously with this host of Perugia, by the different gates, and evidently with little disposition, when entered, to mingle their forces, came a less numerous, but a far more highly disciplined and richly equipped array of horsemen, and preceded by a banner and a leader well

known through the courts of Christendom and nearly in every contested field of Italy for the last few years. This individual was Stefano Colonna, a Roman noble, Herculean in stature, of iron limbs, and ferocious aspect. He was mounted on a charger black as night, encased in gorgeous plate armour, and bearing at his saddle-bow a vast and heavy battle-axe such as no arm but his own amongst the mighty host might wield.

There was a tangible reality of stern times in the appearance of this fierce array, as it wound through the streets, which somewhat startled the peaceful citizens, who hitherto rather talked than thought about the coming struggle.

The march of the troops was directed immediately towards the square in front of the Palace of the Signori; and there the magistrature, arrayed in robes of state, and with the evidences of a wealth that might well impose upon the admiration and the covetousness of their defenders, awaited their coming. The noble chief Malatesta

**Baglioni** responded to the invitation to enter beneath their roof, with all that courtesy which one but recently dispossessed of state and power, and trusting to regain them through the medium, and with the forces and funds, of those who addressed him, might be supposed to assume.

Not so the haughty and dark-visaged Roman. **Stefano Colonna** descended not from his saddle, but bowing with ill-disguised disdain to the illustrious magistrate—no other than **Carducci** himself—who addressed him, signified his desire to know what quarter of the city was apportioned to his horsemen, and when he might be honoured with the commands of the Signori.

He had met (a circumstance that rarely befel him) with an individual little disposed to brook an uncourteous word or a haughty look; one who valued both himself and his office far above a hireling *Condottiere*, of whatever rank or repute. He descended to no further notice of the noble, but turned on his heel, cooled somewhat in

his civilities toward the more politic leaders of the State's soldiers. Stefano Colonna, stern, irritable, and arrogant, had his own reasons for this ill-timed discourtesy, as he also had for accepting the post which had brought him within the city walls.

With pride of unrivalled birth, and an education acquired beneath his family banner amongst warriors who knew no law save the wishes of their leader, no dread, save the displeasure, this proud man had lived a life of vicissitudes, which had taught cruelty and selfishness, as well as overbearing haughtiness. To have accepted, under ordinary circumstances, a second post in command, and to have acknowledged as his superior the mere tyrant of a petty city, would have little accorded with his temper or his reputation, as a fearless soldier, and a shrewd and skilful leader; and nothing short of one of those extreme reverses of fortune which incessantly chequered his career, could not have induced him to yield his reluctant consent. His ever-restless and ambitious

family had mainly helped to bring about the late catastrophe in their native city. They had been the bitterest enemies of the imprisoned Pontiff; pushing him to those hard and cruel terms that obliged him to seek expedients which debased to the very earth the dignity of the tiara; compelling an open auction of the hats of cardinals, and the pastoral crooks of every empty bishopric, and every profitable preferment in prospect that was within his reach. It was Stefano Colonna who received into his own keeping those unfortunate prelates whom they considered as enemies, and whom they purposely singled out as hostages for the fulfilment of terms scarcely within the bounds of human endurance. But when the evil star of the Pontiff had spent its malignity, and other days came,—when the army of the Prince of Orange had at last quitted the city, and Clement regained his freedom, and had entered into treaty with the Emperor respecting newly discovered interests, and formed an alliance with the bandits who had sacked

the city—the first use he made of required power was, very naturally, their hands against the possessions most relentless of his domestic enemies.

Nothing loath for any adventure promised plunder, these unscrupulous had obeyed the Pontiff's wishes to the full. The castles of the Colonna were one after another seized and burnt; their towers razed; their followers exterminated, scattered, like the ashes of their dwellings, by the four winds of heaven. The baron Stefano Colonna then became the rallying point of all the injured of his party, still too feeble to maintain his ground in the territories of the Pope, and without knowing what part to adopt till better counsel came. A messenger from the republic of Florence met him, with proposals to join them against the common enemy.

The terms offered him were, in every point of view, highly desirable. Revenge, that best of all paymasters, had in him hopes even more tempting than

florins. But then came, mingling bitterness and humiliation with his hopes, the unpalatable necessity of obeying many masters, and of following where he had hitherto led. There was, however, but the choice of utter ruin, or acceptance, and small time was allowed him for his selection.

It was whilst a prey to these mingled feelings, all of which united in rendering him stern, and even savage, that he rode in sullen moodiness at the head of his horsemen, into the square of the city. Grinding his teeth with rage as the plebeian figure of the Gonfaloniere disappeared beneath the porch of the palace, he hesitated, for an instant, upon what further course to take.

The dark warriors that surrounded him were not slow in reading, on that frowning and fierce brow, the dark passions that were raging in the bosom of their leader, and the novelty of their situation as readily suggested its cause. None dared to disturb his reverie, but backing their steeds among the over curious-populace, they formed

about him a wider circle, and then so immovable, as though no life dwelt within the iron panoply upon which the sunlight fell with intense brightness.

Stefano Colonna was roused at length by a murmur amongst the crowds, and a swaying hither and thither of these mighty masses. The portals of the palace were thrown open, and forth paced the magistrates of the city, with the important person of Carducci at their head, resplendent with the gorgeous state robes of his office, and accompanied by the leader of the mighty array that thronged the piazza. Herald-harbingered their movements; and as they passed down from the steps of the palace to ascend the Loggio dei Lanzi, every martial instrument gave out its shrill and stirring music, which fell upon the excited senses of Carducci as it did upon the ears of the mettlesome war-horses, which, as the prancing hoofs clattered upon the pavement, added to the uproar.

The small, subtle grey eyes of the Go

faloniere twinkled with a quick and bright scintillation, and his heavy brow became radiant with a novel and martial ardour. He was led up the steps of a velvet and gilded throne, erected after his own device for the occasion, and before him was laid upon a cushion the baton destined for the infirm hand of their elected leader.

Stefano Colonna smiled, with an expression of sarcasm and rage, as he beheld the tottering form of Malatesta Baglioni sink down on his knee, to do homage to the city's magistrate, and then receive from him the important emblem which conferred unlimited power over the armies of the State.

But a ceremony far more galling to his proud spirit was next performed. The officers of the various bands of which that force was composed, passed beneath the standard of the Perugian, which fluttered side by side with the banner of the republic. The keen glance of Carducci appeared to single out the moody brow of Colonna, and

kindled with a light of triumph, as marked the pennons of that proud family droop beneath the ample folds of the gonfalon of the State, which fluttered before the elevated throne.

Colonna turned with ill-concealed disgust from this humiliating ceremony. Too proud to plead weariness, too politic to avow open discontent, he forced himself to conform to the remaining arrangements of the day's pageant. Carducci was not one to abate a jot of the homage which thus unexpectedly fell to his due, and the parade was prolonged beyond the patience of many who had made a wearisome day's march beneath a burning sun. Comfortable, nay, luxurious quarters awaited them ; and as their marchings were at an end, at least for some time, they consoled themselves under the wearisome display, with the prospect of a campaign shared with wealthy burghers, and comforted by the smiling faces of the fair portion of the citizens. Evening came at last, and with it the initiation of the soldi-

to the long promised revels of a luxurious blockade, and the piazza was deserted.

In a gorgeous chamber of the ancient Palace of the Priori, and surrounded with the emblems of his authority, sat the somewhat wearied, yet supremely happy wielder of the city's destinies. Very different was his present state from that of past days, when, flying from the face of an offended prince of the exiled family, this now potent ruler had turned his heel upon his humble home in his native city, and upon his honest merchandise, and gained from day to day bread and garlic sufficient for the fatigues of the morrow, by reading lectures upon the rights of citizens. He was now wealthy to his heart's content; he had been honoured beyond the lot of any citizen of equally obscure origin; and as though fortune administered her utmost to his elevation, he had that day received homage from the bended knees of nobles, high in birth, station, and fame of arms. These were reflections well calculated to banish weariness from his

limbs, and all care of the morrow from his brow.

Yet, as we have led the reader into the sanctum of his privacy, we will extend the privilege, by watching for a few minutes more that brow, upon which those who looked in the hours of his public career had never yet observed aught but self-importance, triumph, or shrewdness. The mood he was now in led him deeply into thoughts, most jealously screened from public gaze ; and gradually the smile of his late triumph began to subside ; his brow darkened, and became so drawn down as nearly to render invisible his minute and cast-down eyes ; he clasped his hands convulsively, his head drooped, and from time to time a slight tremour shook his broad, solid frame.

It happened that a pen fell from the table before which he was seated, to the floor, and the mere and scarcely perceptible touch of its feathery giration startled him ; he bounded to his feet ; his hair stood on end, and the moisture broke in round bubbles from

his brow, and in this mood of mind, scared and nearly bewildered, he gazed towards the distant corners of the room, into which the light from the many silver lamps fell less glaringly; and then, when about to turn his eyes to the cause of his alarm, his glance fell upon a brilliant mirror, and exhibited the ghastly spectacle of fallen features, the paleness of death, and his erect hair. He passed his hands across his eyes to shut out a vision so hideous.

After a few minutes had restored somewhat of calm, he undid his velvet vest, and drew forth a miniature, richly set in diamonds of immense price; he raised it at once to his lips, and then gazed upon it till the mood of his phrensied fear passed away; the fountains of his heart were opened, and tears quick and large, as the tears of childhood, coursed down his rude and passion-worn features; the pomps about him were as invisible, through their moisture, as was the memory of the day's pageant during his present paroxysm.

If such an one as that picture represented had ever been loved and lost, well might he weep for her, even in his old age. No vision even of the dreams of a youthful poet, could exceed its extreme loveliness ; but among its traits of angelic beauty, there was an expression about the eyes and lips, which hid its own fatal secret for the heart of the mourner. There was a slumbering sadness, subdued by melancholy and meekness, which might have escaped the observation of one unacquainted with the subsequent history of that lovely female ; but to the expression alone the eyes of Carducci were riveted in most melancholy gaze. The picture and its memories were at once his stimulus and his shield, through his career for they were the cause of those fitful and heedless rashness, which appeared to him peril and to covet death, which made his conduct through the stormiest periods and at the dangerous eminence to which he had raised himself.

One individual alone in the wide world

was master of his secret. It was a youth who had saved his life under singular circumstances, and who, under the infirmity of an illness which nearly finished his mortal sorrows, had become the depositary of his miseries. His tale was told, and from that minute his listener scorned to touch the bread *he* had broken, or to breathe the atmosphere that *he* breathed; his utter humiliation and wretchedness no longer excited sympathy; an amazed look of disgust and horror met his glance when his tale was finished; and from that hour his self-reproach became tenfold more insupportable.

The picture now trembled in his hand, and his mind was far away from his worldly triumphs, when a knocking at the door of his chamber, disregarded till it had become loud and frequent, roused him; he turned rapidly to remove all signs of his emotion, and bade his visitor enter. A packet was laid before him, and his attendant withdrew.

When again alone, he turned willingly to

anything that might dispel his late train of thoughts. He hastily tore open the pack, and as he did so, a small and plain circlet of gold, that seemed a wedding ring, dropped on the floor at his feet. He staggered, and his whole frame was convulsed with agitation; the paper was crumpled in his ample hand, and for some minutes he stood without power to pick up the token, or to read the nature of its summons. When he did so, a calm and ominous stillness tokened the coming of a resolution which no human passion could further disturb.

He gazed for a moment on the token; the sign which he had instantly sought was manifest; he placed it in his bosom, and then unfolding the paper which accompanied it, read it more than once. He then tore it into a thousand minute particles, and flung them from him. He summoned his attendants, and concealing arms beneath his mantle, drew the long cappuchio, which was wont at that time pendent from the shoulder, nearly to the earth, over his brow, and le-

his apartments. Unheeding for once the honours of the sentries that paced before his doors, he passed rapidly down the stairs, traversed the double courts of the palace, emerged into a side street, and then plunged at once into the narrow and yet crowded streets of the city.

## CHAPTER IV.

DAY after day, in unwearied watch Eugenia Capponi hung over the pillow of the sufferer she had brought to her home, and whose mind had received a shock from which it was but slowly recovering. The constant presence of one beloved, and the gentle cares which his illness necessitated, had begun gradually to bring back the strength of the maiden to a calmer temperament, and to foster the strength which she had formerly fretted hopelessly away.

It was towards evening, and the light of a moon, yet crescent in its beauty, shone solemnly over her

g the composed features of the suf-  
The chamber was silent as the grave ;  
r that crept from her eyes followed  
se silently into her bosom, whose free  
ent was suspended, lest its heavings  
reak the fragile spell of a sick man's  
r.

had passed away many hours of each  
d night, since that motionless thing  
re her. This moonlit hour of the  
ight was appointed for his waking ;  
nurmuring preceded his movement,  
s unclosed, and he awoke as from a  
ng slumber. Most anxiously did  
a gaze into those dark eyes, in search  
ign of the intellect's return. A  
f recognition succeeded to the first  
of bewilderment; the whole truth  
osition broke upon him at once.

genia," he said, calmly, "are we quite  
are there none by, to cry shame upon  
sing my first thoughts for any purpose  
t of pouring out all my gratitude for  
ons which are endless ? Worse than

childish would it be, in one every way less as I am, to talk to you of one day more, and to be doing them."

He took her hand, and laid it upon the silken coverlid, above his heart.

"As long as that beats," he continued, "dearest Eugenia, it must love you for all you have done, and all you have suffered for one little worthy of your kindness. I have a painful—a most cruel duty now to perform. I must crave your pardon and assistance to a deed that will wound your feelings nearly as much as mine; it will, I permit, beneath your father's roof, to have an interview with me, one who, no longer since, sought his life, and in men's eyes was sulted, though he could not sully, his honor. The man I must see this very night is Francesco Carducci! Bitterness enough has he sulted, dear lady, to your affectionate gentle bosom from the mystery which surrounded me till now, and I were not and even wicked, were I again to strive to weave its dark meshes between us.

nature of this brief and most painful conference shall not be hidden from you ; but, till the trial is over, I should unman myself against the coming struggle were I to speak of it to you."

He took from his neck a small silver case, such as usually contain the relic of a patron saint, or a print of the Madonna, and touching a spring behind it, a small gold ring fell into his hand.

"My trust," he said, mournfully, "is about to be resigned ; and if a memorial like this, which for years has rested upon my heart, may meet favour in your eyes, take it, lady, and wear it for my sake ! It is all the treasure," he said, smiling archly, "which I have ever possessed, and, to say truth, which I ever coveted, for it contained what I had thought never to have parted with in this life. But like an empty shell when the fruit is taken out, I may now cast it from me, without its becoming itself a remembrance of one who may have nothing more to give."

It lay in the hollow of the fair small hand

in which he had placed it, and burning tears fell upon it.

“As a token of *hope*,” said the maid, trusting herself, in the extremity of her emotion, to speak at last upon a subject which a moment’s reflection might have represented as scarcely maidenly, “it was a treasure beyond all that this world could give me; but as a token of utter, irredeemable despair, it would wither the heart which it would lie. Take it back, Francesco,” she said, “if your last words conveyed the meaning my wretchedness would fain give them. I need no such emblem to hurry death before its time which may not be remote.”

A paroxysm of tears and convulsive sobs prevented further utterance. These sentences had fallen upon the senses of the youth like consuming fire, and when the words were spoken, he felt as if they had utterly burned his heart to ashes. When he regained the power to reply, his voice was hollow, and his speech solemn and slow.

nia," he said, "you had a right question me; yet had I trusted that, for both our sakes, have left this preference to heaven's own selected will, but the words are said, and, like a bell, must control us both, whether for good or evil. Now look, Eugenia, upon that which would rather blacken with me than that I would designedly do."

He took with some effort of gentle force the amulet from her pale face, and then con-

sidered the amulet, to one seeking worldly things, were infallible; such at least it had been to me; all such schemes have failed with me whilst I kept it. But its power were barren to me, for the treasure it had gained neutralized all mortal blessings. I take it, I say not but that it may be a source of hope; but it must be a hope that comes through *death*:—not yours, lady, but that of one to whom death were heaven's greatest mercy."

The silver reliquary dropped from the hands of the maiden ; she turned her eyes from it as with horror. The full dark gaze of Francesco had minutely watched the quick emotions which his words had produced ; and when he saw their full and spontaneous effect, he threw forth his arms and folded her to his bosom. His heart beat tumultuously ; his very senses seemed to reel with joy and pride, for the triumph of the very noblest feeling of human nature.

“ Beloved one ! ” he exclaimed ; “ life can have no hour left of emotion like this. Beautiful as thou art, beyond all that my pride in your noble and fine nature delighted in, picture thee,—never more will deed of mine pain thee. Our portion may be bitter, but this day, this hour’s nobleness, shall at least lighten your burdens. Let us pause for awhile ; this truly ominous talisman shall go from me, with the symbol it contained before. Let me have a messenger ready to bear my summons to a guide

creature, and an awful interview  
the nearer its conclusion.”

nia Capponi herself received the  
from his hand, and left him. Her  
re was to dispatch a trusty messenger  
Palace of the Gonfaloniere, and she  
urried to her own chamber, to recal  
ook and syllable of her late trying  
w. The awful ordeal for her at  
as over, and with what bounding of  
art did she dwell upon its termina-  
very pulse quickened, and her heart  
pidly, and almost audibly, as she  
pered that first, that sudden and  
ess embrace. His cheek had been  
to hers, his lips had rested upon  
head. It was a memory that no  
ffliction could efface or weaken ;  
ot would burn like the centre of a  
us and glowing fire.

even more elating to all the better  
er feelings of her nature were those  
oned and rapid expressions of heart-  
ogy, springing from the fountain of

admiration, of an act that was noble in proportion as it had been trying. She gained his praise; she had raised him higher in his esteem, by an honest and unaltered impulse, than she could ever have done by watching or by suffering. There was something yet left to live for.

In the meantime, the packet had travelled to its destination, and he to whom it was addressed was hurrying to obey its mysterious summons.

No ordinary motive would have induced Carducci to tread unattended the streets of the city, far less to have turned his back towards the Palace of the Capponi, and to trust himself within its hostile portals. Yet, having once turned his back upon the towering and gloomy walls of his ancestral regal residence, he moved with a speed nearly approaching flight, towards the point pointed out for his meeting. His foot never hesitated till the lofty arch of the Palace of Niccolo Capponi frowned at him.

and no occasion to knock for admission. The bearer of his summons had taken his stand at the portal, and awaited his answer. A sign interchanged between them, and then Carducci moved on silently, in the disguise he had assumed. They passed through a private staircase, and after traversing a variety of private passages, his hand was raised, and pointing to a door, signed for him to enter. The bold spirit of Carducci hesitated for a minute, but by a sudden impulse entered. He found himself in a vast room, faintly lighted, on a bed, beneath a gorgeously draped canopy, lay a figure so pale and so motionless that it might seem inanimate. It was the man he had studied the features of the portrait attentively for some seconds, that he recognized the being who possessed the secret of the dark pages of his history. "I am sent for me," he said, at last, "and I am come. If you are willing, my ears but mine may hear your revelation, for I am in a mood of mind to

hear the darkest tidings that can await  
as the sequel of an ill-placed confidence.

“ Wretched man,” replied the youth  
with an emotion that palsied his feeble  
limbs, “ you have received a token from  
the dead. Who, think you, was likeliest to  
be its depository ?”

“ Those, surely,” replied the agitated  
man, “ who straightened her corpse, whose  
wickedness had slain her !”

“ You are right,” said the youth ; “ the  
token, which she received an exhausted and dying  
maniac, found upon her finger after death,  
was this powerful witness of her identity. I  
will listen, abandoned and miserable man, to the  
remainder of the tale, and see whether  
it may find more solace in its termination  
than in its course. When she had strayed  
among the wild and desolate hills, till her  
screams had destroyed the estranged intellect,  
and her limbs were torn with brambles,  
by the rude contact of pitiless briars, and were  
bruised and blackened with the stones  
of the precipices, which she had no power

distinguish or avoid, she was found upon the bare hills by an aged and lone woman, who, with barely sustenance enough to maintain life in herself and an only child, had yet charity enough to share her pittance with her as long as life lasted. You are aware that *she* left not your roof alone ; an infant was found clasped in her cold arms, and striving to draw from her breast the nourishment which had perished in its fountain. The mother died beneath the stars of heaven ; but the infant survived her, and was gathered up tenderly, and, in accordance with her parent's last wishes, was kept jealously from the knowledge of her mother's murderer. All this you may have conjectured. You may remember the singular accident which made us first acquainted, and you will readily suppose that your secret gave me little inducement to entrust to your care a life that had become precious to me. Now, listen to the cause that has made me reveal to you the knowledge hidden so long and so carefully from you. Your child grew up,

gentle, timid, modest, and lovely ; one  
gladden the heart of a parent who had  
loved aught that was holy and honourable.  
I was her teacher, and with my Maker's  
I formed to goodness as pure and beautiful  
a child as heaven's sun ever lighted. For  
I loved her, it were but crushing my heart  
and moving the ridicule of a stony spirit  
like yours, to picture. I left her side  
once ; it was on that fatal day when I offered  
to do what you and your selfish comrades  
shrunk from. You know my fortune that day.  
When I returned to my mother's cottage  
God of heaven ! how found I the treasure  
had left happy and innocent, with an  
intellect as radiant with promise as her steady  
and chaste brow ! She had wandered, and  
was informed, from my mother's roof, that  
had been several days absent. How or where  
that time had been spent I could not  
clearly learn ; for when I found her, all traces  
of time and its events was indistinct and  
horrible. She had returned, as her mother  
had done sixteen years before, haunted with

hideous terrors, and, like her, a piteous spectacle of beauty in insanity. From all I could gather from her most mournful ravings, it is my conviction that she had fallen into the hands of licentious and unscrupulous men, who had so treated her as utterly to obliterate that spotless and pure intellect which till then had been unclouded even by the shade of sin. One who loved as I loved her was not to be dismayed by the wreck I found her. I nursed both mind and body till health returned, and I fancied reason also was springing up from the earth to which it had been crushed,—when your insane and sanguinary proceedings against the illustrious old man on whose ruin you have risen, brought me a second time within the walls of this accursed city. I left not my home till after nightfall ; I returned to it before the first grey cloud heralded the dawn ; but, alas, alas ! even within that brief interval she had missed me, and once more fled away, I know not whither. The shock reduced me to what

you now behold me ; and the wretch is to this hour lost. Whether she is wandering amongst those hills, or has perished, as her mother did before, I know not. You have all this time toiled in treachery ; you have reaped its reward ; you are powerful, and have the means, I have, of learning her fate. Go, then, and do so : search the caverns and woods of those mountains ; for if she seek the shelter of a roof, it will surely be the one she long dwelt under ; and if not, there you will likeliest find her remains if she has perished. When her fate is certain, let me know ; but be not yourself the bearer of such tidings. I have already for her sake supported her hated presence, till my breath choked me, and I would not, to gain worlds, have another interview as this."

The tones of his voice ceased, and a breathless and chilling, succeeded. Cosimo turned his face to the wall, and the trembling of the couch on which he lay showed the violence of his agitations. When

ducci, stunned and powerless as he had been, regained the power of thought and motion, he said, imploringly—

“ Turn, and let me bless you ! I am not the stony and utterly senseless being you have judged me ! ”

“ Begone ! Man of crimes and blood, begone ! Mock not Heaven with your hypocrisy and impiety ! ” exclaimed Francesco. “ Think you that a moment of drivelling terror, after a tale that might make demons tremble, will avail with a just and stern God, who judges the actions of a past life, and has already doomed you ? Begone ! bring not a curse upon me, by your impious prayers ; for my deeds to those whom you abandoned were pious, and pure, and holy. What can your grief be to mine ? what would you sorrow for ? what have you lost ? I, hypocrite ! I have lost the sunshine and the youth of life ! I have lost the toil—and the price of toil — of an entire existence. None can restore it. Go forth ; and when you have found her, and restored saneness and

intellect, as I only could have done, come back to me, and I will bless you. then, go, go; my heart bleeds as the murdered corpse is said to do in its murderer's presence."

Carducci rose up, and attempted no more. When the door closed upon his retiring figure, the youth called for attendance, a paroxysm of misery, so powerful as to leave it doubtful whether his reason again recovered, seized him, and continued through the remaining hours of that eventful night.

Before sunrise, parties of peasants, acquainted with every path and accessible nook of those sterile hills, were already engaged in the sad search. A sullen and dispirited figure was among them, urging to diligence with promises of rewards that would have made a peasant wealthy and idle for many generations.

## CHAPTER V.

A SINGULAR and stirring change had come over the city of Florence : its population had increased fourfold ; thousands upon thousands of homeless peasants crowded the streets and cumbered the squares of the town with their rustic and rubbishing moveables ; hourly contests ensued between them and the troops, who were prompt and summary in the measures they took to procure free passage for their steeds and their artillery.

Every possible clamour that could mingle in the discord rose up to heaven, confusedly and incessantly, from dawn to sunset. The occupations of commerce ceased entirely ;

for terror, even before the actual arrival of the enemy, had blocked every route of external communication, and the multitudes of riotous citizens, thus thrown on their own resources, were ready at all hours for the exercise of the only industry remaining to them,—that of pilfering the sustenance of the day. It was self-evident they could not do otherwise. When the cares of the day were provided for, they most naturally flocked to the holiday sports of those military spectacles, which, at all hours of the day, were enacted through every quarter of the city. The fierce squadrons of the Colonna wound their way through their squares, glittering and glistening in their flashing cuirasses and plumed helmets, little heedful of the convenience of the peaceful burghers; while the clatter of their war-horses, the lumbering of their cannon, the shrieks of the people, and the curses of the soldiery, began to give a foretaste of the mode of life about to be commencing.

For awhile, the greatest evil, that of

employed and hungry thousands wandering uncontrolled through the streets, was kept off by the necessary labours required for the fortifications. The mighty genius of Michel Angelo, in a morning's walk, had marked out occupation for fifty thousand labourers. The hills of San Miniato and San Gurgio were enclosed within trenches, forming as it were one vast fortress. A trench was conducted from the Arno at San Francesco to the gate of San Niccolo ; battery upon battery were piled upon several stories of arched chambers, over every gate of the city ; the whole circuit of the walls was repaired and strengthened ; thus finding occupation, and already initiating the citizens to the discipline shortly about to put their mettle to the test.

To Stefano Colonna was confided the government of the city, and he lost no time in giving rather a startling specimen of his mode of insuring obedience and respect ; for he strung up by the necks some few of the more unmanageable of the populace, and on

one or two occasions bade his horse charge among the masses that impeded designs intended for their good.

At last came down the thundering of tempest that had so long menaced the city. The plunderers of the Prince of Orange were upon them; an army that seemed infinite swarmed over every hill that bordered in their city. His first assembly was on the plain of Ripoli; he thence spread his legions around the hill of San Miniato, the plains of Guillari, Arcetri and Carmagnoli, and thence over every height with the gates of San Georgio and San Gattolini, where he pitched his camp including the Bellosguardo and the Montoliveto, without the gate of San Friano.

Thus, within a few days after his business had determined upon siege rather than assault, the good city was very tolerably enclosed. The whole space of country towards Rusciano, by the plain of Ripoli, by Bisarno, offered, when the river was in flood, an admirable skirmishing ground for his cavalry.

so that even at the earliest stage of the blockade, the sole tract of country left open, by which the city of Florence could introduce provisions for the sustenance of its engaged multitudes, was by the plain of Prato, and the country of the Mugello. Montughi and the slopes of Fiesoli were occupied by Spaniards, under the Marchese del Vasto and some independent amateur Bisogno.

It was no part of the plans of the besieging general to allow, an hour longer than he could help it, any portion of the environs to be thus open to their supply ; and, accordingly, even the country about the Porta Prato was invested as soon as fresh troops arrived from Lombardy, and the approaches to the Mergello were included within the daily scourings of his cavalry.

Although every movement of this hostile array was witnessed from the city, the stubborn hearts of the republicans by no means misgave them. They had the magnificent Malatesta Baglioni, whose interests

had not yet become separate from the  
to harangue them from time to time as the  
own magistrates had been used to do ; they  
had the dreaded horse of the Colonna, who  
occasional charges among the people  
made themselves esteemed indomitable ; and  
what was worth them all, they had the p  
phesies of Fra Girolamo Savanorola, who  
though they had been cited and fulfilled so  
score of times already, had yet reserved the  
full and true accomplishment till the p  
sent time. Thus upheld, they refused eith  
to yield, or stipulate, or tremble. The  
orators kept fresh in their remembrance  
Bourbon had left his bones beneath  
wretched fortifications of Rome ; and tho  
they observed that his successor had cho  
the less daring plan, of besieging, to tha  
storming their walls, and though the  
already saw every entry to their provin  
cut off, they nothing doubted but that  
as well as his vast host, were assembled  
to perish, and had dug trenches but to  
posit their bones within them.

Thus encouraged by oratory, military pomp, and prophecy, their first proceeding was to levy from all friends of the family of his Holiness such sums as their military protectors declared to be as essential to their defence as fortifications or cannon ; and they thus awaited the commencement of the great struggle which was to decide their fate, as a free republic, or the debased appanage of the bastard offspring of the Pope.

It was not long delayed : from the heights of Arcetri sixteen pieces of cannon opened their first salute upon the fortifications of San Miniato ; and the battery of the belfry and the monastery of St. Francis answered them.

The citizens stood aghast when first the bells of the churches shook an universal response to this beginning of their troubles. From that hour, day and night, without intermission, the cannon roared ; the streets shook with the departure and return of soldiery ; and but too soon the awful shrieks of men, maddened by their wounds, and the

melancholy sight of bodies — those fathers, sons and brothers—brought into the city for burial, completed their initiation into the substantial horrors of a siege. The streets leading to the various hospitals were crowded, like the highway to a country festival, and long blood-stained lines ran from their crowded doorways to every part of the city; and when once the cruel flood was upon their pavements, hatred, rage, and desperation to dare all remaining horrors, came readily enough to their aid.

A native historian has numbered the array that Filibert of Orange had against his city; and assuredly, compared with their own resources, it was formidable enough to make a more warlike people tremble. It was not until the extremity of their evil fortunes came upon them that real sterling resolution of this inflexible people was apparent. Accustomed to peaceful pursuits of commerce, and formerly acquainted with no strife more appalling than that partial and temporary semi-

which attended the taking of castles, skirmish with their neighbours, or the fall of the Medici, and their reinstatement they had hitherto thought highly of their own valour, and had succeeded in forming a similar opinion on the world; indeed, when an armed assembly in the city, and a burning palace or two, had required to diversify the calm routine of their existence, their daring was above the common. But now, like the realization of a long dream, came a ferocious and countless army, and hemmed in their city, cut off their resources, and had actually begun to batter their outworks.

At this moment there was more anxiety about funds and imposts, and the city was struck with their condottieri, than about the consequences of the siege. One council had been early formed, both by the people and their Priori: it was, rather than to reduce their city a heap of ruins than again to be reduced to the sway of the Medici; and there is little doubt that had they had

citizens for their military chiefs, instead of the illustrious strangers who had stood before them and worshipped the rubrics of professional warfare, and whose station in the city depended upon saving their followers from decimation, they would unflinchingly have perished to the last man; or, what was more probable, would have held out till the exhausted exchequer of the Pontiff, who was their sole paymaster, had disgusted the invaders with an irksome and unprofitable labour, and sent them to more lucrative enterprises in all probability against his Holiness' city of Bologna.

The Italian infantry before their city was commanded by Fabrizio Maramaldi, Marià Rossi, Alessandro Vitelli, and Luigi Farnese, and amounted to twelve thousand men. The Spaniards and Germans were twelve thousand; and of those were warriors who practised arms on their own account, and of the Bisogni, there were two thousand; and, finally, they numbered two thousand cavalry, part of whom

employed immediately about the walls, and part in scouring the country.

This vast host had been numbered as they overtopped the hills above the city, and their manœuvres well studied; but neither they, nor ten times their number, would have caused dismay. No greater proof of this could have existed than in the fact that the Pontiff, even when the city was surrounded on all sides, and its fall, in all human certitude, inevitable, yet offered to suspend hostilities, and abide by the decision of the Emperor for the future settlement of the government.

The answer that he received was the same that he had had from the beginning,—“that he was a parricide and rebel to his country; that posterity would execrate his memory; that his fellow-citizens scorned and defied him.”

An ambassador was found bold enough to carry this reply to the Vatican, and to proceed as far in its delivery as the patience of his Holiness would listen to. He was

spurned from the pontifical presence, the cannon of the Prince of Orange concluded all further treaty.

There were, perhaps, no advocates of extreme measures within the city more strenuous than the clergy, particularly of the religious orders. These monasteries were instantly converted into forts and hospitals; and when the finances of the exchequer began to fail, they set up to auction church property of all sorts, the vessels of the altars.

But what gladdened the hearts of the Florentines, and astonished not a few, was the conduct of the Gonfaloniere. Francesco Capponi, within the last few months, was an easy man; he had ceased to care for the duties and punctilios of his office. He was now sadder, a graver man than when in the easy and palmy days of his unmenaced power. His delight had consisted, formerly, in his daily harangues upon the duties of a free state; but he had now learned that in the hour of need he could do

than enact the orator. No day passed without long and earnest conferences with the military chiefs, and without personally visiting the fortifications and the hospitals. Many men might have diplomatized to more effect in the commencement of their troubles, but none could have pursued with more energy, more determined vigour, the course of defence which the city had itself adopted.

A remarkable and trying occasion soon presented itself, which severely tested the moral courage of the citizens, and from which Carducci retired with a dignity well becoming a people consistent throughout this arduous trial. A day was selected by the whole diplomatic body of foreign ambassadors, when they might take their farewells of a state abandoned in its extremity by their respective courts. Carducci named the morrow; and in order that a departure so ominous should have no evil effect upon the minds of the citizens, he resolved that it should be a day of rejoicing. A review of the whole force of the city was

resolved upon, attended with all that and military imposition which it was calculated would give confidence more equivalent to the withdrawal of the pathy of foreign powers.

The morning arose splendid and and its early beams fell upon casque lances, and cuirasses, marshalled by the windows of the Hall of Audience. Carducci himself laid aside his official and appeared arrayed in glittering and his throne was surrounded by mailed body-guard of the Colonna. He remarked, with pride and joy, that the haughty Roman himself graced the audience that his bearing manifested a renewed understanding with the magistrate ; and his arrogance was reserved for the republicans. Malatesta Bagliona, too, was present, with his usual condescending courteous smile.

When a herald had ushered the ambassadors into the august presence assembled leaders, Carducci received

coldly and proudly. This parting, he said, was one which concerned all classes of the commonwealth equally, and, according to the custom of the republic, it should take place openly and in the sight of all men ; he would therefore request their attendance in the open ringhiera of the piazza.

This proposal, though infinitely unpalatable, was acquiesced in, and thither they adjourned. They were there presented to the Gonfaloniere as to a monarch, and he addressed them singly. The ambassadors of those states least in connexion with the republic were first despatched ; but when the minister of France approached to kiss the hand extended to him, Carducci paused.

“ You will, my good lord,” he said, loudly and solemnly, “ bear this city’s best wishes to your king. Tell him in what state you leave it ; and he and his councillors will best know who mainly led us to this extremity. Tell him that the warriors most immediately about us are those who, but a few months since, fought the battles of

France with Lautrec under the walls of Naples, who had previously fought beneath the glorious banner of John of Medicis, the same Bande Neri who stood foremost by his majesty at the battle of Pavia, who covered the retreat of that remnant of his forces, which again made head against Bayard, by the walls of Mantua. Tell me, we rejoice in his recovery of his children, and that we trust that in the enjoyment of his domestic felicity he will find just cause of consolation, while thousands pay with their blood the price of his royal ransom.

“ With you, my lords of Venice, Ferrara, and Lucca,” he continued, “ our partnership shall be that of brothers-in-arms. We have fought together ; we have known until now but common enemies—the Emperor and the Holy Holiness. We hope that you will be more consulted your interests more than your friendship in the step you take this day. And now, my lords, each and all, with our answer to the demands of his Holiness. As our Pontiff, when have we ever de-

him reverence? but we have yet to learn when this free city was feoff of the holy see! To Clement de Medici, our answer is this,—that for his family's designs against this State, he is exiled and deprived of the rights of citizenship! for his own deeds, he is traitor and parricide! he has cancelled all that his ancestry did for this city; his country scorns him, and our posterity shall curse him! My lords, you have free exit from among us; and when our trial is over we may perchance be honoured with your return. Till then, Heaven prosper you—farewell!”

The attendance of the departing representatives was unaccompanied by any demonstration of public annoyance: men's minds were busied with their own more immediate concerns. A last effort was made, in deference to the counsels of the more timid, to avert their fate. A deputation was made to wait upon the Emperor, then at Genoa, and to plead against the designs of the Pope.

Amongst others selected for this purpose,

men were surprised to perceive that Gonfaloniere himself named the most patriotic citizen, Niccolo Capponi, who since his resignation of his office lived in strict retirement ; and, contrary to the expectation of all men, he accepted the appointment, and was attended by Michel Angelo Buonarotti and the youth Francesco.

It was on this unwelcome and fruitless journey that that aged yet zealous citizen was destined to close his mortal career. The Pontiff had been before him ; he himself hastened to the imperial court, and essayed with all his eloquence to procure the reception of the deputies. The interest of the celebrated Andrea Doria secured for his friend Niccolo Capponi the sterile honour of an audience, but it could do no more. Worn out with years of toil, overwhelmed with the prospect of his country's ruin, this eminent and patriotic citizen died on his return, at Campor Nuovo. His remains were borne to his native city, and a day of public mourning

was stolen from the hard duties of the common danger. From that day forth no event of a domestic nature turned the thoughts of the city from their great and momentous struggle.

The departure of the ambassadors had been the signal for the return of the forces from the piazza to their various posts, and of the citizens to their homes. Stefano Colonna, accompanied by a handful of officers, repaired to his daily station, on the height of San Miniato. The operations of the city forces were perfectly visible to those who served the batteries on the opposite hill of Arcetri. Colonna was not ignorant of that fact ; and it was therefore his custom—and one which experience had taught him to be a sage one—to lay aside the gorgeous armour which rendered his appearance a mark to his enemies.

It had been reported to Colonna, on the day of the audience we have just related, that the batteries of the enemy had for some hours ceased their fire ; and as soon as his

attendance could be dispensed with, hurried to ascertain by personal observation the cause of an event from which he augured differently. He had mounted the tower of the monastery, and was looking along the cannon directed against the opposing batteries, when, with a succession of bright flashes, and a simultaneous explosion that shook the very building on which he stood, the whole range of the enemy's artillery at once sent forth their thunder against the devoted building. The shock shook to its foundations; vast fragments of its ancient masonry toppled, and plunged down into the trenches below.

Before the smoke cleared away, Signor Colonna stood alone; a single corpse crushed beside him; but with that exception every soul that had formed the attendance had been swept away with fragments of the building. The guns had been dashed into the trenches, and a mass of ruins, tumbling and crushing down the courts of the monastery, alone m

eye. The toil of many precious days was thus demolished in a single instant.

Colonna gazed on the ruin about him with an expression of amazement rather than of terror. He was covered with dust and blood; the very stones on which he stood tottered. Other thoughts than of immediate safety appeared passing through his mind, for his cheek reddened, and the glance of his large dark eyes appeared maddening with a suspicion, which, however, escaped not his lips.

The intelligence of his escape was received by Malatesta Baglioni with an expression that was scarcely comprehended;—it was partly of consternation, and partly of vexation.

That smooth-spoken leader had retired from the audience of the morning to his own residence; and after dismissing on various duties his more immediate followers, he sent for his medical attendant, and retired to his privacy.

The individual thus summoned was a

short, slender personage, with a sallow and lank visage, hair tinged with grey beneath its time, the eye of a fox, and the step of a cat.

The brow of Baglioni had, throughout the cares of the day, done its stern duty of covering, with an appearance of composure, the extremes of bodily torture. When he threw himself upon his couch, with a strange eye to pry into his sufferings, he gave way to those contortions of face which betrayed his agonies; the moisture started upon his brow, and his livid lips worked nervously and quickly, as though he with difficulty repressed the cries which his features prompted.

His was a disease, at that time, in its origin little known, disgusting in its ravages, and of racking cruelty. He waved away his obsequious and cringing attendant, and called for "water, water," for his parched palate, and his fire-scathed brow.

Water was brought him, and his lips were drugged it before offering it to his lips.

then sat up, and bade the snake-like figure of his physician draw near to him. The suffering man fixed his keen, piercing glance upon the pale, immovable cheek which was now so near to him that his fevered breath gradually brought an evanescent tint to its polished surface ; and in a voice sharpened by his gnawing and remorseless malady, bade him raise his eyes and confront him. The man did so ; and Baglioni then signalled him to recite his tidings.

“ I bore your Highness’s commands,” said the silvery and subdued tones of the speaker ; “ and I doubt not before I leave your presence that you will hear of their fulfilment ; for the voice of the cannon knows no secrecy.”

“ Tush ! man,” said the impatient noble. Tell me of Perugia ! tell me of my own city first :—how fares it ? Stefano Colonna and his fate may come afterwards.”

“ Perugia, noble sir,” answered the physician, “ is evacuated ; his Holiness’s troops left it yesterday at sundown ; not a single

citizen has suffered aught in person or property."

"And a garrison has been left in my palaces, I doubt not," said the noble, with a fierce sneer.

"Not a German, nor a Spaniard, nor much as a Bisogno, has been left within Highness's states," replied his informant.

"Ha! is it so?" exclaimed Baglioni. "Call me hither Giovacchino, without further babble, reptile! We will hear the truth of this mighty condescension when we look further to its truth."

The leech was about to leave the room when the wary Perugian called to him to stay.

"We have an inner room friend; and your time is just now scarcely in request, and we may chance to want you when you are where we could scarcely send to summons you, in with you thither, and answer our call."

The name of this man of many trades was Zonara, and he obeyed without further re-

Baglioni himself called for his most  
d follower. His conference with him  
rief ; a free pass without the city walls  
igned and handed to him ; the man re-  
and Baglioni saw him mount his horse  
ass forth from the court of the palace.  
then recalled his physician from his  
t, and again resumed his position,  
ing afresh with ungovernable pain.  
nd now for our good friend, and second  
nmand, the incorruptible Colonna,—  
news of him ?”  
tefano Colonna”—replied the man,  
a smile so faint and fleeting that its  
was only perceptible about his lips.  
er communication was cut off, for every  
of glass and every article of furniture  
ed in response to an explosion so tre-  
ous, that it seemed to betoken the  
lation of the whole city. “Stefano  
na,” resumed the pale, thin speaker,  
doubt not, fairly sped ; and if there is  
in that gracious music, your Highness  
ame your comrade.”

“Ha! by San Miniato, it was a noble  
to accompany a soldier’s soul to para  
said Malatesta, smiling. “Heaven  
that they may not have missed their  
And what does the most noble Pri  
Orange seek in return for his courtes

“His usual boon,” replied the spy  
beggar’s meed—a few crowns for th  
table. His Highness trusts your Exc  
may be spared many a long day, to p  
the great game of this moneyed city,  
it furnishes stakes for his private past

“We were churlish,” replied Mal  
“to deny him; and the honest citizer  
well be content to hand out the few  
that keep away the ennui from his  
ness’s winter quarters, and thus av  
energies from their walls. I guessed  
his activity that his purse was empty  
yet, if our information is correct, he re  
forty thousand ducats from the po  
treasury the day that were heard h  
cannon.”

“It was presumed that he did so

ly; "for his Highness has lost some  
m since the time you mention; and,  
truth, his activity is the only chance  
ing the claims of the murmurers  
im."

t upon the avaricious knaves!" ex-  
d the Condottiere; "have they not  
ils of Rome in their purses? Why  
t his Highness send the unreasonable  
under fairer mark of Colonna's bat-  
If we are to be paymasters, we must  
o an understanding to that effect, or  
izens will grow niggardly as well as  
and I fear he has left few florins in  
iness's treasury."

is drained," exclaimed the soft voice  
ara, "till it is as dry as a palate  
the fever has fed upon; it has been  
d and pinched till it is as attenuated  
Highness's humble servant."

w now, friend?" said the Perugian;  
ou gamble, too? Your appoint-  
are becoming as costly as those of  
of Orange!"

II. G

“My commerce, my lord, is one, of a very nature, full of perils,” said the apothecary. “I have been twice plundered by his Highness’s body-guard, and thrice stripped of the skin by the Bisogni. The last piece I had from your Excellency’s was, I verily believe, staked by the Bisogni himself.”

“How, miscreant? mean you that a noble gentleman himself waylaid you and robbed you? That Filibert of Chalons plotted with the Bisogni with such an object as you are now?”

“To your Highness I may venture to say as much,” replied the apothecary, resolutely. “his dagger was at my throat when my hard-earned spoil was yielded!”

“Well, well,” said Baglioni, laughing. “your trade is a lucrative one, as I am well to know; and you must pay your money at usury, as others do!”

The meagre man bowed with what grace he might. “Have you any further commands for your servant?” he asked.

“Hark you, my friend,” replied

n, sternly, "we must play our game  
and I must know whose services I  
My two thousand Corsicans I should  
to part with; but a few of my  
ns have been troublesome of late;  
Filibert of Orange needs any more  
before he resumes the pastime,  
he will hardly now tarry in resuming,  
I fain know to what point he directs  
t cannons."

understand, my lord," was the reply.  
a reasonable and just compact, and I  
t fail to state your wishes. With  
permission, I will now retire, for I hear  
mour of the crowd below; they have,  
ss, brought you the tidings of the  
vo."

loud clamour of horsemen, and a  
ng of curses in all tongues, in the  
of the palace, proved the truth of the  
cures of the spy. He vanished, and  
amber of Malatesta was instantly  
d with a loud knocking. Eye-wit-  
of the catastrophe of the battery

brought him the information at once of the destruction of the tower of the monks, and of the miraculous escape of Cosimo. The disappointment was too bitter to be of perfect acting; and from that hour the Roman profited by the result of his reflections.

## CHAPTER VI.

SEVERAL months rolled on their course, day fraught with various interest and excitement to a proverbially talkative people, and yet no perceptible change had taken place in the general aspect of the beleaguered city. The faces of those who strolled idly about the streets might, perhaps, look a little paler and more famine-stricken, and their persons lankier and more emaciated, as though they had inherited the misdeeds of mightier men; but no syllable had yet been uttered of submission, nor in the public councils was there any manifestation of a broken spirit.

The country of the Mugello, which in the early days of the siege been less fertile, had for some time been even worse than any of the other roads leading to the heart of the republic's dominions. A few companies of lances girded the city within limits which the extremes were their own walls. Hundreds of troublesome Perugians and other mercenary soldiers, and a few valiant citizens had removed their complaints to another world; but the niceness of the government of Baglioni had known so well to temper the hardships of the siege, and to support the commonwealth which he had the honor to govern, that he had no severity to complain of, but rather than the unpleasant symptoms of indigestion and famine; and even that came upon them gradually, that it appeared but an amicable monitor, directing the energies of the people to the exploring of the resources of their city. Cats, and rats, and horses had long been dainties; and excellent men's faces had acquired an expression indicative enough of the various food they had fed upon, no mischief of any very

had ensued; perhaps, on the countenance the features had assumed the tint and the outline fittest for the expression of a bold and warlike character, and of a heroic heroism.

The general aspect of stubbornness and obstinacy had taken the place of the former softness-like and calculating features; their tones had acquired sharpness and loudness, and their language itself, an abruptness of diction, scarcely more harmonious than the mixture of the many tongues spoken in the camp of the enemy.

The councils of the Palace of the Signori had assumed a character of sternness, and of a more decisive decision, which threatened at times to place into their own hands the military conduct of the city's defence. The behaviour of their generals had already been criticised amongst the civil authorities, and all impatience began to be manifested, and a long calm of inaction which produced no positive results. Sallies and assaults, and threats of surprising the enemy's

quarters, became the ordinary topics of conversation among these civil dignitaries, of no member among them more enthusiastically than of Carducci himself. His character had continued to rise in the estimation of his country from the first days of active trouble. His voice was, perhaps not so loud as it had been in their debates, but his bearing was far more determined, and he watched with more jealous vigilance the ordinances of the leaders, the military police to whose guardianship was entrusted the most effective safeguard of their civil liberties, which his firmness alone prevented from sinking beneath military despotism.

Yet, withal, it was noted of Carducci that his cheerfulness increased as the siege was straitened. There was a brightness about his brow, and an elasticity in his spirits, which mystified all who had known him best and longest. It was conjectured by those who met him only in public that his gaiety of manner was assumed as a p

k, to be laid by in private, and features aching from its uneasy

But his character, it was more reasoned, was not one fitted to a uncongenial ; and as time passed the expected change had not ap- began to be rumoured that reasons a domestic nature had effected the Vague stories of a fair companion e chambers were whispered abroad, grave citizen ran the risk of in- scandal, scarcely consistent with features, his grey hairs, and his dering upon threescore.

towards mid-winter, and after a usual occupation, the Gonfaloniere his fellow-councillors, and retired own apartments. Once within his als, and with no eye to peer into ey, the solemnity of his late occu- s dismissed from his features, and sion of deep and tremulous anxiety t. He passed with a noiseless and step through the many gorgeous

chambers of his official home, and paused. As he approached a door, apparently leading to his sleeping chamber. He then knelt slightly on the panel, and shrunk several paces backwards, as if awaiting the approach of some one from within. Presently the door opened noiselessly and slowly, a heavy silken curtain that fell behind him was pushed aside, and the slender figure of Zonara the physician approached him. His finger was on his lips; and they retraced many paces from the silent chamber. He then either spoke.

“ Her illness is at this moment in its crisis,” said the mediciner, in his calm and impressive voice; “ to disturb her would were to slay her.”

The aged magistrate trembled in every limb. “ Heaven will be merciful to the repentant sinner,” he murmured, “ When will all be decided ?”

“ Briefly,” was the reply; “ human probability, before nightfall. I will leave her in a calm sleep; let no step

no vision scare her when she wakes ;  
the rest you must trust to the Mother  
Gins. I must leave you for a brief  
to visit his Highness Malatesta Bag-  
No evil can befall her within that  
Have I your Excellency's com-  
s ?”

book that pried into his very soul, was  
ly reply the Gonfaloniere deigned him ;  
fter a most profound inclination of his  
like person, he retired. Carducci at-  
d him to the outermost chamber, closed  
oor behind him ; and when the last  
of his velvety foot-fall died away,  
d the door and turned his steps inward.  
was alone ; and his first impulse was  
proach silently to the door of the sick  
ber and listen. There came thence no  
of life ; and he then threw himself upon  
nees, and covered his face and wept.  
was long motionless ; at last, a slight  
from the room within, or some fancied  
ment, roused him ; he sprung upon his  
his hand was upon the latch, when the

warning of the physician flashed across his memory. He paused, hesitating whether even to withdraw his hand, lest the sound of the retreating bolt might startle the sleeper if that had succeeded. But as he still listened, he heard the rustling as of uneasy movements under the bed, and a heavy sigh, reached his ears. He could withhold no longer ; he drew back the curtain, and entered.

The room was nearly dark ; a single shaded lamp threw its feeble light upon the bed ; it was the same gorgeous and richly covered couch in which, on other days, the young student Francesco had been laid out in his struggle with life and death. Once, and with great probability, beneath the very same gold and silver and gold coverlid had reposed the bosom of Eugenia Capponi. An arm, pale as snow, fingers taper and transparent, was reposing amongst the folds of fringed flowers ; the outline of her limbs, cold as though in uneasy slumber, varied every instant its restless attitude. Moisture glistened upon her brow, over which the braided

black hair were drawn smoothly, conveying pitifully with the ghastly palor of snowy skin.

ducci drew near to her side, and, as closed lids shut out vision from her eyes, ventured to bend over her. She appeared restless with dark visions, for her features red and her bosom heaved. This condition for some time to increase, and the appeared to approach its climax ; for limbs were convulsed, and she suddenly herself, by a sudden and violent ex- a, to the opposite side to which she will then been lying ; a heavy sigh broke her quivering lips, and her whole frame shaken by a succession of quick shud- gs. Her new position appeared to d less ease than the one she had before pried ; gloomy and hideous phantasms ed still to pursue her. She flung her- back again, and so rapidly as to strike in- inclining figure that bent over her. every touch appeared instantly to have ed away her tormentors ; she became

calm, her features relaxed and settled, then, the first time for many, many weeks her eyelids unclosed, and she looked at her.

“My child,” muttered the agitated tator of this afflicting contest, “you restored to me! It is your father watches you; fear nothing. You have ill,” he continued, in reply to her mingled surprise and doubt; “you suffered; but the worst is past. Be sweet one, for your father’s bosom sl you.”

“And Francesco, my brother,” said young girl, faintly; “lives he? is he fo I desire not, I receive not life without h

“He does live, my sweet child,” re Carducci; “you will again behold Happy days are, I trust, in store for bo you.”

The maiden clasped her hands, and tears rushed down her cheeks. “It v false and hideous vision,” she exclaim “I have dreamed long, till my brain r

horrors. Have my groans scared him  
me?"

"Hush, hush! dear one," said her anxious  
father; "you need more rest, more strength.  
I am well; and when you have the  
strength to bear such an interview, I pro-  
mise you, by my Redeemer, that you shall  
see him."

A calm smile, the radiance of content and  
peace broke over her features, and her lips  
moved evidently in prayer.

From that day forth, except when she  
was absent, her father never left her side. As  
time passed longer intervals of calm and wake-  
fulness gave evidence of increasing strength,  
she took courage to revert to the obscurity  
of her former life, and he proceeded to  
explain to her the nature of the ties that  
connected her to him. He had lost her, he  
said, in infancy; he had discovered her  
again in her illness. Fortunately, the long  
series of hideous circumstances that had  
surrounded since her first flight was utterly  
forgotten in the mind of the sufferer, and

she was easily persuaded that the whole was but a succession of fevered imaginings springing from her malady.

No hand but her parent's now ministered to her wants, and she soon learned to look upon him with tenderness. His voice, and its harshness when he spoke to her, his rude, stern brow, the wiry lines of his face, his flexible features, were softened when he looked upon her; the sympathies of her connexion grew daily and hourly stronger, and the sufferer became restless and impatient when he left her.

These early signs of an opening affluence surpassed all the hopes which the possibility of the sad secret of her mother's wrongs had dared to entertain, and were treasured up as promises of peace and happiness in time to come.

As long as she felt and confessed her weakness, she submitted to the definition of her life from day to day the hour of that moment which she appeared to live for. She listened to the tale of her changed station

followed with the gaze of girlish curiosity and pleasure the various objects of luxury and splendour which her father pointed out to her notice ; she appeared to find interest in the plans he delighted to form for their future ; but it was all in reference to *him* whom she had not yet seen.

Accustomed to deceit, and any description of falsehood which the expedience of the moment might seem to render politic, this long-practised intriguer had not hesitated to use such language, such promises, to his child, as he instantly saw suited best to the cravings of her spirit. In speaking of the unaltered affection of Francesco towards her, he felt that he was not violating truth, not incurring any risk of disappointment, or of one day breaking the heart which he was now striving to raise and strengthen. But he had done more than this, for he had explained to her the ties, holy and indissoluble, of marriage ; he pictured to her the pride of a generous spirit, that could repay gratitude with the luxuries of a wealth

beyond the power of imagination to rate.

But whilst his excited child was listless to the marvellous power of gold, with which her understanding was dazzled, and the memories of her visions, and the scenes of Cajano, which led to them, were evoked, throwing the light of their lurid fires on his words, his heart failed him ; for he, for the first time, began to doubt whether the devotion of Francesco—high-spirited and proud as he well knew him to be—could induce him to ally himself thus near to the man whom he despised almost to death. He had availed himself of a variety of excuses to postpone from day to day the long-promised interview, until he at last became terrified by the absence for which he could find but the most meretricious reasons.

The maiden herself marked the occasional moodiness of his brow, and became restless and impatient ; she brooded in silence on some dark suspicions, till a large

crimson spot glowed upon her cheek, and in reply to her father's tears, she met him with looks of distrust and silence. Yet Carducci left her not when others slept; and his glance never wandered from her cheek.

One night his vigil was fearfully troubled. She had fallen into a deep slumber, with complaining upon her lips, and had slept perhaps for an hour, when suddenly she started up, with a shriek so wild and prolonged, that the bewildered parent trembled for her reason.

“He is dead,” she exclaimed. “Cruel and false man, they have slain him! Francesco! Francesco! beloved one! I join thee; they delayed me with false hopes; thou art dead!”

“As I live,” exclaimed her terrified parent, “no harm has reached him. Be calm; I will myself bring him to thee before dawn. It is past midnight, beloved one; the whole city sleeps; be composed; you shall see him, if you destroy not health and intellect with these hideous dreams.

The young girl took his hands pressed them to her lips, and the flowed over them.

“ Oh ! if you are indeed my parent said, “ out of pity to a heart so broken, deceive me no longer. If he let my eyes behold him. Oh ! you me not : he is life, he is health to me me once again see him, and I shall be s and well, and happy ! I can no long my trust in words and promises. Wh eyes close, I see him. But oh ! my fat were better to die than thus to dream a

Carducci bent down and kissed her head. “ At sunrise he shall take my beside you,” he exclaimed. “ I ju was doing well to defer for a brief v scene that must shock your feeble but fear not ; I will keep you no lo suspense ; by day-break you shall see

The maiden threw her arms abo neck ; it was the first embrace of his reo child ; and the delighted parent ming tears with hers.

actually calmed by the solemn asseveration of her parent, Teresa endeavoured to turn her mind to other thoughts than those which had so hideously broken her rest. She ventured no more to think of sleep; when came the power of her tormentors. At length she passed away; and recommending her to Him who alone can give strength, her father left her.

A long hour elapsed, and no step disturbed the solemnity of that awful suspense. A burning spot was again upon her cheek, she had more than once essayed to rise from her couch, when at last, at last it came—the dear, that well-known footstep; and her quick ear easily distinguished that it came accompanied. Every pulse and breathing for some seconds suspended. Alive to the senses lightning-like in their fierceness and keenness, a doubt of all vague and awful images flashed over her spirit, as she hearkened to the sound of the coming footsteps. They were slow, and fell to the floor without noise, and recalled those days when

weariness of mind and body brought him to his mountain home, after a day of drenching in the irksome labours of his early life. But tardily as those steps brought him, the distance between them lessened ; he was on the door, the curtain trembled, and he flung aside, and Francesco stood before him.

The young girl sprung up from her seat, and with the innocent simplicity of childhood threw open her arms to welcome him, and brought down his head to her bosom. The impulse of Francesco had been irresistible as her own ; his eye kindled, his cheek brightened, and he had thrown himself into the arms that were so wildly open to receive him.

What communion he held with her bounding heart whose throbbings vibrated through his inmost being, was happy to him that first moment of their meeting, from the poor girl to whom its revivification had been death. Tears and sobs, and a shudder of violent trembling, shook the man to which he was still held convulsed.

She made no attempt to speak ; her lips fluttered, but it was as if the spirit of life was poised upon them for final flight. Francesco moved not in her embrace. *Her* emotions might have been written in letters of light, for their purity and singleness ; *his*, could they at that moment have been revealed, would have been a sentence of doom instantaneous and irresistible.

“ You, too, have been ill, beloved one,” said the maiden, “ or you would have been with me throughout ; your cheek is pale, and your heart heavy, as of old. Do you grieve over the change of life that awaits us ? Have you feared that ought of good or evil could sever our destinies ? If so, to our mountain cottage once more ; the mockery of this brief change is soon forgotten. Has aught happened ? Is this meeting less to you than it has been to me ? Speak to me, my brother !”

Francesco turned away his eyes from her searching glance, when he first ventured to reply.

“Dear Teresa,” he said, “Heavenness of my gratitude for the joy of your recovery. But it would seem that your father has left me the duty for which your own courage has not sufficed. The trials and sorrows of our past lives are now to be shared for either of us ; your eyes have opened to a new world, a new existence, with many other duties than we have yet known, and apportioned for both of us. You have a father as a parent, and on him must devolve the duty of your future government, as that has been done till now upon me. He is high in rank, powerful, and wealthy ; he has had the means, and will, I doubt not, watch over you with none but a parent might. You have much to learn, Teresa ; you must live, as you have hitherto, in solitude, obeying every injunction, and living only with those who know the value of your beauty. Before long, you will be strong, and rise up from this bed of affliction amongst the high-born and powerful of the city ; men whose lips will be honeyed, and eloquent, but whose eyes and hearts

piercing and censorious. My rights as a brother there were none to question in our solitude; but here, amongst the envious, it will be far otherwise. I am what I have ever been; chastened and humbled, it may be, by trials; but still the unknown and poor student; still, dear one, in fondness and affection, and, in heart at least, your brother."

"I have no courage, Francesco," said the maiden, mournfully, "for the change, desolate and chilling, that you speak of. Let us return, beloved, to the home of our childhood; its liberty, its homeliness, is better suited to me than the restraints and splendours of the life you have pictured."

"Our home, fair girl!" said the youth. "Can it be really true that the frightful changes of our country are hidden from you? That once happy cottage is no longer a dwelling-place for the unprotected. Know you not that armies of ravenous plunderers surround the city, and that none go out beyond its walls? The whole country is depopulated and ruined; and if Heaven avert not the evils that seem

inevitable, this very city may, before long, be a heap of ashes. Gentleness and beauty be lures to ruin. You must wake up from this long trance, with courage and strength for the trials of your lot, which may be averted nor met timidly. You feel this meeting, Teresa, to be a sad meeting, after so long a separation and so much suffering ; but you will learn the truth more honestly and more kindly from my lips than you could do from others. My words are worth remembering ; for they will teach you to be when all about you smiles in a show of confidence and a vain splendour, to be what must so soon, so inevitably be. Hear you not the loud and crashing thunders that are now rolling over us ? That, brother, is the cannon that hourly breaks our ranks and sweeps hundreds of our citizens into graves beneath their fragments.”

“ So that you leave me not again, Francesco,” replied the maiden, “ my forebodings have no terrors for me ; no realities that can equal the vision

have haunted my dreams for months, except, indeed, aught that could harm or change you. Only promise me that you will yet love me as of old, and you shall model me to any form you will."

"Surely, surely, will I ever love you, my poor girl," said the youth; "and my warnings to you best prove it. Let your first duty, dear Teresa, be to reverence and look up to your newly-found parent, to whom more justly belongs the task you look for from me. Have you not remarked the dress in which I am now travestied? It is the livery of those who are pressed into their country's service. The little knowledge that I acquired in more peaceful times has been offered up to the common defence. My post may not be by a lady's couch, even, dear one, though that couch be thine. When our batteries are silent, and our city saved, or taken, I may, if Providence so order it, return to my old habits, my old haunts, and my former poverty."

"You are indeed changed, Francesco,"

said the maiden. "Oh! let not an heart at least make me regret my re a cold and companionless world! proud spirit which so used to love en —which struggled against poverty,— you used to say was worse than peril,— by unforeseen trials? In a few days m will see *me* courageous. Alas! I hav to learn, indeed; let me not have teacher!"

The privacy of their further inte was broken upon by the cautio stealthy entry of Carducci. A dar passed over the features of the you and a look of mingled reproof and was the only welcome to the crafty trate.

"Heaven has accepted my repe young man," said the humble par tones very different from those with the halls of his palace usually reso "and I have now come, in the pres my child, to claim the fulfilment promise, as the fruits of this triumph

Heaven has accorded to my watchings. Let her not feel that coolness exists between those on whom she has placed all hopes of happiness in life. For *her* sake, Francesco, let us be friends. Let us share together, for the brief time that may remain, the authority I possess in this city ; and if our united efforts fail to save our country, let this fair, frail child be our bond of amity in other lands."

Francesco stood immovable, and a prey to contending emotions, which, in such presence, he dared not trust words to utter. "A sick chamber," he said, at length, "is not a fitting place for a scene of this nature ; you shall have another time, and more suitable opportunities, for ascertaining what sympathies we can have in common."

"I will not be repulsed, Francesco," said Carducci, composedly, yet firmly. "I have brooked from you coldness that would long ago have repulsed another ; but my child's welfare is dearer to me than pride ; it must, it shall, be a bond henceforth

between us. Can I plead to you humbly? Teresa, my child, interceded for him for your father."

A solemn and most painful stillness succeeded this earnest appeal. Francesco evidently but little moved; his features bore the expression of insuperable aversion. The young girl raised her bright eyes frequent with tears, to the countenance to her had ever been so gentle. She took his passive and cold hand, and tremblingly placed it on her forehead, as if to mark the boldness of her act, placed it in her father's.

"Then so be it," he said, at length. "I will do all honourable enterprise I will toil with you as a son; and to you, sweet girl, will I be as I have ever been, a fond friend, an affectionate brother."

The word fell ominously upon the ears of Carducci, and not as satisfactorily as before upon the heart of his child. The restraint which Francesco had placed upon his feelings until now, broke down when he was about to leave her, as he had never

till now, with reserve, and an appearance of coolness ; a tear gathered in his eye as he said, " Farewell ! " From that chamber Francesco went out, with no composed mind, to hurry to the batteries.

The day passed away with Carducci in the cares of his office ; but the young Teresa turned to think over the scene of the past interview, to which she had looked forward with so much longing, which had ended in so much doubt and mystery. What hidden cause of ill-feeling between her father and Francesco had till then existed, she had no power of conjecturing ; and, to say truth, she was too much absorbed in other feelings greatly to care about it. But there was a change in the bearing of Francesco, too glaring to escape notice. It was not, as she at first imagined, the difference of their fortunes in life, that threatened to estrange his independent and proud spirit ; for her father had pleaded, well nigh upon his knees, to share them with him ; and but for her he had been spurned.

Conjecture had already turned from many causes, in vain search for so incomprehensible, so terrible a change; till, at length, flashing across her heart with a withering fire, like the breath of an evil spirit, came the doubt, the wholly novel suggestion—could it indeed be that he loved another?

Once in possession of her mind, the schemer turned all trivial semblance into deluding realities. Every word and look of their late meeting was recalled, and, as the demon found the power to make himself minister to his deceit.

In this mood of mind many hours passed away, till her father returned to her. She found a new fire, a fierce and unnatural energy, about her looks and movements; yet the cunning of that spirit, beyond others ingenious in self-torture, outwitted the shrewdness of the wily statesman. Question after question, put with apparent calm, wound out from him much of the history of Francesco during the last few months, accompanied with indistinct fictions, veiled

to account for the coolness which she  
nessed between them.

as Carducci knew that his persecu-  
Niccolo Capponi was but a minor  
mongst the many which had brought  
him the scorn and hate with which  
th regarded him, he was too fami-  
n the casuistry of intrigue to let slip  
ortunity of attempting the removal  
cions of his character, which he felt  
ve existed in her mind, after the  
g's interview. He did not perceive  
doing so, he laid bare a truth far  
rmidable than any confession of his  
eds could have been to his child's  
ss.

and what was Niccolo Capponi to him,  
er?" asked his daughter, naturally.  
was his friend," was the reply. "It  
him that he risked his life, and was  
bleeding to the earth in this palace ;  
or him that even you were for awhile  
n; it was in his house, when an  
ful populace would have forgotten

him, that he was nursed and tended to his wounds !”

“Has this old man a daughter required the maiden.

The whole snare into which he had thus inadvertently drawn was now apparent to the senses of the terrified parent. To evade the question was impossible ; the existence of one known as the most lovely of the daughters of the aristocracy of the city, would have been an insupportable bootless attempt. He answered, that he had.

“And she is beautiful, and wise, and gentle, my father ; such an one as France would worship ?” continued the messenger musingly.

“She is high-born and wealthy, doubtless, haughty, as are all her kindred,” said the father. “Men spoke of her as the promised bride of one much trusted, and a great promise amongst our citizens. She is betrothed to Messer Francesco Ferrucci, who commands the public’s armies at Volterra.”

No smile of returning confidence gave promise of the success of the hint thus adroitly thrown out to mislead her. She asked no further question, but sunk back amidst the piled cushions, and closed her eyes, as if to shut out objects that wounded them. She was at that time of life when the gradation from girlhood to womanhood was enacting its mutations, both in personal maturity, and in those mental perceptions and impulses which accompany the change. Under ordinary circumstances, the progress would have been slow and mystifying; but with her, in the solitude of her sick chamber, quick passions sprung to an abrupt and fierce birth; and though she perhaps knew not what origin to trace it to, the dark memories of her stay at Cajano, which dwelt in her soul like withering sores, hurried her development. Her impulses even in childhood had been of a decisive and bold character; those of her maturing years remained yet a secret, veiled with the same uncertainty

as the events on which their character depend.

The earliest results of her contention on a subject of such awful importance in life, were a disgust at the someness of her solitary chamber, a ferociousness even towards her dotage, and a hurrying impatience to pluck the new existence for which he sought to prepare her; to cast off at any rate the sluggishness of the inaction which she had borne like a chained victim, to the torture of her thoughts, which day and night were incessant.

## CHAPTER VII.

BUCCI had at last notified to the  
, whom his countenance had so long  
ed, the recovery of a long-lost child.  
were many who had known him in the  
his insignificance, and some few who  
confused remembrance of the dis-  
ance and hasty death of a beautiful  
who had shared his toils in other  
His fortunes since then had mightily  
from a poor and wandering peda-  
he had become the chief magistrate  
ch commonwealth ; and it was now  
o small interest that men awaited the  
ed appearance of the discovered and  
ritress of his vast wealth.

A public fête in the palace, it rumoured, was to signalize her present to the world. The youth Francesco not again placed his foot within the palace, her lips no longer mentioned his name, the resolution that was formed within her bosom was carefully hidden from her parents. A fretful impatience to quit her country, daily and hourly entreaty to be presented to the world, utterly mystified Carducci, yielded at last to her importunities ; she was named for her rising for the first time from her bed, and to this period of her existence every thought now seemed directed.

Carducci was aware that the term of his rule was drawing to a close, and that it was highly improbable, in spite of his machinations, that he would be re-elected to the office for which all who possessed wealth or connexion in the state were industriously caballing. Could he have given to the struggle all the powers of his versatile talents, as in former days, he would not have

doubt as to the result ; but he had halted in the race, and others had outstripped him. His voice was less clamorous and less frequently heard in the great council than the agitated spirit of the times required. The name of Gerolamo Savanorola had become a watchword among the people, and those whose eloquence nearest resembled the prophetic and hazardous strains of that singular man were highest on the palmy branches of popularity. Carducci was more frequently closeted with his physician than with the orators of the suburbs ; and his mind had been so long familiarized with caution in his domestic movements, that his very demeanour had acquired an air of circumspection, which was attributed to a foreboding of evil days ; and his supporters began to look rather to the credit of his past conduct for his continuance in office, than to any expectations of energies beyond those of his rival candidates.

In the early days of his child's recovery he had, in fact, himself began to think that

he had done enough for fame, and that it was time to turn his thoughts to that reality which his daughter's health seemed most in need. But, day by day, as the energies of that young girl developed themselves, and the fire of his own untamed spirit rekindled, he once more nurtured plans for retaining power, and for presenting her to the world in the fulness of that splendour which was so dear to him.

The young girl turned with disgust at the pictures of domesticity that he had painted before her ; she aspired to liberty ; but she came from a sick chamber, and from the tameness of a still life, however gorgeous, which a day had been sufficient to weary her of. She then spoke of the pursuits of the busy world below her windows, and implored her parent for an initiation to the pursuits which promised action or stimulation.

The day, so cautiously deferred, at length arrived, and garments were brought, to adorn her feeble limbs when she rose from the chamber. All that a luxurious city could yield, of

costly in apparel, had been prepared for. Velvet and gold, pearls and gems, were laid before her eyes; and the form which she had from infancy been familiar with in rags and shreds, was to be now arrayed in such as might befit an empress.

She surveyed the preparations for her toilette not without emotion; yet fits of indignation and moodiness came over her at her first toilette, in which far other thoughts than the luxury of her dress were reflected across her snowy and radiant brow. The adaptation of means to an aspiring ambition for which she could not but feel them inadequate.

"*He, too,*" she might have said, "has thus arrayed from her childhood up; I can but ape splendour which she would hold as nothing. But the dignity of which he used at times to dream about, the inimitable heritage of the high-born,—the stately carriage of a long training of discipline, —that is hers; and beauty thus alone, it were vain, even pitiable, to see

assumed by such as he knows me. She was, however, clothed in the gapparel her father had prepared for her when her handmaidens had placed her one of those noble mirrors with wstate chambers of the apartments were rated, a look rather of wonder than at the lovely vision she beheld, light her features. "It is vain, vain," she "If he was thus cold when my bare about his neck, and his head upon my how can this masquerade change his

From her sick chamber, the first for many months, she was now led upon the arm of her elated parent scene that awaited her she had not prepared for. All that was exalted by birth or rank in Florence, through father's halls, to bid her welcome to existence. The glittering dresses knights and nobles who formed a spectacle of the court of that mercantile public, had been assembled to receive. A murmur of astonishment, of adm

and compassion, rose as she stood abashed before them.

Her father paused as he felt the shrinking of her unsteady limbs, and then led her up to a tall and commanding personage, whose costume, elegant and costly, yet warlike, pointed out the military noble of the day. The cold and haughty brow of this individual yielded a willing homage to the charms of the lovely yet timid maiden thus presented to him.

“This, my lord,” said the proud parent, “is the frail child over whose severe illness we have so long sorrowed. Think you that health promises early return to these pale and wasted cheeks?”

“By all the saints of your good city, my friend,” replied the warrior, with an emotion which evinced his gallantry, if not his sincerity, “I would pray for no further change to those fair cheeks. Health comes, tinting our maidens with the hues of our olives. Health is well enough for peasant girls and pike-bearers; but beauty is the

solace of a clouded chamber as well as of a mother's tender nurture."

"This noble cavalier, my child," said the parent, with a smile, "is the model of Italian chivalry; the honour of our city, as long as he saves it by his stay amongst us. You might have known, from your father's speech, that Stefano Colonna, whose sword is brighter than his compliments. Will your Highness honour us by passing through our chambers? Our citizens are eager to pay a tribute of their gratitude, and your presence will ward off the gaze of the more curious from the face of a timid maiden who never looks among strangers."

"Most willingly and proudly, my lord," said the noble. "Our lances are plain of little favour with the staid beauty of your austere court; and Stefano Colonna has not been thus gratified since the day of Pavia."

When Carducci beheld his daughter leaning on the arm of this renowned warrior, he felt as though the first train of his aspirations

es were prosperously laid, and he  
d his movements through those  
es of gaping burghers, in whose good  
it was his present purpose to stand  
. In this, too, he had well reckoned.  
l back from the presence of one whose  
was scarcely more terrible than his  
ce was homaged. They were presented  
ds to the haughty noble ; and the very  
of their own names was sweet music  
r ears, as the cold bow of the Colonna  
ced them.

re were others that day whose pre-  
had been commanded that they might  
ow-beaten ; for they were judged irre-  
ble. They fell back, as they observed  
ern glance of the military chief range  
hem, as the Gonfaloniere whispered in  
r.

en the tour of the crowded chambers  
completed, the triumph of Carducci  
perfect, and the humiliation of his  
ter was not less so ; for her restless  
e had searched through the press of

that host of strange faces on a seeking, and she felt that there triumph where *he* was not.

“Whom seek you, fair damsel?” said the proud companion, after he had once followed the direction of her gaze. “Are you thus early turned politician? Is there some potent lead in some doubtful guild among these shrinking whom your fair brow has a smile for? or some knight, of fortune favoured than ourselves, perdue from the leader’s view? Point him out to us, and his good luck shall win him a good watch on the battery of St. George.”

The word fell like fire upon the ear of his listener.

“The batteries, my lord?” said the maiden; and they were the first words she had had the courage to address to him. “such is, if I judge aright, the surest honour, and the surest step to a high promotion?”

“It is the post nearest paradise, far

l the soldier, "and therefore of most  
r to so goodly a race as our armies are  
sed of. It is one to which Baglioni  
y promotes the unruly and the sharp-  
l amongst his followers; and, by my  
Filiberto's cannon are not tardy in  
so intelligible a hint."

nd do any of our citizens, my lord,  
to such speedy provision?" asked  
, with a levity of manner which con-  
the trembling interest with which she  
for his answer.

our father's political foresight, fair  
as promoted not a few," was Colonna's  
ss reply; "and I doubt not but the  
nation of this evening's festivity will  
h forth a list of honourable aspirants  
month to come."

ardon one more question of my inex-  
ce, noble sir. Are there any who of  
own free-will offer themselves unre-  
ended to such distinction?" asked

a.  
urely, fair one," was the sportive

answer ; “ all who hunger and thirst for patriotism — starving students and stricken lovers—all who hope for the gratification of their various appetites in this world, send deputies to the battlements of San Miniato and St. George. But in relation your illustrious parent, lady, is far deeper in such secrets than our eyes for our followers are less numerous than his, and, to say truth, the exchequer which raises and arms them permits not a generous discipline.”

The pursuits of the Colonna, however, rather than his contempt for the grotesque and the vulgar of a court assembled by the vain and the tradesman-monarch, soon called him to the side of the fair girl whom his unworldly pleasantry had not a little startled and frightened. But the effect of his bold appearance at the palace, and his address to the daughter of Carducci, fully answered the purposes for which that crafty parent had bargained for his coming ; and he returned from the threshold of

saloon, to which he had escorted his distinguished guest, he moved with an elate carriage and a contented brow through the crowds that thronged his halls. All whom it was his purpose to conciliate were presented, with a studied eulogy, to his daughter; and such as had before now, from expediency, waived their aspirations to his favour, were saluted as he met them with a mingled familiarity and deference, as though all he had was their gift, and the very halls they trod might one day be their own.

Few men of his time knew so intimately every spring that set in motion the various interests of those about him as did Carducci; and it was only by such knowledge that he had risen from nothingness to power, from bankruptcy in trade to wealth that exceeded the fabled hoards of the miser's deity. Few who crowded the antique halls of this calculating host escaped his courtesies, those cheapest of all bribes, whose value he full well understood; yet amongst them was

there one who, could he have come to him, might have been the promoter of what he valued even above ambition—happiness. This was a young man with a yet mild brow, with a deep-set and somewhat wandering eye. He was of an unobtrusive person, and arranged in garb scarcely of a character to warrant mingling with the richly dressed about him; yet was he at his ease, and most were constrained.

He had more than once crossed the street of the Gonfaloniere, and, either from distraction or pride, without pausing to be saluted. He was evidently one of those few whose utility to Carducci was not in the notice of that nicely-calculating man; and it was not until his fixed and distracted gaze, which, after wandering with interest over the many forms and faces of the street, settled at last on the mild white face of Teresa, that her father noticed, and prepared to pass him with a stern and searching glance.

But Carducci was destined to learn that if ambition required the occasional sacrifice of his inclinations, a stronger passion exacted still more prompt self-denial. His daughter was fully aware of the power she exercised over him ; and, not withheld by the affection which so readily studies the features and the will of one beloved, she had no hesitation in asserting her own merest caprices.

“ Stop, my father,” she whispered ; “ I have not murmured at the irksomeness of many of my presentations ; I would, with your permission, be made known to that noble gentleman who has escaped your attention.”

“ Noble, Teresa !” replied her father, impatiently ; “ he is no noble, but a poor, dreaming, half-witted student, the son of one whose sole title to nobility was sycophancy to the house of Medici, and pedantry, which flourished amongst the mendicant hunters of mouldy manuscripts at the court of Alexis Comnenes. His father

was high priest of the Platonic mu  
of Lorenzo, his country's tyrant.  
you wish it, your introduction w  
but small ceremony.—You are  
amongst us, Master Ficino," said  
nitary, turning to the youth, whose  
was fixed, in no equivocal intensit  
miration, on the features of the fair  
who now stood facing him. "You  
more welcome that we the less expe  
honour of your presence amongst  
daughter would fain be named to yo

The maiden raised her dark eye  
fine calm countenance of this s  
calumniated sage, and, in the rom  
her yet novel career, imagined that  
met what she felt so deeply the  
for—a friend.

"I need a few moments of rep  
father," she said; "and, with yo  
would be seated."

Her look conveyed to the despised  
as intelligibly as speech could hav  
an entreaty to accompany her to

towards which she moved ; and accordingly, much to the annoyance of Carducci, Ficino, without further invitation, took his station beside her.

The impatience of her parent had not escaped the quick eye of Teresa, and she instantly detected his intention of dismissing Ficino ; and had not some communication, requiring the private ear of the magistrate, called him opportunely from her, the youth might have been startled by the candid display of the fair girl's protection. She had shrunk with a nervous timidity from most whom she had been made known to ; for the familiar address of her father's friends, and the abruptness of the various military nobles who composed the staff of Colonna, had abashed or shocked her ; but in the quiet manner, the gentle tones, of Ficino, she felt a relief from the toil of a part acted with little pleasure.

“ I am but recovering from a wearisome illness,” said Teresa ; “ and I have found that the novelty of a pageant inadequately

compensates to an invalid for its fall. If I understood my father rightly, you will not enter within these walls, and are here now unexpected. What motive, what cause has brought you, has brought all this assembly, beneath my father's roof?

"A variety of causes," replied the lady, "motives probably as numerous as the individuals themselves. The command of my father assembled the greater part ; he sought to regain some of the popularity which he has hitherto so imprudently neglected. I presume, brought Stefano Colonna, with his cortege of arrogant undisciplined soldiers, and, for my own part, I came to fix my eyes upon a vision of rarely equalled beauty ; for a rumour had gone abroad that Francesco Carducci had found a lovely child ; that her first apparition among us was destined for to-night ; and that her beauty made beholders forget, as they should, their country's misfortunes ! And here you stand, *unasked*, lady, as you have come, and, I judge, rightly, because these chambers, this

the patriot's home, the common property of the highest and lowest of us all."

There was something in the self-possession—placid, yet tinged with enthusiasm with which this singular person uttered her flattering yet naïve opinion of herself, which, added to the rich and gentle tones of his voice, so vividly recalled to her mind the man who was away, that her eyes were lifted to his face as he spoke, and the tears were on her cheek, during the long abstraction with which she dwelt upon his eloquent features for some seconds after his voice ceased.

The sweet rich voice, whose tones resemble," said the young girl, in calm tones, "has uttered rich music to my ears since infancy. The bland smile which your features have assumed; the lofty forehead, the calm still glance; the bold, frank speech, the undisguised speech, have been familiar to my heart through life. It is because my senses have long pined for your presence, and when the reality should

have come to bless me, I am tantalized by you—his shadow—it is, therefore, I weep. Will you never more come when these crowds are in their hands? she asked, with a look of such singularly piercing sadness, that it brought to her, though a scarcely perceptible one, a clear olive of a cheek rarely susceptible of such a weakness.

“Most willingly would I do so,” was his reply, “if I might hope my coming would bring pleasure; or if,” he said, whilst his glance ran searchingly and passionately, over her pale countenance, “if my coming could bring peace, or end sorrow. But this palace is for the poor, your father’s dwelling. Times have changed, and since the golden days of Niccolò Machiavelli, the poor and the unknown have their interests better than to obstruct themselves and their nothingness upon the leisure of their magistrates. Yet, at your command, I will brave a poor welcome, and come.”

Oh! do so; do so, for pity's sake!" exclaimed the maiden; "you may help to relieve deep sorrows; you may do a work of seeming charity. I am ill, and speak feebly; but I am friendless, and therefore speak boldly. It is easy to see that you resemble my father. I have heard one, to whom you bear some resemblance, often eloquently figure out a character like mine, and I am prepared to find good men among us. But come in spite of all that; he is my father, and *shall* make you welcome. My father's name has pierced the solitude in which I have spent my life; it has been familiar to me for years, as have been all those of the great and wise of this city. It was I that met me by one who loved goodness, and who was himself exalted, and wise, and noble."

"My name, lady, is but an echo; it has no reality; it never will have, reality; but my father's," exclaimed the young man, and his eyes glittered with enthusiasm,—“my father's was indeed known wherever virtue

and wisdom were loved in Christendom was his name that you were taught reverence. He is no more amongst earthly toils were terminated before the dark days of our country came upon us. The good and great men, whose names were little less than treason to us within these walls, went in one company, and at intervals shortly set out to a better and happier world ; and if grief could now reach them, it would be the abasement of all they held good and sacred,—for the utter ruin of a country had so long laboured to make prodigious. Of those who were their friends, few remain ; and I grieve to say, the greatest have left us. Your father sits in his elevated yet perilous office, to the very last of that learned and pious company ; one whose counsels might have saved us. But he, too, is removed. Nicolo Capponi has joined the assembly of the philosophers of a past generation and their offspring—poor heritors of science.

me—live to weep and perish, when they could have excelled and prospered.”

“Do you know the Lady Eugenia Capponi, the daughter of the great man you mentioned?” asked Teresa, with an abruptness of tone that startled and puzzled the unsuspecting student.

“Do I know her, lady?” replied the enthusiastic young man. “I have known her from her infancy; and, as all do who have ever known her, I have loved and worshipped her. She is gentle and beautiful, high-spirited and holy; her starry brow is her glorious throne of pure thoughts; her snowy cheek the very heaven of chaste and pure love; her heart is the home of all impulses to which good men pay homage, of all virtue which the crafty and the false shrink from and slander. Such as I picture her until lately Eugenia Capponi; but she has been hardly tried; her rounded and graceful form has shrunk away, like the diminished stream of a ruined fountain; her dark eyes, her lofty and calm brow, too

openly betray a wounded and s  
spirit. She sorrows for her father's  
one who has lost such a parent can  
to do ; and worse even than this, if  
aright, there is a more secret sorrow,  
like a slow consumption, devour  
heart."

"Is she not a promised bride?  
the faltering lips of Teresa.

"Men unacquainted with her  
nature," replied Ficino, "have spread  
rumour of her marrying one of our c  
a man you may probably have he  
Francesco Ferrucci ; and in so doi  
paid but just tribute to two noble r  
for Ferrucci is a bold and upright v  
and were the destinies of the state  
keeping, we might yet be saved ;  
knows neither fear nor treachery.  
inherited the daring and the adve  
spirit, along with the unconquerable  
of John de Medici ; and any need  
patriotic citizen could bestow on  
were well earned by Ferrucci. Bu

ugh in his manner, and otherwise little  
ed to make happy one so gentle as  
genia Capponi. Her heart, besides, is said  
have placed its affections elsewhere ; and  
report speaks truly, it is on one than whom  
the city holds none nobler,—nobler I would  
not in birth, for that is humble ; but  
the who, with the very highest order of  
culted intellect, has been reared in the  
cepts taught by the very lips of our  
greatest sages. He, too, was formed by  
nature to be loved ; for whilst he is honour-  
ed, independent, and proud, he is withal  
gentle, and of a simplicity of character  
which the learned in classic lore have  
admired as the model of those sages and  
heroes of ancient times who lived to form or  
reform their generation. And if the world  
is true, and Eugenia Capponi has secured  
the love of such an one, she has found a  
treasure. But I weary you, lady,” he said,  
when he observed the colour come and go  
alternately across her cheeks ; “ these are  
the varieties of people who are strangers to you,

and whom you are little likely within these walls."

"Is it so, indeed!" exclaimed the girl, mournfully; "then are they habit them little to be envied! will, doubtless, forsake them, and your curiosity is gratified; and yet it a charity above earthly recompense come at times amongst us. If men courts your friendship,—I should say your endurance,—will you come once more, when this crowd is gone sake?"

"I were indeed uncourteous to so flattering an invitation," answered coldly; "but, lady, if I may come once, before you exert an influence I am aware, will obtain your will in all else, I would have you ask himself what effect your partiality this an unwelcome guest has already produced on those whom it is his interest to propitiate. He will interpret true scowling looks of the multitudes wh

ed me within the last few minutes, and  
ch have escaped your notice. Humble  
ndividual as I am, my name—all my  
ritance of substance and honour—is  
the hissing of a serpent to the ears of  
y member of this vast crowd. Believe  
I am the very last of all this throng of  
tiers, whom your father would wish to  
gain beneath his roof ; and if Francesco  
lucci would wear for another year the  
s of office, the surest way to do so  
ld be to expel me hence, were it even to  
dungeons of the Bargello. They know  
I fear them not, and they also know  
many of their servile deeds were  
cted in my presence. Such remem-  
nces are not lost and not forgiven ; and  
day will inevitably come when I shall  
the penalty of their baseness. Yet,  
, if idle talk may cheer you, you may  
mand me at any hour.”

Carducci, and a train of his more privi-  
d visitors, now approached to where  
sa was seated, and the scowl upon his

heavy features was full confirmation to the maiden of Ficino's unpopularity. The student bowed as he yielded his place, and again mingled with the crowd.

Regardless of the angry visages that frowned upon him, he proceeded to take his way through the different chambers of the palace. Men turned and followed him with a low and menacing whispering accompanied his path ; and before he had gone the last of the long suite of rooms, the murmuring betokened a total stop to his progress. A hesitating move was made toward the door to which his steps were directed, and the terms " spy and traitor " more than once fell upon his ear.

A deep blush of wounded and hurt pride coloured Ficino's cheeks ; but he continued his effort to liberate himself from his uncourteous followers. By the time he had reached the door it was already occupied ; a band of his personal enemies formed across it, utterly preventing the possibility of his advancing.

Ficino paused; the indignation and fiery  
passions of the man were manifestly wrestling  
with the calm of the philosopher; for his  
countenance varied its colour more than once, and  
his usually calm, mild glance flashed from a  
wide pupil, and from under an arched and  
frowning brow. But too wise and gentle a  
man had its throne within that quickly-  
flashing bosom to allow the fame of a life's  
achievement to be sullied by an unguarded  
moment.

"Gentlemen," he said, with a voice  
loudly raised above its ordinary and soft  
tone, yet marked with a clear emphasis,  
such a shrewd man might have taken  
warning from, "I would pass forth, and  
would not willingly create scandal in doing  
so. Forget not, I pray you, the courtesy due  
to a guest of our chief magistrate, but allow  
me free passage."

"There are more exits than this," replied  
the other; and Ficino beheld most directly  
before him the sallow face, the evil aspect,  
and the lean, wry figure of Jacopo Gherardi,

whom the reader has already seen the discoverer of the famous letter on which awhile perilously depended the fate of the whole of the city. "There are private communications through the Gonfaloniere's inner apartments which are well known to the spies of the house of Medici," exclaimed this traitor.

"And which lead more directly to the traitor's home — the Bargello and the gibbet," added the knot of his associates, "this cowardly insult."

"It may be so, gentlemen," exclaimed the student, whose usually mild countenance now glowed with the crimson of indignation and honour; "and if it is so, such proceedings must be more perilous to yourselves than to me. I am no enemy to the country of my birth; I never yet mingled in those base deeds of intrigue which have plunged the country into its present miseries; I have never yet attempted to swear away the blood of an upright and innocent citizen, nor have I done openly in this palace by this

l pigmy perjurer, who chooses the cham-  
s of festivity for the scene of his indecent  
wl. But it signifies little to recriminate.  
hose to pass forth through this door-  
, which you are attempting to impede.  
plain terms, if the state have aught  
nst me, my dwelling, though an humble  
is known, for it is registered in the  
es of the Commune; but if, as it would  
ear, you, Jacopo Gherardi, or any of  
have cause of private quarrel with me,  
s go forth into the piazza; it were a  
e fitting scene for explanation or for  
e than the roof of our magistrate and  
presence of your wives and sisters. If  
singular hinderance proceed only from  
e crude design to affront me, I give you  
ing that, though loving peace, I am not  
to submit to insult."

he face of Gherardi was pale with pas-  
; but he was a coward, and as the  
rel now appeared to become personal,  
ppealed to the surrounding crowd.  
re men knew to what extent of vio-

lence he would have had them proce  
hand of Ficino was upon the colla  
senatorial robe; he was jerked fr  
centre of the doorway, lost his bala  
fell prone at the feet of Ficino, who  
over him.

Apparently, the promptitude of  
had created more sensation than the  
ness of the place would allow the  
present to act upon. No further atte  
made to stop him, and he passed  
from the palace.

## CHAPTER VIII.

FOR some minutes after Ficino found himself free from the evil faces which had scowled upon him, he chose the more open streets, and a pace easily overtaken, had it been the wish of those to whom he had given so fair a challenge to follow him. It was already dusk, and the streets were as silent as the casualties of a besieged city would admit of. The booming of the distant cannon was never intermitted ; its deep and solemn voice had become a part of the undying sounds that are never utterly hushed in a populous city ; yet it by no means drowned

the many minor noises of a living stirring people.

After some minutes, and when all of him, if indeed any had been in, must have been given up, Ficino quickened his pace, and plunged into the narrow and darker windings of the city, where the poor had their homes. Through many an intricate and sinister winding he pursued his way, with a step which was everywhere familiar with them.

A distant gleam, from a small shrine burning dimly before a rude image of the Madonna, at last fell across his path, and his speed slackened. It was one of those votive offerings of piety which are brightest at daybreak, when trimmed and replenished, but drowsily at night, where a ray might have been of service, were now to guide the wanderer off from the black and filthy ordure, which, of antique heritage, had gathered round their ever-augmenting monuments along the street. Ficino fancied, as his eyes were drawn to those feeble beams to the dim orb

which they radiated, that a body not unlike in its opaque configuration to the shadow of a man of vast stature, and garments whose disposition and amplitude betokened disguise, had taken refuge or standing within its immediate circle of dark shadow.

His estimate of the morality of his enemies was not long in suggesting to the mind of Ficino the probable purpose of such a vigil. He paused; and the figure remained immovable as death. He was not unarmed; for it would have been insanity to move abroad in such times without some means of personal protection. Yet the suspicion that flashed rapidly across his mind, of the probability of an associate in so dark a deed as that of assassination, for a moment made him hesitate whether the better part of valour might not be to turn and retreat whilst he had the time. His intention to do so was apparently conjectured, for the shadow moved, and a man enveloped from head to heel in a dress that nearly resembled the frock of the friars of St. Francis

emerged from his lurking place, and advanced directly towards him.

“No nearer, my friend,” said the man, “if your intentions are peaceful, I will give room for us to pass; but if you seek to do me harm, your disguise would seem to indicate that you would do well to pause, for I am armed.”

“Hush, hush! I am no bravo,” said the figure; “I have waited long for you. I little dreamed that one having so many enemies would be abroad at this hour.”

He took from under the folds of his garments a slip of paper, and held it up, as the light fell upon it.

“Will you bear this to your friend?” he asked. “It is matter for neither sword nor intimidation. Will you swear to its contents by sunrise to-morrow?”

Ficino glanced at the superscription, and promised as he was asked, and made good, though with extreme caution, for he had been taught in latter days many a lesson of distrust. In this instance, however, the alarm was groundless. The figure

er had suddenly vanished, the sound of retreating steps was no longer audible, and Ficino was passing rapidly on his way, as he was about to turn the corner of a dark street in which this singular inter-  
had taken place, the voice of the  
er again sounded within his ear; he  
e very breath of his lips warm upon  
eck. The single word "Beware!"  
that was now uttered; and when he  
turned, his monitor was gone.

er a minute's reflection, Ficino turned  
his steps, and rapidly retrod through  
me dark mazy alleys the path over  
he had lately hurried, and a few  
es of quick walking brought him into  
ore open parts of the city.

ilst thus apparently flying from an  
ary danger, he had well nigh thrown  
lf into one of startling reality. His  
y once more across the square of the  
e palace; he had reached the church  
Pier Scheraggi, which stood at that  
where the princely Gallery of the

Medici was afterwards erected, and about to plunge into the street which laterally below the frowning walls of the palace, when from behind the screen of the church's portico he overheard the voices of more than one, in council of some deed which a moment's pause convinced him had himself for its object.

"He shall die," said a voice in husky and jarring tones he immediately recognised—it was that of Jacopo G. "but it shall be no common death; the insult was public, and so shall its punishment be."

"We were well rid of him," said another speaker; "and the speaker is better!"

"It shall not long tarry," replied the seeker of his blood.

Ficino listened to hear no more; "my life is in God's keeping," he said, "when it shall please him to ask it I may be ready to yield it up. I leave it to Providence! that the destinies of t

happy and great city should be squabbled for by such as these ; the best of them but an assassin more daring than his fellows ! O glorious spirit of my sainted father ! my heart tells me that I shall before long join thee, and those illustrious men who, with thee, helped to instruct my boyhood. May I die as you died, holding death, not as sleep, but as a happy return to our parent elements ; our bodies, into all bright essences ; our spirits, to the fountain of all power, all knowledge, all loveliness. To this world I have not attached myself ; and in leaving it, so that I fulfil my destinies, I shall have nothing to repine for."

He had by this time again plunged amongst the thickly-heaped dwellings of the very humblest grade of citizens, the tenements of those who have squalor and foul air for their heritage, who toil in occupations which the pen names not, and from which every sense recoils with disgust. And sounds of licentious orgies, and obscene songs from lips foaming with the fever of

ebriety, broke from many an obscure startling and shocking the ear with riot. Such sounds, and the foul atmosphere through which they floated, made sensitive student quicken his steps.

The streets widened ; the starlight blue vaulted heavens which it filled with calm loveliness, became again visible. He presently found himself upon the quays of the mighty Arno. The Vecchio rose gloomily before him, sentinels in the livery of the Colonna challenged him more than once as he passed it.

Nearly at the entry of the Via de' Cerchietti there stands a modest-looking somewhat modernized in the exterior lower stories, yet retaining sufficient of its antiquity above. The doorway gives admission to this unpretending is unlike the generality of Florentine which are usually the most magnificent their exterior decorations ; but above the arch is a tablet of marble bearing an inscription. The busy citizen passes it by

a thought; the pilgrim of our own land pauses beneath it in wonder. There was no inscription on that doorway when Ficino stopped before it; but the mighty genius of that age, the undying teacher of all ages since, was himself within. His visitor paused, and looked up, to ascertain if there were lights above, and then knocked timidly to demand admittance.

It was not until his summons had been many times repeated that the cord attached to the bolt of the door was drawn, and he was enabled to pass inwards. An old and wrinkled dame held a small lucernina to his face, before the door closed behind him.

“Alas! alas! you are late, young sir,” she exclaimed; “the poor soul has asked for you many times since the Ave-Maria bell sounded. I doubt much if he may longer know you.”

“Whom mean you, Agatha?” asked Ficino. “I seek Francesco, your master’s secretary. Is he within?”

“He is, he is,” was the reply. “Mount

the stairs, and be quick ;—but be they are all there.”

Much embarrassed by a greeting fretfully and unintelligibly delivered, hastened to ascend the staircase. A receding from the very middle of a steep stone steps was a low doorway he paused, and knocked, as he had desired, gently. No one answered after intently listening, he raised the door and entered.

The chamber in which he found was evidently the den of a student ; and papers lay about in heaps, with no indication of use than order. A long table, with a lamp still burning, but a clotted wick was unsnuffed and dim, occupied no inconsiderable space of the chamber. A bed and a chair or two cumbered the room. Open upon the table lay a manuscript blotted by a pen which had dropped from the hand that held it, and still lay upon the unfinished sentence, where the writer of some sudden surprise had cast it.

Ficino bent down over it, and with that freedom of pure intentions, and old friendship with the writer, which years of intimate brotherhood in kindred studies had made him privileged to assume, he took up the paper to peruse it. It was in a style with which he was familiar, and with that unaccountable absence of mind for which he was so well known, he threw himself into the chair before him, and was presently immersed in the contemplation of the bright phantasms of the world within.

Page after page had thus been read and mused upon, and he lost, as was usual with him, all computation of the flying hours. Some trifling accident at length roused him, and he rose from his reading, to seek in the more private chambers of the house if his friend were within.

He ascended the flight of stairs which led to the principal apartments ; yet no sound met his ear. Lights still burned in the passages, but, like the one in the chamber he had left, dimly, as though the vitality of

their nutriment was expending. Neither voice nor footstep fell upon his ear.

Startled by the singular solitude and calm of all things, he ventured, after long pausing to listen, to throw open a door, and pass straight to the sleeping chambers of the family. Then at last the sound of a suppressed whispering reached him ; and presently stifled sobs ; and then a *hard* breathing and a broken voice.

“ Come nearer, Ludovico, my son,” it said, “ for my strength is drawing to its term ; my heart beats feebler each instant ; and after a few more vibrations, that also will be at rest. It has been a good servant for threescore years, toiling patiently through its amazing functions. There has been no murmuring, no rebelling : it is time it had its slumber. Come, then, my child, for your father’s blessing. I have yet a few words for the boy Francesco to carry forth to my country and to posterity : they have had the toils of the day, the deep thoughts of the aching brow through the vigils of the

night, through youth and manhood, and they shall have also my last breathings. Of your career I have nought now to say ; doubtless, all should serve their country as their abilities urge them. You have chosen a heartless and cruel profession ; yet one where success most dazzles. Forget not, in your following of licentious leaders, and a roving, unscrupulous calling, those who have so many years nourished and cared for you."

" My worldly substance," he continued, after a pause, " is small ; the wages of honest service leave old age seldom otherwise ;—such as it is, my testament provides for its distribution amongst you. To your mother I bequeath the legacy of all the love you and your brothers owe me. Be to her a protector, for assuredly worse times are coming ; and a strong arm, and the favour of such as you have cast your lot amongst, may much help her. You have the blessing of a dying father, and happy is the son that has that consoler of his own

deathbed, that witness in his favour before heaven."

Again he paused ; then resumed—" Lay my bones in our common home in the church of Santa Croce ; and if worldly wealth ever fall to your fortunes, let some humble monument point out my resting-place to the pilgrim who in after times may come with the tribute of deep thought, and say of the dust below, ' He was one who outwitted the cunning of men's hearts, who spoke without fear, and served his kind.' "

Once more he paused ; then turning to the person he addressed—" And now, Francesco," he continued, " faithful and tender witness of my long labours, come hither and lay your hand beneath my head, for my brain reels like an agile drunkard. I would, if it so please Heaven, pass away in your arms. My spirit, could I bequeath it, should be yours, for the sake of this city of my birth."

Ficino was aware of the awful adieus of a

mighty spirit on the wing. A long and irresistible presentiment had familiarized his mind with scenes similar. He entered the chamber noiselessly, and unobserved mingled with the group of mourners who surrounded the bed from which that eloquent and sinking voice proceeded. There was no light in that melancholy chamber, save what shone feebly in from the rays of a fast sinking moon. The shadow of each mourner stood about the bed, repeating with startling promptness each gesticulation of grief, and to the uncontrolled fancy of Ficino, appeared so many more mute witnesses of a great man's death.

Ficino might have ventured more boldly than he did; for, independently of the obscurity of the chamber, vision was already perishing in the orbs whose glorious brightness had till now been a fitting throne for a most luminous spirit. The first object that struck him on his entry was the thin and shrunken hand of the sick man feeling

blindly for the youth Francesco, whom he had so touchingly summoned to a most melancholy office.

The features, as the imperfect light fell upon them, bore the wasting traces of past convulsions, and of the pangs of an excruciating malady. Ficino learned afterwards that death had been occasioned by a medicine which had for many years administered relief, but which had at last turned to a deadly poison. All pain had for some time ceased, and death had sent its serene yet surest forerunner, a dull and lethargic calm. His adieus to his family were taken, and he was now for a moment calling up his remaining energies for the expression of the few words that were like the seal upon the testament of past instructions. It remained to him to declare with words,—the readiest believed by all men, the last words the lips utter before death strikes them,—that he had spoken truths imperishable, and that he had nought to recall.

francesco did as the dying man desired ; he placed his arm under his neck, and w his head upon his bosom.

It is well," he said, calmly ; " so let it o the last. The precepts of your whole beloved boy, best fit you for the labours a which I am called. Toil not for hope eward or honour in this world. Wealth easant ; and the sensitive body is sadly in the power of our fellow-men who us. But the hour must come to all, t is now come to me ; and when the nt's power is no more, it is pleasant to k that you have suffered for truth's sake, a as I have suffered. I carried a light re the blind, and tyrants trembled lest sightless multitudes should see *their* t and the secret of their strength ; and, might have expected, they threw me o a dungeon, and racked and tortured

Have not these hands, and wrists, and les, the signs of their cruelty written in orimity ? They will carry their inefface-

able testimony to another world against them. Yes, Francesco; my wages have been the prison and the torture, and neglect, which in moments of weakness I have felt more than either.—Yet what are *they* now? Fear them not; strip the human heart to its native nudity, and if there be shame in the exposure, let those blush in whom the concupiscence of foul passions rages to their country's dishonour. Let men's guile, and the hypocrisy of the crafty and the unscrupulous, be laid bare; thus only can you hope to teach; thus only can you give useful warning. My papers will aid you: and when this generation of liars shall cry out 'scandal,' be assured that they feel the lash they have well merited. Oh, my forlorn and afflicted country! cruel is the scourge that an inhuman tyranny has made ready, to punish your insanity; it will rend and flay, and to how little purpose! Oh, cradle and deathbed of earth's choicest children, how art thou about to be laid

late! the oblivious tomb shall become  
sole refuge for all who have had pride  
in my greatness!"

He was silent for a space; then resumed  
And now, Francesco, bear well in your  
honour my last farewells to our friends; for  
those who have loved us, they who have  
cherished, without ridiculing, our infirmities,  
will not be forgotten when we are leaving  
our country. Bear my tenderest love, and my  
prayers, if it may avail anything, to Eugenia  
Medici. She is born of noble lineage, of  
the race of honest citizens, of a republic's  
heroes. Even *her* father could not save his  
country! Be to her a prop, and as a temple  
keep her calm from the coming storm. Heaven  
surely spare from the universal wreck  
one so lofty and pure a heart as hers. There  
is one, too, whom I should well remember;  
his place should be now beside me. To the  
father of Marsilio Ficino bear the warning of  
my grief; familiar with the snares of blood-  
thirsty men; tell him he will surely meet  
the fate he so uselessly defies. He may

leave his blood upon his country's soil, but it will be a barren heritage, for it will be spilt in the vindication and testimony of no useful truth. He will be a martyr, as his father would have gloried in being, to a whimsical belief in the unsubstantial ghosts of classic affectations."

"Are you still with me, Francesco?" he added, whilst his heart fluttered, and his enunciation was broken. "I feel no more thy breath, that but now fell warmly upon my cheek; it was the only other spot besides my heart that was not cold. You, too, beloved boy, must come to this. Trust not to youth or health; the reed as often breaks as its roots wither. May your end be calm as ——"

At this moment a servant entered with a light, and it appeared that its brightness pierced the film which had overspread the eyeballs of the dying man; for he broke the continuation of his discourse, and the mind wandered amidst imaginations of the brilliancy of the throne of truth and eternal

dom in another world. One word only afterwards uttered, which evinced the variation of sympathies with the world he was leaving : it was the word "Remember!" The voice served the speaker no more ; his lips still moved, like the last and faintest vibrations of a body sinking to its rest for want of impulse. They, too, in a minute or so more ceased ; the breath was the last vestige of life which retained its power.

Francesco laid his cheek down to the earth, that last resting-place of the fluttering spirit ; and then the very slightest possible movement gave notice that the living soul had abandoned the perishable wreck. The mortal spirit of Niccolo Machiavelli was hence more unfettered in the hands of its creator, and Francesco held in his arms but the deserted shrine, honoured, indeed, and cherished, but about to be broken up by the million ministering agents of creation, and to be formed anew into, perchance, a rude dwelling for some unfavoured child of another generation, whose lot might be to

till the earth, and toil from infancy to age to clothe and nurture the animate clay, and lie down to his last sleep, scarcely conscious, save by the vague terrors of a recurring dissolution; that spirit dwelt in the glorious tenement which had been adapted to his use.

From the spot which a few minutes had converted from a sick man's chamber to a corpse's halting place on the road to its home in the cold earth, all who had witnessed the spirit's departure separated to weep in private.

Francesco stood longest and last to gaze upon those mute lips, those dim eyes, in which for so many years eloquence had had its home. The body now lay like a vase broken and thrown aside, when a costly essence, all that had given it price, had been poured from it. Yet the bosom that had cherished him in his boyhood, the lips that had taught him wisdom, the majestic, yet fatherly brow that had reproved him, were they all to him but as common clay, hurrying to lay aside the form with which he was

familiar? Oh, surely not! not, at least, in that moment of his first grief.

“Let us go hence, Ficino,” said the youth to his friend, whose sorrow, more calm, was scarcely less poignant than his own. “The imprisoned mind is set free; its image will be brightest where are the works of its past labours.”

They left the chamber, and went below, into that small study into which Ficino had first entered.

“There they lie,” exclaimed Francesco, pointing to the scattered pages; “those precious relics, gems of price, which the intellect of his survivors have no treasure wherewith to purchase;—they are his generous legacy to us all; truths which indefatigable toil and a rare experience enabled him to dig up from the lowest depths of the human heart. Many a time has my hand trembled as I copied out those singular manuscripts. They will go forth to cold and malicious criticism; and those who have the craft to feel their truths will strive to

turn upon his sainted memory  
suming fire which should burn t  
evil hearts. I have not ventured t  
with a line; nay, not with a sing  
Had I done so, I feel that I sho  
averted the anathema of the wic  
his name. But, after all, what  
things matter to him! To us, i  
those who knew him, who witr  
scene that has yet scarcely ceas  
present, it will be a bitter portio  
such a name blasphemed. We h  
scoffers make a jest of your father's  
*his* philosophy has been the paren  
folly. Judge, then, when pages  
these, like a scourge of serpents  
tear them, how will the wicked t  
him!

“ But, my friend, I am forgetti  
common loss what much concern  
I have had a warning for you.  
made enemies, Ficino, and they ar  
treachery to take your life. Y  
leave this city. I have had a mis

Ferrucci, who invites me to join him. It is a melancholy gift to be able to see down into the buried depths of the human heart. I might easily turn over these pages, and find amongst these manuscripts the explanation of his epistle ; and yet Ferrucci is the truest of all our defenders to his country's cause. He writes to offer me the command of a subject city ; he seeks my counsels ; he calls me our country's safeguard ; and yet how plain, how blazingly manifest, under all this, is the dark spot, the secret canker, which blotches a heart that is so near to nobleness ! Evil minds have been busy with the name of one whom he thinks to gain, by removing the prop upon which her heart leans in its afflictions. But neither he nor I should be enemies. He judges rightly, that with an enterprising heart like his, and the veteran bands that follow him, if they are true to a good cause, our country might yet be saved. Our insane rulers, whilst they scramble amongst themselves for places, and residences, and ermined

robes, have trusted blindly their city to hirelings within, to defend them from hirelings without. We are in the snare we netted for ourselves ; and unless Ferrucci can turn the treachery of Malatesta Baglioni to his own account, we are wholly lost. But you, my friend, must not await the sequel of this foolish tragedy. You shall bear my answer to Volterra, and I will myself soon join you."

" Had I intended flight," Ficino replied, " or feared my enemies, I should have fled before ; I am now under promise to a fair damsel to hold myself within call. Will it not be a curious thing to see *me* possess the entry to Carducci's Palace, and talking of morality and honesty in the chambers and cabinets of that wily and wicked man ? Yet Francesco," he continued, changing his tone of mirth to one of deep sadness, " I this day witnessed a spectacle that might well turn jest into mourning. The old man has found a daughter, a young creature, beautiful as spring, yet with all the buoyancy of

youth utterly crushed out. Some evil influence has thrown her in his way, at a period when designing counsels most easily deface the brightest of God's works."

"No counsels of his will injure her," replied Francesco; warmly. "I have long spared him; but if word or thought of his should corrupt or shadow that holiness in which she has been reared when beyond his influence, his limbs should blacken to a dye as deep as his depravity. That you are likely to be to her a friend I could much rejoice at for her sake; but for your own, Ficino, it would be but a step the nearer to an ignominious grave. Go no more within those accursed walls. She may droop a little from loneliness; but that is a trivial suffering in such times as these. She is safe from evil, even if she learn to love her parent. There is a power yet beyond his: have no fear for her."

"And now, Francesco," said his friend, "in reply to your kind counsels, you shall have tidings for yourself; and if their

import correspond with the mystery of their conveyance, they may nearly concern you."

So saying, he produced the paper of which he had taken charge, and delivered it to Francesco. The handwriting was apparently at once recognised, and the contents were perused with much eagerness.

"Trust not to others the night watch of the Convent of St. Lucia ; it will be visited to-morrow two hours after midnight. Seize, but slay not, and your prize will be no mean one."

Thus ran the words of the document. Francesco remained long plunged in deep thought.

"If you would aid me, Ficino," he said at length, "you may, if I interpret aright, be of no mean service to your country. The risk is great," he added ; we will speak of it to-morrow."

## CHAPTER IX.

At the corner of one of the narrowest  
of the dirtiest of all quarters of the  
Florence, there was, at the time we  
writing of, and there is to this day, a  
mean tenement, over whose doorway  
was supported by an alligator and a  
pair of candles, the stern and stately effigy  
of a Zenobio. This dwelling, as one  
connected with the city will have readily  
perceived, was the home of an apothecary.  
Every name that figured there under the  
figures of the saint, figures there at this  
point and a marble slab, let into the wall,  
testified of honour within, and directly

II.

L

beneath a lamp, which in all probability may never have been extinguished for an hour from that day to this, commemorated, with a pride common enough to the Florentine tradesmen, the antiquity of the family, and of the date of its hereditary calling.

The same phials, the same shelves, the same burnished scales, that still form the ornament of that dwelling, were at that day part and parcel of its furniture. But from that time to this, amongst the many generations who passed their lives in the measuring and mingling of simples, there has never existed any individual who gained the celebrity that was enjoyed by their remote kinsman, to whom we are about to introduce the reader.

The sun had gone down, and the red-robed practitioner, after shutting and securing with no small care the exterior of his premises, turned to give up his post to an attendant. His last care, however, before doing so was, to take possession of the case containing the many mites which the day's

gains had added to his substance. He poised it in his hand for a moment, and in all probability, with the aid of a retentive memory, could have told to a fraction the amount of treasure he was about to secure.

It was an action scarcely perceptible, but the lynx-like eye of his attendant detected it, and the far keener glance of the treasurer himself at once perceived that he had done so.

“These are evil times, Cecco,” he observed, as he secured his earnings; “and if I make no better commerce than this, I must send thee again to the offices of the hospital from whence I took thee. I have made a vow to the blessed San Zenobio that his lamp shall burn while this roof shelters me, and thou knowest that oil sells for a sequin the flask. Thou art already more fleshy than thy patron, and scandal has begun to deal with thy fair name accordingly. Look well to thy trust; if the sainted Diogenes knock, let him be admitted; the presence of one so holy can scarcely fail to

bring Heaven's blessing. If any other claim help, serve them according to thy best. Traffic not in what thou understandest not, but simples that thin the blood and relieve the viscera, in times of foul feeding as these are, will bring thee fame and serve thy neighbour. But on no account let me be disturbed; a day's labour merits a night's slumber, and I have watched in my time. Take to thy good books and thy rosary, Cecco; and if thou dozeest the while, believe that Messer Zenobio watches over thee."

His attendant bowed, for he was one of few words, and the apothecary retired to the interior of his abode. When left alone to the lamp and simples, Cecco set every sense to listen; he distinctly heard his patron mount the stairs to a room above him; he heard the bolt slide into its hasp, and then the soft step of the thin apothecary approach to the solid wall of the building, and he fancied he could hear him go down upon his knees,—in all probability to his devotions,—for he had a reputation for the

miser's piety, which substitutes prayers for charity.

But the keen sense of the listener was still unsatisfied. Certain sounds, not unlike the dropping of thin coin upon each other, fell upon his ear, and presently were followed by the far more exciting chink of weightier moneys hailing their fellows. These sounds long continued, and before the busy calculator above rose from his occupations, the head of Cecco had fallen upon his bosom, and a heavy laboured breathing, like that of one who slept in an uneasy attitude, gave token of that pleasing feebleness of nature which the absence of all curiosity, at a late hour, and after a day of work and fasting, might make pardonable to the most exacting master.

The thin and nearly incorporeal person of the apothecary had no thought of rest. His was a career that had little communion with sleep. He scarcely had a body to be wearied ; and his spirit knew no drowsiness.

When once safely locked within his chamber, he turned, as his attendant had conjectured, to his hoards. He drew forth a key, which was but the first link of a hidden series, each one opening but the linking place of its successor, till an instrument scarce larger than a pin was released from durance. With this he proceeded, after uplifting a part of the pavement of his flooring, to press down a spring, of construction as delicate as the slight thing that touched it; and behold a scarcely perceptible line of separation became apparent. This was pushed aside, and then lay open to his enraptured eyes a vision that cheered him through the remorse of a thousand deeds; that banished at one magic flash the gibbet and the cord, which during most hours of the day shared even *their* influence.

Gold, stamped with the effigies and arms of all monarchs, and of all states, glittered in their glorious welcome to one who loved

it well ; but in far greatest abundance shone the coins of his Holiness, of the Spaniard, and of the Giglio of his native city.

The apothecary's pallid and death-like cheek became tinted with a luminous and flushed brightness, as his lead-like and lurid eyes gloated upon his gathering. When his glance reverted to the case which he had taken from beneath his dress, a look of scorn greeted it. Yet even those miserable and dull dribblets, worn thin and figureless by hard hands, found a heap with which to claim fellowship. But oh ! the beautiful, the ruddy and glowing gold ! he could have felt it in him to have fused his very heart and skeleton limbs, as he had already done the flesh and plumpness of his youth, into that idolized, that precious heap !

Time passed away, hours like minutes, whilst he thus kneeled, with a fevered pulse and a mind wholly forgetful of the world without. The measured tread of the city guard, as it changed its sentinels, at last roused him. It was already midnight ; he

gave a last look to his treasure, and turned at length, to rise.

As he did so, a sound of living breathing (so at least his bewildered senses would interpret it) arrested him. He sprung to his feet, and before him, with a glance fixed not less intently than his own had been upon the yet unconcealed mountains of wealth, stood the figure of a tall square-built man, in the dress of a friar.

The agitation of the startled man allowed no time to reflect or pause: quick as light a dagger flashed from beneath his peaceful vest, and was at the throat of the intruder. A glance then sufficed to make him pause; another second brought certainty, and even then the weapon trembled in his hand.

Utterly lost in the contemplation of the spectacle before him, the intruder had as yet made no attempt to avoid the dagger with which he was threatened. Had he done so, he would doubtless have paid with his life the forfeit of his curiosity. But when the body of the apothecary was placed effec-

tually between him and the object of his gaze, and the dagger gleamed hungrily at his throat, he was at length roused.

“Fear nothing, my son,” he said, and a smile of most doubtful import played over features in which the resemblance to the person he addressed was striking, although well nigh two score of years had done their worst to efface it. “Why should you fear? it is surely a subject of pride to an old father to have one so wealthy for his child! In the course of nature an old man of three-score and ten years cannot have many more to live, and it is cheering to think that I leave my son so well provided.”

“You did not wisely, my father,” replied the younger man, “to come upon me thus noiselessly and unannounced. How did you enter? My watchfulness never slumbers, and I heard no footsteps, nor felt the air tremble, which, methinks, it should have done as these heavy garments disturbed it.”

“The life that you lead, my son,” said the parent, “I can well believe, quickens

your perceptions ; but your father has longer trod over ways that teach wariness. For the rest, you would surely welcome me into my own dwelling ! my coming may still profit you, if it only teaches you increased caution. Is it wise, think you, to play off the music of your golden harmonies within the hearing of our friend below ? Believe me, my coming troubled not thyself more than it did him. When I entered, the youth was standing studying the labels on thy choicest shelves, elevated well nigh to a level with thy blessed saint. I question whether two Braccios separated his greedy eyes from all thy treasure !”

A cold and heavy dew gathered upon the brow of the apothecary as he listened to this awful tale ; a bright wild flash presently lighted up the baleful fires of his glance, and his cheek then resumed its accustomed calm.

“Shut up your coffers, my son,” said the old man, “ your secret is safe in my keeping. I have other matters for thy consideration,

and a scheme which, if well turned to profit, may be worth the double of all thou hast yet scraped together."

The lid fell over the mighty hoard, and father and son turned their minds to the discussion of a topic which indeed promised, if successful, even more liberally than the old man had represented it. Their interview was long, and their opinions, notwithstanding their privacy, were interchanged rather by mysterious allusions than by open discourse. No name escaped them, yet was every perception clear and instantaneous in its transition.

It was an hour after midnight when they separated. The old man drew the folds of his coarse frock closer about him, the capuchin was brought over his features, and, embracing his son, he departed.

When left alone, and the retreating steps of his parent had utterly died away, the cold and clammy moisture once more rose upon the brow of the apothecary, and he threw himself into a low settle, wracked

with the most agonizing terrors. The distortions, the hideous and death-like palor of his brow, long betrayed the entire possession which alarm had usurped over his senses.

After awhile, a glare, like the coming of insanity, gave a wildness and ferocity to his aspect; some thought, fierce and dire, had mingled with, and finally dispelled, his previous terrors. Whatever it might be, its influence was powerful and prompt.

“Yes, yes,” he uttered, “it must and shall be! he dies!”

Against whom this awful sentence was thus solemnly pronounced, we will presume not to conjecture. He now raised himself, and drawing from some secret crypt a phial, whose dull lethargic substance seemed scarcely fluid, he counted out a few heavy drops, which he mixed with water and drank off. A scarcely larger quantity he again poured into a smaller vessel, and to this he added a spirit whose essence crept in ravishing perfumes through the whole house, bathing in sweet oblivion the drowsy senses

of the youth in the chamber below, and bringing to his slumbering faculties, dreams of the fruition of all blissful longings. The apothecary then resumed his hard seat, bent down his head upon his bosom, and trusted his spirit to the control of the passions which swayed it in sleep even as in its waking hours.

When the parent of the sleeper had once gained the open air, and trod rapidly through the silent streets, he, too, had his reflexions. "Threescore and ten years," thus he communed with himself; "said I that I had lived in this silly world so long? I have been hanged once, and drowned thrice! His Highness the Prince of Orange himself had me cut down from the gibbet that his lancers had built for me, and bade them, as his Holiness had done twice before, fling my carcass into the Tiber. Did I rise from the waves with the same old limbs that had been thrown into them? Was the long sleep that succeeded like the troubled and unrefreshing, enfeebling slumbers, that

living men can snatch, whilst youth and strength flit away from them through the relaxed pores? Did I awake the same earth-seeking, withered old man they had all scoffed at? No, no; in experience, in craft, in wariness, I may be older; but in frame, in strength, in soundness of limb and muscle, I am younger yet than *he* is. Let him live on; he gathers wealth and dares not spend it. The two hoards are as surely mine, separate as united. True it is that their sympathies, their affinity, is strong; they crave for union as living men do in the concupiscence of their insatiable nature; a few drops of blood will at any time unite them. Threescore and ten years!—each minute of this vast journey may be numbered with golden ducats. Such heaps might purchase popedom or empire; and could it but bring youth—buy off a few years—human nature would possess perfection!”

Thus musing, the rapid and vast strides of the aged reckoner brought him into the

centre of the narrowest and minutest mazes of the city, which were familiar to him as his own dwelling. After carefully examining the space of the street before him, he at length slunk under shadow of a Madonna's lamp; and it was there that Ficino had found him.

Dawn had scarcely streaked the dull heavens, when his hopeful son rose up from his brief slumbers; a dim light shed its drowsy and sickly gleam over his chamber, and his eye first fell upon the curdled fluid which he had measured out ere he sought his rest. The purer element had separated its transparent lymph from the dense mixture, and now sparkled as he held it up to the light. He shook it, and the whole once more became a troubled and opaque substance. He then folded an ample gabardine about him, and proceeded to descend into the chamber below him.

As he entered, he raised his bonnet in homage to the patron saint of his abode, and then turned to arouse his attendant. The

man was sleeping calmly, and a smile was on his features, for his dreams strewed in their passage the blossoms of trees whose fruit, when it ripens, is ruddy gold.

The apothecary surveyed him for a minute with an unmoved brow ; even the doubts that came to his mind raised no expression upon his sallow and wary cheeks.

“ Wake, wake thee, good Cecco,” he exclaimed ; “ I must go abroad, and the doors of our dwelling unfold at day-dawn.”

The man looked guilty as he awoke, and his limbs trembled beneath the snake-like gaze of his master. “ I have had frightful dreams,” he stammered, “ and—”

“ Rouse thee, I say !” exclaimed the apothecary ; “ prate not to me of your visions ; I have brought thee thy morning draught ;” and he held up nearly to his lips the goblet whose perfume brought a ready light into the dull eyes of the dreamer. “ I would go abroad ; and so to thy duty, Cecco. Thy master confides to thy keeping the guardianship of his little savings. Let none pass to

the inner chambers. I may tarry longer than is my wont, but be vigilant, and it will one day profit thee."

"Fear not," was the reply of Cecco ; and he drained the goblet to its last drop. As he returned the empty glass to the hands of his master, it fell to the floor; and was shivered to pieces.

"Gather up the fragments, thou unthrifty knave," said the master, with well-feigned displeasure ; "its price shall be taken from thy salary, or a new one purchased from thy food. What service of thine, thinkest thou, will be worth the waste and the ruin thy heedlessness brings upon one so poor as I am?"

The rebuked shopman shrunk away from the ill-omened glance that was still upon him. He proceeded to sweep away into the street the particles of broken glass, and his master passed out.

The events but just recorded had taken place on the evening, or rather night, of the fête which the Gonfaloniere had given in his daughter's honour. From that scene,

novel and humiliating as she had found it, Teresa had retired, wearied and wretched, to her splendid yet solitary chamber.

As she passed again before the large mirror at which she had first beheld the wondrous change of her outer person, which had been effected by the costly indulgence of her father, she paused again to contemplate, not as before, the dazzling glories of her apparel, but the pale and worn cheeks to which they gave added melancholy. It was like looking, by some secret power accorded for the purpose of a warning, at once into the hidden recesses of her aching heart ; for every mingled feeling that passed within had left its trace upon her cheek.

A long and deep-drawn sigh concluded Teresa's sad scrutiny, and she proceeded to loosen and cast from her the cumbrous velvets which weighed upon her wearied frame like lead ; she then coiled up her limbs upon a pile of cushions, and gave herself up to the sad pastime of reviewing and calculating the chances of her miseries.

It was already long past midnight, and for hours she had not moved from her position, nor dropped her eyelids over their burning balls. Many tears were upon her cheek and upon her garments, yet she had made no effort to shake them away. A step had approached her chamber, the curtain of her door moved aside, and she had not turned to evince consciousness of the entry of any one, when at last the shadow of a man passed before her. She raised her glance coldly and incuriously, and her father stood by her side. He saw at once the evidences of her emotion, and bent over her.

“Have you no word for your father, my sweet child?” he whispered. “I had hoped to find you sleeping, and smiling with bright dreams.”

“I shall sleep, father, before long,” she said, mournfully, “the sleep that will know neither dream nor waking. What are crowded chambers, and the homage of strangers, and fine apparel, to me? I was

nursed in solitude and clad in rags until both are dearer to me than strange faces and cumbersome garments. I loved my liberty, and I have found a prison ; but oh ! I possessed what, were I still poor, I should perchance still possess. *He* then loved me, and now he loves another !”

“ You dream, my fair child,” said her agitated parent. “ What other can he love as he has loved thee ? You were reared together ; he has from infancy fashioned your growing mind after the model he best loved, and I have, from his own lips, heard the depth of his undying love. His reason was overthrown, his strength brought down well nigh to the grave for thy loss ; and is it because his visits have been inexplicably discontinued since you have been under my roof, that you thus doubt a constancy and a truth so severely tested ?”

“ That he *did* love me, my father,” said the maiden, “ dearer than life, dearly as truth and honour, which he valued more than life, I know far better than you can.

But, if he still loves me, he loves another better. Were not his own words, when he did visit me, of *brotherly love*? ay, surely thus he loves me! He has words of fraternal caution for me; he would teach me the duty of transferring gradually my affection from him to my father; he would teach me how to tread my way warily through the wiles and pitfalls of your splendid mansion; and he himself will leave me for one far dearer than sister ever was; one whose beauty and goodness need no such counsels. He will talk to her of other things than duty, and in other tones than those of a monitor! Oh, would, my father, that I did dream! I should dream of things far less frightful.”

“ My poor child,” said her parent, “ you are utterly deluded. As there is a just God above me, I will not believe such things of him! He does love you; he can love no other as he has loved you. He has dared even to threaten me—your own parent—if my affection watched less tenderly than his love had done from infancy. But I see the

author of this evil. Say I not well that Niccolo Ficino has been your tempter? Base and smooth-lipped slanderer—he shall answer to me for this as for other things!”

“Harm him not, my father!” exclaimed the maiden, springing up from her couch; “harm him not! as you value my peace of mind, nay, as you care to keep me beneath your roof. Ever ready to suspect, your own shrewdness deceives you. If he spoke to me of the Lady Eugenia Capponi, it was by my own seeking, and I sought it because I have already learned that your lips open but as expedience bids them. If he spoke the truth, it was, pardon my frankness, it was more honest than trying, as you have done, to deceive me. Oh, misery is a stern teacher! The precepts of confiding frankness that I have been familiar with from childhood, are poor guides through the ways I have seen trod since I have been in this city. Ficino is *his* friend; his eloquence may have weight with him. Rather, my father, let him come amongst us. When he

sees my misery, when he knows the wretchedness which is destroying me, out of mere pity he will be a messenger to recal Francesco to us."

"I will be your messenger, my child," said her father; "I will seek him out, and you shall need no mediators; his own lips shall speak his truth. I repeat it in all sincerity, I as readily believe in his truth as I do in the existence of the stars now gleaming over us. Be comforted, my Teresa, he will not, he dare not, deceive either me or thee."

"Alas!" said the wretched girl, "talk not of threats; if he comes not for my sake, your threats would indeed be pitiful. Threaten those whom your beck brought into your halls a few hours since, and I doubt not they will tremble; but try not their power over one who knows no passion so base or foolish. But his desertion has made me selfish; bring him to me by any means you will, if it be only for one brief hour!"

When Carducci left his daughter's chamber, it was with the intention of adopting those simple means for an interview with Francesco which he knew by experience would be likeliest to succeed with his simple and straight-forward character. But as he recalled the tearful cheeks, the utter wretchedness, of his child, doubts, and with them dark thoughts, flitted over his mind. He had spoken the simple truth when he declared his conviction of the deep and changeless affection which Francesco bore her ; but now that he pondered over appearances and their probable cause, that confidence was much shaken. That Francesco had at one time scorned him with all the intenseness of an honest heart that abhorred deceit, and scrupled not to avow its feelings, he well knew ; and whether his reiterated and cringing attempts to conciliate him had succeeded or not, became now the subject of his musings. The same dark and tortuous mazes through which he had trodden his way to power now presented the most

secure paths to obtain ends that were of far more consequence to him than all he had yet achieved; all the ready instruments for actions of dubious character with which that city abounded were intimately familiar to him, and of them all no one could have offered more opportunity to his call than he whose modest summons at his door broke in upon his reverie. It was Zonara the apothecary.

The Palace of the Gonfaloniere had been the bourn of that worthy's early walk abroad; for he knew, as well as a more dashing villain,—Turpin, the renowned,—how infallibly speed can prove an alibi. He bowed lowly to the lordly person of the magistrate as he entered, and asked so tenderly for the health of the lovely maiden whom his skill had rescued from an early grave, that the heart of the parent swelled with emotions in his favour, which tempted him to speak with more confidence than so wary a person usually did.

“She fares but poorly, learned sir,”

replied Carducci ; “ we have wearied her ; she has been tried beyond her strength. The assembly of our friends yestereven was more numerous than we had counted on, and, to say truth, less select than we could have wished ; idle rumours have reached her, connected with those piteous wanderings which you may remember preceded the recovery of her reason.”

“ There are means, revered Sir,” replied the mediciner, “ to heal the mind, as well as to restore the limbs.”

“ There are so,” replied the magistrate ; “ but they are neither so simple, nor so safe.”

“ Your Highness,” answered the apothecary, “ is supreme ruler of your people, and those who are unwise are unwary !”

“ It is most true, my friend,” was the reply ; “ but in what consists wisdom, and its companion wariness ? Your words, learned sir, are not spoken at hazard ; does wit shew itself in frequent visits to the quarters of Malatesta Baglione, and occa-

sional ones to those of the Prince of Orange? Does wisdom consist in the bearing forth to our enemies intelligence of our city's councils, and the secrets of our own palace? Or is there shrewdness in doing all this for a grudged stipend, and the ultimate prospect of the Bargello and the cord? And when wealth tenfold may be won without either toil or risk? You are silent, my friend; your lips move, but your reply reaches not our hearing."

"Your Highness may command my poor services," stammered out the terrified scout. "I have no good will to the Perugian, less to the Prince."

"It is well," replied Carducci; "our proposal shall be simple, and its execution not niggardly paid for. We have heard of a projected visit to the Convent of St. Lucia. It is to take place, if we are informed aright, about midnight, and you are to be of the party. Is it not so?"

The convicted man bowed to the correctness of the imputation.

“ It is to be your especial office, I understand, to escort the lady to her rendezvous. Now, might it not be possible, think you, to substitute one damsel for another ?”

“ With her own consent,” replied the obsequious instrument of any one who paid him, “ surely such a change might be effected. Has your Highness prepared an expedient to induce the party you speak of to fall into your scheme ?”

“ That,” replied Carducci, “ will not be difficult ; a lure not unlike the one you had proposed may still serve. Know you the Lady Eugenia Capponi ? she has been amongst the sisters of St. Lucia since her father’s death, and is, I understand, in delicate health. You must surely have been already called in by the tender sisterhood to administer to her malady ?”

“ I know the damsel well, my lord,” replied the man, somewhat staggered ; “ but to say truth, she has a protector whose vigilance is little likely to slumber ; whose vengeance would be like the anger of

Heaven, swift and withering. Your Highness's life were scarcely of more account with him than mine is."

"I know him of whom you speak as well as you do, most wary counsellor," replied the magistrate; "but I am armed as he is with a passion more powerful than the fear of death. Think you that I will see my daughter wither away before my eyes—perish in reason and life, from the fear of a boy's anger? Will you aid me as I proposed, or will you be conducted from this chamber to the tender care of our city hangman? Speak, man, for you have no alternative."

"I will do your bidding, my lord," replied the wretch, "and I trust to your protection for as much as it will avail me. If a letter is to entice the girl, it must be speedily penned. And what is it your pleasure to do with her when we shall be beyond the walls of St. Lucia?"

"What was the fate of the Roman dames, maids or matrons, who fell into the clutches of the robbers of De Bourbon?" asked Car-

ducci. "I wish her removed from my daughter's path; her future destinies in no way concern me. And now, my friend, step into my daughter's chamber. If your art can help her, I will buy her health with more gold than your brightest dreams have ever pictured. When the letter is ready I will join you."

The mediciner moved as he was bidden to the inner chamber. Teresa was still seated as her father had left her; her eyes were red with weeping, for a gentler mood had succeeded to her first transports. When the thin form of the physician was first visible, as it bent under the curtain he had scarcely the strength to raise, her cheek flushed, and she beckoned him rapidly to her side. He bent his eyes to the earth as he approached her.

"Come yet nearer to me, my friend; I will put your many promises to the test. Will you render me a service?"

"As far as may be within my limited power I will do so, lady," he replied.

courageous heart, man," she answered, "do all things! I must see the Lady Capponi; I will trust no eyes but my own. Know you that noble lady? she dwells in the Convent of St. Lucia. Thither I will go before this day's sun shall set."

"Without your father's consent, lady," said the practitioner, "your absence from your rooms for an hour were utterly imprudent."

"Nonsense, man!" replied the maiden; "am I his child or his prisoner? I will go forth when and where I will; and to the Convent of St. Lucia I must and will go, whether you will or no. Hold you, before sunset! If you fear for your safety, it is after all but ordering a sleeping draught and a still chamber."

"Nonsense, lady," replied the apothecary, "in all things I will obey your command, but in this deed I dare not, help you, for my life I must pay the forfeit!"

"Can you not procure me entry to the Convent? I find my own way thither?" replied the maiden.

"Will these baubles tempt you?"

she continued, flinging from the table before her a string of pearls that might have moved a sultana. "Take them; when I have more you shall have them!"

"Lady," he replied, giving back the prize as one far too dangerous to finger, "as far as you propose I will find means to serve you. If you can really leave these walls, I will conduct you to the convent, and procure your admission; but let it not be till dusk. I will be at my devotions in the Church of San Michele, that tall, square building you see before you; but your father ——"

The dignitary of whom he spoke raised the curtain of the chamber, and beckoned him forth. The letter he had written was intrusted to the practitioner, and he went his way, involved in a mesh whose intricacy threatened to entangle his own limbs.

Wary as he was, this worthy found full occupation for the remaining hours of his morning. But the thought that obtruded so often as to threaten the complete obli-

vision of his multifarious engagements, and in truth, encroached much upon that coolness which they required in the bewildered agent, was, that he had been outwitted and betrayed. There were too many engaged in the desperate scheme which had been arranged for that night's execution, and all of them apparently too deeply involved in personal risk, to make it easy to fix with any degree of certainty upon the individual one whose interests could have led him to betray so perilous a secret. But that he had been betrayed, and that but for the private purposes of the Gonfaloniere he would undoubtedly have paid the awful forfeit of his treachery with his life, was no longer a matter of doubt.

He next turned his mind to see how far it was within his power to implicate the magistrate himself in the crime of treason against the state. In this, in spite of all his ingenuity, he utterly failed; he had no means of proving to the world the collusion of so exalted a personage, except by a

forged love-letter : too ludicrous a medium for treason. He saw no hope but in success, and he went on his way, trusting to the future and to his fate, but not without a presentimental feeling of suffocation about his throat.

## CHAPTER X.

that secondary and lower range of  
hills which belt in the city of Flo-  
rence with a cincture of barrenness, and  
of inaccessible rock, one of the most  
prominent eminences is the hill of Montici.  
It forms a cheering contrast to the more  
sterile background of sterility; for the  
olive waves in golden abundance on its  
sunny slopes, and over its sunny slopes shines  
the verdant foliage of the olive, and glow  
from the sparkling bunches of the purple  
grape. Montici, more immediately than  
the neighbouring heights, superimpends the  
city at its base.

It had not escaped the observant eye of Buonarroti that that eminence entirely commanded the batteries and towers in which the people of Florence put their trust ; and it was to counteract the mischief of the enemy's possession of that post, that the hill of San Miniato had been fortified, with all the skill of which that great man was master.

A very cursory scrutiny of the environs of the city he was about to blockade had sufficed to the Prince of Orange to convince him of the importance of that situation ; and there accordingly he had fixed his head-quarters, and encamped the greater part of his army, surrounding the base of the hill with trenches, and erecting batteries on every position from which the city could be most easily assailed.

Far different—as the reader may readily imagine—was the aspect of that spot, when a few weeks had passed over the encampments of the licentious hordes whose sole occupation for many months had been

wanton and gratuitous destruction, from the smiling and garden-like order in which he may now behold it. Every single olive tree and vine had been either chopped down or rooted up for fuel during the winter; the soil had been trampled, and its produce destroyed. Yet the glittering spectacle of the many-coloured tents, shining armour, and waving pennons, shed a gorgeous pall over its desolation.

In the hurried occupation of the hamlet which had formerly smiled on the summit of the hill, by far the greater part of the habitations had been fired, to give that welcome to the rearward troops which their eyes loved best to gaze upon; and consequently but few cottages remained whose roofs concealed the busy life of some privileged handful, out of the mighty host that swarmed upon the spot marked out for their winter's abode.

Under the open heaven were exposed at one view the grouping, the business, and licentiousness of the remainder. There were

many objects which obtruded revoltingly upon the sight, the warlike avocations of this houseless multitude; there were many spots of a red and plashy soil, and many an undulation in the recently turned earth, which bore sad similitude to the shape of the human body in repose; many a shred of garments, and fragments of useless weapons, and shattered armour, for monuments which could not be mistaken—startling proofs that man perishes as soon, and decays sooner, than the productions which his hands fashion for the brief uses of his transient life.

The leader of the vast multitudes that covered every eminence within view, had learned a severe lesson from the pestilences which had attended on the indolent and foul habits of his army, both in Rome and Naples; and in the present instance was turning his experience to profit. His orders for the instant interment of slaughtered men and horses were so strictly enforced, that it would have been less crime to have buried

the living than to have left the dead unearthed. The risk of unbarbarizing the spirits of his savages, by removing the familiar objects of naked and putrefying carcases from their view, was of minor consideration, to the great peril of bringing the pestilence again amongst them. This caution robbed his residence of half the horrors of warfare. But with this single drawback from their gratifications, the licence of these mixed bands of Germans, Lombards, Sicilians, and Spaniards, was little encroached upon. Their horsemen scoured the country nearly at their own pleasure ; and if supplies in sufficient abundance for use and waste were furnished, no questions were asked respecting the quarter from which they came, nor the mode used in levying them. Of the many atrocious and bloody scenes enacted at open day, under the very eyes of the leaders of this band, bards have sung mournfully, and historians have written with indignation and shame. It is to one out of thousands

that might be recounted that we have now to direct the reader's attention.

It had been a day of unusual severity, and was verging towards sunset; the shadows flung by the bare stems and the leafless branches of the trees vainly strove to hide the desolation, and veil the utter solitude, of the country. For many months no living object moved over the lifeless landscape, except from time to time a score or two of lances, who scoured mountain and plain in search of plunder. The grain had not been sown; the rank herbage alone, mingling with the chance-fallen seeds of the over-ripe corn of the last harvest, straggled in tangled vegetation across the wilderness. A silence like the silence of the desert reigned over all things. Morning and mid-day the universal country was silent and solitary, as of old at the depth of night.

It was growing towards dusk, when the rare spectacle of a human being might have been descried, creeping under the cover of each object that afforded shadow, with most

tardy steps, towards the city, whose towers and stupendous dome stood out in such brightness as if every remaining beam of the declining sun were centring their glories over them. The figure we have mentioned was singularly unqualified for a deed so daring as the one he was evidently attempting. He was, although angular and ample in the construction of his frame, yet withered in flesh and sinew ; and one-half of his body, from his hips upward, bent to a line with the horizon. His features and his complexion were like those of a corpse that had been embalmed a thousand years ago—defying corruption, yet having neither the colour, the outline, nor the flexibility of the face of a living man.

He was not unaccompanied, for creeping on pace by pace with him was an aged ass, bony and blind, without flesh, almost without a hair on its ill-used and antiquated hide. It appeared as if these two survivors of an abandoned country had escaped from their graves, to walk where other genera-

tions had passed away. Yet was this superannuated beast, feeble as he was, burdened with a promiscuous load of such refuse of vegetables as, if once safely conveyed within the walls of Florence, would have sold for wealth enough to make the remainder of the days of both happy; for food, even such food, was of more estimation than gold, within the famishing city.

The hands of the owner of this precious charge were hooked and cramped, like the claws of a bird of prey; yet with them he contrived to hold fast to the packsaddle which he had placed on the back of the patient beast, and so they paced on stride by stride together. The force which had perished in the muscles this old man contrived to substitute with ingenuity; the hide of the enduring animal, who, from long familiarity with the maledictions and the cudgel of his driver, had learned to hold both in contempt, was proof against blows; but the crippled fingers, which lacked the strength to wield the club with the emphasis

quired for persuasion, had furnished themselves with a long, sharp instrument, which, on occasion demanded, he inserted with all the spite of conscious impotence into the ears of the sluggard.

It is astonishing how well use had made the two ancient animals acquainted with each other's respective powers, inclinations, and resources. The years numbered by the old man exceeded a hundred; how many of his companion might have lived, defied all the power of computation. Time had subdued the energies and the impulses of each to a steady and reflective gravity, which admirably adapted them for association.

Thus had they journeyed on together through the day, and now towards evening were arriving within view of their destination. Possessing only so much information of the occupation of the country as to refer to the value of provisions in the market, and the consequent difficulty of producing them, the old man had adopted the precaution of concealing his approaches

as much as he could. But he had no sort of knowledge of the routes most vigilantly guarded, nor indeed of the position of the head-quarters of the enemy.

As his evil fortune would have it, he had chosen for his more covered approach to the city a long, green lane, which debouched upon the gate of San Miniato; the very centre of the most perilous situation he could have selected. Thousands of the ravenous and kite-like plunderers kept, from dawn to dusk, their watch on each mountain pinnacle, sending their far ken into every grove and hollow in unremitting search; and yet had he through the whole day escaped their notice; and now, by one of those singular accidents which at times make the road through the very jaws of danger more secure than the bye-paths which would avoid it, was proceeding, unsuspecting of danger, and unmolested.

The gate was not above a hundred paces beyond him, when, suddenly, a loud yell broke up on every side of him. His vision

was bent to the earth, and his hearing nearly extinct ; so that few of the sights and sounds that betoken danger affected him with their warning or their alarms. He still crept on a few paces further, when the clattering of horses' hoofs roused the more sagacious of these tardy travellers. But it was now too late ; a charge, at headlong speed, from the rushing horsemen, hurled the inoffensive donkey, his burden, and his driver, to the earth ; and then, amongst jeers and curses, commenced the examination of their capture.

The reader may readily conjecture what welcome such booty was likely to meet with from such plunderers. A few sabre cuts speedily liberated the peaceful beast from his burden, and when the packsaddle and its appendages rolled upon the earth, the same means laid bare its contents to the derision of the riflers. The ransackings of abandoned hovels, each mouldy remnant of the discovered scraps which a diligent search amongst the hoards of a depopulated village had enabled the doting old man to amass,

had been piled in a promiscuous heap on his cottage floor, and then picked and packed into foul wallets, for the golden market of a luxurious city.

“Up with both brutes to the camp!” became the general cry ; and an application of the points of their lances, used with no tender mercy, soon stimulated the fallen captives to regain their feet ; and thus urged, with what speed they were capable of, they toiled up the hill, to the head-quarters at Montici.

Many a curse and many a blow were used, to quicken the steps of these aged companions in captivity ; and they arrived, at last, on the platform, on which stood the bare pole of an olive tree, which had been adapted, when shorn of its boughs, to the purposes of a gibbet, and from whose summit was dangling, at the moment of their coming, a wayfarer, or speculator, like the wretched old man the infirmities of whose extreme age mercifully deprived him of the power of discerning it.

Gentle reader, thy feelings and thy modesty shall be spared the recital of the first hour of the tortures and the mutilations practised by these barbarians on the person of their resistless victim. His fate, however, we may not conceal. That of his companion, by the unexpected contrast of its nature, we will first dispatch. After struggling through a long life of famine and toil, he had at last fallen into the possession of men who revelled in abundance; his powers of vitality appeared interminable; he continued to live, fared sumptuously, and fattened. History has no record of the period of his demise, nor are we aware of any satisfactory proof that he has yet ceased to live.

It was twilight in the plains, but some lingering beams of the sinking sun were yet visible on the summit of Moutici when the captives arrived, and fell brightly on the scene that awaited them. The only roofed building which had not been allotted to the dwelling of the leaders of the besieging army was one in which a favoured follower, pro-

bably a creditor of the Prince of Orange, had fixed his abode, and established a hostelry for the leisure hours of all who had memorials of their late prosperous campaigns in their purses. The fire upon that hearth never intermitted its blaze; morn and midnight alike rose and fell over the same scenes of roaring jollity and reeling drunkenness. The dark and heady wines of the Casentino, the Mugello, and the Val d'Arno, flowed with a stream as continuous as the river that washed the base of their fortifications; and, not unfrequently, as dark a current as its ruddy wines flooded its floors; whilst the clash of arms, the discord of mingled tongues, shrieks, groans, and maledictions, formed a fitting music for the orgies never ceasing within.

An hour might have passed over the agonies of the captives, and it was already dusk. The cabin was as usual crowded to overflowing, but was far more than usually agitated. From time to time a dead stillness hushed that wild and fierce assembly,

and then broke forth yells and curses, and the passionate outcry of, "Down with him! Death to the impostor!" And then again, the magic eloquence of one so unfavourably received came to his rescue, the clamour died away, and the tones of a voice full of power, yet harsh and hoarse, filled up the interval with startling menaces, and epithets of so singular a character, that the crowd most immediately about him recoiled from the glance and gesture that accompanied them.

The orator stood in the centre of the small circle thus allowed him, like a magician whose charms have evoked demons, but the very power of whose spell prevents them from tearing him limb from limb, as their hideous aspects evince their good-will do. This singular being, famous in his day, was of gigantic stature, long muscular limbs, an angular frame, vast bony hands, and a chest that might have stood the result of a mountain bull. He was old,

yet time had had no power on his towering and vast structure. His lofty forehead was bald, indeed, and wrinkled, nay, furrowed, with deep and rugged creases; but the fire of his glance no age could tame. This aged giant was clothed in sackcloth; a rusted chain girded his loins; he was barefooted, and his head was uncovered. In one hand he held a rude stone, with which, at times, he struck his bosom, till the rafters rung with the sound; in the other he held high above the crowd a white and polished skull. At his girdle hung a crucifix. It was not one of those merely devotional ornaments which wandering friars usually adopt, but a long ponderous bar of solid metal, whose arms were sharpened and hatchet-shaped, like those crosses called by heralds, *pattée*. This pious yet war-like weapon was unattached, except by a small hook, made to fit on to any of the links of the girdle.

Regardless of the sun-blackened faces that scowled upon him, and of the dis-

cordant and savage outcries which at times broke upon his discourse, he proceeded boldly in his harangue.

“ Sons of Satan ! ravishers of weak women ! and men of blood ! ” were the most courteous of his epithets, when he apostrophized his fierce auditors.

At his feet, bleeding and mangled, with intellect utterly scared from his brain, lay the mutilated body of the poor peasant. The accumulated snows of a hundred winters lay in venerable whiteness upon his head, as they did upon the icy Apennine which overhung his dwelling. Generation after generation had sprung up, flourished, perished, and passed away ; the robust and the feasters upon earth’s abundance had been cut off ; yet had the life of this miserable old man been spun out to a longevity rivalling the age appointed to patriarchal life in the earlier periods of the world ; sense by sense dropping individually and at intervals into the slumbers of caducity ; each channel through which the fluids of

life circulate becoming clogged and narrowed, and the very stream of the all but torpid blood creeping along in its tenuity and sluggishness ; and all this in order that an existence so tenaciously guarded might terminate in the manner we are relating. The rage of his captors had been vented upon him in every degrading and cruel manner that barbarity could suggest.

It was when so mangled as to leave it doubtful whether life had not wholly quitted its tenement, that the singular being we have described mingled accidentally with the group of murderers. No sooner had his glance fallen upon the prostrate body than a fierce light, like the glare of sudden madness, flashed up into his eyes, his features were distorted and hideous, and he bounded into the centre of the crowd, and, dashing aside the torturers, bent over the prostrate form. Life was not utterly extinct ; a single sentence was exchanged between them, and the aged man then yielded up his spirit.

When surprise, which had caused the momentary pause, gave way to the new and natural impulse of rage, a score of blades flashed above the head of the intruder. With a suddenness and fierceness which made the ruffians again fall back, he sprung up to his defence, strode over the corpse, his bare feet dabbled with blood which stood in pools about the floor, and raising his voice in thunders over them, he uttered a curse so wild and terrible that it was for a moment believed that he was insane. He had assumed no safe or easy championship ; for, giant as he was, sharp swords gleamed on all sides of him ; and though his eloquence at some moments secured him hearing, yet the frequent bursts of derision and menace promised nothing more than a brief suspension of their rage.

“ Think ye that God is blind, or that your cannon is stronger than his lightnings ?” he exclaimed. “ Think ye, O men of blood, that Christ has forgotten the tortures he suffered when ruffians like you nailed him to the cross ? Have ye forgotten

the blotching pestilence which made your bodies hideous and noisome, like the black spirits that dwell within them? Think ye to do deeds like this in that straitened city below you? It shall surely fall; for the wrath of God has long hung like a sword above it. But, mark well my words;—not one amongst you but that shall rot beneath the earth before that day comes. The blood of this poor peasant has signed you, and the destroyer that slew Egypt's firstborn shall slay you!"

The rage of his audience was at its height; an universal outcry and the clatter of weapons drowned his further denunciations, and a general rush was made upon him. Peaceful as was his costume, the reader may have seen that he was not one to die without a struggle. His ponderous and sharp-edged crucifix parried the first blows that sought his life; the next instant he had grappled one of these iron-clad warriors, and whilst the clutch of his huge hand gripped his throat till his eyes and tongue

l from his head, and his face blackened, gged him like a shield before him, en cleaving down helm and cuirass his path, and bounding against the ng masses, he reached the doorway of t, and was free. He then flung from he strangled corpse, and passed on, t further molestation, straight to the ng over which floated the banner of ince of Orange.

e sentinel who paced before the entry d him with a mixture of fear and nce. The prophet,—for such was the en usually yielded him,—raised his with a benediction, and was allowed to nward unquestioned.

## CHAPTER XI.

THE interior of the building honoured by the residence of the leader of the besieging army presented a singular contrast to its rude and humble exterior. The walls were hung with brocaded velvet, the floors carpeted with rich silks; piles of cushions, worked by the fair fingers of high-born damsels with the armorial bearings of the Roman nobility, vessels of gold, and gorgeous armour, blazed under the light of candelabra which had burned before the shrine of St. Peter. The richest vestments of the plundered churches had been fashioned into coverlids for tables and couches, and

were now covered with drinking cups that sparkled with gems, and that had been chalices. They had been used by Cæsar Borgia for a similar purpose before; the bright metal, whose polished surfaces now reflected the grim and dissolute visages of a group of warriors, had in other days given back from its mirrored surfaces, as distinctly as if sculptured by the hand of the artist in *relievo* on its gold, voluptuousness under rosier tints and more captivating forms. The breath of harlots had passed like a thin mist over their brims, but the taint was no longer upon the metal; the lips that sparkled even brighter than the glowing gems on which they rested had been long since mute; the gestures of voluptuous forms, under all the impulses of intoxicating wines, had long ceased. Death had rioted on ill-used loveliness; he had trampled on the soft and rounded limbs till his gaunt foot had defaced and blackened them with the bruises of corruption. Such pictures, the nightly pictures of the orgies of

the Vatican, had passed from the mirrors of these golden goblets, and were now as faithfully replaced by the group in which Brandano the prophet mingled.

A small table occupied the centre of the room, at which were seated two warriors, one of whom was a young man scarcely twenty-eight years of age. He was tall, slightly built, of broad, fair features, with a quick and mirthful glance, and the general aspect of one who loved the wine-cup and the passions it stimulates. He had upon no feature any traces of internal struggles—none of those dim characters of doubt or fear which so often give the lie to the bent brow and the bold glance. He was one, in short, whose philosophy was to take life easily. No one could look intently into that calm, indifferent brow, and the quick, clear eye beneath it, without feeling that the spirit which could thus effectually lay aside all care for the world without, could resume, at its good pleasure, the fire for action and the intellect for council.

This youth was Filibert of Chalons, Prince of Orange. The wars of Lombardy, the sack of Rome, the defence of Naples, had outnumbered his years with actions of renown. To this youth was entrusted the capture of Florence, and the wasting famine within the walls told how effectually his train was laid for success.

The other individual, seated opposite to the Prince, was one, both in frame and aspect, no prudent man would have desired for an enemy; for in chest, shoulder, and limb, his proportions were herculean. His hair was the fiercest of all fierce reds, and hung in vast tufts about his shaggy pole, like the mane of the bison; his complexion was that of red-haired men generally, deeply freckled, and of an unclean fairness. Upon the whole, a more sinister aspect never marked out a more thorough combination of robber, ruffian, and braggadocio.

When the prophet entered, the Prince raised his eyes from the table, and a slight

tint passed over his broad features, but as speedily vanished.

“ Ever welcome, most reverend sir !” he exclaimed. “ If you have business with us, we will attend you shortly.”

The prophet and his purpose, whatever it might be, were then dismissed from his thoughts, and he turned once more to his occupation. That occupation, as the reader at all acquainted with the history of the Prince will have already conjectured, was gambling.

A deep circle, formed by faces of all hues, surrounded the table. A certain space, however, less obtruded upon, was allowed for a veteran warrior who was seated a pace or two from the table, and whose eyes were riveted, with displeasure equal to their intentness, upon the features of the Prince of Orange. This individual was a Spaniard of more than usually swart and haughty features. His brow was worn bald by the pressure of the casque ; his beard, thick and black, fell

a vest literally blazing with orders of  
ry. Since the repast of which he had  
en had been finished, he had continued  
silently and sternly gazing upon the  
before him.

bert of Orange continued to rattle the  
s if unconscious of his stern presence.  
of gold lay about him, changing, as  
e chose, from the elbow of the Prince to  
the German ; whilst the profoundest  
ss, interrupted only from time to time  
e hoarse mutterings of the players,  
d throughout the cottage.

en the singular figure of the prophet  
the group, the Marquis del Vasto  
his eyes to his countenance with  
that of satisfaction, and an appeal,  
meaning was sufficiently intelligible.  
e reply of the intruder was conveyed by  
rly imperceptible elevation of his  
, as he placed himself behind the outer  
prepared to watch the sports of for-  
in which all seemed so deeply inter-

His towering stature enabled him to

see above the heads of all, and he fixed his keen glance unflinchingly on the German.

The play was long carried on in dead silence ; a heavy breathing now and then, as some portentous stake was won and lost, was drowned in the increased clatter of dice, dashed on the board in rage. Never did player bear his evil luck with a better grace than the young man who had seen an uninterrupted run of prosperous fortune follow the game of his adversary.

The vast heap of gold which had been furnished him by an attendant appeared at last to threaten exhaustion ; for the capacious vase into which sack after sack had been emptied was now allowed to run out, like the sand from the hour-glass which measured hour after hour of the night consumed in this ruinous pastime.

A glance at this annoying incident made the Prince pause for a second or two in his career ; and then, with a look of calm desperation, the salutation of ruin, with which the gambler is familiar, he drew to him the

a basin, and pouring out its contents, divided them, with an affectation of precision, into two portions: the vase itself set apart for a third and last hazard of fatal sitting.

The glance of the Marquis del Vasto only sparkled with disgust and rage, as he beheld this degrading exposure of the chances of the Prince, and the wantonness of their squandering. He raised his hand to the brow of the prophet, who had stood on till now with imperturbable calmness, and a sign, rapid yet perceptible, was made in return. The gigantic spectatorial multitude waited until the dice were once more in the hands of the Prince of Orange, and he pushed through the crowd and bent over the table. The slightest sound, a rustling of a feather, would have attracted notice: it may be judged with what astonishment the eyes were then turned to gaze upon this singular experiment.

"I have a whimsical favour to solicit of your Highness," he said; "may I venture

to speak it before the next stake is thrown for, and——” he paused, and then added, with marked emphasis——“lost?”

The Prince raised his glance from the table to the features of the monk, and, struck by the mystery of their expression, nodded his assent.

“It is simply, my lord,” he continued, “that you will accept, from so poor and humble a wretch as I am, a present which may mend your fortunes.”

He took from his bosom the skull, his inseparable accompaniment, and shook from it two dice.

“These, my lord,” he said, “are fashioned out of the bones of Gabrielli, who, as your Grace knows by experience, was fortune’s most favoured gambler. In exchange, I will take, with your permission, those you have been using through the evening.”

A flash and a scowl, like lightning and midnight, passed over the brow of the German: no objection was, however, made. The rejected dice were gathered up into the

his sepulchre from which the others  
had been taken, and the Prince prepared to  
make his first throw, amidst an excitement  
greater than had yet been felt.

The first of the already separated heaps  
was placed on the hazard, and the dice  
began ringing down upon the table.  
The Prince bent eagerly forward, watching the  
surfaces as they whirled. Fortune  
was perversely bent on the bankruptcy  
of the Prince ; the hazard was against him.  
The dice were once more gathered up ; the  
second and last heap was staked ; the dice  
plattered upon the board, and the last  
of Filibert of Orange was swept over  
into the possession of the German.

The Prince remained now, to retrieve or com-  
pound his ill-luck, but the golden vase, the  
casket from which so much treasure  
had been rifled. It was the crowning stake,  
and no ignoble one. Benvenuto Cellini  
had sculptured it from the solid gold ; the  
hand that had levelled the aspiring  
tower to the dust had toiled with far

more industry over this splendid of art, the paladium of the cre successor. It was rich in wonder majestic in its proportions, sweeping in its outline.

The countenance of its owner perceptibly, as his hand rested massive yet elegant handles of t art. It was not for any affecti beauty of its workmanship, the its intrinsic value, nor the renc strange, half-crazed artisan who ioned it; for it had been come cost; and the eye that aimed crown was little likely to mour loss of a bauble, however admir Filibert of Orange knew—what his own terrible secret—that the that night squandered were the of his hiring troops; and that heaps of gold fled away all cha mighty prize on which every h ambition rested.

The last stake, this sumptuous

placed between the players; the dice were already in the hand of the German, when, to the astonishment of all, the Marquis del Vasto, after a moment's whispering with the prophet, rose from the seat he had so long occupied, and taking from his vest a purse heavily laden, poured its golden contents, without uttering a word, into the vase that was waiting its change of masters.

A slight blush, and a shade of embarrassment, passed over the honest features of the Prince.

“ We are greatly thankful, my Lord Marquis,” he said, with a tone of forced calm. “ This is kindness of a nature we had not looked for. Your loan to our exchequer shall be repaid, and your kindness to a losing player not forgotten. Your confidence in our fortune gives us courage; and now for a last throw !”

Every single ducat of this most opportune supply was placed on the hazard. The circle narrowed, and the Marquis del Vasto fixed his glance intently upon the German.

The dice rattled — were whirled ringing upon the table—the stake was won !

Throw after throw now followed rapidly ; that splendid mystery called luck, whose ebb had so nearly left the Prince penniless, now rolled back its golden waves in glorious flow into his coffers. A lingering affection for the memory of Gabrielli seemed at last to have touched the heart of the capricious goddess. The exchequer of the Prince was filled and emptied by his exulting attendants with far more alacrity than they had been supplied.

Elated with his turn of fortune, his stakes were doubled and trebled, as though success were certain. The winnings of the German flew away from him with awful quickness. The more decisive became the interference of fortune, the more prodigal were the sums staked ; till the exchequer that had been so lately countless, was reduced to the tenuity at which we saw that of the Prince when the Spaniard came to his aid.

At last, boiling with rage, the German

struck his immense hand upon the table, and roared out with a voice of thunder—  
“ My own dice, villain ! I am cheated and plundered ! ”

A death-like pause ensued for a moment, and then followed a loud burst of indignant malediction upon his head. The words of the gambler had been addressed to Brandano ; but the Prince of Orange was on his feet, and his blade already glittered before the eyes of the frantic German. An abject yet sullen apology was instantly tendered, and the Prince turned his back upon him in contempt, silently appealing to the angry looks of those about him.

Brandano had witnessed this scandalous scene with an expression of calm not void of satisfaction. He was the first who spoke.

“ Those dice, noble sir, ” he said, mildly, “ are mine ; I had them in exchange, as these gentlemen may bear testimony, from his Highness. If they were once yours, I shall value them accordingly. Those his Grace honoured me by using were filed and

polished to the finely poised cubes you behold them, by the same artist from whom your Excellence had yours."

The German seized the dice with a look of despair; he balanced them upon his finger, dashed them into the box for a last throw, and placed his last scanty handful of florins upon the board, like crumbs before an insatiate appetite.

If the Prince of Orange, invited to this wretched termination of a sumptuous repast, felt some compassion for the gambler tottering on the brink of ruin, it was more than had been felt for *him*. His pity was of no avail,—the dice fell again, and all was over.

The expression of the countenance of the German was such as the ghastly skull of Gabrielli might have grinned in gratitude to the goddess who had obeyed his invocation. The treasurer of the Prince swept away the sprinklings of gold won, and the party was about to finish, when the German raised his pale brow, on which the moisture stood like a rank dew on the poisonous hemlock, and

looking round on the exulting features of those about him, asked, with a choking and hollow voice—

“ Will any noble gentleman lend me a hundred florins for a last attempt? I will give five hundred for it when fortune turns !”

Men turned away their faces ; and after a moment's pause, the Marquis del Vasto rose, and begged to know if it were his Highness's pleasure to visit the batteries before they retired to rest ?

This proposal was, as the reader may have presumed, but an expedient for breaking up a sitting whose close was embarrassing and painful ; for men who were familiar with the atrocities of a siege felt ill at ease as they looked upon the despair of a beggared swindler. The German was left to brood over his losses, and dream of his revenge.

The ceremony of repaying to the Marquis del Vasto the amount of his loan was

the first care of the Prince, and he accordingly proffered it as soon as they were without the walls of the cottage.

“ I am glad that it served you, my lord,” said the Spaniard, coldly. “ If you have no further need of it, you may hand it over to our friend the friar.”

“ I have not forgotten his reverence, on my own account,” replied the Prince. “ The last stake of the poor devil of a German was not altogether to be despised, and, if I mistake not, our treasurer, as we bade him, tumbled it into his holiness’s wallet ”

“ Then toss the loan after it, my lord,” said the Marquis. “ I would give ten times the amount could it save your Highness from the sharpers who prey upon your confidence and easy nature. It will avail nothing as the result has turned out ;—but, for curiosity’s sake, let us examine the dice which so nearly reduced your exchequer to the state in which it used to be when first I had the honour of knowing you.”

Brandano took forth the dice ; they were  
two, and their dishonest secret was  
fully exposed.

“ Thus it will ever be, my Lord,” con-  
fided the Spaniard. “ It has been your  
design this night to win back, if I conjec-  
tured rightly, all that this detected swindler  
stole from you, either in the Palace of  
Cardinal Colonna, in Naples, or elsewhere ; and  
it will be your own fault if you again expose  
yourself to villanies such as these.”

With this lesson upon his lips the grave  
Spaniard took his leave.

It was already midnight, and the Prince  
and his singular attendant retired once more  
to the cottage.

“ And now, Brandano,” said the young  
Spaniard when the door closed on their privacy,  
“ what is the last grand hazard that is to crown  
your fortunes. You have done me no small  
service since sunset, and if Filibert of  
France succeed in this, his fortunes are  
ruined and so shall yours be. Fear you no  
more, Brandano?”

“ From what quarter should I fear it, my Lord ?” asked Brandano. “ You have the free pass of Malatesta Baglioni. The convent business you trusted to Zonara. Your Highness has declared your reliance on him ; and unless he betray you, I know not in what quarter your plans can meet opposition.”

“ I know not, truly,” said the Prince. “ The consent of the damsel seems somewhat speedily come by. But all is on the chance ; it is a grand stake, and we will play it boldly, if we cannot play it warily.”

“ You know not Catherine de Medici, most noble sir !” said the monk. “ She is in years a child ; but she is self-willed, daring, and ambitious. It would not become me to speak otherwise than with respect of one about to be queen of a great state, and your Grace’s wife ; but common fame has not scrupled to pronounce her one whom overweening delicacy will not keep from such measures as best suit either inclination or interest. To say truth, she

has little reason to like the prison which the magnates of this unchivalrous city have shut her up in. Your Highness's proposal is one which most maidens, influenced by the very strictest punctilios of etiquette, would require little reflection to resolve upon ; and, by my faith, to be your wife, with this rich city for a principality, might tempt one older and calmer than she is. Besides, that the lady's modesty may be sufficiently upheld to your Grace, it is well to say that uncourteous councillors have been found, who, in open meeting, have proposed to place the damsel before the batteries, as a mark for the cannon which so nearly missed sending Stefano Colonna to paradise ; and threats of late days, since men sleep on empty stomachs, have been too commonly the companions of fact, to leave room for doubting the courage to do aught the will suggests."

" Well, well," replied the Prince ; " off with your sanctified frock, my friend ; you may chance, notwithstanding Malatesta's

safe conduct, to find a corslet more serviceable, especially if we should stumble on our friend the Saxon.”

The hint was not thrown away on the old man. He cased his huge limbs in the armour pointed out to him, provided himself with such weapons as were likeliest to serve his need, and they issued forth on the boldest and maddest scheme that knight-errant ever yet ventured on.

It was a bitterly cold night, and there were but few and far-scattered stars visible above their heads, and even they were unavailable as guides ; for the sluggish clouds, moving in vast black masses across the face of the heavens, interposed their impenetrable screens between them and these dim luminaries one after another, till what faint body of light still remained was removed to a distant part of the changing heavens.

When the summit of the hill had been descended, the Prince lost all knowledge of the paths his guide selected ; yet that strange being moved on, with the decision

and promptitude of one who had spent a whole life amongst them. The surface of the ground they trod was treacherous, and recent rains had not improved it.

They had nearly reached the plain, when their steps were arrested by an object whose exact form it was difficult in the darkness to distinguish. Its outline figured a mass nearly shapeless, from which sparkled two small glittering orbs, resembling the eyes of a living creature. It was not until they had fairly approached, and bent down over it, that they discovered it to be a corpse, denuded of its clothing, and cast out, the prey of all foul birds and fouler insects. It was the poor peasant, whose torturing had formed the evening pastime of the wine-shop.

“ The careless and fool-hardy scoffers of all good discipline !” exclaimed the Prince ; “ see how they cast out their dead. They have already lost all memory of the pestilences of Naples and Rome. Some of them shall smart for this.”

“ He died worse than a dog’s death,” replied the old man, bitterly ; “ they might have given him a dog’s burial. A spadeful of earth, or a ditch, to hide him, were no such excess of charity to an old man who had lived a hundred and ten years in this merciful world. It is, perchance, after all, as good a sepulchre as awaits your Grace.”

“ Spare your accursed prophecies on my account, my friend, for I am just now in no mood to be entertained by them,” said the Prince. “ Move we on ; and take your hands off the corpse ; it shall be looked to, and earth thrown over it to-morrow.”

“ It shall be looked to now, and earth thrown over it now, my Lord,” said Brandano, firmly. “ I move not hence till it be laid in its grave.”

“ Are you utterly insane, Brandano ?” asked the young man. “ Do you think I am abroad at this hour to play the merry office of sexton to all the carrion we may find without the camp ?”

“ Ay ! ay ! carrion,—foul carrion, that

reads pestilence. So it is," murmured the monk; "though I would fain have heard a pleasanter name for my father's corpse. If your Highness wishes my further escort you must even help to dig the carrion a hiding-place."

Moved by the calm yet bitter emotions of the singular being beside him, Filibert of France helped with his blade to turn up a foot or two of the soil, and then to place the body beneath it. The earth was replaced, and they moved on again cautiously, and in silence. The distance they had to traverse was not great, and the rapid and huge strides of the monk, whose pace quickened though he were anxious to fly from the unhallowed spot of his father's grave, soon brought them under the gloomy gateway of S. Nicolo. Here the conductor paused, and pointed upwards to the long guns which rested on the parapets above their heads. It was no longer time for turning or for hesitation; the hurried tread of feet, and the clashing of arquebuses, told plainly

that their coming was not unperceived. In reply to the summons of Brandano for admittance, he was met by the customary challenge of the sentry, "Who comes?"

"Perugia," answered the loud, clear tones of the monk.

"All's well," said the voice; "up with the portcullis."

And the heaving up of a mighty barrier, and the clank of chains, announced prompt obedience to the order. A small opening, large enough to admit the body of one entering at a time, was made manifest by the sliding aside of a panel of the immense gate.

Both entered, the aperture closed behind them, the portcullis again fell, and the Prince of Orange—the leader of the merciless host that had straitened the city until famine had consumed all feeling of pity and the charities of human nature—was within the walls of Florence, and his life in the keeping of a man whom he knew to be a paid spy. His heart, though a bold and

gallant one, beat more rapidly than its wont, as he heard the vast barrier crashing down into its grooves. But a few paces brought them further into the city ; all was silent ; the streets were deserted ; their pathway was clear before them, and they passed on.

END OF VOL. II.



THE

SIEGE OF FLORENCE:

An Historical Romance.

BY

DANIEL M'CARTHY, ESQ.

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THE  
SIEGE OF FLORENCE.

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CHAPTER I.

THE Convent of St. Lucia, in which the authorities of the city held caged up a honourable imprisonment Catherine of Medici, the niece of the Pontiff, was a vast and gloomy pile of building, which, without the external appearance of a fortress, possessed all the strength of such edifices, and had hitherto been to the unprivileged as difficult of access. The windows, which admitted light from the street, were small, and far removed from the ground; and not only were they secured by barricades of iron, but, built out about a foot from the main wall,

was a high screen of solid masonry, overtopping the windows themselves, and shelving upwards ; it was closed on the sides, and admitted but a scant light, and the view of such objects as the vision of saints may distinguish in the careering clouds, to the cells of the fair votaries within. Sentries paced, day and night, before the main entry ; for the desire of the captive for escape, and the reward held out to such as should effect it, were no secret to her guardians.

Catherine de Medici, the niece of Clement, had been accidentally within the city when hostilities were first proclaimed ; and the authorities, fully understanding the value of such a hostage, lost no time in removing her person within the walls of the sisterhood of St. Dominic. Her original place of custody had been another building of the same order, but of too perilous proximity to the walls ; and when times grew worse, she was removed to the more central, and far more unassailable residence of Santa Lucia.

Catherine was at this time scarcely more

fourteen years of age. She was known tenderly loved by the Pontiff; and it is certain that the fear of insult to her person was a principal cause of the original approaches of the imperial armies. Offers of a tolerably supportable nature had more than once been offered as the price of her ransom; but in proportion as men had been offered for their freedom, they learned to value it, and as the offers made for her redemption rose, so rose the imperiousness of the demands. The orders respecting her were, that she should never be lost sight of; waking or sleeping, eating or drinking, the eyes of some of the sisterhood were to be ever upon her. And in confiding her guardianship to an abbess of the family of Martolini, so deeply compromised in the proceedings, the Priori felt that they could not guarantee sufficient for her safe custody. Catherine de Medici bore this outrage to her freedom with apparent contentment; nay, she had the talent to persuade her sisterhood that her greatest happi-

ness in life would be to obtain his Holiness's consent to assume the veil and spend the remainder of her days amongst them. But in her secret heart she pined with the strongest, deepest disgust, over the irksomeness of the life she was compelled to lead.

The reward of her dissimulation was, a show of more kindness and a semblance of confidence ; but it brought with it also an infinity of good counsels, of prayers, sermons, and confessions, which well nigh betrayed her hypocrisy, by the intensity of weariness and disgust which accompanied them. In the early days of her captivity, an elderly nun had been her inseparable companion, day and night. She was read to, and preached to, in the day time, and waked up from her sleep at night for matins and other offices, until life became so intolerably irksome, that she was compelled to affect illness and take to her bed as a last resource.

Zonara, the physician, had then been called in to her assistance. Precautions, seemingly ludicrous, yet withal effective,

had at first attended these meetings ; and had the good nuns bethought them of blind-folding the parties during these jealously-ceded interviews, they would have been more secure. But long before vigilance was sufficiently lulled to admit of a word being interchanged perilous to the custody of the captive, looks had established a perfect intelligence between the parties.

She had thus lingered several months before any change took place in her guardianship. The sight of the old nun had become noisome to her as poison, and the very sound of her voice, and the clattering of her sandals, tedious as her sermons,—when fortune, out of mere pity, sent the prisoner a far different companion, in the person of a young maiden scarcely her senior in years. This was no other than the beautiful and sorrow-stricken Eugenia Capponi. Her father was no more ; and she had solicited from her relations a retreat from the world, and permission to sorrow in private over the many griefs that rent her heart. The Convent of

Santa Lucia was the abode she made choice of, and there she was received, not as Catherine had been, but with hearts bounding with pity towards one so sadly tried, and with the love of sisters ; for she had spent her youth amongst them, had grown up within those walls the modest, kind-hearted, and beautiful maiden which the world had known her.

Amongst the sisterhood there were many who had been the playmates of her infancy, the confidants of her increasing years ; and there were others who had been as mothers to her at the trying period of her opening womanhood ; so that if she could not, in the hours of her despondence, wholly lay bare her heart before them, she could at least indulge her sorrow, and feel sure of such sympathy as recluses are capable of experiencing for hearts bruised by passions they condemn.

The venerable abbess, fearful of contagion from worldly vanities, and desirous of withdrawing the venerable sister of the convent from the peril of hourly intercourse with

Two unprofessed maidens, had early decided on their keeping watch upon each other; and thus was Eugenia Capponi thrown into daily contact with the imprisoned maiden, Catherine de Medici. Never were the dispositions of two persons in more glaring contrast; the one simple-minded, warm-hearted, elevated above every selfishness of thought or feeling; the other wily and insincere, with a heart steeled by innate craftiness, and without, amongst her infinity of schemes, one particle of sympathy with the joys or sorrows of any living being.

During the first days of their companionship, Eugenia Capponi had forcibly turned her mind from her own sorrows, to soothe the petulance and divert the ennui of this young person; but she had the wit soon to perceive that the interviews of her physician, evidently the medium of her communication with the world, occupied her thoughts to the exclusion of all topics on which any intercourse could have existed between them; and she accordingly shrunk again into soli-

tude. It was to the bright genius of the physician that Catherine trusted for some scheme for her delivery from the convent, which she was determined to effect at all hazards. Her good fortune had kept her from figuring at Rome during its occupation by the army of Bourbon ; but now that that city was again free, she pined for the splendours of the Vatican, and the homage of a court famous for its gallantry and its magnificence. She had already found means of corresponding with her uncle ; but the vigilance of the watch dogs of the Republic rendered futile every plan for her escape.

The physician had found her one day plunged in unusual melancholy ; despair seemed to have succeeded to the failure of her hopes, and it was then that he ventured to propose a scheme which might well have made a maiden, more modest or less daring, hesitate and tremble. The city, he told her, was well nigh starved ; hundreds were perishing with famine and foul food ; the cannon of the invaders were breaching their

walls, and there was little chance of holding out much longer. The army of the Prince of Orange, it was unnecessary to inform her, was the same that had sacked Rome, and whose brutality was become a proverb. The very worst of evils were to be apprehended for the defenceless; yet had he a plan which, if it met with her Highness's approval, might save her; might exalt her above the station she had been born to. It was, as we have already stated, to elope from her convent, seek the camp of the Prince of Orange, who pledged his word, as a knight and a gentleman, to celebrate her espousals in the face of his army, and then, with the approbation of his Holiness, to erect her a queenly throne in her native city.

Catherine was, as we have already mentioned, but a child in years, and the temptation was brilliant; but she paused, for she had the wit to perceive that failure in the attempt were irremediable ruin. A few more church chauntings and chamber lec-

tures decided her. The tempter readily undertook the management of preliminaries, and an early time was fixed for the great venture. That day had at length arrived, and it arose sunnily in beams and brightness.

It wanted about an hour of mid-day when a litter, accompanied by a small but armed escort, stopped at the main entry of the Convent of Santa Lucia. An order for admittance was presented to the guard, and a young female, enveloped in a mantle, which concealed her person, alighted, and mounted the stairs which conducted to the apartments of the abbess, and from thence a sister of the order attended her to the cell of Eugenia Capponi. As the door closed behind her, she threw off her disguise, and sprung into the arms opened out to receive her.

This young and most beautiful maiden, destined to acquire so melancholy a celebrity in after years, was about the age of her friend ; and her gentleness and beauty have

turned aside the pens of the chroniclers of her times, from the details of their story, to the sweet yet melancholy celebration of her loveliness and her misfortunes. She was at this time in the flower of her youth, untouched by care, her brow unclouded even by the long shadow that it casts before it. Her large, soft blue eyes were radiant with joy, her face and form with loveliness.

“Dearest, dearest Louisa,” said the recluse, “you have brought gladness to me before its time. My wounds are all fresh; my heart is yet crushed; but you are welcome, sweet girl, and we will talk of your happiness, and forget sorrow, as it must ever be forgotten where you are present. Tell me of my brother, fair girl; nay, blush not; what news of Luigi?”

A deep blush, a swelling of the heart, yet a smile of deep, calm happiness, was her first eloquent reply to her friend.

“I know nothing of him. He is a valiant man-at-arms, I doubt not,” she answered, archly. “The fame of his feats has pene-

trated your seclusion ; the whole city rings with it. You are as well prepared to celebrate his prowess as I am."

"Nay, Louisa," said her friend, "you do know tidings of him, and are come here to cheer me with the assurance of his well-doing. He is, as you know, traitress, no man-at-arms ; he is valiant with old books ; welcomed in the gardens of the Rucellai. He is in repute with the good and the wise, the upholders of a falling state. He is the friend of Michel Angelo, and of Niccolo Macchiavelli."

"He is all this, Eugenia," said the fair girl, more seriously ; "he is far more, for he is gentle and kindhearted, and has given the homage of his noble nature to love your poor friend ; and for this he is more, to me at least, than you have named him. You have reminded me that he has lost a friend, one of the illustrious men you mentioned. Niccolo Macchiavelli is no more ! He expired last night, between the hours of two and three."

The cheek of Eugenia Capponi became pale, for that name had other associations than those of fame. "His country will mourn his loss," she said, after a pause. Many loved him; for he has been a kind friend and a loving teacher. Who were with him at his last moments?"

"His family were about him," replied her friend, with some embarrassment. "The young Ficino was, I understand, also with him, and ——" she paused for an instant, and Eugenia filled up the void—

"You would add that Francesco, my father's friend, received his last breath and closed his eyes."

The maiden bowed, and remained silent.

"That hand," exclaimed Eugenia Capponi, "also closed the eyes of my dear father: Francesco has *his* last blessing also. He was the bearer of his last farewells; and, oh! Louisa, the gentle words, the soft and pitying accents, with which that melancholy task was fulfilled! When I think, sweet one, over the past, my poor brain whirls till

I am giddy and rash. Tell me, my fair sister, have you heard, or have you not read in my heart, its mournful secret? You have; surely, you have! and it is my consolation that it will need no words to gain your sympathy. Were he less noble, less raised above his fellows in thought and greatness; had he one single spot, one minutest blemish, in his bright and pure spirit, I would cling to it for my own safety. I should not then have, feeding upon my heart, the humiliating, the bitter certainty that will before long make that desolate spot its own grave. Circumstances have ever delighted in making him the preserver of those dear to me; they have more than once thrown him, wounded and helpless, under my care; they made me the confidant for days and weeks of his most touching and melancholy fate; and, was it possible, whilst I looked upon his beautiful brow, at one time convulsed with the terrors of dark visions, at another, calm, dignified, and lofty, not to feel pity? And when reason

was nursed again into health, and the tones of his voice, like faint music, grew animate with the eloquence of the wisdom he had drawn from that wonderful fountain, whose waters have ceased to flow, whose musical voice is mute for evermore, could I do otherwise than ——”

“ Love him,” added her friend with a smile. “ You have a gentle judge, my sweet sister ; one captive like yourself ; one whose voice is bribed and bought to your acquittal of all unmaidenly weakness. He is made to be loved ; all who know him love him. In truth, I came hither, in part, to speak of him. He has, by some inconceivable means, discovered treachery in high quarters. He was this morning summoned to secret council with the Ten, and, I understand, ventured to suggest the instant arrest of no less a personage than Malatesta Baglioni. You may judge how the sages were startled ; how the heroes trembled ; each one, lest so unwelcome an office should fall upon himself. Grave heads were shaken ; and it was declared

too perilous a measure, and one rife with scandal and confusion to the city. ‘Then, my Lords,’ he exclaimed, ‘you have but one choice left; you shrink from the more secure means of recalling Francesco Ferrucci to defend the city and arrest the traitor; your only safety remains in sending a commissioner to Volterra, to order him to abandon all care for the few strongholds that he occupies, and to march off his black bands, with the rapidity of the thunderbolt, to the Pontiff’s capitol. Let him do as Bourbon did before him! If a deed so bold call not off the armies now without your walls, you will at least have one city in pledge for another, and his Holiness as a hostage whilst you treat with the Prince of Orange.’

“Imagine, dear Eugenia, the effect of such a counsel. A dead silence ensued. I believe the old gentlemen thought that the spirit of John de Medici stood before them, for the eyes of the young hero flashed with enthusiasm; his usual calm, pale face

became fiery, and sanguine, and lordly, like the voluminous cheeks of the Gonfaloniere himself. His advice was little relished. Ferrucci, they told him, was the city's last hope; that if he were once to leave the States, men's hearts would fail them, and the very gates would fly open of their own accord. The voice of Carducci, at last, settled the matter. It was decided to adopt those measures which threw the burden on the back of the absent; and, for the present, all appearance of distrusting so dangerous a man as Baglioni are by all means to be concealed. Francesco is appointed the city's commissioner on this bold errand, and your brother, my informant, is to accompany him. Any means that would rid their counsels of so urgent and fearless a champion seemed wise and expedient."

"And when do they leave the city?" asked Eugenia.

"This very night, when darkness offers the best chance of evading the enemy's outposts," was the reply. "They use the pass of

Stefano Colonna for our city gates, and trust to God's keeping for the remainder of this hazardous route."

"It was well and nobly counselled!" exclaimed the maiden; "and I trust my brother will not dishonour the name he has inherited from brave men. Nay; look not offended, fair one; I by no means fear it. It is only on occasions like this that true courage declares itself. It is not always the most studious who are the most timid. And my brother would never have earned the promise of the fair hand of Louisa Strozzi, were he not as bold at his country's need as he has shewn himself gentle and eloquent in the winning of his sweet prize."

This scene of the frank interchange of mutual confidence between hearts that had beat warmly to each other from infancy closed, as it commenced, in a warm and fond embrace. Louisa Strozzi had taken her farewells, and the few hours that intervened before dusk passed calmly over the sad abode in which Eugenia had chosen her

asylum. The Ave-Maria bell had long since rung out its pious salutation, and the tenants of the cloisters were already licensed to seek their rest, when a second litter, escorted as the former had been, paused under the gateway of the convent.

The pass was in the handwriting of the Gonfaloniere himself. It claimed free admission within the walls for Zonara the mediciner and his attendant. Torches flashed about the parties therein named, in jealous scrutiny. They were made to descend from their vehicle; and after a few coarse jests, and no very complimentary addresses, in the arrogance of one like him presuming to use a style more fitting a noble than one of a scorned profession, as his was, he was allowed to proceed.

The aged portress was waked up from her chaste slumbers, and after no more delay than was necessary to indue her garments, to rouse the Lady Abbess, to carry notice to the parties to whom the visit was intended, and to spell through the not too

legible autograph of Carducci, they were admitted.

It may be necessary to inform the reader that circumstances—to wit, the sense of extreme danger in carrying on the underplot which the daughter of the Gonfaloniere had fixed upon him—had for once made the apothecary honest. He had scarcely left the chamber of the agitated Teresa, than the awful risk of aiding her evasion from her father's house appeared too great, and the chance of remuneration far to problematical, to make so nice a calculator as he was desirous of encountering it. He accordingly came to the resolution of returning once more to the palace, and, whilst he threw off the onus of so unwise a plan, gain some credit for fair-dealing.

The interview with the magistrate that ensued on his return was a stormy one; but the cunning of Zonara outwitted the cunning of Carducci. A suggestion thrown out with trembling, and at first scoffed at, was ultimately adopted. It was decided

the interview, which seemed so necessary to his daughter's reassurance, should take place, not clandestinely, but with his consent, conveyed in a manner to inspire confidence ; that a litter should convey him to the convent after night-fall, and that a pass under his signature should procure his admission as attendant on the physician. Fortune stepped in most opportunely to frustrate their infamous intrigue. The morning council had taken place, and Francesco was appointed commissioner of the Republic of Volterra, with orders to quit the city before dusk. Lulled in the confidence of success, Carducci awaited calmly the course of events, trusting that the interview might, though unattended by any great good, be at least harmless ; and he counted the hours of his daughter's return.

It was for the purpose of affording Teresa the interview thus accorded, and of working out his own most iniquitous scheme, that Donatara now presented himself at the Convent of Santa Lucia.

The nature of his professional inquiries was such as not to admit of the presence of any of the sisterhood. Eugenia Capponi was requested to attend in an inner chamber, and thither, when the attendants of the convent departed, he despatched his young attendant.

Once alone with Catherine de Medici, the brow of the physician became suddenly overcast with a shade of utter wretchedness, and his pale, thin face assumed ten times its usual ghastliness and tenuity.

“For Heaven’s sake! my good friend,” asked the alarmed maiden, “what has happened? Do they mean to drag me to the walls as they have threatened? Have they doomed me to the axe or the cord? All such horrors are painted upon your face!”

“Lady,” replied the man, “nothing so terrible has yet happened! Heaven forbid that it ever should. But the citizens are driven nearly mad with famine; and such horrible cruelties as you have named have indeed been again threatened in the debates

of the Priori ; but they have been, to the best of my belief, for the present deferred. But a calamity of no trivial nature has befallen us. Our design has been discovered, and for a short while longer must be delayed. There are traitors everywhere ; the Prince of Orange has received intelligence that an ambush has been placed to await his coming, and that his entry within the walls will be his first step to the public gibbet. He has accordingly, at no small risk, sent you this notice, together with such expressions of his homage and affections as a maiden may receive."

" And Baglioni," asked Catherine, " has he, too, failed us ?"

" The scheme, Heaven only knows by what means, has become known within the palace," was the reply. " An order has been sent to head-quarters to have a strong body of men under arms at each of the city gates ; and it was with great difficulty that he could send the Prince warning in time."

“ Then God help me !” said the maiden ; and she covered her face with her hands, and wept bitterly. “ You have brought me my death summons ! Is there no way to escape from these hated walls ? His Holiness would pay a ransom as heavy as he paid for his city of Rome and his own safety, to any one who would place me within the Vatican.”

“ Not all the gold beneath the earth, lady,” replied her adviser, mournfully, “ would avail for such a purpose at this moment. But be cheered ;—the Prince of Orange has resources which the trafficking tyrants of this city have never dreamed of. I doubt not but that a few more days will see you in safety, and in a condition to visit on the heads of your jailors the torments they now inflict on you.”

“ The cruel, unscrupulous tyrants !” exclaimed the vindictive Catherine ; and her wild, fierce eyes glowed like living embers. “ If that day does come, bitterly shall they rue this. Florence shall be sacked as

Rome was, and my throne, if I ever have one, shall be amidst their smoking ruins. They think, because I am a young weak girl, and cooped up within this hated cell, that I can never injure them. Let them beware!"

Whilst Catherine de Medici was thus busied with the failure of her intrigues, a scene of a far different nature was passing in the chamber of Eugenia Capponi. That young maiden had retired immediately the physician's presence had been announced, and before she had been made aware of his having a companion, and far less that either of them could have business with her.

The chamber she occupied was a small cell, furnished, as were some hundred others in the same building, with a small rude kneeling desk, a crucifix, a skull, and a few prints of virgins and miracles. She was on her knees, and her thoughts were floating in that luxurious and dreamy medium between the kindred emotions of piety and passion, when the movement of

the latch of her door, as if an unsteady hand were upon it, roused her.

She turned her head, but without rising from her position ; the door was pushed open, and a vision, startling by its beauty and its singularity, met her glance. It seemed a young boy, of apparently not more than sixteen years of age ; his countenance was white as snow ; his features exquisitely fashioned, smooth, and rigid as marble ;— and Eugenia Capponi, when he turned that white face towards her, and when his melancholy eyes, in whose glance sadness had conquered pride, were raised to hers, could have fancied she saw death approaching her, in that beautiful semblance in which Greek genius loved best to image it.

She rose from her knees, and the boy paused ; but so intently was his glance fixed upon her face that a blush crept over her cheeks, and she hesitated whether to rebuke or question him. The dress was familiar to her eye, for it was the crimson livery of the profession *he* had for the time

ted ; and she the more wondered at the clarity of its appearance in her chamber. The dark large eyes of her visitor, after fixing with intense scrutiny every feature of her ingenuous and sweet countenance, cast their daring glance over the stately form and its rounded outlines, with a look from which embarrassed her, and was accompanied with a look of surprise and coldness.

A pale tint came over the cheek of the girl as he finished his scrutiny, and a tear glistened upon his long black lashes. He attempted to speak ; his lips moved, but no audible sound passed over them.

"Are you unhappy, fair child?" asked the man. "Do you seek aught in which I can help you? When my father lived, the rich and the afflicted were ever sure to find a good man's sympathy ; his daughter was known sorrow, and none greater than yours. Take courage, and speak frankly. What can I help you?"

The tones of that soft voice thrilled through the very soul of the listener ; the

tears dropped faster, and were unnoticed ; the voice that might have spoken of thankfulness was still choked and inaudible, when he endeavoured to reply.

“ You are ill at heart, my poor boy !” said the lady. “ What little sorrow can have thus early tried you ? Have you, too, lost one that was dear to you ?”

The slight frame of the young boy quivered like an arrow that has struck its mark, and he leaned for support against the desk at which Eugenia had been kneeling. When he mastered his emotions sufficiently to reply, every particle of colour fled from the face of the maiden. “ Are you Eugenia Capponi, lady ?” he asked, with constrained calm.

“ I am,” replied the maiden. “ Wherefore have you sought me at an hour and under circumstances so unusual ?”

Heedless of her question, the head of the youth drooped for a minute, and he murmured, as though unaware that his words were audible.

“ I had not thought to find so much beauty. Alas, alas ! it is too true ! the treasured hopes of a whole life are perished. What are old habits, the love of childhood, growth together for years and years, to trust to against a lofty brow and a lovely cheek like this ? O lady ! ” he continued, raising his tearful eyes to her face, “ yours is, indeed, a glorious and bright portion, and never before was happiness so cruelly rent away from one who trusted it, as has been done for you.”

Eugenia Capponi trembled, for suspicion had become certainty ; and though pride mingled with pity as those tones reached her, she felt too well how little cause she had for triumph. “ I am very far from being the happy creature you suppose me,” she replied, solemnly. “ Appearances have made the world judge as you do ; but, believe me, all err ! He who reads all hearts sees with how much sincerity and relief in its humiliating truth I make this confession.”

The young boy raised his face, and a quick flash entered into his glance, but fled as rapidly ; and he waved his hand sorrowfully.

“ The world does not err, lady,” he said. “ I have been taught truth till dissimulation has no power with me. The world has judged truly ; but the world knows not—oh ! none can ever know—what a fall of a life’s promises must have accompanied your triumph — how fond a heart has been broken to make yours happy !”

Eugenia Capponi drew nearer to the speaker, and would have taken his hand—that hand, small and snowy, which was pressed to his heart, to control the violence of its throbbing. As Eugenia approached, his face flushed, his eyes sparkled, and he sprung backwards in disgust and anger.

“ Touch me not !” he exclaimed. “ He has given you a right to pity me, for he has made me an object of pity to all men ; but the touch of thy flesh were like the tongue of a serpent to me. Let me get through the

ning purpose of my visit, that I may  
ne.”

saying, he took a letter from his bosom,  
placed it in the hand which was still  
ded towards him. The missive was in  
nk envelope, and Eugenia, connecting  
port with the sad topic on which they  
thus mysteriously conversed, tore it  
in his presence.

the blood flushed over her temples as she  
t; and when the perusal of its few lines  
inished, it fell from her hand to the  
and she gazed into the face of the  
who bore it, with a look of bewilder-  
and fear.

the boy had delivered the letter with  
nt unconcern about its contents; but  
he beheld its effect upon its reader,  
ve passed rapidly to the writing, and he  
stooped to take it up.

Touch it not !” exclaimed Eugenia,  
nfully. “If you have been made to  
it hither, ignorant of its most singular

contents, I were wrong to let it meet your eye."

The prohibition was, however, vain; the youth already held it in his hand, and glanced rapidly over the few lines it contained. When he had done so, he clasped his hands, his head drooped, and he remained long motionless. The paper had again fallen, and a breathless pause ensued.

When the youth again raised his eyes, his countenance had assumed an expression of doubt and pity.

"No, no!" he exclaimed; "I will not, even to save life, be false to him. I, lady, am the wretched girl that he once loved!—she whom he has forsaken, because your bright eyes and fair cheeks have beamed smilingly upon him; and I came thus travestied, to judge for myself if the world's report were likely to be true,—if the wonderful tales of thy gentleness and beauty were not fictions to overthrow my reason. I have seen thee, and I were wise to go back and hide myself

the pity of men's eyes, till death relieves  
from my shame and wretchedness ; and  
contented so to do. Had I desired  
vengeance, behold how the tempter would  
lead me to it ; if I have resisted it, I am the  
more ready to meet my death. You little, indeed,  
think of *him* if this paltry fiction could deceive

Would you so judge him as to believe  
capable of an action like this ? He may  
have changed much since he has forgotten  
the vows he himself taught me to com-  
mend ; but Francesco, when I knew him,  
could sooner have been torn by wild horses  
than to meditate such a deed as this paper  
would suggest. Wretched and false scheme,  
in the shrewdness of an infant might  
you have failed ! And they have made *me* the bearer  
of this libel on all that was noble, and  
honourable, and open !”

He stamped upon the letter, and then  
tore it into a thousand shreds.

“Perish ! as they shall perish who have  
conceived so foul and foolish a conspiracy,”

she continued. "That Francesco may wed thee, lady, will be as Heaven pleases ; but he will never do so whilst I live. Let me but hear from his own lips that he loves thee, and a forsaken girl will not long be an obstacle in his path, or yours. But as for this paltry letter, wrong him not so far as to suppose that he penned it. Heaven grant that I may have judged amiss as to who did ! But hark !—heard you nothing ?"

Both listened. "I hear but a voice of wrangling in the street," replied Eugenia ; "sounds too common of late in this distracted city to merit much notice, or cause much alarm."

"You hear not as I hear," exclaimed the disguised girl. "It is strife in the convent courts or gardens. Heaven preserve my intellect !" she added, with intense excitement. "What do I indeed hear ?";

She staid no longer in doubt, but springing from the door, she dashed through the inner

chamber, and fled away with the speed of light, from corridor to corridor, leaving the astonished maiden not less amazed at her flight than she had been at her first appearance.

## CHAPTER II.

WE left the Prince of Orange threading his way through the silent streets, towards the Convent of Santa Lucia. His guide led him through the narrowest alleys with as much confidence as he had done through the space without the walls. Sounds of mingled merriment and wrangling, with the occasional clash of arms, from time to time were borne past them, and the practised ear of the youthful Condottieri readily enough informed him that they were approaching some of the military lodgments, which, for purposes of keeping order, were dispersed through every quarter of the town. A

suspicion of treachery flashed across his mind, and he paused to question his guide before proceeding further.

“ It is the head-quarters of your Highness’s good friend Malatesta Baglioni,” said Brandano, quickly. “ His Corsicans keep revel, whilst the good citizens starve.”

The Prince again moved on, and with greater speed. A few minutes more brought them into an open square, and they saw at no great distance from them the sentries on duty, in front of the Palace of Baglioni, and lights gleaming in every direction from the many windows of the buildings about them.

Brandano still led fearlessly onward, and, after skirting the square, offered to cross the bridge. They had hitherto met with no hindrance of any sort, but scarcely had they placed foot on the bridge, than a man-at-arms suddenly emerged from one of the small buildings that overhung the river, and, presenting his pike at the bosom of

the old man, challenged him, in no very courteous terms, for his pass.

The hand of the Prince of Orange was instantly on his sword. Had the movement been noticed, it had been the signal for an alarm ; but the vast bulk of Brandano was between him and the sentinel. The pass was given, and the way was free.

This startling ceremony was repeated as they crossed the opposite end of the bridge. When this was also passed, they fairly plunged into the heart of the city. Filibert of Orange now thought the more perilous part of his journey achieved ; but he had not proceeded many paces further, before sounds of a far more ominous nature than any he had yet heard, fell upon his ear.

Brandano himself appeared surprised, and he paused for the first time, as if undecided how to act. A confused din, like the mingling of many harsh sounds, the human voice, the tread of horse, and the clashing of arms, was first heard ; and then a sound

less piercing and irregular, like thousands of subdued voices heard from afar ; and then the quick yet measured tread of approaching multitudes.

“ By the living God !” exclaimed the alarmed young man, “ traitor, you have played me false ! The city is alarmed ; thousands upon thousands are abroad. You, at least, shall not live to receive the hire of this deed !”

His sword was at the throat of his guide, when Brandano appeared first to recover from his surprise.

“ Hush, hush, madman !” he exclaimed, striking aside the weapon. “ You have guessed well ; there is an alarm of some kind. Be silent, and follow quickly.”

So saying, he bounded across the street, and rushed at once into a more open spot. Perfectly acquainted with every inch of ground which the city contained, Brandano directed his steps to one of those lighted shrines which had not unfrequently served his purpose before. The spot he now made

choice of was the angle of a palace, from which had been built out a small square chamber, at once an oratory and the protection of a valuable fresco which ornamented it.

At about seven feet from the ground, a heavy entablature supported the usual altar of the Madonna, erected and decorated by the munificent piety of Lorenzo de Medici. This screenwork alone would have sufficed for the purposes of concealment ; and Heaven knows what deeds that love darkness may have been done beneath that virgin's lamp. Upon this occasion the votive light burned with unusual brilliancy above them, and flung its rays far outward, dazzling the eyes of the approacher, and deepening by its contrast the dark shadow immediately below it.

They had scarcely reached their place of refuge when the sounds that had alarmed them grew louder ; the tread of marshalled multitudes shook the very pavement on which they stood ; and presently, sweeping

from a broad street nearly in front of them, came the advance columns of some vast array, whose point of reunion was evidently the irregular square at the foot of the bridge over which the Prince and his guide had so recently passed.

The rays of the Madonna's lamp reflected dazzlingly from the long lances and glittering corslets which moved up against its stream of radiance, and threw a bright volume of light upon a broad banner, on which was the red fleur-de-luce of the Republic, the venerable Gonfalon of Florence; and also upon a smaller one, borne ostentatiously beside it, making visible a device known and honoured in every court and camp of Christendom.

Column after column of men-at-arms passed to their appointed stations, and then came a band that seemed innumerable, armed with all weapons, clad in all costumes, and marching with more speed than order. They, too, had their banner; it was not one unknown in the tents of chivalry;

it was the banner which, three centuries before, had been the first planted by a Florentine citizen on the walls of Damiana, (his name was Bonaguisa—let posterity honour it!) Its device was a red cross on a white field. A score of smaller pennons, the bearings of the various arts and sections of the city, appeared one after another, as their companies debouched into the square.

A youth, cased in armour, had headed the first bodies of regular troops, and halted them beneath the first standards.

“That stripling,” whispered the monk, as he passed, “is Ludovico Macchiavelli; he dreams of achieving greatness, whilst the shade of blood already tints his winding sheet. He looks as proudly as though the Colonna’s banner, that waves above him, were his own.”

“By my faith,” said the Prince, bitterly, “they are joining from all quarters; the rascally route of the whole city is under arms!”

The last columns of the force thus un-

courteously indicated had fairly emptied itself into the street, when a knight, mounted on a steed which was white as snow, and glittering like his rider in gorgeous armour, with a heavy mace at his saddle-bow, and a lofty plume of white feathers floating from his helmet, passed along the various lines into which they were forming. The vast size of that war-horse, the herculean frame of the rider, and his towering plumes, gave him, as thus seen by the unsteady and partial light of the lamp, the appearance of one of those champions of another world who are said to have mingled from time to time in the combats of Heaven's favoured hosts. The visor of his helmet was up, and the dark, proud eye fixed upon the gallant array before him. The bronzed and swarthy cheek instantly revealed him to the unwilling witnesses of this spectacle.

“Stefano Colonna himself, by my father's soul!” said the Prince, as that gallant noble rode past him. “Madman, idiot that I was to come, thus playing the knight-errant,

whilst my only hope of honour and power in this world is trampled in the mud of this accursed city, under my very eyes. Such an array, with such a leader, means no trifling enterprise. Heaven grant they may turn their attack against the Spaniard, or all is up in this world with Filibert of Orange. Traitor! doubly false and perjured Malatesta! your head shall one day pay the forfeit, if ill come of this night's adventure."

No orders were given within hearing, which could any way lead to the discovery of the intended point of attack by this midnight expedition. That an attack on some part of the lines of the besieging force was intended, was sufficiently manifest; and all that remained to the Prince was the comfortless possibility that Baglioni, if he had not had the power to prevent, might at least be able to divert it from the trenches of Monticci to the hill of the Bello-Sguardo.

"Will your Highness continue your present purpose," asked Brandano. "The town will now be confused enough for any

enterprise, and a scream or two, or the crossing of swords, if we must come to that, will scarcely attract the notice of the few stray sentries these midnight heroes may leave behind them."

"Lead me forth from this accursed trap, into which I have so insanely placed myself!" exclaimed the young man. "Think you it is time for trifling when the spears of the Colonna are amongst the sleeping or drunken demons of Montici?"

"If your Highness would leave the city," replied the monk, calmly, "it must be under escort of the Perugians of Malatesta Baglioni; it were utter madness otherwise to attempt it. An hour hence, when the city is drained of its defenders, as it needs will be, with, perchance, only a single guard at the gate, such an attempt may be successful. At this moment, the gates are the natural point of re-union to all stragglers."

"On, then, in the devil's name!" replied the Prince; "and let us gain what we may from our mad exploit."

Brandano waited for no second bidding, but plunged once more into the mazes of dark and narrow streets. Hundreds of alarmed and eager citizens rushed by them with headlong speed ; but none stopped to impede or question.

As their route continued, such meetings were less frequent, and the sounds of bustle grew fainter, the tumult died away, and they finally trod the streets alone.

The pace of the guide never altered till they reached a towering blank wall, which extended along the whole side of a street. When about two-thirds of this was also passed, he placed his hand against the masonry, and felt cautiously as he moved along, till a sinking in the surface of the stone-work, so slight as to be nearly imperceptible to the eye at daylight, yet to the hand acquainted with its existence easy of detection, arrested his further advance.

“ The door should be here, my Lord,” he whispered. “ Let us listen.”

He knocked a single knock, which

produced a sound scarcely audible ; a faint response from within answered to his summons, and Brandano bade those unseen associates to open quickly. The door flew back, and the adventurers entered the gardens of the Convent of Santa Lucia, the guide first, and the Prince of Orange so nearly behind him as to be precluded from seeing the nature of the place into which he was venturing.

Scarcely was the foot of the young man over the threshold, when Brandano sprung aside, and the figures of two men, hitherto shut out from his view, rushed upon him.

“ It is well ! ” exclaimed Brandano. “ It is the right man ; seize him ! the doorway is safe ; his retreat impossible. Filibert of Orange, you will grace a gibbet better than Brandano has done. Seize him, and the city is saved ! ”

The associates of the traitor guide, to whom these words were addressed, had closed in fierce conflict before the sentence was completed. The Prince was not of a

character to be daunted by a surprise; his sword was in his hand, and before his enemies were upon him, he was on his guard.

“Yield! yield! you are betrayed!” exclaimed the voice of the foremost of his assailants. “You shall have such terms as the city——”

“Gives to spies, and the church to the sacrilegious invaders of her sanctuary, and as Brandano received from his hands at Rome!” exclaimed that vindictive old man. “Such are the terms your Grace shall have—the public gibbet in the Piazza of the Signori!”

A fierce thrust at his opponent was the only reply that the Prince deigned to the challenge and the menace that followed it. No further words were wasted between the parties, but a conflict ensued, fierce and deadly. Filibert of Orange was a swordsman whose renown was a proverb in the armies of the Emperor; and had daylight shone upon the struggle, and relieved him from

the dread of assault from other foes than those before him, he would have little feared for the result ; but two men were engaged with him, and he well knew that a traitor was behind him, though in the darkness he saw not where.

The gigantic person of his treacherous guide was, meanwhile, planted against the closed door through which he had entered ; and another individual, who had apparently taken no part in the proceedings, except opening to admit them, was keeping silent watch on the progress of the encounter.

The strife continued with apparent harmlessness to all parties for some time. If any were wounded, none spoke ; and the sound of their clashing blades was the only one that rung through the convent gardens, till an accident brought the fortune of that obstinate encounter apparently towards a decision. One of the opponents of the Prince slipped ; the blood from his own wounds had formed a puddle beneath his feet ; and, after stagger-

ing with vain efforts to regain his balance, he fell to the earth.

Little heeding a scream, wild and piercing as ever broke from the lips of woman, which rent the air beside him, the Prince dashed forward ; his foot was upon the prostrate body, and his sword's point upon his throat, when the slight figure of a young boy sprung from the earth with the fleetness of a bird, and clasped the arm that was prepared to plunge its weapon into the body of the fallen. That slight, weak being had the power to arrest the weapon, but none to move the foot of a desperate man from his advantage.

It was at this moment that an opponent far more formidable—it was Brandano himself—joined the fray.

“ Stand back, child ! ” exclaimed the deep tones of the aroused giant, who had now bounded from the post he had occupied ; he seized the youth by the belt which girded his waist, and slung him many yards away from the scene of contest. “ Remember the gibbets of the Campidolio, the Tiber, and the

rack, cruel man," he exclaimed ; " thy turn is now come, and Brandano shall have his vengeance !"

The huge arm of the giant towered above the head of the Prince, and the first blow shore away the crest from his helmet ; the second shattered the solid mail plaiting upon his shoulder, and made the firm limbs of the young man stagger.

" Yield thee !" roared the monk in a voice of thunder, and with the fury of a demoniac ; " yield thee ! this city has its gallows and its hangman, and both await thee at this very hour. Hark ! hear ye that ?" he continued, scoffingly.

As he spoke, the alarm-bell of the convent sent out its appeals hurriedly and harshly through the night air. Blow followed blow rapidly and fiercely, and the armour of the Prince of Orange no longer answered to the blade of his adversary with that ringing and and bell-like sound which each blow had at first produced, but harshly and dully, giving good evidence of the battered and rent con-

dition to which it was reduced. The corslet yet shielded his bosom, but fragments of his armour strewed the earth, and many portions of his person were utterly denuded of all defence.

Still he fought as despair alone can fight ; and the blows of his giant adversary showered upon him even more fleetly and fiercely. In the meantime, the alarm-bell had done its duty, and figures were already perceptible, dimly flitting across the long lines of radiance cast forward by the torches which began to gleam from the various avenues of the gardens.

The fate of the Prince seemed inevitable, when, with one of those blows to which seemed given the whole weight of vengeance so long treasured, the sword of Brandano—so well tried, so long faithful—shivered in a thousand splinters ! An exclamation of savage triumph, and a fierce plunge succeeded, and the sword of the Prince of Orange was through his body.

“ Right bravely done ! This way, my

Lord," exclaimed a voice; it was that of Zonara. "Speed, speed, or you are lost!"

The door, of which his memory had lost all traces, flew open as if by magic. He dashed through it, and in a minute more, save the wounded or the dead, none remained to tell their story.

The huge frame of Brandano had staggered when he received his wound, and he even then made an attempt to throw his arms about the person of his retreating enemy; but the draining veins left him powerless; his effort but sufficed to throw him prone upon the earth that was trampled and puddled with his own blood.

The person of Francesco, destined apparently to be wounded in every fray in which circumstances compelled him to mingle, still lay where he had first fallen. Heedless of the combatants, scarcely conscious of the fierce strife raging above her head, of the coming multitudes, of the disgraceful costume in which her young limbs were travestied, Teresa had crouched down upon the

red foul soil, and held the head of the wounded student upon her knees. As long as the clashing of swords rung through the air, she had occasion to exert her feeble powers to restrain him from rising, and once more throwing away his efforts upon so unequal a contest.

She bent over him ; her lips were pressed upon his cold forehead, and she found them bitter with blood. The cause of his fall at that perilous moment was now apparent ; it was not that the soil was treacherous, but that he was wounded, and his brain spun before the body fell.

Consciousness had evidently not wholly abandoned him, for when he felt the pressure of those burning lips on his forehead, he passed his hand over the dress of his preserver, as if to satisfy some doubt that passed through his mind. His fingers fell upon the garments of boyhood, and then dropped carelessly by his side.

Presently the faint light of distant torches reached them, and the steps of a straying

and clamorous crowd shook the ground about them. The first ray which fell upon the features of the pale girl revealed the mystery of her disguise. Joy, even in his agony, sparkled up in the eyes of the wounded, as the recognition flashed upon his senses.

“ Beloved one !” he whispered, “ I am but little hurt ; the future will suffice for explanation. Let thy sweet lips once more touch my cheek, and then, fly ! fly ! for that dress will be the ruin of thy fair fame if men take thee. Francesco will still live to thank and love thee.”

More dear than would have been the gift of life, those words yet fell idly upon her ear, and she made no reply ; but, as the torches approached them, she busied herself in stanching the wound which their light made visible.

“ Fly, fly, dearest !” urged the wounded man ! “ For my sake, begone !”

His words appeared to convey no impression. But a more effective inducement

than even the commands and entreaties of Francesco now came to her rescue. Powerful arms grasped her slight form, lifted her from the earth, and in a minute more the threshold of the garden postern was overstepped, and Teresa found herself hurried along in the custody of some one who dashed through the darkness of the silent streets she knew not whither.

The multitudes whom the alarm-bell had summoned to the scene of the late fray still wandered amongst the shrubs, hallooing and hurrying in their vain search. It was when the coming torches exposed to those nearest to the spot on which that brief and bloody scene had been acted, the results which till then had been matter of conjecture, that Zonara the apothecary, who had closed the door when the Prince fled, approached, and whispered in the ear of Ficino, who was busied about the body of the prostrate Brandano—

“Leave *him* to my care ; he is my father ; you may judge if I am likely to neglect him.

I will also look to your friend Francesco ; he shall be well tended ; but, for the love of Heaven, carry that child hence, whether he will or not ; you may find harbourage in my house for an hour or two till I can join you. You may make friends by it, young man, that may ward off a danger you know not of."

It needed not threat or hire to induce Ficino to do a work of charity,—to lend his help to one needing it ; and, accordingly, finding the young boy seemingly dead to all faculty of hearing or comprehending him, he had determined on the only feasible method, of bearing him away by force.

Once free from the immediate neighbourhood of the convent, he met with no further obstacle ; the struggles and screams of his refractory burden hindered him not in his purpose. All whose ears were readiest to listen to a cry of alarm had already left their homes, to join the troops of the Colonna, and were in a scene where such cries abounded.

“Hush, hush, child!” exclaimed Ficino, soothingly; “I have no thought to hurt thee; thou hast saved the life of my best friend. Ficino never harmed a living being, and for thee he would venture life as readily as he now gives his bosom to shield thee.”

“Set me down!” exclaimed Teresa; “his life is ebbing, and I have a solemn duty to do before life leaves him. Men have libelled him; you as well as others; and I—Heaven pardon me!—who should have known him better—I believed them. Let me see him once more, if it be but for a minute, ere life leaves him.”

Entreaties, screams, and struggles were alike fruitless. Ficino still hurried on from street to street, through utter darkness, making no reply to the prayers or reproaches of the party whose liberty he thus unscrupulously coerced.

“For very shame’s sake,” she said, plaintively, “set not your strength against that of a weak girl! Surely you must know me! Can you so soon have forgotten the promises

made to me but yesterday? Oh, for one minute by his side! Dear friend, let us again join him; his last breath will be wasted amongst strangers.”

If the youth had needed any motive to quicken his steps before, this confession would have stimulated him to his utmost.

“He is but slightly injured, fair lady,” he said; “but not for worlds would I leave you, thus dressed, to be handled by over-curious and rude men. A few minutes more, and you will be in safety, and before daybreak you may see him as a maiden should do. Even from your dearest friend it were kindness, at this moment, to conceal you.”

A dim light, the last faint gleams of St. Zenobio’s lamp, fell across a distant part of the street in which they now found themselves; and thither Ficino hurried with his burden.

The light, as the reader may have conjectured, proceeded from the dwelling of Zonara the apothecary. The door was not fastened;

he pushed it open and entered. They had so long hurried through nearly total darkness, that their eyes were for a moment dazzled even by the feeble rays of an expiring lamp. Ficino had already secured the door behind him, and was about to set down his gentle charge, when his eye distinguished the figure of a man seated, and reclining against the shelves of phials with which every wall, from the floor to the ceiling, was furnished.

“ Help ! help, friend ! ” he exclaimed ; “ I have brought one who may need thy assistance ! ”

But the tenant of the shop appeared steeped in slumber.

“ Wake ! wake, sluggard ! ” called Ficino, raising his voice to a pitch that might all but awaken the dead. Yet the figure made no effort to move.

Ficino then approached to where he sat, to use less gentle means to rouse him. As he came nearer, no pleasant spectacle met his eye. The figure had apparently fallen

back, but the frame itself was erect and rigid ; his eyes stared with a stony and unmoving glare ; his hair was on end ; his cheeks shining, humid, and of a deep yellow ; every feature was pointed, and the skin was stretched tightly over them. The jaw had fallen, and a cream-like foam circled the blue and flaccid lips. Ficino felt his flesh, and it was icy cold ! No further doubt remained. Singular and appalling as it might be, he was dead.

Turning with disgust from this ill-timed sight, he dashed the whole weight of his body against the inner door of the dwelling ; it yielded to the shock, and he once more turned to lead away the young girl from a spectacle so revolting. As he did so, a scene far more dreadful than the one which had till now arrested his notice struck his senses with so much horror as to deprive him for some minutes of the power either to speak or move.

Where Teresa had been placed when liberated from the arms of Ficino, there was

she still, immovable as stone ; her eyes were glaring fixedly, not *on*, but *into*, the glazed and startled balls of the corpse ; but their expression was far more terrible. Her features had undergone so total and rapid a change since he last looked upon them, that they were no longer recognisable. Her aspect was not that of fear, nor was it of disgust, but a wild, fierce, overawed expression, between idiocy and insanity.

A succession of convulsive shudderings, and of hideous and distorted mouthings, passed over features whose rare beauty had so nearly overturned the self-denying philosophy of this descendant of Plato.

Ficino at length started from his first trance of amazement, and flung his arms about her. Great as was the violence of her first paroxysm, his own was even more augmented. He bore her within the house, ascended the stairs, and placed her upon the bed of an upper room.

To this pitiful and afflicting scene succeeded another, which no pen could describe,

no imagination of the terrible overstep. At last came the sound of steps, so long listened for. The crafty foot-fall of the owner of the tenement was heard as he entered the room beneath them. A delay of a minute, as if caused by the vision of the ghastly sentinel who kept watch below, and then steps mounted the stairs, and Zonara stood before them. His countenance was scarcely less death-like than that of the corpse he must have just passed.

“ It must have been a short passage,” he muttered unconsciously ; “ and thus far more merciful than he deserved.”

His glance then fell upon the piteous spectacle on which Ficino was gazing helplessly. He rushed to the bed, and bent down to look more intently into the features of the sufferer.

“ It is all over,” he exclaimed, after a moment of deep thought. “ This violence will not last long ; it is her third attack, and if life lasts, idiocy will inevitably succeed.”

“ Can nothing, nothing be done for her ?”

asked the youth, whilst the tears dropped from his eyes on to the quivering cheeks of the wretched girl. "Is there no power in the beneficent vegetation in whose secret cells philosophers have taught us an all-wise and bountiful Creator has deposited the sources that recreate vitality? Can nothing avert so terrible a calamity; nothing save an intellect so lofty, a person so lovely, as hers was but yesterday?"

"Can drugs recall life, or the essences of unpalatable plants fashion anew the sinews and limbs that have withered and fallen asunder?" asked Zonara, calmly. "That young girl's intellect is not sick, but dead! It were as easy to restore breathing to the corpse below as to bring back intelligence to her brain! It is a melancholy wreck," he continued; "but on this side of her grave no mortal power may avail to save her. These paroxysms we may quell, but beyond that human skill is powerless."

Awful as this denunciation was, its truth appeared unquestionable. Changes of all

terrible and appalling characters flashed in untiring succession across her features. A glare that made the blood curdle but to look upon; a straining of every muscle of the countenance, accompanied with exclamations shocking and obscene,—the fatal memories of those loathsome scenes of Cajano, which had first overthrown her reason, and of the foul visions that had been born of them,—made the scene intolerable.

“ I will go to the dwelling of her father,” said Ficino, “ and prepare the old man as gently as may be to meet this calamity. He may send help; he may at least shroud from an unpitying world so sad a sight; he may ward off unkind listeners from the hearing of these mysterious ravings.”

“ Hearken, young man,” said the apothecary, “ to the counsels of one who pretends to no man’s friendship. Let not your step ever cross the doorway of that cruel and iron-hearted fiend. He has before now listened to cries as piteous, and he has stood

by whilst the torture has wrung forth their souls from men's lips, and his rest has been no whit the more troubled for it. Think you that his heart feels as yours does? It will be but a groan or two, more of rage than of sorrow, and his heart will be thenceforth invulnerable; and the first proof of his gratitude for your childish commiseration will be to give your limbs to the official of the Bargello. Begone forth of this city whilst the gates are open and the populace is busy. There is a home yet for the persecuted around the banners of Ferrucci, and before two suns shall set, your friend Francesco shall be with you. The news of this mischance I will myself carry to Carducci."

"Stay where you are," replied Ficino; "leave not the side of the wretched girl till her father's bosom, cold as it may be to others, yet surely not wholly inhumanized towards her, may be prepared to receive her. I fear nothing for myself; and lips that may venture to speak of a just and

avenging God were the fittest to announce his affliction."

Thus saying, and without waiting for reply, Ficino descended the stairs and plunged into the darkness. "His blood be upon his own head!" muttered the apothecary, as he gazed after him. He then turned to busy himself with the form before him, and dismissed the youth wholly from his mind.

## CHAPTER III.

No better proof of the extent to which treachery was conducted, both within the walls of the city and the camp of the besieger, could be given, than the circumstances attending the sallying forth of the citizens against the enemy's lines on the night with whose events our last chapter was occupied. The sign-manual of Malatesta Baglioni himself admitted the Prince of Orange within the walls.

On the other hand, tidings had been conveyed to the city authorities, of confusion and insubordination in the camps of the besiegers, arising from arrears of pay, and

of quarrels and jealousies amongst the various classes of which that promiscuous herd was composed. It was even known to the Gonfaloniere that Filibert of Orange would that very night be absent from his tent, though it had baffled the utmost exertions of the ordinary spies to ascertain for what purpose. Yet had Carducci himself, as we have seen, found means to discover the intended attempt on the convent; and had not his individual interests stood between him and his usual sagacity, Florence had been saved, and that ill-fated child, whose indulged caprice was her ruin, had been safe in person and in mind. The result of his dishonest policy he had yet to learn.

The instant decision of the Colonna, on being consulted by the Signori, was under cover of the darkness to assault the camp. And here again the treachery of Baglioni interfered, by taking the conduct of the enterprise on himself, which his superior rank enabled him to do, to divert the attack

from the trenches of Montici, which he well knew to be without a leader, to the well-defended quarters of the ever-vigilant Marchese del Vasto, on the hill called the Bellosguardo. Further than this he had no means of averting the evil.

At a given signal, the gate of San Pier Guttolino was thrown open, and a dense body of citizens poured from under its deep archway, determined to liberate their city, or lay their bones on the sunny slopes that looked down upon the domes and palaces of their native place. The regular men-at-arms of the Colonna, with that chieftain himself at their head, led the van, and, forming into detached columns in the open space beyond the gate, began to ascend the hill by the several lanes and bridle-paths which led directly to its summit.

It was a part of the plan, arranged in concert with the military leaders and the civil authorities, that when the first columns should have reached the brow of the eminence, a select body of the city guard, com-

posed of the wealthier order of citizens, should, on a given signal, move simultaneously from the gate of St. George on the hill, feign an attack upon the quarters of the Prince of Orange at Montici, and at all costs prevent his descending the valley to bring aid to the Spaniard.

Had this second detachment corresponded with the force under the Colonna, the Marchese del Vasto, though having at his command fifteen thousand of the Spanish infantry, at that time unquestionably the best in Europe, must, as the result sufficiently manifested, have been utterly destroyed.

But here arose one of those ruinous casualties, so frequent and so unforeseen, that outwit human calculation, for the establishment or the overthrow of the liberties of states. The leader of this auxiliary band, which had earned the respect of the professional defenders of the city, was a chivalrous and high-spirited youth, who had

fought under the black flag of the *Bande Nere*, with Ferrucci, at Naples.

The last words of Lautrec, when his tongue was swollen with the pestilence, were of eulogy of this young and gallant soldier. He was a native of the Tuscan states, and idolized amongst his men, many of whom were of the first families of the Republic, and had been his schoolfellows in boyhood, his intimate friends through life. This young officer, by name Amico da Venafro, was proud of his birth, and had acquired somewhat of the haughty bearing of his model, Ferrucci; this was, however, mingled with so much of generous and good feeling towards the humblest of his fellow-citizens, and so much dashing bravery in action, that men readily attributed the occasional abruptness of his manner to its real causes—partly affectation and partly the schooling of his early campaigns. But, unhappily, the brow that could control itself when a friend or even a soldier of his

fellow-citizens was pained by it, darkened and scowled when thwarted by any of the overbearing followers of the Condottieri in the State's pay.

It had been his fortune more than once to be called to council with both Baglioni and Colonna. His opinions had been expressed fearlessly, and urged somewhat more energetically than those leaders thought within his sphere.

Baglioni, traitor as he was, had encountered his enthusiasm with courteous disdain. Not so the irritable spirit of the Colonna. Held back by none of the restraints that curbed the conscience-stricken, but not less ferocious, spirit of his companion in command, his pride rose up against what he had no scruple to term the boorish presumption of a plebeian pikeman. Insults studiously inflicted were resented fiercely. Reproaches followed in which the rough Republican incautiously hinted his suspicions of treason amongst the hired servants of the State. It was with difficulty

that personal strife was prevented in the very presence of the assembled troops. This scandal was, however, averted ; the parties separated for the time, boiling with rage, and with threats which but too soon found scope for their gratification.

On the very morning of the intended assault on the enemy's lines, it chanced that Amico was returning from the Palace of the Signori to his quarters, and Stefano Colonna was riding towards the interior of the city. They met nearly in the centre of the Ponte Vecchio. No word passed between them ; their swords leaped spontaneously to their hands, and a fierce and fatal encounter ensued. Men witnessed it ; for it took place at mid-day, and the whole world was abroad. A loud outcry drowned the clash of those angry blades. Crowds rushed to the scene, but they came too late ; the sword of Stefano Colonna was through the very heart of his foe ; and that haughty man thought he had achieved no very notable feat when it was done.

The body of as gallant and honest a patriot as the city possessed dropped to the earth without uttering a groan.

This melancholy event plunged the whole city into a sullen and fixed grief; the populace clamoured, and there were not wanting friends of the deceased with courage enough to demand the immediate arrest of the murderer: the impending enterprise, and the reduced state of the city, however, overruled the first burst of indignation, and it was decided that the Colonna should be for the present unmolested, and that the intended assault should proceed.

It did proceed, as we have shewn; but the cruel and haughty soldier who was to lead it was destined to feel the effects of his brutality in the hour of his extreme need. The appointed signal—two reports of the falconet over the gate of San Nicolo—was given; the thunders of the guns roared over the silent camps, and were sent back in many a crashing reverberation from every hill that girt in the city.

Colonna long listened for the response. None came : and had he known the spirit of the people whose pride he had so wantonly outraged, he might have felt that none would come ; that the leaderless troops had left him to disgrace. He was already too far compromised for retreat ; and cursing in his heart, not his own folly, as he might have done, but the poltroonery of the citizens, he gave orders to advance. The troops of St. George jeered bitterly as the signal reached them ; and their officers refused to martial them under the banner of their leader's murderer.

Time was flying ; the alarm was probably given by the very guns which were to have brought him aid ; and his only trust was in speed, and the chance of a surprise. At all risks, Colonna put himself at the head of his infantry, and ordered them onward.

In some measure to supply the place of the band that had failed him, he had sent his horsemen to occupy the valley that lay between the hostile camps ; and he himself,

covering his gorgeous armour with the white shirt prepared for him, and which was worn by all who joined such night excursions, moved on to ascend the hill.

Their way lay up a steep path, which had been paved in former days, but which the Spaniard had purposely broken up ; and the vast fragments, undiscernible in the darkness, presented at each step obstacles which threatened to be insurmountable. They then struck aside into the fields, thinking, as every step of that fertile hill had been familiar to most of them from infancy, to find as direct and a far less cumbered ascent. But they had forgotten that for near ten months, during which their city had been besieged, they had never ventured beyond the gate in that direction ; and they found to their cost that the wary Spaniard had not left so facile a pathway to his stronghold. Deep trenches had been cut in all directions, and into them the numerous watercourses of the mountain had been made to discharge their wintry streams.

Hitherto, their path, though wearisome, had been attended with success beyond their hopes ; every outpost had been taken, every sentry cut down, and no shot had yet been fired. All was still dark in the quarters towards which they were quickly approaching.

An accident, trifling in itself, yet of sufficient importance to the individual who was its victim, rendered useless all further attempts at precaution. A loud cry for help spread a momentary panic amongst the toiling troops of the Colonna. What the nature of the danger thus clamorously announced might be, no one could tell. It turned out, after confusion and uproar enough to have awakened the slumbers of the drowsiest of all sentries, that some heavy-armed citizen had fallen into one of the deep pits across their rambling ascent, and had called out for help before he perished.

A rapid succession of flashing arquebuses, followed by their ringing reports, gave Colonna the first unwelcome intimation

that the alarm had sufficiently spread through the trenches on the heights above them. Further precautions were now useless. A general rush up the hill ensued, and the battle-cry of the Colonna was borne bravely over the furthest pinnacles of the city. The cannon of the fortress had not yet fired; but it now burst over the assailants, bearing its summons to the friendly camps on the distant hill for succour.

Stefano Colonna felt that all must be won quickly, or the very retreat of the unskilful citizens cut off. The Spaniards were not tardy in joining their standards. But it was a singularly novel circumstance in the diary of their existence, to be summoned by beat of drum from their quarters, to repel a sortie of citizens whom they most supremely despised. The topmost plateau was gained, and Colonna was in their trenches before they clearly understood the nature of the attack.

The fortress was now pouring out its dark bands, thousands upon thousands.

They halted to form, and the ghost-like warriors of the Colonna were upon them, making conspicuous by their white dresses the immense host that had gained their stronghold. A deadly and fierce conflict ensued; but it was of individuals against masses. The Spaniards were broken before they had time to present an ordered or united front; their various knots, which, with that instinct which discipline ever prompts, had formed nearly upon their thresholds, were hewed down and trampled to the earth, and the assailants passed rapidly over them. Fresh hosts were ready to fill up the vacancy; but they were scarcely better formed. The strife, the clash of weapons, and the carnage were renewed.

A wild shout of triumph told the success of this second struggle; and then rose up an universal deafening outcry, thundering alike above the shrieks of the dying and the roar of the cannon, the maddening intelligence that the provisions were disco-

vered. The cry of "Bread! bread!" was borne from a distant quarter of the attack; and to this fatal cry the boldest and the bravest turned with one accord, heedless of the foe, of the victory within their reach, of the insanity, with a half-conquered and enraged enemy behind them, of turning from the strife. All fierce passions were merged into one craving appetite for food.

All but the immediate followers of the Colonna, whose rations had yet enabled them to estimate plunder above bread, rushed to the centre of this thrilling clamour. The press was as confused as it was universal. Hundreds were crushed in their unsated hunger; and but too soon the blades of the contending multitudes were turned against each other. Groans, and screams, and curses, rung harshly through the bloody trenches; but the cry of "Food! food!" "Bread! bread!" rose ravenously above them all. It was the voice of Famine calling loudly to her sister—Slaughter!

A mere handful of his followers now

remained about the person of the leader of this scattered host. There was no choice left but to follow the general impulse, to fly from the post so bravely won, that his white dress might not invite a hundred blades to vengeance. The low gateways still swarmed with the aroused enemy, and Colonna had not advanced many paces before he perceived that his retreat was cut off. The white shirt, intended as a protection from the destroying blades of his followers,—the only ones, it was presumed, from which, in a nocturnal surprise, he could incur much risk,—now pointed him out to his enemies; and the Spaniards moved in a dense body, and with the passions of shame, revenge, and despair behind them, to cast themselves on the wretched remnant thus unexpectedly found lingering within their reach.

The sword of Stefano Colonna never served him better than it did that night: his oldest and trustiest followers were hewn down around him; yet his single arm had cloven its way amongst the masses of enraged foes.

His huge frame and vast strength breasted well the opposing multitudes. Hurling aside the feeble, and dealing blows upon the brave, that crushed alike helm and corslet, he baffled all strength, defied all weapons, burst through all numbers. His armour was dented and rent, but his step had not yet stumbled ; his lofty plumes were untouched ; his limbs unscathed. His foes were too closely packed to deal blows capable of felling one so powerful. His cuirass turned aside the pikes that were directed against his body, and thus continued this unequal struggle, till, bounding over a fallen man whom his sword had struck to the earth, he was free.

The wretched citizens, whom he now hastened to join, were still busied with the plunder of their ill-timed discovery, and the adventure of the night was for the time wholly forgotten ; they imagined themselves already victors, and revelled in the fruits of their lamentable scramble.

The voice of the Colonna, thundering out imprecations on their insanity, was their first

recall to duty. But a sound even more startling than the voice of the leader whom they so much dreaded was now ringing on all sides of them. "The Prince! the Prince of Orange is upon us!" exclaimed a thousand voices. Suspicious of treachery, confused, and fiercely assailed by the rallying Spaniards, the bravest paused.

The war-cry of the Republic was faintly raised; but they still hesitated. It was a moment when all depended upon the energies of one man; but that man was Colonna. Voice and gesture, encouragement and threat, began to enforce some appearance of order. The serried bands of the enemy were, however, upon them before they had bestowed a thought upon the possibility of their rallying.

A charge, fierce and fatal, followed. The blade of their leader still flashed in the van, but the tide of fortune had turned against them for their folly;—they were broken. Again rallied by their unyielding chief, fresh carnage thinned their ranks.

The veteran infantry, with the dreaded Marchese del Vasto at their head, charged through them and over them; and at the very moment when flight might have been pardonable in more experienced troops, came shrilly upon the night-breeze the trumpet sound of Malatesta for retreat. Vainly did Colonna now try to steady his men for one more effort; the next charge from the Spaniards saw their backs turned to the fortress, their faces to the city; the trenches were swept, and the victors followed in the pursuit.

“For the love of chivalry, noble gentlemen,” said Stefano Colonna to those about him, “let us once more face them, or the whole of this vile rabblement will be speared before it reach the gates.”

A mere handful of untameable warriors, men of a life of siege and assault, turned, as if mechanically, at his voice. It was an act of fruitless heroism; and Colonna himself, who had escaped unwounded until now, as if by miracle, was the first to reap the

fruits of his rashness. A shot from an arquebuse in the mêlée struck him, and he fell to the earth. The contest that ensued over his body was short and murderous ; but the few desperate men around him availed for his rescue. He was torn from beneath the feet of his foes, and borne away down the hill in safety. The flying crowds, meanwhile, had not found their return to the city as easy as their sortie ; the forces of the Prince of Orange, after a fierce but brief contest with the handful of Colonna's horse posted in the valley, met them in their retreat.

Writers, jealous of the fame of those unwarlike townsmen, have not been able to deny them the praise of gallant conduct, of unyielding obstinacy, in that night's encounter, though they have sneered at their uncouth bearing, and their grotesque appearance in the armour of knights and warriors. They met this fresh array like brave men who had achieved their freedom ; the plunderers of Rome fell back from the

fury of their charge ; the gate was gained, and the last struggle was fought on its very threshold. Stefano Colonna was borne at once to the luxurious home into which famine, that revelled elsewhere, had never entered, and the citizens, such as survived, were left to find, as best they could, refreshment from their toils, and dressing for their wounds.

## CHAPTER IV.

FICINO had but just left the sad spectacle of which he had been so melancholy a witness, when the noise of the disastrous return of the troops roused the city. Multitudes of women of all classes of the commonwealth poured out to meet them : young maidens, children, and aged parents—all that had a stake in the bloody lottery in which all that life prized had been put to hazard—thronged the streets.

Ficino mingled in the concourse. Groans and lamentations too soon sounded the melancholy welcome to the returning warriors. He alone, probably, of the many

thousands with whom he had mingled, had none within that glorious company to search for or to mourn over; yet, perchance, amongst them all there was not a heart so penetrated with universal sympathy as his. Of the wounded, many lay down to die in peace on the pavement of their beloved city. Those who had fair forms to bend over them and soothe their transit, Ficino the consoler passed by, to bear his pity to the deserted.

Amongst the press, jostled and unaccompanied, was the staggering form of a young warrior, whose remnants of costly armour, shattered and blood-stained, seemed to bespeak him an officer of one or other of the hired bands of the city. No arm was offered to support or steady him, and after vainly striving for some paces to follow the throng, he fell to the earth, and with much difficulty trailed himself to the doorstep of a poor cottage, there to die. Ficino approached him, bent down to him, and raised his head. Life was so nearly spent that the wounded

man failed to notice the hand that helped him, and his features were so altered, that for some minutes Ficino had no memory of having ever seen him.

“Where art thou wounded, poor youth?” he asked. “There is one at hand who may help thee. Place thy head upon my shoulder, and I will bear thee hence, where the chill air shall not harm thee, and where thy wounds may be cleansed and dressed.”

The sound of that voice sunk deeply into the soul of the wounded man. He raised his head, and a smile played faintly for an instant over his features. Recognition was then complete.

“Gentle friend,” said the dying youth, “your voice is, as ever, sweet and soothing. Like my dear father’s, it has ever been eloquent in praise of our country; and it is pleasing to have one by me who, when country and life are flitting from me, may think indulgently of such a death as mine is. Seat thee here, Ficino, by my side; Ludovico Macchiavelli will need no further help than

thine to cheer his passage hence. Bear my farewells to our friends. My father's grave is not yet closed ; his corpse will scarce be cold before his son's. Lay us together, for he loved me dearly, as he loved us all, though he thought lightly of the vanity of a career which finishes so gorily."

The life-blood ebbed away slowly ; strength was perished for ever ; and the youth drooped against the shoulder of his friend.

" I were well content to join thee, Ludovico," said his gentle comforter, in the soft and melancholy tones that best harmonize with hearts from which hope has departed. " Would that I could change health with thee for wounds so glorious ! It was not vanity that led thee to give thy young blood for thy country, but it was the memory of thy sage parent's early lessons. He grieved as a father ; but as a patriot, dear friend—as one who attached small value to aught in this mutable world, but who knew that freedom was Heaven's best gift, man's richest heritage—he was proud of thee ; your meet-

ing will be a glad one.—Art thou indeed gone?” he continued, as the body of the young soldier, after a quick shudder, fell stiffly against him. “Is thy noble spirit so soon departed? Then has one more of our city’s great and good ones preceded me in the race. Gently will I lay thy head in its honoured grave; and when men point to the resting-place of thy illustrious parent, they shall be reminded that his child poured out his blood, as he had done his deathless eloquence, his rare wisdom, for his country and for freedom.”

Ficino, mindful of his promise, bore that youthful corpse to its premature grave; and before another sunset, the same tomb closed over the earthly spoils of Niccolo Macchiavelli and his son. Many hundreds were, within a few days, carried in long and gloomy procession to graves ages ago forgotten. In the general lamentation over individual bereavement, the noblest loss of all was overlooked. The Orti Rucellai might mourn over the departed shade of

Socrates ; the lovers of rare eloquence might tread the deserted groves, whilst imagination, the mighty sorcerer, might make audible the echoes that slumbered amongst the branches of its plane trees. But the rest of that generation was occupied with its own griefs, and left to posterity the pious duty of erecting his mausoleum, and gathering from his immortal pages his sublime and imperishable eulogy.

The morning after the fruitless and sanguinary adventure just recorded rose brightly over a most gloomy city. When men came to calculate their losses, all stood aghast ; for their slain were numbered, not by the thousand or the hundred, as were the soldiers of their Condottieri, whom they counted correctly and calmly, as so many more or less to consume the State's pay and provisions ; they were counted individually ; for each they mourned, for all had been fellow-citizens ; and the lowliest and least had left a void, not in a muster-roll, but in the

homes and intimacies of those they left behind them.

It was a day of lamentation, and of curses, and of the burying of dead, in Florence. Pride, and sullen, unyielding hate, made the mourners hush the knell of the city bells, which should have borne aloft to the regions of liberated spirits the dirge from the hearts and homes they had left ; but the churches gave up to heaven, in place of the toll of bells and funeral anthems, solemn and deep-felt prayers for vengeance. The very clergy hesitated not to anathematize the man of blood who had stained the tiara, and polluted the sacerdotal garments, with the gore of his own brethren.

Such was the sad spectacle on which the morning sun shone within the city. Immediately beyond its walls were overthrown vineyards sloped with gore, reeking with carnage, foul with mangled corpses ; but far away over the abandoned yet smiling hills, the glad beams of dawn broke as

cheerfully as of old, during that long and golden interval when the invader had been forgotten in the fertile fields of Italy. A strong vegetation had already hidden the traces of man's labour ; the furrow was no more distinguishable in its long straight line, portioning out a season's toil and a season's promise ; chaining as it were each man's patrimony, hill to hill, valley to valley, with glorious bands of golden grain. The spring verdure was over all things, bright and beautiful to the eye ; and if no longer bearing food for man and his dependents, it mattered little, for there were none to gather it. The labourer had overrated the duration of his wants. Like a glutton, he had prepared food far beyond his necessities. The birds of the air, and the insects, whose homes were beneath the abandoned glebe, were his heritors ; they might feast upon the grain spread above their homes, and upon the hand that sowed it.

Climbing the gentle and sunny slope of a hill, near which no road except that formed

by the track of wandering hoofs was perceptible, might be seen a small escort, mounted and armed at all points, and in attendance upon two youths, who rode on a few paces in advance. It was easy to judge, from the extreme precaution used by the scouts who preceded them, that their journey was by no means one of security. They universally made choice of the more elevated ground, and yet were cautious that the little band should never be exposed on any ridge with the clear sky behind them. They usually selected those sweeping copses of branchy chesnuts which capriciously, as the soil willed it, raised up around them an impervious screen, already verdant with their broad bright leaves.

Their knowledge of the country was evidently accurate, though their route appeared to wander hither and thither, as the nature of the land over which they rode afforded the readiest means of concealment. Evil, indeed, were the times when a commissioner of the Republic of Florence was obliged thus

to journey through the State's territories, shrinking like a guilty shadow from the dawn.

The youth honoured with this important trust was pale, both from wounds and weariness ; and his armour, seemingly too cumbersome for such frail limbs, was borne by an attendant. His brow was gloomy, and his thoughts evidently less upon defence or surprise than upon some inward sorrow ; yet at times would a sudden brightness flash from his raised eyes, and he would give the spur to his steed, and measure covetously the open space of country before him.

“ Were this hill once climbed, Luigi,” he said, “ we should have a level country before us ; and an hour or two of smart riding will bring us to Volterra and its gallant governor. If Ferrucci is the man that fame speaks him, he may yet save his country. Would to Heaven that his Black Bands were already on their march ! Had not such utter imbecility so long ruled us, he would long ago have sent us peace from the

Vatican. But where one man amongst us has courage, or honesty, or good faith, ten are traitors, or idiots, or cowards. We must trust none of them ; least of all Carducci. Believe me, he wished neither of us well when he named us for this commission ; and the pleasantest intelligence he could receive would be our capture. That he has sent through Baglioni to the Prince tidings of our journey I by no means doubt ; and had our route been left to his tracing, we should have travelled fewer miles than we have done. It will be a sad task to bear to Ferrucci the death of young Macchiavelli ; for he loved him. But our city has had greater losses ; would that I could add, she has worthier sons surviving to avenge him."

The path they were now following had reached its highest point, and a general exclamation of joy broke from the little band as they beheld, rising darkly against the distant heavens, the hill on which for more than two thousand years has stood

the city of Volterra, and, crowning its topmost pinnacle, its vast and imposing citadel.

Their cry of joy was but that of an instant ; for a grand yet ominous spectacle lay distinctly visible in every minute particular beneath them. A vast array, with all the ministry of war, was spread out in the plain at the foot of the hill on which the city stood ; and as they paused for a few minutes to conjecture the intention or purpose of this unexpected force, the terrible truth flashed upon the senses of all in undoubted evidence:—that city, also, was about to be assaulted ! Ferrucci and his force, the last hope of the commonwealth, were now attacked in the only fortress remaining to the State.

That vast array was in motion ; for their banners at one time had the sunbeams full upon them, and at another were undistinguishable from the mist which still slumbered around the mountain's base. The

dark masses were approaching nearer to the walls ; and presently out broke simultaneously the thunders of the cannons of both hosts ; and the smoke from the battlements of the citadel was dense as the mist through which their enemy was moving. Batteries erected in haste, yet bristling with more artillery than the whole city of Florence possessed, thundered upon the walls ; and the citadel in reply—abounding also in guns, which his Holiness had dispatched but a few months previously by sea from Genoa to fortify the city, when he held it, and which Ferrucci had found a most opportune prize when he stormed the walls—now gave back thunder for thunder, sweeping away whole squares of the assailants, for every yard of masonry which they had brought down.

No practicable breach had been effected by the tremendous and concentrated fire, which followed with the fleetness of heaven's hail ; and the travellers, from the eyry they

occupied, could perceive that trenches were thrown up, and the assailants were moved under their cover.

Whatever might be the result of the struggle when both met hand to hand might be doubtful; but it was a matter of certainty that no walls could long withstand the tempest of balls that was hurled from so many guns against them. They might have judged, from the prompt and effective manner in which the enemy's batteries were served, that this attack was confided to no unskilful leader; but it was not known until after all was decided that the most famous engineers of their day, Calcella and Donato da Trotti, had been sent from Lombardy by Antonio da Leva, for that express enterprise. The cannon roared without a minute's intermission, and dense volumes of smoke at last shut out both the assailants and the city from further view.

Spurring their horses now to their utmost speed, the travellers swept round in a somewhat wider circle, to gain the city by

an access least likely to be intercepted. This hurried course was long continued ; and no word was spoken to betray the intense anxiety with which the struggle for life and freedom was contemplated. Their ears had become accustomed to the brief intermissions and the regular return of those crashing thunders ; and when a longer space began to intervene between the discharges, the circumstance immediately attracted the observation of each one amongst them.

The regularity and the deep full chorus of the enemy's guns were still recognisable, but the fire of the citadel became less frequent, and little doubt remained that some calamity of no ordinary nature must have befallen within the city.

Urging on their horses to their fleetest speed, they had already gained the valley, whose remote windings were occupied by the enemy ; and then all the fearful sounds of the terrible strife, towards which they were approaching, became distinct and intelligible. The very embrasures of the

citadel were visible ; the smoke of its now silent guns had been borne away on the breezes that for ever sweep round the summit of that elevated rock ; and the massive fortress stood out unshattered and calm above the town ; and upon its topmost tower, gloriously as ever, still floated the banner of the Republic.

The cause which thus silenced its guns was for some time a mystery ; but as they drew nearer they beheld the wall of the city breached, and a struggle of the most furious and deadly nature raging at the chasm. Hundreds had met, hand to hand ; soldiers, peasants, and citizens mingled in one unyielding *mêlée*.

Then it was that first became visible to the approachers the form of a mailed warrior, who dashed, from time to time, across the opening, at one minute waving on his followers, at another, heading the promiscuous multitudes, whose bodies were now the city's only barrier ; beating to the earth man after man, with a ponderous mace,

which, together with the solid chain that secured it above his elbow, was crimson with blood ; flinging his vast strength against the assailants as they formed, with unshrinking obstinacy, on the crumbled ruins, hurling down piles of ponderous and precious marbles, stripped from the gorgeous furniture of the city's palaces, upon the heads of those below ; again disappearing, again leading on fresh parties to the breach, and resuming the duties of a common soldier.

“ That man is Ferrucci,” exclaimed the leader of the little band, who had gazed upon his prowess with astonishment. “ His ammunition must have failed him, or he would never thus put all to the venture of his single arm.”

The speaker and his little troop had now mounted the hill, and entering the town by a gate furthest removed from the part assaulted, were, in a few minutes, in the thick of this obstinate strife. The balls of the enemy still fell in exterminating showers about the city ; fragment after fragment, of

the old walls toppled into the ditch below them, and fresh bands from both hosts sprung up where each new chasm was formed.

The fiercest assault that had yet been attempted by the enemy was now raging, when the cry of "Fresh troops from Florence," raised by one to whom the stratagems of war came as instinctively as his many other rare gifts, gave fresh stimulus to the fainting forces of the townsmen.

Enraged by the obstinacy with which these unpractised citizens had repulsed every attack, though their city in many parts blazed above their heads, the leaders of the assailants had determined upon a general and fierce rush once more to the breach. This last onset was headed by their leader in person. This leader was the famous Fabrizio Maramaldo—of scarcely less repute in those calamitous times than the Marchese del Vasto himself. He was urged on by motives of most bitter personal hate against Ferrucci, who had made the

pompous manners and bravading summons to surrender, which the Spaniard had sent him, the amusement of the camp and soldiery of the fortress.

The indefatigable Ferrucci was the first to recognise his enemy, and the first to meet him on the breach. The fury of the assailants was equalled, though it was not to be exceeded, by the rage of the citizens. The tide of conflict swayed hither and thither, yet no crush of the surrounding combatants, no yielding of the vast masses, which at one time left each leader unsupported, availed to separate them when their weapons had once crossed. The heavy sword of Maramaldo swept away first the plumes, and then the entire casque of Ferrucci. Bare-headed, and with every feature distorted with rage and hate, that dauntless soldier whirled his iron mace above the head of his opponent ; blow followed blow with a power which neither sword nor armour could withstand ; the heavy frame of Maramaldo staggered, he was again struck, stunned, and hurled to the

earth. A rush of his own soldiers to the rescue, and of the followers of Ferrucci around their chief, trampled over his body, and bore the victor of that fierce duel once more back into the bloody stream of the unyielding battle.

For several hours had that deadly strife endured. Ferrucci himself was wounded; and when his temporary disappearance in consequence had given courage to his enemies, and his own men were trembling in their extremity,—when a handful more of the assailants on the walls would have decided the fate of Volterra,—was heard once more the cry of “Ferrucci for the Republic!” and that indomitable chief was seen borne on the shoulders of his soldiers, on a bed of rude planks, and placed down within a few paces of the breach.

The fight raged about him, but no step had been yet gained within the city. Despair had long ago wrought its last wonders, and the hideous carnage of so many of the choicest warriors of the Spanish and

Sicilian legions at last made their leaders tremble for their utter extermination:

From the wounded Maramaldo was at length extorted the order to sound the retreat. It was at once the note of victory, and of despair; the last stragglers were hurled headlong from the battlements, the cannon ceased, and the ruined wall, so murderously contested, was abandoned to the keeping of corpses.

It was no moment even for the wounded to seek rest. A new wall arose; bastion upon bastion propped up the shattered masonry; the while a chosen band bore out their leader, wearied and wounded as he was, to pursue an enemy whose retreat, when they were once in the open country, became a confused and precipitate flight. Their last remnant of strength was utterly broken; their camps were deserted; their baggage, and, what was of far more consequence, their cannon and magazines, fell a prey to the victors.

The glory of Francesco Ferrucci was at

its height; and posterity possesses, in the fame he that day acquired, some solace from the cruelty of his subsequent fortunes. Antonio da Leva heard with astonishment the history of that day's feat-of-arms; and the little town of Volterra, a hitherto insignificant dependency of the Florentine republic, rose in military fame above the metropolis.

The tidings of the arrival of a commissioner of the Republic met Ferrucci in the moment of his triumph, on his return from the pursuit of the scattered enemy. It may be pardoned him if, with somewhat more than his accustomed haughtiness he bade the emissary wait, whilst he turned his mind to matters of more import than the ceremonials of a reception. It was with a just and laudable pride that he caused himself to be borne into the fortress, not through the gates that would have gloried to receive him, but over the breach which his defence had immortalized.

It was not until he had made the tour of the walls, and given orders for their instant

repair—until he had visited the wounded, and taken order for the speedy and honourable sepulture of the dead—that he deigned to turn his thoughts to the emissaries of the Republic. It was with no small astonishment, and apparently with no less displeasure, that he perceived the parties on whom that high trust had been conferred. His meeting with Luigi Capponi was courteous, yet of freezing coldness. To Francesco he bowed with a sneering loftiness of aspect, which met with a return far more cordial than it merited.

“ We have heard, noble sirs,” he said, without awaiting the purpose of their commission, “ of the hard straits to which your city has been reduced ; and I doubt not but that you are the bearers of more urgent complaints that I have not been able to supply food for two or three hundred thousand cooped up and starving men. But, by my faith, gentlemen, such attacks as you may have this day witnessed leave me few idle men for the escort of provisions, even

were they sowed and reaped;—which you may also have noticed, on your route hither, is not any longer the case within leagues of that unhappy city. What news bring you from the famous leaders to whom our statesmen have confided the defence of our homes and families? We hear that Stefano Colonna sharpens his swords on our kinsmen's throats, and that Malatesta Baglioni is such a pink of chivalry that he silences his batteries whilst Filibert of Chalons takes his siesta."

"The news from the besieged city," said Francesco, heedless of the irritation and arrogance both of his speech and manner, "is not cheering, and as it bears little reference to our present commission, and would come chillingly on so glorious an occasion as this is, we will, with your permission, pass it over. If you care to hear the tale of our city's feelings, both Luigi Capponi and myself can assure you that men clamour for your presence amongst them; and, could such a thing be done

without scandal, would willingly see the baton which Malatesta keeps under his easy chair placed in a hand that would wield it to better purpose. But the object of our commission tends to an event far remote from this. The decision that should long ago have been formed has triumphed in the last hour ; and your peremptory orders herein contained, and which we doubt not will readily leap with your own enterprising spirit, are, that you forthwith abandon this city, and every other fortress and stronghold within the State's dominions in which you may have garrisons, leaving each and all either to defend themselves or capitulate as best they may ; and summoning, in the State's name, all such aid, whether of men or money, as you may think fit, march with all speed to the walls of Rome. Your orders further command the seizure of the person of Clement as a rebellious citizen ; and in case, within such time as the circumstances permit, the armies at his control, now without the walls of Florence, be not

removed from the dominions of the Republic, you will proceed against him to the death, as one judged by the Senate and people of his native city."

The eyes of Ferrucci flashed with uncontrollable delight, as the last tones of the student's voice were hushed, and the official document from which he had been reading was presented for his inspection. If all destinies within the hand of Providence could have been proposed to his election, the one now shaped out by the words of his commission was that he would most unhesitatingly have chosen.

"You bring me welcome tidings, gentlemen," he exclaimed, "when I had looked for more complaints, more begging; and I rejoice to think that in leaving my country on an enterprise in which Bourbon perished, I leave behind me the heart in which a counsel so bold and soldier-like found its birth. This day's victory has not been gained without a few casualties; but you may tell their Excellences the Priori that

Ferrucci pledges life and fame that the black banner of John de Medici shall float above the Vatican before a week is over our heads. If you have no further orders, we will see to our wounded. The commands with which I have been honoured are perfectly clear and explicit. I have understood them to the letter, and further discourse were but waste of time."

The youthful commissioners bowed, and with ready apprehension of a hint so intelligible took their departure. But they had not proceeded many paces from the scene of their brief interview before an attendant overtook them, and delivered his leader's request that Francesco would again join him.

"I am bade to say," continued the veteran, "that it is not on business of the state, and that your company alone is desired."

Without change of countenance, or appearance of hesitation, though he had his own conjectures of the scene that awaited him, Francesco turned and followed the

soldier once more into the presence of Ferrucci. That individual was seated when he entered, and leaning against a table with his face upon his hand, in deep thought. His countenance, though pale from the pain of his wound and from loss of blood, still bore visibly enough the traces of the day's victory, of his more recent excitement, of the fierce passions, not yet subdued, which had influenced him through so many hours of murderous conflict, and of the elation bordering upon ferocity which his late interview had not wholly calmed. The fire of his dark glance kindled when the modest yet collected mien of the student met his eye, and his lip quivered as he spoke.

“ I have done thee some wrong, young man,” he said ; “ and before I strike this last blow for fame I would do something to repair it. I had thought that the dalliance with fair cheeks and a lady's tresses had destroyed in thee that courage which helped to raise the spirit which set these times in motion, and that then thou hadst, whilst

simpering at a maiden's footstool, left to the dotards of the palace the task of conducting us by all mean and dishonourable ways to our ruin. When I heard that Baglioni had been entrusted with the command of our troops, and Colonna made the guardian of the lives and liberties of our citizens, I proclaimed thee traitor in my heart, and vowed that our first meeting should be in deadly conflict. I had also," he continued, whilst a slight colour passed over his pale face, "wrongs of my own to avenge; and though they mingled not in my judgment of thee, they took not from my impatience for such a meeting. Answer me,—was this counsel thine by which my present fortunes were brought about?"

"It was," replied Francesco; "it was the last of many, any one of which would have brought you honour. Had I been amongst the living, instead of lying like a crushed worm, senseless and powerless, when that traitor was thus unwisely trusted, I might have had the power, as I should

surely have had the will, to direct the choice of the trades for that high post to yourself. But as for private wrongs, Ferrucci, in what have I ever injured you? Speak it freely; for I would not willingly dwell coldly in the heart of one who loves his country, and may perish beneath its banner."

"You rivalled me in those days in fame, Francesco," replied Ferrucci; "and though, perchance, you knew it not in your cave in the wilderness, my name, already one of promise, was syllabled by men's lips in union with one whose beauty and birth had excited my puerile homage; and in this case you did more than rival me. But that dream is past; it was the first to be forgotten. If you value Ferrucci's friendship, its price is the forgiveness of past misconception. You have earned it, and you have it!"

"All value it to whom freedom is dear," replied the youth. "Ferrucci's friendship is quoted by the suspicious in Florence as the surest pledge of men's patriotism; his

approval is a title to good men's honour. Our city is full of treachery. Loyalty is utterly dead amongst us. The very orders you have this day received were extorted from the private passions of men whom falseness to their country had made cowards; whose consent was the bribe to silence; and the most friendly counsel I can give you is, to await no further intercourse with the Priori. If other orders come, let them have miscarried on the road. Our only hope of safety for our country must dawn from the prison of Clement de Medici."

## CHAPTER V.

A SINGULAR change had come over the exterior of the humble dwelling of the apothecary since last the reader was admitted to its arcana. San Zanobio, indeed, still retained his presidency—still looked down in all the serene dignity of mitre and beard with which Giotto had endowed him, when his pencil immortalized that spirited chase which the saint and Satan had achieved around the angles of the Duomo, dodging round his own unrivalled campanile, doubling about the baptistry, and then again flying from end to end of the cathedral, pursued by, and out-speeding the whirlwind which to

this day awaits the venturing forth of the venerable saint from the sanctuary in which he found refuge. San Zanobio still swung above the doorway of the apothecary; but the minor dignitaries, the candles, and the red-mouthed alligator, who had administered to his supremacy, were no longer visible. In place of the glittering windows and the tinted mixtures, a grim barrier of crossed bars of iron now frowned upon the exterior of the dwelling of that lank and loathsome spider who carried on his villanies within.

Any precaution which terror might have chosen to adopt in times of so much peril would have been judged pardonable. Indeed, a precaution somewhat similar had already been taken by all who possessed what the unscrupulous and hungry coveted,—rat's flesh from the sewers of the city, and the more savoury viands of the dogs that had helped to hunt them. But when that unsailable barrier had been projected in a night, to guard the nauseous drugs of the mediciner, diverse jokes were passed upon

his prudence, and his profession. But in the course of a day or two, when stifled sounds of groans and wailing and malediction were heard issuing from the interior of the building, it was rumoured—in all probability by the apothecary himself—that he was charged with the custody of some maniac, whose birth and blood suited not the promiscuous and plebeian commonalty of the public asylum.

To the interior of this dwelling the reader has already once entered, and may again venture. If the outside had undergone a change, the inside was scarcely recognisable. In the same small room in which were concealed the treasures, and therewith the heart of the reptile, and over the very spot where heaps of gold and strings of pearls abounded, there was now spread out a vast platform of rough and heavy planking, about seven feet in length, and two or three in breadth. These planks were strongly nailed into beams of immense thickness, which rose about a foot from the flooring; and stretched out upon

them lay, as if for purposes of torture or anatomy, the form of a human being.

The form was that of the giant Brandano. His ankles and wrists were loaded with heavy fetters of iron, which were bolted down into the solid supporters of this hard bed. The amazing power which dwelt in those herculean limbs had been well calculated; for besides the fastenings already mentioned, a strong chain passed over his middle, and was secured by immense screws to the under parts of the boarding.

If the wretched man thus bound was not really mad, never were the convulsions of maddened limbs, the contortions of insane features, more appalling than his. He was alone, and writhing in his bonds; heaving his vast chest, and straining both wrists and ankles against their irons with a violence that threatened to wrench the bones from their sockets. A convulsion passed like a huge wave from his feet upward over his whole body, till it poured the blood in a swollen torrent into his face and temples; every vein

started in their fulness, and his eyes grew red and protrusive, and then the inflamed stream forced itself from his mouth and ears, flooding his whole person, and the planks and floor beneath him.

Many such paroxysms had evidently passed over him since his imprisonment, for the whole of his rude resting-place was a jelly of blackening and stiff gore. When his muscles relaxed their tension from extreme pain, and the creaking of the joists of his couch and the rattling of his irons ceased, there came a sound of mocking response, as of piles of ringing gold shaken together, and falling from their heaps. The subdued giant burst into a wild and savage laugh as the sound reached him.

“Ha! ha! thou speakest well and musically, thou smiling demon!” he exclaimed. “I have conversed with thee before now, and thy language is more intelligible than the tongues of my fellow-men. I have worshipped thee through a long life, and thou abandonest me not now. My precious

son has found out my secret, I doubt not, as I found out his. We all have secrets ; but the merriest of all is how to make a parent's veins distil gold. *My* father lived to be one hundred and ten years old ; and yet, sweet spirit, thou hadst *his* blood too at last. It must have been a gratifying sight to thee to see that old man in his dotage, driving out his starved ass loaded with the scraps he had pilfered in the dark, when all but he had fled from the destroyers. It was a burden that all foul beasts would have turned from ; yet, had it reached the square of this city, would have weighed against a treasure. The very brute that bore it, famished as it was, would have sold for a prince's ransom. It was a pity, for the venture's sake, that the Germans stopped him ; they took the old man's life, but Brandano got his heritage. It is all in the mighty treasury over which methinks I keep no unfaithful watch."

His further ravings were interrupted by the creaking of the door of his prison

chamber, and a stealthy footfall, which the wretched man too readily recognised, caused a recurrence of those hideous throes which menaced momentary suffocation. This fresh access passed away in a convulsion and a deluge of blood, like the former, and left a scarcely less terrible calm.

“Is the knife at last ready for the old man’s throat, my well-beloved son?” he exclaimed. “Thou art a skilful operator, I doubt not; and wilt do the foul work tenderly. Better the sharp blade than the dull draught.”

The individual thus addressed was Zonara the apothecary. Brandano had not yet seen him; for the sight of all objects not immediately above him was prevented by his position. He now approached with great caution to the fettered limbs of his father. He heeded neither the raving nor the taunt, but bent down cautiously, to examine one by one the fastenings of the bolts. The rivets that secured them had been apparently loosened by his agonizing heavings; and

before even casting a look upon the lurid and maddening features of his captive, he most carefully tightened to the utmost of his power, screw after screw, till the whole of these solid bands were once more immovable. He then laid his finger on the lacerated wrist, and proceeded, with a grave aspect of most barbarous mockery, to inquire of his sufferings.

“How art thou, my father?” he asked. “The dark fit, I see, has been again upon thee! Ah me!” he ejaculated, whilst the ready tear dropped from his eyes. “His generous, his noble spirit has fled beyond power of recal! That imperious and manly intellect which has played with the ambition of princes, swaying their vast armies, leading them like wayward children by their caprices, is now become helpless, and reason, I fear me, is merged in incurable lunacy. How feelest thou, poor old man,” he added, modulating his voice to the gentleness of a young mother. “Dost thou yet know thy son?”

The old man laughed so wildly and horribly that the nerves of his demon son were shaken.

“Do I know thee?” he said at last. “Art thou not he whom I once nursed in my bosom?—my only child, whom I fondled upon my knees; whose slumbers I have hung over till tears shamed my stubborn and fierce nature? Art thou not the frail, weak infant whom a breath might have annihilated, grown into a comely, a noble and dutiful youth! Surely I know thee, my beloved.”

“He raves, he raves!” muttered the son; and his tears still flowed, like the venom of a serpent, down on to the cheeks of his parent. He then proceeded to draw from his vest a glittering lancet; he passed his finger over its edge, and then peered down into the glaring and protruded eye-balls that were intently watching him.

“Out upon thee, demon!” roared the enraged, yet helpless captive, with a voice that stunned the delicate organs of the sickly apothecary, and made every bone in his

diminutive body vibrate. "Thinkest thou to slit a throat like mine with that sickly instrument? The muscles of this old body have blunted the blades of the brigands of De Bourbon, and this old throat was proof against the halters of that worse tyrant, Filibert of Orange."

"I mean not to harm thee, my father," said the hopeful son. "This instrument is no butcher's weapon. Thy own blood would soon destroy thee, were it not for the help this lancet will afford thee."

The thin bright blade was plunged into the swelling vein of the arm, and the blood leaped up into the very face of Zonara. It was left to flow until sickness glazed the eye of the old man, and the puncture was then lightly bandaged.

"Beats not thy heart more freely now, my father?" he asked.

"Surely, surely," answered his parent, faintly. "The stream that feeds it has become gentle, and lamb-like, and loving in its current. Hark, my son," he continued;

“ this strife cannot last much longer, for I am old, and must be well nigh spent. Bend thee down to my lips, for my voice grows feeble, and I have a secret for thy sole hearing. It is one I have guarded jealously until now, and which I had sworn only to part with when life was leaving me. Thou art all of kith or kin I leave behind me, and I have toiled hard to bequeath to thee something better worth than an old sinner’s blessing. Bend over me, Zonara; I must whisper gently, or the corpse of thy shop-boy may hear my secret—he had long, sharp ears for the jingle of thy gold. Oh, the heaps of glowing gold that I must leave behind me! I have caverns of piled-up treasure. There are gems amongst them that have sparkled round the necks of the Roman matrons; inheritances of two thousand years, heirlooms from Crassus and Lucullus. I have golden vases that have glowed on the shrines of the apostles. I have gold that was Constantine’s; pearls fished up from the Cydnus, that were the gift

of Mark Antony. I have gold crosiers from the catacombs, and no mean diggings from the palace of Nero. I have earthed treasures, compared with which thy miserable gleanings are but as thy pigmy limbs to mine. Oh! it was, indeed, a glorious destiny to follow in the traces of Louis de Bourbon. Alas! alas! memory weakens—my voice is going. Bend thee nearer, or my secret, my secret—”

The voice died away in a fluttering of the choked breathing; the lips feebly moved; and the son, the rightful inheritor of a father's earnings, bent down to catch the last feeble accents of a spirit on the wing. The dying man seemed scarcely aware of his movement. Oh! it was well acted! He turned his head uneasily; the cheek of Zonara was against his lip. Both faces were too near for the expression of either to be seen; but over that of Brandano there passed a glare, like the deadliest flash that ever broke from the eyes of a maniac who has long acted the tame and spiritless sim-

blance of sanity, and, when cunning has outwitted wisdom, leaps up with a wild laugh, and strangles his keeper ; and before that expression changed, there rose up a shriek, startling the famished neighbour from his foul repast ; a yell of agonizing pain ; a groan so pitiful that it might have been a vibration wrung from the crashing asunder of every fibre and sinew in the human frame. The teeth of Brandano had seized their victim ; their gripe was like the closing of a red hot vice. Scream upon scream—exquisite music to the ears of Brandano—followed, and the hot breath of the tortured man passed over his very cheeks.

The world of that peopled suburb stopped their ears against those fearful sounds, as the wailings of madness, which bring bad dreams ; but the prone giant drank them in, into his very soul, more covetously than a fond mother does the first lisplings of an only child. Pain and the loss of blood soon reduced the sickly and feeble frame of

Zonara, far more than the oceans of blood that had been day after day drained from the vast body of his parent had affected that enduring frame. Sickness, giddiness, and then insensibility, came to his help; his brain spun round, and his feet no longer sustained him. One jerk of the giant's head severed the gory member on which his fangs had fastened, tearing away the flesh and hair with it; and the body of the mutilated man fell to the floor, and out of his sight.

Then again rung through that shamble chamber exulting peals of hideous laughter and mockery, in which hate and gluttoned vengeance, not insanity, had their triumph.

“ Rise up, Zonara! and let me see 'if I know thee now!’” thundered the excited Brandano. “ Fie, fie, child!” he continued; “ where should be an old man's treasures but in the love of his children? Rise up, my beloved one! Let not thy old father die without thy hand to close his eyes!”

That voice, and the withering taunts it uttered, appeared possessed of the power of a spell ; for his son rose up and again confronted him ; and a most hideous spectacle he presented. Pale, and shaking in every limb ; his clothes flooded with blood ; the gaping, palpitating, and streaming wound ; and, above all, the expression of features that might have graced the prince of fiends ; presented a strange contrast to the exulting features, the stained mouth, on which the hair and flesh were yet tangled, of the chained being that lay before him. The trembling wretch made more than one effort to speak before his voice was audible.

“ Farewell, my father,” he said, at length, with the compelled calm of a purpose irrevocable as fate. “ If your revenge has sufficed you, it is the better for you. From where you lie, methinks you can just see the top of yonder doorway. Mark it well ! It will now open to close after me, and your eyes will swim in your head, and your brain burst with madness, before it moves again.

Keep your eyes well upon it. The spirits of the damned are said to look thus upon the gates of Paradise after their last closing. You shall die; but not so quickly as, perchance, might suit one so piously prepared. You shall starve! You have hungered in the dungeons of the Prince of Orange, if I have heard aright; and, doubtless, you will think such a death merciful. If I disturb you as I lay the bricks across the door, you will bequeath your pardon as a legacy? A father's blessing and a child's love are better worth than a miser's hoard. By to-morrow's sunrise your tomb will be finished."

So deadly was their mutual hate that the son leaned over his father's face, and they both gazed silently their horrible farewells in this world. The door opened and closed upon the shadowy form of Zonara; and the laughter of his father's defiance and derision followed his steps long after he had left the house.

Such was the scene acted under the roof

of San Zanobio a few days after the famous attack upon the enemy's lines. The whole city, in the meantime, had become a prey to confusion and alarm. The citizens felt themselves betrayed, and yet none dared openly to denounce the traitor. The guards throughout the various posts had been doubled; and fresh executions were daily taking place amongst the more riotous of the rabble. The Condottieri in the city's pay had ceased any longer to tender their homage within the palace, or deign to the magistrature the ceremonial of consulting them on matters not immediately concerning their supplies, and what intercourse was necessarily carried on between them was conducted in writing; for a significant hint which Baglioni had received from the blunt speech of the Gonfaloniere was whispered about, at once as a proof of his unyielding hardness, and a sign that misunderstanding had reached its utmost extreme.

When the disastrous result of the expedition we have described had become known,

Carducci had assembled the Priori, and summoned Malatesta Baglioni into their presence. That warrior, holding in supreme contempt the burghers, in whose pay and palaces he found some consolation under the loss of his Perugian states, had over-reckoned on the patience of men goaded to despair. He had made them the subjects of a long and intricate system of bargaining; he had put them up to sale, successively, to the Pope, the Emperor, and the Prince of Orange; he had hung them when they murmured, and starved them when they fought under his robber-flag; and all had gone well with him. And now, when admitted to the presence of men smarting from the bereavement of their sons and parents, he presumed to accuse them of undue interference in matters at once beyond their office and their comprehension. The whole scheme he declared had been one of madness, and the result precisely what reasonable men expected, and such as the enterprise merited. He was for once interrupted

in his further harangue by the thundering tones of Carducci, demanding silence.

“ You are called hither, Sir,” exclaimed that dignitary, “ not to counsel, far less to rebuke ; but to account for the failure of the enterprise you undertook to conduct, and in which the only part you appear to have taken was, to turn the attack from an unprotected point, in which success was certain, to one which no one knew better than yourself to be impregnable. You have been hitherto allowed to rule in this city, in which you have no stake ; in future, as long as your stay is permitted within our walls, you will learn to obey the Republic’s magistrates, these elected Priori, and me, their Gonfaloniere.”

Malatesta prudently remained silent ; and he declared afterwards that he already fancied the dagger of that fiery old man at his throat. He was, however, somewhat to his astonishment, permitted to depart, safe in person, though shattered and befouled in his reputation. He waited few ceremonies

of congé in departing. The populace already awaited him about the entry of the palace, and but for the opportune appearance of a troop of his Corsicans, his day's perils would not have been yet past.

As he was about to mount the charger prepared for his use, the thin and ghost-like figure of Zonara glided to his side, and bent to hold the stirrup, which, with extreme bodily torture, his infirm foot was vainly attempting to seize. A signal, scarcely perceptible to the narrowest observer, sufficed to direct the steps of that familiar spirit to his head-quarters. A prompt movement of the cavalry scattered, with unceremonious speed, the scowling populace; and the proud soldier, cursed and cursing, passed on, at a pace better suited to his infirmities than his impatience, to his home.

The apothecary had passed his threshold before him, and was already in humble attendance in his ante-room, when, groaning with pain, he was borne in men's arms to his bed-chamber. Zonara was then summoned.

No sooner were they alone—the traitor and the parricide—than the rage of the insulted hireling, smothered till then, broke out in alarming vehemence of voice and gesture, and with it, as usual, came one of those paroxysms of racking torture with which his disease avenged the city's wrongs.

His attendant gazed upon his sufferings with calm curiosity of aspect. What were the shootings of aching joints to what he had himself, within the last few hours, suffered and inflicted. The rage of Malatesta, who needed not comparison to estimate his own feelings, fell in a storm of maledictions upon the pale, unmoved brow of the apothecary, whose patience was as proof against hard words as it had been against compassion.

“Go,” exclaimed the Perugian, when his passion had in some degree exhausted itself; “go speedily to the Prince of Orange, and bid him choose his own hour to assault this accursed city. The cannon on every battery

round the walls shall be turned upon the vile herd within. Let him slaughter them to the last man. Hark!" he said, as the obsequious emissary was about to leave his presence; "tell him furthermore, that the outcry is now for Ferrucci. Messengers have been sent to summon that mighty warrior with all haste. Let the Prince meet him on his road. I will keep these sapient citizens within their cage. He need have no fear for his own trenches."

The outcry was indeed for Ferrucci; an impatient clamour to have amongst them the only leader whom men could trust. It was not the impatience of panic, but the result of the mustering of all energies for a last and desperate effort; one that should redeem their city, or give it up a depopulated wilderness.

Courier after courier had been despatched, with the most pressing orders, for the instant return of the hero of Volterra to the capital. The streets swarmed with

murmurers ; and hourly scenes of tumult, and contests with the soldiery, began to crimson the pavements of the city.

To add to the general confusion, the period had arrived for the election of a new Gonfaloniere and a new magistrature. Carducci, to the astonishment of the whole city, had abandoned all contest for his re-election, and, indeed, wholly disappeared from the council chamber.

Nothing could well exceed the universal excitement. Colonna, who might have availed to maintain some semblance of order, was laid up by the effects of his wound ; and his men-at-arms had become more than ever unpopular, by the stern performance of their duties as guardians of the city. With them, more frequently than with the Perugians or Corsicans of Baglioni, were those ill-fated encounters ; for the absence of Colonna was to his highly disciplined forces a holiday of arrogance, licentiousness, and tyranny.

The Convent of Santa Lucia, after the

night attack made upon its sanctuary, became the central spot about which all the most turbulent spirits of the populace assembled. An attempt had been made, with the connivance, it was asserted, of Baglioni, to spirit away the niece of the Pontiff; it was said that her escape was to be the signal for the sack of their city by the united soldiery of all hosts, both within and without the town; and there arose a general and tumultuous clamour for the delivery of that young maiden to the mercies of the mob; and when the armed warriors of the Colonna appeared to protect her residence, many voices were heard calling out to storm and burn the whole hive of unoffending females to the ground.

A charge from a numerous squadron of lances succeeded in clearing the immediate neighbourhood of the rabble; but the sound of their angry voices was long audible through the inmost chambers of that abode of trembling sisters.

Headless of the imprecations of the mob,

and the trampling of the horse that were piquetted within the courts of the convent, Eugenia Capponi remained musing mournfully over her own sorrows, and the succession of stunning events that had been crowded into so short a space of time, and which had so rudely broken into the calm though melancholy routine of her late existence. Luisa Strozzi had, early on the morning succeeding the attack on the convent, hastened to implore her friend to share the security of her home; but she perceived that there was evidently somewhat of mystery connected with the subject of that midnight alarm. The cheerfulness which her former visit had partly restored was again fled; she appeared bewildered by the conjectures which her danger had excited; and all that the repeated entreaties of her friend could elicit was, that her determination was fixed to remain where *his* advice had placed her. She would trust her conduct to his guidance; she had full reliance on his honour; that life had no alternative and her career possibly

a duration which but few more ills of any sort could trouble.

Though very imperfectly comprehending the train of thoughts which occupied her mind, Luisa Strozzi was not to be repulsed ; and later in the day, when Ficino had been enabled to procure admittance to her presence, and when, during an interview with that frank and pure-minded student, who spoke without reserve before her on a subject whose delicacy he did not seem wholly to appreciate, all that was yet but imperfectly known to her was explained, she perceived, by the excitement produced in her friend, and the flutter of her heart, that some crisis in her hopes had taken place, and that some singular error had been removed from her mind.

Ficino was more than usually agitated ; and whilst he spoke, the piteous vision of which he had been a spectator was still floating before his eyes, causing him in his abstraction to mingle the incoherences of compassionate ejaculation with the recital

of the earlier events of the night in which he had been an actor. There was no need of cross-questioning or indirect inquiry to arrive at the possession of all the information he could give; and Eugenia was overwhelmed with confusion at the remembrance of her credulity on a subject which, whilst it had been a snare to her maidenly discretion, implied also a doubt of the uprightness of him on whom every hope and thought in life now centered. Francesco, she was informed, had been slightly injured, and had quitted Florence for the camp of Ferrucci at Volterra. The only point of his narration about which the gentle student endeavoured to spread a veil of mystery was the disguise of Teresa; but as his sad story proceeded, all reserve was forgotten, and the plain and melancholy truth was all told.

“The city is doomed, lady,” he said, sorrowfully; “youth and beauty may linger yet for a brief while amongst us; but the strength of our warriors, and the cunning of

our statesmen, which should be their safeguard, are departed from us. I bore the sad story to the old man her father; and my words, though, God knows, chosen with all gentleness, turned the stern and cruel intriguer into a drivelling and weeping dotard. He offered me wealth to give back intellect; he threw himself at my knees; he would have kissed my feet to shew him his child. He then, as his mood changed, called me her murderer, and would have strangled me. After awhile, he asked me more calmly for Francesco; and when I told him that he was already gone, he waved me from him, and folded his arms in mute despair."

"And have you left that beautiful and afflicted child with the reptile whose villany has done this deed?" asked Eugenia. "If you will, dearest Luisa, give her an asylum in the home you offered me, we will all share it. Oh, Ficino, a woman's love, a woman's care, may yet avail her. Lead us to her desolate couch. *He* loved her better than life—better than aught else; he has before

now nursed her under an affliction like this ; and our care till he returns may yet save her for that gentle tendance which the heart's malady cannot ultimately resist."

"Lady," exclaimed the youth, " a new soul must be breathed into that beautiful form, before intellect will ever again revisit it. I know not whether this be possible ; the probability is, that it may be ; but if otherwise, death will be a better friend than life. It were better to see her loveliness laid where no demons may molest it, than to see her as I even now do. It was a truly piteous and terrible spectacle. And yet, before many more days, raving madness may be better than the fate of all that are lovely, and gentle, and chaste, within this city. The nights of Rome are already casting their shadows over Florence."

He paused for a minute or two in deep thought ;—tears came into his eyes, and their melancholy gaze was fixed in singular wildness upon the modest, sweet countenance of Luisa Strozzi.

“You, too, fair lady,” he exclaimed, abruptly, “have long hair and a taper waist; your eyes are beaming, and bright, and beautiful. The philosophers of the Orti Rucellai, who honoured loveliness, have spoken of your form as that fittest for a living shrine of truth. What shall be your fate when the robbers of Christian shrines, and the murderers of children, and the scoffers of all that makes human life respectable, are amongst us? There are worse ills than madness; and oh! how far more merciful is death, and its dwelling in the bosom of earth our mother, than the air that is poisoned, and the sky that is darkened, by man’s dishonour!”

## CHAPTER VI.

FICINO, though he knew that the price of his blood had been paid, that he was a marked man, and that spies tracked his wayward goings and comings, yet continued to wander about the city, like an unquiet spirit in search for something that he had lost. He had been reared to a contemplative and retired life ; immersed from early boyhood in abstruse metaphysical speculations, —in all classical, yet melancholy reveries. The eloquent assemblies of the gardens of the Rucellai had done much to sober the effect of the whimsical theories of his over-learned father ; but they had at the same time

directed his energies to a more exciting and sadder study ; namely, to the stormy policy fittest for the expulsion of a tyrannical dynasty, and the extent to which individuals might, under circumstances of emergency, constitute themselves their country's avengers.

The effect of this mingling of the dearest interests of actual and every-day life with the unreal and dreamy phantasies of his earlier studies, of the characters and persons who scrambled for the power of life and death in his native city, with the classical phantoms of ages long past away, was to convert a simple-minded and unaffected student into as whimsical on original as exists in a century. He had from infancy leaned so much upon the learning of others, and associated with sages who had long taught the philosophy on which, as on the sun of human perfectibility, his mental vision was fixed, that when their support failed him, he found his steps vacillating and feeble. One by one, the props of his reliance had been removed,

and he clung with more tenacity to those that remained.

But when Niccolo Macchiavelli, the last and greatest of the glorious band who laboured to revive the spirit of defunct learning amongst his fellow-citizens, was removed, it seemed to him as if all patriotism, all dignity, had been thrown to the earth with that fallen column. Unable any longer to fix his mind upon the insoluble mysteries which from boyhood had been his study, he roamed about the haunts of other days, without resources, yet heedless of all things in which his fellow-men found interest. Keenly sensitive, nay, chivalrous, in his sympathies, his mind turned instinctively to those impulses which the domestic miseries of so many of his friends were so well calculated to excite.

Ficino had no ties of blood to limit his charities, nor any inducement stronger than benevolence to direct his services. In better days, and before the perilous state of parties had made his grateful memories of his

father's protectors a subject of danger to him, and caused the timorous and time-serving to shun him, his singular exemption from the bonds of female beauty had been the subject of much mirthful diversion to his companions, and the name of Plato, the household deity of his father, had been bestowed upon him as a jest.

But notwithstanding this title,—rarely popular with the fairer portion of the creation,—it was observed, with no small jealousy, that to the chambers of the loveliest of the ladies of his native city none was ever more welcome than this unpretending student; and there was no one who would have been more willingly chosen in the hour of extremity as a champion or a confidant. He was often abstracted and eccentric; yet were the musings of his elegant and ornate mind ever gentle, upright, and chaste. His ideas of beauty were abstract and highly critical; a flower, a bust, the pensive features of a young maiden, all animate or inanimate things,—could he have been ever

brought to allow the existence of the latter, — were equally in turn the object of his study, and of his honest and enthusiastic eulogy.

As long as his admiration was confined to objects without the range of sentient creation, the poetry of Ficino's conceptions was listened to with delight ; but it as often happened that a snowy cheek, bright eyes, or a round and polished forehead, was the subject of his enraptured gaze, and of his sudden burst of eloquent and warm praise. Yet dangerous and invidious as such themes usually are, it could not be said of Ficino that he had ever wounded with a word, or made an enemy of the most virtuous.

The companions of his studies, the rivals of his scholastic fame, speedily fled away from him when his indiscriminating candour made association with him dangerous ; but of the fairer portion of his friends and patrons, none failed him in the time of his disgrace ; none met him with an altered brow or a colder look because he had made enemies.

Ficino's possessions in the world, it was conjectured, without much deviation from fact consisted mainly in the garments that clothed him, a few books, and the precious manuscripts of defunct scholars. None knew either where or how he procured his living; and none could have conjectured how very simple were his wants. When the city abounded, his sustenance had consisted of a few herbs, a crust, and a draught of spring-water; such fare as the least fertile of his native hills afforded without toil would have sufficed him. If his cheek grew paler and hollower when the whole city murmured for food, it may be conjectured to what pittance he entrusted his daily sustenance.

Ficino had hitherto wandered at will through the peopled streets, and no one had interfered with his freedom; but as men's minds grew ferocious with daily suffering, it became painfully evident that there was a craving everywhere for an object on which to pour out their accumulated savageness,

and that Ficino was likeliest, from the freedom of his discourse, to be that victim, was manifest to all who loved him ; and his warnings were, in consequence, numerous and urgent, and from no one more so than from Luisa Strozzi, who mingled more in the world, and knew intimately the dispositions of those in whose hands was his fate. Yet no persuasions had the power to prevent his imprudent roamings, and his more imprudent eloquence.

Ficino was now off on another exploit, and his steps were bent rapidly towards the dwelling in which he had last seen the ill-fated Teresa. Several days had elapsed since then ; and though he felt that, having conveyed the story of that melancholy event to the maiden's father, he had done all which lay within his power to succour her, and though he felt sure that she had been left no longer under that roof than was necessary for darkness to come again over the earth and veil her removal, he yet felt an inward yearning once more to visit that

melancholy scene; and such an impulse Ficino never resisted.

With no very settled purpose, he accordingly hurried towards the tenement of San Zanobio. The very streets seemed novel to him. The blood of Ludovico Macchiavelli, staining the doorstep against which he had leaned, and bled away his life, was the first object which convinced him of their sad identity. The door of the apothecary's dwelling was still where it used to be; but the neighbours looked upon him as he entered it as upon one fool-hardily venturing into a haunted dwelling. Their manner conveyed to his mind an indefinite notion of something about himself of strange or novel; yet he entered the abode, as he had approached it, without self-reproach.

His steps were naturally turned towards the door leading to the inner chambers of the dwelling. It was securely fastened; but, without much regard to the sanctity of the mediciner's domesticity, he threw himself against it, as he had done before, and with

similar success. He leaped up the stairs without further thought; but where, if his remembrance served him, there had been formerly a door leading to other chambers, there now rose up a blank wall, undistinguishable from the solid building about him.

Utterly bewildered, Ficino paused to conjecture whether his recollection or his senses deceived him. He returned once more into the room below. There was the same shew of labeled phials, the same museum of nameless curiosities, above all, the same San Zanobio; all, but the dead man, his staring eyeballs and stiffened hair, were precisely as he had before found it.

He returned to the stairs; again ascended them; and there was the solid white wall denying further progress. He then shouted to the owner of this singular tenement; his voice was beaten back by the impenetrable masonry; no one answered him. He called again and again to as little purpose; and was at length about to give up his search,

when a sound, like the groan of an expiring man, fell faintly upon his ear.

Utterly at a loss to conjecture whence it proceeded, he once more called out for a reply. This time he was heard and answered, though in tones so faint and broken as to be scarcely audible.

“ I am here—dying—starving,” said the voice. “ There is no entry where you appear to be ; descend into the chamber below ; press your heel against the flooring where the oil drops, beneath the image. There is another way, but that is the more direct.”

Ficino staid for no further instructions ; he sprung down the stairs at a bound, and after vainly stamping on the shining floor, at last perceived a spot, like the stain of a drop of oil ; he pressed it, and in an instant found himself precipitated headlong into total darkness, he knew not whither.

Stupified with the suddenness of his transit, and somewhat bruised with the rude contact of unseen projections, he remained as unconscious of the locality in which he

found himself, as of the manner in which he was likely to afford aid to the immured in a chamber above him. He groped about, vainly seeking for some means to ascend to the higher stories of the house.

Gradually, as his vision became accustomed to the obscurity, he perceived a feeble glimmer of distant daylight penetrating through one of those small apertures that are usually left in the solid foundations, to admit air, and this sufficed to shew him the secrets of the spot into which he had entered so incautiously.

His first impulse was to seek for the doorway or entry by which he had arrived ; but none was visible ; it had evidently closed behind him as suddenly as it had opened. He then turned his search to the exploring of what other mode of sortie there might exist. He was in a small, low vaulted chamber of rude brickwork ; a low door sprung out from the foot of one of the terminating arches ; but it appeared to

conduct rather downwards than upwards. Thither, however, he went.

The door was fast closed, in all probability by means as invisible and as ingenious as the first he had passed ; but he had already familiarized himself with an unceremonious method of proceeding with the closed doors of that mysterious dwelling ; he drove his heel against it, as he had been instructed to do above, and the door flew open.

The sight that now greeted him surpassed all the marvels of that incomprehensible dwelling. He appeared to be in a very treasure-house ; chests of gold, half the sacking of Rome, might have cumbered the floor. The first few steps to the ascent he was in search of were coffers of the precious metal ; his feet trod upon the abounding treasure. Before a few projecting handles of wood enabled him to gain the summit of the vault, his head struck against the ceiling, and a bolt lay across his line of sight ; this was slipped, and the board above him raised,

and the rest of his wanderings were in open daylight. He was in the anteroom of the long-sought chamber.

The scene that now met his astonished sight, the reader has already witnessed. The wretched prisoner lay, nearly exhausted with his wounds, and his long famine, and his far more horrible anticipations of what remained.

“Burst these accursed bolts, stranger !” exclaimed the unconquered Brandano ; “they have fettered my limbs till their feel is like a red hot saw. In some of those cabinets you will find the axes that fashioned this goodly couch ; split up the planks, for the iron is beyond the power of human limbs to move or wrench.”

The unfortunate man conjectured truly. The same instruments which had shaped the framework of that solid platform were found ; and Ficino did as he was bid, and hewed the whole wood-work into splinters before the iron bands would loosen their hold.

What feelings passed through the bosom

of the wretched prisoner during the process of his unexpected liberation no pen could accurately picture. Ficino, when the last gyves had dropped from the shivered wood-work, raised him up, and a thousand rack-ing pains flew, like a living and cutting fluid, through every joint of his stiffened limbs. Every bone in his back seemed cracking and snapping asunder; his knees and shoulder-blades felt as if some external force were wrenching them from the trunk.

Ficino chafed him with his garments, and then sought for the means to cover him; for hitherto he had been stretched out in un pitying and imposing nudity. In the ante-chamber, which the old man had at times used for his capricious domicile, were found the whimsical disguises which the nature of his various occupations required.

Ficino was astonished when the half-famished old man, from whose veins pools of blood had flowed, till the flooring about his bed was covered with a thick coating of its indurated glue, rose up and proceeded

to throw his monk's garments over his gaunt limbs, with as much ease as one rising refreshed from slumber. He little knew the powers and the passions of that singular being.

“And now for my choice son !” exclaimed the old man, as he beheld himself once again erect and free. “Go hence and get me bread, good youth ; bread and a draught of water. I have not forgotten that the city is starving ; but all is to be got for gold. I have kept vigil, and fought well with hunger ; but this good life must be treasured beyond price for a little while longer. You shall have your reward, young man. Take from the heaps below the price of a beggar's ransom, and add to it the city's reward for the capture of a parricide, and you are but paid a hangman's bargain. We will reckon better as time helps us.”

Food was procured ; for it *was* to be had for gold ; and Ficino was much struck by the compelled temperance of one who had starved so long.

“Can I help you in aught else?” asked the student. “My blood grows cold as I linger within these hated walls. Have you any friend or children that I can send to you?”

“I have a son,” replied the old man; “but his whereabouts is like the flash of an exhalation, or the wit of a lunatic. But if you will bear a simple line to Malatesta Baglioni, you may serve me better.”

“I would as soon bear thy missive to Satan,” answered Ficino, quickly.

“Then fare thee well; I shall have time for that also,” said Brandano. “One word more, young man, before you leave my dwelling. You know its secrets, which no living creature but yourself knows. It may chance that Brandano be again outwitted; in which case, he makes you his heir. The hoardings of a whole life are the fittest price for a life’s ransom.”

“Fare you well,” replied the youth. “Your most odious dwelling and its caverned secrets shall be spurned from all place in my memory, as soon as I shall have passed

forth of its threshold. The smallest coin of these useless heaps would purchase sustenance for more years than I have days to live !”

Ficino was conducted through the same dark ways through which he had made his entry, but, to his surprise, quitted the vaults by a different exit ; and after treading a long passage, whose damp and fetid air nearly made his brain reel with sickness, he found that he was actually wandering amongst rows of corpses ; some were deposited with the decencies of human sepulture, with the costume of the grave about their limbs, and with some emblem of the hope in which they died ; but by far the greater part of those mortal ruins were lying in confused heaps, as haste, disgust, or indifference had strewed them. These were apparently the corpses of those who had omitted to lay by money ; and the covering which charity to the sensibilities of the living had lent to envelope them on their last short journey hitherwards, had been withdrawn by the thrift of the pious

confraternity, which reserved its loan for those who were to come after.

There was light enough, which found its way into the vaults from various grated apertures, to shew this wanderer amongst the dead the pathway to the regions of upper air ; and the student was surprised to observe the distant glimmer of a lanthorn, borne in the hand of a man who was cautiously descending from a ladder into the vaults.

He stepped aside behind one of the vast square columns which supported the roof above him, and waited till the individual should pass him by. When the last step of the ladder was descended, the new comer called out to one above him, and presently a cord was thrown to him, the orifice of the vault was darkened, and a tray, marked in various places with white crosses, was let to slide briskly down to his feet ; the burden it had brought was taken from it, and it ascended for a second.

These journeys were continued till the last traveller had reached his home, and

then a shower of faded nosegays followed him ; the voice from above again spoke, and Ficino heard over head the sound of his retreating footsteps. The last companion of these settlers in a new land now took up the lanthorn, and the light fell full upon his features. They were those of an old man, of a venerable, nay, lofty aspect. Ficino started when he saw them ; he pressed his hand to his forehead, and drops of intense agony rolled down over his cheeks, which were tinted with a blush of insupportable shame.

“ And all this to maintain a few days of life ! ” murmured the old man. “ Would that my existence alone were to be cared for ! A life of singular vicissitudes would finish not inaptly by my burying myself. But *he* must live. I nursed him in his childhood, I instructed him through life, and I have had my reward in a rare and sweet affection. And we may both live through these times, after all. And now

for my day's labour, and my honest perquisites."

Thus communing with affections glowing with the fervour of youth, and the warmest charities of a heart long tried in friendship, the old man set about his occupation. He more than once passed by the resting-place of Ficino, before that young man had the power to take his glance from his labours. He moved at last, ascended the ladder, and emerged from the circular aperture through which the bodies descended, and found himself in one of the aisles of an empty church.

Brandano, when he had lost sight of the retreating figure of his liberator, mounted the stairs once more to the chamber of his captivity; but he tarried there only long enough to tear open the flooring beneath his couch, and lay bare the secret of his son's treasures. He then bore away, to the very minutest coin, the gold which had cost him so dearly. It was tumbled into the

heaps which formed his own treasury: he then turned his back upon his house, and before dusk was several miles distant from the city.

## CHAPTER VII.

THE city of Florence had now been in a state of siege for nearly eleven months, and its walls were as sound as when the armies of the enemy first encamped about them. Treachery had toiled, hitherto unsuccessfully, against the liberties of this indomitable people. The leaders who had been honoured and enriched by their munificence, plotted with the Prince of Orange and the Pope, and betrayed to the force without the walls the earliest knowledge of all military movements; thus digging pits for those whom they had helped to blindfold. Famine had swept away its tens for the units sacrificed to the

batteries, and no cry had as yet escaped, even from the blue lips of hunger itself, for compromise or surrender. On the contrary, those who had been the warmest advocates for conciliation before matters had come to this pass, were now the loudest clamourers for resistance to the death.

Public passions had become ferocious and ungovernable; and to have breathed an aspiration for other days, soon became cause sufficient for an ignominious punishment. Gibbets were erected in the great square of the Palace of the Priori, and, latterly, each day had fed them with victims chosen from the minor ranks of discovered traitors. To the honour of their country, this supply was soon exhausted, and then, alas! men began to clamour for the blood of those whose incautious opinions had been stored up by their enemies for that fatal hour.

Foremost on the list of this proscription stood the name of as virtuous and patriotic a citizen as breathed in Florence. It was that of Niccolo Ficino. The fact was not

concealed from him. He was again and again urged to fly from the sentence which, when once passed, would be irrevocable ; and the last act of Carducci's power was to name him as emissary to Volterra, and to place at his disposal the means of flight. That wretched father, even in the extremity of his domestic miseries, gave a thought to the calm and meek student who had borne him the first tidings of his affliction, and sent to give him notice that in a few days more the new magistrature would be elected, and that their first act would be his arrest on an accusation which the excited minds of the populace would visit with death.

It was all in vain ; there was a fatality in all that he said or did. Ficino refused to quit the city ; he sent the assurance of his gratitude to Carducci, and that afflicted man from that hour forgot him. Ficino saw the guard of honour that escorted the broken-hearted old man from his chair of office to the retirement of his private palace ; he was even in the crowd when the new Gonfa-

loniere and his colleagues were proclaimed before the Palace of the Priori ; and from the scene of that pageant he went his way to his various pursuits, as unconcernedly as if no danger threatened him.

A most gloomy fortnight now passed over the city in its extremity. Tidings had reached the palace from Ferrucci. In reply to the last summons of the expiring magistrature to return at once to Florence, that patriotic citizen had declared his unwillingness to abandon his present advantages for the purpose of cooping up a few thousand men the more in a famished city, where they could be of no benefit to the state, and would ill agree with the hired troops who were there already. He pictured, vividly as truth, the high state of discipline, the undaunted bravery, of the Bande Nere ; they had conquered, he said, in battle, hand to hand, the hitherto invincible legions of the Spanish infantry ; they had, without ammunition, defended a fortress whose walls were breached ; they had pursued a greatly

superior force into the open country, had captured tents, artillery, and magazines, and swept one of the most experienced generals of the Emperor from before them. He concluded by presenting again to their consideration the glorious campaign which had been so inexplicably counter-ordered, and he pledged life and reputation that within a brief month he would send them peace, based on terms of their own dictation, from the Vatican.

Glowing as was this spirited picture, tempting as was the prize thus confidently promised, and flattering alike to the pride and the revenge of his native city, yet the spectacle of a starving people, treacherous condottiere, and ill-disposed soldiery, were too startling realities for a people utterly exhausted to continue under, whilst a victorious general undertook an enterprise so daring that the most unfettered empire might have paused to ponder on it.

In this state of most ruinous uncertainty matters remained until the new magistrature

was chosen. Their first act was to dispatch fresh orders to Ferrucci, to hasten with all speed, and with every soldier he could muster, back to Florence. This summons, which they knew to be most unpalatable, was accompanied with extravagant eulogies on his past conduct, with adulation, and even the humblest entreaties ; and, above all, with an appointment, intended to soothe his wounded ambition, by which was vested in his person an authority of a nature more extended and irresponsible than had ever yet been conferred on any citizen before him.

It were vain to endeavour to describe the disgust with which Ferrucci received these first dispatches from the new governors of the city. This was no secret to the timid counsellors who recalled him ; but the news came at last, that Ferrucci had put his troops in motion, and the whole city became a theatre of most extravagant joy.

The transition to extremes under great excitement is proverbial, and nothing was

now heard but notes of triumph on their approaching delivery ; and it must be confessed that the early measures taken by Ferrucci were of a character to encourage their wildest dreams ; for in collecting his forces for this last venture, he utterly scouted the proposition of abandoning Volterra. It had long been his stronghold ; he had captured it by his own prowess ; he had shed his blood to defend it ; it was connected with the most glorious pages of his fame ; and it shrewdly enough occurred to him that a small garrison, occupying so important a fortress, might be lure sufficient to tempt Maramaldo to strike another blow for his lost honour, and thus rid his route of no insignificant opponent.

The morning destined for his departure dawned gloomily over the city he was about to quit. He made the tour of the walls in person ; and when he turned his horse's head towards his journey, men noticed, ominously, how bitter was the struggle of disappointment, pride, and duty. The order

to march he refused to give as emanating from his own consent, but read the command, which he considered fatal, from the written dispatches of the Priori.

The early days of Ferrucci's progress might be copied word for word from the historians of his time. In three marches, by Vada Rosignano and Livorno, he arrived at Pisa, at the head of a force small indeed in numbers,—for they amounted on the whole but to fifteen hundred foot and a handful of horse,—yet respected throughout by Maramaldo, who followed him with a force far more numerous.

But the doom of Florence was against him from the first hour that he prepared to approach it. The wound he had received on the walls of Volterra became daily worse ; fever succeeded ; and when he reached Pisa he was utterly incapacitated to proceed.

Here he was delayed thirteen days, during which the measure of the miseries of his native city was complete: from the pinnacle of their exultation the besieged were plunged

again to the abyss of despondency. The tale told in Florence, and it was not exaggerated, was, that Ferrucci lay in hourly danger of death; delirious, and with no prospect, even if he recovered, of being able to accompany, far less to lead, the troops on whom all their hopes depended; and that in the meantime detachments from the multitudinous forces around their city were forming on all sides of the line of march between him and them, prepared, in case of his moving, to act in unity, and utterly overwhelm him.

All evil passions which had partially subsided were again roused with tenfold acerbity, and fresh tumults, fresh executions, hourly ensued. The numberless warnings which Ficino had received had not yet prevailed on him to quit the open streets, or the assemblies where these mournful excesses were perpetrated: yet those who knew him best and saw him oftenest began to perceive a change in his spirits, which was readily attributed to the

daily dread of a fate which he appeared to want the energy to fly from.

“ Why should I fly ? ” he would ask—“ or whither ? I have done no crime against the State ; and if my country reject me, of whom should I claim shelter ? My father’s bones have been laid amongst this afflicted people, and so, with Heaven’s permission, shall mine be.” If observers were in error as to the cause of his altered spirits, they were not so as to the fact. A change far greater than met the eye had come over him. The idea of having become an object of universal hatred to his species, was to this gentle philanthropist a source of insupportable anguish. He became more than usually restless, abstracted, and moody. Gloomy phantoms, which fled from him as soon as he turned to grapple with them and question them, haunted his brief slumbers and his daily roamings. It was not the fear of death, nor of the world beyond the grave, that caused him that maddening disquiet. His conscience offered itself proudly to his

investigation ; he found in it neither spot nor subterfuge. The visions, hideous as they were, were utterly intangible and incomprehensible.

The last interview he was known to have sought was with Luisa Strozzi. The gentleness and warmth of that young maiden's character ; her accomplishments, unrivalled by any of the ladies of her age and city ; and above all, the rare loveliness of her person, of which in his happier days he had, in his privileged and frank manner, proclaimed himself a worshipper ; had rendered her presence to him as that of a spirit from that glorious world of classic phantoms in which his thoughts most frequently wandered. His last look and his last words never passed away from the memory of that gentle creature, whose misfortunes in after-life far exceeded his.

“ I am come, lady,” he said, “ to bid you a last farewell ! and were it not that the beautiful and holy are rarely blessed in this world, I would predict for you long years of

happiness. When the calumnious tell you that Ficino met his death like a guilty coward, believe them not ! I declare before my Maker that I am innocent of offence in deed or thought against my fellowmen. I murmured when they persecuted me, not because I feared death, but because I loved all who breathed the same air, trod upon the same verdant and bright earth that I did. I loved intellect in all its forms ; I loved beauty of cheek and brow and shape, as its fittest tenement. I loved the perfection of both, lady, in you. You have ever been gentle and patient with the despised student ; and you have his last blessing."

He bent and kissed her hand, and tears fell upon it as he once more raised his head, and waved his farewell.

From the lordly palace of the Strozzi, towards dusk, Ficino turned to seek his own home. A part of the way that conducted towards it the reader in an earlier chapter accompanied him. It lay not now through the same dark and sinuous lanes ; he sought

rather the more open streets, as though he had a farewell for them also; and their route conducted him shortly to the open piazza of the Palace of the Priori. Hosts of bright stars were lighting up the cloudless heavens, and their radiance sufficed to render partially visible the objects he paused from time to time to contemplate. More gloomily than he had ever before thought them, rose up the tall spire of the palace, and the heavy battlemented parapets which crowned its summits.

The banner of the Republic drooped without movement across the sentinelled doorway, and Ficino paused to read that singular inscription which the people in the time of Niccolo Capponi, under one of their paroxysms of frantic devotion, had caused to be sculptured above the arch under which their magistrates entered. "To Jesus of Nazareth, their king," thus run the writing, "the Senate, and the Tuscan people."

Further in, rose up an offering to Moloch; and this had no inscription, for it needed

none. A tall gibbet spread out its single arm nearly above his head, the chains rattled, and the beams creaked ; and, as the youth raised his eyes, he beheld the form of a human being swayed gently hither and thither by the night breeze.

“ Ay,” he exclaimed ; “ there is the solution of the long secret. This wandering shall not have been without its uses ! What feelest thou, deserted and cold mortal ? Does the convict’s chain, or the chain’s stigma, any longer trouble thee ? Do the ghosts of honest men shun thee because thy neck is wrenched and thy ancles bloody with this masquerade of a murderer ? Haste thee hence to thy hiding-place in the peaceful earth. Ficino is ready to succeed thee ; he will need the cord that has strangled thee ; the chains, and the pulleys, and all the apparatus of thy gory transit. Look well at him, thou coward spirit ! thou hast seen great men pass hence with throes as terrible, tortures more prolonged, than his were, or than thine will be ! And now hence ; the

old man that awaits us, that watches for us, that breaks not the scanty crust fashioned out of the flesh of corpses till we come, must have his farewell.”

Thus saying, Ficino sprung away from the gallows' foot, and traversed rapidly the gloomy square and the dusk lanes—avenues to the dwellings of fortune's least favoured children. Many of the very narrowest and foulest windings of the dark city were traced before he paused. A dim light, burning within a tenement the least inviting of the thousands about it, was the beacon to which his impatient steps were directed.

In a room of an upper story of that tenement, and keeping contemplative vigil beside that faint light, sat an old man in an attitude of deep sorrow. His eyes were fixed upon its rays, but the tears upon their lashes made the object from which they emanated a confused centre of painful and dazzling brightness. A soiled scrip and a frayed cord lay across his knees, and his lips moved, though no sound passed them.

The chamber itself might not have struck a student as one peculiarly forlorn. It is true that its walls were damp and stained, and its casement shattered ; but a very wilderness of papers strewed the floor, the solitary table, and the few shelves it contained. A bed occupied as small a space as so cumbersome a piece of furniture could do ; and over its head against the wall was a rude engraving of Marsilio Ficino, which had once decorated the frontispiece of that sage's work on the Banquet of Plato.

The step of one rapidly ascending the stairs made the aged man start upon his feet ; a smile broke over his lean, pinched features, and a bright and joyous light kindled in his dimmed eye. He took the light, and, shading it in the hollow of a hand transparent from its tenuity, moved to meet him.

“ Welcome, beloved boy,” he said ; “ welcome to the arms and heart of the old man that loves and has watched and wept for you.”

Ficino stood before him, and the arms of the aged man were folded around his neck.

“ I have been fortunate,” he said ; “ I have brought you food. Eat, eat ; for you have, I doubt not, fasted since yester-eve.”

He then took up the undainty wallet, to shake from it those morsels, the pilfered perquisites of dogs and their domestic brotherhood, on which the daily sustenance of these two friends depended.

“ It is a sad trade, child,” he murmured, “ that you have pointed out to me, and it should be a thriving one, for men die far quicker than their places can be supplied—almost as quickly as hungry men can fashion their sepulchres. The whole generation is passing away, but, my young friend, the priests, and not the sexton, eat their heritages.”

Ficino was wearied, and had seated himself whilst his friend was busied in hunting out from the corners of the sack their common repast. He smiled as he listened to the moralizing which accompanied his search.

But when the food was at last found, and the delicate affection of the old man had, by apparent accident, broken the scant provision into two most unequal portions, a deep blush first, and then the paleness of the grave, passed over his cheek, and he looked up into the features of the old man, and then, taking his hand, said—

“ Dear friend, I have eaten my last meal. I have seen thee at thy labours, and the sight will suffice for my sustenance as long as I shall need it. Have you brought water? for I thirst, and my head spins giddily. Are those buried who die when the Priori are weary of them? You shall bury me, old man, and therewith finish your famine-taught craft! You may hang up your cords and this old sack in the public piazza; they will teach their lesson!”

No smile came over the wan cheeks on which the wild and restless glance of the speaker had been fixed; but the old man rose up and passed his trembling hand over the youth's forehead. It was cold and dewy.

He smoothed the long glossy hair from off that lofty dome-like forehead, and looked anxiously into his deep clear eye. He apparently read there little that reassured him, for he took the youth's hand, and pointed to the scanty store of provisions that lay yet untouched.

“ Eat, Ficino,” he said, “ for your reason wanders. The store is scanty, but such as it is, you have ever shared it until now. If the brain veers, intellect dies, and friendship perishes, and all the sweet communities of our past lives will be forgotten. Hunger is more merciful than this. All that my utmost toil has been able to earn for both has not sufficed for the sustenance of one. I am old, and worthless, and weary of life ; the struggle is vain, and but for your sake I should long ago have given it up. Eat, eat, boy,” he continued, emptying his unsavory yet hardly acquired scraps before him. “ It was for this hour of our evening meeting, and for the talk over the memories of other days,—the facile magic with which your

voice again led me to the gardens of Careggi and the banquets of Lorenzo,—that I bore cheerfully through the day's hunger and the smell of graves. But you are ill, child," he continued, as he noticed the unsteady wandering of the bright eyes on which he gazed. "The bread tastes of the old man's blood, and thy heart turns from it."

Ficino bent down his face till the palms of his hands covered it, and his friend stood silent and nearly breathless beside him. His bosom heaved, his emotions were too powerful for restraint, and he wept. Till his trial was over, no word was spoken.

"Let us hasten," said the young student at length; "few such hours are left us. We shall meet, old man, where our joys and sorrows may be more perfect in their participation than they have been here; nay, where the very elements of our beings may be mingled, as our souls have vainly striven to be in this world."

He rose and shook the tears from his face, and drank. He then moved to seek from

amongst his papers (his only riches) some that he intended, as he said, for a legacy. The old man watched him as he was thus busied. When the youth had found the objects of his search, he folded and inscribed them, and bound them up.

“ Francesco, our friend,” he said, “ will ere long be returned. Bear him these, with Ficino’s love. He has valued them as I have done, and he will not let my memory perish. You also, my old friend, I must make over to him, together with what I most care to save from the approaching scramble. He knows the vicissitudes of thy career, and will care for thee when I am hence.”

A noise, a rush of multitudinous footsteps, sounded upon the stairs ; the door of the chamber was dashed open, and the guards of the Bargello entered.

Ficino smiled as their dark dresses and glittering weapons met his eye.

“ Your coming is not unexpected, my friends,” said the youth ; “ I have been

putting my worldly affairs in order, and nothing now remains to me but to bid farewell to this old man. We have lived together many years, sharing such opulence as you see around you ; and though you may find it a circumstance difficult of comprehension, it is yet true that we, having nothing to hope from each other, have lived in the unity of a long and untiring love, and, as we are about to part at last, I would fain embrace him."

No motion either of limb or feature betrayed in his friend consciousness of the scene that passed before his eyes. Ficino approached and embraced him; but even that failed to arouse him to any comprehension of the scene that was acting in his presence.

"It is well that it is even so," said the youth, when he beheld the temporary overthrow of his faculties. "Let us begone."

In a few minutes more he had descended those stairs, overstepped that threshold for the last time. Heavy irons and the secret

dungeons of the city prison were the termination of this last walk through the streets of his beloved city. So utterly abstracted was the calm spirit of the young man from this world and its passions, that he failed to notice the presence of a triumphant enemy: the face of Jacopo Gherardi glared on him with a smile of satanic vengeance; that thirster for his blood was the last lingerer in his cell. He watched the youth lift up his irons and smile, and the bitterest of his feelings was that of disappointment, for he felt the incompleteness of revenge. The immortal mind was not his victim.

## CHAPTER VIII.

UPON Francesco Ferrucci was now centered all of hope that remained to his country; to him let us therefore return. Bitter indeed had been his waking from the short-lived, the glorious dream of his march to Rome. In the first paroxysms of his disappointment, his maledictions fell thickly upon his country and its rulers; and he more than once seriously meditated acting upon the advice which a bold counsellor at his elbow urged with all the energy of a despairing cause, and turning his black banner towards St. Peter's. But messenger after messenger followed; honours, promises, unlimited

power, were offered him ; and, above all, the much coveted baton of supreme military command was held out to him, if he would but come and wrest it from the hands of Baglioni.

Fully aware of the importance of dispatch, whatever decision he might choose to adopt, his struggles were fierce in proportion as they were brief. We have already anticipated the measures taken by Ferrucci, and his journey to Pisa ; but the particulars of that eventful departure from Volterra have some interest.

The trumpet sounded for the muster, and the whispered rumours of the angered mood of their commander made the appearance of his veterans as warlike as it was prompt. The sable banners, the death decorations of their accoutrements, were paraded from their quarters, and met him in the square of the fortress. Ferrucci glanced mournfully and peevishly along their gallant lines, and formed them in the order in which he intended his march to commence. Every single horse, its rider, and his appointments,

were submitted to stern scrutiny. All was orderly, prompt for instant service, and as warriors should be. Presently the drums were ordered to beat a death-note; cannon roared from the battlements; and a spectacle calculated to whet the appetites of men about to be led out to carnage presented itself.

When the smoke of the guns had cleared away, a long and ponderous bar of iron, having at least a dozen pulleys and ropes, with running nooses pendent from it at short intervals, was perceived to move slowly out in a horizontal direction from the main wall of the building, and remain stationary over the centre of what appeared merely a large and heavily barricaded window.

It was sufficiently evident what was intended by this ominous apparatus. The very cords, as they waved as if impatient for their burdens, would have sufficed to proclaim the nature of this military festival; and the sequel was not long delayed. Moving slowly along the parapets of the tower, now visible,

now hidden by the battlements, the spectator beheld the well-known costume of the Spanish infantry.

Why this ignominious fate had been chosen for these gallant warriors does not appear ; in all probability it was in retaliation for cruelties perpetrated upon men in the unhappy and helpless plight in which they now were.

When they arrived above the fatal window, the eye missed them for a minute or two, whilst they descended by an interior staircase. Presently, the whole grating of iron barricade before the window swung gradually down like a drawbridge, thus forming below the horizontal bar a platform, affording sufficient standing room for the row whose places were well pointed out by the significant nooses which waved above.

All that remained was the work of a few minutes. At a signal from Ferrucci, their knell rolled out from the drums, and they were, one and all, at the same minute, swung abroad into the air. There were twelve or

fourteen of them, and they met their death like warriors. There was no murmuring, no pale faces, no trembling of the limbs as they took their places ; no extravagant gestures, either of entreaty or bravado. A dark and fierce scowl had, indeed, passed over the features of those hardy soldiers when they perceived the disgraceful death in store for them ; and some few words in their own tongue were exchanged between them.

The fierce spirit of the time received their convulsions with loud yells of savage joy ; and the rattling of their ironed limbs had ceased before the echoes of those wild shouts died away.

Ferrucci had watched the deportment with which the unhappy victims of evil times had closed their lives of cruelty and rapine ; and the sight, though it moved his respect to the individuals, added tenfold bitterness to his feelings against their leaders. Orders were given, as we have described, to march ; and band after band,

banner after banner, passed mournfully outward by the gate of San Francesco.

Ferrucci arrived, as we have stated, at Pisa, with his army unscathed, though Maramaldo had tracked their march day by day; but he himself was worn out in spirits, broken by fever, and scarcely able to retain his seat on horseback.

Then ensued that ruinous delay of near a fortnight, during which time the whole forces of his enemies, wherever scattered, had time to unite, and form their plans to intercept his march.

During the illness of Ferrucci, and the compulsory delay of the Republican force at Pisa, there were not wanting in the camp patriots and leaders with energy to turn that period to what account they might, and make preparations according to their means, to meet the struggle when it came. These men had greatly augmented the little troop with which they had entered Pisa; they had provided themselves with all arms, stores, and horses, which they judged most needful

to the besieged city, to relieve which they were marching.

The health of Ferrucci mended slowly ; yet, throughout the camp, though men looked upon delay as ruin, there was heard no sound of murmuring, far less any proposition to allow any other of their officers to raise his banner. When the first violence of the fever began to leave him, the impetuosity of his impatient spirit became his worst foe ; the daily emissaries of the state who followed each other on the same incessant errand, to urge him to put his forces into movement, nearly drove him to madness.

It was towards evening, and the gates of Pisa were about to close their posterns, and cut off all communication with the open country, when the gaunt figure of Brandano, saluting the sentry with that mixture of familiarity and protection which use had made a part of his general manner, even to men of a far more elevated sphere than that of the honest citizen whom he now ad-

dressed, presented himself for admittance, and requested to be led straight to the quarters of the youth Francesco.

The interview seemed one of deep interest; for Francesco led him after awhile to the bedside of Ferrucci; and when he was dismissed, orders were borne out for march on the morrow.

The reader may be interested to know with what resources this daring and singular leader of the forlorn-hope of Florence contemplated forcing his way through a country swarming with veteran troops, all thirsting to avenge a disgraceful defeat; and after fighting fresh battles over every mile of country, if fortune favoured him, of beating his legions of enemies from his path, of forcing his way through the circles of besiegers which, for nearly a year, had been multiplying trench after trench, battery after battery, till there was not a hill that belted in that devoted city, but was fortified for its ruin.

It was on the morning of the 29th of

July when the little army of Ferrucci passed on their desperate adventure forth of the gates of Pisa. It numbered in all three thousand infantry, commanded by Paolo de Ceri, Niccolo Masi, Carlo di Civitella, and Amico di Arsoli, names inscribed on the pillars of the temple of fame. They had gained renown in other lands, and now, in the hour of their country's need, brought their swords to serve her.

To these were joined about six hundred cavalry, and the remains of the veteran force of the Bande Nere, which Ferrucci considered his own body-guard, and whose livery and insignia of death he had never laid aside since he followed Giovanni de Medici to his soldier's grave.

Such was the handful of warriors that marched out from the city of Pisa, as confidently as if to ascend the capitol. Far other was the preparation made to intercept them. The Prince of Orange, who had known the prowess of Ferrucci of old, when he commanded the Tuscan cohorts under

the walls of Naples, and but for whom Lautrec and his sickly army had perished long before they did,—foreseeing how differently matters would assuredly go with him if the energies of Florence were directed by one abounding with expedients, incorruptible, and looked upon as the redeemer of their city, was not disposed to allow any chivalrous notions of fair fight to prevent his crushing at a blow, and by an overwhelming force, the only enemy he had to fear. He accordingly had sent orders to Fabrizio Maramaldo to allow the little army to pass unmolested to San Marcello, and that then both he and Alessandro Vitelli, each of them commanding separate bodies of men far outnumbering the whole force of Ferrucci, should advance by different routes on that place; whilst he himself in person would move thitherward from the camps before Florence, with eight thousand of his best men, to cut off all chance of escape.

In accordance with this plan, Ferrucci was permitted to reach San Marcello without

opposition. That Maramaldo was at his heels he well knew, but of the advance of Alessandro Vitelli he had no intelligence, nor could he have imagined that his own movements were so well known to the enemy before the walls of Florence, as to enable them so to time their march to meet him as to combine with the bands that followed him, and hem in him and his little band between them.

From San Marcello, Ferrucci had two routes for choice. The one led direct to the fortress of Gaviniano, offering free pathway for his cavalry, baggage, and artillery, but equally open to the enemy, with whom a battle must in all probability be fought before its walls. The second route offered a safer, but a far longer march to Scarperia ; but it was a march over mountain, rock watercourse, and precipice ; neither artillery nor baggage could have been saved. Their advance must have become a precipitate flight ; their only hope, in the speed with which they might outstrip their enemies in

the chase ; and, in case of meeting difficulties in entering Florence, their chance—thus deprived of artillery and fatigued by such a march—utterly desperate.

The reader may readily conjecture what route a spirit like Ferrucci's made instant choice of : it was decided to pass at once to Gaviniano, the trap which the Prince of Orange had so adroitly prepared for him.

When it was sufficiently clear that such was the direction of the Florentines, the forces of Maramaldo no longer followed on their traces, as they had done till now, but, taking another route, directed their march, also, with headlong speed, to the same point. Ferrucci was not yet aware that he had an enemy in front, nor any other than Maramaldo in his rear ; and yet every report of the arquebuses of his and the Sicilian's skirmishers was borne by the breeze over the corps of the Prince of Orange, who was approaching the fortress from its opposite extremity.

It was not until the forces of Ferrucci

were within a bow-shot of the village that they once more gained sight of their persevering enemy, and became aware that his endeavours were, like their own, directed towards the possession of the place. The march now became a precipitate race; and the consequence was, that both forces entered the place by different gates at the same time.

They waited for no orders, no forming, but as they met in the centre of the town, there they commenced their struggle. The independence of their country was that day to be decided; victory and freedom, or defeat and a long night of servitude and insult, must begin when that day's sun should sink in the western wave.

The numbers of those engaged were not, in the estimation of Ferrucci, of inequality to alarm him, for the Prince had not come up on one side of the town, nor Vitelli on the other. Both forces had well imbibed the personal hatred of their leaders. Ferrucci himself was amongst the first that entered Gaviniano. His immediate corps

of veterans had entered with him ; and it was at their head that he made the first attack upon his enemy.

The charge of his black warriors was one which well responded to their leader's confidence. The infantry of the Spaniards again bent before them, were rallied, and, after the first discharge of their rude guns, man met man, with sword, and pike, and halberd : no ground was yielded. The bodies of those fierce combatants fell where they received their charge.

It appeared that Ferrucci felt a relief in personal combat from all the accumulated annoyances he had long suffered under. He had himself led on the first attack. His murderous mace was whirled about him with the frenzy of a maddening fever, which his excitement soon produced.

But whilst forgetting the duties of a leader in the fierce conflict of a private soldier, the aspect of the engagement assumed a change. The giant form of Brandano, cleaving his way through the ranks

of the enemy, and strewing his path with corpses with as much seeming ease as he would have smitten reeds from that path, bore the startling intelligence to his leader, that the army of the Prince was upon them.

Ferrucci turned, disentangled himself from the *mêlée*, and rushed after the bounding strides of his grim conductor.

At the gate of the fortress, the cavalry of Ferrucci, which had been sent on to secure the passes from the country beyond, had met their coming enemy ; and thus were two minute sections of this shadow of an army engaged at the two extremities of the town.

The gallant Filibert of Orange, striking, as he was well aware, for the prize and completion of his toils, himself led on his host. He was mounted upon a bay charger ; and when Ferrucci first got sight of him, he had severed with a blow the helm and head of a horseman who had striven to arrest him. The man's hand was upon the collar of his corslet after the body was a mere trunk.

Ferrucci and Brandano both fell upon him with the same fierce impulse ; but a crush forced them instantly asunder. Brandano was on foot, and the heavy horses of the Prince's followers hurled him far away in the mêlée. The giant had been taught a lesson of little confidence in the sword as a weapon, on which he had before trusted his life, and so nearly lost it. He now swayed above his head a battle-axe, stained to the very handle with gore. Its edge was notched, but no armour could endanger it as long as the arm had the power to wield it.

Various of the immediate attendants of the Prince, who had noticed the fury of Brandano's attack upon him, singled him out, and had risked their swords against his more ponderous weapon ; yet he had hitherto escaped unharmed. At last, a knight, cased from head to heel in complete mail, urged his powerful charger against him.

The giant form of Brandano seemed scarcely more towering than that of his

opponent. Their weapons, indeed, were unmatched; blow upon blow showered upon the iron coat of Brandano, and the horse of his opponent seemed skilled to drive him beneath the very edge of the descending blade. Blood already streamed from his face and head, and his vast form staggered even when the temper of his armour resisted the blows.

The voice of his opponent reached him in a fierce curse, and Brandano even at that moment remembered his foe: it was the gambler between whom and the Prince of Orange he had so singularly interfered. The sound of those mocking yet fierce tones roused every energy of his failing strength. He sprung a few paces backwards to gain sweep for the circling of his vast weapon; the horse of his adversary was urged after him; it stumbled for a single instant over the body of a dying man, and the battle-axe of Brandano cleaved him through the skull; and before the German had had time to make an effort to support his steed, he was

himself thrown from the lifeless animal to the giant's feet ; the battle-axe gleamed above him, and the next instant, brain, and skull, and casque, were dashed into a hideous and shapeless mass.

The exulting laugh of Brandano rung loudly over the ruin, and he once more sprung into the mêlée. Ferrucci was no longer visible, but Filibert of Orange yet towered above the fray. Men were falling quickly before his arm, his war-cry rung up cheerily, his blade flashed around his head like an aureole, and the thinned and harassed handful of the cavalry of Ferrucci was borne back by a multitude, hemmed in, slaughtered, and trampled on.

The battle-axe of Brandano was now amongst them, and it was no insignificant diversion. The horses shouldered him ; the blades of their riders flashed over him, and on him. Bleeding, struggling, and slaying, he was not to be borne down. His fixed, fierce glare was upon the lordly form of the Prince of Orange, as he careered amongst

the *mêlée*, with an elation of mien fitter for the sports of the tilting-lists than for the battle-field.

The tide of strife had more than once borne them within reach, and as often whirled them again asunder. The towering form of Brandano at last attracted the notice of the Prince. He saw him beating down all opponents, and whirling his murderous weapon with appalling carnage even amongst the warriors nearest to his own person, before the suspicion of who he was flashed through his mind. A savage exclamation, as one of his fierce blows humbled to the earth some knightly crest, revealed him to the Prince.

“Traitor!” thundered out the young man, as his sword descended heavily upon his vast antagonist.

Brandano made him no reply with words; his energies were all treasured, his raging passion all concentrated, in the arm that now struck for the cancelling of all his wrongs. All who in the press and confusion

could assault him forced their heavy chargers to bear him down ; but that murderous battle-axe gleamed above helmet and plume ; it might be turned from its descent, but no weapon could arrest it, no armour on which it once fell could resist it. The huge muscular hands that grasped it were deluged with blood ; its haft was blackened with dabbled shreds of plumes ; its blade clotted with the adhesive glue of scalp and brain.

It was said that Filibert of Orange had mixed in that day's combat with a presentiment of evil ; it has since been known that his superstition had been tampered with ; that the fears expressed by his mother's letters for his safety had been made the ground-work of dreams and stories, and the interpretations of wise men.

The Prince, though apparently the last of all human beings to acknowledge the influence of such predictions, entered battle at Gaviniano with a foreboding ; and when the desperate, yet still inspiring war-cry of " Ferrucci for the Republic !" was swept

past him, he more than once strove to disengage himself from the present *mêlée*, and seek that warrior, at once a nobler and a better matched antagonist.

Brandano perceived the Prince's object ; that old man had the eye of an eagle, with the ferocity, the love of the tearing of flesh, of the foulest vulture. He breasted the Prince's struggling charger, his arm was raised, its fell blow was directed straight against the very front of his antagonist's helmet. The rein saved him, the horse swerved aside, the blow dropped wide of its mark, and before he was again in face of his foe a new antagonist had braved and met its edge.

A roar of rage and disappointment broke from the lips of Brandano, as he beheld the plume of the Prince fluttering freely above the battle, as his horse bore him safely from the peril. Scarcely had the wolf-like cry of Brandano died away, when the loud, ringing report of musketry broke upon his ear ; the tall, white plumes on which his gaze had been fixed with a feeling almost

amounting to madness, suddenly wavered, drooped, and sunk below the glittering surface on which all is pomp, brilliancy, power, and fame ; below which all is blood, agony, humiliation, death, oblivion.

There rose up a hasty cry of " The Prince ! the Prince ! " and then ensued a general lowering of plumes, and a wide opening through the hitherto serried mass.

Brandano cleft his way through the throng, and he beheld what he would at any time have given half his hoards, much as he loved them, to behold. A knot of dismounted horsemen were lifting the body of their leader from the trampled and sanguine soil ; blood was scarcely perceptible as flowing from any wound ; his limbs were for a minute slightly convulsed, and then still. Filibert of Orange was indeed dead ; like Charles de Bourbon, a stray shot from an unknown hand had laid him low.

" Let his Highness's death be concealed from the troops," said the voice of a knight who had helped to support him.

Brandano had seen and heard enough ; he now turned away with a grim smile. A century more of life would not have bought from him that moment's gratification.

The concealment of such an event was utterly impossible ; a loud cry of exultant joy from the distant strife, where the *Bande Nere* and the followers of Maramaldo were engaged, betrayed the triumph with which they received the intelligence that the foe who had for eleven months made their native city a land of famine, had at last met the fate which thousands of better men had been subjected to by his tyranny.

It was a gallant and irresistible charge which immediately followed the bruited news. The leaderless troops bent, wavered, turned, were panic-struck, and fled. They bore the tidings of their disgraceful defeat themselves to the walls of Florence. Eight thousand of the choice troops that had so long been the terror and the scourge of the encaged citizens had been

scattered by their own forces, headed by one of themselves.

It was a victory that even the defender of Volterra might be proud of; but that brave man was in the thick of a still raging battle. Whilst there was an enemy to conquer, it was no time to pick up trophies. The last fugitives had turned from the gate of Gaviniano, by which they had entered, and the survivors of that gallant troop which had thus nobly done the duty they had undertaken as desperate, turned to seek out their leader near the centre of the town, and throw the impetus, inconsiderable as it might be, of their spirited charge against columns already wavering from the panic which the tidings of the death of the Prince and the flight of his followers had occasioned.

Maramaldo had not been sparing of his person; he, like the unwearied foe whom he had more than once that day met in the thickest of the carnage, had given example

to the brave, courage to the timid. But when the tidings came that Filibert of Orange had fallen, he perceived that the day was lost. It was to no purpose to calculate on the slaughtered or the survivors of the mere handful with whom the battle had begun ; many or few, the battle-field was horrible with carnage ; and floating above the heaps of carcasses—like some foul bird of prey, whose sluggish wing so flags from incessant circling over its hideous banquet, as to flout the very faces of the dead—came, from the lips of warriors wearied with slaughtering, the bloody cry of “ Slay ! slay ! No quarter to the tyrants ! Victory to the Republic ! Ferrucci for the Marzocco ! ”

Maramaldo gave the order to sound the retreat ; and it was a joyous sound to his beaten and dispirited troops. His back was once more turned to the foe, and the remnant of his forces had already gained the gates of the fortress, when hark ! sweeping on the gale, and singularly mingling with the cries of men in their agonies, came the inspiring

sound of martial music to the attack. "It is Vitelli," exclaimed Maramaldo, in an ecstasy of fierce joy. "Turn, my men, for your revenge; they can now neither fight nor fly."

Ferrucci's first effort when he heard the craven sound to call off the beaten was, to collect into one compact body all that remained to him, both horse and foot; and though the whole of that troop, if numbered to a man, would not have exceeded a thousand, and although they presented a ghastly and pitiful spectacle in their shattered arms and bloody wounds, he himself was the first to raise the shout of victory, and there was not a voice that was mute, though the blood welled out from the mutilations of many with the exertion.

It was the proudest, the holiest, and the last cry of triumph that their country was henceforth to utter. The liberty, the glory of Florence gave up to Heaven its expiring cry, on the gory pavements of Gaviniano, whilst the banners of the Prince of Orange

and of Fabrizio Maramaldo, the most illustrious of their enemies, were trampled under their horses' heels. The spoils of two armies, each more numerous than their own, were strewing the field on which they had conquered ; but, alas ! they had themselves none left to gather them.

Ferrucci and the warriors he had led through so many perils, and had now, in the threshold of their homes covered with immortality, had achieved all that human prowess could aspire to. It were extravagant and unreasonable to expect they could do more than they had that day done. Seven thousand fresh troops were led into the little town which had been so hotly contested.

The scene that ensued was rather that of a military butchery than aught else. One charge—it was the expiring effort of the assembled remnant, and it was made with the fury of men seeking their death with glory—was made on the columns of Vitelli. Those columns opened to receive them, and

formed behind their passage. No more was seen of them than of a stone thrown into the deep sea: a large circling ripple, and then calm. The famous legion which had acquired celebrity of no common character, brilliant as it was evanescent, finished its career in that hopeless *mêlée*. The banner round which Ferrucci had assembled the few unconquerable spirits who had fought through the day by his side, was the last point about which the remnant rallied.

The last scene of that day's disaster was now hurrying to its close; the last few were hewed to the ground, the glorious banner fell over the body of its trusty guardian, and all was over; for though Francesco Ferrucci still lived, he was a prisoner; and when men prepared to drag him bound into the presence of Maramaldo, he knew that his last steps were to join the spirits of the departed brave. He had been that day many times wounded; his whole frame was racked by his late illness; he was covered with blood; his armour battered, rent, and

scarcely hanging to his yet erect and haughty figure ; and thus he was led into the presence of the meanest foe that ever disgraced the days of chivalry.

The scene that ensued even history turns from with loathing. In answer to the demon taunts of Maramaldo, his prisoner replied—

“ Use your power as you may. My chance might have been yours ; you have little cause for exultation ; I have none to fear death !”

These words were his last. Maramaldo himself chose to be his butcher. His arms were pinioned ; and whilst the victor frantically waved his sword above his head, Ferrucci neither blenched nor shrunk, nor did the lid drop over his eagle eye, whose glance watched intently the cheek of his murderer, until that sword had been plunged again and again into his body. His glorious spirit was freed from its thrall ; and the lofty form which had been its tenement was cast out as carrion, its only chance of sepulture the noisomeness of its decay.

## CHAPTER IX.

GREAT was the consternation which came over the inhabitants of Florence when the sad tidings of the termination of their hopes were made known amongst them. The news of the affair of Gaviniano, the death of Ferrucci, and the annihilation of that army which was only a few days since hesitating upon which was the wiser policy—the siege of Rome and the captivity of the Pontiff, or the liberation of their city—reached them in the natural course of events, and when tumultuous joy was at its extreme, from the rapidly-borne intelligence of the defeat and death of the Prince of Orange.

The consequence was a forthpouring of every living being into the streets and squares ; rage, amazement, despair, and shame were depicted upon the various countenances which thronged to that gloomy union. There had been hitherto a resource for all things. Public executions had diversified the dulness of a long siege ; military parade, ecclesiastical pomp, prophecies, an occasional sally from the walls ; each had in their turn diverted men's minds from the famine that burned them up, and from the death-rattle of their expiring freedom, which was beginning already to be heard. But now came the oft-repeated question, to which none responded, of—what was to be done ? The grand tragic finale of Saguntum had been kept in reserve for a fitting catastrophe, in case of the worst ; but now that that worst had arrived, men's minds were so bewildered that the grand expedient was forgotten.

In the extremity of their doubt came news

of the arrival of survivors from the fatal field of Gaviniano, and the bells summoned all promiscuously to instant audience. The daily business of the city was not, however, wholly interrupted, and some of the last acts of expiring liberty were too rife with a savage consolation to be suspended by any arrivals or any tidings. The gallows still stood out gloomily from the centre of the Piazza, and as the multitudes rushed past its foot, the scene that was enacting above their heads served to divert much of the overflowing of the populace from the chambers of the Palace.

A pale, thin youth, heavily ironed, was led out to meet his death. His crime was whispered variously ; whatever it might be, it signified little,—he was to die ; and death, were its mode not ignominious, was preferable to the life of those about him, who had hunted him down to the public shambles. That youth was Ficino. The ceremonial that had stood like a barrier of straw

between him and the evil passions of strong enemies had been beaten down ; he had been judged in secret !

Posterity, when they read of the long series of insult and degradation inflicted by the house of Medici on their country,—when they read of usurpation transmitted from one generation to another, and the long chapter of their violations of public justice, finishing with a siege and its inconceivable atrocities and unmasked tyranny,—from thenceforward will pardon the ravings of that delirium of public feeling which preceded by a few hours the death of a brave people's independence, and will scarcely wonder that it was thought a crime worthy of death to have asserted, as matter of opinion, that Cosimo de Medici, their first tyrant, had merited the rare, and of all eulogies that most enviable one, which after his death the magistrates of a not yet wholly enslaved people had caused to be graven upon his tomb, that the dust in repose below was that of the Father of his Country.

This was the offence for which the youth was led out to die. He had not been wanting in his duty to himself, either in vindicating a calumniated name, or in stretching out his arm in his own defence. He had met his accusers with dignity and calmness. When the astonishing nature of his accusation was stated, he bent his head mournfully, and was for some seconds mute from the violence of his emotions.

“Unhappy and fallen indeed is the people,” he said, at length, “which thus confuses right and wrong—which thus loses all perception of the nature of virtue and of guilt!” He had, he said, no defence to make against an accusation which inferred no guilt—implied nothing to which justice or common sense could object. The public edict by which that golden epitaph had been inscribed had never, he remarked, been revoked. In their statute books, in thousands of public inscriptions, but pre-eminently in the sumptuous temple of San Lorenzo, they would find this great man thus immor-

talized ; and if the homage of one so humble as he was could compensate to his memory, outraged by this accusation, he was willing to make the sacrifice, and pay the penalty ! No more words were needed ; his sentence was pronounced : “ Death upon the morrow ! ” From his judgment chamber he was led back to his dungeon ; and it was thought an action of unmerited indulgence that a friend—an old man weighed down with years and sorrows—was allowed to visit him for a brief hour !

It was the vigil of that morrow, the eve of the day on which that extraordinary trial and condemnation had taken place, when two travellers were spurring with breathless speed coursers reeking with foam and blood, from the action of Gaviniano towards Florence. For several miles their horses had been drooping, and the spur alone kept them from reeling beneath their riders. It was near dusk when utter exhaustion rendered further progress impracticable. It would have been difficult to say whether horses or

men presented the more pitiable condition. Both were reeling from weariness, and loss of blood, and want of food ; both were partly covered with shattered armour, hanging in unconnected plates as accident willed it ; both wore on their armed crests dabbled and rent plumes, which, of all parts of their ruined and grim attire, was the most pitiful, as it contrasted the pride and finery of the hour before the battle, with the humiliation and revolting squalor of that which followed it.

One of those over-urged horses, though of unusual strength and build, had been so burthened with the weight of a warrior of gigantic breadth and tallness, that when he drew bridle at the door of a small cottage off the road, it floundered beneath him, and, with a long drawn breath, gave up life.

Brandano strode from the dying horse, and lifted down his companion from his saddle. That companion, though of a complexion and frame apparently little suited to the trying hour of a soldier's

trade, had fought with him through that disastrous day, and was now flying, not to save, but to claim the sacrifice of a life to a betrayed country. That youth was Francesco the student. His eyes were blood-shot; his garments drenched with gore; his blade shattered; his body drooping; his limbs powerless. His rude companion bore him in his arms tenderly, as he might an overwearyed child. He carried him to a couch of straw, stripped off his soaked garments, and the fragments of useless armour; he brought water, bathed his temples, steeped and chafed his limbs; and when he saw nature breathing the balmy essence of all-restoring sleep over his senses, he threw down his own vast limbs, uncared for, beside him, and fell presently into a deep slumber.

Both slept long and heavily, though there was no light burden on the mind of either. When Brandano at length roused himself, and rose from his rude couch,—the bricks of the cottage floor,—he heard steps rapidly

measuring the floor below him; hastily descending, he beheld the figure of an old man, more aged than himself, abandoned to all the extravagances of the wildest despair. When Brandano stood beside him, the stranger turned with an aspect of the most impetuous, yet most humiliating entreaty, imploring him, for the love of the God that made him, to bear a message to the host of Ferrucci.

“It may be too late,” he exclaimed, piteously; “his gentle, his noble spirit, may be fled, and his innocent blood shame our afflicted city. It wants but three hours to sundown, and then he dies.”

“Who dies, old man?” exclaimed the gentle tones of Francesco. “Who remains yet in that wretched city that old men weep for? Is Ficino at length seized? All else, methinks, who were good or great in Florence, have already ceased to feel this life’s evils.”

So altered were the features of the two individuals who stood facing each other, and conversing of what so deeply

interested both, that they met as total strangers, though they had broken bread in sweet fellowship for years past. That old man was unknown to no one who had enjoyed the honoured association of the learned and the high in birth and station of that generation.

“Ficino,” exclaimed the old man, in despair, “dies at sunrise, unless Ferrucci arrive to save him.”

“To horse! to horse, Brandano!” exclaimed Francesco. “This cruel murder may not be. We will find the gallows a substitute; and Florence will need a gentle monitor to teach her stubborn sons submission. Away, away! once more to horse!”

Brandano wound his fingers into the long mane of the only steed that remained to them, Francesco was once more in the saddle, and thus they kept pace together through the refreshed animal’s fleetest gallop. Valley and hill, the desolated, harvestless fields, the dismantled churches, the ruined, untenanted cottages, all disappeared

like shadows behind them. The city gates are in view ; the streets ring to the clatter of those impatient hoofs ; the tower of the Palace of the Priori touches them with its long, wand-like shadow ; its square is gained. The bell of the Bargello was tolling out sullenly over them the death-note of somebody.

With the functionaries of a most loathsome office about him ; men who had been reared in an atmosphere of jails—whose hearing had from infancy been attuned to the sound of groans, the most mournful of all cadences to which the human voice can fashion its touching harmonies ; with all the appalling apparatus of the death that was to be met ; with the lurid gaze of the half-naked executioner gloating apathetically upon a scene which, for him, had no horrors, no interest beyond perquisites and stipend ;—with this revolting company before his eyes, yet seeing, fearing none of them, stood the slender figure of the gentle student, Niccolo Ficino. His face was pale as death,

but his lips retained their meek smile, as he now looked his last upon the city he had well loved. The populace below clamoured for the last scene, and Ficino, who had not till then spoken, turned and said—"Now, friend ! for they are impatient."

The official thus addressed raised his eye to the face of his principal. That dignitary was Giacopo Gherardi ; Ficino was kneeling, and he bent down to address him.

A second and a louder clamour rose up from the gallows' foot ; it died away ; a dead silence followed it ; and then suddenly the rapidly reiterated sound of horses' hoofs was heard on the pavement.

Gherardi sprang up ; he gazed down the various avenues opening on the square. The riders were upon him ; the trampled populace was no barrier. The hand of Brandano was on the wood-work of the scaffolding ; his vast frame was swinging from joist to joist ; his head was above the platform. The first object he beheld was the trembling hand of Gherardi fleetly as light-

ning signing to the executioner. The axe descended, and the trunk, headless and lifeless, lay before him !

Faint, sickened, disgusted with life, yet feeling he had duties still to live for, Francesco dashed through the crowd, and sprung up the palace steps. The hall of the Great Council was thronged to overflowing, to receive him, and hear his tidings. As many as three thousand citizens are said to have been assembled in that vast area. The voice of that young student had been often heard before from the spot on which he now stood. His life of late had been one of studiously-sought abstinence from public affairs ; yet had fate so destined it that the same voice which first woke his fellow-citizens to freedom should be that which was to proclaim their doom to a long tyranny, from which through ages no other sound should have the power to rouse them.

Few words sufficed for that sad narrative. Ferrucci was dead, his army was annihilated, and the victors were marching upon the city.

The voice of the youth ceased, and a dead, prolonged silence ensued.

“And now, my countrymen,” exclaimed Francesco, raising his voice till the rafters—those responsive witnesses of so many orators—rung with its round, full tones, “your disaster is told, and you will have time to mourn over it. We have a few hours yet left us; let us employ them to profit. Behold this!” he said, and he drew forth a crumpled and gory scroll from his bosom. “Before now a letter decided upon the fate of a noble citizen; now hearken to the love Baglioni bears you! The paper is clotted and crimsoned, as ye may perceive; it is the blood of Filibert of Orange, who was to have been king of Florence, which thus stains it. It was found in his bosom when he fell; the same bullet pierced his heart which perforated this. Let those who to the last have held their trust in traitors read this and pass their judgment.”

The scene of insane tumult that ensued when the epistle was read, baffles all de-

scription. It was a missive from Malatesta Baglione to the Prince, announcing the intended march of Ferrucci, and pointing out the route traced for him by himself, and adopted by the Priori. It contained moreover an assurance, to which his knightly fame was pledged, that the citizens should not send a man forth from the gates to molest such of his forces as he might choose to leave to protect his trenches, whilst he went to meet the ill-fated leader of a doomed people.

In the frantic delirium of that maddened multitude, Francesco was no more thought of; his presence was no more heeded. He received in his own arms at the foot of the tree of ignominy the cold stiff form of his gentle friend, which Brandano had in defiance of a thunder of maledictions taken down unresistedly.

In death Francesco was not unmindful of his friend's fame; his body was conveyed to the cloisters of Santa Croce, and laid to its rest in the same glorious company of his

country's sages which he had cherished in life. Francesco strewed the dust upon his coffin, and the memorial of the vanity of all things human sunk deeply into his spirit, for he had himself not been without his trials.

Twilight was falling over the city on the last evening of its unyielded freedom, when Francesco, after the performance of the last sad duty we have mentioned, passed with a heart bent down with foreboding over the threshold of one of the proudest palaces of Florence. It was evidently the first time he had entered beneath its roof; and though his eye was familiar with the costly luxuries that decorated the interiors of the palaces of the merchant nobles of his native city, yet was there something in the astonishing magnificence of all his glance encountered, which so gratefully jarred upon ancient associations in his mind, that he more than once inquired of the stately dignitary of the household who heralded him, whether he

had not mistaken the residence he was in search of.

He was assured with a smile of gratified consequence that he was under no error, and he was then again led onward through various suites of gorgeous chambers, till, after being paraded through what was doubtless intended for festivity and pomp, he arrived at an apartment of smaller and more habitable dimensions ; and then the attendant pointed to a door that terminated their travels, and beckoned him forward, apparently unwilling himself to face the dweller in this sanctum of the temple.

As Francesco stood with his hand upon the door, his foot upon the threshold, there came a sound of voices in broken converse, which were familiar to his ear, and one of which thrilled through his whole being. It was a gentle voice, whose tones sounded cheerfully, even playfully, and the sweetest of all gentle laughter followed it. This was all he needed ; he had no doubts for further eluci-

dating; he threw open the door and entered.

Splendid as the costly decorations which imagination, and not money, purchases for the palaces of romance, were the various gems of antique art, which the collections of the scattered family of the Medici had furnished for the dwelling rooms of the owner of this habitation of almost fabulous grandeur. But the glance of the poor student, who entered this choice cabinet, had no sympathy with its decorations. Before him stood, arrayed in robes whose richness offended his recollections of the past, his feelings for the time present, the lovely, the sylph-like figure of the companion of his childhood.

In person, Teresa was, as well as could be judged from the disguise of ample and embroidered robes, scarcely altered since he had last seen her. Her fair face was wreathed in smiles; her brow bright and joyous as it used to be of old, before misfortune had ever breathed over its glorious

mirror. Her back was towards him as he entered; and he paused to watch the sportiveness of her mood, as she busied herself about the person of her father, whose countenance she intercepted from his view.

A deep sigh broke from the lips of the old man, as she passed her fingers playfully over his forehead; and she then bent down and rebuked him fondly for want of courage. She bade him be cheerful for yet a little time, and he should exchange his ducal bonnet for a crown.

Francesco's heart misgave him; he felt that something was amiss. He, too, sighed; and the fair creature turned and faced him. Was this to be like their mountain meetings, with a scream of delight, and a bound into his open arms? Such was the all-explaining query which, even in the last moment, he had ventured to ask of his doubting heart.

She paused for a few seconds, as if she strove to recollect him. A gleam,—so at least he thought,—a gleam-like recognition

came up into her eyes, but faded as instantly.

“Look, my father,” she exclaimed; “here is a bold knight from the camp. He must have brought the tidings you used to care for; and to me he has, doubtless, come with news of my truant true love. Fie, fie!” she continued; “what a figure for your Highness’s presence! He is as bloody as the heads we used to look upon of a morning from the windows of the other house. What tidings, most ragged and unsavoury knight?” she inquired. “Have you aught to tell us of our lieges at Volterra?”

Francesco stood motionless and mute; the whole melancholy truth was palpable and self-spoken. He turned at length to her parent, and he saw the old man, the wily statesman, the unscrupulous intriguer, the builder and adorer of a dwelling that Solomon might not have scorned, broken like a high tufted reed that has been met by the breeze in anger, and apparently but

few degrees removed from the idiocy of his child.

“ I left her with thee,” whispered Francesco, “ well in mind, and strengthening hourly in her health, whilst I went on a mission of your sending. Speak, man, the truth for once, and let me know how my trust has been repaid.”

Carducci heard without much seeming comprehension of the sounds that fell upon his ear. He at length struggled to regain energy enough to reply ; but his words were incoherent, and the effort terminated in a wild, long-continued, hysterical laugh. He pointed with his finger to the forehead of his child, and this part only of his reply was intelligible.

“ The old man is become childish, fair Sir,” said the maiden ; “ much honour and men’s flattery have overset his brain. I pray you excuse him. You may speak your tidings to me ; I am his Highness’s daughter.”

“Teresa,” said the youth, “is it even so? I had thought to find thee otherwise than thus. Come, my beloved, into my arms; they have pillowed thy poor head when thou wert even worse.”

He spread out his arms to embrace her. He had forgotten that the ancient links which had connected intellect and love had been broken. The fair girl bounded from him disdainfully.

“This, Sir, in my father’s presence!” she exclaimed, imperiously. “For whom do you take us?”

The arms of Francesco dropped powerless to his side, and he stood for some seconds, pale and deathlike, gazing upon those fine features, that inimitable form, irresolute how to find intelligible language or ideas to mediate between her mind and his.

“Lady,” he said, at length, “I am from the camp of Ferrucci. Is there any one there of whom you would hear tidings?”

“Surely, surely!” she said. “How fares

my beloved — Francesco, the learned and the lofty, surnamed the Student? Have they taught him to slay men as he slays maidens? He was our father's chief prop and counsellor. We have all wept for his absence; and that old man has raved about his return like a love-sick maiden!"

"Francesco," replied the youth, fixing his full, deep glance intently upon her features, "is dead! He fell covered with wounds, pale and bloody, as you now see me!"

"Then Heaven be merciful to his soul!" replied the young girl. "We will send tidings of his death to the Lady Eugenia Capponi. It were pity to break the heart of so beautiful a maiden. But men say she was betrothed to him; and if that be true, what fate but the fate of the tempter could she expect to meet? We are all going hence shortly," she continued; "for my father tells me he must kill me if the city is to be pillaged; so that I shall meet him of whom we spoke, where those who have died for love find their paradise."

“ His spirit is free, maiden,” said the youth ; “ it wanders on those beloved mountains where he and you spent your happy childhood. Do you not remember with what craving of the heart you have stood upon those barren pinnacles whilst the sun went down, pining for the vision of that beloved form, as it came weariedly up from the regions where the mist and clouds assembled for their night’s slumbers. Even thus, lady, he now awaits you ; and he sent me to bear his summons. Will you come ?”

The bewildered maiden started ; his voice had, in some way, touched her. She gazed wildly into his features ; a thousand changes flashed over her countenance, and then left it pale, wild, and scared. Suddenly the dark spirit that had made his home within, awakened from the dreams of his slumbers in the loveliest bosom ever formed for woman, and as he looked from her flashing eyes upon the disturber of his sleep, the whole aspect of her mood was changed

from the calm apathy of a passionless lunacy to the extravagant terrors pictured by the magnifying mirror which insanity brandished before her. She shrieked shrilly, and rushed to the knees of Carducci.

“ Shield me ! shield me, my father ! ” she exclaimed ; “ see you not through that vile disguise ? It is the monster Alessandro de Medici ! Even thus he would before have seized me. Oh ! save me, my father, or slay me. ”

So fearful a paroxysm of terror now seized her that she clung to her father’s neck, uttering scream upon scream, till her forces failed, her arms relaxed their fold, and she fell motionless on the earth.

More animation now entered into the glance and manner of Carducci than Francesco thought could have been saved from the wreck of his intellect. He sprung to his feet, lifted her in his arms, and after gazing with ravenous search into that pale, meek face, he smiled.

“ God of Heaven ! ” he then exclaimed—

“ you have her father’s gratitude ; for she is dead.”

He drew aside the voluminous folds of her black hair from her marble brow, and beckoned Francesco to him.

“ Is it not a beautiful and chaste corpse ?” he asked. “ It was but yester-eve that I raised my dagger to strike her as she slept ; but her eyes opened ; her sweet lips murmured ; I know not whether a gleam of intellect did indeed pass over her brain ; she put aside my hand, and said, mildly, ‘ Not to-night, my father ; *he* will come to-morrow, and all will be well !’ The last trial has been fairly made, and yourself have seen its failure. She is better as we now behold her than as we saw her but a few minutes since.”

Francesco made him no reply ; his heart had no assent for that freezing sentence, by which the form he had so long loved was consigned to worms, because the intellect was no more as men had fashioned it. He had loved her before now, when her affliction

was the same ; and he knew that a studious spirit could devise means of corresponding, through the necessities on which the human frame was dependent whilst life lasted, with the spirit within, however shattered. He shuddered when he first bent over the beautiful, meek cheek on which her father's breath had fallen when that speech, wrung from the depths of a heart steeped in misery, had passed his lips.

The old man stood aside and watched the agony of his companion in despair. The lips of the student rested on the damp marble of the calm brow. The door of the chamber opened, and a third spectator mingled in the scene of misery, without attracting the notice of those thus mournfully occupied.

Francesco had long thus bent in hopelessness over the unmoved features of the maiden, when a shudder shot suddenly through his frame ; his eye flashed with that lightning gleam—the brightest, the most evanescent that ever kindles in the eye of man—that formed by the collision of hope

and fear. He laid his hand upon her heart, his cheek nearly down to her lips.

“She lives,” he muttered; “she surely lives! Teresa, dearest!” he whispered, in tones musical as the voice of mercy, “look upon me; you will know Francesco.”

The snowy lids were lifted; her eye met his; calm, peace, and it almost seemed intellect, were in its glance. She essayed to raise her arms, but they were powerless. The attempt, if not correctly comprehended, was at least warmly interpreted.

Francesco closed his arms about her; he lifted her from the couch on which her parent had placed her, and nursed her upon his bosom.

“We have been long separated, Francesco,” said the young girl; and every heart suspended its breathing whilst the words that were to follow would reveal the truth, which appeared miraculous beyond hope. “We have been long separated, and the memory of how much, in the hour of my temptation, I wronged thee, has been even

more cruel than thy absence. Thou weepest, dearest!" she continued. "Is it to see me thus shaken? Have you felt my heart, how cold and death-like it has long been? My lips burn, Francesco—thine have rekindled them; and so will my heart do shortly."

"Hush! hush, beloved! thou art weak," said the student, tremulously. "Francesco will never leave thee. A life of love, of tender, deep, all-redeeming love, thou hast suffered for, and earned. Hush! hush! let not thy lips reply to me. We will seek again our mountain-home; misery never reached us till we left it. The dark dreams of a few months will be forgotten, whilst we dwell beside secret fountains of happiness inexhaustible."

Eloquent and bright were the joyous scenes through which the youth strove to lead her away from the dark precipice on which she had so recently tottered, and to which she was even now far too fearfully near. She lay in his arms mutely, with tears of joy upon her pale cheeks, listening to the music,

gazing upon the golden sunshine, of promised happiness.

Whose would the anguish be if all yet prove a delusion? if disease yet prove more powerful than the magician, Love, thus invoked to assert his mastery?

The kisses of Francesco fell upon her eyelids; every pulsation of his heart vibrated through hers; the warmth of his embrace made her limbs glow, brought the colour too brilliantly into her cheek; but, beyond that, health had no power to give the participation of its own vitality. Exhaustion crept over the senses of the frame thus balancing between the voluptuousness of life and the corruption of the grave; and then, for the first time, Francesco ventured to lift his eyes from the reanimated cheek, to gather from the glances of those about him the confirmation of his own feeling, that, for the present, the danger was past.

In doing so he perceived (and who shall picture the sensation caused by such a vision) who it was that had come unbidden,

and mingled in the scene of that overwhelming trial. Beside him stood one who, if the paleness and coldness of snow upon cheek and brow are harbingers of death, was apparently a fitter subject for the grave than she who might be said so narrowly to have escaped it. That individual was the Lady Eugenia Capponi. Her dress was that of the nuns of the convent in which she had her temporary asylum ; and the strong contrasts of its intersecting bands of white linen and black cloth made fearfully visible the ghastly ravages of a long malady, whose seat was in the very springs of the fountain of life.

Francesco, who read, perhaps, as well as any mortal had ever yet done, the feelings beneath the mystic imagery of the all-revealing features, saw at a single glance the extent and the completion of the sacrifice. He took her hand ; it was cold with the damp coldness of a plant whose juices no sensibilities ever warm. She offered no resistance to his wish ; but as if the touch

of his hand caused feebleness, she leaned against the couch on which lay the slight, frail figure of Teresa.

“I came, Francesco,” she said, “to tender what aid might be in my power to one whom you pity; but to change destinies with whom, I would—oh! how willingly—give all that remains to me in life, except some few fond memories of days past. I did not know that you, her best physician, had come back to heal the wounds your absence had occasioned. We have a few words to say yet together, which were better said in private. I have a claim upon a few minutes of your leisure, but can wait a more fitting time. That old man is, I presume, her father. If so, you will do well to tell him the purpose which brings me unbidden beneath his roof.”

“Your Excellence,” said Francesco, turning to Carducci, “beholds your house honoured by the presence of one who has come, after the manner of her race, to repay good for evil. It is the Lady Eugenia

Capponi who condescends to come thus unsought into the dwelling of her father's worst enemy, hoping, by the sweet persuasions of a gentle voice and a noble heart, and that tenderness which springs from hopes no less crushed than *hers*, to soothe her to the oblivion of woes that can harm no more. It is most true, Eugenia," continued Francesco, turning to her as he spoke, "that what you have to say, and I to listen to, requires no other witness than the God that made our hearts, and can best aid, with the eloquence of most open truth, to make the life that remains to each of us not so utterly blank and desolate as seemed inevitable. We will perform together our vigil of charity by the couch of that frail and much afflicted being; but it cannot long be, I fear, in this dwelling, whose master, with a prodigality commensurate with his vast ambition, has spread out so gorgeous a bait to allure the brigands of the Bisognos into the inmost recesses of his home. You can, perhaps, dear Eugenia,

give that fair girl and me shelter, before the assassins are amongst us. And your Highness will, if you heed one who has of late been made acquainted with our conquerors, remove yourself, and such of these baubles as you set store upon, before our walls are beaten down, and the great scramble begins. Hark!" he added; "hear you not those loud, wild screams? They herald in, in all probability, the last excesses which the people have the power to indulge in. It is the usual cry. And hark! how cordially the countless multitude join in it. 'To the gallows! To the gallows!' Heaven grant that the object of their humane promotion be some of the murderers of poor Ficino! Were I not effectually weaned from the passions of life's turmoil, I would take especial care that they should be."

A wild and raging tumult rocked the city to its foundations. It was only the distant and dying sound that feebly reached the secret chamber of the Palace of Carducci. But where the storm raged, rose up the

stunning imprecations of a whole people's anger, and a simultaneous shout for vengeance; whilst the desperate yet helpless populace, like a maniac, was frantically hurling itself against its dungeon, beating its own bosom with the gyves that loaded its frenzied limbs.

From the council chamber of the palace a fierce rush of citizens had been directed against the quarters of Malatesta Baglioni. A decree of the senate had declared him a disgraced and false traitor, a dishonoured knight, the seller of a city's liberties, and of a brave man's blood. He was summoned to give up the baton of the military post of which he was unworthy, and to begone forth of the walls before another sun should dawn.

The reply of the unmasked ruffian, to whom his sentence had been read by a deputy from the Priori, was a blow of his dagger, struck with all the force of which his diseased body was capable, against the person of the magistrate.

The scene that ensued baffles all description. The clamorous citizens had assaulted a conscience-stricken man in his own stronghold, and they speedily found that he was prepared to meet the consequences of his wickedness if they came openly to meet him. The tidings were brought, with the speed of light, that the cannon on the batteries were no longer pointed outwards against the enemy, but with their long tubes projecting beyond the embrasures, and pointing down the long and crowded streets.

“Who comes to talk to Baglioni of treason?” asked that proud man, contemptuously. “Stand aside, my friends, that some of your immaculate senators, the penmen of that primitive and edifying document we have just heard read, may face me. I will help your appetites to victims, if you seek the blood of traitors. Ha, ha! do ye fall back, O Signori?” he exclaimed, jeeringly, as there undoubtedly did take place an impulse which swayed the

mass some paces back, from the gesture of his arm, raised with the energy of sincerity.

His question had the effect of causing an instant planting of every foot firmly against the ground, and a resolution to give life before receding another step; more than this, every man looked upon his neighbour with suspicion. Presently rose a cry—“This is the man! Behold the traitor!” and a clamour ensued, in which, for many minutes, no voice was distinguishable.

“I appeal to the honour of the most noble Malatesta!” exclaimed the terror-shaken voice of the unhappy wretch thus seized, and on the point of being torn to pieces by the infuriated mob. “He knows my innocence; I have been employed about his Highness for months—”

“In carrying tidings of the city’s councils,” exclaimed a voice—“in playing the go-between of this noble knight and Filibert of Orange.”

“Get forth of my presence, ye false and

calumniating rabble!" exclaimed Baglioni. "If the blood of that poor apothecary will satisfy your craving, take him, and begone. If this quarter of the city is not at peace within one-fourth of an hour from this minute, my lances shall drive some of you into the river, and I give the signal to the batteries."

The truth seemed to be rightly conjectured by Baglioni: the life of the apothecary, a man of mystery and of evil fame, *was* food enough for their craving. Their passions were so far excited as to be better pleased with a victim like the obscene mediciner, whom they might tear piecemeal, in whose blood every man might stain his hands before his voracity for a murder had time to cool, than they would have been by a more illustrious captive, whose uttermost punishment for the present could he arrest.

Without the power of uttering either defence or entreaty beyond the few words we have mentioned, the shrinking wretch was

borne from the presence of Malatesta, and was presently in the open city, the centre of thousands clamouring for his blood. Had he been left to the unaided resources of his own diminutive and frail person, it is questionable whether the pressure of his accusers as they closed about him, before a hand had been turned in direct injury against him, would not have put an end to his existence in the very earliest stage of the proceeding. But he was not destined to be thus fortunate—for he found a protector! It was one of stature, sinew, and decision well calculated to breast the waves of the wildest multitudes. That protector, thus opportunely found in the extremity of his need, was Brandano, his own father. The frail body against which all hands were lifted murderously was raised up high above the heads of those who sought his blood.

“Down with him!” howled the ferocious, wolf-like, and baffled crowd; “his life is forfeited; let him die!”

“ Let him be judged !” exclaimed the giant. “ If he have offended, he shall surely die !”

“ Let him perish ! Baglioni, his accomplice, has already judged him !” screamed the seekers of his blood.

“ Baglioni is himself judged,” retorted the giant. “ The Priori are his judges, and none shall harm him till he has had his sentence.”

Heedless of the menaces and curses, as he was of the efforts, of those through whom he forced his way, to compel him for his own safety to lay down his burden, Brandano continued to press onward, little by little, to the Palace of the Signori. The eyes of the scared victim had gazed once, and but once, from his elevated position over the ocean of his enemies ; and the spectacle of so many glaring eyeballs flashing the deadliest hate against him seemed to have quenched the vision in his own over-strained orbs ; the lids dropped over them ; and until he had for some minutes stood where no voice reached

him, until he had been more than once roughly shaken, he did not again venture to look about him.

When his terror once more allowed him to dream of the possibility of defence from accusations as vague as they were violent, he found himself in the secret chamber apporportioned to select tribunals and speedy judgments, and which his knowledge of the mysteries of the building reminded him neighboured closely upon a chamber furnished for torture.

Zonara was a man whose arguments leaped rapidly to conclusions ; and when he recognised the walls that enclosed him, and had read the disgust and cruelty of the features of his judges, he resigned himself to circumstances, against which it was vain to contend. By his side stood the gigantic form of Brandano ; his arms were folded, and he awaited calmly the opening of the approaching judgment.

“ My lords,” exclaimed the aroused criminal, “ the hatred of our country we have

well earned ; for though the confession will avail nothing to avert your vengeance, we have done treason against the State. It was my father who admitted the Prince of Orange within the walls on the night of the attack on the lines of the Belloguardo ; and it was I who procured him safe exit from the city when the alarm was taken. For myself, I am ready to meet death ; but my aged, my fond parent, oh, my lords ! let him be spared. It was for my sake that he toiled in the profitable though perilous practices which have brought us to this ; it was that I might have some heritage better than famine when he was removed that he became the go-between of the discontented and the enemy. I have nothing wherewith to purchase life ; it is forfeited to my country ; and I shall not murmur in laying it down. But that old man may have the hire of his treason ; he has, at least, the list, which your Highnesses may think worth purchasing at the price of his pardon, the list of those who have made him and me the me-

dium of their dishonest traffic, sacrificing us to their cowardly and base intrigues.”

“ Away with them ! away with both of them ! ” exclaimed the whole body of their judges. “ Their lives are forfeited to the people, and let their punishment be instant, whilst the passions of the populace may be appeased. Let their passage be from the palace roof to the square below.”

Such was the ceremonial of their judgment, and such their sentence. From the audience-chamber the criminal, and the astonished Brandano, who had been introduced as an ostensible witness, and who found himself involved in the same sentence, were hurried from story to story of that towering building, out upon the leads, and then to the battlements.

Every spot of the whole city was visible from that elevated point ; and the eyes of both instinctively sought out a small mean house, at a remote end of the town ; it was the dwelling of San Zanobio, the treasure-house of both father and son. No smoke

ascended from its roof, no step tarried in its vicinity. Below them, in the Piazza, was a multitude that was countless ; and from every street and alley they could perceive the eagerness, the avid appetite, with which the whole city was pouring out, to witness the striking scene they were themselves about to exhibit. The individuals of this contentious and scrambling crowd appeared no larger than mice ; but their mingled outcry, when the victims appeared above the battlements, swept past them heavenwards, like the roaring of an angry ocean.

The brief scene that now ensued was not devoid of grandeur, as it was viewed from the square of the palace. Even at the vast elevation on which the group above was collected, the gigantic form of Brandano sufficed to distinguish it from those about him. He was standing aloof, with his arms folded, and calmly watching the preparations that were making for the carrying into effect the barbarous sentence

against them. A platform was erected, which raised the actors to a level with the top of the line of battlements. The hands of the condemned were about to be bound with cords ; it was the last brief and useless ceremonial which remained ; and the hand of one of the officials, apparently in reply to some question of Brandano, was pointing to the abyss.

At this moment that extraordinary man, throwing open his ample chest with a heavy breathing, sprung from where he was standing on to the summit of the platform, and seizing the diminutive person of his son, lifted him from the earth, held him out for a moment at the full length of his arms from him, and then, with a fierce swing of the whole power of his amazing strength, sent the body whirling from the battlements, through the air, and down the deep abyss.

Scarcely could that fearful missive have reached the earth before Brandano himself had met his death. He feared not to en-

counter the same flight to the same unknown regions, beyond the grave, through which his son had so briefly preceded him that he would surely overtake and witness his reception by the grim ferryman.

## CHAPTER X.

ON the third day after the scene just recorded, in a small chamber at the very summit of one of the loftiest houses in the Piazza of the Priori, were keeping watch by the side of a couch, on which lay a young girl in calm slumber, two persons who have occupied no small share of the reader's attention.

The maiden by whose side they had thus met to keep vigil was the young Teresa. Her features were smiling in her slumbers ; doubtless she was already feasting on the promised bliss of a love tried and triumphing. Female care had evidently been bestowed

upon the decencies and the becomingness of her appearance ; for the dark hair was drawn in smooth glossy bands across the dazzling and snow-like surface of her forehead. There was a tint of the very faintest possible shade, yet it was perceptible and beautiful, resting like a suspended breathing upon the cheek. It was by the side of this ethereal vision that Francesco, the student, and Eugenia Capponi, were keeping their untiring and anxious watch.

“ Seek not to hurry my departure hence,” said the maiden, mournfully ; “ she will have a long life of happiness, which no one shall take from her ; but my minutes of the joys of this life are flitting, Heaven knows how quickly ! Do not *you* be impatient to quicken them. Fear not ; she will live ! The object of your election is one of rare beauty ; and it were difficult for the eye of woman to rest upon that cheek and brow, and not covet their loveliness. When I see those eyes animated as I once saw them, and those young limbs lay aside their torpor, I

will leave her; but until then, the slight services I can render may gain indulgence for my intrusion. Whether I consult my own peace of mind, or the world's opinion of my conduct in so doing, is a question you at least will judge kindly of. But think you there is no danger that your retreat and hers be discovered by the enemies of her father? You, too, Francesco, have evil wishers; will it not be well, even now, to think of the kind offer of Luisa Strozzi, and take shelter in her house till better days?"

"It would not be fitting, dear Eugenia, for many reasons," was the reply. "Her family will have their own share of peril, and it were ungenerous indeed to add to their burdens. I think, besides, that there is little risk of our being molested where we are. You may be sure that they who stand not in their neighbour's way, and have no wealth to tempt the plunderer, are soon forgotten. Men will believe the hollow promises of their victors; and Clement is too crafty to risk his vengeance by impatience.

He has laid his train not badly. We are to continue with our old magistrates : Carducci is named Governor of Volterra, the grand theatre of Ferrucci's glory ; and our city is to be emptied of the hired bands of Colonna. Such are the lures held out to catch the rabble's vivas. How long it may be before the mask falls, who shall guess ? Hark ! Are those not sounds of some fresh tumult ? In all likelihood, the grand game of Pope Clement is commencing."

Both rose, and drew near to the window. It was a small aperture, which opened upon a steep shelving tiled roof, and from which they were enabled to witness the hourly shifting scenes of the busy square immediately beneath them, and the origin and sequel of the numerous pageants whose theatre was the front of the gloomy palace of the Signori ; and they thence perceived that an exhibition of some unusually exciting character was about to take place ; for column after column of armed men, banners and artillery, were moving up the

several streets to that spacious centre. Small ceremony was used with the undextrous populace which cumbered their pathway ; several tiers of cannon were ranged along the platform in front of the palace, and men with lighted matches took their station beside them.

“ Thus was it, Eugenia,” said her companion, “ on the day that this fatal game had its beginning. Your venerable father, though a man of mild feelings and peaceful impulses, faced guns thus pointed ; and I see not why resolute men might not again do so. But, alas ! they who had courage, and they whose eloquence created it, are gone from amongst us. Their next proceeding will doubtless be to tear down the Gonfalon of the Republic, and raise up in its place the Palli of the Medici.”

Scarcely was this conjecture hazarded than the fact followed it ; and Francesco only wondered that the dishonoured banner was not tossed beneath the heels of the German cavalry. That venerable standard—

no more a thing for brave men to honour— was taken within the portals of the palace, and the humiliation was speedily forgotten in the tragic scenes which followed. In the meantime, the square had filled with troops ; and a select body, composed of the city's conquerors and betrayers, Spaniards, Germans, and Perugians, were formed into three sides of an open square, in whose centre was raised an elevated seat, over which the banner of the Emperor was planted.

Bitter was the smile that passed over the countenance of Francesco, when he saw who was the individual thus honoured with a vice-regal throne, amongst a people whose republican liberties had been guaranteed by the pledged faith of all parties. It was a military festival, and deserved a warrior for its chief ; and the chief chosen was Malatesta Baglioni, the traitor !

“ See, Eugenia,” exclaimed Francesco, “ how amicably terminates this tedious and gory drama. Admirable sympathy of

opinion! when the State and the State's enemies select the same individual for guardian of our liberties. His Holiness, to shew honour to the people's choice, has continued our government in his hands; and with that loftiness of spirit which can admire gallantry in an enemy, in return for his energies, his incorruptible honesty, his unrivalled valour, has restored to him his usurped power in the city of Perugia. Colonna, on the contrary, who was rude and unmannerly in his intercourse with his Holiness's beloved citizens, is to go out from amongst us. He will go forth at his own time, and in his own manner; not because he is a fierce warrior, and has at his command a scarcely-diminished host of unconquerable and highly disciplined followers; not because his Holiness fears him; but lest the precious lives of his well-beloved Florentines might be periled by displeasing him! Baglioni is early summoning his lieges to do him homage."

A press ensued amongst such parts of the

multitude as lined the intermediate space between the palace and the position of Malatesta; and all eyes turned in the direction of the portals of the Bargello. Even the exalted dignitary himself seemed to take more interest in the apparition whose advent the moving of the crowd betokened, than in his own triumph. Presently a way was opened by the officials of the city dungeons, and a prisoner was led forward. It was a man far advanced in life; he was arrayed in the robes of an office that had been honoured; his head was bare, and his long grey locks were thrown back, defying shame, from his brow.

Francesco shuddered when the opening in the throng enabled him to catch a glimpse of the prisoner, and in him instantly to recognise the fallen Gonfaloniere, Francesco Carducci.

“They have taken the obstinate old man at last,” said the youth, who from his position witnessed the whole of this melancholy scene. “It was an act of singular

infatuation thus to have taken up his abode in that gorgeous residence, and court death as he did. And, unfortunately for his fame, they have taken him at a moment when his unconquerable spirit has become quenched in idiocy. Amongst his many faults, that ambitious man knew not cowardice; yet will they now attribute his unsteady gaze, his relaxed features, and his infirm step, to fear; and the very multitudes who worshipped him for his profitless audacity, will hoot at him for his apparent meanness."

Francesco, when he thus spoke, could not from his elevated eyry distinguish what was not without its effect on the crowded and busy stage below. That old man, who had played his part in the late turbulent and perilous times not without dignity, now that he was led out from station to ignominy, from a palace to the block, had the energy to put from his mind the withering and unnerving memories of his domestic miseries, and walked forth with a step as firm, a brow as elate, an eye as

indomitable, as he had a few months since assumed, when the acclamations of a whole people accompanied him to the same throne on which Baglioni was now seated, and before which that individual, like a conscious traitor, in whose bosom the pride of honesty had no place, had been the readiest to bend his knee.

A dead silence accompanied the stately pace of the old man, who, it was evident, struggled well that the infirmity of his limbs might not be a cause of scandal to his fame.

He paused for a second as he was conducted past the platform on which Baglioni and his allies were in converse, and a smile of deep, ineffable scorn flitted across his lips. He then passed on to ascend the scaffold from which his last spectacle was to be given to the world. A second detachment of the prison functionaries followed him, but with an irregularity of pace which betokened some impediment to their advance.

It was not until this second procession had reached the very foot of the frame-

work which awaited them that Francesco was enabled to perceive that in the very centre of their ranks was carried a chair, in which was lying, rather than sitting, the figure of a man, whom for some time he had difficulty in recognising. When the chair was placed on the ground, preparatory to being swung upward to the platform above, he discovered the haggard face, deathlike and livid, of Jacopo Gherardi, the persecutor of Niccolo Capponi, the spiritless murderer of poor Ficino.

Pitiable indeed, yet, according to his deserts, most unpitied, was the aspect of that abject and despicable being. Every limb, every muscle, had been struck dead by sudden fear; his features were ghastly and fallen; his eyes tremulous, like a flame chased by a varying wind; his hair was wet with the heavy moisture of the forehead, over which the convulsions of his first terror had shaken it; his whole aspect had become that of a scourged idiot. The mob hooted him as he passed. It was the only death, of

the many that followed the surrender of the city, that was popular ; for the minds of men who had a short time previously hunted down the gentle and friendless student, had exhausted their paroxysm, and were become merciful, and their fastidious senses could now no longer endure the sight of blood.

If there were any who, compassionating the fate of the murdered student, craved the blood of his murderer, their revenge must have been disappointed ; for when he was carried out to die, the eye that saw him seemed to behold an exhumed corpse, a noisome effigy, revolting to look upon, more revolting to touch, brought out in savage mockery.

Before the signal was given for execution, there came on the breeze's breath, as it winged over the silent and gloomy square, a trumpet-note, blown shrilly, though far distant. It was no note of mourning, no sound heralding men from damp, dark dungeons to the gibbet ; but the martial and proud note of a soldier's march, which each

instant wafted nearer ; and presently, from one of the streets opening on the square, was seen the head of a proud column of mailed horse. It was the cavalry of the Colonna, and that haughty warrior himself headed them. His family banner was now seen, as on the first day of his appearance in the city, unaccompanied by that of the Republic. It came not now, as then, to be lowered to any.

Those haughty veterans, marshalled by knights, dependents of his princely house, whose bearing and demeanour were copied from those of their leader, grasped their weapons greedily for blood ; their fierce and sullen glances flashed with that defiance which their fame for discipline and fearlessness, their glittering armour, and their perfect equipments, well enabled them to cast upon those about them. The same heedlessness which had ever marked their evolutions through the multitudes, characterized them to the last. It would almost seem that the haughty noble who headed

them studiously sought to inflict insult alike on the citizens who had submitted, and the victors who were triumphing; for as they wheeled into line, the body of the prison guard, and the prisoners they escorted, were thrown back from their path, trampled, and scattered.

A withering sneer was on the features of Stefano Colonna as he approached the pompous canopy of Baglioni. Without deigning to notice the fallen magistrates from whom for so many months he had received his orders, he bade a herald advance, to claim free exit forth of the city, and unmolested passage through such of the dominions of the State, and of the Pope, as he might think well to choose. The instrument had been prepared, and was handed to him. Without a word of thanks or farewell, he forthwith gave order again to sound the march, and then, for the first time since he had inhabited their city, the mutable populace shouted their acknowledgments of his gallantry and good faith.

No sooner had the last plumes of that arrogant host disappeared from the square, than the signal was given for instant execution, and in a very few minutes more the naked arms, the gleaming axe of the executioner, sent a quick dazzling flash of sickening light, from the scaffold to the very face of Baglioni. The ills of a broken heart, the lethargy of sated passions, were at rest for ever!—the gory heads of Carducci and Gherardi were stuck on pikes, and carried off to decorate the towers of the Bargello—the earliest trophies of his Holiness's victory.

“ She sleeps through it,” exclaimed Francesco, glancing at the tenant of the couch to which he now turned. “ She will awake fatherless ; once more thrown back on the guardianship which it would have been well had she never left ; and with what a melancholy heritage does she return ! No beauty, no innocence conquers the stigma of alliance with the public executioner. Even the convents which open to receive all crushed hearts would give a freezing welcome to

the daughter of the foul gibbet. The mountain caves, my poor Teresa, which have known all thy secrets hitherto, will not refuse to harbour thee when they shall have learned this also !”

The couch over which Francesco poured forth vows of constancy, unheard by their orphan object, yet falling like the scorching breath of a destroying wind on as loving a heart as ever beat within a woman’s bosom—one meriting a far other destiny—was shaken by a quick convulsion, and its tenant started from a troubled slumber. “ I have witnessed the scene of the dim prelude, Francesco,” she said, mournfully. “ Is it false ? Can visions so unutterably horrible be sent only to torture ?”

The stately form of Eugenia Capponi was bent over the pillow on which tossed the restless head that had fashioned these dimly revealed, yet, perchance, prophetic visions ; and she strove to tune to the music of compassion a voice whose chords had been rent by the ruthless hand of the heart’s worst

tyrant. The face which despair had no power to make ungentle had still its smile, as she endeavoured to lift affectionately the snowy and small hand which, after a gesture like the waving of a farewell, had fallen to her side.

“ I need no help but *his*, lady,” said the sufferer. “ Oh, Francesco ! where art thou at a moment like this ?”

The youth thus invoked took the place of the repulsed Eugenia, and raised her until her form reclined against his bosom. Her limbs became restless, her heart fluttered, and then seemed utterly to cease its beatings ; and then again it throbbed impetuously, as if the caged spirit within were struggling against its bonds. Her first impulse had been to lean down her head, her cheek against his, and weep ; but suddenly her face glowed, her lips quivered, and she murmured imploringly —“ Save me ! save me, Francesco ! you have done so before now. I am dying, my beloved ! Oh, God of pity, let me live my time ! I am yet

young, and should live whilst *he* lives !  
Oh, life ! life ! Francesco ! dearest ! death  
grapples me—his clasp is cold and loath-  
some, like that of the demons of Cajano !  
But, oh, he is far stronger ! he will surely  
part us.”

The fold of her arms was tightened round  
the neck of Francesco, and she clung to him  
with all the force of an excited frame, not-  
withstanding a succession of convulsions,  
which seemed like the efforts of one invisibly  
striving to wrench her from him.

It was an alarming and awful menace,  
freezing the blood of those who beheld it,  
for each moment of that fierce contest of  
life and death appeared her last ; and yet it  
passed away, and the grim tyrant abstained  
from gathering the gentle and sweet flower  
which the abruptness of his handling had  
nearly crushed. Colour came again into  
that pinched and pale cheek, elasticity and  
power once more entered into those ele-  
gantly modelled limbs, and the buoyant and  
quick sensibilities of youth and conva-

lescence entered, like the impulses of a new spring, into her bosom.

The voice, rich and eloquent, of all-powerful love, whilst slaying, by slow torture, the far nobler being who bent over her couch, reversed the dark sentence of her summons; and the sweet and sisterly solitudes of the high-spirited Eugenia, who fed her soul with the hopes which had long been the source of her own vitality, gradually lured back health, and, in a short time, Teresa was enabled to rise from her couch, and to talk of the future.

Most intently did the youth Francesco watch the earliest impulses of the heart thus marvellously won back to life; and he perceived, sorrowing, that the reward to his companion in that charitable and holy vigil was the suspicious glance, the gloomy brow, the mute and thankless lip of jealousy.

Then it was that Eugenia left them. Teresa slept whilst their adieus were taken; the last words they spoke were over her couch; whilst the sleeper, in a dark dream,

revealed her ungrateful secret. Tears were on the cheek of Eugenia, and the pure and proud spirit, which had upheld itself till then, faltered. Nature had been tried beyond its endurance ; and with her hands clasped in agony over her noble and bursting heart, she prayed for death.

Francesco wound his arm around her, and the paroxysm spent itself. Her head was on his bosom, and he bent and whispered—"Eugenia, Francesco will not outlive thee !"

## CHAPTER XI.

IN the odorous pathways through the flowering heath, on their native mountains above Carreggi, Francesco and Teresa passed the first bland season after the death of liberty in Florence. Alessandro de Medici, the satyr, ruled in all the licentiousness of Pan or Proteus the abased herd, in their bondage of obscene transformation, from ancient and grave republicans into all foul and crawling creatures, which, retaining the semblance, had been rifled of all the spirit and sensibilities of men. Little mattered it to the obscure student what indignities, in the corrupt city, defiled the bloody grave of

perished independence. When the smoke of its many hearths rose up, interposing its cloud between him and the tints of the rosy sky at sunset, he turned elsewhere his glance, as if from the fumes of an idolatrous and impure sacrifice.

On the sunny slopes of his mountain home, with the smiles of spring glancing from every visible object about him ; with its dew-born verdure receiving the very prints of his feet with a pressure as if of welcome ; with the perfume of its breath of flower-buds around him, and the exulting, yet gentle music of happy birds, making the very air he breathed an element of song and sweetness ; with his arm round the taper waist of that sweet wood-nymph, who was not less loved by the ancient trees, the waterfall, and the green recesses of the mountains, which had been familiar with her fair cheeks and her springy limbs from infancy, than by his own heart— Francesco, thus wandering beneath the cheering rays of a glorious sun, lost all

memory of the political arena into which he had entered rashly, and from which his retreat had been in disgust and bitterness.

In those calm and sunny wanderings, the reader will not wonder if one topic would, at times, force itself into his thoughts and on to his lips; and but too often, when he poured out his rapturous admiration of the sweet calm of the unpeopled woods, and pictured to the fair creature by his side, who gazed upon the imagery of his eloquence as upon dream-born visions of paradise, the happiness of their united future, there would come, dimly shaping itself from the unreal elements of foreboding, a phantom, pale and melancholy, following with terrified yet fascinated eagerness the blushing cheek of his companion, as she averted it from his gaze of fervid passion, and listening to the words which had so powerful an interpreter. And he then felt in his heart that though she disturbed not the solitude of his retreat, there yet lived one who awaited but an act of his

own—the realization of the glowing promises even then upon his lips—to lay down the toilsome burden of a life that had outlasted hope. At such moments the savage spirit of a proud nature, maddened by despair, whispered the words of his last promise to the absent; and he again cast back in the teeth of his tormentor the same vow, and defied him.

It was towards the close of summer, and the face of the smiling earth was radiant in abounding beauty; the golden harvest was yet unplundered; every fruit, blushing in the languishing tint of its maturity, was still on the drooping boughs; and every minutest insect—made bold by the power of the attraction of loveliness in everything—came fearlessly forth from its hidden home, to the universal festivity of the parturient earth. But, alas! no change from the aspect of earth's bright mutations was perceptible in the melancholy home which the broken-hearted Eugenia had chosen as a resting-place, on her way to the cold grave—a tene-

ment scarcely more impervious to the sympathies of life than the voluntary and solemn sepulchre called the Convent of Santa Lucia.

Several months, which had seemed interminable,—so charged had been every moment of their duration with the anguish of a heart with but one hope—that of death,—had passed over the retirement of Eugenia since matters had changed in Florence. To contemplate the stately form, the proud brow, the apathetic glance of a young fair creature perishing by the hourly torture of a breaking heart—by the agony that falls lingeringly, drop by drop, from a height—and who yet, with all a maiden's pride, a Christian's fortitude, struggles unshrinkingly against her fate,—is surely matter for no gratifying musing.

Such was, such for months had been, the gentle Eugenia. There was less change in her outer person than they who best knew her had expected. Her brow had reassumed the loftiness which birth had given it, and which love—a love, as she was well aware,

placed lowly—had previously moderated. To grief had not been accorded the power to deface either a single lineament of that cheek of rare loveliness, nor a proportion of her majestic figure. The heart alone, that noble home of pure thoughts and deep feelings, of the very finest order of unselfish sympathies, had been abandoned to the tormentor, whose ruthless pleasure was to lacerate, and trample, and taunt it.

Day after day, month after month, had flitted past Eugenia; yet so absorbed had been every energy of mind and body in one relentless sorrow, that all time—the hours of light and of the sleepless darkness—had become as one long day, whose night must be in death—whose lurid sun would have its setting in the grave. She had received no tidings of Francesco; and when her thoughts were gloomiest, her only lingering support, the feeling, in spite of all things, that he yet loved her, would fail. “He is too happy,” she would then say, “to seek association with the wretched; and it is wise and well that it should be so.

He has made his election, and rejected me. The peaceful grave has its calm welcome, and with a little while more of endurance all will cease. I must wait here till their union ; their marriage bell shall bid the sexton prepare my bed for me also."

The joyous beams of a summer sunrise, which no bars could intercept, shone cheerfully into the narrow cells of Santa Lucia. Eugenia stood at the small window of her chamber, and looked forth musingly on the extended roof of a wing of the building. Her dark Dominican robes repulsed the light of the glorious orb which had thus mercifully entered that abode of melancholy, as the heart within rejected the consolation of its cheerful brightness.

All about that solitary settlement was at rest. No eye might see how many victims of self-sepulchred loveliness were waking at that hour—how many tearful glances looked without hope on the breaking of another day. No step yet trod the arcaded cloisters ; no living form broke with intercepting

shadow the unity of the frescoed imagery on those time-honoured walls. It was not on the storied lunettes of the opposite cloisters that the fixed and tearless glance of Eugenia Capponi had settled with so deep an interest ;—between her and them lay the usual enclosed space of ground whose many crosses and undulatory surface sufficiently pointed it out as the last home of the Sisters of Dominic. A thick, rank vegetation covered it ; the graceful lizard darted from time to time across the several beds in which the dead slept ; and over the tall white crucifix which rose from its centre, the earliest rays of the breaking day poured their soft rich light, as if in homage.

“ This day,” said Eugenia, musingly, “ should be my Luisa’s wedding-day ; and, if my busy fancy tell me not amiss, it should also be *theirs*. And hark ! now come the chimes of our convent bells ; they have bethought them of their welcome for the greeting of the brides. Ha ! do my senses again deride me ? In truth, who rings—the

sacristan or the sexton?—they are slow and sullen sounds. My ear is surely on the watch for the call of the welcome spectre. Alas, what a vain, utterly vain and fruitless struggle!—one after another, all my faculties mock me. I confuse the tones of mirth and mourning; I no longer know living things from corpses, nor members that have life from those already mouldering. But surely, surely, my poor Luisa's marriage-bell sounds full mournfully."

It was truly an unusual welcome from the altar to the bride, that slow and intermittent toll which reached the ear of Eugenia. It was no illusion of a disordered imagination, but the distinct and solemn greeting which the church vaults give to those who have bought residences within them for evermore—to those who will be seen no more in the busy streets, whose very stones have become their friends from constant fellowship, nor in the assemblies of men, where their vacancy was forestalled. It was no voice of joy, no festal sound; it was the

voice of Death, calling to his victim to come to that dwelling in the cold earth which awaited him.

That day had been appointed for the wedding of Luisa Strozzi; and the church attached to the convent in which her friend resided had been chosen by her for its celebration, at the request of Eugenia, who had expressed a resolution to attend it. The lights stood upon the altar; an aged priest, the same who had blessed the union of Luisa's parents, stood ready to receive her; the whole building was filled with the odour of flowers; yet over their heads still rolled the solemn tones of the death-bell.

The portals of the church were thrown open, and, strangely mingling the glare and gloom of marriage garments and of mourning, were seen the attendants upon a bride, radiant with youth, and hope, and loveliness, and those upon a corpse—ominous intruder on a scene of joy!

There was another contrast, besides that of life and death, perceptible in the two proces-

sions which entered the church. It was one scarcely less widely marking the objects of association or aversion;—it was that of poverty and wealth. The escort of the bride was not numerous, but it was of the highest and proudest of the city. The corpse had no train; the officials of the Misericordia were performing, for the love of God, the last functions of charity; and a single individual had come to mourn. Yet life and its splendours dared not to question the supremacy of its victor, death. The poor and humble funeral had the pathway of precedence, and it advanced with a slow step up the centre of the church; and almost pace for pace accompanying it, moved the bride and her bridal train. They knew that the church was the common point of union for the corpse as well as for the bride, and that its vaulted roof as often resounded with the solemn harmonies of the dirge—that festive farewell of man to the departed — as with the music of the marriage mass; and though thus inopportunately reminded of

life's brevity, neither Luisa Strozzi nor her young husband interpreted the mirth-marring casualty of that meeting as an intended warning.

Men set down from their shoulders in the middle of the church the burden which would need the charities of its kind no more ; they knew that calm was on the confined features, and that when a little earth had been thrown over it, it would be at rest for ever. What that still form had been, or had hoped to be, it mattered little ; its name had been blotted out of the calendar of life ; it was one of countless millions of dark erasures, which, one by one, at irregular intervals, blacken that ancient volume, and to which man vainly strives by his registers of baptisms and funerals to form an index, and defeat oblivion, which shall defeat him and all his works. For the survivors, whose hearts are made orphans by bereavement, the gentle and the consoler should keep their compassion ; and seldom had the lot of mortal been more pitiable than his who

walked up the aisle of the church side by side with the dead.

That solitary mourner was Francesco, the young student ; and the cold corpse, still dearer to him than life, than all life contained, was the ill-fated girl Teresa. He had loved her as an infant, as a child, and as a beautiful and chaste maiden ; and now, with her corpse he had come to bury all that was youthful in heart and feeling. The torch of a bright intellect, of a pure spirit, which had burned for her guidance, could not, indeed, cease to give its light ; but its beam henceforth would have none to cherish it ; it must burn away wastefully, till with life it should be consumed.

Francesco, as he walked up the church, was unsupported, and he had no tear upon his cheek. He perceived not the cold shudder which shook the limbs of the beautiful Luisa Strozzi as he passed her, and she recognised him ; nor was he aware that round the torch-lit centre, where the coffin rested, that fair girl and her lover, turning

aside from their flower-strewn and joyous pathway, had come, intermingling their glittering dresses with the sad livery of the tomb, and were kneeling with those who came to mourn.

From her solitary cell, Eugenia Capponi had at last descended to the church ; her stately and slow step sufficed to lead her to the mingled groups. So intent were all parties on the scene before their eyes, and so ghost-like and noiseless had been her gliding step, that none noticed her coming, none saw the sudden and death-like stroke which precipitated her to the earth. From the cold pavement, behind the column at whose base she had fallen, she was taken up when both the ceremonies of the day had been performed.

Francesco, as he went outward from the church, distinguished not over whose prostrate form he stepped. She was carried motionless and corpse-like to her bed, by the side of which the gentle Luisa, now her sister, spent the time stolen from the treasured pre-

sence of a fond husband. It was long feared that health was past recal ; but the voice of hope pleaded eloquently from the sweet lips of her consoler, and the soft air of a bright and balmy season lifted her gently from her couch, as the wave lifts a buoyant swimmer.

The season of the vintage, which borders on the gloom of the last days of autumn, as did the marriage of the Strozzi on the funeral of Teresa, was now approaching, and Eugenia Capponi was led out for the first time, from the abandoned and sullen city, into the fragrant and joyous fields, then, of all times, most musical with the voice of song and laughter. Every hill abounded with groups of merry maidens ; and they who had looked long on the dark side of the picture of life did well to go out and view it then, for it was the holiday of infancy and youth, and the forms and voices of those two ages harmonized, as the heart and ear and eye could best desire them. From vineyard to vineyard, from the trellis-work avenues of the plain to the less

regular tiers of terraced vines, where the crooked olives held up, as of old did the tottering fawn above his head, the bunches of the blushing grape, the bounding forms of happy girls were glancing everywhere.

Luisa, the lovely bride, from whose cheek the blush seemed never destined to depart, had undertaken truly a task of charity;—it was to lure back to the sympathies of life a heart which, by most, was judged already dead; and it was in pursuance of her unwearying care that, towards the end of autumn, she led out her friend Eugenia to the classic groves of Careggi.

The villa of Luisa's father, Filippo Strozzi, neighboured on that of Lorenzo de Medici. The spot was more famed by the memories which dwelt, like undying flowers, around it, than by its own tame scenery; and the affectionate heart of Luisa had conjectured wisely that the associations of that spot (and she had long since learned its secret) would well help her in her task.

It chanced that one evening they went

out, as usual, to watch the glories of the sinking sun, as they rested on the ruined walls and blackened and half-consumed portals of the palace villa, which had been built by Cosimo, and rendered famous by the birth and life and death of Lorenzo within its walls. After they had mused away the first hour of twilight, calling back the scenes of the late stormy times, when Carducci, in the audacity of his power, had sent forth incendiaries to burn that palace of proud memories to the ground,—when they had seen the bright moon silvering that gloomy building, Eugenia turned aside from the path homewards, and seated herself on the trunk of an ancient olive, to weep alone. Softly, sweetly as the dew that fell upon her rich tresses, as the moonlight that bathed her beautiful figure, came over her spirit the memories of other days. The gloom of the last months was forgotten : she called to mind the pale brow, the eloquent voice of Francesco, before she loved him ; the grateful and glowing language of his

thanks for her watching when he first awoke from his long malady ; and when the tender passages of the many interviews of those days had given her courage, she encountered one by one, the phantoms which had been her tormentors ; and after awhile she rose from her seat, and, with a prayer upon her lips, turned her face to the mountains, her back to the home of Luisa, and followed whither a merciful spirit had been sent to lead her.

A small cottage, hidden in the shadowy solitudes of pathless pine forests, on the highest ledge of the mountainous belt of Apennine, concealed the first meeting of Eugenia and him she went to seek. The sleepless waterfall, with its rejoicing music, intercepted the sounds of the voices as they passed the threshold. The solemn secrets of that meeting none ever knew, and they were never again alluded to.

From that day forward the fair Luisa had a lighter task, in cheering and in winning back the happy spirit of other days. Several

months passed away ; spring was again upon the earth ; and a wedding train issued from the princely mansion of the Capponi towards the church of Santa Croce ; for there, where lay the honoured ashes of his great preceptor, Francesco felt that he should find the eternal sympathies of the glorious dead.

There, in the presence of Luisa and her husband—on whose brow that very day fell the first shadow—Francesco and Eugenia were at last married.

From the church, Francesco led his bride instantly from Florence, as from a pest-house, leaving behind him the rumour that the beautiful Eugenia had espoused a citizen of Lucca.

Those few who had known the poor student in other days, and beheld shortly the wonderful splendour of his mode of life after his nuptials, presumed that he had inherited the immense riches of Carducci, the ruler of the State's finances in times that admitted of no very deep scrutiny into their administration. It was indeed true that all

**this vast wealth had, by the singular clemency of a calculating government, and at the urgent request of Francesco Guicciardini, been allowed to take the course destined for it by the will of the unfortunate magistrate, and had fallen to the possession of one who, for years, had not possessed wherewith to buy the very garments that covered him, and who yet, by a more singular freak of fortune, at the moment of receiving that vast bequest, was already wealthy beyond even his own power of ascertaining or imagining. None knew of the far mightier hoards of the monk Brandano, which had been bequeathed to him ; certainly none lived to contest his inheritance.**

There was a pleasant novelty, to one unused to wealth, in the adaptation of this long-hoarded treasure to the purposes of life's luxuries and decorations. It was the age of paintings and of palaces ; and the immortal hand of Michael Angelo was yet gifted with the power to strike the rock, and

prove, by miracle, the supremacy of his fellow-citizens in nature's favour.

But oh ! far beyond all that the treasures of the earth could give was the sight of the sparkling eye, the sweet cheek, the joyous brow, of the noble, the beautiful wife who made his home a paradise ! In the busy city, in the oft-sought solitude of matchless scenery, the charm, the ecstasy of all things, was in the sweet lip that made them all mute witnesses of her ever-overflowing love, and in her never-dying smile, that lighted and gladdened all things.

Eugenia had long pined in solitude ; the sweetest influences of life had been long frozen in her bosom ; and now, with a sudden and bright mutation, her destiny had been reversed, and most copiously did she drink of the long tantalizing cup of joy that was at last ceded to her. Not the minutest cloud, the very smallest speck, dimmed the sparkling mirror of her happiness. She at least had never known the love

and loss of any other object. Even in the immaculate dreamings of her maidenly fancy, love had forced upon her solitude some airy semblance of its joys; and the tormentor, sated with the cruelty of his long trial, was now repaying all with the inebriating delights of fruition. There was no feature on the face of universal nature without its smile for her. A veil, odorous and roseate with the tints of love's bloomy breath, was spread between her vision and every object of earth; all things administered to nature's voice harmoniously; beauty and happiness seemed to dwell, like palpable atoms, in every visible object of creation.

Who that has not suffered as she suffered shall comprehend the extent of her triumph? We dwelt long upon the sad chapter of her trial, and may be excused for picturing one faint image of her reward.

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The sumptuous dwelling which Francesco built for his bride may yet be visited in the

city he chose for his residence. His posterity has not perished ; and in their possession are said still to be many curious relics of that famous pilgrimage of Brandano and De Bourbon to the shrines of the Apostles.

THE END.







