NORMAN LESLIE.

A TALE OF THE PRESENT TIMES.

"You shall see anon; 'tis a knavish piece of work."
Hamlet.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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NORMAN LESLIE.

CHAPTER I.

In which, what seemed finished appears to have only commenced.

"How shall we hope for mercy, rendering none?"
SHYLOCK.

"HUSH!" cried the nurse, "he sleeps."

"How has he passed the last four hour s?" whispered the doctor.

"Quiet as an infant. His pain has left him. He fell into a doze after taking the medicine, and has stirred neither hand nor foot since."

They stepped cautiously towards the bed, and gazed upon the features of the poor, unconscious old man, with that silent and steady examination with which the living contemplate the dying or the dead,—awed—horror-struck—plunged in mystic fear and wonder at the vast changes in the fleshly temple, and those far more vast and sublime which have stricken the interior, breaking its lighted altar, and leaving aisles dark and abandoned.

"He's dreadfully fallen away, doctor. His actions lately have been very strange; but he appeared

more settled and sensible before his slumber. Do you think there is any hope?"

The doctor compressed his lips, and shook his head.

"None, nurse, none; the good old man cannot last the day."

"He has lived a pure life," said the nurse. "He has been a charitable and a religious man, and a kind friend to me." Alice wiped her eyes with the corner of her apron. "I shall never get such another."

The physician gave some trivial instructions.

"Can you not stay, doctor, and see the end?" asked Alice.

"No, good Alice, my presence can avail him nothing; but there are others less hopeless whom I am bound to see. This poor old man's heart is broken beyond the reach of medicine."

"Hush!" said the nurse, as a murmured name broke from the lips of the dying father.

"Rosalie—Rosalie! My child—my child! Save her—do not kill—Leslie—Leslie!" Drops of agony stood on the dreamer's forehead.

"Wake him," said the doctor; "this agitation will destroy him."

With a gentle hand on his skeleton fingers, the honest nurse dispelled the horrid vision.

"Ah! where am I?" said he, with a feeble and repining voice, opening his glassy eyes—which now, from the sunken proportions of his ashy face, appeared strangely large—and rolling them fearfully round, with a vacant stare upon his companions.

"It is I, Mr. Romain—Alice, and the good Doctor Melbourne," said the nurse, carefully wiping his damp forehead with a handkerchief.

"Oh, true—I was dreaming of my poor daughter."

"My good friend," said the doctor, "how are you this morning?"

"Oh—better—thank you—much better," he said, drawing his short breath quickly with nearly every word; "I shall be well soon."

He smiled. What is there so ghastly as the smile of a dying man unconscious of his situation?

"Alice," he said, peevishly, "what is the reason Rosalie stays—so that—"

His faint breath was exhausted; his heavy eyes closed again; and he sank once more into a doze.

"Yes," said the nurse, "there it is; the murder of poor, dear Miss Rosalie has broken the old man's heart."

"But you should not say *murder*, nurse," said the doctor; "it is decided, after an adequate examination, that Miss Romain was not murdered, at least by that unfortunate Norman Leslie."

"Not *murdered!*" echoed the nurse, in a vehement and sudden whisper. She took the doctor by the lappel of his coat, and led him from the bed towards an embrasure of the window. "Doctor Melbourne, that wretch, that monster Leslie *is* her *murderer*, as sure as the sun is in heaven!—all the world knows it."

"Nay, nurse—nay, this is not right," said the doctor, gravely. "I am sorry to find the people so generally withholding their sanction from the deliberate verdict of a jury. The sufferings of poor Leslie touch my heart."

"Blood for blood!" said the nurse, her generally mild features animated with indignation and merciless revenge.

"But, Mistress Alice, 'judge not, lest ye be judged!'"

"Whatever be the truth," said the old woman, solemnly—"and God knows it, and will judge the wicked—Mr. Romain has lived, and will die, with the belief that Norman Leslie killed his daughter, to hide from him and the world the base and cruel

arts he had used against her, and to her destruction. I have never spoken to any one but yourself, doctor, who was not of this same opinion."

"Sorry to hear it—sorry to hear it, Alice. A good citizen should not only obey, but respect, the laws. In no country are they better and more wisely and impartially administered, than in our own. It is cruel and wicked to persecute this unhappy man, regularly and fully acquitted by a court of justice. He is already half-destroyed with this affair. I fear it will weigh him down yet, and drive him to some desperate extremity."

"I hope it may—all the world hopes it may," cried Alice. "Look at that poor, poor old man, his gray hairs brought down in sorrow to the grave. Father and daughter—both fallen beneath *his* hand. He who did this has money—wealth can work wonders: he has got himself acquitted—in what way they best know who acquitted him; but the bloody *murderer* walks the streets, free and independent, seeking whom else he may devour—the horror of every one that sees him. If I were a man, I would strike him down in the street. Let him look to himself—time will show. He should be, and will be, hunted down like a wild beast. Were I to meet him, old woman as I am, I do believe I should tear his eyes out with my own hands. God forgive me for such feelings, and by the bed of death, too!" And the highly excited old woman wiped her eyes, which were full of tears.

"Mistress Alice, Mistress Alice," said the doctor, "while you exclaim against one crime, take care you be not guilty of another yourself: the terrible odium poured upon the head of that wretched and persecuted man must sooner or later overwhelm him; he will die, and his blood will be upon the heads of his oppressors."

"Never a bit," replied Alice; "the devil will take

care of his own. Oh, doctor, that this blood-stained assassin should walk the streets is a crying shame and disgrace to the country! I repeat—let him look to himself: I have heard hard things said of him; there are eyes on him he little suspects. I do think the news of his sacrifice would sweeten the last moments of that dying old man."

"Monstrous! Alice, monstrous! you speak almost blasphemy. I have heard much talk of this kind lately. If you have friends capable of injuring Leslie, as your words imply, warn them, Alice, of their wickedness and danger. The law would take terrible vengeance upon them, should it come before the court."

"Oh yes, forsooth," said Alice; "upon the *poor* it would doubtless fall; but the rich can escape, no matter what *they* have done. Doctor, doctor, I tell you—mark my words—safe as he thinks himself, that Norman Leslie is on the brink of a precipice, and no one will pity him—the villain, the monster!"

Words were wasted upon the enraged old woman, and the doctor left her without reply.

CHAPTER II.

A Suspicion.

"This fellow's of exceeding honesty,
And knows all qualities, with a learned spirit,
Of human dealings."—*Othello.*

An eminent physician beholds human nature in a gloomy light; and he who had just left the bed of Mr. Romain was one of the most skilful and highly esteemed. His noble and gentlemanly appearance; his bland and soothing manner; his sterling sense; his profound knowledge upon general subjects, as well as on his own dignified profession; his ever cheerful spirits, and excellent heart, rendered him a delightful companion even when a necessary one. Happily married to a woman who brought him a large fortune, independent of his own ample income, a family of sons and daughters were growing up in usefulness and happiness about him; and his broad forehead was just sufficiently touched with silver to make him the more appropriate adviser for those of the fair sex whose fastidiousness, or whose delicacy, might less frankly receive the assiduity and advice of younger men. How many essentials are there, besides professional skill, to the complete character of a great physician! His very manners and appearance had in them something soothing; something that hushed alarm, quieted nervous apprehensions, restored hope and confidence, and made the morbid and the cowardly ashamed of their terrors. Prompt to the call of

pain, he was ever punctually ready—toiling more for humanity than reward—dispelling, like a good spirit, torment and danger, and guarding from agony and death. As life is the essence and foundation of all other blessings, so he who preserves it exercises a most elevated and noble office; and if his duties bring him often into the midst of wo and mourning —if he is daily compelled to behold the soul and body separated (for the time must come to all when no earthly aid can save)—what a cheering and supporting offset does he possess in the reflection that many walk the blessed earth, behold the sky and sweet nature, and bless friends and relations with their presence, whom *his* hand had rescued from the yawning grave. Oh, what joy! what divine power! to come the saviour of a terrified and weeping circle; to raise up the half-lost form of some sweet child, or lovely girl; to give back to life a father, a wife, a son; to say unto the dying, who are already mourned as dead, "Arise, and walk."

Doctor Melbourne had known Leslie, and admired him sincerely. With the rest of the world, he had been sometimes staggered by the weight of evidence brought against him, not only at the trial, but subsequently through the medium of the public journals. A good citizen, however, as well as a benevolent man, he willingly waived his own opinion in favour of the verdict, and resolved to believe and to advocate the innocence of the unfortunate victim of general persecution.

We must remark here, that in no quarter of the globe are the laws more purely and properly administered than in the United States. The decisions are probably as equitable as it is in the nature of human laws to be. In no country, too, are they regarded with more universal reverence and confiding submission. If injustice occurs, it appears in those fantastic combinations of accidental circum-

stances—exceptions in the usual order of society—which the broad and immutable course of a general law cannot be turned aside to correct; but the law itself is acknowledged to be, as far as mortal institutions may be, broadly and beneficially adapted—without being warped by barbarous ages, or distorted into uncouth shapes to suit present individual interests—wisely and impartially to the whole body of the people. No currents flow to favour particular persons or classes. The mass of the people, however, in all ages, and under every form of government, contain materials, or classes, liable to be inflamed by accidental causes; and the majesty of mankind, or rather their strength and power, exhibits itself at times independent of law—examining how far the bonds they have consented to wear continue to be adapted to the public good. These outbreaks and excitements are inherent to the state of all earthly things. The healthiest individual has his moments of depression—of illness and pain; the gentlest, the most disciplined, are sometimes agitated with passion or affected with anguish; climes of heavenly purity are awakened by the thunder, the volcano, and the earthquake;—and no government will ever be invented to exclude from the ever-floating and heaving world of human feeling those turbulent ebbs and flows, those fiery outbursts, which, amid the universal beauty and order, carry wreck and terror through the realms of nature herself.

Doctor Melbourne drove from the dwelling of Mr. Romain to another and yet more elegant mansion. Had his visit not been a sufficient sign, there were other indications which betrayed, even to the careless observer, the presence of sickness in the house of Mr. Temple—once so adorned with gayety and beauty, and so bright with the midnight revel. The knocker was muffled—the bell was tied—the

window-shutters closed—and the pavement before the door thickly bedded with the soft bark of the tanner, over which the wheels of every passing carriage rolled inaudibly.

The doctor found the family abandoned to dark forebodings—perhaps more painful than excited anguish. The illness and apparently approaching death of Flora were afearful and a frightful lesson to remind them that they belonged to earth, and were linked, in the midst of their blessings—with the lowest and vilest—to wretchedness and danger. Bitter was the pang of each passing hour that stole the hue from the cheek, and the graceful roundness from the form, of that lovely, lovely girl—that softened and etherealized her gay sweet spirit with the prospect of the grave. Vainly had all human means been exhausted. Day by day, week by week, she grew paler and paler, thinner and thinner—more feeble, helpless, and hopeless. They who loved her most no longer questioned whether she could recover, but how long she could remain on earth. Mr. Temple started from his careless pursuit of pleasure, and concentrated all the energies and anxieties of his soul upon this single theme. Mrs. Temple's majestic form bent beneath the affliction and assiduity that preyed upon her day and night, and her eyes ever bore traces of bitter tears. The servants wept—the groom wiped his eyes as he curried his horses—every messenger whom business, or chance, or friendship brought to the house of sorrow trod with apprehension and awe as he approached the door; and the whispered inquiry, given with half-held breath and beating heart, was ever the prelude to, "Oh, fading, fading fast away! Oh, worse—much, much worse!"

Poor Flora!—every one remembered the bright and blooming girl. Whose cheek so radiant? whose eye so full of joy and kindness? Her voice and step filled the house with cheerfulness. Her presence shed a light and a peace even upon the poor and

the unhappy. There was not a beggar, a decrepit old woman in the neighbourhood, whose ear had not learned to hear that sweet voice—whose heart had not beat with quicker pleasure at the approach of that light step. Old John, the wood-sawyer—a rough and ragged wretch, whose heart had stood the storms of seventy years—came every morning to the door, asked after his young mistress, and turned away with the great tears rolling down his cheeks like rain. Poor, poor Flora! Every heart trembled for her.

Some there were, however—envious, perhaps, of the prosperity of the Temples, or offended at their display—who did not hesitate, with that exquisite cruelty and malice—a very snare of Satan—which people of the most ostentatious piety sometimes fall into (so blind, so weak is the human heart), to declare aloud, and with cold indifference, not totally free from a tincture of gratification, that "the calamity of their daughter was a judgment upon the Temples from a revengeful Heaven, for having wasted their wealth in idle pleasure."

Amid all this dismal sorrow Flora was calm and unsubdued. Her patient and unresisting gentleness and sweetness yielded without repining, as a lamb on the altar. Her voice, though faint and low, was sweeter in its tremulous tones; her manner had gained a new, an indescribable grace and softness; and over her countenance had stolen a beauty so touching, so exquisite, so unearthly, that even those beholders who did not weep stood to wonder. She spent hours of the day in a large easy-chair, clothed in a robe of vestal white—her fragile and beautiful form supported by pillows and cushions. Sometimes she was assisted in a laborious walk across the room, and sometimes moved near the window, and breathed the air which the now rich autumn blew gently in loaded with incense. Her

continued cheerfulness, her uncomplaining and angelic nature, her gentle tenderness to all about her, every eloquent look, every accidental word, bound her as with a spell to all hearts, and was treasured carefully in all memories to be dwelt on and repeated when the eyes that shed, the lips that breathed them, should exist but in the minds of the survivors. In her gayest and brightest moments, never had she wielded such a power over the affections.

It is impossible at any time to look on a thing so fair, except with extreme interest: but when sickness descends upon her; when pain racks her young limbs, even as it does that of a common brute; when we see the cords of life and happiness gradually relaxed and falling to pieces; when we gaze on her patient, sweet face, as something doomed to pass away prematurely with ordinary vulgar things, to fall and fade, like the leaves and the flowers: oh, in the bosom that loves, the impressions of sadness and agony are indeed almost unendurable.

Mr. and Mrs. Temple received Doctor Melbourne with speechless wo.

"How is she to-day, my dearest friends?" inquired he.

Tears were his answer, till Mrs. Temple, sobbing, replied—

"Weaker, weaker, doctor; and dearer as she passes away."

"Oh, doctor," cried Mr. Temple, "Flora is already an angel. Day by day she has less of earth and more of heaven; soon we shall be utterly alone. I cannot bear it—I cannot bear it! Oh, Melbourne, save my daughter!"

"Be calm, my good friends: I do not attempt to console you—I cannot; only be patient under the will of the Almighty: my heart bleeds for you. I can only sympathize with you. May God avert this calamity from your house."

He took Mr. Temple's hand, who, in return, grasped his with convulsive energy; and turning away his face, the hardness of his breath, the heaving of his bosom, announced the dire pangs with which, alone, this deeply-rooted affection could be wrenched from his heart.

"Come," said the doctor, kindly and cheerfully, after a moment of silence, "let us see the dear girl."

The mother, with noiseless step, and wiping her eyes, carefully disentangled the hand of the doctor from that of her afflicted husband, and led him gently to the chamber of Flora.

It was a bewildering morning; the sunshine gleamed delightfully in through the crimson curtains, the flowers were all blooming in the garden, and the birds sang merrily beneath the windows. Flora was seated in her large chair, with a little stand before her, on which lay a book.

"My daughter," said Mrs. Temple, "here is Doctor Melbourne."

"Ah, dear mother—doctor"—she held out her faded hand, and with a smile—"what a trouble I am to you!"

"Come," said the doctor, with a cheerful encouraging air; "we must talk awhile with the naughty sick girl: how does she do to-day?"

"Naughty, doctor, as you say; I have forgotten your injunctions, and indulged myself for a few moments with reading. I think I feel stronger to-day."

"We shall send you off somewhere in the country," said the doctor; "you are too confined here in this close noisy town; and the air is changeable: we must take her into a kinder climate, into a more cheerful land. Come, Miss Flora, what do you say to a soft, delicious clime all the year round; where oranges and lemons bloom through the whole winter, and where snow never approaches nearer the green

and flowery vale than the peaked tops of silver that shine from the clouds; where the mild sunshine never ceases to warm, and the bright verdure never passes away? What say you to a land of such beauty and enchantment? What say you to *Italy?*"

"Oh, doctor," said Flora, with a languid smile, "I think all my youthful feelings are dead in my bosom; a few months ago, such a thought would have kept me wakeful for joy; but now"—a half-audible sigh escaped her lips.

"Why, my child?" asked the doctor.

"And why, my beloved Flora?" said Mrs. Temple, kneeling down affectionately, taking her hand and pressing it to her lips, while the doctor held the other, and ever and anon felt the pulse.

The pale and feeble girl sighed, but returned no answer.

"You are doing very well this morning," said the doctor. "I have seen a poor man who would like to own a pulse so strong and regular as this—the father of that unfortunate Rosalie Romain—Ha!" he exclaimed suddenly, and in a changed tone.

"What is the matter?" said Mrs. Temple.

"I was surprised," replied the doctor, "at the sudden leaping of the pulse—what! it is quieter now—so—so. I have been reprimanding Romain's old nurse for her bitter denunciations of that unhappy being, poor Norman—Ha! again!" cried the doctor.

A transient colour passed across the face of Flora, and she lowered her eyes.

The doctor shook his head. He was a man of the world, and knew where to read the complaints that wore away the body of his fellow-creatures elsewhere than in books. He thought there was more in this than met the eye.

CHAPTER III.

A Discovery.

"There, in thy scanty mantle clad,
Thy snowy bosom sun-ward spread,
Thou lifts thy unassuming head
In humble guise;
But now the *share* uptears thy bed,
And low thou lies!
BURNS.

As the doctor entered the adjoining room, Mrs. Temple followed, and he desired to speak with her and her husband again.

"I am going to ask something," said he; "but I believe we are scarcely calm enough to-day."

"Speak—oh speak!" said Mr. Temple; "if it concern Flora, another day may be too late."

"Well, then, hear me without shrinking. It is my duty to tell you!"

The mother motioned her hand for him not to proceed, and hid her face.

"Nay, I am not in despair about your daughter's recovery, but it is my duty to tell you that she is in a most perilous crisis. Her disorder increases. It has baffled my skill; but I am induced to believe, from something which has taken place this morning, that we have not fully understood her disease. You ascribe it to cold and agitation at the trial of Leslie."

"Yes; that monster will have her life to answer for as well as poor Rosalie's. She was obliged to attend as a witness, and there took this fatal disorder."

"You know, Mrs. Temple," said the doctor, "that I have at times thought Flora troubled with some secret grief."

"Oh, doctor," replied Mrs. Temple, "what grief, secret or known, could Flora Temple have ever suffered? She was never from our sight! She never had a wish ungratified."

"In these cases, sometimes," added the doctor, "the affections prey upon the heart."

"Affections! it is utterly impossible. She has been ever sought by all."

"And all have been refused?" inquired the doctor.

"Always, always!" was the reply.

"Many offers rejected?"

"Many, very many," said Mr. Temple; "the richest—the noblest!"

"I think Flora Temple would scarcely *love* in *vain!*" added the proud mother, haughty even in her grief, and with a sarcastic tone; "*that* tale would meet with *little* credit."

"Has she been accustomed to see no one who might awaken an interest in her?"

"None, none! I know her heart. It is pure, and free as ice from such a feeling. I have myself often *wondered* at it. She not only never loves, but, by her actions and words, never admits the possibility of her loving; and yet her nature is all affection."

"And it was at Leslie's trial she took this illness?"

"That fatal trial," said the father.

"And since that period, she has declined to her present state?" pursued the doctor. "Do not be offended or surprised at any questions I may ask."

"You alarm me," said Mrs. Temple.

"Was your daughter acquainted with Norman Leslie previous to this trial?"

"No, no!" answered the mother, with an expres-

sion of anger; "she cannot be said to have been acquainted."

"He visited us," said Mr. Temple, "perhaps once a month, and remained a half-hour at a time."

"Heaven forbid," ejaculated the mother, "that she should be insulted by the name of his acquaintance."

"Is it quite *impossible* that your daughter—" The doctor paused, in some embarrassment.

"Doctor Melbourne," said Mrs. Temple, with severe gravity, and a little elevating her bust, "you do not mean to insult us in our misery?"

"Let us once more enter her chamber, madam," said the doctor: "watch her face as I speak from a distance; and, as you value her health, her life, express no surprise."

They re-entered. The momentary gayety of Flora was gone. She sat in her chair languid and pale, and scarcely spoke as the doctor once more took her unresisting hand.

"My dear young lady," said he, "you must not despond; you are really better to-day; I do hope to make you well."

She closed her eyes, and, with a heavy sigh, shook her head.

"Here have been visiters to see you this morning, your mother tells me, and they have all gone away with the hope of your recovery. Count Clairmont called."

"He is very good," said Flora quietly.

"And Mr. Morton."

"Poor Morton!" said she, with a faint smile of half-remembered humour.

"And Mr. Moreland," added the doctor, walking carelessly to the window.

"I never shall forget the eloquence of Mr. Moreland," replied Flora, with a long-drawn sigh.

"And, as I entered," continued the doctor, with

the same air of careless inattention—"there stood at the door and made many kind inquiries after you, our poor friend Norman Leslie.—Look," said the doctor to the mother, in a whisper only audible to her ear; "be convinced." He withheld her from springing to Flora.

"There has been Captain Forbes of the army, and a whole host of others," continued he, aloud, and calmly, as if he had noticed nothing. "They all join in their warmest prayers for your recovery, and recommend you to fly this cold climate."

"Has she ever heard any thing respecting Leslie?" inquired the doctor, when they were again alone.

"Nothing but casual conversation concerning his guilt, his infamy, and the general execration in which he is held."

"And has she never asked concerning him?"

"Never."

"Not one question?"

"Nothing."

"Nor desired to know aught of the man whom she avowed herself to believe innocent? never even mentioned the name at the bare sound of which she thus starts and trembles?"

The mother clasped her hands in a new impulse of agitation.

"Mrs. Temple," said the doctor, solemnly, "your daughter *loves*. The lightest word of Norman Leslie is dearer to her young heart than all the world beside.

CHAPTER IV.

An unexpected Medicine.

"Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased?"
Macbeth.

EARLY the next morning Doctor Melbourne visited, as usual, the mansion of Mr. Romain. All was over. The old man had breathed his last. The news of his decease was already abroad, and exercised a very unfavourable influence upon the general indignation against Leslie.

In a few moments he was once more at Mr. Temple's. Since his last visit he had taken occasion to inquire, and his suspicions of Flora's true malady were more than confirmed. It appeared now beyond a doubt, even to Mrs. Temple, that her daughter had entertained a secret attachment for Leslie; an attachment greatly enhanced by his late danger and present situation. In the first place, she knew, or at least thought she knew, him innocent. The awful event which had involved his reputation and happiness; the struggle of her soul, necessarily concealed, even from a mother; the shock of his arrest for murder—for the murder of one of their familiar companions; the excitement, the hope, the terror of the trial; the unexpected, overwhelming news of his acquittal; the odium, and fearful peril which yet hung over him—all fell with a blighting, and crushing power, upon a heart which had never before known sorrow. The cold and almost bitter sternness, too, with which, at the trial, he whom in secret she loved disclaimed the possi-

bility of affection on the part of either, had gone to her heart like a poisoned arrow, and left a wound rankling beyond the reach of medicine.

It appeared that she had attended the trial, not on compulsion, but, as Mr. Loring had stated, voluntarily, having privately written, on the first day, the nature of the fact which she was able to testify. The letter had been accidentally mislaid before it reached the intended hand, which caused the lateness of the period at which she was introduced. How her sensitive and shrinking nature had endured that ordeal, made more fiery by the inconsiderate vehemence of the profession, the reader is already aware. At her urgent request she had remained with her father till the return of the verdict. Not a sound had she uttered to betray the agony with which she watched the ebbs and flows of opinion—with which she beheld that haughty, that beloved form, enduring, with fierce and unnatural calmness, the cold inquiry—the quiet sneer—the rude gaze—and the storm of denunciation from all the various throng of judge, jury, counsel, and spectator. On her return home commenced the attack, whose frightful ravages had at length brought her to the great world's edge.

Under these circumstances, the course to be adopted was, to her parents, a source of painful embarrassment. That Leslie was guilty, few, very few pretended to doubt. The doctor ventured to express a belief in his innocence; but he perceived at once that it was in vain. Mrs. Temple, from some secret antipathy, had conceived a dislike to him, heightened, probably, by his open contempt for her favourite Clairmont. She would not admit the idea of his innocence.

"It is my duty," said the doctor, at last, "to say what I think. The mind and the body are so wonderfully connected by such subtle fibres—so inter-

twined with each other in their millions and millions of reciprocal influences—that I frankly declare their mutual operations baffle the skill of surgery, and may alike disappoint every hope and every fear. They act upon rules independent of our art. Your daughter suffers under no *cold*. Her disease is in *the mind;* we must minister to that—we must pluck from the memory the rooted sorrow. If Mrs. Temple will allow me to confess my thoughts—"

"Speak."

"I believe Norman Leslie an innocent and noble being. In faith I *know it*. Juries and judges, editors and the world at large, may be deceived by evidence; but he who looks narrowly into the human heart, when sickness is on it, when death is near, cannot be deceived. He is innocent, and your daughter loves him!"

"Doctor Melbourne does not advise me to link my daughter with an assassin; rather would I see her in her coffin."

"That she should *marry* Leslie," said the doctor, calmly, "can be proposed by no one. That, I know, circumstances do not permit; not the soul-stricken youth himself would dare to dream of union with her. But as he is now about to leave this country for ever, should she know what *I* know, that he loves her, and regards her as an angel to be worshipped, and above his reach; could she but once *know*, but once *see* this, she would part from him with a healed and a peaceful mind. Her heart would be relieved of its present burden. If life must be borne, she would bear it with resignation. If death must be encountered, she would meet it with cheerfulness."

"There is reason in your words," said Mr. Temple.

"And wormwood too," added the wife, with a

haughty frown, her high temper rising even through her grief.

"Emily," said Mr. Temple.

She replied quickly,—

"I know what you would say, but I will never consent. I wish I had burned the letter, as before this I intended. I do not believe, I never will believe in his innocence. She shall never see that letter."

"Emily," rejoined her husband, gravely, after a moment's pause, "she *shall* see the letter."

"Now my dear, dear husband, you cannot, you will not."

"I can, and I will," replied he, kindly, but firmly.

He rarely opposed her; when he did, she knew resistance would be utterly useless, and bit her lip in silence.

"Doctor Melbourne," said Mr. Temple, "I repose in you the most implicit confidence. Your opinion in the innocence of this unfortunate young man coincides with my own. You must know he has written to my daughter, very honourably enclosing to me, with a hint to its contents. It was his desire, he said, as in all probability he should never meet her again, to express his gratitude for her voluntary appearance at his trial, to which he owed his life. He added, however, that the letter might contain sentiments warm beyond the limits of simple gratitude, and he trusted to my honour either to give it to Flora or to burn it *unread*. This conduct is that of an honest, and high-minded man. I sympathize with him sincerely. Flora shall see the letter immediately: she is already doomed; it is our only hope. I will speak with her *myself*."

She had requested to be left alone, and now lay on her pillow, lost in thought. Oh how had she suffered! It was not that the strength had left her once perfect limbs; that her joyous voice had lost all its tone of mirth; that pain had shot across her, and laid its unrelenting hand upon a bosom whose every feeling was pure, compassionate, and tender; but *thought* had stung her with its fiery fang.

Silence was in the apartment, broken by no sound but such as harmonized with it, and rendered it more eloquent and holy. It was an autumn afternoon, the air was still, and bright with the hues and warmth of a mellow heaven. The window was open; a bird sat pluming his feathers on a near branch, ever and anon pouring forth his warbles, as if his little heart overflowed with a gushing fulness of music and joy. A cluster of half-blown roses gathered around the window, all bright and lovely, as once had been her own cherished dreams of life; her soft blue eyes, after wandering out over the painted sky, and upon the bright green of the garden, rested upon the yet unshaded flowers; and thought seemed passing through her mind with a darkening, deepening tide, at first lapsing idly, soft, and tender, then darting with a more impatient and wilder impulse. At length she covered her face with her hands, and the tears burst through her whitened and delicate fingers.

At this moment the door opened gently. It was her father. He came alone, and held in his hand a letter. She strove to brush away her tears, hastily, almost guiltily: she could not; the more she dashed them from her long, drenched lashes, the faster, the heavier, they crowded forth. The softened father, by a kind of intuition, entered at once into her feelings; re-approached and leaned over her bed, his own eyes blinded with the heart's dearest waters. Tenderly, almost convulsively, he folded her to his breast.

"My daughter," he said, "Mr. Leslie—"

He paused again, and looked not on her face as he spoke. The kindness seemed understood; she felt—why, how, she knew not—but she felt that there was confidence between them, sacred confidence, and unmingled, unbounded love. Yielding to the gush and whelming flow of her feelings, she placed her head on his bosom, and wept.

"My child, my child!" broke from his quivering lips. They wept together.

In a few moments, after another embrace, and imprinting upon her forehead a fervid kiss, he withdrew in silence. The letter lay beside her; she opened it tremblingly, breathlessly. Twice, through the gathering and blinding tears, she essayed in vain to find meaning in the characters that floated indistinctly, and all blended together, before her eyes. At length, raising herself from the pillow, and putting back the long hair that fell unheededly around her neck and face, she ran her gaze rapidly over the lines. A flow of crimson suffused her cheek; her eyes softened; her bosom heaved; she pressed wildly the half-read page, again and again, to her lips.

Blissful moment! Death itself came now, radiant with light. No! no, she had not loved in vain.

CHAPTER V.

A midnight Ramble and its consequences.

"Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass that every one that findeth shall slay me."

The storm beat fiercely upon the black, silent houses. Every window and door was closed against night and the tempest. Lightnings enveloped earth and sky. So intensely brilliant was the glare, that every object in the street, every shape of house and tree, the distinct outline of every cloud, were sharply, vividly visible. Peal after peal of thunder burst leaping through the heavens. All nature seemed drenched in an ocean of rain, and the wind roared in the air.

A single form, muffled in a heavy cloak, was the only living thing desperate enough to encounter this discord of the elements. It was Norman Leslie. On the succeeding morning he was to embark for Europe, with little prospect of ever again beholding the country of his birth, of his love, and of his ruin. Rendered by his situation a subject of the most painful curiosity, he had rarely of late ventured out by day. Indeed, from several circumstances that swelled the proof of his guilt, and perhaps from the active hatred and artifices of Clairmont, the public mind was yet more than ever bitterly disposed against him. The night had then been his time for exercise and lonely contemplation. Then he had forth issued like a solitary ghost, prowling around

the haunts of his ancient pleasures; sometimes in the enchanting moonlight, and sometimes in the tempest, his companionless wanderings had been repeated often till the breaking day warned him to retire.

One only idea had relieved his mind during these solitary and brooding hours. It was the declaration that Flora Temple had made while giving her testimony at the trial, that she had *never been affianced in marriage*, and that she had always believed *Mr. Leslie attached to Miss Romain.* It burst upon him like a heaven of warming light to the drooping and benumbed victim of a wintry storm. For a time, it had occupied his mind during the trial even more than his own danger. Strange vicissitudes of life! that in this, his most terrible and perilous crisis, touched his soul with the sweetest bliss he had ever known. Here, then, the whole mystery of Flora's conduct was explained. He had half confided to her the passion that gradually mastered him; nor had his gentle tone, his unguarded looks been reproved. Nay, he had deemed it answered, till Mrs. Temple, in her absorbing admiration of Clairmont and his title, had crushed his opening hopes. From that moment Flora Temple had nearly lost his respect, except when, as vague surmises crossed him respecting Mrs. Temple's veracity, his repressed affection rose again. His manner to the unsuspecting girl had been cold, and studiedly careless.

"Perhaps," he thought, "had I then dared to strive, I might have won an angel to my side. But my rude change of manner, which to her must have seemed the vilest caprice—the most unprincipled fickleness—has now lost her to me for ever."

With these sentiments, he had written to Flora the letter mentioned in the previous chapter. We will not transcribe all its deep and fervid outpourings of love. He flung away every restraint, for

he wrote to one whom he never expected to behold again till they met in a brighter world. It was, therefore, not only a confession—it was a farewell; and full it was of the melancholy poetry and tenderness of his gentle and romantic, but despairing nature. He sought no response—he expected, he wished none. The decree of fate had gone forth. He dared no longer to hope for love. He was doomed to wander through the fartherest climes alone and branded. He bade her, if she had ever thought of him, to forget him—to consider him as one swallowed in the raging sea. Other thoughts than happiness, he said, were now to be his companions. He solicited no love in return—such unmerited bliss it would even be infamy for him to accept. He would link no bright and joyous being with his dark destiny. No beauteous head should bow in darkness and shame by *his* side, to be pointed out by the finger of scorn in the public street—to be blighted with a name, on the lips of ribalds and mockers, now "common as the steps that mount the capitol." No! on this wild earth they would meet no more. Her, his home, his country—he turned his face from all; they were things to him past, though they never could be forgotten. "But," added the glowing and eloquent lover, "I will strive to hear of you even on the opposite side of the globe. I will watch your fate with unsleeping solicitude. I will think of you, love, adore you. Every breeze that wanders, every star that rolls to the beloved west, I will freight with gentle thoughts of you, and blessings on your head. While I live you shall influence me to all that I can accomplish of high and holy; and when death is on me, I will once more waft to you a message, to say how faithfully I have worshipped, how I have fed upon memory, and how I have cherished your image to my latest hour."

Perhaps, although to her he had disclaimed the hope

of a reply, he had not to himself. No reply, however, reached him; and on this turbulent night, the last he was to spend in America, he had resolved, in spite of the raving elements, to walk forth again, and with the true but airy tenderness of a lover, to gaze, for the last time, on the mansion where slept the being who had so deeply impressed his soul.

As he approached within sight of it, the tempest increased. Close, tremendous bursts of thunder rolled in huge volumes and stupendous seas of sound along the sky, crushing, mingling, and crashing, as if the very earth rocked on its axle. Fierce shot the blue and livid lightning, leaping from cloud to cloud, now cutting the eyeballs with sudden zigzag lines of intolerable brightness, then wrapping all nature in sheets of gleaming fire, that threatened to utterly extinguish the blinded sight.

The dwelling of Mr. Temple was a very large and prominent one; and as the dazzling and quick darting fluid sometimes lingered with a less vivid fire, Leslie could distinguish it at a considerable distance high amid the elemental war. He was yet far off, when a bolt, launched with maddened fury, darted from a black cloud directly upon the building. A towering chimney rolled from its height; a blaze appeared rapidly mounting along the edges of the roof, increasing each moment with almost incredible power, which implied some highly combustible material in the upper portion of the house. Before he could reach the spot, the flames, aided also by the frightful wind, were sweeping over the whole mansion, while massy billows of lurid smoke rolled up upon the gale.

The conflagration had gained a most ominous height ere the surrounding inhabitants, or those within, seemed conscious of the danger. Then a bell rang sharply, and several cries of "Fire! fire!" mingled with the crash. The pealing of the bells

immediately became general. A watchman thundered at the door with his club. Norman had approached before this universal alarm, but his presence was but of little use. The doors were closed, and, although he knocked and rung violently, it was long before he knew whether he had made himself heard. At last came shrieks from within, and a throng of people half-dressed, domestics, and other members of the family, appeared in confused, wild haste, and, as the light increased, shrieking, and clasping their hands: their wild attitudes, and vehement motions and gestures, gave them a resemblance to furies in their abode of eternal fire.

"Oh, God!" cried a voice of sudden and sharp agony; "Flora—Flora—"

"Which way?" asked Norman, starting forward.

The speaker was Mrs. Temple.

"For the love of Heaven," demanded the youth, "direct me."

But the terrified mother had fainted. Without further delay he sprang forward, committing his steps to the guidance of Heaven.

At this instant a figure rushed from the crackling and crashing house. It was the desperate father.

"Where is she?" exclaimed a dozen voices.

"Here! she *must* be here!" he almost shrieked; "her room is empty—I have sought her everywhere in vain."

"Not here! not here! She will perish in the flames!" burst from every quivering lip.

Again the agonized father started into the midst of the conflagration. Leslie had already entered.

The flames had now reached a height perfectly furious and appalling—spouting from the windows, and rolling over the beautiful and doomed mansion with ravenous and infernal fierceness: now, in a tall and gleaming pyramid, leaping high into the sable heavens; now sloping back into a huge and yawn-

ing gulf, that buried all things in a deluge and mad whirlwind of fire. Surge after surge of flame and smoke swept hideously on the gale, rendering it almost impossible for the rapidly increasing multitude to approach. Far and wide, the surrounding scene lay strongly and magnificently visible in the deep red glare. Street and house, roof and chimney, dome and spire; the huge dense crowd; and the mantle of cloud and storm, that veiled the heavens: all glowed like objects in the near reflection of some heated furnace. So might have gleamed the buried Pompeii, when the mountain heaved its fiery tempests to the night.

Leslie had rushed through the crowd, and, leaping, springing, flying, mounted the steps. The intense light, the fierce heat, the crackling, crashing, and falling of rafters, announced too fatally the awful progress of the element. Blackened, scorched, almost suffocated, choking with an agony of suspense, he shouted long and loud. At length he clambered upon a half-consumed stairway, and, through the spacious window of an ample cabinet, beheld the object of his search. She had fallen in her flight, and lay senseless on the floor. With an exclamation of tumultuous joy and triumph, he was in the act of leaping down to her rescue (oh bliss unspeakable! to bear in his longing arms from a dreadful death, that angelic form, more precious to him than all the world beside), when he felt a sudden and violent hand on his shoulder. He turned—the face of Clairmont was before him.

"Villain of villains!" shrieked Leslie, mad with impatience, and striving to shake off the grasp of his foe; the latter, with a sudden rush, threw him from his height, fifteen feet down, upon the opposite side of the stair, and himself leaped to relieve the beautiful and unconscious girl.

Gnashing his teeth with impotent indignation, alarmed for Flora and for himself, Norman only with ponderous strength, and after repeated efforts, broke through a way which had been blocked up by piles of heavy furniture, that had nearly confined him to a dreadful death: again he sought the room where he had seen Flora. She was gone. He rushed once more into the open air. Clairmont was just bearing her forth in safety. Her beautiful form hung lifeless on his arm. Her long hair streamed to the ground. Her arm and hand had fallen heavily by her side; *her head was on his bosom*, and one hand he had daringly seized in his own.

A shout of delight rose from the crowd as he appeared with his lovely prize. Mrs. Temple received him with a shriek of joy. He stood proud and high, the object of deep admiration and clamourous applause.

With a bursting heart, and half exhausted, Norman approached the group who were endeavouring to recall to life the object of his love; when Clairmont, in a loud voice, and directing the universal attention with his finger, shouted—

"Ho! *Leslie the murderer!*"

Like the shock of agitated waves when a rising wind sweeps the sea, the mass of human beings all visible in that intense light, stirred and heaved at the sound. The death of Mr. Romain on the preceding day had fearfully augmented their indignation against that now common and execrated name. The cry arose, the shout went round, a thousand lips repeated the words, a thousand faces turned upon the victim, as he stood conspicuous and in the full gleam of the fire—and "*Leslie the murderer!*" rose higher than the surrounding tumult of heaven and earth.

Bowed down, maddened, crushed to the dust—

his proud heart bursting with love, with indignation, with despair—he turned and sought refuge in flight.

CHAPTER VI.

America and Italy—Florence, from the Hills—A Wanderer, and the changes of Years.

"The vast, vast plain with ocean's grandeur lies;
Around sharp hills and banks of verdure rise.
Here the rich vine its weighty tendrils weaves;
And there the olive stirs its silver leaves.
Towns, tow'rs, and convents, lifted to the sky,
Beneath, vales, domes, spires, villas sparkling lie,
While the fam'd Arno, silvery now and bright,
In frequent bends pursues his course of light."

ANON.

TIME rolled away: days expand to years while we look forward; but years shrink to moments as we cast our glance back upon the past. Six winters had elapsed since the circumstances hitherto related. Events of a general import, in no way connected with our story, had erased it from the conversation and memory of the community; and the individuals whom we have introduced to the reader had apparently lost the characters of actors in a continuous drama. No information had ever transpired concerning the unfortunate Rosalie Romain, and it had been universally conceded, at least by those who had not intimately known him, that she had fallen by the hand of her lover. Men shook their heads, shrugged their shoulders, and called it a strange affair; and so it faded away among the thousand marvels of the past. The young man

had been last publicly seen at the conflagration of Mr. Temple's mansion, where he had been recognised by the mob, aided by the unguarded exclamation of Count Clairmont. From that moment his voice had never been heard nor his face seen by the public; nor even by any of his former acquaintance. He was supposed to have buried himself in the oblivion of some foreign clime; and it was currently reported that he had fallen in a political fray in Poland. His family resided in extreme exclusion: the statesman's dreams were shivered to atoms. Howard had married Miss Leslie while the obloquy against Norman ran the highest, and they rarely mingled in society. Upon other points our history itself will contain sufficient information.

We must now bear the reader from that sublime fragment of the globe which the immortal Genoese gave to civilized man; and to America—with her beautiful and stupendous scenes of nature; her immense lakes; her broad and sweeping rivers; her climes, melting into all the varieties of the globe; her cataracts, shaking the earth; her mountains, kissing the heavens; her solitudes and forests, yet hushed in primeval silence; her Indians, stern and sad, fading from reality into fable; her broad fabric of political freedom, already towering up brightly and boldly amid the wrecks and shadows of history; her magnificent cities; her vast plains, laughing with plenty; her healthy breezes, laden with the voice of contentment and peace—to America, we bid farewell; and Italy claims our attention. Italy!—what a contrast! On wings mightier than those of the eagle, you have soared from a world, yet unscathed and new; you have alighted on a remote, a more wondrous realm; you are as one born blind, who first sees those things which before he only heard of. Objects hitherto but vague, and hallowed shapes of imagination, now rise, startling

your very soul with their stern, naked reality, all rent and wounded, all blackened and blasted, where the hot and rolling lava of each human volcano has scattered them, and burnt them, and left them in their despair. Oh, Italy! who treads thy stricken and terrible domains, from the fresh and virgin dells of the new world, feels then, perchance, for the first time, appalled that he is *man*. Beneath him every field has a voice, and a story—around lean crumbling monuments full of gloom and agony—unburied ghosts flit through the dusky shade: like Æneas, he shrinks, lest the very branch, as he plucks it, may shed drops of blood. War and hate, murder and superstition, have made themselves tokens that frown and bristle from every hill and dale. He beholds the million crippled beneath the chariot-wheels of crowned kings; he roams through her desolate huts; her hideous dungeons; her stately palaces; her immortal tombs; her blood-soaked plains; her unpeopled cities. The genius of aristocracy and despotism stalks by the prone column and the broken arch; the bloated tyrant yet revels in his golden house; the wailing of wo yet mingles with the tread of stern armies; the ulcerous beggar starves in the costly temple; the desperate ruffian stabs in the abandoned amphitheatre. This is the moral aspect of Italy.

It was near the hour of sunset, towards the close of a golden autumn (though all the autumns of Italy may be called golden), six years after the events recorded in the preceding pages, that a single horseman, having sent on his servant in advance to procure for him the necessary accommodations, paused on the brow of the hill which, on the road from Bologna, commands a near view of the Val d'Arno and of Florence. Floods of deep splendour, streaming from the gorgeous west, bathed the immense level, and its banks of sloping moun-

tains, in the softest of all earthly radiance. The plain lay shining through a half-palpable mist, like a vast still lake, imbosomed among steep hills. On three sides rose eminences, each one crowned with some striking edifice, celebrated town, or remarkable ruin. Here a crumbling fortress, there a half-buried wall, and there an abandoned cathedral; while an old convent, or a superb villa, seen at frequent intervals amid palaces and peasants' huts, and immense broad walls of yellow stone, rendered the view yet more romantically picturesque. On one hand, in a sharp and abrupt swell of the Appenine, rose the steep of Fiesole, capped with its ancient town and modern village—a monastery built by Michael Angelo, the Franciscan convent, and the spacious cathedral, loftily pressing into view. In the opposite direction rises a tower erected for the observations of Galileo, and near stands the villa in which Boccacio wrote most of his hundred tales of love. The Arno glided along on its way of liquid light, while in the horizon faintly rose the dim blue mountains of Genoa. Upon the bosom of each green and leaning hill, and far, far along the extent of the limitless plain, the sunshine was brightly reflected from countless villas, huts, towns, and palaces in the foreground, lifting their stone towers and walls from out the foliage of cyprus and olive, and in the distance faded to dots and specks, sparkling through the floating gauze of aerial gold. In the midst of this inexpressibly beautiful scene, swelled darkly and heavily into the illumined air the gigantic dome of Santa Maria del Fiore: its filagreed belfry sprang beautifully up by its side, and around rose the large and massy towers; the tiled, burnt, and time-scathed roofs; the gloomy, black palaces, encircled with gardens, and the crumbling, moss-painted, vine-clothed old walls of the city. The month of November had just com-

menced; and while London was merged in mud, fog, and smoke, and New-York lay dark and cold amid her naked trees and wintry winds, this ancient and celebrated town, sheltered from the north by stupendous mountains, and basking under a heaven all warm with hues of pearl and emerald, lay steeped in this ocean of glowing light, with the exquisite splendour of a *Claude*. The air slept in stirless repose—the deepest tranquillity was impressed upon the scene, over which came neither noise nor motion, except that through the profound stillness might sometimes be heard the softened roar of the distant carriage-wheels, as the nobility hastened to their evening drive at the Cascine; or the sound of the peasant's song, as he wound down the road with his light cart and little white ass; or the ringing of the bells, each quivering toll wafted deliciously over the sparkling house-tops and scented vales in waves of silver sound.

The traveller slackened the reins of his horse as he reached a near eminence commanding this enchanting prospect. The noble beast paused, arched his neck, lifted his head, and pricked his ears, apparently sharing the pleasure of his master in gazing down on a picture so lovely. Thus, alone on that height, the stranger yielded himself to the spirit of the scene and the hour, and sat silent and lost in earnest admiration. He was evidently a man of the higher ranks, whose appearance at once commanded attention and respect. He was tall and graceful, and with a figure well developed, just passed from youth into the fulness and vigour of manhood. His countenance was browned, as if with many climes, but marked by features of striking beauty, chastened by melancholy and thought, and conveyed the idea that you would find him one dangerous to insult, and yet easy to love; one who had felt and reflected much, whose heyday of life

had gone with the winds—to whom years had brought experience and wisdom—disappointment, and, perhaps, unhappiness. Something there was in his expression of sweetness, and something of sternness, all blended into a look care-worn and subdued, as if his soul were with the past. It was thus that Norman Leslie, for it was he,—after the lapse of six years, spent in far eastern climes, eastern even to the Roman, even to the Greek,—it was thus Norman Leslie again appeared upon the stage of this drama, and, though ignorant of it himself, connected with its other characters.

While he muses upon perhaps the most extraordinary scene for beauty which the globe can furnish, let us also pause briefly to trace the course of his few past years. The reader is already aware that the trial which released his person had been fatal to his reputation: his fate seemed as embarrassing as it was terrible; he was cut off from all the world—a crushed, blackened being; and who can wonder, however they may blame, if, in the first agonies of despair, the thought of death, death by his own hand, had darkly and powerfully presented itself to his mind. From this despondency and supineness he at length awoke, and thought of *action*. Yet what action? what was he to do? On earth he had no hope but *one*—it was to unravel the web in which he was entangled; to detect some clew to guide him through its labyrinth. What was the *cause* of his present ruin? was it accident? or was he the victim of some nefarious plot? It was at the memorable conflagration, and on the eve of his departure from America, that a secret voice began to stir in his breast, whispering the name of Clairmont as in some way connected with this dire tragedy. The mere suspicion caused him to postpone his voyage. A thousand times his reason rejected it as absurd—as impossible; a thousand times

it came rolling back upon him with a turbid violence, like a fever or a nightmare. In his cooler moments it had no force; there appeared no foundation whatever upon which to build such a conjecture. The object of Clairmont's stratagem had evidently been Flora: what could *he* have to do with Rosalie Romain, or she with him? Could she be alive, and suffer an innocent person to be thus sacrificed for a crime which had not been committed? She was then either dead, or absent from the country; but, if absent, to what place could she have fled beyond the broad-spread rumour of his guilt? Wherever the winds of heaven wafted the English language, the blistering story must have been echoed; and, if she knew it, would she not certainly refute it? But her absence, or her decease, equally acquitted Clairmont. If she were indeed murdered, Norman could not believe *him* the murderer; crimes are not committed without an object. Nor, supposing her fled, could he believe him implicated in her flight, or why had he not borne her company: besides, she had been seen by Flora; but then Flora might have been mistaken.

Notwithstanding this conclusion of his calmer moods, there were moments when imagination superseded reason; and imagination, to every observing and poetic person, has frequently appeared endowed with the accuracy of instinct, and the inspiration of divinity. He had more than once found its dictates correct, although in opposition to every surrounding probability. As to Clairmont's character, from the first moment he saw him an indefinable presentiment had darkened his mind—a presentiment that they were linked together in their future career. So they had been. He recalled the quarrel; that demoniac expression, whose fiendish malice made him shudder; that oath, that deep, deep oath; the subsequent look, which had acci-

dentally caught his glance a few moments after their fair-seeming reconciliation; the midnight attack—his dim suspicions of which he had never but once breathed to mortal ear; the interposition of Clairmont at the fire; the fiendish triumph of his leer as he shouted his name; his previous slanders and avowed enmity. In his solitary night-wanderings, these thoughts gathered and accumulated upon him, till Clairmont's agency in the late tremendous vicissitudes flashed upon him with all the intensity of conviction. These influences had by degrees powerfully affected his character; he grew frozen with the sternness of a single enterprise, and a single resolution. He was no longer a crushed being, dragging out an existence without an object and without a hope. No, life grew to him more precious than it was to other men—than it had ever been before. He was to live hereafter burning with one wild, mighty hope; he was to unravel the mystery and clear his fame. The vague and chaotic mass of darkness he was to reduce to light and order. His father and sister were necessarily involved with him in odium and ruin; to clear his innocence was a duty he owed *them* even more than himself. Flora Temple, too, had sympathized with him—nay, his audacious heart half dared to whisper, had loved him. He knew not whether he could ever behold her again, but the thought that she might one day witness the triumph of his character over calumny and degradation, was another sustaining influence which lent vigour to his mind, and lightness and determination to his steps. He resolved, therefore, to concentrate all his energies upon this one purpose; it was vast and vague, but its very vastness and vagueness only animated and inspired him the more; even in wretchedness and shame it was an object worth living for. All other hopes, and thoughts, and con-

siderations he threw away to the idle air; he wondered at the weakness of his first despondency; he cast off from his mind every doubt; and thus resolved, he experienced the benefit of that almost supernatural power which inspires men whose faculties are all bent to one purpose. Hitherto his mind had resembled a river, which meanders idly along a plain, in a thousand devious and shallow tracks, as if without aim or impulse; it now flowed with the deep and silent motion of a stream which condenses its tributary and wandering floods into one deep and narrow channel, and rushes on, darkly and heavily, to the brink of the cataract.

But in his very commencement difficulties almost insuperable blocked up his path. *Where* was he to look? upon whom was he to fix his eyes? Was he to seek the bones of that bright girl in the vague depths of the river, or beneath the earth? or was he to commence a search among the living? Which way should he turn his steps? If alive, she could not be in America; what clime should he visit? He had no thread through the mazes which surrounded him, no beam of light, no whisper, no token, only one—Clairmont. *Him* he resolved to follow: him, in spite of reason, he regarded as the secret blaster of his life; upon him, then, he determined to fix his gaze.

Sometimes he resolved to seek an interview. But what could he gain by that? He would, indeed, enjoy the satisfaction of pouring out a bosom full of hate; he might again denounce him in public; he might assail him with suspicions, and threaten to dog his steps over the world: but what weight would his denunciations have?—*his*, the condemned, the outcast, the murderer, escaped by chance from the murderer's death? they would be imputed to the malice of guilt, or the ravings of madness. Besides, it would put his foe on his guard. No, he must

proceed with caution; he must guard carefully against secret attacks upon his own life: silence and patience were his only course; secret watchfulness, and a hope that time would aid him. Oh, then he learned how bitter it is, when the heart is bursting, and the brain is on fire with some deep and maddening emotion, to smother the tumult within; to nurse in the bosom violence, anguish, and torture, with the faint hope that *time* may afford relief.

At this period he heard that Clairmont had sailed suddenly for Europe. He awoke from his reveries with the intention of taking passage for the same port, when a fever fell upon him.

For a month he was confined to his bed, and in the long solemn hours of the night delirium often came over him. Who can paint the ravings of any imagination disturbed by physical agonies?—but *his* imagination, heated, burning, maddened, as it was, even in its soberest moods! What were the phantoms that peopled his wandering dreams? He yielded to the wildness of fancy—the workings of the unseen, ungoverned, fantastic spirit, when the orbs of sight were closed; the goings on of airy intangible images; the coming up and passing away of troops of spectral visitants. The ghost of the past floated dimly, silently, solemnly by—half-forgotten scenes and faces returned upon him—old voices rang in the ears yet, with a sound that fell noiselessly, as if itself were but a spectre. Thus as he lay in the lone night-watches—lone to him, for although a father, a sister, a friend, ever bent by his couch, and wiped the damps from his forehead, and wept, and whispered the soothing endearments of love, yet he saw them not, he felt them not, his soul was dead to outward truths. He was rapt, absorbed, and lost utterly in his own wild, vast, awful world of the unreal, the invisible.

Slowly, majestically, train after train of mighty beings swept by him, rising out of darkness as from a deep—sinking again into dim abysses, and hushed chasms, that spread around like *eternity*. Sometimes he called to them, he shouted, he shrieked; their cold, dead, immutable faces frightened him; he thought that unless they spoke to him, unless they gave him one human look, one human token, *he should go mad*.

Then a change came over him: this illimitable solitude in which he had seemed to lie on air, as if the globe were annihilated, and he alone, utterly, startlingly alone, remained amid these innuemrable throngs and myriads of spirits; this huge, sublime void melted away, and the green and scented globe broke up around him, as through a mist, and he lay on a green bank amid flowers, and buds, and leaping brooks, and murmuring bees—and Flora Temple sat by him—and their hands were clasped tenderly, and she kissed him, and looked into his eyes, and made him feel that she loved him unutterably. Then shrieks burst forth, the blissful scene faded, and he lay in a prison; then came the trial, the sea of faces, all upturned towards him, all scorching him with their numberless and burning eyes; the speeches thundered in his ears—the jury—the judge—the verdict—and "murderer!" "murderer!" was whispered by fiendish voices, and shouted by demons; and on the black air rode ghastly forms, reeking with the fumes of eternal wo and desperation, flapping their fierce wings in his face, and writing the word *murderer*, in letters of flame, everywhere upon the sable mantle of night; and one of the fiends wore the face of Clairmont; and he came and stood before him and folded his arms, and smiled, and turned white, and swore again, "Remember, Norman Leslie, I will have your heart's blood!"

In this terrible delirium came to his memory what had never presented itself before, the faces of the woman and her lovely child whose lives he had saved from the affrighted steeds months ago. In his waking and sane moments he had utterly forgotten them. Now she was with him in his anguish, and thanked him; and her face, and that of her child, grew as distinct to him as if he had seen them but yesterday. There he lay, as it seemed, for ages, while an ocean rolled ever its floods over him, with a rushing, slow motion, that sometimes gave him pleasure, but afterward, from its monotony, wearied him, and at length almost *maddened* him.

When he recovered, Clairmont had been long gone. He set off after him, but had never met him, nor known which way to turn his steps.

For years he had wandered over the globe. The Turk, the Russ, the Greek, had been his familiars. Gradually the hope of piercing the gloomy secret of his life faded away, and he turned his attention to other subjects.

For obvious reasons, he had substituted a middle name for that by which he had been usually known, and wrote himself in the traveller's books Mr. Montfort. He thought by that means that accident might, more probably, fling him in the way of Clairmont.

Besides, he was not, as has been already hinted, without his suspicion that Clairmont, if thrown upon his track, might secretly attempt his life. Thus, travel-worn and changed—sad, but far, far less unhappy—he now paused, looking down on the home of Dante, Lorenzo, and Buonarotti, and musing on its romantic history, and the fiery beings who had trodden its streets. So had years changed him, so were his old impressions effaced, or softened, or weakened, that all the turbulent and heart-broken images of the past—all his wo—his disgrace—his

very love, lived in his mind in calmer and milder colours—mellowed, and perchance somewhat faded, like a Rembrandt or a Corregio, by time. As he pressed onward his good steed towards the gate where his servant had been ordered to meet him, neither Flora Temple nor Rosalie Romain crossed his fancy. They were—he had compelled them to be—dreams of the past. He had *forced* his mind into new thoughts and sterner occupations than idle lamentation and unrequited love. If such remembrances swept over him ever, it was in those intervals of life when excitement flags—when the health and spirits fail—when accident softens the feelings, or awakens the associations of the inner heart.

The traveller, at a gentle pace, reached and entered the *Porta San Gallo*. The valet had found a hotel to his taste. His rooms were already prepared—a fire lighted; and alone, as had been his custom for many a year, he partook of his simple and solitary meal.

CHAPTER VII.

A By-scene in Florence.

"——And poring o'er her beauties,
Till at length I learned to love them."

A SCULPTOR sat alone in his *studio*. The sunshiny air of his apartment almost gave the warmth of flesh to the cold marble figures scattered around here and there on the floor, or leaning from shelves and frames. A large opened window admitted the tempered breeze, laden with stolen sweets from the

orangery of an adjoining palace. Large blocks of the material in which he worked lay in the court and the antechamber, soon perhaps to be awakened into those half-breathing shapes which peopled the solitude of his apartment. The artist was youthful, and of a most interesting appearance. A character of melancholy and intellectuality peculiar to his profession—peculiar, indeed, to all whose studies lead them from the outer world into the higher realms of thought and imagination—was impressed at once upon his air, form, and features. Slender, but gracefully formed, you saw at a glance that his labours were not of the body, but of the mind. It was beneath the expanded forehead that the glorious circle of his life and genius lay; and that the intensest toil might weary or reward him, even in the hour when to other eyes he seemed most at rest. His countenance was of that high and classical mould frequently found among the cultivated Italians. Pale, noble, intelligent—you marked him immediately as one of no common cast. Large black eyes glanced a softened and shaded ray when unexalted; but, with animation came light and fire, and a certain beauty and expression denied to his features in their ordinary repose, and implying genius—enthusiasm—the yearnings and deep aspirations of a far-reaching soul. Many women would have found in him the dangerous faculty to feel love in its most passionate moods; and not only to feel, but to excite it. His face, too, was full of candour and manly mind. His smile, when he did smile, was sweet and still; but the habitual expression was that of thought and abstracted melancholy. Something winning and endearing there was, both in the chiselled mouth, and the lustrous eyes, and the dazzling teeth, which shone through his smile. His hair was profuse for the fastidious fashion of the day, but the quality made ample amends; and the rich auburn

masses about his white blue-veined temples, and the two slight curls which added so much to the expression of his lips, gave his whole bust a striking air for a picture. Many a young bright-hearted girl would have imbodied in him her favourite hero of romance. With all that was amiable and gentle, too, came ever and anon over his air a *hauteur* and sternness, as the mood of his mind varied. He was a *beau ideal* for genius.

Before him stood the bust of a young girl. Never shone a face so sunny and beautiful. Was it some ideal creation there beaming in immortal marble —the brilliant imbodying of female loveliness—of girlhood—of hope, joy, and purity—as these attributes exist in a most fervid imagination? Did not he who had awakened such a dream of softness and light from the passionless and inert stone—did he not tremble with the exquisite appreciation of his inspired work? Did not his eyes sparkle with triumph and joy? Did not his heart heave with the fulness of a fairy vision for once realized by his hand?

No. As Angelo gazed on the graceful head, and the girlish and bright face, his reveries seemed to partake more of sadness than delight; and after a long silence, and kissing with an impulse of love the cold forehead and the unstirring tresses, he sighed, and the flush of an excited thought came over his cheek.

"Yes," he said, "I must lose even this—even the work of my toil—the produce of my own eye and my own hand. I must part with the dear impress and faint reflection of what haunts me so deliciously, so dazzlingly—even to this—dull, unanswering marble as it is—I must bid farewell, because fate cast my lot in penury—bitter, heart-gnawing, soul-corroding penury. Beautiful, adored, celestial image!"—he kissed again the silent head—

"I love thee, although dim and dark compared with *her*. Oh, how I love thee!"

He paused, still regarding it, and then continued: "Dim did I say? Why, I wonder I have *dared* to hew out this unworthy thing to image forth her bewildering charms. *Thou*, Antonia?—why, where are those eyes, more soft than ever gazed from the fearful fawn? Where the tinges that float over the tresses? Where the smile that steals across the rose-bud mouth? Where the voice that so fills and bewilders my soul, that a thousand thousand times I would have flung myself at her feet—wept—prayed—and adored her—but for that cold priest, who leers and treads so stealthily about with her, as if he were my evil demon? Where are the words that rise from those lips—beautiful words—all, bright as flowers—or sea-shells—or any thing that nature made most bright and fair: and yet," he said, relenting towards the unconscious object of his displeasure, "even this would be a companion. This—nameless, friendless, obscure as I am—I might love without dishonour—without scorn. Leave me those pouting lips, sweet heaven! dead as they are to my audacious kisses; and leave me those drooping eyes—even though unseeing. Better, perhaps, that they should not view my presumptious homage, lest their marble orbs dart fire and contempt upon me."

He started up, and paced across the room.

"Yes, contempt on me—whose companionship is with the divinities of the past; whose tread is in the track of Phidias and Praxiteles—of Angelo and Cellini; whose hand can thus remould the fleeting features, conferring an immortality which nature refused: on me—whose name and whose productions shall endure when the frail original of this beautiful thing lies mingling with the common dust. But, thank the great God of freedom, the time draws

near, my country—my bleeding, groaning, trampled country! Thy deep, low voice rises to me from a thousand hills. Why should I waste my golden youth in idle and unanswered love? Why should I pursue disappointment, and woo scorn? Why should I?—and yet—and yet how fiercely burns this bewildering passion in my heart for that careless girl! Shall I yield to it? Shall I leave my ambition, and chain myself with love's flowery fetters for ever to her feet? Yet she loves me not: oh, no! not even *my* madness can dream it. But will she not?—may she not, should this deep-laid plot succeed? Her proud cousin Alezzi is a leader, and so am *I*. Should it succeed, wealth and fame may be mine. Whose star would then burn more gloriously than the poor artist's? Oh, I would people a gallery with her lovely shape! All my marble should turn to Antonia—nothing but Antonia.

CHAPTER VIII.

An insight into the Mind of the Wanderer—No Misfortune irreparable but Guilt.

"Oh this learning! what a thing it is!"
Taming of the Shrew.

We said that the remembrance of Norman's past agony, and even of his love, only swept over him now with a softened power. The former sounded to him like the roar of a far-off city, and his dream of Flora Temple came floating faintly as the swell of distant music on the breeze, sometimes with a tone more audible, and sometimes dying almost entirely away. His character was changed. He had

awakened from the confidence, the security, the thoughtlessness of youth. He had been torn rudely adrift from all that graced life, and he had learned to commune with *himself*. Travel, solitary observing travel, amid all that was wonderful on the globe, had poured into his mind new materials for study and thought. Sometimes he imagined that his original and boyish character had been all worn away, and replaced by new opinions and impressions, new modes of acting and thinking, new memories, new hopes and ambitions. America, to his lively and poetic imagination, was but the stage of a theatre, on which, in times gone by, he had acted a tragic part. Never, he thought, could those scenes be revisited. He strove to fancy it all a dream; rescuing nothing from the phantoms but two or three linked most closely to his bosom by ties of relationship and love. His father, and sister, and Howard were among those whom he hoped once more to behold; but he was to behold them in Europe.

It may be supposed that among his present feelings was a distaste for general society. He had changed his name, not with any intention to deny his identity among those with whom he might chance to associate, but for reasons hitherto mentioned. Society exposed him, not only to painful and impertinent curiosity, but to awkward and embarrassing predicaments. He met them, however, when inevitable, with firm moral courage and dignity; but while he never shrank from notice, he never courted it. His person and bearing, his now fully developed genius and matured and enriched understanding, would have secured him an honourable reception in any circle, even under his own name, and with the full knowledge of his story. Indeed, when connected with his appearance, around which years, and travel, and melancholy, and study, had shed a more striking grace and continual self-possession,

there was in his adventures something romantic and thrilling. So young, so noble, so handsome—with such eyes and such a voice,—women pronounced him innocent the moment they saw him. His letters of introduction always alluded to his history; he wished no concealment from his friends: but they were also strong, and even enthusiastic, in expressions of esteem, confidence, and admiration. Many a pressing allurement had been laid to seduce the unfortunate and handsome young stranger into the circles of the gay and the lovely. But other aspirations had awakened within him.

As soon as he had abandoned the definite hope of discovering any thing respecting Miss Romain—a hope which, however faded, lay yet, perhaps half-unknown to himself, smouldering like hidden fire in his heart—he had thought to beguile his solitude and disappointment in *study*. Driven over the battlements of the world of external beauty, he explored a new and mightier world in books. In his character lay a deep appreciation of the grandeur and triumph, of the almost celestial grace and dignity, which rewards the searcher after knowledge. Wealth he had without limit. Love?—he had tasted the enchanted goblet, and its contents turned to tears as he drained. Ambition? ambition for the world?—power, influence, applause among men?—he shuddered; for he remembered, with a writhing and transpierced heart, that fatal night when, amid the crash of thunder, and the riot and whirl of a maddened conflagration, his fellow-beings had raised against him the yell of the blood-hound; and "*Leslie the murderer!*"—a peal befitting the dun vaults of hell itself—drove him from his love and from his country. No; his path lay no more among *men*. He was to carve it out through the sublime and lonely altitudes of science. For himself—or, peradventure (and a solemn thrill of inconceivable

rapture rolled through his veins at the thought), for the eyes of a race yet unborn—he would kindle about his brow the steady halo of the *scholar*. Here was a world of which he might be the monarch. A world whose numberless and illumined paths he could mount alone; a world peopled but with the awful spirits of the great of old: and all conjured up obedient around him by the wave of his silent wand, and in the solitude of his midnight hours.

Reader, can you not feel and triumph with the outcast and the exile—with the homeless and the hopeless—when the lofty and splendid aisles of this holier sphere burst and broadened upon his gaze. A new gift of wings seemed to unfold themselves at his shoulder; and spirit voices, inaudible to the grosser sense of others, spoke sweetly in his ears, and the scales of mortality fell from his orbs, and the divinity of the past and the present was upon him and within him. Roaming over the magnificent and wonderful globe, he read its lessons and penetrated its secrets. Oh! what are the glitter of wealth and the pride of royalty, the pomp of troops and the allurements of sensual luxury, to the plain garb and unattended simplicity of the scholar? Visiting no spot but its history is familiar; reading a thousand sweet secrets and eloquent lessons in every simple flower, in every thronged city, in every lonely wood; gorgeous visions and stately phantoms rising up before him upon every plain, by every ruin! Is he not a monarch? Does he not dwell in his own solemn kingdom? Are not the air and the earth, the desert sea and the gold-paved sky, more to him than to other men?

Norman had been educated only as young men of his age and country are but too often educated. The classical studies are got through with at college, and afterward neglected. Business, fashion, pleasure, then tempt the steps and monopolize the swift

rolling year. New actors are to be seen, new excursions to be enjoyed. Books soon become strangers, except the ephemeral works of the day, where all that is noble and grand is too often made subservient to amusement. Such a giddy as well as heartless thing is the *coterie* of fashion. Perhaps but for the peal of thunder which had fallen on his path—thus fallen from a heaven of unstained blue—he never could have exerted, never known the divinity within him. Thus often, in this shadowy world, the most terrible calamity is but the sable mantle of some luminous blessing.

Books soon became to him, not only a refuge, but a a passion. With a matured and firmer understanding, he now retraced his way through those temples of classic lore where his boyish foot had lingered but half-conscious of their splendour; and oh, what associations often swept over him, while wandering again back over those paths of his by-gone days! Often he stood once more in the sunny haunts of early life, and the voices of his childhood rose around him; and hope—then a dear and familiar spirit, now the spectre of one buried—seemed again to smile and cheer him on. The modern languages he mastered with a rapidity that surprised himself; and every author in the French, the Italian, and the German he could read with fluency and delight. With hushed and solemn joy, too, as one in the solitude of night, he stood to gaze on those great and ever steady stars in the literary firmament, which have burnt there just so gloriously upon the eyes of vanished ages. Then he learned how far exclusive devotion could carry the mind.

The thirst for *knowledge*, unslaked, unslakable, *grew* upon him. History opened its immense and sublime realms, to which the narrow present became only a point almost invisible. In this startling study he forgot himself for months—for years Here

met the lonely student his silent and unaccusing companions. Here found he a home where his footsteps could wander in peace. Alexander and Pericles, Camillus and Cæsar, Alaric and Mahomet —he walked with these. The Grecian temple rose before him against the blue serene. The streets of old Rome and her mighty millions spread around. Thebes, Palmyra, and Jerusalem were the haunts of his spirit.

But history involved other studies of a yet more astounding nature—astronomy, geology, metaphysics, the human mind, the world of inferior living creatures; and amid them all stood, chaste, stately, brilliant, and eternal—towering, yet unequalled, yet unharmed, through every age, every clime, every language—those gorgeous monuments which the poet has reared, those proud battlements of intellect and genius, defying decay, even as the cloud cleaving and ice-capped Alps dazzle, with their silver tops, each rolling generation. Now, for the first time, he began to comprehend the immensity, the solemnity of existence—this inexplicable gift, this ray of immortal divinity, lighting up a handful of mortal dust. We have said his character was changed. He had left the circle of *fashion*. He had burst from the entanglements of youthful hopes and habits—of selfish pleasures and idle frivolities, in which so many, capable of nobler enjoyments, fritter away their years. He was no longer the sighing boy, nor the musing youth. Manhood had come upon him, and with manhood *reflection*.

At this period, accident enabled him to render a very important service to the Marquis Torrini, an old and wealthy nobleman of the Tuscan Court. Meetings between them took place necessarily, and frequently. To this gentleman Norman had been presented with a letter of introduction, from one of his most intimate friends in Vienna. But hearing of

him a character that attracted neither esteem nor sympathy, he had never commenced the acquaintance. Having it now thrust upon him, he handed the letter. It touched upon his history. He hoped that it would frighten his new friend, whose absorbing weakness, or passion, was superstition. But, on the contrary, from some inexplicable caprice, the feeble dotard, who had regarded most young men with dislike, became enamoured—declared he knew all the story—that it only rendered Signore Montfort a greater favourite—that he must not think of refusing a *suite* of rooms in his palace, one of the most remarkably splendid, by-the-way, in all Florence. Leslie *did* think of refusing, and very seriously; but among the attractions of the Torrini palace were a spacious and valuable library, and a gallery of rare old paintings. From severe studies he had lately turned to paintings for recreation, and delighted to acquaint himself, not only with the gems of art and the difference between the schools, but to trace out the singular fortunes of the immortal and inspired artists. He accepted the invitation.

It was about the middle of December when he entered the palace. He found the old lord much better than he had been represented, although utterly abandoned to the magnificent dreams of the Catholic persuasion, which walks familiarly with saints and angels, and sees God's finger writing on the earth and sky. Perhaps the nature and tender affection of a father softened the hasher features of his real character. You cannot *hate* a man who is reverenced and beloved by a guileless and lovely young daughter—at least, *I* cannot.

CHAPTER IX.

A Florentine Palace—An Italian Girl—A new Chord struck —Its Vibrations.

"Which out of things familiar, undesigned,
When least we deem of such, calls up to view
The spectres which no exorcism can blind."

The marquis kissed Antonia, as with the old *gouvernante*, a few days after Norman's domiciliation, they leaned from the marble balcony of a terrace overlooking the garden. There is something in that same kissing which, even between father and daughter, if the latter be extremely beautiful, awakens—awakens—I suppose I may call it *sympathy*. Antonia *was* a vision of beauty—so young, fresh, and ardent.

Her father kissed her, and laid his hand on her head—that very original and bright piece of nature's workmanship which had caused the rhapsody of the young sculptor.

"I have ordered the rooms to be warmed for Mr. Montfort to-day, to see the pictures: will you not go with him and the signora?"

Such a *cicerone!*

"Oh yes, my father!" (how the melody of the Italian melted from those lips), "Signore Angelo is to bring home my bust this morning, and I will let Signore Montfort be the judge, if he will stay away from the Pitti and spend the morning with us."

Signore Montfort bowed. Perhaps the study of

painting had improved his eye, but he could not fail to see, and to feel, how lovely and graceful was this rare young creature; how light her step; how warm and tender her eyes; her voice, how musical; her form, how fair. He had hitherto met her without attentively regarding her—she had passed before his eyes as some bright cloud in the sky, some gorgeous bird through the grove, or a soft-hued sea-shell on the marble beach. As they commenced their round—she, with her beaming and lovely face, like one of Raphael's madonnas, and the wrinkled old *gouvernante* by her side—a sudden kindness stirred in his heart, a sense of her excellence and surpassing charms. Years had glided away since he had been the companion of woman—years of severe solitude and gloom; and now that nameless light, that exquisite spell which, to those gifted with the keen perception of female character and beauty, the form of an innocent unshaded girl often conjures up, was shed upon him. He thought of his sister, and—of Flora. From that moment an airy link had been thrown around him—the careless girl had touched upon one of the deepest chords of his soul; and while he yielded, with a half-melancholy delight, to its slow, fading vibrations, he felt that his guileless and light-hearted companion was already nearer to him than a cloud or a sea-shell. It was not *love*, but it touched him for a moment with something of love's fervour. It was the echo of that blissful voice, sent back upon his heart from the hollow solitudes of his later years.

The *signora* was soon tired, and left her charge to the guidance of Mr. Montfort, and she led him, for the first time, through her father's magnificent palace.

The building was one of those striking, immense, and durable edifices bequeathed to the Italian

nobles by their wealthy and warlike ancestors. On approaching it, the stranger, especially from the north and west, would not be so much impressed with its splendour as with its dimensions for a dwelling. The elegant comfort of a London or a New-York mansion, the neat, beautiful steps and doorway, which in the two latter form the only entrance, the carpeted halls, and the comfortable air of home, felt even in the exterior, were all wanting here. The entrance was a high, gloomy arch, through which alike horsemen, pedestrian, and carriage passed into the lofty court. From this arch, heavy steps of stone, or marble, led the eye up along a cheerless broad passage, stately, dismal, and comfortless. In niches and on pedestals stood sculptured forms, their spirited attitudes strangely contrasted with their deathly faces and voiceless lips, some defaced by time or chance, and covered with dust never disturbed: here a Mars, threatening the world, bereft of arms; and there a Venus, as simpering and conscious of her charms as if the enmity of the three sisters had yet left her an unbroken nose; while on each turn in the stairway reposed colossal sphynxes and couchant lions of Egyptian and oriental granite. The whole edifice, seen from the street or the court, more resembled a prison than a palace, as the reader of poetry and romance is apt to imagine one; and even after mounting some distance up the steps, the stranger, untaught in the fashions of the continent, wonders whether the vast structure, with its cumbrous strength and lonely grandeur, is really *inhabited*, or whether it is not appropriated merely to some public purpose—chambers of council, or tribunals of justice. Lose yourself in the capitol at Washington, and fancy it a *family* residence of some prince, or potentate.

But the first disappointment is much more than

compensated by the uncounted wealth lavished within. Long halls, floored with tesselated and glassy marbles; ceilings vaulted, loaded with heavy bas-reliefs, or painted with bright, gleaming, and radiant frescoes; immense mirrors, which, in one room, appeared to constitute the whole breadth of the walls; windows reaching from floor to ceiling, and composed of enormous slabs of plate-glass, leading forth upon marble balconies, and to scented groves of orange and lemon; the rooms heavily curtained, and draped with silks and velvet, of all hues and kinds—here one cerulean as heaven—there another draped with a forest green—a third flushed with a mellow and a sunshiny glory, from crimson velvet linked and fastened with studs and knots of gold. About twenty-five rooms on one floor: those set apart mostly for the mere pomp of display, led the wondering and dazzled visiter from curiosity to curiosity, and from splendour to splendour—now over carpets of matchless beauty, now over mosaic floors, whose glittering surface spread beneath the feet like ice. The intruder at once fears to trust himself upon their slippery smoothness, or to tread upon their pictured beauties. Some dozen rooms were completely crowded with paintings, each one by a master, and many *chefs d'œuvres* of the immortal authors. The stern cliffs of Rosa, the melting sunshine of *Claude*; Raphael's exquisite and gentle grace, and the winning softness of Guido: but who can enumerate the treasures of an Italian gallery of paintings? At frequent intervals stood statues of classic beauty, and often of ancient workmanship. Other furniture corresponded to that already described: a profusion of the most costly clocks and vases; a wilderness of bronze, crystal, gold, marble, and alabaster; a thousand exquisite shapes of classic lore; tables of untold value, inlaid with sparks of gems, brilliantly dis-

posed, in the polished and gleaming slabs, to resemble flowers, insects, shells, &c.; ivory ornaments, wrought by Cellim; boxes, altars, and cases of amber; while, not unfrequently, the doors, cornices, and walls themselves were incrusted with jasper, porphyry, and verde antique. Scarcely the eye believed the splendour real, half-deeming each bright image but the gaud of some theatrical show, so prodigal, costly, unused, and useless appeared the waste and riot of magnificence. The knees ache in traversing the long apartments, and the eyes are wearied in attempting to analyze their bewildering and wanton brightness. But however dazzled for a moment, you are still soon fatigued with this monotonous and unmeaning grandeur. So much unnecessary parade seems strained and idle, if not ridiculous and vulgar. If you have seen the simple dwelling of Ariosto, and his little garden, or the humble retreat of Petrarch, among the green Euganean hills, or the damp cell of poor Tasso, in the mad-house at Ferrara, you regard this princely pomp with something of sarcasm. In a country, too, where every narrow street and golden vineyard; every palace, step, and fountain-pedestal; every mountain-peak and cathedral floor; every place, indeed, of any description, not guarded perforce by the insolence of aristocracy or the bayonet of despotism, is haunted and swarmed with all forms of loathsome and blasted misery that ever humanity produced;—this blaze of rank, power, and abundance shows not only absurd, it becomes shocking and cruel.

But Norman was an old traveller, and these thoughts had passed away with his first impressions of Europe. Now he trod the princely halls with admiration; and as the fair girl, leaning on his arm, pointed out, with a pure and sweet familiarity, each theme of praise in picture or statue, he forgot his

taciturn gloom, and displayed in his manner and conversation all the unwonted admiration which she inspired.

In the course of their long ramble through the superb halls of paintings—the good old *signora* seizing every possible occasion to throw herself down upon one of the luxurious *fauteuils*, and the antiquated *cicerone* waiting at a respectful distance, till the memory of Antonia should need assistance from his more practised experience (which, by-the-way, rarely happened)—several incidents conspired to render her to Norman an object of interest. In the first place, he found her quite a proficient in his native tongue; and he enjoyed the quiet pleasure of following the delightful accent upon her unaccustomed lips. You really love your language while hearing it spoken indifferently well by an agreeable young girl in a foreign country. Antonia had studied it with zeal, and music was nothing to her charming errors and timid hesitation. A being so pure and lovely was enough at all times to win the eye of the student, bathed as his spirit was in the fervour of poetry; and while watching and gently aiding her along the path of a new language, he found himself half-unconsciously yielding to the gentle anxieties, and half-playful, half-tender alarms of a happy mother, scarcely trusting the first uncertain steps of a beautiful child. He felt that the sportive communion thus increasing between them would have been dangerous in other years. But the image of Flora had to him the sacred sadness of buried love; and he sighed to look down on Antonia and think how cold and dead his heart was, that her radiant face, her guileless spirit, could now waken in his breast only those vain regrets, that tender anguish, which, in the triumphs of study, he had nearly forgotten.

He was struck, too, with the blended artlessness

and intelligence of her nature; with her antique opinions and utter ignorance of the world, so strangely contrasted with her high cultivation upon certain accomplishments.

They were engaged before a celebrated painting; and while Norman was smiling, with a heart more at rest than it had been for years, upon the engaging and animated face of his guide—even as one out of the brawling, battling world gazes on a newly unfolded rosebud, wondering how the inert soil could yield a thing so fair, so tender—he beheld a third person, in the habit of a priest, close by his side. He had apparently approached a few moments before, with the stealthy pace of a cat, and now stood smiling upon them as they lingered before the broad painting, their shadows lengthened on the glittering and pictured floor.

"The fair Antonia," he said, "has not welcomed her instructer, who has just returned from Pisa; anxiety to see my dear child has brought me unbidden into her presence."

"Oh, Father Ambrose! dear, *dear* Father Ambrose! How good! how kind! Have you speeded well in your journey? Is your sick friend recovered? Will you remain with us now?"

The priest smiled.

"If I had as many mouths as the Hydra yours would find work for them all."

"Oh, then, I know your poor friend is well, or else you would not smile; and all a girl's idle questions are answered without a word. But, Father Ambrose, know Signore Montfort, my father's most esteemed friend and guest. He has supplied your place; for he is learned as you, and I am his debtor for much, much wisdom: and Signore Montfort will already have conjectured that this is our honoured Father Ambrose, whom we have spoken of in his absence often."

The holy man turned his face upon Norman, and the keen eye of the latter detected, or imagined that he did so, a certain scarce perceptible ripple that crossed its singular smoothness. His eye perused the face a moment with a sinister but brief shade of displeasure. Norman returned the gaze with an interest which surprised him. Where had he seen those features? Where had that insinuating smile before crossed his observation? Had he met him before indeed? What unquiet association stirred at his heart as he encountered the glance of those small but keen eyes? He replied briefly, and took occasion the subsequent moment, while the intruder was engaged in conversation with Antonia, to note him more narrowly. He was small, but beautifully formed, with a white slender hand, black eyes and hair, and a silent smile of singular sweetness; his voice was soft and musical, and he had the power of modulating it to harmonize with the secretest chords vibrating in the bosoms of those he addressed. Yet, with his intelligent and classical cast of features—the wavy and raven hair parted on that white round brow, the almost feminine yet voluptuous mouth, and snowy teeth gleaming through—with all the graces of his person and manner, there was about him something wily and insincere, something which no sooner fastened admiration than it awakened distrust. There was, besides, that on his features which impressed Norman powerfully with a sense of the past—which, dimly and mysteriously, awakened in his bosom thrilling associations and vague presentiments. The object of his new interest soon departed, stealing away with the same noiseless tread with which he had entered, and lifting a heavy curtain of crimson velvet which hung broadly against the wall, disappeared through the door concealed behind. To Norman he seemed to vanish: an unaccountable foreboding, a feeling of

superstition, a willingness to abandon himself to his sudden emotion, as to an omen, crept over him, and he longed to be alone. Of Antonia he inquired into the history of the person he had seen.

"Oh!" she said, "it is the good Father Ambrose —the kindest—the best—the dearest—the holiest. He was the friend of my father—oh, a long, *long* time: before I was born—"

"A long, long time indeed," said Norman, smiling at the earnest and becoming enthusiasm which marked her every word and action, and again looking on her but as a beautiful child; for she seemed only wavering on the fairy limits between girlish simplicity and woman's deeper imagination.

"Seventeen years full, this spring," said the *signora*, who, having rested herself, had now joined them—"full seventeen years; and a good girl she is, too, signore," and the old woman smoothed down the tresses of her head affectionately as she spoke; "and knows as little of the world as a wild rose."

A sigh from behind attracted their attention. It was the young sculptor with the bust. The snowy image rested on a marble table, before an immense mirror. The artist stood by its side, leaning against a column, his arms folded upon his bosom. For a long time—while all admired his work—he seemed to be forgotten; and Antonia, leaning on Norman's arm with a familiar girlishness, and looking up with each word confidingly into his face, little dreamed the pang each random glance, each gentle and neglectful tone, shot to a heart—though cast in life's rougher and gloomier paths, yet all as high, and soft, and passionate as her own.

"How strange," she said at length, "Signore Angelo has gone!"

"Those poor artists," said the *governante*, arranging her lace cap, "are always so eccentric."

CHAPTER X.

The stirring of Associations—an Italian Picture—a Mystery and an Adventure.

"That face of his I do remember well."
Twelfth Night.

The face of that priest haunted Norman's very slumber with a dark and ominous meaning, as inexplicable as it was unpleasant. He could not banish from his mind the impression that they had met before. Where? He had been in all quarters of the globe; and images of the remarkable climes where his foot had lingered, and his eyes and his soul been dazzled, rolled through his imagination—but none touched upon this newly awakened chord. Beneath the lofty peaks of Asia, where the Assyrian, the Mede, the Greek, the Roman, and the Saracen had left their footmarks, he had strayed. Had this singular face there greeted him? No. Had those eyes glanced on him beneath the turban of the dusky Moor? No. He could reach no recollection from the brilliant shadows of the past; nor amid all that his memory presented of the varied zones and people of Europe could he detect any link connected with him. America? A dim conception rested on him that *there* their paths had crossed; that those eyes had bent on him there, at some of the terrible moments of which he had suffered so many. He inquired particularly into his history; but all that he learned contradicted completely, incontrovertibly, every suspicion.

Ambrose had spent his life in Italy. For more

than twenty years he had been an inmate in the family of Torrini. He was trusted by all; and if remarkable for any thing, it was for his character of holiness. Norman, therefore, forced himself to believe that his interest in him was merely an accidental coincidence.

But, driven from the idea that he was connected himself with this man, his disappointment was relieved in some measure by the fact that the character of the priest grew on him, the more he studied it, with deeper hues. He could not help hating him. He had thought of himself that he was gifted with a keen sense of human character—that he read men's souls by intuition—that towards some his very heart yearned in love, while from others he recoiled with an instinctive dislike. Some will smile at the idea of this novel one among the senses; but there are secret affinities in our nature, and hidden repulsions and voices, that call out to us with tones that will not be hushed—at least that was the theory of Leslie, and he yielded to his distrust.

The holy father was in the habit of giving lessons to Antonia in her little boudoir. It was a lovely place; and the bright girl chose often to sit and read there, and warble her favourite melodies, and to receive also her most intimate friends. Among these very soon she learned to rank Norman. He grew accustomed to her guileless and affectionate ways, and imperceptibly glided into a brother's friendship and familiarity.

It is not true that men—I speak of the thoughtful and the pure (are there not such in this bad world?)—cannot pass beyond the limits of mere ordinary friendship with the more lovely and enchanting of the other sex without entering into the realms of love—without yielding to the earthlier whirl and current of a feverish and absorbing passion. Nothing

could be further from Norman's breast than love for the unshadowed Italian girl—*love* in the acceptation of the word most familiar to romance readers. Years, misery, and meditation had made him prematurely old; and his heart was the heart of a wanderer over every zone—of one, like those birds which sleep in the air on their unresting and outspread wings, doomed to be ever afloat, and ever alone. But he loved her with the purified and disinterested tenderness of paternal affection. He saw into the crystal depths of her unsullied and sunshiny mind and character. He beheld in her one whose unconscious power over his feelings was that of awakening mournful memories, but no selfish passion—memories which subdued, chastened, and etherealized his nature. If her young voice ever thrilled through his soul, it was of another that he thought; and in her presence he ever found himself more softened to his old impressions.

"Oh!" he one day thought, when the exquisite grace of her character and person had struck upon him with peculiar force, in some of the thousand little offices and kind communions which each passing day seemed to increase between them—"oh! had I some young, beloved brother—some bright, glowing boy, yet untouched with care—just awakening to the dream of love—with what delight would I behold *him* by her side, to trace the unfoldings of their fairy loves; to watch their glances drink the blissful light of each other's lingering gaze; to see him wander spell-bound where her young foot had been; and at length, from the visionary lover, deepen into the adoring, the blest husband."

He was passing the boudoir of her who thus occupied his thoughts. The door was a-jar. He was about to enter, when a sight met his eyes that arrested him. Antonia was in the act of receiving a lesson; by her side was the priest. She had

dropped her eyes intently over her book, and sat in an attitude of careless grace and exquisite girlhood. Beautiful student! Close to her the priest had drawn his seat, and had fixed his eyes intently upon the radiant face which, lost in the earnestness of a new thought, was all unconscious of his gaze. His arm, which had been thrown, apparently by accident, across the back of her chair, gradually fell from its remoter position, till it almost clasped her waist, while his vivacious features expressed any thing but their usual meek and holy humility.

As Norman stood regarding the group—picturesque and beautiful as it was—a feeling, not of jealousy, but of alarm, shot through his soul. So pure, artless, and confiding was this rare creature—dreaming no ill, believing ever the promises of outward semblance, so ignorant of the world, and placing such implicit faith in Ambrose—that he trembled for her opinions, if not for her happiness and virtue. There was to him, also, about this priest something quiet, sly, deep, and devilish; and now, as he sat thus near, thus trusted, pouring into her young soul his monstrous dogmas—and who can tell what more dangerous poison beside—he looked like the tempter watching by Eve and studying her ruin. It is probable that his surprise was visible in his face and manner; for Father Ambrose, after a long breath and the fading away of an absorbed smile, on looking up, started perceptibly as their eyes met, but immediately regained his oily smoothness of manner.

Why did he start? It was the act of a hypocrite—of a devil, who feared lest the cloak might have fallen from the cloven hoof: and then Norman smiled at the importance to which every trifle grew to him in the strange mood which had lately come over him.

On conversing with Torrini, he found him, although

perfectly doting on his child, yet abandoning her education entirely to the Father Ambrose. Torrini, as he grew old and ill, had fallen into the very lowest abysses of superstition, and had conceived a project, Norman discovered some days after, of consigning Antonia to a convent. On expressing his surprise, and probably his abhorrence, the marquis had betrayed that the priest had first suggested the measure. In the course of his subsequent interviews with Antonia, Norman turned the subject upon this point. He found her steeped in the prejudices and unnatural hopes of an education the most warped and erroneous.

If a young fawn could speak, it would not more unguardedly confide its wild thoughts and wishes to the forest breeze than Antonia to all whom she loved, and who sought her thoughts. One day after Norman had spoken to her of life—of the great world—of human destiny and human happiness—she told him, with a light tear glittering from her long lashes, that a convent was her refuge; and she knew it would prove a sweet one from a dreadful fate. It seemed she had been wooed in marriage by a proud and haughty cousin of her father's, —one on whom from her infancy she had looked with terror. But Ambrose and her father both loved him, and she knew it would grieve their hearts were she ever to think of another. Nothing, she said, filled her with more pleasure than the thoughts of the holy and secure life led by the sisters of St. U——. Those tranquil walls were the port where every vessel reposed in safety. She had been told that the world was as the terrible sea, smooth to betray and merciless in its fury—wrecking with equal ease the tallest vessel and the lightest bark; that beneath every wave lurked a rock, and in every silver cloud hung a tempest.

If there was something mournful in the sight of

one so unsuspecting and light-hearted thus entangled in the meshes of superstition, Norman's interest was much enhanced by discovering the secret, passionate, almost hopeless love entertained for her by the sculptor Angelo. To the acquaintance of this youth Norman had been attracted by many nameless allurements of person, mind, and character. So pure, high, aspiring, and so gentle-hearted was the melancholy artist, that Norman learned to love him before he was aware. His own princely fortune enabled him, in the most delicate way, to relieve the embarrassment of his friend by affording frequent employment for his chisel. This brought them often together, until at length something of a kindred spirit united them in the bands of sincere friendship. Angelo found in Norman wealth without pride or ostentation; a heart sympathizing with the impulses and recoilings, the pride and the despair, of unfriended merit: while the more matured and experienced student discovered in the artist genius and virtue rarely seen: and the more he studied his character, the more he admired its chaste symmetry and classic proportions. It stood among other men like a Grecian temple reared amid the homely and discoloured mansions of modern business. Imbued with poetry—imbued with passion —he was dangerously gifted with capacities both for happiness and misery. By a series of casual trifles Norman had learned his love for Antonia. We will not detain the reader with it; nor with the fulness of his bliss when he discovered that Leslie was not a lover. From that moment their friendship had become cemented.

One day Norman lounged from the palace after a half-hour of sportive study with Antonia. He had ordered Psyche from Angelo, and the latter had promised him the first sight of it on this morning. It was his custom to note down in a kind of

diary the leading events of the day, with such reflections as they chanced to elicit, and to sketch in rude outlines the most remarkable characters he encountered. These were treasures to his father and sister; and for their eyes they were intended. On the present morning, after he left the palace, he remembered that he had sallied forth without closing the volume which lay open on the table. He returned, therefore, with a hasty step; and mounting suddenly to his apartment, was surprised, as he entered, to hear a slight stir and rustle, as if some one, startled by his approach, had abruptly quitted the room. But how? Certainly no one had passed him by the door; and yet the noise had been too distinctly audible for fancy. He glanced his eyes around, all was lonely and quiet; but a heavy piece of silken drapery in one corner seemed to stir, and gradually settle itself into repose. He walked up to it and examined it closely, and the wall behind it. Nothing could he find. His notebook lay, as he had left it, open upon the table; but upon approaching to take it, he perceived, to his increasing surprise, that it was upside down—not the position in which he had left it, certainly, for he had written in it the moment before his departure. It was plain that some one had been in his room. Was there a secret door? He began to fancy the old days of romance come back upon him. A palace—a priest—a lovely girl, and a private panel —they were the very materials for a novel.

The incident left an impression on him too distinctly unpleasant to be the theme of jest. The idea of being watched made his blood boil. He had heard of the numerous *spies* with which Italy abounds. Perchance the priest acted in that capacity. From a floating conjecture the idea soon grew into a confirmed truth. It by no means softened his feelings of dislike towards his reverend

friend: he resolved to be more wary in future. But he had nothing to fear from the Tuscan government. He knew Italy too well to be linked with any attempt at reform or revolution; and he knew, too, that such attempts, unsuccessful, only increase her distress.

With these thoughts, he resumed his walk. It led him, in the way to the sculptor's, by the square of the Duomo, and the glittering and airy tower with its gorgeous tracery. The doors of the immense edifice were open, and, with that feeling of solemn awe with which these gigantic, time-worn, and magnificent monuments of ages rolled away ever inspired him, he entered. Its vast, huge, naked interior—dim, gloomy, stupendous—for a moment, often as he had before seen it, hushed and absorbed him. It was on this broad marble floor that the great Lorenzo had been so nearly assassinated; and here other historical incidents, conclaves and councils, had occurred, which forcibly linked the long aisles and airy dome and vaults with the splendour, romance, and grandeur of the past. He pictured the immortal forms in whose steps he was treading —Michael Angelo and Dante—Petrarch, Boccacio, and Galileo. His eye now fell on the deep-stained windows; and now upon the statues, yellow with age. A procession of priests, followed by another composed only of boys, some almost infants, and clothed in long black robes hung with white lace, went shuffling by; then a sudden burst of voices chanted behind the altar, and all again was lonely and still.

As he lingered a moment by a column, he heard, or thought he heard, the sound of his own name. Turning suddenly, a tall and athletic man, wrapped in a long cloak, stood gazing on him, and near; but moving away, with a quiet, stealthy pace, he discovered one resembling the priest. It struck him that

the two had been engaged in conversation, but that, on the sudden sight of him, they had parted. To ascertain whether it was indeed the holy man—who began now to occupy a large portion of his thoughts—he followed, with a quickened step; but, entering a side-door, the object of his pursuit disappeared before he could actually determine his identity. On returning, the other also was gone. He stood alone on the mighty floor, amid the cold marbles and dusky tombs. Then a sudden peal of the organ heaved its rolling waves of harmony along the far-reaching roof—swelling up—dying away—and swelling up again upon his startled ear.

CHAPTER XI.

A new Mystery—Letters from Home.

"A gloomy sea
Rolls wide between that home and me;
The morn may twice be born and die,
Ere e'en your seal can reach my eye;
And oh! e'en then, that darling seal
(Upon whose print I used to feel
The truth of home, the cordial air
Of warm loved lips still freshly there!)
Must come, alas! through every fate
Of time and distance, cold and late,
When the dear hand, whose touches fill'd
The leaf with sweetness, may be chill'd."

MOORE.

THE old Marquis Torrini held weekly soirées at the palace. A brilliant but extraordinary circle gathered at these entertainments. Most of the celebrated characters of Europe might, at some time or other, be seen there. Ex-kings and queens—

the defeated generals of old wars waltzing by the side of their victors—English statesmen—French heroes—the Russian prince—tourists and scholars from far-off countries—and women—all that Italy could boast of lovely here flashed and floated in the mazy dance. Among them were belles from other circles—wandering daughters of wealth and beauty, freed from the restraint of morality prevailing in other societies—gay, and careless, and bewildering minions of fashion, accomplished in all but morals, who lived only to shine, to captivate, and to love. Here the star-wearing lord led down the dance some dangerous girl—the tender exile of a colder clime, who here learned to allow as grace what she had before concealed as shame. This atmosphere of rank was as a new existence—stupid virtue dwelt in the lower world. "Modesty! Leave it for plebeian breasts."—"Reputation! What can the person mean!"

In these elegant regions of aristocracy and splendour, notwithstanding the pressing desire of the old nobleman, Norman rarely ventured. One night he yielded to his curiosity to make the acquaintance of a celebrated scholar and traveller—a man of high character and science. Evening came, and he found himself in the superb and dazzling rooms, thrown open with all their medley of regal magnificence, and thronged with the glittering array of rank and fashion.

He found Sir H—— a man of simple manners and plain strong sense, in addition to his other great and well known merits. Two travellers, mutually familiar with many places and people on different sides of the globe, will have numerous delightful topics of conversation. They were pleased with each other, and again Norman forgot his reserve towards strangers, especially when his companion kindly, and with unaffected candour, touched upon

his history, which Torrini, at the request of Norman, had explained to him. The evident sympathy and confidence of the good philosopher were like healing balm to his spirit; and he felt that happiness might be his, even without the grand denouement which he had once conceived so necessary to his very existence. A select circle of such friends—the love of a being like Flora—retirement and study—he sighed as these softening and grateful visions stole over his imagination.

Sir H—— to his attainments in philosophy added no inconsiderable knowledge of the fashionable world, and he recounted the character and leading adventures of some of the most distinguished men and conspicuous women present. Much as he knew of Italian society, Norman was shocked, and almost incredulous. The most admired females were giddy runaways from husbands and fathers—some, the charming *protegées* of lords or kings. English women, glittering in plumes and diamonds, and the fair divinities of general worship, who, in their own northern land, might never dare the glances of the world. Some were notorious for adventures, which they took no pains to conceal; and others were enveloped in mystery, which only rendered them more interesting.

One beautiful woman attracted much attention. Her appearance, indeed, was striking. She was ripened into the full maturity of womanhood. Her tall, round, perfect figure shone conspicuous amid the loveliness around. Her complexion was dark and transparent. Her hair—night was not so sable—was smoothed glossily upon her beaming brow. The dignity of her countenance was chastened by a sweet smile. But the most remarkable of her features were the eyes—so large—so intently dark and lustrous; sometimes veiling their fires beneath a softness that threatened the coldest heart; and

again, when unobserved, when engaged in conversation, or darting their glances round the room, as if in search of some one—bright—haughty—dilated—restless, and almost wild. At times her gaze assumed a positive fierceness; again grew beautiful and tender as a gazelle's.

"One of the curious effects of travelling," said Norman to Sir H——, "is to show the pilgrim fac-similies of his familiar home-faces in the most remote part of the globe. I am really sometimes startled to meet in cold strangers the very counterparts of my most intimate friends. Now my father stalks by me in the form of a duke; and now my old school-friend sits in state upon a throne. Yonder superb creature I feel certain I have beheld before—yet it must be illusion."

"The Countess D——," said his companion, "one of the most marked women of the day; that slender young man who attends her is the Duke de L——."

Norman continued to watch this haughty stranger with singular interest. As he followed her with frequent glances, he found that he himself was not altogether unobserved. His appearance was of a kind, indeed, to command attention in such a scene. Among other eyes, those of the stranger were fixed several times full upon him; and once, when he suddenly turned towards her, he thought she almost started in her attempt to avoid encountering his gaze. Antonia stood near, and saw this species of communion between them. Norman would have spoken to her subsequently, but she seemed to have forgotten his presence; except only once, when he caught her girlish and usually bright face shaded with a cloud of melancholy, and the eyes fixed on him a moment with an expression of misery and reproach, of which he did not conceive her capable

A short time afterward, curious to observe more

closely the face which still appeared as one not unknown to him, he caused himself to be presented to the Countess D——. If, however, his vanity or his romance had woven any conjectures out of her former glances, he was now chilled by her cold and almost severe demeanour. Nothing could be more civil and courtly; but still she was one in whose acquaintance he found it impossible to make the slightest progress. The Duke de L—— chatted agreeably; but the countess, with her large eyes opened upon Norman as if with something of surprise at his seeking with her even the ordinary familiarities of polite life. She spoke no English—had never been out of Italy, Switzerland, and France; and when the duke ordered her carriage, she passed from the rooms with a courtesy almost imperceptible, so that Norman doubted whether or not she even intended it as a greeting. The interview, however, banished from his mind the impression that he had seen her before. Some one very like her he had certainly beheld, but he endeavoured to dismiss the subject.

On retiring for the night, he found on his table a package of letters, and a card from Frederick Morton, with a line in pencil stating the accident by which he had learned of his change of name and presence in Florence, and his anxiety to see his old friend before his departure for *Rome*.

Nothing rakes up the associations like the sight of one in a foreign country who has been familiar with us in our own. Late—late that night did Norman remain seated by his solitary fire poring over letters—oh! how rich with the spirit of distant lands and other days! Julia—his father—Howard, had written. A thousand agonizing—a thousand delightful thoughts awoke in his bosom. Morton had seemed to him singularly interwoven with his own fate. If, as he darkly suspected, Clairmont was the author of the

prominent calamity of his life, it was this very *Morton* who had been the cause. He smiled as he recalled the brilliant night at Mrs. Temple's; he sighed as Flora Temple's image again rose up before him—softer—lovelier—dearer than ever. Yes, the presence of Morton seemed to roll back upon him the stream of long-buried hope and love, and a flood of tenderness gushed over his soul. He smiled once more while recollecting the "B. Hotel, room No. 39, up-stairs:" and thus, with sighs and smiles, the airy tissue of which most men's memory is woven, and into which fade and melt at last all the heaven-climbing schemes of youth and ambition, the greater part of the night rolled away.

CHAPTER XII.

Contrasts and Aspirations—And yet another Coincidence.

"Not to the skies in useless columns tost,
And in proud falls magnificently lost;
But, pure and artless, pouring through the plain
Health to the sick, and solace to the swain."

POPE.

THE Psyche was finished. Nothing from the chisel of the young sculptor had equalled it. Fortune had thrown into his hands a block of marble matchlessly perfect; pure and stainless as her whose attributes it imbodied. Soft fell the drapery, as if waving with the air; and so exquisitely graceful were the tender limbs, so sweet and appealing the virgin face, that the spectator held his breath and trod with a hushed step, as if the heavenly vision, thus betrayed in its visible beauty on the

gross earth, would start from his gaze, and die of shame.

The artist withdrew a few paces, and, leaning against a colossal but half-hewn Jupiter, folded his arms and waited the examination of his friend and patron. He had placed the figure on a revolving pedestal, and arranged the shutters to send down on it the light most favourable to the potent spell of imagination. On his auburn hair, veiling even from friendship the interest with which he watched the effect of his power, a dark crimson cap was drawn down over his eyes, as if carelessly; his arms were folded; his head thrown slightly back; over his handsome face a smile had stolen—just lighting his gaze—just parting his lips.

The sense of excellence in works of art had entered deep into Norman's soul. This delicious dream of loveliness threw him off his guard. He forgot the presence of the author. He gazed in rapture—walked round it again and again with never-tiring delight, murmuring, ever and anon, in the tone that comes only from the heart—

"Oh, beautiful! beautiful! Lovely as the soul! Radiant as the morning!"

He breathed at length, as his attention relaxed, and turned suddenly towards Angelo. The sculptor stood, as if himself a statue, in the same unstirring attitude; but a change had come over his countenance: the deep, delighted smile had faded from his lips, and his eyes were full of tears.

"Is it not a high art," he said at length, "to cope with the very hand of nature?"

"Even so," replied Norman. "When I look on a statue, it is ever with a thrill. Immortality is written on it, as well as genius."

"Ay," rejoined Angelo, his face again lighting up; "will it not go down the tide of ages—will it not? When kings, who now roll by me as if I

were dust beneath their chariot-wheels, shall be dust themselves—when beauties, who deem me, and such as I, too humble even to *look* on their radiance, shall be kissed by the worm—when cities, now thriving and waving with their millions, shall be unpeopled, crumbling, grass-grown, and silent—shall not this little image, in which I have again timidly traced *her* lineaments, shall it not live among the yet unborn myriads?"

Norman saw he was excited, and drew him gently to the window. It looked out upon a wide and gorgeous garden, where huge vases of orange-trees and lemons were ranged against the sunny wall, and statues and fountains gleamed through the leaves.

"Angelo," said he, "I have observed, of late, that you have grown more unquiet and gloomy than is your wont. Does any misfortune prey upon you? Can I serve you? It has pleased Heaven to make me wealthy: I know you entertain wild opinions on many subjects, and on this in particular. But the adage, that wealth is not happiness, is truer than you suppose."

"Wealth may not be happiness," replied the sculptor; "but poverty, I know, is misery—deep, writhing misery. Were all the wealthy such as you, I could be content to behold the golden abundance and profuse beauty of the magnificent globe monopolized, as it is, by a few. But those who possess it are but too often the grasping, the cold, the narrow-minded, and the mean. I look back on my past years. What has life been to me? One long, burning curse. I have drank insult and humiliation with every breath. Am I less high and noble than the creeping reptile to whom the laws of this degenerate land have given yonder palace —those stately fountains—these scented groves? This man has spurned me from his gates. He did

not know me. Let him look to himself. We may one day meet again."

"You alarm me, Angelo. What is it you mean?"

"Nothing," said the sculptor, with some confusion. "When I speak on this theme, I rave. See," he added, as if to change the subject, "with the aid of your liberality I have been able myself to perform a generous action. This picture—it was the property of a poor old painter who was obliged to sell most of his articles for bread. Many of the Florentine artists assisted him as far as they were able. I could only take this."

The production he alluded to stood on the floor with its face against the wall. He reversed it, and discovered the head of a fine dog, full of spirit. There was about it a life and animation exceedingly attractive; but it evidently came from a pencil practised in the higher walks of the art. "I bought it," continued Angelo, "because the circumstances of the poor man's life interested me greatly. With a powerful genius, and high and noble character, it has been his misfortune to suffer a life of bitter poverty—a continual struggle against ghastly want. A fashionable artist in his own walk has always eclipsed him; and he is, at this moment, ill, and has been actually almost starving."

"Poor fellow!" said Norman. "Has he other productions for sale?"

"Several," answered Angelo.

"And do you know him to be a *deserving* object of attention?"

"Come and see for yourself," said Angelo. "The sky is fair, let us walk forth and taste the breeze. Your Psyche shall be sent to the palace to-morrow. At present let us leave it, as I am weary of confinement. Walk with me to Signore Ducci's—so the painter is named—and you shall judge of him and his paintings for yourself. It lies without the walls,

and up the hill of *Belles-guardo*. Poverty has already driven him, body as well as soul, from the haunts of his fellow-creatures."

The two friends pursued their way towards the abode of the unfortunate artist along the black, discoloured, and wretched lanes and alleys of the far-famed town, overhung as they are with immense caves, and sternly redeemed, ever and anon, by a huge and gloomy palace; or a ponderous arch flung across the street; or the heavily-sculptured, but unfinished, façades of cathedrals; or the huge blank walls of a convent; or the turret of some immense antique tower.

They passed towards the *Piazza Santa Trinita*. The groups of Vetturini ever lounging before the black and stupendous *Palazzo Strozzi*, assailed them with their usual clamorous importunities—"*Per Roma, Splugen, Napoli, Venezia.*"

Upon the bridge, the light and beautiful work of *Ammaunati*, their course was impeded by a crowd. A friar, who had won the right of saintship, stood in the centre of the pavement, receiving, in advance, the adoration of the Florentines. He was a coarse, common-looking man, bare-footed and bare-headed, with a cowl and frock, a cord around his waist, and a pair of brawny shoulders, which might have better spent their strength in cultivating the earth than in usurping the honours of Heaven. The multitude thronged around him with lively signs of reverence and worship; knelt before him, kissed the hem of his garment, and stretched their eager hands tumultuously to touch the stones ere evaporated the divine virtue imparted by his sacred feet. The face of Angelo grew almost pale as Norman turned towards him with an inconsiderate and almost incredulous smile, which an instant's reflection checked.

"Can you wonder," he said, "dear Montfort, that I *hate*"—he gave the word that strong and bitter

emphasis natural to his ardent constitution—"that I *hate*, deeply, eternally, those who have brought my noble country to this? those who keep her trampled down in this abasement! Nature gave me a gentle and a loving heart. I sadden over the pain of a wounded bird; I cannot see a sheep slaughtered without a recoiling horror: *but*, for the tyrants of my country I have no mercy. It has been drained utterly from my bosom by years of bitter experience and observation. I hate them. Oh! how I hate them! I would lay down my life—nay, that were nothing, for often I feel that I should be glad to be rid of it on any terms; but were it bright in reality, as it sometimes is in fancy;—had I wealth and power—were Antonia by my side—mine, for ever mine,—I would even then lay it down to hurl into the dust these proud, haughty oppressors. Am I not right?"

"No," said Norman, "not in practice, although you may be in theory. As your unhappy country is situated, it resembles the fox in the fable, who preferred to have his blood sucked by flies already half-sated rather than by a new swarm more fierce and ravenous. Every revolution, even the most gloriously successful, is, at first, an appalling evil; but a failure only rivets and tightens the chain—strengthens the tyrant—weakens the hope of future relief, and pours out that very blood most noble and most feared by those in power."

"You think, then," said Angelo, "that the patriot who now strives to break the fetters of Italy only inflicts upon her an injury?"

"Yes, decidedly."

"And no plan to free her would have your approbation?"

"No, by no means. Italy will only be regenerated, if she is ever regenerated, by the slow influence of opinion; and her first aid will come from

abroad. She might be freed by her own revolutions a thousand times, and she would only fall back again into slavery and degradation. Austria, Russia, France, must be first changed: in her struggles she copes with the colossal energies of all these."

"Had your own glorious countrymen thought so, Montfort, the world had wanted the grandest example of history."

"My own countrymen," said Norman, "you must remember, are separated from Europe. They breathe an atmosphere all their own; and were morally prepared to govern themselves long before they became their own masters."

"Oh!" said the sculptor, "how I have hung over the romantic story of your country!—over its sublime moral fabric—over its godlike statesmen and soldiers, higher, because more enlightened, than those of either Rome or Greece. Your government and your heroes have been *disinterested*. The happiness of their race is their sole object. Your nation steps along the career of *moral right;* never reels with the drunkenness of glory—with the thirst after empire. Instead of involving millions in war, pestilence, and famine, in pursuit of such designs as, for so many thousand years, have shaken this old world, you would not, however easy the enterprise, acquire by force or fraud the wealthiest portion of the globe. You possess the principle of growth hidden in an acorn, which, in its humble origin, affords you at once a hope and a lesson. Like that insignificant seed, you were borne by adverse winds to a distant and savage shore; you were planted by accident, and grew in neglect; and now you appear flinging abroad your branches to heaven, striking your roots deep into the earth, bending and groaning sometimes beneath the storm, but never yielding to its fury, and towering above the surrounding woods, till the remote revolutions of time

and nature shall lay your lofty honours in the dust. Oh that *I* had been born in such a land! where I could tread amid the still woods and mountains, and *feel* myself not a *slave*."

Surprised at his eloquence and agitation, Norman replied—

"How differently you speak from many of your European brethren!"

"No," said Angelo; "do not wrong us. Thousands of hearts, I know, beat like mine at the mention of your distant and noble country. 'As Rome *was* and America *is*,' thus runs their whisper when they form high schemes for their own land. And are your cities like ours? And is nature bright? And are there millions who live ever free, contented, and in peace?"

"Even so," said Norman. "You would be enraptured to behold my native town. It lies even more beautiful than Venice; on a flood, and overarched by a sky, as lovely."

"And all are supplied with the necessaries of life?"

"All."

"None of these beggars and kings, rioting and starving side by side? No saints and friars? And the laws are just and benevolent, and the religion rational and pure, and the government aids, and never crushes those beneath it?"

"All," said Norman, "all these blessings gather under the shelter of my country."

Angelo paused a moment, and added—

"And what would they deserve who could here build up another as independent and happy! If blood must flow, how noble a death thus met in the pursuit of just laws and human happiness!"

He looked around as he finished speaking. They had been for some time surrounded by a throng of beggars, orphans, cripples, the blind, the ulcerous,

the dumb—creatures blasted by disease, age, and accident, the refuse of hospitals, the wreck of wars. They gathered around, soliciting aid "for the love of God and the Madonna!" Norman emptied his purse among them. A handsome girl, who led her blind father, received nothing from the scramble.

"See," she said, "he has no eyes."

"But I have no more," said Norman; "nothing but the purse—"

"Well, then give me the purse!" she cried, snatching it from his hand.

At this moment the cry went forth that the sovereign approached.

"The duke! the duke!" exclaimed the needy crew as they shrank on either side against the wall. The royal party made their appearance in the most magnificent equipages, covered with velvet and gold, everywhere blazing with the imperial arms, and each carriage drawn by six prancing steeds clothed in trappings of gold, surrounded by *chasseurs*, outriders, postillions, and guards. The horses' hoofs clattered against the pavement—the dazzling ornaments flashed and glittered in the sun—and the snowy plumes floated in the air. As the imposing procession advanced, passengers of all descriptions stopped to give it way. Vehicles belonging to strangers unacquainted with the customs of the place, at a sign from a postillion remained stationary. The starving mendicants bent the knee, and the passers-by uncovered their heads with profound humility. The peasant, with his frail cart and skeleton ass, crouched to salute his master. All hats were doffed—all heads lowered—all eyes drawn towards the single man, who, with one or two careless responses to the general salutations, was whirled, flashing, trampling, and glittering, on his course.

"I do not mind," said Angelo, "the oppression of the body so much as the abasement of the mind—

the foul opinions with which they blight the young and the beautiful. Montfort, what think you! *Antonia*, they tell me, is going to bury herself in a convent."

"I have spoken to her of it," replied Norman. "She seems to have been educated in the idea, and has answered my persuasions with the most enthusiastic pictures of that gloomy life."

"I would even rather see her there," said Angelo, "than in the arms of another. Yet I know I am mad, worse than mad, to let her image thus haunt me; her proud cousin Alezzi, her old father, would spurn me as a dog, could they think I had dared to dream—"

"Banish it, my friend," said Norman, kindly. "You are young and ardent; the thought will pass away."

"Yes, when—"

He stopped suddenly, as if about to reveal something which he desired to keep secret.

They soon arrived at the poor old painter's. He had a miserable room on the eminence of *Bellesguardo*, and was ill—confined to his bed. The two visitants just sufficiently communicated with him to announce that he could dispose of several of such pictures as he chose to part with immediately, and at his own price. He named a modest sum for the only two he had left. Norman trebled it, and paid the money down. The good old man, with a grateful look and pressure of the hand, thanked and blessed his generous patron; who, promising to send his domestic for the purchase, also assured him of another visit, and more aid.

He was preparing to pass the evening in solitary study, when his servant came in with the pictures from the unfortunate painter. Norman had not looked at them before. He now turned them towards the light for examination. The one was a

half-finished saint, with a halo around its brow, a crucifix, scull on the table, and a string of angels' heads, peeping down from the walls and ceilings. The other was the face of a blooming and lovely boy of six, of such remarkable beauty, as, when once seen, could scarcely be forgotten. Over the right eye was a scar.

Norman gazed at it a few moments with the most lively surprise.

"Yes," he said, with a smile of pleasant recollection, "that brilliant sleighing day in New-York, seven years ago, and this delicious little face I saved from the fury of those mad horses: I know the eyes perfectly; I never shall forget them; and, now I remember, they are also those of the mother, to whose singular and beautiful face Howard called my attention—*her* life I also saved; and *she*," he said, rising in interest and animation, "is the one, unremembered till this moment, whose image last night I so vainly strove to conjure up, and whom that remarkable Countess D—— so closely resembles. It *is* strange. *Can* it be? Can this fair countess have been in America? Does she really owe to me her life? But why concealment? Why disguise herself? Why deny that she had been out of Europe? I *will* meet those haughty eyes again, as, I swear, I have met them before. Yet, why should I? If the lady choose to deny her travels, and to be somebody else, it is no affair of mine. This child I *know*, and there is the scar; but for the mother, I saw her only once—years have gone by. Besides, what is it to me?"

CHAPTER XIII.

A Dialogue and a Conclusion.

"Look, nymphs and shepherds, look!
What sudden blaze of majesty
Is that which we from hence descry,
Too divine to be mistook:
This, this is she."

MILTON'S POEMS.

YEARS had confirmed and deepened, without altering the outline of Morton's character. In his society Norman passed several pleasant hours, learning many interesting particulars from home; and among others, that Miss Temple had suddenly recovered after Norman's departure, and continued yet the belle of the city—even improved in charms, and at the age of twenty-three more fascinating than she had been at eighteen—and yet unmarried. It had been whispered, that she, with the whole family, was about coming abroad.

"By-the-way, Leslie," said Morton one day, as they were riding on horseback to the *Cascine*—"or, I beg your pardon, Signore Montfort, I should have told you, but I declare I forgot, that she desired me, if I ever crossed you in my travels, to—d—n it, now!—what is it? I never—Do you know, Leslie, I have lost my memory lately?"

Norman turned away his face to hide his emotion. He felt in that moment that his soul was a thousand times more bound up in Flora Temple than it ever had been before. Assuming, however, an indifferent air, he asked—

"But, Morton, what was it that Miss Temple said?"

"Why, she told me, one night at your sister's—she and your sister, you know, have grown regular friends—real hand and glove."

"Miss Temple and Julia!" faltered Norman, with a feeling more like his former self than he had experienced for years.

"Oh, to be sure—why, she half lives at Mrs. Howard's."

"And Julia never even mentioned this in her letter—how strange!"

"Pho! nonsense! I suppose she forgot it."

"But what did she say? You have not told me."

"Why, she said—as I was saying—one night, at Mrs. Howard's—that, if I crossed you in my travels—you see, I was going to take the whole tour of Europe—up the Rhine, across the Splugen—Venice—Vienna—"

"But the message."

"'Tell Mr. Leslie,' she said, 'that is, if you see him in the course of your travels, that'—I declare now—I never—I have lost it entirely. It was something about friends in America—something about—about—the truth is, I did *not* expect to meet you much, so I did not bear it in mind."

"But she said something of me, and *to* me? And she is the bosom friend of Julia?" said Norman, with flashing eye.

"Yes, bosom friend—regular hand and glove. She is a prime article, but—however, I have already written home to our folks, and Maria will go to Mrs. Howard's at once. I told them how nicely you were getting on here. I declare, I never *was* so astonished."

"*Getting on!*" echoed Norman: "why, how did you tell them I was 'getting on?'"

"Oh, I told them; leave me alone for that. I drew a description of you that will do their very hearts good:—Great palace, says I, larger than City

Hall; *suite* of rooms from the marquis, all to himself; little marchioness, says I, plump as a peach—half the day in her *boudoir* with her all alone, says I; a hundred thousand piasters a year, at least; and, says I, he's in for it—regular, I tell you."

"Morton," exclaimed Norman, in a voice almost stern, "did you, really?"

"Oh, yes, d—n me, I did *so*—honour bright; leave *me* alone—I was really poetical on the little marchioness."

"Poetical—"

"Yes, I enlarged out, ye see, and got into a description. Why, she is as far above any thing that ever was, or ever could be seen in America, as a sun above a candle!"

"And you are sure that this letter will go to Miss Temple's knowledge?"

"Why, I was afraid," said Morton, "lest Mrs. Howard might not see it; so, what do you think I did?"

"What, in the name of Heaven?"

"I added a P.S., sending your love—you know those things are always of course—and begging Maria to take my letter round, and read them the passages."

Norman turned away again, but it was to hide his vexation.

"Whom do you think I saw in Paris?"

"Whom?" said Norman.

"Guess."

"God bless me, Morton, it would be easier to guess whom you did *not* see there."

"A great friend of yours."

"Of mine!"

"Particular."

"I cannot conjecture."

"Don't you remember B. Hotel, room No. 39, up-stairs?"

Norman turned suddenly, and with breathless attention.

"Don't you remember 'out of one muzzle into another'—the candle snuffer—the Veronese lady?"

"For Heaven's sake, Morton, who? It was not—"

"But I say it was, though—that d——d French count."

"Almighty powers!—When—where—how? tell me."

"Why, man alive, what's the matter! He is not here, is he?"

"Would to God he were!"

"Would to God he were not, say I."

"Morton, I am deeply interested in this man—deeply, painfully. Tell me instantly the circumstances under which you saw him."

"Well, so I will. I caught him in the most infernal—but you shall hear."

"Quick! I am on the rack."

"You see," resumed Morton, "I do take it upon myself, with pretty considerable certainty, to declare that he who would be guilty of such a thing—"

"Guilty!" interrupted Norman. "Ay, guilty! I'll be sworn, guilt black as—"

"Yes! d—n the fellow. If it were not for his cursed talent at snuffing candles—ditto, men—I would horsewhip him, as sure as—"

"What was the circumstance?"

"Why, you see, when I was in Paris I used to go continually into Galignani's reading-room—"

"Yes!"

"To read the papers—"

"Well!"

"And there, one day, as I went in, who should be there but Clairmont. I knew him the very moment I set eyes upon him."

"What said he? what did he? when was it?"

"Don't interrupt me, my dear fellow. I never

can tell a story if you interrupt me. So, one day, as I said, who should be there but Clairmont. I had been expressly eager to get a view of a certain New-York paper, and he had it in his hands, reading it intently. He was sitting with his head bent down over the paper. Well, I waited; still he did not stop reading; well, I waited longer, still he never stopped, but kept always reading the same article. I got up, walked backwards and forwards, with my hands in my pantaloons pocket; swore a little, hummed a tune, drummed on the table with my fingers, and got decidedly out of patience for about an hour. At last I walked pretty near him, and looked under his hat; and—what do you think?"

"I do not know."

"Guess."

"Really—"

"The d——d fellow was asleep."

"And that was all you discovered about him?"

"All! why, he kept me waiting an hour."

"Come," said Norman, as they reached the beautiful circle where all the gay, fashion, beauty, and nobility of Florence were assembled, "let us quicken our pace and see who are here." They accordingly galloped around, before long arrays of splendid equipages, drawn up motionless on one side, and crowds of others glittering and flashing as they glided amid the trees.

"See!" said Norman, "the Marquis Torrini and his beautiful Antonia!"

The old nobleman bowed, and the young girl turned and gazed with such a sweet smile upon Norman, that Morton's susceptibilities were touched.

"Leslie, you are a lucky dog," he said, "she is most beautiful!"

Norman ran over the names. Great and brilliant they were of the gay assembly, and Morton seemed quite dazzled. He took every opportunity

to display his fine person to advantage, and kept his horse in a continual prance. He had suffered a pair of grim mustaches to curl beneath his nose, and his whiskers commanded attention even in Florence.

"Ha!" said Norman, "the Countess D—— again!"

"Which is the Countess D——?" asked Morton.

"That superb woman yonder on horseback, with the servant in green and gold by her side, riding with the Duke de L——. See, see! Looked you ever before into such eyes?"

"What! No—yes—I declare, I never—" said Morton, "as I live. Countess D——, did you say?"

"Ay," said Norman, somewhat surprised.

"Countess Fiddlestick," said Morton: "that woman is no more a countess than you are. That very woman I saw in New-York twice, and both times with that very infernal scoundrel the—"

"Morton—great heavens!" said Norman, turning pale, "speak!"

"The d——d count in the French army."

"Clairmont?"

"Ay, Count Clairmont. Once I saw her at his door striving to see him, and she was turned away by the black snowball who waited at the hotel; and the second time—"

"Well, quick!"

"In the night, in the street, by the light of a lamp, again in close consultation with him; and they stood scowling on each other like two cocks a-going to fight."

"Almighty Providence!" said Norman, plunging the spurs into his horse's flanks till the blood came. The startled steed leaped forward with a snort of pain, leaving Morton in an instant forty yards in the rear.

"Well! I declare!" said Morton; "what is he

after now? The little marchioness, I vow. No, by Joe! he passes her carriage! she rises and gazes at him! He never gives her a look, I do declare. Its the black-eyed woman he calls the Countess D——. There! he has caught her up—he bows—she bows. Why, d—n it, I believe he's after all the handsome women in Florence—aint he? I'll have to put another postscript—wont I? I declare I never *did* see such a—"

He galloped after his friend, muttering the close of his sentiment inaudibly.

CHAPTER XIV.

The Painter's Room[illegible]e.

"Noting this penury to myself, I said," &c.
Hamlet.

Turning from the countess, again baffled by her perfect composure and distant civility, Norman pushed his horse towards the gate that led to Bellesguardo.

"The painter shall unfold this mystery," he thought, as he hastened along the streets. "*He* must know something of the child whose face he has transcribed. From him I may gain a clew to lead me out of the maze in which I am so singularly bewildered. Fool that I was! I should before have fathomed the depth of his knowledge on this subject. I will deal cunningly with him. I will steal the secret from his unwary lips—for secret there is. If this woman *be* the mother, the painter must know it. I will have the heart out of him, ere I be again thrown back into doubt."

He reached the door. It led into a wretched hovel. The common streets were not more filthy than the rough steps that conducted to his neglected apartment. He pulled the little dirty cord at the opening gate which communicated with the "*piano*," where dwelt the object of his search. It was some time before the gate opened, apparently of itself. A pretty *Cameriera* leaned down from the third story, and, in a soft voice, asked who desired entrance.

On inquiring for Signore Ducci, he was informed that he was dangerously ill, and not expected to survive till morning.

"Can I see him?"

"Scarcely, signore."

"It is a matter upon which my life may depend," rejoined Norman.

"Then walk in, signore. But stay, the holy man is there now," added the dark-eyed and modest young girl; "come with me into the adjoining room. It is the next to the poor Signore Ducci, and when he is alone I will call you."

She bent her head gracefully as she left him in the scantily furnished painting-room of the dying artist. He cast his eyes around. It bore evident marks of penury. About even an inferior painter there rests a halo, however feeble, of genius and ambition. His mind, even if it have not reached them, has nevertheless grasped at the more radiant shapes of nature; his life has been one of floating dreams and brilliant shadows, a continual pursuit after the striking and the beautiful; he inhabits a region half ideal, teeming with lovely groups, and steeped in gay and tender colouring. When he withdraws his eyes from his own imaginations—imaginations not only more gorgeous than reality, but even beyond his power to pour upon the visible canvass—how much he must behold to blot out from the picture of common life! how much he must feel to palsy

his arm, and chill his hope, and teach him to fear that he struggles in vain!

"Poor fellow!" said Norman, as he gazed around upon half sketched fragments—a Venus dripping from the flood, a helmed head, a startled steed, the edge of a princely palace—"poor fellow! Shadows indeed! What other men possess in substantial forms, he owns only in pictorial resemblances; and now—his pencil idle, his pallet broken, his fervid hues mouldering in the dust—from the bright world of glowing light, he goes down to the shroud, the coffin, and the worm. Rest, chilled and tired heart! rest from your labours. Peace at last will still its throbs. I rejoice," he continued, as he descried in the room several objects provided by his own benevolent care—"I rejoice that, ere it close in darkness and death, my hand has shed on its gloom and sorrow even one little beam of pleasure."

A groan interrupted his reflections. It came from the chamber of death. In reply, another voice met his ear. It startled him with its familiar sound. The room which he then occupied was darkened. Before the door hung a heavy green curtain. He approached. Again he heard the voice—cool, wily, and hypocritical. The temptation was irresistible. He cautiously set the door ajar, and glided between the aperture and the curtain; a station whence, himself unseen, he could view the room in which the patient lay. There were in it three persons. The first, the wretched sufferer himself, apparently in the last stage of malady. A light from the west, which the sun had left an immense wall of emerald and gold, fell upon his pale dying face. The second was the girl who had admitted him. In the third, seated by the bed, in his sable gown, with the glossy black hair parted over his quiet artful features, and a subdued look of holiness, he recognised the priest.

The painter, with an expression of long suffering and exhaustion, was just replying to a question, with half-spent breath.

"No," he said, "never a word on that subject."

"But he seemed rich?"

"Ay, and kind as a brother."

"Tall?"

"Yes, and noble; the bearing of a prince."

"How often has he been here since?"

"Once, according to his promise."

"And he gave you money without an equivalent?"

"Yes."

"And you know not his name?"

"No."

"You swear, as a dying man, you have never breathed a word?"

"I swear."

"And that you never will?"

"I swear."

The priest rose to go, promising to return in the morning. As he withdrew, the young and evidently sinless girl followed him to the door, took his hand, knelt, and kissed it.

"Your blessing, my father," she said, devoutly.

"Bless you! bless you, my child!"

Again the fair enthusiast kissed, ere she surrendered, the white and pious hand.

When Father Ambrose had withdrawn, Norman entered at the call of the girl.

The painter, exhausted with the previous colloquy, had sunk back into a doze. Norman gazed on his broad white forehead. There, perhaps, slept his secret, at least the faint clew that might lead to it. Those lips, so cold, so still, could, peradventure, with a breath direct him to the path. Hours he lingered, resolving, when the object of his solicitude should awake, to attempt the discovery, which, however remote, he could not help vaguely supposing

in some way or other linked with his own mysterious fate.

Late in the night, the pale invalid opened his eyes wildly, and stretched forth his hands.

"My mother—my mother!" he said, "my gone years—my distant home among the hills—tell her—I died—with her name—on my lips—tell her—tell her—"

Vain—vain. To that green home no more his foot shall stray. That voice the mother never again shall hear. Already the spirit, free from its world of anguish, was deep amid the secrets of another world.

CHAPTER XV.

A Character partly unfolded—The Wanderer detects a Clew to lead him through the Labyrinth.

"How I recall Anchises—how I see
His mother's mein, and all my friend, in thee!"
DRYDEN'S *Æneas.*

BEFORE the information of Morton, which so singularly coincided with his own suspicions, Norman had planned a journey to Pisa with him, and had formally taken leave of Antonia and the priest. It had been his intention to depart in the afternoon, and to spend the evening and night at the villa of a friend, a few miles from town. Now, however, he changed his mind. He excused himself to Morton; and after visiting, as we have related, the poor painter Ducci, went alone, and full of portentous presentiments, to his apartments. In order to ex-

empt himself from interruption, he had not informed any one of the change of his intentions; and now, at twelve, sat alone in his room, with a rush of thoughts, new and strange, rolling through his mind.

He had overtaken the Countess D——. Her face turned upon him—the very eyes of his painting—the very countenance: no mother ever more resembled her child. His address, however, was received with the same utter coolness and self-possession, rendering nearer approach impossible.

Did she know him? Was she resolved to continue in her mystery? Was there any relation between her and Clairmont? Even if there were—what then? Did that prove any thing? Suppose he could trace and demonstrate all that he suspected—that she was indeed the mother of the child—that some secret relationship subsisted between her and Clairmont—that she had been in America: should she even acknowledge all this, would it realize those dim and irrepressible forebodings which had been for some time floating in his mind, respecting the discovery of his own deep secret; and which were gradually increased and deepened by several trifles, individually almost too insignificant to notice, yet, in the aggregate, striking and inexplicable?

The priest, with his sly smile—his silver words—his mysterious and silent air—his evident desire, on many occasions, to avoid him—his appearance in the Duomo with that gaunt stranger, when his own name had been mentioned—the secret intruder into his room, having evidently perused his note-book: this woman—this Countess D——; her resemblance to her whose life he had saved in New-York; the child's picture, with the very scar; and now, when he had almost abandoned the idea that these were more than mere coincidences, here comes Morton, who exclaims at once that this very

Countess D—— has been in New-York, holding dark and mysterious communion with Clairmont. "What! is the black veil to be lifted? Are these extraordinary shadows, that have so weighed upon me of late, are they really the commencement of the great work? Is the mighty and accursed enchantment which has locked me in odium and in despair, is it fading away? Do the links begin to fall from my limbs, and the scales from my eyes? And this very Morton—he who has so oddly plunged me in this dilemma—is *he*, silly fool as he is, to be the instrument? Shall I walk again among men with the halo of innocence beaming around my brow—beaming to every eye, to every heart? Flora unmarried, and the friend of Julia! What delicious hopes! What—"

He was interrupted by a slight noise. It seemed close to the wall, behind a heavy curtain. His heart leaped to his throat. He was already excited to a most nervous agitation. The heavy toll of the Duomo was just sounding two. All was silent. He leaned his ear. Again he heard a rustle; and hastily extinguishing the lamp, he silently withdrew within a deep embrasure in the window, and, enveloping himself in the folds of a large curtain, waited in unbreathing silence. A light appeared. The drapery on the opposite side of the room, which he remembered had shaken before when he suspected a similar intrusion, once more moved. Gently, stealthily, as a cat crouches to watch its prey, a form emerged from the wall, with a shaded lantern, bending and listening; prying, step by step, and on tiptoe. The intruder reached the table, held the light to the adjoining room, as if to ascertain whether any one, by chance, was there; then, apparently satisfied with his scrutiny, and assuming an easier and bolder air, he uncovered his face, and sat down

upon the large chair by the table: a look sufficed for recognition. It was the priest.

"So ho!" he said, "to Pisa he has gone! Well, let him. If he would but stay—if the old tower would but fall and crush him, we should have easy work of it. Only *he* prevents her—only he; and yet the green fool never dreams it. Ha! ha! Well, let us see; she shall yet be ours."

The worthy man proceeded to examine, very strictly, all the furniture in the room in any way appertaining to Leslie. He turned over the papers—glanced among the books—looked carefully through one or two letters, left by chance on the table—and opened, with false keys, the trunks. Norman had sufficient presence of mind to restrain his impulse to step forth and lay a hand upon his shoulder, and kept perfectly silent. The priest, after looking carelessly through such papers as he found, laid his hand on the packet brought by Morton, and reading the superscription, exclaimed,—

"No! yes! Holy Virgin! Norman Leslie!"

After arranging every thing as they had been before, he glided out of the apartment.

"So, then," thought Norman, as he stepped from his hiding-place, "the infernal rascal is a spy; nay, something more than a spy. What meant the ill-omened raven by the exclamation at my name, and his courteous wish of the leaning tower? Does he know me? He spoke, too, of *her:* who is *she?* Antonia—the beautiful, the innocent, the light-hearted Antonia. I must save that gentle being from the wiles of this old fox; and since I know the secret door, I will endeavour to profit by it. Every day, my reverend brother here goes, at eleven, for an hour, to the cathedral; I will take a look into his regions."

The morning came. Norman met the priest at eleven in an antechamber.

"What!" said Father Ambrose, in his smoothest tone, "Signore Montfort!"

"Ay, holy father, by the merest chance. I returned at daybreak."

"I rejoice to see you look so well," rejoined the priest, with a smile.

When he was gone, Norman ascended into his apartment; and, after much scrutiny, discovered a small and well-concealed sliding panel. He opened it without ceremony. It led into a corridor, and thence into another suite of rooms less elegantly furnished. In a small room, with the light from a high window shed strongly down upon his face, sat a young boy. He was attentively poring over a book. The face could not be mistaken; it was the same sweet countenance which smiled in the picture, and the scar was distinctly visible over the eyebrow. The eyes were presently raised, and lowered again. Those same large, black, lustrous orbs. At that instant a step was heard. Norman withdrew, unobserved, into his chamber. A half-hour afterward, trembling with curiosity, he again tried the panel. It was fastened on the other side.

CHAPTER XVI.

The Thread is broken once more.

"There were two portraits—"
L. E. L.

The haughty Countess D—— led the fashion of Florence. She was the divinity of general admiration. At the numerous soirées, balls, concerts, and

operas, none appeared so marked and dazzling. The Count D—— had been a man of ninety; and scarcely were they united by the priest, when they were separated by death. The old man went quietly to the grave, and the magnificent young countess to the very meridian blaze and splendour of fashion. A noble young widow, rich beyond compare: the duke would do well to marry her.

Her establishment was gorgeous. Her palace was newly furnished, with most costly care; and her equipage—it was the *sun* of Cascine. Four sable coursers drew her, every afternoon, through the glittering throng; and after her were turned all eyes, if not all hearts.

The interest she attracted was not a little heightened by her mien of cold and distant pride. Her manner was even severe and freezing. Her very face, beautiful as it was, had in it something passionless and sepulchral. A colourless transparency marked her dark complexion. An almost bitter smile often revealed her dazzling teeth; and her large eyes gleamed, not only brilliantly, but burningly around upon her throng of worshippers: fascinating the men with a dangerous and lustrous softness, which, on encountering the distrustful look of her own sex, turned to cool and keen contempt. One more cordially hated by the fair, more rapturously applauded by the manly, more remarked and courted by all, dwelt not within the walls of Florence.

She seemed to delight in her triumphs in the *beau monde;* but with the delight of pride rather than passion. Her lip curled, and her eye flashed; but her heart never melted. Her countenance still seemed immutable, passionless, and sometimes even wretched. She never sighed, it was not in her nature; but a close observer might discover that she suffered—that amid the highest gayety of the revel, her soul was sad and solitary—that amid its most

melting ardour, her heart was ice—was marble. High, inscrutable, cold, and beautiful, her course was watched, and wondered at. Dukes and counts, nay, princes and kings, it was said, came to her feet, when her eyes softened with encouragement. Yet even her encouragement was bestowed with the artificial brilliancy of an actress, who smiles from the prompt-book, who sustains a tender or a gay rôle with the ease of her profession; yet whose radiant joy, or graceful love, falls from her as an idle mantle the moment she reaches the side-scene.

There was a magnificent ball at the Prince M——'s the second evening after Norman's adventure with the panel; Antonia, the Countess D——, Leslie, all the world, were present. Norman taxed his powers to make himself agreeable to the fair syren, who won and flung away a thousand hearts; any of which others would be proud to gain, and prone to treasure. In subsequent conversations with Morton, he had learned that the female he had seen in New-York was a very ordinarily dressed woman, and apparently from the common ranks of life; but that she had spoken *English*, both at Clairmont's hotel, and at the interview in the street. She had spoken the language *well*, and he scarcely recollected a foreign accent. Norman, with the most courtly respect, first attached himself to the duke, and quite succeeded in captivating him. He next contrived to draw the countess herself into the discourse, and, with the most intense but guarded vigilance, watched to detect the slightest change in her features as he proceeded in his design. They conversed of America—of New-York. Presently, with artful abruptness, he asked her if she had "ever known a distinguished nobleman, *Count Clairmont?*"

"Never!" she said, with the most perfect ease

and composure. "She had heard the name, or one like it, but had never met the count himself."

During this, apparently casual, colloquy, Norman regarded her with all his awakened soul. Their eyes even met, full and uncloudedly, as she replied. There was no change whatever in her countenance and manner; it was still cold, high, haughty, calm, —not a hue arose—not a feature changed; her lids drooped not—her eyes shed no beam of light the less.

His heart sank within him. It was evidently impossible. He was convinced, and he utterly abandoned the idea. Thus completely satisfied of the fallacy both of his own suspicions and of Morton's, and with that proneness to confidence peculiar to warm and candid natures, he addressed the countess with a respect so sincere and evident, so much more real than that which he had hitherto assumed, that she seemed slightly pleased with his attention, and even bent on him her eyes, divested of their unmelting and distant coldness, with a shadowed tenderness that made him whisper to his heart,—

"She is a thousand times more beautiful than even *I* supposed!"

"You will excuse me," he said, "but you bear a resemblance so singularly strong to a friend in whom I am fatally interested, that I could not forbear indulging the hope that you might be the same."

She smiled calmly again; and they were interrupted by Prince M——. As she turned to reply to the salutation of the prince, Antonia, with her father, approached. The marquis entered into conversation with the duke. Norman spoke with Antonia.

"Like all the world, Signore Montfort," she said, not with her usual free and delightful manner, "you

are captivated with the lady at your side, I perceive."

The remark was made, and answered, in English.

"She is a remarkable woman!" replied Norman. "A strange interest attaches to her in my eyes. Seven years since, in New-York, my native city, I rescued the life of a lady, with her child, from the fury of two maddened horses in full flight. This lady is the very counterpart of my beautiful American friend. In Florence I have accidentally met with a painting of the very child—I cannot be mistaken. And, what is still more singular, I am certain that yesterday at your palace, in the room of the holy Father Ambrose, I beheld the lovely boy himself. I knew him by his eyes and face; and more certainly by a scar over—"

A faint exclamation caused them to turn. The prince had just left the countess. Norman fixed his eyes on her countenance, as if he could pierce to her very soul; and for the moment his suspicions were again awakened. She sat leaning back upon the embroidered couch, her eyes fixed upon a statue—so silent, so thoughtful, so sad and calm, that it seemed impossible she had uttered the cry, which was attributed to a lady very near her, whose coronet of diamonds had nearly fallen. He then resumed his inquiries of Antonia, who informed him that the child he had seen was the nephew of Father Ambrose, who had lately suffered him to visit Florence for a time, and over whose education he watched with peculiar care.

"Indeed," she added, "so great is his anxiety, that he scarcely permits the young lad to leave his presence for a moment."

The countess and Antonia stood together in conversation. They were the two most lovely women in the rooms: but how different! The one had

evidently seen the world, and suffered from its blight. Splendidly beautiful she was; and as Norman gazed upon her tall and majestic form, her head, in its queenly shape and lift, reminded him of Cleopatra. Over her remarkable eyes glittered and trembled a tiara of diamonds of untold value. Beneath, shone her dark, thoughtful face, with the romance of eastern beauty. An Asiatic softness and indolence of manner had crept over her, and the splendour of her attire recalled recollections of Arabian tales. Still, even through the whole there was memory and misery. She seemed a Zenobia —not in the splendour of her Palmyrean throne, nor fainting in the triumph of Aurelian; but afterward, calmed and subdued, the ambitious victor, the Syrian queen, sunk into the melancholy Italian in her Roman villa.

Norman's eyes turned from her to Antonia. In her shone beauty all unshaded by sorrow, all untouched by time—a rose-bud scarce opened to the summer light. Could ever tears cross the sunny face? Dew-drops would be no more pretty—no more lightly wafted away; at least, so thought Norman.

CHAPTER XVII.

A View behind the Curtain.

"To lie in cold obstruction."
Shakspeare.

In a small chamber, far removed from the gallery and suite of rooms open to the curiosity and admiration of visiters, the old Marquis Torrini lay,

"couched on a curious bed," surrounded by mirrors, satin, gold, velvet, and precious marble, preparing himself to die. The priest sat by his couch, arrayed in his holy vestments. The patient was dreadfully emaciated with sickness, and apparently overcome with terror at the thoughts of his approaching fate.

"Father Ambrose," said the dying marquis, in a weak voice, "you have desired to see me alone; speak quick, for they say my time is short."

"I could well pray," said the priest, "that your days might be lengthened, but—"

"You think such prayers would be useless?" interrupted the marquis, his eyes turning with an expression of horror upon his companion.

"I am certain," replied the other, "that the Marquis Torrini desires his servant to speak candidly."

The patient cast on him another look of despair, and murmured, as if half to himself,—

"It is not *possible*—it cannot be—they deceive me, surely. Die? die?" he repeated, with an emphasis of terror and bewildered torment; "lose this being—moulder, dissolve away into nauseous matter, into living corruption?"

He shuddered, and covered his face.

"My kind and noble friend," cried the priest.

"These eyeballs," continued the marquis, "with which I see thy face, fallen from their sockets—these lips crumbled to ashes—this hand, this moving, sensible, living hand, struck to a motionless, unmeaning, unfeeling clod—the flesh dropped from the bones, the sinews unstrung—the joints unlocked? Holy Christ, it is *impossible!*"

The wretched invalid let fall the skeleton hand which he had held up and extended before him as he spoke, and covered his face.

"My dear lord," said the priest, in a low voice, "these are the whisperings of the fiend to turn your thoughts from heaven. He would thus lure you on

till your last moment, not leaving you calmness sufficient for the arrangement of your earthly circumstances."

"No!" said the dying man, "it is not the fiend—it is nature—it is instinct. The horror of death is planted in our breasts. Jesus himself yielded, and cried out on the cross. Where a God trembles, oh! what is left for man!"

"The recollection," said the priest gently, but quickly, "that he trembled for us his children—that he put on these mortal sufferings, to open for us the gates of Paradise. Lift your eyes to Heaven!"

"Ambrose!" said the patient, "it is a falsehood! What have I done to you, that you join in this mummery—that you would affright my soul with idle and dreadful apprehensions? I know I am weak and nervous; but I may yet live. I am stronger and much better to-day. Medicine has enfeebled me more than disease. I am sure—*sure*, dear Ambrose, of regaining my health."

The priest cast his eyes upwards, and his lips moved.

"Why do you pray?" asked the marquis.

"For you, my brother! I am not one of those who, for an idle tenderness, would suffer you to meet the crisis which awaits you, perhaps this day, perhaps this hour—"

"Holy Christ!" murmured the terrified noble.

"Blindfolded, and ignorant where you go," continued the priest, disregarding the interruption. "The beast brought up for slaughter may yield his throat to the knife without previous warning; he may feel the life-blood ebb and bubble away, and the icy faintness of death steal over his stiffening and quivering limbs, with only the brutishness of physical pain. *He* has no *soul*. His obtuse dulness is a gift of mercy from God. But *you* are immortal;

and the hour approaches when you must bid farewell to earth for ever!"

The marquis's face whitened to a yet more livid ghastliness; he rolled his starting eyeballs towards the solemn and severe face of the speaker.

"And you tell me then, Ambrose, with your priestly sanctity, that this is *death* upon me?"

"Death!" echoed the priest.

"That this stately mansion—my villas,—my palaces—my untold treasures—my proud hopes, are all gone?"

"Bubbles!" cried the priest—"passing, hollow, idle bubbles!"

"Holy Virgin! save me!" cried the courtier, in a changed tone of voice: after a moment's pause—"Where are your prayers, priest?" and he wiped off, with his clammy hand, the drops that stood on his forehead.

"They have ascended to Heaven in all the watches of the night!" replied the other, meekly and devoutly.

"And with what avail, Ambrose?" asked the marquis.

"The ways of God," said the priest, "cannot be read by mortals. Death comes to all, at some time or other."

"And your miracles, too," said the marquis, who, while in reality quite destitute of any rational religion, or supporting belief, was merged in the darkness and paradoxes of the blackest superstition—"your sacred brethren have raised the dead. Oh! can they not save the living? Think, Ambrose, think! has your church no relic? have your saints no power? You have called the waters of the clouds upon the earth; you have cured the lame, the palsied, the ulcerous; beggars and wretches have benefited by your intercessions and your power. I am none of these. I am rich, noble!

Drive this dreadful sickness from my veins—pour health and strength into my heart; give me once more to tread the green grass, to hear the birds in the grove, to look on bright nature—to be a *man!* Do this, Ambrose, and I will make you wealthy—you shall revel in gold!"

The voice of the speaker grew husky, and choked and he fell back exhausted.

The priest looked down a moment on his ghastly face, his blue shrivelled lips, his loosened and discoloured teeth, his emaciated cheeks, his hollow eyes, his sunken temples, and shook his head.

"Marquis Torrini," he said, after looking cautiously around the apartment, as if to be secure against listeners, "your hopes of earth are vain; I may not trifle with you on this your last day—peradventure your last hour. The wealth of Europe, of the world; the powers of science, of necromancy; nay, the virtue of prayer and divine relics, can stead you nothing."

The marquis groaned fearfully, and cast his eyes around the apartment, as if to survey for the last time the objects and images from which he was about to part for ever.

"Oh, save me!" he at length muttered—"save me! save me!"

"Nay, hear me further," continued his ghostly adviser. "Death alone, the mere bodily pang, is nothing. Till it touches you, you live: when it comes, it is gone. I would that death itself were your only fear."

"Sacred Mother!" ejaculated the invalid.

"You are old, marquis," continued the priest; "your locks are white; your stay has been long in the land."

"Oh! short it seems to me."

"You are ungrateful, now in your dying hour, as you have ever been—ungrateful to Heaven! Your

years have been years of pleasure; you have wallowed in luxury; you have laughed, revelled, danced, and gambled. What right have you to call on the Holy Mother? What offering of yours has ever hung on her altar? When has your knee bent in her homage?"

"By all the saints!" exclaimed the marquis, remonstratingly, "morning and night, for fifty years, have I knelt before her image."

"Ay!" cried the priest. "Your knee—your corporal knee, has touched the crimson cloth, and your idle and unthinking tongue has paid her useless homage. But the Holy Mother of God is not propitiated by such valueless breath and unmeaning motion. By the true cross! I tell you, I cannot, I dare not, at this instant pray for your soul. The silent words rise sluggishly in my bosom, and part heavily from my lips. Some leaden influence, some fiendish weight, clogs their airy wings, and they fall back unheard."

"Oh, pious father! I confess my sins. Intercede for me—push, compel your holy prayers upward—urge, urge their flight—I will aid you. By Saint Giovanni, your words startle and affright me!"

"Rash, careless man!" said the priest, in a more severe tone, perceiving that he had fully aroused the childish superstition of the sick man, "it is in vain! It is in vain! The fiend has the advantage. You have deserted Heaven—Heaven deserts you! The evil one, even now, enters your room. He gloats upon your dying torments."

"Saints of heaven!"

"He passes your bedside unrebuked; he watches by your pillow, and triumphs in anticipation over such dreadful vengeance as I dare not even think of."

"Ambrose! by the blood of Christ! for the

sake of the Virgin! aid me, advise me, rescue me —what shall I do?"

The nervous and dying noble crouched in his bed, covered his face with the clothes, and spoke in an agonized voice, which evinced the extremity of superstitious terror.

"My lord marquis," said the priest, "you know I love you. It was to save you that I sought your bed."

"Thanks—the thanks of a lost, dying sinner! divine Ambrose!"

"You know, in our holy church, there are divers relics, impregnate with supernatural virtue. Among them reposes, in its sacred case, a nail of the true cross. You know, also, that over the southern door, not far from the statue of God the Father, is a group of the Madonna, and our Saviour between two angels. Late last night I entered the deserted and sacred pile, alone; and with devout and earnest adoration produced the mystic nail. Its wondrous influence shed through the gloomy and immense aisles a calm and effulgent light, full of indescribable glory. Placing it on the altar, I knelt for an hour; and, as I have already said, prayed for your welfare —long, long I prayed!"

"In vain? in vain?" demanded the invalid, gasping in his intense anxiety.

"In vain! For a slow-rolling hour, much ado I had, marquis, to gain for you the ear of Heaven. There are those for whom, at the very first revealment of the blessed nail, the Virgin descends at once, and speaks aloud."

"Go on—go on—oh, holy man!"

"At length, as I knelt, the Virgin Mother descended from the window, and sat enthroned upon the altar. I urged your cause. She frowned severely on me, and my heart quailed; but at length she said, 'There is one hope on earth for your

dying sinner. He can yet show that he is willing to sacrifice to Jesus.'"

"'How? Ambrose—how?"

"Bending my forehead till it touched the marble floor, even thus did I ask the sacred Virgin, 'How, oh, mother of God!' I said, 'can the dying sinner be saved from the flames of hell?'"

"And then—Ambrose—and then?"

"'Let him bestow his daughter on the convent of St. U——,' she said, and disappeared."

"My child! my child! my sweet girl!" murmured the marquis.

"I know," said the priest, "that she is the hope of your heart; but what would become of her without you? The vile world—the bad, corrupt world—the poisonous, polluting, wild world, would blacken her pure innocence. The snares of Satan are already spread for her tender feet. Have you already provided for her?"

"She is the heiress of all my wealth."

"All? Now, marquis, behold! The Virgin comes—she descends in a cloud of light and soft fire. Look, she turns her heavenly eyes on you. The evil one, whom now I behold lurking by your side, shrinks away and trembles, lest by one great act, worthy to make you a saint, you baffle his toils for ever, and rise among the blessed. Send your daughter to the convent of St. U——; send her there, a pure, unsoiled victim on the altar. Her stainless prayers will plead for you like thunder! Her virtues will be a spell to guard you from wo. Look, now, marquis—look how he trembles!"

"Who trembles?" said the marquis, raising himself on his elbow, and casting an affrighted glance around the room.

"He—look—the evil one, with his huge eyes of fire glaring over you, and breathing of smoke and sulphur."

"Save me, Ambrose!"

"See! he starts, lest with one fell blow you strike him for ever to the dust, and send him howling and limping back to hell."

"I will, Ambrose—I will bestow my daughter," said the half-fainting, wretched victim. "But my wealth—what will become of my vast treasures?"

"Thy cousin Alezzi," rejoined the priest.

"But my will is made."

"Revoke it."

"I am faint, I am sick; my eyes grow dim."

"Ever watchful for your soul's salvation," cried the priest, "I have already prepared a will—you have but to sign. Behold, the fiend already retreats from your bed, and the Mother of God smiles and nods!"

"But, Ambrose, my sight is dark, I cannot even read."

"Let me read it."

"Holy Saint Dominick! a faintness comes over me—my hearing is thick."

"Sign it then unread," cried the priest.

The dying man reached forth his hand, and with blind eagerness scrawled his signature to the parchment, while the priest supported him on the bed.

The voices of the procession of the host, in their long monotonous chant, now floated slowly from the distance, gradually increasing in sound. The priest folded up and placed in his bosom the will. Antonia rushed into the room, her eyes streaming with tears. The chant grew nearer and nearer, louder and louder. It stopped before the palace. It ascended the steps—it rang at the door.

"I recall—I revoke," said the dying marquis, raising himself on his elbow with momentary strength.

But the voices of the procession, which now filled the room, rendered his words nearly inaudible. A fit of coughing, caused perhaps by his excitement,

exertion, and exposure during the previous hour, seized him, after which he sank back upon the pillow. Raising himself then again, he rolled his eyes from form to form, with a glassy, death-like gaze. At length they rested on the form of Antonia, who, kneeling at his bedside, was gazing up at him with a mingled expression of grief, alarm, and horror. The dying father recognised her, reached forth his hands to her beautiful glossy head—raised his eyes—attempted twice to speak.

Let us draw a veil over the scene.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The Reader makes an Acquaintance.

"———Auri sacra fames.
Quid not mortalia pectora cogit."

VIRGIL.

It was near the hour of morning. The tall and gaunt Alezzi paced his chamber with impatience; now he started at the sound of passing footsteps—now he stopped and leaned his ear, as if expecting some one's approach.

"By the saints!" he exclaimed, at length—"how long he lingers! The old dotard is dead these eight hours. I told him the instant—the very instant; and see, the moon is low in the west. That creature! she has bewitched me, I think, with that sweet look of hers. How it glances each moment across me! and ever associated with her father's wealth. My heart is a whirlpool of, I

know not how many, contending passions—hope, avarice, and fear. What if he has failed? That world of treasure falls to the hand of a girl—a weak, unprotected, unadvised girl, to waste upon that runagate adventurer Leslie. The old marquis deems me a saint. It must have been easy for Ambrose to work upon his feelings in my favour; and *she*, thus dispossessed of her fortune, let her marry me or not, the piastres are mine. What! do I shrink at grasping them? Are they not *better* mine than hers?—mine, who have drained the last of my resources? What can *she* do with so much? Her equipage, her dresses, are all she wants; and these she shall have, ay, to dazzle the best of them, if she wishes not this convent. But had she known the fierce and infinite joy of the gambler! had she opened in her girlish heart a mine of ecstasy and fire, so vivid, so immense!—Hark!—yes! no! yes! Ambrose? Speak—by the gods, man, speak!"

"My breath is exhausted!" cried the priest, sinking into a chair.

"Then nod your head. Is all right? Has he signed the will?"

"He has," cried Ambrose.

The vehement and fiery noble sprang upon his feet—for, in his anxiety, he had almost knelt in bending down his haughty height to the priest—clasped his hands violently and triumphantly together, and cried,—

"A thousand thanks to the Virgin!"

"And a thousand piastres to me," said Ambrose, with one of his quiet smiles.

"Dear Ambrose!—nay, sit, you are tired—you shall be my friend for ever. Ask what you will, it is yours. They told me long ago that my worthy cousin had taken the leap. But whence this delay?"

"Grief and respect for my late honoured master," said the priest, with another smile.

"Why, you untoward knave!" cried the marquis. "You do not seriously mean that grief or respect had any thing to do with your tarrying?"

Ambrose gave another smile, silently, through his white teeth, and, as he did so, he took from his pocket a parchment. Before he proceeded to unfold it, he said,—

"Yes, grief and respect both kept me; but both belonged to another and a softer bosom—Antonia detained me."

"Tell me hastily, best of friends! tell me all."

"By the mass, an I can remember it, I will. Firstly, the old marquis died, and that in the very moment when about to revoke this precious paper. As he fell back with his last motion, the girl rushed in. The death-scene was a *Caravaggio*. *My* pencil, you know, leans towards the warmth and loveliness of Titian."

"No matter how your pencil leans, priest; on with your story."

"When the poor old nobleman was stiff and cold, they tore off Antonia, with difficulty; she crying the while that she was now without a friend on the globe. Seizing this opportunity, I led her into a secluded apartment, and touched upon the subject of the will—"

"How? Good Ambrose, quick! I ache! I burn—"

"I told her how her honourable and lamented father had spent his last moments with me, at his own request. That he had spoken of *you* with the utmost affection—

"'The Marquis Alezzi!' interrupted she. 'Ah! I guess to what purpose! I know too well my lamented father held him highly in his estimation. *I* despise and distrust him.'"

"Humph!" said the marquis.

"I am frank," cried the priest; "I speak all. 'My lovely child,' said I, 'you will not accuse *me* of misrepresenting, when I assure you that your honourable father has better reasons than you know of for loving the good marquis. *I* am your friend and father; I will not deceive you.' She seized my hand with an impulse of her young, trusting heart, and *kissed* it; and—"

"Kissed!" interrupted the marquis, knitting his brows.

"(You forget," said the priest in a parenthesis, and with another of those expressive smiles for which he was so remarkable—"you forget my profession)—and begged me to proceed. I then touched on your noble character; your generous recklessness, which had in some degree diminished your estates—"

"Ay!" echoed the marquis. "Diminished indeed!"

"Your pure habits—your amiable character" (with another deep smile)—"your—"

"Enough!" said the marquis. "To the rest."

"In fine, then, I told her it was her illustrious father's last wish and will, knowing none so fit to protect her youth as you, that she should submit her actions to your authority, till she saw fit to enter the convent of St. U——. I told her, also, that you had the guardianship of her fortune."

"And what said my sweet mistress?"

"An your lordship murmured before," said Ambrose, "when she but kissed my hand—"

"On! on!" said the marquis, sternly.

"She threw herself at my feet, seized my hand, covered it with kisses (you know, my lord, she is but a child, and so full of feeling and affection that it overflows without bounds upon every surrounding object—she has a dog which she adores), begged me, at least, to save her from the fate of

wedding you. Her beauteous eyes were drowned in tears, and her grief was so beautiful that—"

"Silence, knave! enough! Give me the will! If I am her guardian, I will mould her tastes differently."

"My honoured lord, it is here. Behold where the blind, dark hand of expiring life has rudely traced the feeble marks! Your lordship is now high and wealthy again; you will not forget your faithful Ambrose?"

"Not for worlds, good priest! The thousand piastres are yours. Return to Antonia to-morrow, and seek to persuade her to my wishes. So much beauty were better in these arms than in a convent. But rather than suffer this princely fortune to elude me, she shall be buried in a convent; or—"

"In a grave!" said the priest, smiling.

The marquis replied not, but, with a countenance full of gloating delight and triumph, unfolded the parchment: but as he cast his eyes over its broad page, his hard, gaunt countenance took a paler hue; his lips were pressed closely together, his nostril dilated with long-drawn breath, his remarkable brows were knit into a fierce frown, and his eyes seemed to shoot sparks of fire.

"Fiends! hell! and the raging furies, priest!" at length he said, in a voice so changed that it seemed that of another speaker, and stamping his foot against the tesselated floor with the last imprecation. "What trash is this?"

"My noble lord, the will—the signed legal will of the Marquis Torrini; bequeathing his daughter to the convent of St. U——, or to your arms, and all his estates to your possession."

"Will! will!" almost howled the marquis, furious passion blackening his face. "It is no will!"

"My lord—"

"Lord me no lord—villain, knave, wretch! you have been false! This is a worthless sheet of parchment, the lease of a house, or some such tradesmen's trash, scrawled on the bottom with the half-legible characters of that stupid, bigoted old dotard Torrini. Ambrose—"

He stopped suddenly, and rested his large fierce eyes full on the face of the priest, while his broad chest rose and fell with the storm within.

"You have not dared to trifle with *me?*"

"By St. Dominick! by St. Paul! by the Virgin Mother! this is some wondrous transmutation! I—I—"

He stopped in bewildered confusion, while the noble stood glaring on him with the ferocious eyes of a tiger, pausing the moment ere he rends his prey.

Ambrose crossed himself, uttered an exclamation of horror, and dropped upon his knees.

Alezzi seized him by the breast of his black robe, a flake of foam specked his lips, he shook his crouching companion with his iron grasp, and, in a husky, half-suffocated tone, added,—

"Speak, slave! speak!"

"By my hopes of heaven! by earth! by hell! I am innocent of this!"

"All the hopes of my life blasted in one moment!" cried the marquis.

"I know naught of the means by which this paper has been transformed," said Ambrose, "I swear by the holy cross and crown—I swear by the bones of my father! I *am* myself astonished, bewildered, and amazed! What has come over me? but now I held it in my possession, folded it with my own hands, and placed it in my bosom; and now again, while, as far as my scattered senses can speak, it has never left me, I find this worthless scrawl, foreign from the purpose, yet signed by Torrini. What thunderbolt has fallen upon me!"

"Ambrose!" cried the marquis, in a calm, deliberate tone, "if this be *error*, it is the strangest, stupidest, d——st error! If, as it sometimes flashes upon me may be the case, it is *fraud*—fraud on your part—double fraud—fraud against me, while you seem *for* me to defraud others—I am an indifferent master of my own language; but I cannot call up words to name the hot, deadly, swift vengeance with which I will overwhelm you. I will stab you at the altar—"

"My honoured, my beloved master!" said the priest, in a supplicating tone and attitude.

"I thought to-night," cried the marquis, leaving his grasp on the throat of Ambrose, and striding backwards and forwards in deep agitation and excitement, drawing his breath hard through his nostril, as at each moment his teeth were clenched together —"I thought to-night to be the master of princely riches—to tread over floors of precious marble—to gaze around upon galleries of matchless and priceless pictures—to look on woman's beauty, youthful, ripe, voluptuous beauty, and to say, these, these are mine! I was to be master of slaves—for all men are slaves of the rich. I was to send forth across the seas for luxuries and refinements. I was to win back from those who have beggared me, all—all—*all* my losses! And last, greatest, the grand scheme would have been ripe at once; visions of greatness and bliss—images of warm delicious hours, too soft to name, too vast to measure, floated before me, and in my very grasp! Monarchs might envy, and queens love me. Beauty would be at my feet, and power in my hand. With the wealth of this little soft-faced girl, I could wield Jove's thunder! These were my thoughts an hour ago; now," he added, stopping suddenly and folding his arms, "what am I?—a beggar! the prey of

gamblers—the outcast of his circle—a beggar—a fool—a wretch—a baffled, useless reptile!"

During this long outburst of passion, Ambrose had collected his senses, and regained his composure. He waited till his companion, or his master, had concluded, and bent his head down moodily upon his breast, and then spoke in an insinuating voice,—

"My noble lord will hear his servant: you have wronged me by your suspicions. How can I have been false? Had I been so, how could I escape your knowledge, or your just revenge? What could I gain by falsehood? But you know well that my loss is heavy. If I had been treacherous, would not time at once show?"

"There is reason in your words—you could not deceive, and you could not escape me."

"This amazing accident," said the priest, "for accident it is, cannot now be accounted for. It is probable that I myself have changed the paper by mistake. But, my lord, though this *will* be lost, all is not lost. Antonia regards me as her father—as her confessor—as her only friend; so did the departed marquis himself. No quackery was too gross for me to palm off upon the old man. I won his name to this paper by such a childish device as I should be ashamed to relate. Antonia is as easily governed by those who know how to touch the springs of her character aright. She shall yet either seek your arms or the convent, leaving her property to you. This Montfort we shall find means to be rid of. He away, her actions I can mould at will; you shall be master of her coffers!"

The marquis regarded him with a look penetrating and gloomy.

"May my soul never enter the gates of heaven," said the priest, "if I am not fidelity itself!"

"Ambrose, if you play me false—"

CHAPTER XIX.

A Quarrel, and a Charge.

"The deadly arrow still clings in his side."
VIRGIL.

BEAUTIFULLY broke the day upon the stern old palace on the morning when the body of the poor marquis had been conveyed to the tomb of his fathers. The illness of Torrini had in some measure diverted the attention of Norman from his own singular situation. He had found himself in this foreign land, apparently remote from any thing connected with his interests. The years which had rolled over his head had half healed his wounds. His mind had been made up never to revisit his country, unless at a distant period, and then in disguise. The hope of clearing his fame—of discovering the secret of Rosalie Romain's fate, had been completely extinguished; even his early love had melted into a dream, and no more mingled in his thoughts among the realities of the future. He had formed plans of resuming again his travels into those oriental lands whose languages and people were most disjoined from his own; and now he found himself, by a mere chance, fallen accidentally upon a vein of the most extraordinary casualties and coincidences, which, however they sometimes appeared unimportant, at others stretched to their most painful tension his curiosity, suspense, and suspicion. He seemed passed into a magic circle, where, under the wand of some enchanter, viewless

phantoms of his own fate attended on his steps, whispering ever in his ear words connected with the mightiest secret of his soul, brushing by his elbow, darting over his sleep, disappointing him when most excited, exciting him when most hopeless. Vainly he had striven to grasp these shifting shadows. It seemed that the more he exerted himself, the farther he wandered from their aid; that only when he sat down passively, or abandoned the pursuit, their fantastic and capricious influences again rose around him.

The possibility, however, of piercing the secret which hung so darkly over him had returned upon his mind, and the spark of hope had been fanned into a blaze. The feelings he had imagined long since extinct recurred to him with redoubled force. His old impressions were once more uppermost in his heart. His suspicion of Clairmont grew blacker and deeper; with his suspicion, his hate—and with his hate, his hope of crossing him. The Countess D—— he had resolved to watch; but she had left town, and he had not been able to learn the place of her destination. The child, of course, he was anxious to find; and the priest, with his mysteries, he had determined to unravel. All these plans were interrupted by the illness and death of Torrini.

The situation of Antonia divided his attention. He saw her the victim of an infernal design. Her scheme of entering a convent he had endeavoured to controvert, but without apparent success. He had, however, once told her his suspicions; and also, that if ever in any dilemma she should need a friend, she must apply to him, as to a brother, or a father, for advice or aid: and when he spoke, truth and honour were legibly written on his face and actions.

He sat alone in his apartment the morning after the death of the old noble, revolving in his mind what course he should pursue. Propriety dictated the impossibility of his remaining longer in the house as a guest, with only this beautiful young female and her aged *gouvernante*. Yet, in the palace were the priest and the child, one of whom was now so intimately connected with his own fate, and, by consequence, the other also. By remaining, might he not protect this defenceless and lovely girl from the insidious plans of the priest? As he considered these things, a domestic brought him a note. It was written in a hasty hand, and signed *Antonia*.

"Oh, Signore Montfort!"—thus it ran—"you once told me, should I ever require the aid of a *brother*, or a *father*, to apply to you. Little did I think it would so soon be the case. Alas! I am already in need—inexperienced, alone; and, but for yourself, friendless. Father Ambrose has told me you are to leave the palace, and has hinted dark and dreadful things of you. Oh! come to me—come to me!"

Astonished and alarmed at the import of these agitated lines, he hastened at once to her boudoir. It was a lovely spot, overlooking the spacious and magnificent garden, quite secluded from the nauseous streets. It seemed a new world of foliage and light, the music of birds, and the liquid murmurs of bright waters as they leaped into the air, and fell back into their marble fountains. Trees of the orange and lemon, ranged in enormous vases, shaded the narrow winding walks. The bending willow, the tall dark cypress, the silver olive, and the silky locust mingled together in clumps of verdure; and high, huge smooth walls bounded the luxuriant and summer Eden, along whose sides and angles vines and roses clung in odorous loads. Birds were gathered here by hundreds, and lived the year

round, ever undisturbed, straining their little throats as if their hearts would burst for joy. Graceful statues of white marble shone through the green—nymphs and fauns, naiads and goddesses; and in a large fountain in the centre sat father Neptune on his car, glittering amid the ever-falling spray. The outward world of beggars and troops—of monks and friars—of filth and gloom—of poverty and pomp—of hollow-eyed despair and supercilious wealth—the lean and starved cripple, the fat and bloated monk—were utterly shut out from this sylvan scene.

As Leslie entered, he cast his eyes through the tall windows, open even at this late season for the waftings of the sweets that floated over the balcony. He could not help thinking that this bright and perfumed seclusion was an appropriate abode for its young charming mistress, whose heart was just so pure and secluded from the outward world. The boudoir itself was impregnated with her spirit. Her taste and refinement were visible in the choice and disposition of its furniture, which was simple, but costly and magnificent. A rich carpet covered the glassy floor; the walls were delicately draped. Two magnificent marble vases stood on the balcony, breathing in their balmy odours. A harp and a piano, and piles of music; large mirrors; tables of rarest marbles; several exquisite pictures,—a Madonna, by Guido—Saint Cecilia—a Magdalen—the Crucifixion—and a St. Sebastian. Among them was only one not of a pious character—a Cupid, by Albano. The arch boy, amid wreaths of flowers, watched some viewless victim; his bow bent, his arrow drawn to the head, apparently waiting a moment for the most sure and fatal aim. He had scarcely seated himself, when Antonia entered. Partly with the half-unrestrained familiarity of an ardent and affectionate child, partly with the dignity

of a passionate woman, she advanced hastily to his side, and was about to speak, when the door opened.

The intruder, who had so inopportunely interrupted the interview, was tall, strikingly tall—an accident which, according to the mood of his mind, conveyed an impression of awkwardness, grandeur, or terror. His frame was bony and muscular, but gaunt and thin; his hair peculiarly black and abundant, parted low over his forehead, and shaded thick and bushy brows. Beneath glanced a pair of eyes not without beauty, but the beauty was continually counteracted by a fixed ferocity, that pained and disconcerted him they looked on. They were of intense blackness, and full of the vivid fire which, in this wonderful clime, warms and nurses the soil, flames in the mountains, glows in the sky, and burns in the bosoms and along the features of her children. His complexion was olive, nearly sallow; his nose aquiline, almost to deformity; his mouth, half concealed by two ample curls of raven hair, was bold, large, and stern, though, when he smiled, a light came over his features from the white handsome teeth. It resembled a gleam of sunset over a rocky and steril landscape, and for the moment the fierceness of his eyes was softened. When he spoke, his lip assumed an expression which implied the heart of a scoffer. His voice was deep and rich; the low tones, when he wished to conciliate, sweet and mellow. Altogether, he presented that strange mixture of good and bad which enters, more or less, into almost every thing human, but seldom in such prominent and unblended proportions.

As Leslie regarded him, his first thought was a brigand; his next, a poet; his third, what could bring so extraordinary an individual, at so early an hour, with so little ceremony, to the private boudoir of the young Antonia? As he flung open the door, the two gentlemen mutually started, and a species

of surprise appeared so far to arrest them as to afford each time to complete his observations. Leslie arose; the other paused on beholding him, started one step back, gazed around a moment as if to assure himself that he had not entered a wrong chamber, cast an angry glance on Antonia, and, knitting together his dark and ample brows, measured the form of Leslie from head to foot with a coolness almost insolent. The young man lifted his stature with an air of surprise as cool and firm; and a gathering shade upon his face boded no willingness to undergo such a critical examination.

"So proud, too!" muttered the stranger.

He shot forth another keen glance, with more fiery freedom and disdain, upon the now stern and erect form of Leslie, and withdrew, closing after him the door with passionate emphasis. It was the very face which Leslie had seen in the cathedral, in conversation with the priest.

"Upon my soul!" cried he with a half-smile, for he could scarcely doubt of some strange error, "I should like to renew my acquaintance with that brigand-looking gentleman in some more appropriate place."

"Oh, hush, for Heaven's sake!" murmured Antonia, trembling with alarm. "It is he—my fear—my abhorrence! It is Alezzi!"

As she spoke, footsteps were heard returning.

"By the saints!" cried a deep voice, in Italian.

"Hist—hist!" said another, in a low, anxious tone.

"But I tell you—" cried the first.

"Convince yourself, then," replied the other.

Again the door opened, and the bending form and smiling face of Father Ambrose entered, leading in the haughty figure of his patron.

"My lord," cried Ambrose, "this is the kind gentleman to whose friendship the deceased marquis, as well as the fair Antonia, owed so much. Signore Montfort, this is the Marquis Alezzi."

The angry noble scarcely bent his head. Norman did not move.

"The guardian of the young marchioness and her amiable friend should be better acquainted," said the priest.

"We shall be," replied Alezzi.

"Not with my permission," said Leslie, sternly, darting back, flash for flash, the fierce glances of the marquis. "I am accustomed to select friends for myself, priest."

"So high!" murmured Alezzi, as if to himself. "We'll try if we cannot find means to put this eagle down."

The priest, a little behind, made vehement gestures to Leslie, deprecating his attitude and anger, and begging him to yield and conciliate.

"Why do you sign to *me*, priest?" exclaimed he, calmly, "I have no secrets with you."

"It is the Marquis Alezzi," rejoined the priest.

"Be it so. And what follows?"

Ambrose raised his hands and eyes, as if the youth were mad in still daring to speak like a man, even before the Marquis Alezzi.

"Who are you?" demanded Alezzi, with unrepressed contempt.

"When I know by what authority I am questioned," said Leslie, "I shall be better able to determine whether the questioner be a knave or a fool."

"Your words, young man," said Alezzi, trembling with rage, for he was accustomed to see men abashed before his searching eyes—"your words are registered where they will not be forgotten; but I cannot stoop to quarrel. Is it fitting that I, the guardian of a young and beautiful girl, in demanding to know the name and character of a gentleman in her boudoir—her guide—and, for what I know, her lover—"

"I assure you—" said the priest.

"Silence!" cried the marquis.

Ambrose withdrew from his flashing look.

Leslie began to reflect that he had been premature. He even commenced to speak, but the marquis interrupted him,—

"Is it proper that I, in the palace of my near relative—I, a noble of rank and fortune, the guardian of Antonia, should be insulted for demanding at least an acquaintance with those who frequent her society?"

"Oh, Montfort," said Antonia, in an under tone of alarm, "speak him kindly!"

"I might confess that I had been premature," said Leslie, "had I been acquainted with your person; but your method of seeking information is somewhat singular and unprepossessing. I must be bold to add, that even supposing you had the right to demand it, a more courteous manner would better become *you* and the young lady of whom you are, I believe, the self-constituted guardian."

"He saved my life," said Antonia.

"And has been improving your mind, my young mistress," said Alezzi sarcastically—"teaching you English. Hey, priest, went it not so?—philosophy and nature. My good young folks, I trust I have come in time. You know, Antonia, your father's wish, which I am bound to see executed. I cannot suspect you of stooping in your thoughts to a nameless adventurer."

"My good lord," said Leslie, calmly, but haughtily, "I despise and defy you! Your insult take back in full! I speak to you, and your tool yonder, without disguise. This unprotected girl is your victim. I comprehend well your base intrigues. The world already know you for an adventurer and a beggar. It is for me to swell your list of names with that of *villain!*"

The marquis leaped towards him, as if to crush him to the earth. Antonia rushed between, and Ambrose held his arm.

"'Tis well," said Alezzi, recovering himself after a momentary glance of ungovernable fury; "to a priest and a woman you owe your life. The transient impulse which could make me stoop to one like you" (he laughed scornfully) "has passed. I am calm again, young man, as yon marble image. But if you would brave Jove, try the bolt."

Striding close to Leslie, folding his arms, and leaning his sallow face towards that of his foe, while a malignant smile lighted his features, he said, in a deliberate and low voice,—

"Hark in your ear!"

Leslie stood high and stern, expecting a personal attack, but at Alezzi's words, inaudible to others, for a moment he grew pale, and started with signs of anguish.

"You understand me, then," said Alezzi, triumphantly and maliciously. "You know why I bear your impotent slanders. I may not even shed your blood without stooping; and, being what you are, you can no more receive chastisement from the hand of an Italian noble, than favour from that of a high-born maiden."

But Leslie's confusion was only momentary.

"My lord marquis," he said, recovering immediately his cold and lofty calmness, "thank my moderation, and my resolve never to reply to *that name* with violence, for your *life*."

"Murderer!" cried the marquis, "begone! I will see that every door in Florence is closed against you; and if once more you dare address, even with a word, this innocent and unsuspecting girl, your life shall answer it."

A scowl of fearful hate gleamed from his dark eyes.

The priest, with a meek and supplicating face, raised his eyes and hands to Heaven; then hastened to the support of the affrighted Antonia, who faintly murmured,—

"Go, Montfort—oh, go at once!"

Norman stood a moment, erect, calm, and even gentle; and his gentleness, when extended to his foes, had they better known him, would have made them shrink.

"My good friend," said he, "let me show you as a serpent crushed, which even when alive was fangless. I have no *friend* in the world unacquainted with the history of my life, except this same youthful girl, who remained ignorant of it at the suggestion of her father. Himself knew my misfortune and my innocence. Your brutal slanders could inflict upon my reputation not the slightest wound, except among strangers with whom I never mingle. Should circumstances, however, induce me to leave Florence, as perhaps they may, let me before I go acquit myself of a debt which I owe you and your sanctified tool yonder."

"Insolent knave!"

"It was my intention to place this fair girl in possession of a fact which, for purposes of my own, I have hitherto been induced to conceal. This scoundrel priest may thank me that I stood so quietly to behold him, with your name familiarly on his lips, kneeling at midnight, like a common thief, in my apartments, and over my opened trunks. *You*, my haughty lord, are also indebted to me for having substituted, on the priest's table, a certain useless paper, which somewhat disappointed, I believe, your lordship's honourable plans of wealth. Ha! Does the galled jade wince? What! both dumb? I leave you, worthy pair. I am armed equally against the intrigues of the one and the violence of the other. Antonia, beware of them. They are

both hypocrites and villains, and both your foes. If I can ever aid or advise you, Antonia, seek me without reserve. Should *you* desire further explanation with me, my lord marquis, you shall never want ample opportunity of meeting me at your pleasure."

With a look upon Antonia, and a smile that rivalled the priest's for coolness, he bent his eyes a moment upon the astounded marquis, and slowly withdrew.

CHAPTER XX.

Passages from Letters.

" ——Let us see;—
Leave, gentle wax; and, manners, blame us not."
King Lear.

Two of the letters from which are selected the following passages were dated somewhat anterior to this period of our story, the others nearly at the present time.

Letter from the Priest to the Marquis Alezzi, in Rome.

"Neither do I know who he is, nor whence he came, as well as I hope one day to do. Rich he is, as may be seen from all his actions. He has taken into peculiar favour the artist Angelo—him who did the Psyche your lordship admired so. Of him he has made many purchases, and paid for them well, too. They say the poor chiseller of marble was almost starving, till this same Signore Montfort relieved him. I have not written to you before, because I desired first to know whether the blind

god had any thing to do with his coming to the palace. I certainly know he is far from such thoughts. He spends most of his hours in the library alone. When with her, *I can answer for it*, he never touches on the theme. Still, the girl is ardent and susceptible, and it were much better that she saw him not. I spoke of it to the marquis, but he frowned as I have not seen him do for twenty years, and bade me silence. He has at least fascinated *him*. I should suspect him almost, by his attentive kindness to Torrini, of a design upon the piastres, only there is in the man an open and complete contradiction to the thought, a disinterested recklessness of self, which some would call nobleness, and others folly. He has Angelo with him often in his rooms, not as a slave, but a companion; and the young sir has even dared, though I really smile while I write, to look with no icy eyes upon Antonia. You will have a penniless sculptor, mayhap, for your rival, but not this Signore Montfort. It is the most unfortunate thing, his coming here, with his silver voice and gallant bearing. I had already won from Antonia a consent, which she formally gave her father, to receive you as her future husband. But she is now more coy and shy. She will not yield up to me her heart and soul, as of wont, and I espy in her new thoughts and new schemes. I will set on foot inquiry about Montfort, and revolve certain means of rendering you the old man's successor, either with the pretty sylph or *without*. She inherits her father's devotional zeal, and has a dream of a convent, which I have taken care to strengthen, knowing we might one day wish to be rid of her. Angelo, too, has revealed to me his love. His *love!* Why, the prating fool thinks our golden revolution is to be brought about solely by his genius, and that it will reward him with all he can ask of wealth and honour. I have found this love for Antonia a tempt-

ing bait, did the fiery boy need urging to the crisis; but, truly, he is as hot for war, and as full of bitter hatred against —— and ——, as yourself. I do think, so inflamed is he with hopes of liberty, that he fancies all Italy will suddenly turn into a Sparta, or that the best days of the old city will come back again by the cutting of a few foolish cardinals' throats. He believes that he may hereafter claim the hand of Antonia, and that she will be more willing to receive him as a lover, when she finds in him the deliverer of his country—*the deliverer of his country!* He moulds under my touch like the softest wax. His fiery and fearless nature will be useful to us on the great day."

From the Priest to ——.

"And with your assistance *here*," so ran on the letter, "much might be done.

* * * *

"Alezzi is now full of money, and only needs a wary friend to beggar him. The sturdy bully trusts me altogether, and I have so woven around him my meshes, that he shows to me like a bullock drawn up to the ring, and patiently waiting to be knocked on the head. Come, and you may glut yourself with his possessions. Never lamb at the altar bled more unresistingly. Only yesterday he lost three thousand piastres to B——, who, as you are aware, is but a tyro at the business. Under your skilful treatment, he will yield his all, and you may walk on gold. Other plans there are too. You know his cousin the Marquis Torrini, and the pretty little dark-eyed child Antonia—time has done wondrous work on both. The former has dwindled into a trembling dotard, who can scarcely sleep at night without me by his bedside, so completely have I mastered his mind; and the infant,

Jesu Maria! has budded into the very loveliest blossom of girlhood that ever fired the veins of prince or priest. Even I, the holy Father Ambrose, even I burn—but, of course, in secret. I am in the family as a son, and but for the watchfulness of Alezzi, I know not what would come of it. The fire that flashes in your veins burns also in mine. It was but yesterday this exquisite creature, as I was alone with her, giving a lesson in English, which language she speaks quite well, ran hastily across the room, from some wandering impulse of tenderness, to caress her favourite bird. Her foot being entangled in a garland of riband, she would have fallen, had I not caught her in my arms. I could not help—no, though my whole plans depended upon it—pressing her with a most paternal ardour to my bosom. But the little dark-eyed minion did not, or would not, understand, and neither chided nor blushed, but only *thanked me!* The glow of a ripened woman already overspreads her with the charms of heaven, and—*I* am to educate her! *Educate* her! Envy me you do, for I know you. You and I are none the colder for having drawn our first breath beneath those fiery skies of Naples."

From the Priest to the same.

"The boy is gone. Take care of yourself. I kept him tenderly for years, and lately, from several necessary causes, brought him to Florence, where he was guarded, like a stolen treasure, in my own most private rooms. The very devil must have had a hand in it. Who could have abducted him else, I know not; and as for flying of his own accord, the innocent young thing could never dream of it. Gone he is! How and when, I am utterly at a loss to conjecture.

* * * *

"Never mind the boy, I shall have him again soon. I cannot think but he has strayed by chance. —— and —— are both right. I am locked in your interests as ever."

From the same to the same.

"What! again? with an immense fortune—and thrown in her way, say you, by *chance?* Lucky dog! Never will you want three hundred thousand piastres more than now. The whole field is up. The carnival will be the most memorable of carnivals. By the Virgin! with many it will be a farewell to other things than meat. Be on the spot at least by then. All you have told me I will endeavour to do, but hush your alarms. *He* is yet here; but fear nothing, all is right—thick walls and iron locks."

CHAPTER XXI.

An Italian Courtship.

"Was ever woman in this humour wooed?"
Richard III.

The marquis drew near, and, seating himself respectfully and tenderly by the side of Antonia, said,—

"My sweet girl, hear me! Among all the miseries which life has brought me, I have felt none more bitterly than my wrongs at your hands."

"Your wrongs, marquis!"

"Ay, fair girl, mine! Why do you hate—why

do you slander me? I have never done you injury. I have watched over you even when you slept. And this villain, whose crimes I have unmasked, would have succeeded perhaps in bearing you off—you and your fortune—but for my care."

"I thank your care gratefully."

"Antonia, I love you!"

Antonia was silent.

"Father Ambrose has related to you your father's dying wish, that you should not remain in this bad world without a proper protector. See, scarcely are his venerable bones in the earth, ere his sagacity is apparent; and the basest and subtlest of impostors, in the form of youth, beauty, intelligence, and virtue, rises at once to ensnare your young affections."

He paused. Antonia was yet silent.

"You revere your father's memory. It was his last wish that you should be sheltered beneath my care, not only as a ward, but as a wife."

She looked up into his dark face, cast down her eyes, and trembled.

"I know I am not a gallant like the idle butterflies of the day," continued Alezzi; "but I trust I know what tenderness you deserve from a husband. This youth—this Montfort, or Leslie, for he has names a plenty—doubtless stands in my way to your affections. Nay, start not; turn not pale, Antonia—I *know* it. Now I have a proposition—marry me, Antonia, let me be your friend, your protector, your husband; this Leslie, if you still love him—"

"Well, my lord—"

"Let him still dwell in your heart—we cannot quell and master our affections at will, Antonia. They rise and overwhelm us—they bear us away with their deep and swollen tides; we are light as thistle-down in their whirling and turbid eddies. Take then this Leslie, receive him as your guide,

bend upon him—ah! favoured lover!—the light of your eyes, the smiles, the vows, the kisses of your lips. I will remain your protector in the eyes of the world; and you should know, child, that it will cause scandal if you encourage a lover before you have a husband."

"My lord," said Antonia, for the customs of her country caused this extraordinary proposition to be received with less amazement and indignation than the reader may deem proper, "I duly appreciate your kindness."

"If you love this Leslie, you will save him by yielding to this proposal. He has thrust himself upon my hatred. I hate him!" he said, his white teeth shining through his curled lip; "he is an *adder* in my path, and I will crush him to the dust! But for your sake, dear girl, he shall pass unscathed—he shall dwell with you in peace, only pledge me your hand. You will secure his life, his happiness, and your own."

Antonia was yet silent, but sobbed and covered her face with her hands.

"My sweet child!" cried Alezzi, "you have wronged me cruelly, and misunderstood my character. Being your husband, I will not be your tyrant. Marriage, my dear Antonia, is at once a freedom from all narrow restraint, which must ever check the warm heart of the maiden. You are now a slave to fashion and calumny. Already the world speak of your familiarity with this stranger in terms of wonder and reproach. Be mine, the voice of slander *dies* at once: women will envy, but cannot blame; and men will love, while they dare not importune you. This youth, this Leslie, we will suppose pure and innocent, wronged, falsely accused—all that he should be—all that you think him; be mine, and you shall dwell with him undisturbed. He shall still be the companion of your

steps, and the chosen of your affections. Confess to me that you love him more than your own soul."

"The Blessed Mother protect him!" said Antonia, lifting her eyes to a small image of the Virgin, exquisitely carved in ivory, which stood on a kind of altar before the spacious mirror; "the Blessed Mother protect him! I *live* only in his presence!"

"Then, Antonia," rejoined the marquis, "without my aid, without my power—without my protection as your husband, his absence will be eternal! his death will be sure and speedy! I know much of this unhappy man—much that would plunge him in the blackest ruin. He has made himself so deeply my foe—he has wronged and insulted me so bitterly and audaciously, that, without other cause, he dies. There is here, also, a noble lord from France, who has sojourned in America, and who knows the whole history of Leslie; he, too, has been the victim of this man's haughty temper—he, too, has sworn revenge before the altar and on the cross. He has long been the companion of my convivial hours, and he has confided to me the secret of his hatred, and of his determined resolution to lay your lover at his feet. He will pursue him over the earth, and his vengeance is deadly as fate! Antonia, these separate foes direct their batteries against the single head of Leslie—unsheltered, unfriended—a stranger in the land—blackened in fame—the foul and poisonous stigma of murder fixed upon him by his own country—a fugitive—a wretch! What shield can he lift against this universal war? Where can he crawl, or skulk, to hide himself from this general hate? Even should he defend his life, what becomes of his happiness? Shunning all, shunned by all, his existence must be that of an owl—an existence of solitude and night, and trembling at the very beams of the blessed sun."

"Poor, poor Montfort!" exclaimed Antonia, tears gushing forth and rolling heavily down her cheeks; "what will become of him—so proud—so high—so noble! What will be his fate!"

"Misery, despair, terror, and a bloody death!" cried Alezzi, in his deepest voice, and with a scowl that sunk to the soul of the girl. "All this anguish—all this wo and ruin one word from your lips will change to joy and love; all the clouds that roll and frown above his head, ready to blast him with their concentrated thunders, you, Antonia, with one word—a breath—a smile—a look, can chase for ever away. Through the pits that yawn about his feet you can conduct him in safety; why do you hesitate? I do not even ask his safety at the expense of his love. I do not ask you, in dismissing him from death, to banish him from your arms, nor your heart; I ask you to reclaim him from danger—from destruction—from absence; to lean upon his arm—to sit by his side—to drink in the tones of his voice—to study, to draw, to sing, to ride, to dwell with him. And what do you lose?—what sacrifice? You give to me—I will be frank with you—a claim to your fortune, which is more than you can use, can measure; and you give me a mere formal ceremony—an abstract title to call you wife."

"And what pledge have I, my lord marquis, that you will keep your word?"

"You may bind me by *laws*—by laws which I cannot break or elude, to settle upon you such portion of your useless and immense grandeur as will suffice for your wishes and his. You may bind me by laws, also, to grant you the full freedom of his society and his love. The country you happily live in provides you with this power. I tell you, Antonia, more frankly," for the marquis really warmed in the subject, "I am not a boy. I love you, sweet child," putting back a wandering curl from

her forehead with his fingers, "but not with the idle fever of the youthful and the romantic—not with the monopolizing, self-absorbing, unnatural passion that burns in the pages of poetry and romance, or in bosoms warped from the liberality of nature. Plainly, I would marry you as I would purchase some rare and costly ornament—as I would transplant some rich and beautiful flower, not to lock you up and gloat on you, Antonia, in secret selfishness. Woman I have never sought or loved; I have other, nobler, higher, fiercer joys—ambition, power, wealth. You are different; you live as a gentle girl should—to love. Well, love then, Antonia! Suppose that what you fair women call '*our hearts*,'" and he smiled jestingly, "have no share in commanding our union; we have motives, to you as strong, to me stronger—*interest* commands it. You will purchase your lover; I, my ambition. Speak, Antonia! say but that you will be mine! Join yourself to me irrevocably this night, and I swear to you, by the holiest of saints, by the most sacred obligations, you shall be as free as the air to adopt what lover you will; and, if you desire, I will seek your presence only as a stranger."

"My lord," replied Antonia, now pale and faint, but still perplexed and in doubt—for his soft and winning manner and specious eloquence had staggered her resolution, "give me till to-morrow to reflect upon your offer!"

"And in the mean time, my good child," said the marquis, for he saw the danger of deviating from the cool and unimpassioned manner which he had assumed, and which rather, throughout the whole scene, had resembled the sober kindness of an indulgent father than the ardour of a lover, or the tenderness of a husband—"in the mean time, my good child, I will have papers drawn, so simply and so palpably unequivocal to ensure to you, without quib-

ble or evasion, all that I have promised and all that you can desire, that your timidest doubts will be allayed, and every alarm of love and hope hushed into peace and joy. I return to you, Antonia, to-morrow."

She motioned him assent and adieu; her heart was too full and swollen for words. The wily noble cast upon her a lingering look, in which a close observer might detect the lurking warmth of passion, blended with triumph scarcely repressed. Then, with slow and studied deliberation, he bowed and departed.

The reader will remember, that the most striking objects to the traveller are not always the novel aspects of shores and mountains, the sight of antique and wonder-raising palaces and ruins, nor cities fashioned in forms so strange and picturesque that even to look upon them stirs the breast with new sensations. The intelligent wayfarer finds more themes for reflection in the moods and standards of the moral world, as they vary according to clime and country. Italy presents many of these grotesque wonders; and her systems of government and society are as uncouthly shattered into wild and accidental fragments as her immense and mouldering amphitheatres and her ruined towers; with this exception, that her dilapidated edifices and walls are the sublime wrecks of once perfect things, while her monstrous shapes of politics and morals appear but the phases of a mighty chaos, which has never had bright order and perfection. Her morals, her customs, her laws, her governments, have no general connection with truth, wisdom, and virtue. Every object, every principle is bent, warped, and distorted from the beauty and glory of happier countries. Hence, opinion is a crime—the press is a danger—religion, a cheat—and female dishonour, a fashion.

CHAPTER XXII.

The Cloak falls from the Cloven Hoof.

"A fairer person lost not heaven."
Paradise Lost.

When Antonia was left alone, a tempest of furious thoughts flew through her mind: not that she doubted the propriety, but the policy, of the step she was urged to take. Many of her noble friends, the familiar visiters of her father's house, had entered into the marriage state from motives equally unconnected with feeling, and were authorized by their husbands, in some parts of Italy, by legal marriage settlements, to meet their lords in the fashionable circles by accident, and almost as strangers. Her own mother had united herself to the Marquis Torrini without love, and for years had met him with indifference; while a gay young duke was her constant attendant at home and abroad.

It had been one of Antonia's dreams to gain the love of Leslie. She had never thought of obstacles. Visions of happiness had floated in her fancy—travel, study, music—long and happy visits to other lands. Her enthusiastic nature had brooded over these, till they had become powerful objects of hope. They were to be now all blasted. She was to resign herself to Alezzi—to be the wife of one she loved not—to yield some vague portion of her wealth to his grasp.

Should she dismiss his suit, what horrors spread themselves darkly out before her! Montfort was

doomed. She knew well the unrelenting and powerful vengeance of Alezzi. She started to hear that Montfort was now the victim of another's hate. Perhaps a day—perhaps a minute, might be too late. A union with Alezzi would be a union with Montfort. His life would be saved; his love would be hers. Her impetuous nature could brook no delay. With no one to advise or guide her, she was lost in a whirl of doubt, when a gentle knock at the door announced a new visiter, and Father Ambrose entered.

Him, of all men, she regarded with the profoundest reverence. His wisdom came from Heaven itself. He was the controller of the elements. He had recounted to her cures which he had effected, and souls which he had saved. Spectres, whose unburied bones made them restless in their graves, had visited him to gain peace from his holy prayers. The Virgin had replied to him in audible words, when he knelt to her at the altar. Ships he had saved at sea amid the tempest. He had guarded the vineyards from blight, and, at the call of the peasants, he had unlocked the relics of holy saints; and by their divine efficacy, added to his pure prayers, the earth had produced in double abundance, and the huts of the poor had been sheltered from plague and famine. He entered. His step was soft and noiseless. He seated himself by the side of the beautiful girl. He took her hand, kissed it, and said,—

"Antonia, I come to save you. Alezzi is your foe, your tyrant. With one word I can hurl him to destruction."

"Oh, welcome! welcome!" cried the terrified girl, exhausted and almost abandoned to despair.

"Antonia, you are pale, you tremble, your senses forsake you. Lean upon me, sweet girl—dearest, fondest, loveliest! Ha! she faints."

He received her form in his arms. He pressed it to his bosom, again and again. He impressed kisses upon her lips.

"What madness," he said, "has touched my brain? The wine, the wine has fired my veins. Antonia! angel! seraph! beautiful, beautiful girl!" as she lay in his arms—her white and jewelled hand fallen heavily into his own—her long tresses loosened from their bonds, and hanging to the floor—her face pale, but lovely to the priest beyond his power to contemplate. Calmly again he sought her half-open mouth with kisses.

"Ho-ho! she revives."

Roused by the ardour of his embrace, she had indeed revived, and gazed around as if in a dream. So implicitly did she rely upon the virtue and divine purity of the man, that even while he held her imprisoned in his arms she regarded him only as an over-fond father.

"Oh, dear Father Ambrose!" she said, "what terrible destiny is mine!"

The confiding and unresisting affection with which the lovely and unconscious girl received his endearments cheated him into a momentary misconstruction of her character.

"By Heaven!" he cried, forgetting himself entirely in the whirl and fervour of his feelings, "I love you so, Antonia, that my nature is changed."

"Will you then save me, holy father?"

"Save you, Antonia!—save you!—but in these arms."

"Oh, I will fly to them with joy unutterable—let us hasten away."

Deceived by her eager attachment, he clasped her once more to his breast, and once more approached his lips to renew the kisses which he had found so delicious. With eager vehemence he pressed them to hers. The wily villain little knew

his charge. As if an adder had stung her, as if a bolt of thunder had fallen upon her, she started back, her eyes flaming with indignation, her cheek reddening to crimson with shame and horror.

"It is true, then," she said; "Montfort is right—he marked you for a villain, and so you are. What, ho—Alezzi!"

"Child of my age," cried the priest, "what would you do? would you pour out my old blood on this floor like water? would you see me dashed a stiff mangled corse at your feet?"

"Yes," said Antonia, swelling with fury; "you merit such a fate. Alezzi! come forth!"

"Antonia!" said the priest, darting towards her, his countenance at once losing the soft and holy humility, and blackening with deep and frightful rage, "hear me! Would you die yourself?—Down upon your knees! Before the Virgin Mother, swear that what you have suspected you will never reveal, or I will kill you as you stand."

"God have mercy on me!" cried Antonia.

"Swear!"

"I swear," murmured the shuddering girl.

"What I have done," continued the priest, "has been done at the command of the Virgin, and as a trial to your virtue. Should you betray her minister—should you break your oath, the Mother of God would start from her pedestal to strike you *dead*."

He fixed upon her his fierce eyes with the dreadful malice of a demon. The door opened, and in a moment the fiendish fury and tempest of his countenance were changed to the soft smile and cloudless repose of a summer's day.

CHAPTER XXIII.

The Vicissitudes and the Transformations of Love.

"He knew the stormy souls of womankind;
What secret springs their eager passions move,
How capable of death for injured love."
DRYDEN'S *Æneis.*

On Norman's return to his apartment, he had directed a short note to Antonia, but received no answer.

"Can it be possible," he thought, "that the calumnies of Alezzi have gained credit in her ear!"

The idea stung him, and opened afresh those wounds in his heart which time and distance had nearly healed. He lamented his acceptation of Torrini's invitation to the palace. In the despondency of the moment he derided as ridiculous the hopes of discovering any thing of Miss Romain, which had been lately new-born in his breast. The boy, the Countess D——, the picture—he derided his own infatuation which could detect encouragement in trifles so light. Nearly seven years had passed away, and here he found himself, as at first, still marked with the blistering and burning brand upon his forehead; all men might read—all fingers might point at it! Against the world's hate and malice, what defence could he rear? Even should he lay low in his heart's gore the bully Alezzi, would that prove his innocence? would that gain him esteem, respect? would it not rather invest his name with new horror? would he not be yet more

a shunned being? His imagination looked forward through the path of his future existence; what did it discover?—gloom, everlasting gloom, and wo, and ignominy—scorn, hatred, and solitude.

"Never again," he said, as he paced his room in the silence of midnight—"never again will I trust myself within the pale of civilized society! Never again will I fling off my mantle of dark and terrible loneliness! I see, I see my lot is cast—the doom is sealed. Fate has marked me. Hope has left me. She whose image has still clung to me—I will forget her—ay, utterly and for ever. Parent, friends, home, country, my name, my language, my very self—all shall be forgotten! Yet do I not despair. No, I will mingle in more romantic and brilliant climes—I will change my very identity. Beings whom I have loved, scenes of my boyhood, hopes long cherished—all that has cheered and illumined my gone years—farewell!

"This Antonia, too—bright-eyed, light-hearted, exquisite creature! How fond, how confiding!—with her melting voice, and yet more melting eyes. Fair, tender, noble girl—could I but secure her happiness!"

A touch upon his shoulder caused him to start; sternly he turned. Heavens, what a sight met his gaze! Antonia—her long black hair loose over her shoulders, her face pale, her eyes streaming tears—stood before him; one moment stood, and the next flung herself at once, and with an utter abandonment of all restraint, into his arms and upon his bosom. A flood of tears choked her utterance. Touched, alarmed, and with all the interest he had ever felt for her—all his admiration suddenly aroused—he strove, peradventure but feebly, to remove the beautiful trembler; and those faint attempts were unavailing, for, once yielding to the deep and burning love which had long been hidden

in her breast, she clung to him with fervour which he could neither explain nor resist.

"Again—again," she said at length, passing her arm around his shoulder, and looking up into his face with streaming eyes; "speak those blessed words again! Oh! you can—dear, dear Montfort, you *can!* My happiness is in your gift—one kind look, one word of tenderness, of love, and I am steeped, steeped in bliss!"

"Antonia," he said, "my sweet girl, sit—sit, dear Antonia, you are wild, you are agitated, you know not what you say."

"Too well—too well!" she said again, still clinging to his bosom, and utterly abandoned to her feelings. "I say, dear Montfort, I love, I love—I adore you; only, only you. Oh! I am beset with dangers—with foul, black villains! And you—you, too—but I will love you—I will fly with you. What have I said!"

She covered her now encrimsoned cheeks with her white hands, and the tears gushed through her slender delicate fingers.

Leslie at once saw his situation; and it was one which, whatever it might have been to other men, presented to him only emotions of pain and embarrassment. Yes, this ardent and passionate girl, whom he had ever mistaken for a child, loved him with all a woman's devotion and agony. Young and light-hearted as she seemed, he had never dreamed of this. He had forgotten that in Italy love is everywhere; and that the rich blood which flows in the veins of her women has been nursed by voluptuous customs, and kissed for ages by a burning sun, till it flashes to the heart of each individual with hereditary fires.

"Antonia," he said, as soon as her agitation had in some measure subsided, "my dear, dear sister!"

"No sister! no sister!" she said, seizing his hand and covering it with kisses—"cold, cold Montfort!"

"Antonia," cried Leslie, "sit, be calm—oblige me, and hear me speak. Sweet girl, you say you love me; you must not—I should be a villain did I allow it. I am a friendless, blighted man—an outcast—and persecuted by all."

"And do you think, oh, Montfort! for that cause that I would love you less? No, no—more, a thousand times more!"

"You must not, noble and generous girl; it is wild madness; to-morrow I leave you, for ever."

"Oh! no, no," she said, shrinking again to his bosom with the shuddering fondness of an affrighted but affectionate child; "I know your story—I know it from Alezzi, Montfort."

"Do not call me Montfort. It is a name to hide one execrable."

"Stay," said Antonia, with a calm look, "be *you* seated. Alezzi has told me that your name was Leslie—Norman Leslie—that you have been charged with murder—that you escaped by an informality in your trial—that you won the affections of a beautiful American girl—that, having won them, you wearied of them; and, fearful of discovery, that your hand—this hand, Montfort, this very hand—took her life, and threw her body into a stream. Well, Montfort, I heard him through as one hears the wind whistle when beneath a shelter which it cannot reach. I smiled, and in my smile were scorn and incredulity. Because I knew you, Montfort, though my heart bled at every pore to hear such blasphemous charges. They told me you were in the *habit* of winning the affections of women; and Alezzi denounced you for having attempted—as he said—but too successfully, to gain my own. Of *that* accusation I felt your innocence; and, by instinct, I felt your innocence of all. *My* love you

have never sought. To me you have been ever as cold as ice. Yet, for that very coldness, I love you. Woman's shame prompts me to conceal this love. I cannot—it overwhelms me. Did I not tell you my heart would burst, my brain would madden, and the springs of my life would snap asunder?"

"Antonia, your ardent feelings lead you away."

"No, it is—it always will be my nature. Had you ever wooed me, I might have loved you less. Had you flung yourself at my feet, I never should have been at yours; nay, I might have frowned and called you presumptuous. It is your coldness which has conquered me—your stern, unnatural coldness. I love you as I have heard men may love a marble statue; and the hopelessness of such a passion is its fuel and its madness. I thought all men would love me—*must* love me; all but you *have*. The iron-hearted Alezzi, the very priest Ambrose, princes, dukes—I have felt in the great world that *all*—*all* were at my breath;—I could smile them to my feet—I could frown them away; they were my *lovers*—they were my *slaves*—all but *you*; and on your icy soul I have hung till I am spell-bound—and, Montfort, you must be mine!"

Once more she flung herself into his arms, and wept on his bosom.

Many ideas rolled through his mind. Through his character there ran a vein of philosophical thought and rapid observation, which rarely deserted him, even in the most sudden emergency—a vague sense of the vast advantages which many men would find in the power to marry this lovely and impassioned, but strange being. Wealth without end was at his command, if wealth he had needed; and he might procure it without even the shadow of concealment, for she already knew his history, and confided in his innocence. Perhaps, for a moment, with her form in his arms—beautiful

as she was, almost beyond compare—the suggestion lingered in his mind; then the strange vicissitudes of life struck upon his fancy—that *he*, who had for years pined and moped in solitude, a distant and timid lover, counting the slightest glance of his mistress's eyes, the most passing smile of her lip, as a stream of light from the very gates of heaven—loving with all the energy of his nature, yet loving in vain—and now, in his turn, chance had raised *him* to the throne, and, instead of the trembling supplicant for favour, lo, it was upon *his* breath that a beautiful, devoted, high-born woman hung for happiness. *He* was now the arbiter of her fate. *His* smile had caught value—*his* look was light from heaven. The recollection of his own misery as a slave, contrary to the usual examples of history, was not ill calculated to render him indulgent as a despot. Who shall blame him if, scarcely knowing what he did, he folded, with a gentle but half-trembling sympathy, the lovely form in his arms—if he kissed away the tears from that bright child's lids—if, reckless or forgetful, when he knew that each touch imparted pleasure, his hand put back the ringlets from her temples and laid itself, as if in a blessing, upon her beautiful head?

"You love me, Montfort," she said—"I know you love me. I am alone in the world, surrounded by dark and bitter enemies. But for you, I should yield to their snares. Without your continued aid, I shall yield to them yet. I have no firmness with them. From my youth, they have been accustomed to mould and govern my mind and feelings. Love me, dear Montfort—love me and save me! Alone, I am unable to cope with those around me. Only you will save me. Say, dear Montfort, you will be mine!"

She hid her face in his bosom.

Desperate moment! Years had fled since he had

seen Flora Temple. The hope of beholding her again was nearly extinct. Even if he beheld her, he was uncertain of her affection. Never had Antonia looked so lovely—never so confiding. He had wooed Flora through doubt and suspense. He had wooed *in vain*. But this impassioned creature loved him in spite of reason, prudence, fear, and suspicion—loved him till her guileless heart seemed bursting with its load.

The weakness, however, was but momentary. It was a baseness to suffer, even for an instant, the warm and inexperienced heart that beat so burstingly against his own to doubt his feelings and his intentions. Yet, Virginius, when his daughter lay fainting in his arms, scarce paused with more tender reluctance to strike the unnatural blow.

At length he said, with a sudden effort, and grasping her small soft hand in his own, while still she clung to him and looked in his face,—

"Antonia! hear me. I love, deeply, unchangeably, I love—another."

Not Ithuriel's spear wrought such a transformation. In one moment, the gentle and fond girl stood erect before him—fond—gentle—nay, a girl no longer. It was a high, stern woman, whose tearless eyes and pale calm face froze him with haughty and majestic contempt.

"Antonia," he said, bending like a subject before an angry queen, "forgive me—I have never, never dreamed of this."

She replied not.

"You are offended?"

Yet she replied not.

"You hate?"

"*Yes!*" she exclaimed, with a single glance from her flashing eyes.

"And thus we part—"

"*For ever!*"

"One word."

"*Away!*"

With a gesture of speechless and indignant scorn, she waved him back, and disappeared.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Scenes at Rome—An old Friend—A strange Discovery.

"————The welfare of us all
Hangs on the cutting short of that fraudful man."
Henry IV.

It was the first night of the carnival of Rome. There was a masked ball. Lords, dukes, princes, and noble ladies thronged the splendid dome. A gorgeous tide of fashion heaved and swelled to its utmost height.

Could all the thoughts and feelings—all the burning passions—the cunning schemes—the bright hopes—the blank suspicions—the joy, the agony, that went on beneath those floating plumes and sparkling stars—could they be laid open to the day, what clashing characters mingled in the whirl! Hark to the young sweet voices—watch the actions of each passing incognito. Who are they? The husband is there watching his wife—the lover his mistress; jealousy rolls its eyes unseen; hate lurks beneath a painted smile; the very air is full of mysteries.

A gay harlequin and one in palmer's weeds met.

"Hist! Speak!"

"The bright stars above us," murmured one.

"And the hell beneath," replied the other.

"Right," said the first, in a secret whisper; "is he here?"

"By the Virgin! I saw him. But there are two in the same dress, and it has thrown me off the track."

"Whist—look!"

"Can it be?"

"It is."

"The plume of the *right* one is touched with crimson."

"I will speak with him," said the palmer.

"In ten minutes meet me by the column where we parted."

"Off—he comes!"

They separated.

"Holy Mother!" cried a cavalier, muffled in a dark mantle, his broad hat looped up with a diamond, and shaded by a sable plume; "both—both are here. God! could I mistake?—those two fraternal friends! See—see how the same stealthy pace shows in each the same quiet, soft, hellish hate! Now, nerve me, Heaven! Palmer's weeds, and the many-coloured harlequin—I shall not forget; and both on the blood-track after *him*. Be still, deep-fraught breast, thy time is almost come!"

Gliding swiftly after the first two speakers, the cavalier disappeared.

All eyes were turned upon him as he passed, so princely was his port. The young knight won hearts in all directions. Beautiful he must have been, though the features could not be distinguished behind the vizor bars; his armour glittered in the almost noontide splendour; the plume floating over his helm was touched with crimson.

"From the Holy Land, sir knight?" asked a palmer.

"Ay, good pilgrim."

"And the blood of the infidels on thy plume? I would, sir knight, that they *stained with blood* wore *all* the red token as *fairly as thou!*"

"Ha!" cried the knight.

The palmer was gone.

A harlequin stood leaning against a column.

"Holy sir palmer!"

"Merry fool!"

"Did you rightly guess?"

"When was I *ever* mistaken? I touched his master-chord, and it trembled beneath my hand. It is himself."

"The red plume?"

"Ay, you cannot be mistaken."

A glitter from the mask of the harlequin showed the flash of fiery eyes.

"It is well."

"Can I aid you?"

"No! alone—alone, I do it! Headless shall lie that lofty plume ere to-morrow's sun!"

Again they separated.

The graceful and slender cavalier drew his dark feathers lower over his brow, and while the harlequin stole through the crowd, followed close on his track.

Two stately forms swept by in royal robes. The one, a man of imposing aspect, crowned, and in his hand a sceptre; the other, a lady, a diadem on her brow. On the monarch's arm hung a girl unmasked, and beautiful as morning. The young knight saw her, and started so abruptly with an exclamation of delight and amazement.

"Fair lady," he said, after an interval, during which, with the license of the place, he had regarded her attentively, "may an honourable knight-errant

lay at your feet his heart, and ever after do battle in your name?"

"No, sir knight," said Flora, smiling, for it was she; "seek, I pray you, some other love—some worthier."

"No other love," cried the knight, approaching with the most guarded respect, and yet with a tenderness, sincere, deep, and agitated, in his voice and manner, which did not escape the notice of her who had called it forth, "than Flora Temple—no worthier breathes the sweet air of heaven!"

"How!" she replied, surprised and almost alarmed, "you know me?"

"There is not a page of my heart," replied the stranger, "where your name is not written, where your image is not engraved."

The lovely girl turned pale and drew back, eying her companion from head to foot with keen scrutiny, and then shrunk with something of a tremour close to her father's arm.

"Nonsense, daughter!" he said; "remember you are at *Rome*, and in a masked ball; these things mean nothing but jest."

The knight stood erect and silent, as if deaf to all sounds but the voice of his lady love.

Mrs. Temple, ever childishly delighted with adventure and admiration, smiled on the proud form who stood thus glittering in his mailed suit, and who appeared to have thus publicly selected Flora as the peculiar object of homage. The attention of the father and mother was, however, immediately directed to other attractions; and although the daughter hung on the arm of the former, she could receive the remarks of the knight, and even reply to them, without the danger of observation.

"Your noble father," said he at length, when he found another opportunity to address himself to her ear alone—"your noble sire, fair lady, mistakes

What I say means more than jest. Dost thou remember—"

He paused, and resumed again in a tone yet lower and deeper,—

"Yes, dear, most beloved Flora! the bosom that once more, after long and weary years, heaves at the sound of your voice, has learned nothing from absence but love, although more hopeless—but adoration, although offered in despair. Farewell again—now, perhaps, for ever."

"Stay—stay!" she cried, pale as monumental marble, yet uttering not the least exclamation to render the interesting interview less interrupted by others.

The knight obeyed.

"Something tells me," said she, after a short pause, and with a voice that trembled with emotion, "that I speak to one whom I have met in a distant land."

"To an exile," added the stranger, "whose years of agony would be repaid a thousand fold, if but one kind word from your lips would bless with hope that deep and faithful love which absence could never weaken, nor even despair destroy."

"Mr. Leslie?"

His very heart stood still. Those same eyes which had haunted him in the remotest climes were now turned on him with increased loveliness and feeling. At this moment the cavalier with the sable plume approached, and said,—

"Ho, sir knight—a word with you!"

He to whom this was addressed showed little inclination to accept an invitation so abruptly given, and was turning away, disdaining reply, when the speaker, shading his brows with one hand, half-lifted the mask. Beneath it glanced the eyes *of the Countess D——*.

At such periods, years of thought flash over us in a moment. That remarkable face—he had first

seen it with Howard, and saved her from the mad steeds; it had floated afterward, darkly, ominously, in his delirious dreams; then the haughty coldness with which it had mingled in the giddy circles at Florence—the firmness with which Morton had identified it at *Cascine*. The consummate skill which had guided her through his interviews with her, so as again to fling the suspicion from his mind; and now, here, beneath a mask, in man's attire, the same glance—but its coldness changed to fire—its meaning and its mystery unveiled, gleaming on him amid the riot and confusion of this magnificent scene! Even Flora was forgotten.

"Norman Leslie?" she said, after a gaze of singular agitation, "you are in danger!"

"How? from whom?".

"Your life—you are watched!"

"My life I value not; but, mysterious woman, you know me—you are then she? By Heaven!" he grasped her wrist, "you shall not leave me till—"

"For God's sake! I am your friend; stand aside but for one moment. Seem not to regard me. Eyes are on us—eyes of hate, fire, and revenge. More presently."

She glided away, leaving Norman almost motionless with astonishment. He turned to Flora—she also was gone.

"Alms!" said a holy friar, beneath whose cowl might be detected the head of a profligate young noble; "alms, I pray you."

"Stand!" cried a stalwart figure, arrayed as a robber.

Norman looked around. Nothing could he see but a wilderness of grotesque forms and masked faces.

Presently a hand touched his arm.

"Look not around," said the voice; "I am the sable plume. If you attempt to gaze, or follow, if you exhibit any sign to betray to others that I am addressing you, both of us are lost—Nay, then, I will fly—you shall never behold me again."

"Speak then," said he.

"Beware the harlequin."

"The harlequin? There are *twenty* here."

"Then avoid them *all*—and the palmer—they seek thy life."

"And who are '*they?*'"

"The one is the subtle priest, the other—"

There was a pause.

"Nay, he has passed; yet he is almost now within reach of our lowest voice. The other is—move not, stir not—"

"Speak!"

"Clairmont."

It was with difficulty indeed that the advice contained in this last sentence was adopted. His heart leaped to his throat. His blood rolled and boiled in his veins.

"You know the secret of my life?" said he, however, without stirring.

There was no answer.

"I will turn, if you speak not, and drag you before this whole multitude."

There was no answer. He changed his position.

As he suspected, his informant had disappeared. He sent a keen glance round amid the thousands. Palmers and harlequins were passing and repassing him in every direction.

"Sir knight of the crimson plume," said a voice.

"Well, my fair page?"

"Beneath the vase, on yon pedestal, lies a scroll. It is for you; but read it not till you are *alone*."

Bewildered, half believing himself in a romantic dream, he made his way to the spot designated, and

with a cautious hand moved the small vase. Passing his fingers over the marble, he seized a strip of paper.

Trembling with curiosity, hoping that he was about to make the discovery which would lift him at once to bliss unutterable, he forgot the caution he had so singularly received respecting the harlequin; and, after wrapping around him a heavy black mantle which he had left in the corridor, without waiting for his carriage, he hastened—he almost flew into the street.

The moon was just emerging from a silver cloud that lay like a bar along the sky. Its light fell broadly down from the eaves of an immense palace. Pausing in a narrow lane, he held up the scroll. It contained only a line:—"By twilight, meet me tomorrow night, at St. Peter's, before the *altar of St. Leo the Great*. Your life, more than your life, depends on it."

A short, deep exclamation at his side startled him; and the glimmer of a bright blade trembled in the moonbeam.

"Ha!—at last!" cried a well-known voice, as a dagger was lifted over his breast.

Off his guard, unarmed, utterly exposed, death once again gleamed before him; from which all his personal strength and courage would have been unable to defend him, when a figure darted upon them and threw a heavy cloak upon the arm of the assassin. Grasping him, thus entangled, Norman brought him to the ground, and tore off his mask. The face of Clairmont met his eyes. It was black with passion. He wrenched the knife from his hand—a dreadful feeling flashed across him; but muttering, "No—no *blood!*" he flung the blade fiercely away. "Dog! assassin! you shall come with me!"

A crowd of revellers burst suddenly round the corner—several rushed to the spot. Norman stood

alone. His victim, with a sudden and desperate struggle, had wrenched himself away; leaving only a few shreds, of various colours, in the hand of his foe.

CHAPTER XXV.

St. Peter's—The Denouement approaches.

"Anon out of the earth a fabric huge
Rose like an exhalation.
* * * *
———Where pilasters round
Were set, and Doric pillars overlaid
With golden architrave; nor did these want
Cornice or frieze, with bossy sculptures graven;—
The roof was fretted gold."

Paradise Lost.

THE roar of the carnival had died away. A dusky twilight fell on Rome. See the tall column and slender obelisks pointing through the gloom!

A solitary passenger, muffled in a cloak, paced thoughtfully through the black lanes and broken squares—by the towering palaces—the spouting fountains—the sculptured cathedral—the leaning walls—the prostrate temples. Impatience appeared in his step and manner—many a sacred wreck he passed unpausingly. The mute, scarred Pantheon—that gem rescued from the deep of time—won not his regard. Old Tiber rolled his yellow waves unseen. Where was bent his gaze? There!—where from the circus of the imperial fiend another Pantheon sat amid the stars, throned in all the pomp of colonnade and pilaster, of fountains and statue—

to astound and dazzle unborn ages—there his eyes were fixed—thither his step advanced.

If you have never seen St. Peter's, reader, you are to be envied. In your prospective lies the possibility of a *new* impression. Its immensity and magnificence almost cease to be physical objects. They strike, they amaze, they exalt the mind. They awaken, impress, and overwhelm the imagination. They roll over you with the mastery and solemn thrill of something intellectual and ideal. Its mighty floor spreads from your feet with the level that tasks the eye to receive—its brilliant walls, clothed with splendour, gorgeous with all of precious that earth can yield, that genius can create, rise around with an intense grandeur that pains the gaze and the comprehension. You stand in the midst, lost and diminished; now lifting the eye with mute incredulous wonder to the golden roofs, the vast and radiant dome; now measuring the ponderous monuments, peopled with exquisitely majestic, almost breathing, forms of marble. With a hesitating step you approach an infant angel, that grows as you advance into gigantic and impossible dimensions. Bewildered you recede from some stupendous pile, which, with each enchanted moment, falls lovelier and yet more lovely into all the proportions of grace and the perfection of nature.

The stranger lifted the heavy curtain—he stood within the wondrous hall. Was his soul struck? Was his vision dazzled and overwhelmed? No. Such a powerful charmer is custom, such a yet more potent necromancer is interest, that he trod the endless pavement as if it had been the commonest sward of green in a silent forest. Mark how his eye darts around amid the wilderness of glittering marbles and beaming pictures.

"Who moves on the broad area yonder? It cannot be she!"

No, it is a single traveller, hushed and awe-struck, gazing and gazing upon the interminable piles of gorgeousness.

A step approaches our stranger.

"'Tis she!"

No. A priest glides along with half-heard step, and disappears.

"For the love of the Madonna, signore!" cries a voice.

"Ha! at last!" thus said the eye and start of the muffled wanderer.

No. A blind beggar, led by a filthy child, craves, amid this wondrous wealth, for means whereby to live.

With still and watchful pace, on and on he went —by the cinders of the great, by the works of the inspired, by sacred statue and holy relic, by mouldering king and forgotten pope, by couchant lion and winged seraph. With a beating heart he stands by the altar of St. Leo. He stands alone.

"Hist!"

Was it fancy?

"Hist!"

"Again!"

He approached the immense tomb.

"Ha! Is it you?"

"Yes; but away!—again you are watched."

"I care not. I am armed."

The figure lurked behind a giant image. The face was half visible.

"Mysterious being," said Leslie, "for the love of God, relieve my racked soul."

"I dare not now. Yonder priest, who passed us but now, is the companion and agent of your bitterest foe and mine. I dare not remain. He knows

me. But to-morrow, after the carnival, meet me at the Coliseum. Watch till I come, if it be till midnight."

"But, one word. Rosalie Romain! does she live? Can I learn aught of her?"

The priest had approached again. He was at their side before they knew he had turned. His eyes were fixed upon them. From their evident disguise, and mysterious manner of meeting, they were well calculated to attract attention. It might have been mere fancy that he knew aught of them or their affairs. Leslie bent on him a stern glance. It seemed to quail him. He shrank back, and retreated.

"Now, strange woman!"

The figure was gone. He passed behind the tomb. No one was to be seen but the blind beggar, who had hobbled after him with his extended hat; and a group of foreigners gathered, mute and motionless—their eyes fixed on a magnificent statue.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Rome during the Carnival—A Ray breaks in upon the Darkness.

"Hadst thou thy wits, and didst persuade, it
Could not move thus."

Hamlet.

WHOEVER has not witnessed the festivities of the carnival week at Rome will scarcely lend credit to the burlesque extravagances even to this day committed by all classes. It is a page of reality resembling one of old romance; and the stranger wonders to see its antique and remarkable leaf thus bound up in the prosaic volume of common life. The grave and sensible Englishman, the observing and intelligent American, is astonished at the spectacle of a whole people abandoned to the maddest freaks of frolic and fancy—disguising themselves in grotesque habits, masking their faces, altering their gait, form, and demeanour—entering with lively ardour into the wildest folly. From the violent gesticulations and various costumes, it appears as if the theatres of the world had emptied their wardrobes, and sent forth their performers to play each in the face of Heaven those thousand parts in other countries—at least in ours—reserved for the midnight stage. Here a brigand stalks in the full glory of arms and equipments, with flowing tresses, dark mustaches, and a countenance of more than human ferocity. He steals along after the rolling carriage, and aims his carbine at some beauteous victim.

There a Spanish lover, with his graceful cloak, broad hat and feathers, and love-breathing guitar, sings his serenade to each passing fair: sometimes, for the occasion excuses all civil familiarity, he murmurs a soft air to an English belle in her carriage; sometimes whispers love to the gay French girl; sometimes kneels to the *Contadina* in the street; and again, directs his strain to a bright face peeping from a palace window, or leaning and laughing over a balcony. Behind him stalks a knight glistering in armour, who bears upon his lance the favour of his lady-love, or hands a letter on its point to the first pair of eyes that take his fancy—stranger or native, high or low. The fierce Saracen stalks through the throng, brandishing his cimeter and twirling his mustaches. The copper-coloured Indian with his tomahawk threatens swift destruction to each shrinking maid. Old lords and ladies, in dresses of antique magnificence, recall the splendours of the most celebrated courts. The frolicksome sailor reels along, as if the light Italian wines had been too strong for his brain. The lover sighs—the warrior shouts—the spectre glides; and many striking characters are correctly dressed, and represented with serious accuracy and excellent effect. Others there are who delight to fling over the whole the broadest possible air of ridicule. Humpbacks swelled into mountains—eyes glaring like moons—huge mouths—bald pates—overgrown stomachs—statues of twice the ordinary size—deformed foreheads—and noses of such ponderous dimensions, magnified proportions, and rubicund colours, as may chance, if you eat too heavy a supper, to haunt your late slumber in the shape of an incubus—all that mirth and ingenuity can invent to distort and caricature, here floats upon the vast and ever-moving tide, rising and sinking in the dense, universal commotion—disappearing, and appearing

again; carriages loaded with double numbers—horses rearing with two and four—women seven feet high, and sweet girls in uniform of banditti. Those whose ambition does not seek to support distinct and memorable *rôles* content themselves with the simple smooth common mask—a pretty girlish countenance, whose everlasting repetition at length wearies the eye, and becomes no theme of curiosity or distinction.

Some, too—so picturesque are the inhabitants of Rome—even while wearing their every-day habiliments, can with difficulty be distinguished from the maskers; and the bare-footed and cowled monks and friars—the long-bearded mendicants, covered with rags and wrinkles—the fat priest, and the stern soldier, are only known from the giddy surrounding concourse by their unmasked faces, their steady step, and their grave demeanour. Nearly all the town join in this sport; or, if they do not actually participate, at least throng together by thousands and thousands to witness it and swell the extraordinary spectacle. Countless numbers of ladies, both natives and foreigners, may be seen either in their carriages or at the windows—gentleman and noble, young and old, peasant and duke, all mingled and blended together in a wild, excited, half-familiar, half-merry, half-mad mass of human beings—crying, laughing, screaming, gesticulating, leaping, dancing, singing, shouting, and pelting each other with flour sugar-plums, or oats steeped in plaster of Paris resembling them, and covering the air, the street-walks, and all the population, with the white of a universal snow-storm. A hundred thousand people are not unfrequently assembled, either as actors or audience, upon the scene of action, which is in the Corso and the adjoining streets, squares, and avenues.

Our readers, on either side of the ocean, need

not be reminded that the Corso is the Regent-street, or Broadway, of modern Rome, straight and exceedingly narrow, built up closely on both sides with high houses, or gloomy, but immense and magnificent, old palaces, all of which are crowded upon every point; where men and women sit, stand, or climb from roof to basement, cornice, pedestal, and balcony. Through this principal thoroughfare two processions of carriages and pedestrians go slowly, in opposite directions, pelting each other, and all around them and all above them, with snowy tributes; and receiving in return discharges in showers from every quarter. The middle of the street presents a tide of the gayest and gaudiest colours, and the most lively motion—not unlike the rapid stir and agitation of a fierce battle. On either side, tiers of seats—a most lucrative profit to the proprietors—are provided for the thousands who desire, stationary and secure, to behold the giddy scene. A sloping bank of faces thus rises on either hand of those moving in the procession, leaving only a passage sufficiently wide for the two rows of carriages to pass each other.

"Well," said a stranger, who had taken a seat before the Dorian palace, and in the midst of the wildest clash and riot of the revel, "it is a brilliant day, signore."

"It is, indeed," cried the other.

"Are there ordinarily so many spectators to this gay fête?"

"I know not, signore stranger—but I think not. I have lived in Rome, on and off, for forty years, and in that period the carnival has been up and down several times. Lately I have not seen it so well attended."

"What remarkable order is preserved!" said the stranger. "I have not heard an angry word, nor seen a blow, nor a quarrel, nor beheld a man drunk,

except a mad wag of a sailor; and his drunkenness, like his mask, was only put on."

"There are rarely any disorders here, signore," said the Roman.

"One almost envies the character of a crowd where no brawls disturb the general hilarity. It speaks well for their morals."

"Humph!" said the Roman, "there are other things besides morals which may keep folks from fighting or getting drunk."

"Other things besides morals!—what other things?"

"Sharp bayonets and drawn swords," said the Roman, dryly.

The stranger in his turn muttered, "Humph!" or what in the French is equivalent; but, however, continued the conversation—"I am sorry to hear you backward in doing honour to the Roman government."

"The city is full of spies," said the Roman; "and one does not like to talk too much to one whom one does not know."

"I approve your prudence; but, in my case, it is ill applied, as I am quite a stranger, with no disposition to meddle in its affairs, either by turning informer myself, or by expressing any opinions which might furnish food for the information of others. I am but a recent visiter to this part of the world, and know more of my late residence, China, than of your Eternal City."

"I can see by your accent," said the Roman, "that you are not Italian, as no Italian speaks French like you. However, I neither was, nor need be, fearful of expressing my opinion. I say, that one does not like to see double lines of soldiers stationed about the streets, with their gleaming helmets and drawn swords, scowling on these poor children of

foolery as if they watched a decent pretext to cut their noisy throats."

"How!" said the stranger, "is it not the usual regulation?"

"No, signore: there is always a military guard very properly stationed about town to prevent confusion; but look yonder—they do not flock in such numbers as that, nor do they wear such faces. Why, they look like wolf-dogs; or, by the Virgin, wolves themselves, peering and glaring over into the sheepfold."

"And what reason is there for this extra care?"

"His holiness has discovered a plot again," said the Roman, with a sneer: "arms have been found in a house, and men who dared to own them. The muskets and swords are now turned against the people's own bosoms, and the plotters are quartered in St. Angelo and elsewhere. All the authorities from Como and Venice to Naples have already received intelligence, and to-day it is reported that the rising was to have taken place."

"The danger is over, then?"

"It is: but a strong guard is posted everywhere through the streets; and there will be some will feel cold steel or heavy lead for this day's work."

"It might have been worse, friend," said the stranger. "Rebellion is a wild business, and is but too often placing a knife in the hands of a madman. But—see this fellow!"

"Ay, he personates a priest," said the Roman, "and has been going about all day preaching, with that long beard and huge book."

"His lungs must be strong," said the stranger, laughing.

"There is a beautiful creature," observed the Roman, "in that rich carriage."

"How the villains pelt her!" replied the stranger; "why, they will put her eyes out."

"And a prettier pair could not be extinguished," said the Roman.

"But surely," cried the stranger, "I know yonder party—two ladies and two gentlemen in that barouche: see, they are now surrounded by pelters, and are half lost in a cloud of white. I have seen them before, I am certain."

"They are Americans," said the Roman.

"Ha! Flora—Flora Temple!" exclaimed the other; "I could have sworn I knew her; and yon tall stately dame is her mother."

"And the good-looking portly gentleman, Mr. Temple."

"And the fourth—I know him: it is Clairmont as sure as life; it is that reprobate of a count."

"You know them well, friend."

"Ay: they recall days gone by. It is but a few hours since I landed at Naples, after a long voyage from the East Indies. These people I once knew something of in America. Their story was interesting. I must follow them; make myself known again; and push some queries, touching old times and friends."

The stranger was about pressing a passage through the crowd, but his new acquaintance stopped him.

"You will easily see them, signore, when the festivities of the day are over. At present (to say nothing of the difficulty which you will find in overtaking them) you will but mar their sport. See, they are far away already."

In fact, the party had now nearly disappeared.

"They will return again, and we shall have them by us in a few moments once more; for you observe, signore, that the carriages move, as it were, in a circle—driving into the Corso by the Capitoline Hill, and leaving it through the *Piazza del Popolo*, or the *Via Condotti*, and hastening by the parallel

streets back towards their original entrance by the Capitol."

"True," said the stranger; "I will wait—more especially as I believe I must; for yon soldier has so pressed back the crowd with his drawn sword, that I can scarcely at present effect my retreat."

"Right," answered the other; "and surely here is a spectacle worthy of a few moments' extra attention. What a strange aspect of human nature!"

"Strange indeed!" echoed the foreigner—"Yon fat fellow with the trumpet."

"And this giant upon stilts."

"And that enormous woman driving the barouche full of harlequins."

"And—Ha!—*that* is most extraordinary of all," said the Roman.

"Extraordinary indeed! But—no—she is not masked. It is really a female. How well she plays her part!"

The object which had thus attracted the attention of the two chance acquaintances was indeed one calculated to interest every beholder; and she had already excited considerable admiration among those spectators who, amid the discord and confusion of the scene, had happened to catch a distinct view of her. The character represented was that of a female, pale and wild; her dress disordered; her hair floating loose about her shoulders; clad in raiments of white, which appeared to have been caught up carelessly from a bed, and wrapped around her in the form of a mantle. In her hand was a mask, which she sometimes held to her face, and sometimes waved in the air. She had been several times seen in opposite parts of the town;—now on some eminence, attracting all eyes by the singularity of her actions and dress;—now sinking again in the crowd, and lost as in the general waves of a heaving sea. No one had time to regard her long, nor to

follow her course; but many were the remarks drawn forth by the ingenious and impressive propriety of her costume, and the great talent she exhibited in acting her *rôle*. Uniform attention, in such a restless and agitated scene, where many were much more eagerly intent on displaying their own persons and powers than on animadverting upon those of others, she could not hope to acquire. Every thing around her was wild, grotesque, and striking as herself. And those who had the curiosity to fix their eyes upon her for any length of time, were afterward heard to declare, that her actions were strangely and powerfully eloquent and affecting: sometimes singing wild catches of music; sometimes smiling, and laughing aloud to herself; again shouting, and apparently affrighted by the fear of pursuit: from which mood she started again into the airs of a princess—bowed her head ostentatiously to the occupants of the palaces, and smiled upon the gay equipages as they rolled by. Often, as if appalled by some awful recollection, she shrank, shuddered, and trembled at every passing voice and glance; and, clasping her hands energetically together, gazed up to heaven with streaming eyes. Yet no one attended to her, as she was generally in the midst of the turmoil; sometimes pressed by the crowd into the street, and pelted with plums. Her shrieks, her prayers, her entreaties, and her agonies, whether assumed or real, all passed for mere mummery—all for idle show. Now a party whom she addressed with extended, imploring hands, shouted in derision. Another drove carelessly by. Again lost, again borne out of view by the multitude—the mirth of some, the wonder, the neglect of all—she floated with the tide, like mad Ophelia upon the stream, singing as she sank. At last, she became the theme of general notice; and had, indeed, drawn towards her all eyes, at the moment when the masked Roman

and the inquisitive stranger had first discovered her. After a few moments' gaze, each uttering an involuntary expression of deep astonishment and interest, they parted company, and were soon separated in the crowd.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A Flight—A Pursuit.

" This way the noise was, if mine ear be true,
My best guide now."

Comus.

During the day, Clairmont had heard of the wild girl who excited so much curiosity and admiration among the vast concourse.

* * * *

Fearful of some catastrophe, he at last caught a glimpse of her person; and beheld, with the most frightful forebodings—with a burning mixture of anger and of anguish—

* * * *

To Flora and his other companions therefore pleading sudden illness, he induced them immediately to quit the Corso. On reaching his hotel, he retired at once to his chamber—desiring his servant to say to all inquirers, that he slept and could not be disturbed. Enveloping himself in a domino, and masking his face (for he knew well that there was one whose encounter might be death), he started forth with feverish anxiety in the pursuit.

It seemed that the unhappy being, with the deep

subtlety of madness, had suspected that she was in danger of being overtaken by too open and too long exposure of her face at one time. She had therefore provided herself with a red shawl, which, at intervals, when the caprice of flight seized her, as it frequently did, she wrapped around her so carefully as effectually to envelop her; and hiding her features in a mask of the most ordinary form (of which there were hundreds everywhere precisely similar), she would stop suddenly—glide away among the crowd to parts of the city most remote from that where the fear had seized her. The task of tracing, of overtaking, and seizing her, therefore, at any time of doubtful success, in a multitude so vast and in such rapid motion, was rendered peculiarly so by the numbers of masks like hers, and of disguises not greatly different, which rushed to and fro everywhere around. Indeed, to Clairmont and many others, she appeared almost endowed with the power of ubiquity—to be a spirit, wild and anguish-struck, riding on the waves of the commotion, beckoning, weeping, praying, threatening, and forming a striking feature in the picturesque crowd.

With stealthy pace, Clairmont stole after his object, regardless of all others. Several times, when he thought he had accomplished his purpose, he found in the confusion of dresses that he had mistaken the person. Once, instead of her, he seized in his arms a pretty Italian girl; and a bystander, with the promptness of a lover, somewhat rudely dashed him away. Again he believed himself sure; but instead of a female, he found in his arms a slender youth in petticoats, who exhibited neither disinclination nor inability to assist himself.

At length, in a side street, he succeeded in tracing her, and suddenly seized her. She screamed and struggled. A mounted guard, with a drawn sword, instantly rode up.

"Back, signore!" he said: "no rudeness—no riot. Back, fool—back! Are you deaf?"—and with the point of his drawn sword to the breast of the once more baffled count, he compelled him to retire; and the affrighted girl, after a keen look at his figure and jewelled hand, with an exclamation of horror, flew swiftly away, and was lost to his sight.

Almost insane himself with disappointed hope and idle rage, he forced his way from crowd to crowd of the now retiring maskers; who, dispersing at sunset, sought their houses in straggling groups. Hour after hour he prowled around the streets. The sun went down; the multitude disappeared; the shadows of night fell on Rome; the stars glittered; the round moon rose broadly and silently over the Eternal City—and still his victim had escaped his grasp. Stung with rage and furious fears, he knew not where to go, nor what to do—when in the distance, and near the outskirts of the town which lead into the Forum, a white form was stealing along the wall. It was she; and he sprang after his prey. She perceived that she was followed, and darted off like the deer aroused by the hounds. She bounded—she flew with the speed of desperate fear; and with the motion of swift revenge, Clairmont pursued to the arch of Titus. She hid behind it. He approached: she bounded on. He followed. The huge shadow of the Coliseum lay black on the green. She rushed towards it. In its winding labyrinths, Clairmont knew she might lurk all the night. Silently he drew one of a pair of pistols. He aimed and fired. There was a shriek—she fell! He lurked back in the deep shadow. Like a bird whose wing has been broken, but who still struggles on through the grass, to die in some bush away from the huntsman's murderous hand, the poor girl rose, and with a painful motion

gained the entrance of the mighty pile, and was lost in its midnight vaults.

"She would have it," said he, setting his teeth and flinging away his pistol.

A few moments he lurked in the shadow. No one appeared. Assassinations in Rome were common; they rarely attracted any attention. He could not avoid walking hastily to the spot. It was a green knoll. One or two flowers bloomed there. The grass seemed uncommonly fresh and verdant: the moonlight fell broad and full upon it. He stooped to gaze—there was blood! His heart sickened; he shuddered; turned on his heel, and walked back towards the city. Suddenly he stopped. "No," he said, "it is no time for childish shudderings. I *must* back."

He was silent, but returned with rapid strides towards the Coliseum.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Rome by Moonlight—The Wanderer keeps his Rendezvous at the Coliseum—And what he saw there.

"I pray you, let us satisfy our eyes
With the memorials and the things of fame
That do renown this city."

Twelfth Night.

It was night, and moonlight. Moonlight in Rome! The Temples had retired early from the Corso, and, after a few hours' repose and refreshment, had formed a party, to visit, for the first time, the Forum and Coliseum. Clairmont would have been a useful guide; but he had been seized on the Corso

with a sudden indisposition, which caused, indeed, their retiring from the ground very early in the afternoon. He now wrote that his illness, though but transitory, was sufficient to confine him to his room. They started for *the ruins*.

Something there was of unusual romance in the present aspect of the city. The sunlight had faded from the heavens, and left the blue void hung with trembling stars, and lighted by the radiance of a round and spotted moon, that never lent its edges of silver to objects of such deep and profound interest. The streets were hushed, still, and lonely. The maskers had vanished—the revelry had died away. The night was warm and exquisitely clear; and the light as it fell across the Roman streets, as it slanted down upon the sculptured fronts of the many renowned churches, and touched the immense and lofty piles, the palaces of the great and the gay, now gone—there was something, while it delighted, that saddened and awed the mind.

Mrs. Temple proposed, that before they visited the ruins they should drive to the most remarkable part of the modern city, and receive their first impression of its wonders from this heavenly night. It is the true method to look on an ancient town. It sends you back a thousand centuries—the soft and shadowy reality so indulges and assists the flowing imagination. Flora, during the latter years of her life, had applied much to reading. History had been with her ever a favourite study. Now, in truth, she would have had her reward. One richer, more stirring, more pregnant with the spirit of enchantment, could scarcely be allotted to a human breast. Ah! a very different thought occupied her mind.

They drove to *San Pietro* and the Vatican. They paused by the portico of the Pantheon, and the stern and mighty palaces. They gazed at the slender obelisks and the numberless fountains—the

tomb of Adrian—the Tiber, winding its way silently beneath the arches of the bridge—the columns of Antoninus and Trajan against the sky; and statues and pillars ever and anon struck their gaze. They stood on the Capitoline Hill, beneath the equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius; they descended to their carriage, and ordered it to the Forum and Coliseum. The vast plain was at length reached. Oh, what a dream of Flora's young years was here at length imbodied before her! and yet, as the shadowy and most consecrated objects fleeted by, she could give to them no thrill, no attention; but her abstractedness at such a time seemed no more than natural. The voice of the *cicerone* sounded like that of a necromancer, as he pointed out the Tarpeian Rock—the Capitoline—the Palatine—columns and temples—the enormous fragments scattered about—arches, walls, baths, aqueducts, lifted broken in the air, or strewn in pieces on the ground.

At length, huge and vast, tier above tier—blasted, ghastly, incredible, sublime—the Coliseum rose, a startling stupendous vision. Even Flora, for an instant, forgot the knight of the red plume. Mute, chilled, awe-struck, they gazed at its colossal proportions—its stupendous walls lifted to the sky, its broken fragments, the blackness of its shadows upon the turf, and the bright moonlight streaming down through its dilapidated apertures and into its blood-stained arena. Long they gazed: they walked round it; they raised their eyes to its vast and rent summit; they entered its crumbling passages; they trod across its earthy floor; they penetrated its dens, its vomitories, its winding labyrinths—a world of associations rushed across their minds. In the absorbed earnestness of their feelings, they had separated, and each followed the bent of her own deep impulse, stealing along the shadow, and unconscious that they were not together.

The *cicerone* and guard, with the lantern, had accompanied Mr. Temple into a dark and winding passage. Mrs. Temple passed out of the farthest gate, and Flora, quite removed from both, stood in the moonlight by an immense fragment of travertino, which had fallen, no one knows when, from the summit, and lay half-buried in the soil. Thus alone, she abandoned herself to her meditations, when she heard a voice whose echoes had lived in her heart for many a long year.

"Miss Temple!"

She started.

Norman Leslie was at her feet.

"Flora!"

He seized her hand; she trembled, and would have fallen, but he supported her with his arm.

"This agitation, these tears, loveliest, dearest, what do they mean? Dare I think? Can I be so deeply, so richly blessed? The hope of your love, beautiful Flora, has sustained me through many a weary year. Sweet girl, do I hope in vain?"

"Mr. Leslie," faltered she, "if you value the love of one so unworthy as I—"

"Flora—"

"It is yours."

An instant—she was in his arms, on his bosom.

But, hark! A shriek—shrill, intense, piercing, as if the voice of some mad spirit, now first whelmed in its fiery fate, rose on the air. At the sound, Mr. and Mrs. Temple, with the guide and guard, rushed forward. Flora and Norman stood together, the fair girl clinging to his arm. There was a moment's silence. All stood as if expecting some horrid apparition, when, on the second tier of the Amphitheatre, there rose a wild form, her hair streaming around her uncovered head, her white robes floating in the air, her hands clasped in frantic pain and

terror, and her manner expressive of the wildest agony and fear.

"It is he! it is he!" she cried, with wild and half-choked accents. "O God! save me—save me!"

"Then stand, fool!" cried a hoarse, fierce voice, while the unseen speaker seemed climbing up after his victim.

"Oh! do not—do not kill me!"

"It is the wild maniac!" exclaimed Mrs. Temple.

"Yes! it is the wretched girl of the carnival," said Flora, trembling with alarm.

"God of heaven!" cried Norman, "it is she—it *is* Rosalie Romain!"

It is impossible to depict the amazement of those who beheld this remarkable scene. But the current of intense curiosity was too deep and swift for remark.

"Save me! oh, save me!" screamed the maniac.

"Stay!" cried Norman, in a voice of deep emotion, and stepping into the middle of the arena, where the moonlight fell full upon him; "Rosalie Romain, I am your friend—I will come to your aid!"

The shriek which replied to him froze his blood.

The before invisible pursuer, now first emerging from the black shadow, stood full in the light. He had lost his mask. His features were distorted with rage and violent emotion.

"Heavens!" said the shuddering Mrs. Temple, "it is Count Clairmont!"

"Villain!" cried Norman, "here the great hand of God has at length held you forth for what you are. Wretch! if you touch yon creature, I will crush your head like a reptile's beneath my heel."

"Leslie!—and, by G—d, Flora Temple! Off, then, all my vain dreams!"

He drew a pistol, which glittered in the moon-

beams, cocked it, and, as he spoke, seizing the wrist of the wretched lunatic, turned to Leslie.

The whole incident had scarce occupied a minute. Leslie still stood alone in the arena.

"Clairmont!" he said, "you cannot escape me!"

"Detested coward!" cried Clairmont, with a hoarse, fierce laugh, "that this gibbering fool is she you seek I deny, and the world will never believe. She is my *wife*, and I claim her; stop us at your peril! If you permit us free egress, you are safe, and I will trouble your happiness no more; but"—and he uttered an imprecation too dreadful to repeat—"if you attempt to impede my way" (he raised the pistol) "you *die!* By ——, the temptation is almost too sweet to forego; but I *will* forego it, if you come not in my path."

"No!" said Norman, "not for all your threats shall you ever pass from this spot. I will grapple with you, if twenty lives be the price. Guard, to the opposite door! I cross him here!"

Clairmont moved to descend; and, partly retreating, endeavoured to draw after him the bleeding girl, when she sank exhausted at his feet. He left her as she lay, and was about to disappear, when he paused and said,—

"Norman Leslie! at length we know each other. To-night both of us live, or both die! Pledge me your sacred word that I may depart unmolested, and you never hear of me again; refuse, and this is your last moment on earth!"

Without further reply, Norman sprang forward towards the eminence where stood his foe, when Clairmont, with an oath, raised the pistol.

A moment more, and his life-blood would have flowed. Flora had sprung towards Leslie in frantic terror, when a powerful and unseen arm descended upon the caitiff in the very act of murder. The blow was sudden and tremendous, and directed full

against his head with a crushing force. Hurled from his height as if by some deadly engine, he was dashed heavily to the ground. For a moment he lay, as if he were indeed a senseless clod. He turned, and it was observed that— But why dwell on a dreadful scene? His head had struck against the sharp edge of a stone, and he presented a spectacle too fearfully awful for delineation. Rage, hate, despair, and death mingled in his dying features.

The guard now appeared with the senseless form of Miss Romain on his arm. Flora and Mrs. Temple vainly endeavoured to revive her, while a domestic hastened for the carriage, which had been left at some distance.

"Lift me," said Clairmont, "some of you. What accursed hand struck me?"

"Mine!" said a powerfully formed man, whom all recognised as Kreutzner. "A kind stranger directed me in time to the spot where, unhappy man, you stood."

"And the stranger?" groaned the writhing Clairmont.

"Is here!" said a voice, which, although a woman's, had in its tones something so stern, haughty, and bitter, that all started—Clairmont most of all.

The new-comer stepped up to the side of the dying man. It was the Countess D——. She regarded him, as he lay, with a glance so joyous and malignant, that she appeared a fiend rather than a human being.

"Louise!" he cried; "hateful, detestable wretch!"

"Curses, curses on *you!* Miserable, crushed reptile, *die!*" she said, gazing down on him as on a serpent she had slain—"*die!* I rejoice in your calamity. I have already betrayed you; I—*I*—*I* unlocked the cell of your wretched victim Rosalie; I put Norman Leslie on your track; I saved him last night from

your dagger; and now that I behold your torments and your death, I smile and triumph!"

"Oh, silence her slanderous tongue!" groaned Clairmont.

"No! let me speak to your dying ear. Your sin and your shame I will spread far and wide. Do you curse me? You have already; and now I repay you, and rejoice that I am the instrument."

"Peace!—peace, now," said Norman, "fearful woman; he no longer hears you—he is *dead!*"

Never fell the cold moonlight, even on that spot, upon a group more hushed and awful.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A Scene of After-years—The storm-beaten Vessel reposes in the Harbour.

"Fly, envious Time, till thou run out thy race!"
On Time—MILTON.

ONWARD, and still onward, speeds the flight of time—deaf, blind, relentless—for nothing he stays his wing. Ever with the same eternal haste he presses on. Events that might astound the universe, prayers that might pierce a fiend, never delay, never melt him. Cities roar and are silent—empires rise and fall—mountains bow their ice-crowned thrones—seas advance from their unfathomed beds—even worlds, balanced in their far places, burst asunder, and pass away in the boundless deep of space—and yet, ever unpausing, unpitying, unwondering, his course is on, and still on!

Unpitying, did I say? No, dark, but slandered divinity, not unpitying. Dread minister of Providence, thou bringest peace as well as a sword. All that can be spared remains unharmed by thee; and in thy path not only ruin lies, but joy and beauty. It is thy hand that nursed the half-blown rose, ripened the harvest, and reared the oak. Who spread nature with the tender spring? Who clothed the callow bird in his gorgeous coat, and launched him on the breeze? Who brings every object to its true use and perfection? Who sweeps away prejudice and error? Who unveils lustrous truth? Not all things fall beneath thy scythe. What blow hast thou stricken against Homer and Shakspeare, more than to brighten their radiance, to secure their immortality? Does not all that is good and noble triumph by thy aid? Will not the whole globe, befriended by thee, grow wise and good? Will not war and superstition, tyranny and vice, be banished?

Four years! Like a breath they have passed; a wreath of vapour, curling on the air, melts not more lightly. Reader, you have turned a leaf—and they are gone. Even so startingly rapid shows the past. Yesterday—only yesterday—we were noisy children on the green—images were around all bright and dear; look you now what a transformation! Youth is vanished. Years—how we know not—are on our foreheads and in our hearts. As in a theatre—the scene is changed. Other objects, new characters are before us. They call us by different names. They woo us to strange enterprises. Go to the haunt of your boyhood—go with your grave, cold face, your wearied and melancholy heart: stand amid the careless and happy forms that sport there to-day. You will strike them with awe. The unshaded glance, the joyous laugh, the high, happy shout, will be hushed till you pass.

Back from the scathed Europe, with its foot-marks of gaunt and bloody ages, we are once again in the fresh and happy scenes of a new world.

Upon the brow of a lovely bank, gorgeous with massy verdure, and scented with wild perfume, a white mansion shone through the trees. Immediately beneath swept a broad and crystal flood, eddying and dimpling on its glad course in sudden bends and circling meanders. Never looked the gentle sun on a scene more fair;—never, even in those spots by the Asiatic, the Greek, the Roman, rendered immortal in story. Directly from the silver river sloped up wild and beautiful mountains, which sometimes giant nature had rent asunder and left naked and blasted in perpendicular cliffs. The shores were richly decked with towns, country-seats, and cottages. The soft sky bent all unclouded above. Rich and sweet spread the scented fields around.

The lovely seat to which we invite the reader was exquisitely situated, surrounded by giant trees and sylvan walks, and a fair promenade which led down to the water's edge. On an ample portico, a family group watched the changes of a magnificent sunset.

In an arm-chair sat a silver-headed man, whose person possessed all the mellow charm which manly beauty receives from age. His white locks were smoothed over his high brow with a majesty that at once won respect and reverence. His face was mild and happy; but years had impressed it with heavy marks—and yet more than years—sorrow.

A graceful form hung over his chair, with her arm affectionately upon his shoulder; and by her side a gentleman had drawn familiarly.

It required no more than a glance to discover in the two latter Julia and Howard; and in their aged

companion, the still noble, but much changed and time-bowed, form of Mordaunt Leslie.

As they thus sat, surrounded by wreathing vines and bursting flowers, and enjoying the mild-tempered and illumined atmosphere, a beautiful child of about three years, loaded with fruit and flowers, and playing with a large curly-haired dog, came laughing and running from a thicket.

"There's Flora—come, Flora!" exclaimed all at once.

When there is a kind-hearted grandfather, and a sweet aunt, and a gentle uncle in the family—and the father is adored as the lost one found—and the mother is pronounced "the *very* sweetest woman in the world"—the only child, whatever may be its claims, will be an angel of course. But the little creature now staggering under its pretty burden—which the almost laughing dog was sportively, we had nearly said affectionately, endeavouring to pull away—was really altogether lovely. Look, reader! Did you never see those blue eyes before—that little smile, that lightly pencilled brow—upon another face?

A few moments after the appearance of the child, two other figures emerged from the imbowered walk, which wound charmingly in along the high river-bank. The one was a gentleman, the other a fair girl—yet not altogether a girl. Somewhat there was in her face of sedateness which girlhood never knew. Beautiful she was—more beautiful than ever! Happiness and love had shed on the young wife of the wanderer new and dearer charms. Health glowed on her cheek. She hung on his arm familiarly and fondly. A moment ere they came into view, he stopped and looked down upon her. Back from her forehead he put the soft hair unreproved. She returned his gaze with a glance of steady, trusting love. His hand lingered

over her forehead, and he shaded her eyes with it as one who peruses a painting.

"Why do you look at me so?" she asked, half blushing.

"It was one of my young dreams, Flora," he said, "thus to scan your face—thus to meet your eyes—thus to avow—thus to hear how we love each other!"

They approached the mansion.

"Ah! there comes father!—there comes mother!" said the old gentleman, releasing the sunny infant from a dear embrace; and off she ran and bounded into her father's arms.

At this moment, one of the magnificent steamboats which ply from New-York up the river to Albany had sent ashore a boat. A single passenger landed. Conceive the pleasure of all on recognising Kreutzner, their old and valued friend.

The usual greetings were warmly exchanged; and the new-comer was welcomed with the sincerest friendship and hospitality. When the first glow of pleasure had subsided, he announced that he had brought from Europe a letter for Norman.

"For me!"

"Ay!" said Kreutzner, handing it to him—"from one of the most extraordinary of your acquaintance. It was sent to my lodgings, before I left Palermo, with a note requesting me to deliver it into your hands."

Norman took it eagerly, and broke the seal. Flora leaned over his shoulder, read the signature, and turned pale.

"Bless me—bless me!" said Norman. "Have not the fates done with us yet? I thought we had acted our parts;" and with strong signs of astonishment he read the name of the "Countess D——."

"My dear friend," said Kreutzner, "this communication, I presume, will throw light upon the char-

acter of one of the most remarkable women I ever met. To me it will be interesting to learn any thing that concerns you; as, owing to our sudden separation at Rome, your own eventful story has never, in any connected form, reached my ears."

"There is little to tell," said Norman. "The singular discovery of Rosalie gratified the strongest wish of my life—the strongest but one," he said, turning to Flora; "which was, you see, in consequence, gratified also. Miss Romain—"

"Poor Rosalie!" sighed Flora.

"Miss Romain accompanied us home, where she was identified by many, and where proper measures were taken to make her identity and existence public. She continued, however, for several months after our arrival, the victim of an incurable insanity—shrinking from all who approached with signs of the most agonized apprehension and alarm; sometimes singing and smiling; sometimes praying and weeping, and acting over again fragments of the dreadful scenes through which she had passed: at length she died."

"And is nothing particular known of her flight?"

"No more than that she fled with that arch villain Clairmont, whose brutal cruelty drove her to madness. The Countess D—— was deeply implicated in the affair, but most mysteriously. This package will doubtless explain. There is one, however, connected with my adventures in Florence whom I have met on this side the water—the Marquis Alezzi. Betrayed by the priest, who, while he seemed the partner in a dangerous conspiracy, was in fact only a *spy*, he was stripped of most of his slender remaining possessions, and banished from Italy. In this country he has sought and found a shelter, and long resided in a southern state. His present destiny I know not. There are two more friends of

mine," continued Norman, "from whom I am anxious to hear."

"I have been much since in Rome and Florence," said Kreutzner; "I may chance to have heard of them."

"The one," rejoined Norman, "is a most gifted young artist—a sculptor."

"Angelo N——?"

"The same."

"If you love him, I shall tell his fate with reluctance."

"Speak."

"He also, with Alezzi, was engaged in the conspiracy which occasioned so much talk at the time; and he also, after having been led on by the priest too far to retreat, was by him informed against, and fell on the scaffold—I saw his head roll in the dust."

"Know you," demanded Norman, after a pause and a slight shudder—"know you the fair daughter of Torrini?"

"That do I, and well too. She is the gem of Florence. Young, gay, and beautiful, her joyous face is pointed out to the stranger as the loveliest at court. But you are aware of her change?"

"No. I wrote once, but the letter was unanswered."

"She is the wife of Prince C——, and a brighter and happier creature never floated in the dance."

"But come," said Norman, "the manuscript!"

The curious circle gathered around him as he read.

CHAPTER XXX.

The Manuscript of the Countess—The Mystery laid open.

"*Chorus.*—All is best, though we oft doubt
What th' unsearchable dispose
Of highest Wisdom brings about,
And ever best found in the close.
Oft he seems to hide his face,
But unexpectedly returns,
And to his faithful champion hath in place
Bore witness gloriously."

Samson Agonistes.

THE letter was written in a strong and bold hand. It was as follows:—

"You will be surprised, Mr. Leslie, but not displeased, at these few lines from me. I render them to you as a duty. I should have performed it before, but for a circumstance mentioned below. I am going to sketch my history; not to solicit your sympathy, but because it is closely interwoven with your own. If I utter any sentiment in my own extenuation, or in my praise, ascribe it, not to vanity, but to *truth*. I have done with vanity and with the world. Long before this reaches you I shall be immured irrevocably within the walls of a holy sisterhood, where not even the farthest of its floating rumours can reach me more. What have I to do with vanity? I write as one dying, and you may read my words as those of one *dead*. Dead! oh, would to God I were!

"Fifteen years ago, in the loveliest part of Italy, there lived a family in easy circumstances, without rank or fortune, without the wish to obtain them.

They were independent, enlightened, affectionate, and happy. The villa they inhabited stood on the sea-shore near Naples. That scene of heaven!—I will not even attempt to describe it.

"The circle that gathered together in the happy dwelling consisted of four:—a kind old father; a mother, only too fond and indulgent; a brother (I feel the blood ebb from my cheek as I write his name); and a young girl, the most joyous and light-hearted of all creatures. Her face was ever illumined with a smile of peace, purity, and happiness. There was in her heart nothing but sunshine: it resembled the heaven of her own radiant clime, as clear and—as fervid. Never had she known a sorrow, a fear, a reproach—never had she heard of ill—never had she practised an art—never had she deceived a being; she could not deceive, she was too ingenuous. She knew naught of fashion, naught of splendour; she was all simplicity and confidence, all hope and truth.

"Recall her whom you met at the Prince M——'s, seated amid lords, dukes, and nobles, flashing with diamonds; yet, which vainly flashed over a sternly melancholy brow, over a dark and broken heart. You suddenly pronounced to her a name which struck every drop of blood in her veins to lightning. Recall her calm look, her full, unflinching eyes. Can you believe these two beings the same?

"The same, did I say? No, there is not a thought of my mind, an impulse of my heart, but is now changed. All that then graced me has vanished—all that I then was incapable of I have since learned. The world has so transformed me, that *I*, who could not endure the gaze of a stranger, can look down now the fiercest foe; I, who shuddered at the death of a bird, now can, nay, have stood tearless by the graves of all I ever loved.

"I was nineteen, when I met a young Neapolitan,

of very mean extraction, but of great beauty and talent. It was Clairmont, though that was not his name. We met—he wooed me, he won me. I had never loved before; I have never loved since. Such as I love but once, and that once is either heaven or hell! My story is the story of many a maiden. The unfriended suitor solicited my hand in vain. He was poor; and there were, moreover, suspicions concerning his character, which, while they made me only cling to him with deeper devotion, caused others to shrink from his side as from pollution. Love, with me, was more powerful than all other considerations—it overwhelmed me; I was whirled off upon its turbid and resistless tide from all that I had been, all that I had hoped. Father, mother, brother, all were then to me but the worthless thistle-down that floats away on the summer gale. We loved—we married *secretly*. Eve in Eden was never so happy as I, till one day I was disturbed from a blissful revery by the trampling of hasty feet, as of men who bore a heavy burden. I rose. A shriek met my ear from the lips of my mother—a groan from my father. Startled with fears of I knew not what, I rushed to the chamber; I saw—even now my brain whirls at the recollection!—several stranger forms: in their hold was apparently a dead body. The arms and head hung heavily, lifeless; the hair fell back from the forehead, clotted with gore. It was my brother! He cast his eyes on me.

"'Rinaldo!' he murmured, and died.

"We had been watched. My generous and high-tempered brother had traced me to Rinaldo. They fought; and the never-failing pistol of my husband had lodged a bullet almost in his heart.

"I pass over that period. My father and mother, both old, soon followed their darling boy. I was

left with all their property. Rinaldo had fled. I was alone, and a mother.

"Still mad with the passion with which Clairmont —for by that name you know him had inspired me, I followed him to Venice. For his love, what had I not sacrificed?—parents, brother, happiness! On rejoining him who had thus bereft me, I found him cold. He no longer caressed me; strange companions lured him from my side; strange and mysterious enterprises occupied his hours: I was unloved, unheeded, almost forgotten. From many circumstances, I was induced to fear that I was linked to a villain. I strove tremblingly, and in anguish, to crush my apprehensions.

"At length, one day he announced his intention of leaving me for an indefinite time—me and my bright boy! I found growing up in myself then a new energy—a power, a fire, equal to his own. I begged, I prayed; and when he turned away deaf and cold, I started to my feet, and, with flashing eyes, I *threatened* him. It was the first unfolding of that character which neither he nor I knew belonged to my nature. It was the first uncoiling of the basilisk within me. He gazed on me incredulously, and coolly smiled. You remember that smile!—I fainted.

"When I recovered, he was gone! It was two years before I could trace him. At length, I found he had sailed for America. I followed him in the depth of winter—I and my child. I knew not that he resided in New-York; I knew not the name he had assumed; and I was struck mute with astonishment in your beautiful city on beholding, surrounded by fair ladies, the form of my husband, still beautiful and still adored! You know the rest. My agitation had nearly cost me my life, when your daring arm rescued me from those fierce steeds. I had seen you before I discovered Clairmont; and, without meaning to flatter you, they who see you

once do not forget you. Again I saw you subsequently with Miss Romain; hence I recognised you immediately at Torrini's in Florence.

"On recovering from the terror, less of the accident than of the discovery by which it was occasioned, I ascertained Clairmont's address; and the next morning, after being rudely denied admission, I at length succeeded in gaining an interview. Once more I entreated, and once more I threatened. Here I found my threats of more avail, for here his plans were high and audacious, having conceived the design of marrying a very wealthy and beautiful girl. I accused him of it. He smiled again, and bade me learn that I was not his wife: the ceremony had been a feigned one. I would have cried him through the city for a villain; but, with a look so sardonic that it affrighted even me, he solemnly swore that if I breathed his name to any human being he would sacrifice every hope, every consideration, and never sleep till he had taken the life of myself or my child. He then frankly confessed that his passion for Miss Temple was only a mask—he loved her not. *Me*, he said, he loved. It was his intention to fly when he could raise a large sum of money; and he declared that I should be his companion. To what degradation had I fallen, that even after this—such was my infatuation, such my love—I consented. He even went so far as to promise to depart by a certain time. I have reason to believe that the lady whose fortune he pursued disliked and rejected him; for, after some time, he altered his plans, and had proposed to raise money by a mock union with another, the miserable victim with whom— But let me not be in advance of my story. Rosalie Romain yielded to his flatteries. By the arts in which he was so proficient he completely fascinated her, and prevailed upon her to fly, and to carry with her, upon her person, a number of dia-

monds of which she was very fond, and which he hoped to find sufficient for the demands of his necessities, which were great. Against you he had conceived so mortal a hatred, that, as I subsequently learned, he had already attempted your life. He also circulated against you the most malignant slanders. Partly by persuasions, partly by threats, he had prevailed upon me to be a participator in the game he was about to play. He swore to me, that, once in Europe, he would send home again the girl: it was only for the jewels she brought him that he had wooed her—that he could not procure them unless she fled with us; that he would marry *me* in Europe, where, he said, a large sum would soon fall into his hands from his brother Ambrose: and he threatened me with the most dreadful revenge if I refused. It was I, then, who received Rosalie Romain from your hands on the day of your mysterious ride. It was then that I saw and knew you. The gig belonged to Clairmont. Late in the evening he drove us to town, and left us to walk alone to a boat that was to carry us on board a vessel which sailed in the morning for Naples, while he returned the gig to his servant, who waited at the hotel. In that walk we encountered yourself and Miss Temple on the Battery. We hastened on board. I passed for the mistress, to avoid suspicion, and she for my maid. She being ill all the voyage, I only was seen, as I was at once known as an Italian lady: we thus eluded any inquiries which, when suspicion fell on you, might have been that way directed. The vessel did not sail till the next afternoon. Clairmont was in the act of coming down; his baggage was all packed and ready in his chamber, and left to the direction of his valet, when you encountered him, and inflicted upon him that new rancorous wound, which only ceased to sting and torture him in death. He rushed to his

chamber. His temper was lashed to its highest, wildest paroxysm of rage and revenge, when the valet accidentally mentioned what he had heard in the hotel. The disappearance of Miss Romain had already created a sensation through the town, and a report had been started that you had *murdered her*. From that moment his hellish mind was fixed. He sent a message to me, stating that, by force or art, I must silence the voice of Rosalie Romain; that the vessel *must* go without him; that the valet would accompany us in his stead, and that he would, by a French ship, meet us on our landing at Naples. So artfully was it managed, that we complied, scarce comprehending what it meant. Rosalie was sick during the whole passage. We met Clairmont a long time after our arrival. The valet had received instructions to conceal us, if possible, from all observation. This he effectually did; but, just before our meeting with Clairmont, died of a fever. It was Clairmont who flung the hat and feathers on the stream, and the handkerchief in the wood. He remained some time after in America to guard himself from suspicion.

"On his arrival in Europe, he had a most difficult game to play. It was his determination to conceal Rosalie Romain from human eyes, that the suspicion might never be withdrawn from you. I soon learned to hate the villain more ardently than I had ever loved him; but, while I hated, I also feared him. A character so malignant mastered mine. I knew him capable of the most fiendish actions, and I soon had an instance of it. Miss Romain, on finding her situation, and the cruel baseness of her lover, lost her senses, became a confirmed maniac, and was most secretly confined, under the superintendence of the priest Ambrose, at Rome, the brother of Clairmont, and, like him, a villain. Lest this should be betrayed by me, he obtained pos-

session of my boy, in whom he knew my soul was bound up. With this grasp on me, he told me, with the triumphant hate and ferocity of a devil, that if ever I betrayed him, nay, if ever he suspected me, the young head I loved most should be crushed in the grave. I shuddered; I believed—I obeyed. How well I kept the secret, you can testify.

"At Prince M——'s you unknowingly informed me of the place where my boy was concealed. I hastened myself in disguise, when I knew that the priest was away, to his rooms, and recovered my lost treasure. I should have said, that, on first parting with Clairmont, I had yielded to the solicitations of Count D——, and become his wife. With the intention of gaining possession of her person that I might commit her to your charge, I unlocked the prison of Rosalie Romain; but, with the subtlety of madness, she eluded my care, and escaped into the crowded streets. You know the rest. The angel boy is dead. I have no longer any reason to guard my reputation. May you be happy. *My* heart is ice. I have performed my duty. Farewell *for ever!*"

THE END.