Dно 21, 1887 THE TRUE WITNESS AND CATHOLICICHRONICLE 2

VENDETTA; -0B---

The Story of One Forgotten.

CHAPTER IV.

Every one knows what kind of summer we had in Naples, in 1884. The newspapers of all lands teemed with the story of its horrors. The cholera walked abroad like a destroying demon; under its withering touch scores of people, young and old, dropped down in the streets to die. The fell disease, born of dirt and criminal neglect and sanitary precautions, gained on the city with awful rapidity, and worse even than the plagu- was the unreasoning but universal panic. The never-to-be-forgotten heroism of King Humbert had its effect on the more edu-cated classes, but among the low Neapolitan populace, abject fear, vulgar superstition and utter selfastness reigned supreme. One cases may serve as an example to many others. A fishermae, well known in the place, a hand-come and popular young fellow, was seized, while working in his boat, with the first symp-toms of, cholera. He was carried to his mother's house. The old woman, a vil-lainous-looking hag, watched the little pro-cession as it approached her dwelling, and the situation at once, she shut and King Humbert had its effect on the more edu. taking in the situation at once, she shut and barricaded her door.

"Saotissima Madonna !" she yelled shrilly through a half-opened window. "Leave him in the street, the abandoned, miserable one! The ungrateful pig! He would bring the plague to his own hard-working, honeat mother! Holy Joseph! who would have children? Leave him In the street. I tell you !"

It was useless to expostulate with this femi-Lt was useless to expositute with this beam nine scare-crow; her son was, happily for him-self, un onscious, and atter some more wrang-ling he was laid down on her doorstep, where he shortly afterwards expired, his body being af . . . ris carted away like so much rubbish by

th Internet in the city was intense. The sky was a burning dome of brilliancy, the Bay was still a glittering sheet of glass. A thin column of smoke issuing from the crater of Vesuvius increased the impression of an all-pervading, though imperceptible ring of fire, that evened to surround the place. No birds sang i the late evening, when the nightingales in my gardens broke out in a bubbling torrent of meio iy, half joyous, half melancholy. Up on that wooded height where I dwell it was comparatively cool. I took all precautions ne-cessary to prevent the contagion from attacking our household; in fact, I would have left the neighborhood altogether, had I not known that hasty fight from an infested district often carwith the disease. My wife, besides, was not nervoys-I think very beautiful women seldom are. Their superb vanity is an excellent shield to repel pestilence; it does away with the principal element of danger-fosr. As for our Stella, a todding mite of two years old, she was a healthy child, for whom neither her mother or myself entertained the least anxiety.

mother or myself entertained the least ability. Guido Ferrari came and stayed with us, and while the chelera, like a sharp scythe, mowed down the dirt-loving Neapolitans by bundreds, we three, with a small retinue of servants, none of whom were ever permitted to visit the city, lived on the tarinarcous food and distiller city, lived on the farinaccous food and distilled water, bathed regularly, rose and retired early, and enjoyed the most perfect health.

Among her many other attractions my wife was gifted with a beautiful and well-trained voice. She sang with exquisite expression. and many an evening when Guido and myself sat smoking in the garden, after little Stells had gone to bed, Nins would ravish our ears with the music of her nightingale notes, singing song after song, quaint stornelli and ritornelli, -songe of the people full of wild and passionate beauty In these Guido would often join her, his full baritons chiming in with her delicate and clear soprano as the fall of a fountaia with the thrill of a bird. I can hear those two voices now; their united melody still rings meckingly in my ears; the heavy perfume of orange blossom, mingled with myrtle, floats towards me in the air; the yellow moon burns round and full in air; the yellow moon burns round and full in successfully. My finds to develop the the dense blue sky, like the King of Thule's me, and a paner, cold and bitter as though nak the dense blue sky, like the dense and again [ed steel had been thrust through my body, are never grateful enough to the candid persons who wake us from our dreams-yet such are in truth our best friends, could we but realise

August was the most terrible of all the sum

All liness, s not the plagae. Rest here till I return ; I am going to letch a doctor." The little fellow looked at me with wonder ing, pathetic eyes, and tried to smile. He pointed to his throat, and made an effort to speak, but vainly. Then he crouched down in the grass and writhed in tor ura like a hunted animal wounded to the death. I left him, and walked on rapidly; reaching the barbor, where the heat was sulphurous and intense, I found a few scared looking men standing simlessly about, to whom I explained the boy's case, and appealed for assistance. They all hung back-none of them would accompany me, not even for the gold I offered. Cursing their cowardice, I hurried on in search of a physician, and found one at last, a sallow Frenchman, who listened with obvious reluctance to my account o: the condition in which I had left the little fruit-seller, and at the end shock his head de-cisively, and refused to move. "He is as good as dead," he observed, with cold brevity. "Better call at the house of the Misercordus; the brethren will fetch his

body." "What!" I cried, "you will not try if you

The Frenchman bowed with satirical suavity. "Monsieur must pardon me ! My own health would be seriously endangered by touching a cholers corpse. Allow me to wish monsieur the good day !" And he dusppeared, shutting his door in my

face. I was thoroughly ensaperated, and though the heat and the fortid odor of the sun-baked streets made me feel faint and sick. I forgot all dan er for myself as 1 stood in the plague stricken city, wondering what I should do next to obtain succor. A grave, kind voice saluted

my ear. "You seek aid, my son?"

I looked up. A tall monk, whose cowl partly concealed his pale but resolute features, stood at my side-one of those heroes who, for the love of Christ, came forth at that terrible time, and faced the pestilence fearlessly, where the blatant boasters of no religion scurried away like frightened hares from the very scent of I greeted him with an obeisance, and darger.

explained my errand. "I will go at once," he said, with an accent of pity in his voice. "But I isar the worst. I have remedies with me; I may not be too

"I will accompany you," I said eagerly. "One would not let a dog die unaided, much less this poor lad, who seems friendless." The monk looked at me attentively as

walked on together. "You are residing in Naples ? " he asked.

I gave him my name, which he knew by repute, and described the position of my Villa. "Up on that height we enjoy perfect health," I added. "I cannot understand the panic that

prevails in the city. The plague is fostered by such cowardice." "Of course !" he answered calmly. "But

what will you? The people here love pleasure. Their hearts are set solely on this life When death, common to all, enters their midst they are like babes scared by a dark shadow. Reli-gion itself"—here he sighed deep!y—" has no hold upon them."

"But you, my father," I began, and stopped abruptly, conscious of a sharp throbbing pain in my temples. "1," he answered gravely "am the servant

of Christ. As such, the plague has no terrors for me. Unworthy as I am, for my Master's sake I am ready-nay. willing-t: face all deaths."

He spoke firmly, yet without arrogance. looked at him in a certain admiration, and was about to speak, when a curious dizziness overcame me, and I caught at his arm to save myself from falling. The street rocked like a ship at sea, and the skies whirled round me in circles of blue fire. The feeling slowly passed, and I heard the monk's voice, as though it were

This last exclamation was wrung out of me by sheer anguish. My limbs refused to support the define onto sky, like the King of Thutes goblet of gold flung into a deep sea, and again I behold those two heads leaning together, the those two whose lives were a million times dearer than my own. Abl they were happy days-days of self-delusion always ara. We Here he placed me in a recumbent position on one of the wooden benches, and called up the

He has caught the plague !" "Thou fool !" exclaimed the monk, fiercely, "How caust thou tell? A stroke of the sun is not the plague, thou coward! See to him, or by St. Peter and the keys there shall be no

stella comm' a te " What did Guido say "Purer than the flawless diamond-unapproach, able as the furthest star !". That foolish Pietro still polishes his wine bottles. "I see him-his round face is greasy with heat and dust; meek meet round face is greasy with heat and duss; but I cannot understand how he comes to be here at all, for I am on the banks of a tropical river where huge palms grow wild, and drowey alligators lie asleep in the sun. Their large jaws are open —their small eyes glitter greenly. A light boat glides over the silent water-in it I behold the erect lithe figure of an Indian. His features are strangely similar to those of Guido. He draws a long thin shining blade of steel as he approaches. blade of steel as he approaches. Brave fellow ! — he means to attack single-handed the oracl creatures who lie in wait for him on the sultry shore. He springs to Iand—I watch him with a weird fascination. He passes the alligators-he seems not to be aware of their presence-be comes with swift, aware or their presence—it comes with swith unhesitating steps to me—it is I whom he seeks —it is in my heart that he plunges the cold steel dagger, and draws it out again dripping with blood! Once—twice—thrice !—and yet I cannot die ! I writhe—I moan in bitter anguish! Then something dark comes between me and the claring arc comething card and me and the glaring ann-something cool and shadowy, against which I fiing myself despair-ingly. Two dark eyes look steadily into mine, and s veice speaks: "Be calm, my son, be calm. Commend thy-self to Christ!" It is my friend the monk. I racognize him

gladly. He has returned from his errand of mercy. Though I can scarcely speak, I hear neyself asking for news of the boy. The holy man crosses himself devoutly. "May his young soul rest in peace! I found

him dead." I am dreamily astonished at this. Deadso soon ? I cannot understand this ; and I drift off again into a state of confused imaginings. As I look back now to that time, I find I have no specially distinut recollection of what after-wards happened tome. I know I suffered intense, intolerable pain-that I was literally tortured on a rack of excruciating anguish-and that through all the delirium of my senses, I heard a muffled, melancholy sound liks a chant or prayer. I have an idea that I also heard the tinkle of the hell that accompanies the Host, but my brain reeled more wildly with each moment, and I cannot be certain of this. I remember shricking out after what seemed an eternity of pain, to the Villa ! no, no, not there ! You shall not take me-my curse on him who disobers me!

I remember then a fearful sensation, as of being dragged into a deep whirlpool, from whence I stretched up appualing hands and eyes to the monk who stood above me-I caught a drowning glimpse of a silver crucifix glittering before my gaze, and at last, with one loud cry for help, I sank-downdown ! into an abyss of black night and nothingness !

There followed a long, drowsy time of still ness and shadow. I seemed to have fallen in some deep well of delicious obatill flitted before my fancs-these were at first undefinable, but after a while they took more certain abape. Strange fluttering creatures hovered/about me-lonely eyes stared at me from a visible deep gloom; long white bony tingers grasping at nothing made signs to me of warning or menace. Then, -very gradually, there dawned upon my sense of vision a cloudy red mist like a stormy sunset, and from the middle of the bloodlike haze a huge black Hand descended towards me. It pounced upon my chest-it grasped my throat in its monstrous clutch, and held me down with a weight of iron. I struggled violently-I strove to cry out, but that terrific pressure took from me all power of utterance. I twisted myself to right and left in an endeavor to escape-but my tyrant of the sable Hand had bound me in on all sides. Yet I continued to wreatle with the the matter. I forced a smile. "It is the heat, I think," I said, in feeble tones like those of a very sged man. I am faint - griddy. You had best leave me here—see to the boy. Oh, my God This last evelopmention Slowly, as my senses returned to me, I remem bered my recent illness. The monk—the man Pietro-where were *they*? What had they done to me? By degrees I realiz d that I was lying straight down upon my back—the couch was surely very hard. Why had they taken the pillows from under my head? A pricking Why had they taken sensation darted through my veins-I felt my own hands curiously-th-y were warm, and my pulse beat strongly, though fitfully. But my pulse beat strongly, though fitfully. But what was this that hundered my breathing? Air-air ! I must have air ! I put up my hands-horror ! They struck against a hard, the accursed boards-with all the force of my shoulders and arms I toiled to wrench open the closed !id ! My efforts were fruitless ! I grew closed iid i biy enorts were ruitless i I grew more ferociously mad with tage and terror. How easy were all deaths compared to one like this ! I was sufficient of the start from their sockets—hlood sprang from my mouth and nostrils—and icy drops of sweat trickled from my forehead. I paused, gasping for breath. Then, suddenly nervi: g myself for one more wild effort, I hurled my limbs with all the force of agony and desperation against and the force of sgony and desperation against one side of my narrow prison. It cracked—it split asunder !--and then--a new and horrid fear beset me, and I crouched back panting heavily. If --if I were buried in the ground-so ran my ghastly thoughts-of what use to break open the coffin and let in the wouldthe damp wormy mould, rich with the bones of the dead-the penetrating mould that would choke up my mouth and eyes, and seal me into silence for ever! My mind quailed at this idea-my brain tottered on the damp into a silence the silence of the sil the last rattle in the shroat of a dying man. But I could breathe more easily-even in the stupefaction of my fears-I was conscious of air. Yes! the blessed air had rushed in somehow. Revived and encouraged as I recog-nized this fact, I felt with both hands till I found the crevice I had made, and, then with frantic haste and strength I pulled and dragged at the wood, till suddenly the whole side of the coffin gave way, and I was able to force up the lid. I stretched out my arms-no weight of earth impeded their movements-I felt nothing but air-empty air. Yielding to my first strong impulse, I leaped out of the hateful box, and feil-fell some little distance, bruising my hands and knees on what seemed to be a stone pavement. Something weighty fell also with a dull crashing thud close to me. The darkness was impenetrable. But me. The darkness was impleteduate. But there was breathing room, and the atmos-phere was cool and refreshing. With some pain and difficulty I raised myself to a sitting posi-tion where I had fallen. My limbs were stiff and cramped as well as wounded, and I shivered as with strong ague. But my censes were clear-the tangled chain of my disordered thoughts became even and connected-my pre-vious mad excitement gradually calmed and I began to consider my condition. I had certainly been buried alive-there was no doubt of that. Intense pain had, I supposed, resolved itself into a long trance of unconsciousness—the people of the inn where I had been taken ill had at once believed me to be dead of cholera, and with the pane-stricken, indecent haste, common in all Italy, especially at a time of plague, had thrust me into one of those firmsy coffins which were then being manufactured by scores in Naples-mere shells of thin deal, nailed together with clumsy hurry and fear. But how I blessed their wretched construction ! Had I been laid in a stronger casket, who knows if even the most desperate casket, who knows it even the most desperate fronzy of my strength might not have proved unavailing! I shuddered at the thought. Yet the question remained—Where was I? I re-viewed my case from all points, and for some time could avrive at no satisfactory conclusion. Stay, though! I remembered that I had told the munk my name; he knew that I was the only descendant of the rich Romani family. What followed? Why, natur-oly, the good father had only done what his Romani family. What followed? Why, natur-ally, the good father had only done what his d ity called upon him to do. He had seen me of my wailing voice inging through the sound haid in the wait of my ancestors—the great a ches of the valls was strange and full of

Romani vault that had never been opened aince my father's body was carried to its last resting place with all the solemn pomp and magnitconce of a wealthy nobleman's funeral obsequies. The more L thought of this the more probable it seemed. The Romani vault! Its forbidding gloom had terrified me as a lad when I followed my father's coffin to the stone niche assigned to it, and I had turned my eyes away in shuddering pain when I was with tarnished silver, which contained all that was left of my mother, who died young. I had felt eick and faint and cold, and had only recovered myzelf when I stood out again in the free air with the blue dome of heaven high above me. And now I was shut in the same vault-a prisoner-with what hope of excape? I reflected. The entrance to the vault. I remembered, was barred by a heavy door of closely-twisted iron-from the a flight of steep steps lead downwards-down-wards to where in all probability I now was, Suppose I could in the dense darkness feel my way to those steps and climb up to that do rof what avail? It was locked-nay, barred-and it was situated in a remote part of the burial ground, there was no like thought of the near even the keeper of the cemetery passion by it for days-perhaps not for weeks. Then must I starve? Or die of thirst? Tortured by these me. A r imaginings, I rose up from the pavement and stood erect. My feet were bare and the cold stone on which I stood chilled me to the marrow. It was fortunate for me, I thought, that they had buried me as a cholers corpse-they had left me half clothed for fear of infection. That is, I had my flannel shirt on and my usual walking trousers. Something was there, too, round my neck; I felt it, and as I did so a flood of sweet and sorrowful memories ruched over me. It was a slight cold chain, and on it hung a locket containing the portraits of my wife

and child. I drew it out in the darkness; I covered it with passionate kisses and tears-the first I had shed since my death-like trancetears scalding and bitter welled into my eyes-Life was worth living while Nina's smile lightened the world ! I resolved to fight for existence, no matter what dire horrors should be yet in store for me. Nina-my love-my beau-

tiful one Her face gleamed out upon me in the pestilent gloom of the charnel-house; her eyes beckoned me-ber young aithful eyes that were now, I felt sure, drowned in weeping for my supposed death. I seemed to see my tender-hearted during sobbing alone in the empty silence of the room that had witnessed a thouand embraces b tween herself and me; her lovely hair dishevelled; her sweet face pale and hagggard with the bitterness of grief ! Baby Stells, too, no doubt she would wonder, poor innecent ! why I did not come to swing her as usual under the cravge boughs. And Guido -brave and true friend ! I thought of him with tenderness. I felt I knew how deep and Issting would be his honest regret for my loss. Oh, I would leave no means of escape untried; I would find some way out of this grim vault | How overjoyed they would all be to see me again—to know that I was not dead after all ! What a welcome I should receive ! How Nina would nestle into my arms; how my little child would cling to me; how Grido would clasp me by the hand ! I smiled as I pictured the scene of rejoicing at the dear old Villa—the happy home sanctified by perfect friendship and faithful love !

A deep hollow sound booming suddenly on my ears startled me-one ! two ! three ! I counted the strated ine-onle : two ! tirted I I counted the strakes up to twelve. It was some church bell tolling the hour. My pleasing fancies dispersed—I again faced the dreary reality of my position. Twelve c'clock ! Mid-day or midnight? I could not tell. I began to calculate. It was early morning when I had hear there ill-mate much rest early up I been taken ill-not much past eight when I met the monk and sought his assistance for the poor little fruit seller who had afterall perished alone in his sufferings. Now supposing my illness had lasted some hours, I might have faller into a trance, --died, --as those around me had thought, somewhere about noon. In that case would certainly have buried me with as thev little delay as possible, -before sunset at all events. Thinking these points one by one, came to the conclusion that the bell had just heard must have struck midnight. the midnight of the very day of my burial I shivered ;--- a kind of nervous dread stole over me. I have always been physically courageous, but at the same time, in spite of my education I am somewhat superstitions-what Neapolitan is not? it runs in the Southern blood. And there was something unutterably fearful in the everything that passed. "Attend to him well, Pietro-it is the rich thy pains. I will return within an hour." "The Count Romani ! Satissima Madonna ! He has caught the plague !" "The not colling the plague !" this idea in my mind I put out my hands and be gan to move along slowly and with the utmost care. What was that? I stopped; I listened; the blood curdled in my veins; A shrill cry, piercing, prolonged and melancholy, echoed through the hollow arches of my tomb. A cold perspiration broke out all over my body-my leart beat so loudly that I could hear it thump ing against my ribs. Again-again-that weird shriek, followed by whirr and flap of wings. I breathed again. "It is an owl," I said to myself, ashamed of my tears; "a poor innocent bird-t companion and watcher of the dead, and therefore its voice is full of sorrowful lamentation-but it is harmless," and I crept on with increased cou-tion. Suddenly out of the dense darkness there tared two large yellow eyes, glittering with fendish hunger and cruelty. For a mo-ment I was startled, and stepped back; the creature flew at me with the ferocity of a tigercat! I tought with the horrible thing in all directions; it wheeled round my head, it directions; it wheeled round my head, it pounced towards my face, it beat me with its large wings — wings that I could feel but not see; the yellow eyes alone shone in the thick gloom like the eyes of some vindictive demon! I struck at it right and left-the revolting combat lasted some moments-I grew sick and dizzy, yet I battled on recklessly. At last, thank Heaven! the hure owl was vanquished; it fluttered back. wards and downwards, apparently exhausted, giving one wild screech of baffled fury, as its lamp-like eyes disappeared in the darkness. Breathless, but not subdued—every nerve in my an obstruction-it was hard and cold-a stone wall, surely? I felt it up and down and found a hollow in it,-was this the first step of the stair? I wondered; it seemed very high. I touched it cautiously—suddenly I came in con-tact with something soft and clammy to the touch like moss or wet velvet. Fingering this with a kind of repulsion, I soon traced out the oblong shape of a coffin. Curiously enough, I oblong shape of a coffin. was affected much by the discovery. I found myself monotonously counting the bits of raised metal which served, as I judged, for its orna-mentat.on. Eight bits lengthwise-and the soft wet stuff between-four bits across; then a pang shot through me, and I drew my hand away quickly, as I considered whose coffin is this? My father's? Or was I thus plucking, like a man in delirium, as the tragments of velvet on that combrous oaken casket wherein la the sacred ashes of my mother's perishe beauty? I roused myself from the apathy into which I had fallen, All the pains I had taken to find my way through the vault were wasted I was lost in the prolound gloom, and knew not where to turn. The horror of my situation pre-sented itself to me with redoubled force. I began to be tormented with thirst. I fell on my

fantastic terror to my own cears knew that were my agony much further prolonged I should go mad. And I dared not pic-ture to myrelf the frightful things of which a unation might be capable, shut up in such a place of death and darkness, with mouldering corpses for companions! I remained on my knees, my face buried in my hands. I forced myself into comparative calmness, and strove to preserve the equilibrium of my distracted mind. Hush ! What exquisite far-off floating voice of cheer was that? I raised my head and listened, entranc d!

listened, entranc d! "Jug, jug, jug | lodola, lodo!a! thril-lil-lil sweet, sweet, sweet!" "It was a nightingale. Familiar, delicious, angel-throated bird ! How'I blessed thee in that dark hour of despair ! How I praised God for thics innocent existence ! How I eprang up and laughed and wept for joy, as, all uncon-scious of me, thou dicks taske out a shower of pearly warb! rags on the breast of the southed

pearly warbings on the breast of the southed air! Heavenly messenger of consolation ! . . . even now I think of thee with tenderness-fo thy sweet sake all birds possess me as their worshipper; humanity has grown hideous in my sight, but the singing-life of the woods and

A rush of strength and courses invigorated me. A new idea entered my brain. mined to follow the voice of the nightingale. It sang on sweetly, encouragingly, —and I began afresh my journeyings through the darkness. I fancied that the bird was perched on one of the trees outside the entrance of the vault, and that if I tried to get within closer heaving of its voice, I should most likely be thus guided to the very staircase I had been so painfully seeking. I stumbled along slowly. I felt feeble, and my limbs shook under me. This time no hiau impeded my progress; the nightin-gale's liquid notes floated nearer and nearer, and hope, almost exhausted, sprang up again in my heart. I was scarcely conscious of my own movements. I seemed to be drawn along like one in a dream by the golden thread of the bird's sweet singing. All at once I caught my foot against a stone and fell forward with some force, but I felt no pain-my limbs were too numb to be sensible of any iresh suffering. I raised my beavy, aching eyes in the darkness; as I did so I uttered an exclamation of thanks

giving. A slender stream of moonlight, no thicker than the stem of an arrow, slanted downwards towards me, and showed me that I had at last reached the spot I sought in fact I had fallen upon the lowest step of the stone stairway. I could not distinguish the entrance door of the vault, but I knew that it must be at the summit of the steep ascent. I was too weary to move further just then. I lay still where I was, staring at the solitary mom-ray, and listening to the nightingale, whose raptu ous melodies now rang out upon my ears with full distinctness. One / The barsh-toned bell I had heard before clauged forth the hour. It would soon be morning; I resolved to rest till then. Utterly worn out in body and mind, I laid my head down upon the cold stones as readily as if they had been the softest cushions. and in a few moments forgot all my miseries in a profound sleep.

I must have slumbered for some time, when] was suddenly awakened by a suffocating sensa tion of faintness and nausea, accompanied by a sharp pain on my neck as though some creature were stinging me. I put my hand up to the place.... God ! shall I ever torget place. . . God ! shall I ever torget the feel of the *Thing* my tremblicg fingers closed upon ! It was factaged in my flesh-a winged, clammy, breathing horror ! It clung to me with a loathly persistency that nearly drove me frantic, and wild with dis-gust and terror I screamed aloud ! . . . I closed both hands convulsively upon its fat, soft body,-I literally tore it from my flesh and flung it as far back as I could into the interior blackness of the vault. For a time I believe] was indeed mad . . . , the echoes rang with the piercing sbrieks that I could not re-strain ! Silent at last through sheer exhaustion

I glared about me. The moonbeam had van-ished; in its place lay a shaft of pale grey light, by which I could easily distinguish the whole length of the staircase, and the closed gabeway at its summit. I rushed up the ascent with the feverish haste of a madman-I

grasped the iron grating with both hands and shock it fiercely. It was firm as a rock, locked fast. I called for help. Utter silence answered me. I peered through the closely twisted bars. I saw the grass, the diccping boughs of trees, and straight before my line of vision, a little piece of the blessed sky, opal-tinted and faintly blushing with the consciousness of the approach ing sunrise. I drauk in the sweet fresh air ; a long trailing branch of the wild grape vine bung its leaves

vered

the ground, its splintered portions bearing de-cided witness to the dreadful struggle I had made to obtain my freedom. I advanced and examined it closely. It was a frail shell single of the undertaker's art, though God knows I had not fault to find with its workman-ship, nor with the haste of him who fashioned it. Something shore at the bottom of it-it was a crucifix of ebony and silver. That god allowed him to see me buried with-out this sacred symbol; he had per-haps laid it upon my breast as the last, service he could render me; it had fallen from thence, no doubt, when I had wrenched my way through the boards that inclosed me. I took it and kissedit reverently-I resolved that if ever I most is a proof of its truth, restore to him this cross, which he would be sure to recognize met the boly father sgain, I would tall bim my story, and, as a proof of its truth, restore to him this cross, which he would be sure to recornize. Had they put my name on the coffin lid? I wondered. Yes, there it was-painted on the wood in coarse, black letters, "FADIO ROMANI" --then followed the date of my birth; then a short Latin inscription station that the data short Latin inscription, stating that I had died of cho'era on August 15, 1884. That was yes-terday-only yesterday ! I seemed to have lived

terday—Only yesterday I I seemed to have lived a century since then. I turned to look at my father's resting-place. The velvet on his coffin hung from its sides in monldering remnants—but it was not so utterly damp destroyed and worm-eaten as the soaked configuration indication in the transition and indistinguishable material that still clung to the massive oaken chest where she lay-she from whose arms I had received my first embrace-she in whose laving eyes I had first be-held the world! I knew by a sort of instinct that it must have been with the frayed fragments on her coffin that my fingers had idly played in the darkness. I counted, as before, the bits in the carkness. I country, as perceptible the bits of metal-eight bits lengthwise, and four bits across-and on my father's close cusket there were ten silver plates lengthwise and five across. My poor little mother! I thought of her picture-it hung in my library at home; the picture of a young, imiling dark-haired beauty, whose delicate tint was as that of a beauty, where denotes the was as that of a peach ripening in the summer ann. All that loveliness had decayed into-what? I shud dered involuctarily—then I knelt humbly before those two sad hollows in the cold stone, and implored the blessing of the dead and gone beloved ones to whom, while they lived, my wel-fare had been dear. While I occupied this kneeling position the fiame of my torch fell di-rectly on some small object that glittered with remarkable lustre. I wout to examine it; it was a jewelled pendant composed of one large pear snaped pearl, set round with fine rose brilliants! Surprised at this discovery, I looked about to see where such a valuable gem could possibly have come from. I then noticed an unusually large coffin lying sideways on the ground; it appeared as if it had fallen sudden-ly and with force, for a number of loose stones and nortar had been sprinkled near it. Holding the light close to the ground, I observed that a niche exactly below the one in which I had been laid was empty, and that a considerable portion of the wall there was broken away. I then remembersed that mhan I had then remembered that when I had sprung so deeply out of my narrow tox I had heard romething fall with a crash beside me. This was the thing, then-this long coffin, hig enough to contain a man seven feet high and broad in proportion. What gigantic ancestor had I in-reverently dislodged ?-- and was it from a skele-ton throat that the rare jewel 1 held in my hand had been accidentally shaken?

My curiosity was excited, and I bent close to examine the lid of this funeral chest. There-was no name on it-no mark of any sort, save-one--a dagger roughly painted in red. Here was a mystery! I resolved to penetrate it. I set up my candle in a little crevice of one of tha empty niches, and laid the pearl and diamond pendant beside it, thus disembarrassing myself of all encumbrance. The huge coffer lay on its side, as I have said its upmermost corner side, as I have said; its uppermost corper was splintered; It applied both hands to the work of breaking further asunder hese already split portions. As I did so a eathern pouch or bag rolled out at my feet. I picked it up and opened it—it was full of gold pieces ! More excited than ever I seized a large pointed slone, and by the aid of this extemporized instrument, together with the force of my own arms, bands, and feet, I managed, after some ten minutes' hard labor, to break open the mysterious casket

When I had accomplished this deed I stared When I had accomplianed this deed I stared at the result like a man stupefied. No moul-dering horror met my gaze-no blanched or decaying bones; no grinoing skull mocked me with its hollow eyesockets. I looked upon a treasure worthy of an emperor's envy. The big coffin was literally lined and packed with incal-culable wealth. Fifty large leathern bags tied COSTAR COL

half of these were crammed with gold coins,

the rest were full of priceless gens -necklaces, tiaras, bracelets, watches, chains, and other

articles of fomuine adornment were mingled with loose precious stones -diamonds, rubies, emeralds and opals, some of unusual size and lustre, some uncut, and some all ready for the

jeweller's setting. Beneath these bags were

packed a number of pieces of silk, velvet, and

mer months in Naules. The cholera increase with frightful steadiness, and the prople seemed to be literally mad with terror. Some of them, seized with a wild spirit of definice, plunged into orgies of vice and intemperance with a reckless disregard of the consequences, One of these frantic revels took place at a well-known café. Eight young men, accompanied by eight girls of remark-able beauty, arrived, and ordered a pri-vate room, where they were served with a sumptious repeat. A text place sumptuous repast. At its close one of the party raised his glass and proposed, "Success to the Cholera !" The tosst was received with riotous shouts of applause, and all drank it with delirions laughter. That vory night every one of the revellers died in to rible agony; their bodies, as usual, were thrust into flimsy coffins and buried one on top of another in a hole hastily dug for the purpose. Dismal stories like these reached us every day, but we were not morbid-ly impressed by them. Stella was a living charm against pestilence; her innocent playfulness and p attl: kept us amused and employed, and surrounded us with an atmosphere that was

physically and mentally wholesome. One morning—one of the very hottest morn-ings of that scorching month—I avoke at an earlier hour than usual. A suggestion of possible coolness in the sir tempted me to rise and stroll through the garden. My wife slept soundly at my side. I dressed softly, without disturbing her. As I was about to leave the room some instinct made me turn back to look at her once more. How lovely she was ! she smiled in her sleep ! My heart beat as I gazed -she had been mine for three years-mine only !-and my passionate admiration and love of her had increased in proportion to that length of time. I raised one of the scattered golden locks that lay shining like a sunbeam on the pillow and kissed it tenderly. Then-all unconscious of my fate-I left her.

Conscious of my tate-1 left ner. A faint breeze greeted me as I sauntered slow along the garden walks,—a breath of wind scarce strong enough to flutter the leaves, yet it had a salt savour in it that was refreshing after the tropical heat of the past night. I was at that time absorbed in the study of Plato, and as I walked, my mind occupied itself with many high problems and deep questions sug-gested by that great teacher. Lost in a train of profound yet pleasant thought I strayed on further than I intended, and found myself at last in a bye-path, loug disused by our housewinding footway leading downwards hold,—a winding footway leading downwards in the direction of the harbor. It was shady and cool, and I followed the road almost unconsciously, until I caught a glimpse of masts and white sails gleaming through the leafage of the over-arching trees. I was then about to retrace 'my iteps, when I was startled by a sudden sound. It was a low moan of intense pain, -a emothered ory that seemed to be wruog from some animal in torture. I turned in the direc tion whence it came, and saw lying face down wards on the grass, a boy-a little fruit seller of eleven or twelve years of age. His basket of wares stood beside him, a tempting pile of peaches, grapes, pomegranates and melons-Novely, but dangerous eating in cholera times. I souched the lad on the shoulder. "What alls you !" I asked. He twisted him-

self convulsively and turned his face towa :: me, -a beautiful face, though livid with as-

me, -a beautiful 1800, though livit with as-guish. "The plague, signor," he moaned: "the plague! Keep away from me, for the love of God! I am dying !" I hesitated. For myself I had no fear. But my wife-my child-for their sakes it was neces-sary to be prudent. Yet I could not leave this poor how massisted. I resolved to go the bea bor in search of medical aid. With this idea in poor hoy unassisted. I resolved to go the har bor in search of medical aid. With this idea in any mind I spoke cheerfully. "Courage, my boy," I said; "do not lose

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place for thee in Heaven !" The trembling inukeeper looked terrified at this menace, and submissively approached me with pillows, which he placed under my lead. The monk, meanwhile, held a glass to my lips containing some medicinal mixture, which I swallowed mechanically.

"Reet here, my son," he said, addressing me in southing tones. "These people are good-natured. I will but hasten to the boy for whom you sought assistance-in less than an hour I will be with you again."

I laid a detaining hard on hisarm.

"Stay," I murmured feebly, "let me know the worst. Is this the plague?" "I hope not!" he replied compassionately. "But what if it be? You are young and strong

enough to fight against it without fear." "I have no fear," I said. "But, father promise mo one thing-send no word of my ill-ness to my wife-swear it ! Even if I am unconscious-dead-swear that I shall not be taken to the Villa. Swear it ! I cannot rest till I

to the Villa. Show have your word. "Iswear it most willingly, my son," he an-wered solemnly. "By all I hold sacred, I will swered solemnly. "By all I hold sacred, I will respect your wishes." I was infinitely relieved -the safety of those I loved was assured—and I thanked him by a

How the gesture. I was too weak to say more. He disappeared, and my brain wandered into a chaos of strange fencies. Let me try to resolve these delusions. I plainly see the interior of the common room where I lie. There is the timid inkeeper—he polishes his glasses and bottles, casting ever and anon a scared glance in my direction. Groups of men look in at the door, and, seeing me, hurry away. I observa all this-I know where I am-yet I am also climbing the steep passes of an Alpine gorgethe cold snow is at my feet-I hear the and roar of a thousand torrents. A crimson cloud floats above the summit of a white glacier -it parts asunder gradually, and in its bright centre a face smiles forth ! "Nina ! my love, my wife, my soul !" I cry aloud. I stretch out my arms-I clasp her !-bah ! it is this good rouse of an inkeeper who holds me in his masty embrace ! I struggle with kim fiercely pantingly.

"Fool !" I shriek in his ear. "Let me go to her —her lips pout for kisses—let me go !"

Another man advances and seizes me ; he and the innkeeper forced me back on the pillows-they overcome me, and the utter incapacity of a terrible exhaustion steals away my strength. I cease to struggle. Pietro and his assistant

look down upon me. "Emorto /" they whisper one to the other. I hear them and smile. Dead? Not I! The scorching sunlight streams through the open door of the inn-the thirsty files bozz with per sistent londness-rome voices are singing "La Fata di Amalfi"-I can distinguish the words-

	" Chiagnaro la mia sventura
	Si non tuorne chiù, Rosella
•	Tu d'Amalfi la chù bella,
	Tu na Fata si pe me !
	Viene, viè, regina mia,
	Viene, curre a chisto core
	Os non c'è no sciore
	Non c'è stella comm'a te !"*
That	is a true song, Nina min / "Non

*A popular soug in the Neaponitan diatect.

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succes and grouned aloud. "God of infinite mercy !" I cried, "Saviou of the world ! By the souls of the scored dead whom Thou hast in Thy holy keeping, have pity upon me! O my mother! if indeed thine pity upon me : Ony mother : It indeed thine earthly remains are near me-think of me, is weet angel in that heaven where thy spirit dwells at rest-plead for me and save me, or let me die now and be tortured no more !"

of my wailing voice inging through the somi re own coffin.

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dew. I squeezed one hand through the grating and gathered a few of these green moraels They of coolness-I ate them greedily seemed to me more delicious than anything I had ever tasted; they relieved the burning fever of my parched throat and tongue. The glimpse of the trees and the sky soothed and There was a gentle twittering of calmed me. awaking birds; my nightingale had ceased Binging.

by itself in a sort of oil-skin, verver, and by itself in a sort of oil-skin, strong ly perfumed with camphor and other spices. There were also three lengths. I began to recover slowly from my nervous terrors; and leaning against the gloomy arch of my charnel house I took courage to glance back-ward down the steep stairway up which I had spices. There were also three lengths of old lace, fine as gossomer, of matchless ar tistic design, in perfect condition. Among these sprudg with such furious precipitation. Some-thing white lay in a corner on the seventh step materials lay two large trays of solid gold work-I descended cautiously, and with some reluct manship, most exquisitely engraved and orna-mented, areo four gold drinking cups, of quaint ance; it was the half of a thick waxen taper such are as used in the Catholic ritual at the burial of the dead. No doubt it had been and massive construction. Other valuable and curious triffes there were, such as an ivory statuette of Psyche on a silver pedestal, a waistband of coins linked together, a painted fan with a handle set in amoer and turquoise, a fine thrown down there by some careless acolyte, to save hinself the trouble of carrying it after the steel dagger in a jeweled sheath, and a mirror framed in old pearls. Last, but not least, at the very bottom of the chest, lay rolls upon service had ended. I looked at it meditatively. If I only had a light ! I plunged my hand half abstractedly into the pockets of my trousers -something jugled ! Truly they had buried me in haste. My purse, a small bunch of keys, my card-case—one by one I drew them out and examined them surprisedly rolls of paper money amounting to some mil-lions of francs-in all far surpassing what I had myself formerly enjoyed from my own revenues. I plunged my hands deep in the leathern bags : I fingered the rich materials; all this treasure was mine / I had found it in mw own burial -they looked so familiar, and withal so strange! I searched again; and withal time found something of real value to one in my condition—a small box of wax vestas. Now, had they left me my cigar case? No, that was vault. . . . I had surely the sight to consider it as my property? I began to consider gone. It was a valuable silver one-no doubt the monk, who attended my supposed last moments, had taken it, together with my watch and chain, to my wife. Well, I could not smoke, but I could what a fool I was not to have thought of them. befire; the dagger painted on the lid of the chest should have guided me to the solution of the mystery. A red dagger was the recognized sign-manual of a bold and dangerous brigond named Carmelo Neri. who, with his reckless gang, haunted the vicinity of Palermo. So!" I thought. "This is one of your bright ideas, my cut throat Carmelo.! Cunning rogue ! you calculated well, -you thought that none would disturb the dead, much less break open a coffin in search of gold. Admirably planned, my Carmelo ! But this time you must play a losing game ! A supposed dead man coming to strike a light. And there was the funeral taper ready for use. The sun had not yet risen. I must certainly wait till broad day before I could hope to attract by my shouts any stray person who might pass through the Meanwhile, a fantastio idea sugcemetery. Meanwhile, a fantastic idea sug-geated itself. I would go and look at my own coffin ! Why not? It would be a novel experi-ence. The sense of fear had entirely deserted me; the possession of that box of matches was sufficient to endow me with absolute hardibood. I picked up the church candle and lit it; it gave at first a feeble flicker, but afterwards burnt with a clear and steady flame. Shading it with one hand from the draught, I gave a parting glance at the fair daylight that peeped smilingly in through my prison door, and then went down-down again into the dismal place where I had passed the night in such indescribable horror.

Numbers of lizards glided away from my feet as I desoraded the steps, and when the flare of my torch penetrated the darkness I heard a surrying of wings mingled with various hirsing sounds and wild cries. I knew now-none bet-ter-what weird and abominable things had habitation in this storehouse of the dead, but I felt I could defy them all, armed with the light I carried. The way that had reemed an long in the dense gloom was brief and easy, and I soon found myself at the scene of my unexpected awakening from sleep. The actual body of the vault was equareshaped, like a small room inclosed within high walls,--walls which were scooped out in various places so as to form niches in which the narrow caskets containing the bones of all the departed members of the Romani family were placed one above the other like so many bales of goods armanged evenly on the shelves of an ordinary warrhouse. I held the candle high above my head and looked about me with a morbid interest. I soon perceived what I sought-uy

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losung game ! A supposed dead man coming to life again deserves something for his trouble, and I should be fool not to accept the goods the gods and the robbers provide. An ill-gotten ! of wealth, no doubt ; but better in my hands than in yours, friend Carmelo ?" And I meditated for some minutes on this strange affair. If, indeed-and I saw no reason to doubt it-I had chanced to find some of the spoils of the redoubtable Neri, this great chest must have been brought over by sea from Palermo. Probably four stout rescale had carried the supposed coffin in a mock selemn procession, under the pretence of its containing the body of a dead comrade. These thieres have a high sense of humor. Yet the question remained to be solved, --How had they gained ccess to my ancestral vault, unless by means of a false key ? All at once I was left in darkness, My candle went out as though blown upon by a gust of air. I had my matches, and of course could easily light it again, but I was puzzled to imagine the cause of its sudden extinction. I

looked about me in the temporary gloom and wn coffin. There it was in a niche some five feet from fourd that four blocks of granite in the wall