## VENDETTA;

--OR---The Story of One Forgotten.

CHAPTER XXV.—Continued. "The Signor Ferrari then flung away the unfortunite Giacomo with so much force that he fell in a heap on the pavement and broke his lattern to pieces. The old man set up a most pitial grouning, but the Signor cared nothing for that. He was mad, I think. 'Get to bed!' he cried, 'and sleep-sleep till you die! Tell your mistress when you see her that I came to kill her! My curse upon this house and all who dwell in it! And with that he ran so quickly through the garden into the high road that I had some teaching to follow him. There after had some trouble to follow him. There after walking unsteadily for a few paces, he suddenly fell down, senseless."
Vincenzo paused. "Well," I said, "what
happened next?"

Eccellenza, I could not leave him there without aid. I drew my cloak we'll up to my mouth and pulled my hat down over my eyes so that he could not recognise me. Then I took water from a fountain close by and dashed it on his face. He soon came to me for my assistance, saying that he had had a sudden snock. He then drank greedily from the fountain and went on his way.

next visited a common tavern in one of the back streets of the city and came out with two men. They were well dressed—they had the air of gentlemen spoiled by bad fortune. The Senor talked with them for some time— be seemed much excited, I could not hear what they said except at the end, when these two strangers consented to appear as seconds for Signor Ferrari, and they at once left him, to come straight to this hotel. And they are arrived, for I saw them through a half-opened door as I came in, talking to the Marquis D'Avencourt.

"Well!" I said, "and what of Signor Ferrari when he was left alone by his two friends?" "There is not much more to tell, Eccellenza.

He went up the lttlr hill to his own studio, and
I noticed that he walked like a very old man
with his head bent. Once he stopped and some one. He let himself in at his door with a private key—and I saw him no more. I felt that he would not come out again for some time. And as I moved away to return here, I heard a sound as of terrible weeping." And that is all, Vincenzo?

"That is all, Eccellenza."

I was silent. There was something in the simple narration that touche 1 me, though I remained as determinately relentless as ever.

After a lew moments I said,
"You have done well, Vincenzo. You are aware how gressly this young man has insulted me-and that his injurious treatment can only be wiped out in one way. That way is already arranged. You can set out those pistols you Vincenzo obeyed-but as he lifted the heavy

case of weapons and set them on the table, he ventured to remark timidly,
"The Eccellenza knows it is now Christmas-

day ?"
"I am quite aware of the fact," I said, some-

what frigidly.

Is nowise daunted, he went on, "Coming the Errele the Errele back just now I saw the big Nicolo—the Eccel-lenza has d subtless seen him often?—he is a vinegrower, and they say he is the largest man in Naples-three months since he nearly killed his brother-cblene! To night that same big Nicolo is drinking Chianti with that same brother, and both shouted after me as I passed, 'Hola! Vincenzo Fiama! all is well between us, because it is the blessed Christ's birth-Vincenza stopped and regarded me

Nicolo or his brother to do with me?' finally he said simply, " May the saints preserve the Eccellenza from all harm!

till five o'clock or thereabouts, and I advise you

mind was too deeply engrossed with all I had gone through. I could enter into Guido's feelings-had I not suffered as he was now suffering?—nav! more than he—for he, at any rate. ould not be buried alive! I should take care of that! He would not have to endure the agony of breaking loose from the cold grasp of the grave to come back to life to find his name slandered, and his vacant place filled up by a usurper. Do what I would, I could not torture him as much as I myself had been tortured. That was a pity-death, sudden and almost painless, seemed too good for him. I held up my hand in the half-light and watched it closely to see if it trembled ever so slightly. No! it was steady as a rock-I felt I was sure of my aim. I would not fire at his heart, I thought—but just above it—for I had to remember one thing—he must live long enough to recognise me before he died. That was the cognise me before he died. That was the sting I reserved for his last moments. The sick dreams that had bowildered my brain when I was taken ill at the suberge recurred to mc. I remembered the lithe figure, so like Guide that had glided in the Indian canoe towards me and had plugged a dagger three times in my heart. Had it not been realized? Had not ide stabbed me thrice? in his theft of my wife's affections, in his contempt for my little dead child, in his slanders on my name Then why such foolish notions of pityof forgivenes, that were beginning to steal into my mind? It was too late now for forgiveness; the very idea of it only rose out of a silly sentimentalism awakened by Ferrari's allusion to our young days, days for which, after all, he roully cared nothing. Meditating on all these things, I suppose I must have fallen by impercentible degrees into a doze which deep ened till it became a profound and refreshing eleep. From this I was awakened by a knocking at the door. I arose and admitted Vincenzo, who entered bearing a tray of steaming

"Is it already so late?" I asked him. "It wants a quarter to five," roplied Vincenzo-then looked at me in some surprise, he "Will not the Eccellenza change his evening dress?"
I nodded in the affirmative—and while I

drank my coffee my valet set out a suit of rough tweed, such as I was accustomed to wear every day. He then left me, and I quickly changed my attire, and while I did so I considered carefully the position of affairs. Neither the Marquis D'Avencourt nor Captain Freccia had ever known me personally when I was Fabio Romani, nor was it at all probable that the two tavern companions of Ferrari had ever seen me. A surgeon would be on the field—most probably a stranger. Thinking over these points, I resolved on a bold stroke—it was this that when I turned to face Ferrari in the combat, I would do so with uncovered eyes—I would abjure my spectacles altogether for the occasion. Vaguely I wondered what the effect would be upon him. I was very much changed even without these disguising glasses, my white beard and hair had seemingly altered my aspect—yet I knew there was someting familiar in the expression of my eyes that could not fail to startle one who had known me well. My seconds would consider it very natural that I should remove the smoke-colored spectacles in order to see my aim unencumbered—the only person likely to be disconcerted by my action was Ferrari himself. The more I thought of it the more determined I was to do it. I had scarcely ficialish dressing when Vincenzo entered with my overcost and informed me that the my overcoat and informed me that the Marquis waited for me, and that a close carriage was in attendance at the private door of the hotel.

"Permit me to accompany you Eccellenza!"
pleaded the faithful fellow, with anxiety in the Come, then, amico," I said, cheerily. "If

He promised readily, and when I joined the

Marquis he followed, carrying my case of "He can be trusted, I suppose?" asked D'Avencourt, glancing keenly at him while shaking hands cordially with me. "T) the death!" I replied laughingly. "He

will break his heart if he is not allowed to bind up my wounds!"

"I see you are in good spirits, Conte," remarked Captain Freccia as we took our seats in the carriage. "It is always the way with the man who is in the right. Ferrari, I fear, is not quite so comfortable."

And he proffered me a cigar, which I accepted. Just as we were about to start the fat landlord of the hotel rushed towards us, and laying hold of the carriage Goor—"Eccelleza," he ob-served in a confidential whisper, "of course this is only a matter of coffee and glorias? They will be ready for you all on your return.

I know—I understand!" And he smiled and nodded a great many times, and laid his finger knowingly on the side of his nose. We laughed heartily, assuring him that his perspicuity was wonderful, and he stood on the broad steps in himself, and, taking me for a stranger, thanked high good humor, watching us as our vehicle rumbled heavily away.
"Evidently," I remarked, "he does not con-

sider a duel as a serious affair."

"Not he!" replied Frecca "He has "You followed:
"Yes, Escallenza,—at a little distance. He known of too many sham fights to be ext visited a common tavern in one of the back able to understand a real one. D'Avencourt

knows something about that too, though he always kills his man. But very often it is sufficient to scratch one another with the sword-point so as to draw a quarter of a drop of blood, and ed the lips of the dying man. Sense and specunonor is satisfied. Then the coffee and glorias are brought as a grantered by constitution returned to those glaring eyes so awfully are brought as a grantered by constitution. are brought, as suggested by our friend the "It is a ridiculous age," said the Marquis,

taking his eigar from his mouth, and compla-cently surveying his small, suple white hand, "thoroughly ridiculous, but I determined it should never make a fool of me. You see, my dear Conte, nowadays a duel is very frequently decided with swords rather than pistols, and why Because cowards fancy it is much more difficult to kill with the sword. But not at all. Long ago I made up my mind that no man with his head beat. Once he stopped and should continue to live who dared to insult should his fist in the air as though threatening me. I therefore studied sword-play as an art. And I assure you it is a simple matter to kill with the sword-remarkably simple. My opponents are astonished at the ease with which I despatch them !'

Freccia laughed. "De Hamal is a pupil of yours, Marquis, is he not?" I regret to say, yes! He is marvellously clumy. I have often earnestly requested him to eat his sword rather than handle it so bourishly. Yet he kills his men, too, but in a butcher-like way—totally without grace or refinement. I should say he was about on a par with our two associates, Ferrari's seconds." I roused myself from a reverie into which I

had fallen.

"What men are they?" I inquired.
"One calls himself the Capitano Ciabatti, the other Cavaliere Dursi, at your service," answered Freccia indifferently. "Good sweerers both and hard drinkers—filled with stockphrases, such as 'our distinguished dear friend, l'errari,' 'wrongs which can only be wiped out by blood'—all bumbast and braggadocia! These fellows would as soon be on one side as the other."

He resumed his smoking, and we all three lapsed into silence. The drive seemed very long, though in reality the distance was not preat. At last we passed the Casa Ghirlande a superb chateau belonging to a distinguished pobleman who in former days had been a irrently neighbor to me, and then our vehicle joited down a gentle declivity which sloped into a small valley, where there was a good-sized piece of smooth, flat green sward. From wistfully.

"Well!" I said calmly, "what has the big lated turrets of my own house, the Villa Romani. Here we came to a standstill. Vincenso mani. Here we came to a standstill. Vincenso jumped briskly down from his seat beside the coachman, and assisted us to alight. The carriage then drove off to a retired corner behind I smiled gravely. "Thank you, my friend. some trees. We surveyed the ground, and saw I understand what you mean. Have no fear that only one person beside ourselves had arfor me. I am now going to he down and rest rived. This was the surgeon, a dapper goodhumored little German who spoke bad French to do the same. At that time you can bring me and worse Italian, and who shook hands corsome coffice." And I nodded kindly to him as I left bowed low and smiled very amiably. "The him and entered my sleeping apartment, where I was. I had no intention of eleeping; my vices. You have reposed yourself? That is well—sleep steadies the nerves. Ach! you shiver! True it is, the morning is cold." shiver!

I did indeed experience a passing shudder, but not because the air was chilly. It was because I felt certain—so terribly certain, of killing the man I had once loved well. Almost I wished I could also feel that there was the slightest possibility of his killing; but no! all my instincts told me there was no chance o this. I had a sort of sick pain at my heart, and as I thought of her, the jewel-eyed snake who had wrought ail the evil, my wrath against her increased tenfold. I wondered scornfully what the was doing away in the quiet convent where the sacred Host unveiled, glittered on the altar like a star of the morning. No doubt she slept; it was yet too early for her to practise her sham sanctity. She slept, in all probability most peacefully, while her husband and her lover called upon Death to come and decide between them. The slow clear strokes of a bell chiming from the city, tolled six, and as its last echo trembled mournfully on the wind there was a slight stir among my companions. looked and saw Ferrari approaching with his two associates He walked slowly, and was muffled in a thick cloak; his hat was pulled over his brows, and I could not see the expression of his face, as he did not turn his head once in my direction, but stood apart leaning against the trunk of a leafless tree. The seconds on both sides now commenced measuring the

ground.
"We are agreed as to the distance, gentlemen?" said the Marquis. "Twenty paces, I think ?"

"Twenty paces," stiffly returned one of Fer rari's friends-a battered-looking middle-aged rouc with ferocious moustachies, whom I presumed was Captain Ciabatti.

They went on measuring carefully and in si-lence. During the pause I turned my back on the whole party, slipped off my spectacles and put them in my pocket. Then I lowered the brim of my hat slightly so that the change night not be observed too suddenly,—and re-suming my first position, I waited. It was day-light though not full morning,—the sun had not yet risen, but there was an opaline lustre in the sky, and one pale pink streak in the east the sky, and one pate pink streak in the east like the floating peunon from the lance of a hero, which heralded his approach. There was a gentle twittering of awakening birds,—the grass sparkled with a million tiny drops of frosty dow. A curious calmness possessed me. I felt for the time as though I were a mechanical automaton moved by some other will than my

own. I had no passion left.
The weapons were now loaded,—and the Marquis looking about him with a careful business-like air, remarked—
"I think we may now place our men?"

This suggestion agreed to, Ferrari left his place near the tree against which he had in part reclined as though fatigued, and advanced to the spot his seconds pointed out to him. He threw off his bat and overcoat, thereby showing that he was still in his evening dress. His face was haggard and of a sickly paleness—his eyes had dark rings of pain round them, and were full of a keen and bitter anguish. He eagerly grasped the pistol they handed to him, and examined it closely with vengeful interest. I meanwhile also threw off my hat and coat,—the Marquis glanced at me with careless approval.

"You look a much younger man without

your spectacles, Conte," he remarked as he handed me my weapon. I smiled indifferently, and took up my position at the distance indi cated, exactly opposite Ferrari. He was still occupied in the examination of his pistol, and did not at once look up. "Are you ready, gentlemen?" demanded

Freedin with courtsous coldness. "Quite ready," was the response. The Marquis D'Avencourt took out his handkerchief.
Then Ferrari raised his head and faced me fully

the Marquis makes no objection, I shall not.
But you must promise not to interrupt any of the proceedings by so much as an exclamation."

The proceedings by so much as an exclamation.

The proceedings by so much as an exclamation. His lips moves as though he were about to utter an exclamation,—he staggered.
"One!" cried D'Avencourt.

We raised our weapons.

"Two!" The scared and bewildered expression of Ferrari's face deepened visibly as he eyed me steadily in taking aim. I smiled proudly—I gave him back glance for glance,—I saw him waver,—his hand shook.
"Three!" and the white handkerchief flut-

tered to the ground. Instantly and together we fired. Ferrari's bullet whizzed passed me, merely tearing my coat and grazing my shoul-The smoke cleared, Ferrari still stood erect, opposite me, staring straight forward with the same frantic far-off look, the pistol had dropped from his hand. Suddenly he threw up his arms, shuddered, and threw up his arms, shuddered, and with a smothered groan fell, face forward, prone on the award. The surgeon hurried to his side and turned him so that he lay on his He was unconscious,-though dark eyes were wide open, and turned blindly upward to the sky. The front of his shirt was already soaked with blood. We all gathered

around him.
"A good shot?" inquired the Marquis, with
the indifference of a practised duellist.
"Ach! a good shot indeed!" replied the little German doctor, shaking his head as he rose from his examination of the wound. "Excelfrom his examination of the wound. "Elent! He will be dead in ten minutes. bullet has passed through the lungs close to the heart. Honor is satisfied certainly!"

upturned. He looked upon us all doubtfully one after the other—till finally his gaze rested upon us. Then he grew strangely excited. his lips moved,—he eagerly tried to peak. The doctor, watchful of his movements, poured brandy between his teeth. The portial gave brandy between his teeth. The pordial gave him momentary strength—he raised himself by a supreme effort.

a supreme enort.

"Let me speak," he gasped faintly, "to him!" And he pointed to me,—then he continued to mutter like a man in a dream—"to him election." him alone!

The others, slightly awed by his monner, drew aside out of ear-shot, and I advanced and knelt beside him, stooping my face between his and the morning sky. His wild eyes met mine with a piteous and beseeching terror. In God's name," he whispered thickly,

" Who are you?" "You know me, Guido!" I answered steadily. "I am Fabio Romani, whom you once called friend! I am he whose wife you stole! . . . name you slandered! whose honor you despised! Ah! look at me well! your own heart tells you who I am !' He uttered a low moan and raised his hand

with a feeble gesture.
"Fabio? Pabio?" he gasped. "He died-I saw him in his coffinsaw him in his coffin—"

I leaned more closely over him. "I was buried alive," I said with thrilling distinctness.

"Understand me, Guido,—buried alive! I escaped—no matter how. I came home,—to:learn your treachery and my own dishocor! Shall I tell you more?"

A terrible shudder shook his frame,—his

head moved restlessly to and fro, the sweat stood in large drops upon his forehead. With my own handkerchief I wiped his lips and brow tenderly, -my nerves were strung up to an almost brittle tension, -I smiled as a woman smiles when on the verge of hysterical

weeping.

"You know the avenue." I said, "the dear old avenue, where the nightingales sing? saw you there, Guido-with her!..-on the very night of my return from death,—she was in your arms,—you kissed her,—you spoke of me,—you toyed with the necklass on her white

He writhed under my gaze with a strong convulsive movement.
"Tel me , quick?" he gasped. "Does
. . she . know you?"
"Not yet!" I answered slowly. "But soon

she will—when I have married her!"

A look of bitter anguish filled his straining eyes. "Oh God, God!" he exclaimed with a groun like that of a wild beast in pain. "This is horrible too horrible." is horrible, too horrible! Spare me . . . spare . . . . A rush of blood choked his utspare . . . A rush of blood choked his ut-tterance. His breathing grow fainter and faint

er; the livid hus of approaching dissolution spread itself gradually over his countenance. Staring wildly at me, he groped with his hands as though he searched for some lost thing. I took one of those feebly wandering hards with in my own, and held it closely clasped. "You know the rest," I said gently; "you understand my vengeance! But it is all over,

Guido— all over now! She has played us both false. May God forgive you as I do!" He smiled—a soft look brightened his lost glazing eyes—the old boyish look that had won my lover!" he repeated in a sort of plaintive babble. "All over, now! God
Fabio forgive! "A totable."

convulsion wrenched and contorted his limbs and features, his throat rattled, and stretching him. self out with a longshivering sigh, . . . he died! The first beams of the rising sun, piercing through the dark, moss covered branches of the pine-trees, fell on the cluster-ing hair, and lent a mocking brilliancy to his wide-open sightless aves there was a smile or the closed lips! A burning, suffering sensation rose in my throat, as of rebellious teast trying to force a passage. I still held the hand of my friend and enemy—it had grown cold in my clasp. Upon it sparkled my family diamond the ring she had given him. I drew the jewel off; then I kissed that poor passive hand as I laid it gently down—kissed it tenderly, reverently. Hearing footsteps approaching, I rose from my kneeling posture and stood erect with folded arms, looking tearlessly down on the stiffening clay before m. The ret of the party

came up; no one spoke for a minute; all surveyed the dead body in silence. At last Cap tain Freccia said softly in half inquiring He is gone, I suppose ?" I bowed. I could not trust myself to speak, "He made you his apology?" asked the

Marquis. I bowed again. There was onother pause of heavy silence. The rigid smiling face of the corpse seemed to mock all speech. The Tue doctor stooped and skilfully closed themselfaced appealing eyes—and then it seemed to me as though Guido merely alept and that a touch would awaken him. the Marquis D'Avencourt took me by the arm and whispered, "Get back to the city, amico, and take some wine—you look positively ill! Your evident recret does you credit, considering the circumstances—but what would you?-it was a fair fight. Consider the provocation you had! I should advise you to leave Naples for a couple of weeks—by that time the affair will be forgotten. I know how these things are managed—leave it all to me.

I thanked him and shook his hand cordially and turned to depart. Vincenzo was in waiting with the carriage. Once I looked back, as with slow steps I left the field;—a golden radiance illumined the sky just above the stark figure stretched so straightly on the sward; while almost from the very side of that pulse-less heart a little bird rose from its nest among the grasses and soared into the heavens, sing-ing rappurously as it flew into the warmth and glory of the living, breathing day.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Entering the fiacre, I drove in it a very little way towards the city. I bade the driver stop at the corner of the winding road that led to the Villa Romani, and there I alighted. I ordered Vincenzo to go on to the hotel and send from thence my own carriage and horses up to the Villa gates, where I would wait for it. I also bade him pack my portmanteau in readiness for my departure that evening, as I teins, for a few days. He heard my commands in silence and evident embarrassment. Finally

smile. "Do you not see, acce, that I am heavy-heated, and melancholy men are best walked bareheaded through a long, cold mothers. Whatever it is, it is certain locked at me no more, but told her based as she walked, and never spoke till she but a time is at hand when this foolist. heavy-hearted, and melancholy men are best left to themselves. Besides, remember the Cainival, I told you you were free to indulpt in its merriment, and shall I now deprive you of your pleasure? No, Vincenzo; stay and enjoy yourself, and take no concern for me."

Vincenzo saluted me with his usual respect ful bow, but his features wore an expression of

obstinacy. "The Eccellenza must pardon me," he said, "but I have just looked at death, and my taste is spoilt for Carnival. Again, the Excellenza 18 sad, it is necessary that I should accompany him to Avelling.

I saw that his mind was made up, and I was in no humor for argument.
"As you will," I answe I answered wearily, "only

believe me, you make a foolish decision. But do what you like; only arrange all so that we leave to night. And now get back quickly, give no explanations at the hotel of what has occurred, and lose no time in sending on my carriage. I will wait alone at the Villa Romani The vehicle rumbled off, bearing Vincenzo

seated on the box beside the driver. I watched it disappear, and then turned into the road that led me to my own dishmoured home. The place looked stient,—not a houl was stirring. The silken blinds of the reception-rooms were all closely drawn, showing that the mistress of the house was absent: it was as if some one lay dead within. vague wonderment arose in my mind. Who was dead? Surely it must be I—I the master of the household, who lay stiff and cold in one of those curtained rooms! This terrible whitehaired man who roamed feverishiy up and down outside the walls was not me;-it was some angry demon from the grave to wreak punishment on the guilty. I was dead, I could never have killed the man who had once been my friend. And he also was dead, the same murderess had slain us both, and—she lived. Ha! that was wrong, she must now die, but in such torture that her very soul shall shrink and shrivel under it into a devil's flame for the furnace of hell!

With my brain full of hot whirling thoughts like these I looked through the carved heraldic work of the villa-gates. Here had Guido stood, poor wretch, last night, shaking these twisted wreaths of iron in impotent fury. There on the mosaic pavement he had flung the trembling old servant who had told him of the absence of his traitress. On this very spot he had launched his curse, which, though he knew it not, was the curse of a dying man. I was glad he had uttered it; such maledictions cling! There was nothing but compassion for him in my heart now that he was dead. He had been duped and wronged even as I; and 1 felt that his spirit, released from its grosser clay, would work with mine and aid in her

punishment. I paced round the silent house till I came to the private wicket that led into the avenue : opened it and entered the familiar path. I had not been there since the fatal night on which I had learned my own betrayal. How in tensely still were those solemn pines—how gaunt and dark and grim! Not a branch quivered—not a leaf stirred. A cold dew that was scarcely a frost glittered on the moss at my feet. No bird's voice broke the impressive hush of the woodland's morning dream. No bright med flower unbuttoned its fairy cloak to the breeze, yet there was a subtle perfume everywhere, the fragrance of unseen violets whose purple eyes were still closed in slumber.

I gazed on the scene as a man may behold in a vision the spot where he once was happy. I walked a few paces, then paused with a strange beating at my heart. A shadow tell across my path - it flitted before me, it stopped-it lay still. I saw it resolve itself into the figure of a man stretched out in rigid silence, with the light heating full on his smiling, dead face, and also on a deep wound just above his heart, from which the blood object redly, staining the grass on which he lay. Mastering the sick horror which seized me at this sight, I sprang forward, the shadow vanished instantly, it was a mere optical delusion, the result of my overwrought and excited condition. I shuddered involuntarily at the image my own heated fency had

conjured up; should I always see Guido thus, I thought, even in my dreams?
Suddenly a ringing, swaying rush of sound burst joyously on the silence ;-the slumbering trees awoke, their leaves moved, their dark branches quivered, and the grasses lifted up their green liliputian sword-blades. Bells!and such bells !- tones of melody that stormed the air with sweetest eloquence, -round, rainbow bubbles of music that burst upon the wind and dispersed in delicate broken echoes.

"Peace on earth, good will to men! Peace-on-earth-good-will-to-men!" they seemed to say over and over again, till my ears ached with the repetition. Peace! What had I to do with peace or good-wid? I to do with peace or good-will? The Chric Mass could teach me nothing. I was at one spart from human life—an alien from its customs and affections-for n.e no love, no brotherhood remained. The swinging song of the chimes jarred my nerves. Why, I thought, should the wild erring world, with all its wicked men and women, pro-ume to rejuice at the birth of the Savious !- they, who were not worthy to be saved ! I turned swiftly away; I strode fi-reely past the kitgly pine that, now thoroughly awakezed, seemed to note me with a stern disdain as though they said among themselves: "What manner of smal c esture is this that torments himself with passions unknown to us, in our calm converse with the stars?

I was glad when I so d again on the high ro d, and infinitely relieved when I heard the roid, and infinitely relieved when I heard the rapid tot of horses and rumbling of wheels, and raw my closed brougham, drawing by its prancing black Arabiaus, approaching. I walked to meet it; the coachman seeing me drew up instantly. I hade him take me to the Convento dell' Annunziata, and entering the carriage, I was driven rapidly away.

The convent was situated, I know, some where between Naples and Serrento. I guessed it to be near Castellamare, but it was fully three miles beyond that, and was a somewhal long drive of more than two hours. It lay s good distance out of the direct route, and was only attained by a by read, which from its rough and broken condition was evidently not much frequented. The building stood apart from all o her hati'atians in a large open piece of ground, fenced in by a high stone wall spiked at the top. Roses climbed thickly among the spikes, and almost hid their sharp points from view, and from a perfect nest of reen foliage, the slender spire of the convent chapel rose into the sky like a white finger pointing to heaven. My coachman drew up before the heavily barred gates. I alighted and bade him take the carriage to the principal hostely at Caetellamare, and writ for me there. As soon as he had driven off, I rang the convent bell. A little wicket fixed in the gate opened immediately, and the wrinkled visage of a very old nun locked out. She demanded in low tones what I sought. I handed her my card, and stated my desire to see the Countess Romani, if agreeable to the Superioress. While I spoke she looked at me curiously,—my spectacles, I suppose, excised her wonder,—for I had replaced these disguising glasses immediately on leaving the scane of the duel,—I needed them yet a little while longer. After peering at me a minute or two with her bleared and aged eyes, she shut the wicket in my face with a smart click and disappeared. While I awaited her click and disappeared. While I awaited her return, I heard the sound of children's laughter and light footsteps running trippingly on the stone passage within. "Fi done, Rosie ! " said a girl's voice in

French; "la bonne Mòre Marguerite sera très très fâchée avec toi." "Tais toi, petite sainte !" cried another voice

more piercing and silvery in tone. "Je ven: voir qui est la 1 C'est un homme je sais bienparceque la vieille Mère Laura a rougi!" and both young voices broke into a chorus of re-newed laughter. Then came the shuffling noise the old nun's footsteps raturning evidently caught the two truants, whoever it. I also bade him pack my portmanteau in readiness for my departure that evening, as I proposed going to Avelino, among the mentalism, for a few days. He heard my commands in silence and evident embarrassment. Finally he said:

"Do I also travel with the Eccellenza?"

"Why, no!" I answered with a forced sad evidently caught the two truants, whoever they were, for I heard her expostulating, solding, and apostrophising the saints all in a breath, as she bade them go inside the house and ask the good little Jesus to forcive their naughtiness. A silence ensued, then the bolts and bars of the huge gates were undone slowly—it opened, and I was had led me into the building, to a lofty hall, glorious with sacred paintings and statues, and from thence into a large, elegantly furnished rom, whose windows commanded a fine view of the grounds. Here she motioned me to take a seat, and without lifting her evelide, said :-"Mother Marguerite will wait upon you instantly, Signor.

I bowed, and she glided from the room so

noiselessly that I did not even hear the door close behind her. Left alone in what I rightly concluded was the reception reom for visitors. looked about me with some faint interest and curiosity. I had never before seen the interior of what is known as an educational convent. There were many photographs on the walls and mantel-piece-portraits of girls, some plain of face and form—others beautiful— no doubt they had all been sent to the nuns as souvenirs of former pupils. Rising from my chair I examined a few of them carelessly, and was about to inspect a fine copy of Murillo's Virgin, when my attention was caught by an upright velvet frame surmounted with my own crest and coronet. In it was the por-trait of my wife, taken in her bridal dress, as she looked when she married me. I took it to the light, and stared at the features dubiously. This was she,—this slim, fairy-like creature c'ad in gossamer white, with the mar-riace veil thrown back from her clustering hair and child-like face,—this was the thing for which two men's lives had been sacrificed! With a movement of disgust I replaced the frame in its former position; I had scarcely done so when the door opened quietly and a tall woman, clad in trailing robes of pale blue with a nun's band and veil of fine white cashmere, stood before me. I saluted her with a deep reverence; she responded by the slightest possible bend of her head. Her outward manner was so very still and composed that when she spoke her colourless lips ecarcely moved, her very breathing never stir-red the silver of ucifix that lay like a glittering signal-manual on her quiet breast. Her voice, though low, was singularly clear and penetrat

ing.
"I address the Count Oliva?" she inquired. I bowed in the affirmative. She looked at me keenly: she had dark, brilliant eyes, in which the smouldering fires of many a conquered passion still gleamed.
"You would see the Countess Romani, who

is in retreat here? "If not inconvenient or out of rule-" I be-

gan.
The shadow of a smile flitted across the nun's pale, intellectual face; it was gone almost as

soon as it appeared. on as it appeared.
"Not at all," she replied, in the same even
conotone. "The Countess Nina is, by her monotone. own desire, following a strict regime. but to-day being a universal feast day all rules are somewhat relaxed. The Reverend Mother desires me to inform you that it is now the hour for Mass; she has herself already entered the chapel. If you will share in our devotions, the Countess shall afterwards be informed of your

presence here." I could do no less than accede to this proposition, though in truth it was unwelcome to me. I was in no humor for either prayer or praise; I thought mosdily how startled even this im-passive nun might have been, could she have known what manner of man it was that she thus invited to keeel in the sanctuary. However, I said no word of objection, and she bade me follow her. As we left the room, I asked :

'Is the Countess well?"
"She seems so," returned Mere Margrurite, she follows her religious duties with exacutude, and makes no complaint of fatigue. We were row crossing the great hall. I ven-

tured on another inquiry. "She was a favorite pupil of yours, I believe ?" The nun turned her passionless face towards me with an air of mill surprise and reproof.

"I have no favorite-," she answered coldly.

"All the children educated here share my at-

tention and regard equally." I murmured an apology, and added with a forced mails: "You must perdon my apparent inquisitive

ness, but as the future husband of the lady who was brought up under your care, I am naturally interested in all that concerns her." Again the searching eyes of the religiouse surveyed me; she sighed slightly.

"I am aware of the connection between you," mani belongs to the world, and follows the ways of the world. Of course marriage is the natural fulfilment of most young girls' destinies; there are comparatively few who are called ont of the ranks to serve Christ. The efore when Nins married the estimable Count R. mani, of whom report spoke ever favorably, we reporced grown ly, feeling that her future was safe in the hands of a gentle and wise protector. May his abuly rest in peace! But a second marriage for bad news. I said, gravely, "I am the beater of bad news."

She sank into the chair as though unnervent. rankly.

"I am honored that you do so, madame!' I said earnestly, feeling a cert in respect for this ternly composed yet patient-featured woman; vet though in general you may find many easynable objections to it, a second marriage is, I think in the Counte a Romani's case almost necessary. She is utterly without a protectorshe is very young, and how beautiful! The nun's eyes grew solemn and almost mouraful.

Such beauty is a curse," she answered with emphasis; "a fital—a fearful curse! As a coild it made her wayward. As a woman it keeps her wayward still. Enough of this, Signor!" and she bowed her head; "excuse my plain speaking Rest assured that I wish you both happiness."

We had by this time reached the door of the chapel, through which the sound of the pealing organ poored forth in triumphal surges of melody. Mere Marguerite dipped her tingers in the holy water, and signing herself with the cross, pointed out a bench at the back of the church as the one that strongers were al lowed to occupy. I seated myself, and looked with a certain soothed admiration at the picture with a certain soothed admiration at the picture was the sharp, quick breath; she thought I knew all sharp, quick breath; she looked at the diamage of the church as the original land. She looked at the diamage of the church as the original land. sparkle of twinkling lights—the bloom and fragrance of flowers. There were silent rows of nues blue-robed and white veiled, kee ling and absulpd in prayer. Bahild there a little cluster of youthful figures in black, whose drooped heads were entirely hidden in veils of it?" flowing white muslic. Behind these again, one woman's slight form arrayed in heavy mourn ing garments: her veil was black, yet not so thick but that I could perceive the sheeny ali ter of golden hair—that was my wife, I knew. Prous angel! how devous she locked! knew. Pious angel! how devout she locked! I smiled in dreary scorn as I watched her; I cursed her afresh in the name of the man had killed. And above all, sprrounded ! with the lustre of golden rays and encrusted jewels, the uncovered Host shone serenly like the gleam of the morning star. The stately service went on, the organ music swept through and through the church as though it were a strong wind striving to set itself free,
but amid it all I sat as one in a dark dream, scarcely seeing, scarcely hearing—inflexible and cold as marble. The rich plaintive voice of one of the nuns in the choir, singing the Agnus Dei, movel me to a chill sort of wonder. "Qui tollis peccata mundi,"—"Who takest away the sins of the world." No, no! there are some noxious to you. I promised that I would site sins that cannot be taken away—the sins of faithless women, the "little" sins as they are called nowadays; -- for we have grown very lenient in some things, and very severe in We will imprison the miserable wrete who steals five france from our pockets, but Je veux the cunning feminine thief who rote us of our prestige, our name, and honorable standamong our fellow-men, escapes almost scot free; she cannot be put in prison or sentenced to hard labor, not she! What can be done with such as these? Much has been said latterly of the wrongs perpetrated on women by men; will no one take up the other side of the question? We, the stronger sex, are weak in this, we are too chivalrous. When a woman flings herself on our mercy, we spare

ber and are silent. Tortures will not wring her

secrets out of us; something holds us back from

betraying her. I know not what it can be,

rather than he will diagnoce a woman.
But a time is at hand when this foolish But a time is at hand when this foolish chivalry of ours will die out. On changera tout ceta! When once our heavy mesculine brains shall have grasped the novel idea that woman has by her own wish and choice resigned all claim on our respect or forcearance, we shall have our revenge. We are slow to change the traditions of our forefathers, but no doubt we shall soon manage to quench the last spark of knightly reference left in us for the female sex as this is evidently the point for the female sex, as this is evidently the point the semale sex, as this is evidency the point the women desire to bring us to. We shall meet them on that low platform of the "equal-ity" they seek for, and we shall treat them with the unhesitating and regardless familiarity they

The state of the s

the unnesting and regardless familiarity they so earnestly invite!

Absorbed in thought, I knew not when the service ended. A hand touched me, and looking up I saw Mère Marguerite, who whis.

pered—
"Follow me, if you please,"
"Follow me, if you please," I rose and obeyed her mechanically. Outside the chapel door she said—

"Pray excuse me for hurrying you, but strangers are not permitted to see the nuns and boarders passing out." I bowed, and walked on beside her. Feeling

forced to say something, I asked—
"Have you many boarders at this holiday
season?" ason: "Only fourteen,' she replied, "and they are children whose parents live far away. Poor little ones!" and the set lines of the nun's stern

ace softened into tende ness as she spoke. We do our best to make them happy, but naturally they feel lon-ly. We have generally fifty or sixty young girls here, besides the day scholars."
"A great responsibility," I remarked.
"Very great indeed!" and she sighed; "almost terrible. So much of a woman's after scholars. life depends on the early training she receives. We do all we can, and yet in some cases our ut.

most efforts are in vain; evil creeps in, we know not how,—some unsuspected fault spoils a character that we judged to be admirable, and we are often disappointed in our most promis-ing pupils. Alas! there is nothing entirely without blemish in this world." Thus talking, she showed me into a small, comfortable-looking room, lined with books and

softly carpeted. This is one of our libraries," she explained,

"This is one of our libraries," she explained.

The Countess will receive you here, as other visitors might disturb you infthe drawing room. Pardon me," and her steady gaze had something of compassion in it, "but you do not look well. Car I send you some wine?"

I declined this offer with wants to the contract of the I declined this offer with many expressions of

gratitude, and assured her I was perfectly well. She hesitated, and at last said anxiously-"I trust you were not offended at my remark concerning Nina Romani's marriage with you!

I fear I was too hasty?"

'Not so, madame," I answered, with all the earnestness I felt. "Nothing is more pleasant to me than a frank opinion frankly spoken. I have been so accustomed to deception-" Here I broke off and added hastily, "Pray do not think me capable of judging you.

She seemed relieved, and smiling that shadowy, flitting smile of hers, she said—

"No doubt you are impatient, Signor; Nina shall come to you directly," and with a slight salutation she left me. Surely she was a good woman, I thought, and

vaguely wondered about her past history, that past which she had buried for ever under a mountain of prayers. What had she been like when young, before she had shut herself within the convent walls, been like when young, before before she had set the crucifix like a seal on he heart? Had she ever trapped a man's soul and strangled it with lies? I fancied not—her look was too pure an 1 candid; yet who could tell? Were not Nina's eyes trained to appear as though they held the very soul of truth?

A few minutes passed. I heard the fresh voices of children singing in the next room-

"D'ou vient le petit Gesu? Ce joli bouton de rose Qui fleurit, enfant cheri Sur le cour de notre mère Marie." Then came a soft rustle of silken garments, the door opened, and my wife entered.

CHAPTER XXVII.

She approached with her usual panther-like grace and supple movement, her red has parted in a charming smile.

ing out her two hands as though she invited at embrace; "and on Christmas morning, too She paused, and seeing that I did not move speak, she regarded me with some alam "What's the matter?" she asked in fainte tone; "has anything happened?"
I looked at her. I saw that she was fulla

and gazed at me with terrified eyes. Sherombled. Watching her keenly, I observed a these outward signs of trepidation with deg satisfaction. I saw plainly what was pas-ing in her mind. A great dread hat seized her—the dread that I had tound out her treachery. So indeed I had, but the time had not yet come for her to know the time had not yet come for her to know it. Meanwhile she suffered—suffered acutel with that knawing terror and suspense cating into her soul. I said nothing I waited for to speak. After a pause, during which he cheeks had lost their celicate bloom, she said forcing a smile as he spoke-

"Bad news? You surprise me! What can't be? Some unpleasantness with Guido? Hat you seen him?"
"I have seen him," I answered in the same

formal and serious, I answered in the sair formal and serious tone; "I have just left his He sends you this," and I held out my diamon ring that I had drawn off the dead man's first If she had been pale before, she grew pale now. All the brilliancy or ner comments faded for the moment in an awful haggardure with fingers t All the brilllancy of her complex size with a bewidered sir.

"I do not understand," sie murmured plantly.

"I gave him this as a rememb and

lantly. his friend, my husband; why does he ret Self-torture i criminal ! I studied her wit

dark amusement, but answered nothing. denly she looked up at me and her eyes!

"Why are you so cold and strange, Cesar she pleaded, in a sort of plaintire which "Do not stand there like a gloomy senting tell me at once what has happened. I remained standing where I was, inflexi-silent. She glanced at me again, very timic

and whispered atresh. Ah, you do not love me !" she murn "You could not be so stern and silent if I loved me! If there is indeed any bad no you ought to break it to me gently and kind you ought to break it to me gently and kind I thought you would always make everyth

easy for mu—"
"Such has been my endeavor, madame him—you remember! I have kept my well He is silenced for ever!"

She started.
"Silenced? How? You mean— I moved away from my place behind chair, and stood so that I faced her as I sp I mean that he is dead," She uttered a slight cry, not of sorrow by

wonderment.
"Dead! She exclaimed. "Not possible to be she will be

She listened attentively. A little color back into her cheeks.
"In what way did he insult you?" the in a low voice.