

of the simple meal merchant. Troposi wore a sad face, and to the eager question of Gravina, if he would give him his boy, his only reply was: "You must come with me to my home, and see Francesca." He led the way through many a winding dirty street, to a very small but neat cot in the suburbs of the city; at the door stood Pietro, with a little band of boys, to whom with eager gesture he was chanting some wild stanzas. He held in his hand a toy lute, from which he contrived to draw forth a few notes to accompany his voice. Gravina quietly approached, without the boy's seeing him, and he found him giving in flowing numbers, an account of his meeting with himself the day before. Suddenly he broke off and commenced again a rapid address to his young friends, on the pleasant companionship they had enjoyed together, and closed with an adieu. As Gravina came forward the boy dropped his lute and retired into the house.

Francesca Troposi was a noble looking woman, and it was evident that the genius and refinement of the boy had been inherited from her. Though in the humblest sphere, she was an Italian woman of the highest order; not one of those whom the poet has thus satirically described:

"Methinks the furies with their snakes,  
Or Venus with her zone might gird her;  
Of fiend or goddess she partakes,  
And looks at once both love and murder."

But Francesca was more like the ancient matron; her calm and dignified manner would have well become the noble wife of Brutus, or her whose jewels were the immortal souls committed to her charge. With easy grace she received Gravina, and, placing a seat for him, stood with her hand upon Pietro's head, for she had called him from the nook in which he had hid himself on Gravina's approach. When Gravina saw the mother of the child, he almost regretted the offer he had made, for none, he thought could so well train and lead his young mind, as the one who threw such a charm of refinement about the humble home of the poor meal merchant.

Long and interesting was the conversation between Gravina and Francesca; it needed all his lawyer's eloquence to induce her to part with her child. At first she peremptorily refused to do so, but won by Gravina's gentle manner, and the palpable advantages which, he proved to her, would accrue to her boy, from the superior opportunities of education which he would enjoy, she at last yielded a reluctant consent; while talking, she had kept him closely cradled in her arms, as if fearing he might be wiled away from her; but when her heart had once consented to part with him, she rose, and placing him in Gravina's arms, said with solemn voice:

"He is yours, I resign him to you, and as you fulfil your duty to him, may Heaven requite you. A mother's blessing, or a mother's curse will follow you, as you deal justly and truly by her child."

Gravina arose, and approaching a small image of the Virgin which stood in one corner of the lowly room, knelt before it, and laying his hand upon the head of the trembling Pietro, said:—

"I swear before thee, Mother of our blessed Lord, to be father and mother to this child, to nurture him in wisdom; and I pray thee to give me grace, and the aid of thy holy countenance in leading him in the right way. As I do unto him, may it even so be done unto me."

It was a sad scene that parting between the mother and son; she strained him in a long embrace, as if wishing to link him indissolubly with herself. Again and again did she bless him, and implore him not to forget her, nor his brother, and his sisters, who clustered round, a healthy merry group, but whose buoyant spirits were saddened by their mother's agitation, and the half unconscious perception that something was going to happen which would mar their enjoyment. At last, seeing Pietro pale and exhausted, Gravina, placing in the mother's hand a weighty purse, sufficient to convert the poor booth of her husband into a respectable shop, and to give her many of the comforts if not the luxuries of life, took his young charge, and led him to his new home.

How gorgeous and beautiful did every thing in that mansion appear to the untutored eyes of the young poet; he seemed the victim of enchantment, and almost expected to see the rich draperies which curtained the windows and the wells, the magnificent pictures and luxurious seats, fade away into the rough tiles, narrow apertures, and coarse benches of his father's cot. For a long time his spirit was oppressed by the beauty of all around him, he was like one shut up in a highly perfumed room, where the very breathing is checked by the heavy fragrance, or perhaps more like the bird taken from its wild free forest home, and caged in gilded wires.

Gravina deeming occupation the best cure for the home sick spirit of his young protégé, placed him at one of the best schools in Rome, and the improvement he made was most rapid, particularly in the classics; he seemed to master all their difficulties at a grasp, and in the ardent pursuit of knowledge, his mind recovered its elasticity; his books became his brothers and sisters; and his kind patron, in leading and directing his studies, was more than father and mother to him. The good lawyer became daily more delighted with the child of his adoption; he had the good sense to appreciate his genius, but like the fathers of Petrarch and Tasso, he desired to turn its channel from the muses to the law; being himself an advocate of great note, he wished to see Pietro following in his steps, and reaping the benefits of his experience. The docile child endeavoured to comply with his friend's wishes, but his nature could not be altered, and the genial current of