

in the world or being understood by ordinary people. Thus he became self-centred. When his last support failed him he fell. I believe he was a religious man; I have heard him talk with true religious feeling. He approved of all my secret plans for my father's welfare. He came to see us every day, and I never heard a careless or reprehensible expression pass his lips. And now to hear that old Mayor make those horrible speeches!'

'I don't think he meant—' stammered Don Innocenzo.

'I heard everything. If he returned to the castle I am sure that it was at the earnest request of Donna Marina. Only too well I remember what she said to me on the way to the Horror. I am as certain as if I had seen the letter or telegram. And at that time he was neglected or despised by everyone. Who knows, who knows, Don Innocenzo, what melancholy thoughts he had, poor lad, when he found himself treated so roughly by me, for all my religious principles! He who begged for a helping hand to save him from drowning. I might well have acted otherwise, and spoken to him then as I wrote afterwards. But I thought—'

She could not go on.

'No,' replied the curate, 'you should not get these ideas into your head. How could you foresee all this? Wishing to accomplish a noble sacrifice, you took the most prudent course, so as not to encourage vain hopes, and to leave the young man entirely free.'

Edith presently raised her head.

'And not to be here to-morrow!' she said.

'Better so, believe me. You could not hide your feelings from your father; and who knows how much he would suffer to see you like this.'

'At least,' whispered Edith, 'see to it that some