VENDETTA;

The Story of one Forgotten.

CHAPTER XIX.-Continued. Yet it has been proved that it is not always the holl weyed, sailow and despairing looking persons who are really in sharp trouble—these are more often bilious or dyspeptic, and know no more serious grief than the inca pacity to gradify their appetites for the highflavored delicacies of the table. A man may

be endowed with superb physique, and a con stitution that is in perfect working order-his face and outward appearance may denote the most harmonious action of the life principle within him-and yet his nerves may be so finely strung that he may be capable of suffering acuter agony in his mind than if his body were to be backed slowly to pieces by jagged knives, and it will leave no mark on his features while youth still has hold on his flesh and blood. So it was with me; and I wondered what she So it was with me; and I wongered wast she

Nina—would say, could she bahold me, unmasked as it were, in the solitude of my own
room. This thought roused another in my
mind—another at which I smiled grimly. I was an engaged man! Engaged to marry my own wife; b-trothed for the second time to the same woman! What a difference between this and my first courtahip of her! Then, who so great a foul as I—who so adoring, passionate, and devoted! Now, who so darkly instructed, who so cold, so absolutely pitiless! The climax to my revenge was nearly reached, I looked through the coming days as one looks through a telescope out to sea, and I could watch the end approaching like a phantom ship—neither slow nor f-st, but steadily and silently. I was able to calculate each event in its due order, and I knew there was no fear of failure in the final result. Nature itself-the sun, moon and stars, the sweeping circle of the seasons—all seem to aid in the cause of rightful inspice. Man's duplicity may succeed in with holding a truth for a time, but in the end it must win its way. Once resolve, and then de-termine to carry out that resolve, and it is astonishing to note with what marvellous ease everything makes way for you, provided there be no innute weakness in yourself which causes you to hesitate. I had forms: ly been weak, I knew, very weak, -else I had never been fooled by wife and friend; but now, now my strength was as the strength of a demon working within me. My hand had already closed with an iron grip on two false unworthy lives, and had I not sworn "never to relax, never to relent," till my vengeance was accomplished? I had! Heaven and earth had borne witness to my vow, and now held me to its stern fulfilment.

CHAPTER XX.

Winter, or what the Neapolitans accept as winter, came on apace. For some time past the air had been full of that mild chill and vaporous murkiness, which, not cold enough to be bracing, sensitly lowered the system and depressed the spirits. The careless and jovial temperament of the people, however, was never much affected by the change of seasons—they drank more hot cofee than usual, and kept their feet warm by dancing from midnight up to the small hours of the morning. The cholera was a thing of the past,—the cleaning of the city, the sanitary precations, which had here so much talked about and recommended been so much talked about and recommended in order to prevent another outbreak in the coming year, were all forgotton and neglected, and the laughing populace tripped lightly over the graves of its deal houdreds as though they were odorous banks of though they were odorous banks of flowers. "Oggi! Oggi!" in their cry,—to-day! to-day! Never mind what happened yesterday, or what will happen to-morrow.—leave to i signort Santi and la Signora Madonna! And after all there is a grain of reason in their folly, for many of the butterest miseries of man grow out of a fatal habit of looking back or looking forward, and of never living actually in the full-faced present. Then, the story in the surface of the story of the Naples with something of the picturesque madprototyre, the Feast of Bacchus. I was reminded of this coming festivity on the morning of the 21st of December, when I noted some as though some humorous thought had flitted across his mind. He betrayed himself at last by asking me demurely whether I purposed taking any part in the Carnival? I led and shook my head. Vincenzo looked dubious, but finally summoned up courage to

*Will the Eccelenza permit"-"You to make you to make a fool of yourself?" I interrupted, "by all means! Take your own time, enjoy the fun as much as you please; I promise you 1 will ask no account of your actions. He was much gratified, and attended to me with even more nuncriliousness than usual. As he prepared my breakfast I asked him-"By the way, when does Carnival begin?"
"On the 26th," he answered with a slight air of surprise, "Surely the Eccellenza

"Yes, yes," I said impatiently. "I know, but I had forgotten. I am not young enough to keep the dates of these follies in my memory. What lotters have you there?"

that letters have you there:

He handed me a small tray full of different

mafeum fair ladies who "deshaped missives, some from fair lad.es who sired the honor of my company," others from tradesmon," praying the honor of my custom," all from male and females toadies as usual, I thought contemptiously as I turned them over. when my glance was suddenly arrested by one special envelope, equare in form and heavily bordered, with black, on which the postmark "Rome stood out distinctly. "At last!" I thought, and breathed heavily. I turned to my valet, who was giving the final polish to my breakfast cup and saucer-

You may leave the room, Vincenzo," I said briefly. He bowed, the door opened and shut niselessly,—he was gone. Slowly I broke the seal of that fateful letter; a letter from Guido Ferrari, a warrant self-signed, for his own execution!
"My best friend," so it rac, "you will

guess by the 'black flag' on my envelope the good news I have to give you. My uncle is dead at last, thank God | and I am left his sole heir unconditionally. I am free, and shall of course return to Naples immediately, that is, as soon as some trifling law business has been got through with the executors. I believe I can arrange my return for the 23rd or 24th instant, but will telegraph to you the exact day and, if possible, the exact hour. Will you oblige me by not announcing this to the Countess, as I wish to take her by surprise. Poer girl! she will have often felb lonely, I am sure, and I want to see the first beautiful look of rapture and astonishment in her eyes. You can undrsband this, can you not, amico. or does it seem to you a folly?
At any rate, I should consider it very churlish were I to keep you in ignorance of my coming home, and I know you will humor me in my desire that the news should be withheld from Nina. How delighted she will be, and what a joyous carnival we will have this winter! I do not think I ever felt more light of heart; pe haps it is because I am so much heavier in nocket. I am glad of the money, as it places me on a more equal footing with her, and though all her letters to me have been full of the utmost tenderness, still I feel she will think even better of me, now I am in a position somewhat nearer to her own. As for you, my good Conte, on my return I shall make it my first duty to pay back with interest the rather large deby I owe to you;—thus my honer will be a listed, and you, I am sure, will

"Yours to command. GUIDO BERRARI." This was the letter, and I read it over and over again. Some of the words burnt themselves flame. "All ber letters to me have been full of the utmost tenderness!" O miserable dupe! fooled, fooled to the some of folly even as I

have a better opinion of

had been. She, the arch-traitress, to prevent his entertaining the slightest possible suspicion or je lously of her actions during his absence, had written him, no doubt, epistles sweet as honey, brimming over with endearing epithets and yows of constancy, even while she knew she had accepted me as her husband—megood God! What a devil's dance of death it good God!

"On my return I shall make it my first duty to pay back with interest the rather large debt I owe you" (rather large indeed, Guido, so large that you have no idea of its extent), "thus my homor will be a isfied" (and so will mine in part), "and you, I am sure, will have a better opinion of yours to command." Perhaps I small, Guido. mine to command as you are—perhaps when all my commands are fulfilled to the bitter end, I may think more kindly of you. But not till them. In the meantime —I thought earnestly for a few minutes, and then, sitting down, anough the following motor —

panned the following note:—
"Caro amico! Delighted to hear of your good fortune, and still more enchanted to know you will soon enliven us all with your prerence? I admire your little plan of surprising the Countess, and will respect your wishes in the matter. But you, on your part, must do me a trifling favor:—we have been very dull since you left, and I propose to start the gaieties afresh by giving a dinner on the 24th (Christmas Eve), in honor of your return —an epicurean repast for gentlemen only.
Therefore, I ask you to oblige me by fixing
your return for that day, and on arrival at
Naples, come straight to me at this botel, that I may have the satisfaction of being the to welcome you as you deserve. Telegraph your answer, and the hour of your train; and my carriage shall meet you at the station. The dinner-hourcan befixed to suit your convenience of course; what say you to eight o'clock?
After dinner you can betake yourself to the Villa Romani when you please—your enjoy-ment of the lady's surprise and rapture will be the more keen for baying been slightly delayed. Trusting you will not refuse to gratify an old man's whim, I am "Yours for the time being,

"CESARE OLIVA." This epistle finished and written in the crab bed disguised penmanship it was part of my business to affect, I folded, so led and addressed it, and summoning Vincenzo, bade him post it immediately. As soon as he had gone on this errand, I sat down to my as yet untasted breakfast and made some effort to eat as usual. But my thoughts were too active for appetite-I counted on my fingers the days,—there were four, only four, between me aud—what? One thing was certain—I must see my wife, or rather I should say my betrothed,—I must see her that very day. I then began to consider how my courtship had progressed since that evening when she declared she loved me. I had seen her frequently, though not daily—her be, haviour had been by turns affectionate, adoring thinks of the second s adoring, timid, gracious, and once or twice passionately loving, though the latter im pulse in her I had always coldly checked. For though I could bear a great deal, any outburst of sham sentiment on her part sickened and filled me with such utter loathing that often when she was more than usully tender I dreaded less my pent-up wrath should break loose and impel me to kill her swiftly and sudden-ly as one crushes the head of a poisonous adder—an all-too merciful death for such as she. I preferred to woo her by gifts alone, and her hands were always ready to take what-ever I or others chose to offer her. From a rare jewel to a common flower, she never refused anything—her strongest passions were vanity and avarice. Sparkling gems from the pilfered store of Carmelo Neri,—trinkets which I had especial y designed for her,—lace, rich em-broideries, bouquets of hot-house blossoms, gilded boxes of costly sweets-nothing came amiss to her-she accepted all with a certain covetous gles which she was at no pains to hide from me-may, she made it rather evident that she expected such things as her right. And after all, what did it matter to me thought?-of what value was anything I pos-

sessed save to assist me in carrying out the punishment I had destined for her? I studied her nature with critical coldness—I its inbred vice artfully concealed neath the affectation of virtue—every day she sank lower in my eyes, and I wondered vaguely how I could ever have loved so coarse and common a thing! Lovely she certainly was,—lovely too are many of the wretched outcasts who sell themselves in the of the Zist of December, when I holed some unusual attempton the part of Vincenzo to construct the streets for gold, and who in spite of their trol his countenance, that often, in spite of their bis efforts, broadened into a sunny smile woman as the one I had wedded. Mere as though some humorous thought had beauty of face and form can be bought. I rose to take my leave. "Then you will require leisure to make your preparations," I said with ceremunious politeness. "I assure you I approve your resolve. If you inform the beauty of face and form can be bought." as easily as one buys a flower,—but the loyal heart, the pure soul, the lofty intelligence which can maks a woman an angel—these are unpurchasable ware, and seldom fall to the lot of man. For beauty, though so perishable, is a snare to us all—it maddens our blood in spite of ourselves; we men are made so. How was it that I—even I, who now loathed the creat ure I had once loved-could not took upon her physical loveliness without a foolish thrill of passion awaking within me — passion that had something of the murderous in it—admiration that was almost brutal—feelings which I could not control though I despised myself for them while they lasted. There is a weak point in the stringest of us, and wicked women know well where we are most vulnerable. One dainty pin-prick well simed and all barriers of caution and reserve are broken down-we are ready to fling away our souls for a smile or a kiss. Surely at the last day when we are judged, and maybe condemned, we can make our lest excuse

the Creator in the words of the first misguided man : "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me she tempted me, and I did eat!" I lost no time that day in going to the Villa Romani. I drove there in my carriage, taking with me the usual love-offering in the shape of a large gilded osier-basket full of white violets. Their delicious odour reminded me of that May morning when Stella was born,—and then quickly there fisched into my mind the words spoken by Guido Ferrari at the time. How mysterious they had seemed to me then,—how clear their meaning now! On arriving at the Villa I found my hance in her boudoir, attired in morning deshabille, if a trailing robe of white cashmere trimmed with Mechlin lace and swansdown can be considered deshabille. Her rich hair hung loosely on her shoulders, and she was scated in a velvet easy-chair before a small sparkling wood fire, reading. Her attitude was one of luxurlous ease and grace, but she sprang up as soon as her maid announced me, and came forward with her usual charming air of welcome, in which there was something imperial, as of a soverign who receives a subject. I presented the flowers I had brought with a few words of studied and formal compliment, uttered for the benefit of the servant who lingered in the room, then I added in a lower tone :

I have news of importance, can I speak to you privately?"
She smiled assent, and motioning me by a graceful gesture of her hand to take a seat, she at once dismissed her maid. As soon as the door had closed behind the girl, I spoke at once and to the point, scarcely waiting till my wife resumed her easy-chair before the fire-

"I have had a letter from Signor Ferrari."

She started slightly but said nothing, she merely bowed her head and raised her delicately-arched eyebrows with a look of inquiry as of one who should say, "Indeed! in what way does this concern me?" I watched her parameter and the content of the watched her narrowly and then continued. He is coming back in two or three days—he says he is sure," and here I smiled, "that you will be delighted to see him."

This time she half rose from her seat, her This time she half rose from her seat, her lips moved as though she would speak, but she remained silent, and sinking back again among her violet velvet cushions, she grew very pale.

"If," I went on, "you have any reason to think that he may make himself disagreeable to you when he knows of your engagement to me, out of disappointed ambition, concert, or self-interest from of course you never encouraged. interest (for of course you never encouraged him), I should advise you to go on a visit to some friends for a few days, till his irritation shall have somewhat passed. What say you to such

a plan?

and submissive look, she replied, "It shall be as you wish, Cesare! Signor Ferrari is certainly rash and bot-tempered, he raight be presumptuous enough to but you do not think of yourself in the matter. Surely you also are in danger of being insulted by him when he knows all?"

by him when he knows all?"

"I shall be on my guard!" I said quietly.

"Beades, I can easily pardon any outbreak of
temper on his part—it will be perfectly natural.

I think! To lose all hope of ever winning such
a love as yours must_need be a sore trial to one
of his hot blood and fiery impulses. Poor
fellow!" and I sighed and shook my head with
a benevolent gentleness. "By the way, he
tells me he has had letters from you?"
I put this question carelessly, but it took her
by surprise. She caucht her breath hard and

by surprise. She caught her breath hard and looked at me sharply, with an alarmed expres She caught her breath hard and sion. Seeing that my face was perfectly impassive, she recovered her composure instantly,

"Oh yes! I have been compelled to write b him once or twice on matters of business con-nected with my late husband's affairs. Most unfortunately, Fabio made him one of tho trustees of his fortune in case of his death-it is exceedingly awkward for me that he should occupy that position—it appears to give him some authority over my actions. In rea he has none. He has no doubt exaggerated the number of times I have written to him? it would be like his impertinence to do so.

Though this last remark was addressed to me almost as a question, I let it pass without response. I reverted to my original theme.
"What think you, then?" I said. "Will you remain here or will you absent yourself for

She rose from her chair and approaching me She rose from her coast and approaching me knelt down at my side, clashing her two little hands round my arm. "With your permission," she returned softly, "I will go to the convent where I was concated. It is some convent where I was coucated. It is some eight or ten miles distant from here, and I think (here she counterfeited the most wonderful expression of ingenuous sweetness and piety)—"I think I should like to make a 'netreat'—that is, devote some time solly to the duties of religion before I enter upon a second marriage. The dear nuns would be so glad to see me,—and I am sure you will not object .? It will be a good preparation for my future. I seized her caressing hands and held them

and their trees in the standard of the standard while I looked upon her kneeling there like the white-robed figure of a praying saint. "It will, indeed!" I said in a harsh voice. "The best of all possible preparations! We none of us know what may happen—we cannot not be the standard with the said of the s tell whether life or death awaits us—it is wise to prepare for either by words of penitence and devotion. I admire this beautiful spirit in you, carina / Go to the convent by means. I shall find you there and will visit you when the wrath and bitterness of our friend Ferrari have been smoothed into silence and resignation. Yes—go to the Convent, among the good and pious nuns—and when you pray for yourself, pray for the peace of your dead husband's soul—and—for me! Such prayers, unselfish and earnest, uttered by pure lips like yours, fly swiftly to heaven! And as for young Guido—have no fear—I promise you he shal offend you no more!'

"Ah, you do not know him!" she mur-mured, lightly kissing my hands that still held her; "I tear he will give you a great deal of trouble."

"I shall at any rate know how to silence him," I said, releasing her as I spoke, and watching her as she rose from her kneeling position and stood before me, supple and deli cate as a white iris swaying in the wind. "You never gave him reason to hope—therefore he as no cause of complaint."

"True," she replied readily, with an un-troubled smile. "But I am such a nervous creature! I am always imagining evils that never happen. And now, Cesare, when do you wish me to go to the Convent?"

I shrugged my shoulders with an air of indif-

ference. Your submission to my will, mia bella," said coldly, "is altogether charming and flat-ters me much, but I am not your master—n it yet! Pray choose your own time and suit your departure to your own pleasure.

'Then." she replied with an air of decision. "I will go to-day. The sooner the better, for some instinct tells me that Guido will play us s trick and return before we expect him. Yes, I will go to-day."
I rose to take my leave. "Then you will

you I approve your resolve. If you inform the Superioress of the Convent that I am your betrothed husband, I suppose I shall be permitted to see you when I call?"
"Oh certainly!" she replied. "The dear
nuns will do anything for me. Their Order is

one of Perpetual Adoration, and their rules are very strict, but they do not apply them to their old pupils, and I am one of their great favorites.

"Naturally!" I observed. "And will you also join in the service of Perpetual Adoration?"
"Oh yes!"

"It needs an untainted soul like yours," I said with a satirical smile, which she did not see, "to pray before the unveiled Host without being conscience-smitten! I envy you your privilige. I could not do it-but you are prob ably nearer to the angels than we know. And so you will pray for me?" She raised her eyes with devout gentleness. I will indeed!"

"I thank you!"—and I choked back the bitter contempt and disgust I had for her hypocrisy as I sp ke,—"I thank you heartily—most heartily! Addio."

She came, or rather floated, to my side, her white garments floating about her and the gold of her hair glittering in the mingled glow of the firelight and the wintry sunbeams that shone through the window. She looked up—a witch-like languor lay in her eyes—her red lips

Not one kiss before you go?" she said.

CHAPTER XXI.

For a moment I lost my self-possession. I scarcely remember now what I did. I know clasped hrr almost roughly in my arms, know that I kissed her passionately on line, throat, and brow, and that in the fervour of my embraces, the thought of what manner of vile thing she was came swiftly upon me, causing me to release her with such suddenness that she caught at the back of a chair to save herself from falling. Her breath came and went in little quick gasps of excitement her face was flushed,—she looked astonished yet certainly not displeased. No, she was not angry, but I was-thoroughly annoyed-bitterly vexed with myself, for being such a fool.
"Forgive me," I muttered. "I forgot

A little smile stole round the corners of her month. "You are fully pardoned !" she said in a low voice, "you need not apologize." Her smile depend; suddenly she broke into a rippling laugh, sweet and silvery as a bell—a laugh that went through me like a knife.

Was it not the self-same laughter that had pierced my brain the night I witnessed her amorous interview with Guido in the avenue? Had not the cruel mockery of it nearly driven me mad? I could not endure it—I sprang to her side—she ceased laughing and looked at me in wide-eyed wonderment.

"Listen!" I said in an impatient almost flerce tone. "Do not laugh like that! It jars my nerves-it-hurts me! I will tell you why. Once-long ago-in my youth-I loved a wo man. She was not like you-no-for she was false! False to the very heart's core-false in every word she uttered. You understand me? she resembled you in nothing-nothing But she used to laugh at me—she trampled on my life and apoils it—she broke my heart! It is all past now. I never think of her, only your laughter reminded me—there!" And I took her hands and kissed them." I have told you the story of my early folly-for-get it and forgive me! It is time you prepared for your joarney, is it not? If I can be of service to you, command me-you know interest (for or course you never encouraged prepared for your journey, is it not? If I can humid.

It is time you ment before, masted prightly and then grew it was unaffected.

It is time you ment before, masted prightly and then grew it was unaffected.

It is time you ment before, masted prightly and then grew it was unaffected.

It is time you humid.

It is told that it England the principal was a soldier once—I know what duty means.

But there is a better service—gratitude. I am you how and your poor servant, but you have win my hoart.

And I laid my burning hand on her head your poor servant, but you have win my hoart.

-then raising her levely eyes with a wissful weighted with its clustering curls of gold. She weighted with its chasering duris of gold. Are thought this gesture was one of blessing. I thought God only knows what I thought—yet surely if curies can be so bestowed, my curse crowned her at that moment! I dared not trust myself longer in her presence, and without another word or look I left her and hurried from the house. I knew she was startled and at the same time gratified to think she could thus have moved me to any display of emotion—but I would not even turn my head to catch her parting glance. I could not,—I was sick of myself and of her. I was literally torn asunder between love and hatred, love born basely of material feeling alone,— hatred, the offspring of a deeply-injured spirit for whose wrong there could scarce be found sufficient remedy. Once out of the influence of her bewildering beauty, my mind grew calmer, and the drive back to the hotel in my carriage through the sweet chillness of the December air quieted the feverish excitement of my blood and restored me to myself. It was a most lovely day, bright and fresh, with the savour of the sea in the wind. The waters of the Bay were of a steel-like blue shading into deep olive-green, and a soft haze lingered about the shores of Amalii like a veil of grey, shot through with silver and gold. Down the streets went women in picturesque garb carrying on their heads baskets full to the brim of purple violets that scented the air as they passed, children ragged and dirty ran along, pushing the luxur ant tangle of their dark locks away from their beautiful wild eyes, and holding up bunches of roses and narcissi with smiles as brilliant as the very sunshine, im-plored the passengers to buy "for the sake of the little Gesu who was soon coming.

Bells clashed and clanged from the churche in honor of San Tommasso, whose festival it was, and the city had that aspect of gala gaiety about it, which is in truth common enough to all continental towns, but which seems strange to the solemn Londoner who sees so much apparently reasonless merriment for the first time. He, accustomed to have his reluctant laughter pumped out of him by an occasional visit to the theatre where he can witness the "original" English translation of a French farce, cannot understand why these foolish Neapolitans should laugh and sing and shout in the manner they do, merely because they are glad to be alive. And after much dubious consideration, he decides within himself that they are all rascals—the scum of the earth, and that he and he only is the true representative of man at his best, the model of civilized respectability. And a mourn-

ful spectacie he thus seems to the eyes of us "base" foreigners—in our hearts we are sorry for him and believe that if he could manage to shake off the fetters of his insular customers and prejudices, he might almost suc-ceed in enjoying life as much as we do!

As I drove along I saw a small crowd at one of the street corners—a gesticulating, laughing crowd, listening to an "improvisatore" or wandering poet—a plump-looking fellow who had all the rhymes of Italy at his fingers ends, and who could make a poem on any subject or an acrostic on any name, with perfect facility. I stopped my carriage to listen to his extempo rised terses, many of which were really admir-able, and tossed him three france. He threw them up in the air, one after the other, and caught them, as they fell, in his mouth, appearing to have swallowed them all—then with an inimitable grimace, he pulled off his tat t red cap and said,

"Ancora affamato, Eccellenza!" (I am still bungry!) amid the renewed laughter of his and without conceit—and his good humonr mented the extra silver pieces I gave him, which caused him to wish me—"Buon appetito e un sorriso della Madonna!"—(a good appetite to you and a smile of the Madonna). Imagine the Lord Laureate of England standing at the corner of Regent Street swallowing halfpence for his rhymes! Yet some of the quaint conceits atrung together by such a fellow as this improvisatore might furnish material for many of the so-called '' poets'' whose names are mysteriously honored in Britain.

Further on I came upon a group of red-capped coral fishers assembled round a portable stove whereon roasting chestnuts cracked their glossy sides and emitted savory odors. The men were singing gaily to the thrumming of an old guitar, and the song they sang was familiar to me. Stay! where had I heard it?—let me listen!

"Sciore limone Le voglio far mori de passione

Zompa llari llira !"
embered now. When I had cra out of the vault through the brigand's hole of entrance—when my heart had bounded with glad anticipations never to be realised,— when I had believed in the worth of love and friendship,—when I had seen the morning sun glittering on the sea, and had thought— poor fool!—that his long beams were like so many golden flags of joy hung up in heaven to symbolize the happiness of my release from death and my restoration to liberty—then—then—I had heard a sailor's voice in the dis tance singing that "ritornello," and I had fond ly imagined its impassioned lines were all for me Hateful music—most bitter aweetness! I could have put my hands up to my ears to shut out the sound of it now that I thought of the time when I had heard it last. For then I had possessed a heart—a throbbing, passionate, sensitive thing,—alive to every emotion of tenderness and affection—now that heart was dead and cold as a stone. Only its corpse went with me everywhere weighing me down with itself to the strange grave it occupied, a grave wherein were also buried so many dear delusions—such plaintive regrets, such pleading memories, that surely it was no wonder their small ghosts arose and haunted me, saying, "Wilt thou not weep for this lost sweetness?" "Wilt thou not relent before such a remembrance?" or "Hast thou no desire for the past delight?" But to all such inward temptations my soul was deaf and inexorable; justice—stern, immutable justice, was what I sought and what I meant to have. May-be you find it hard to understand the possibility of scheming and carrying out so prolonged a vengeance as mine? If you that read these pages are English, I know it will seem to you well-nigh incomprehensible. The temperate blood of the Northerner, combined with his open, unsuspicious nature, has, I admit, the advantage over us in matters of personal injury. An Englishman, so I hear, is in-capable of nourishing a long and deadly resent-ment, even against an unfaithful wife—he is too indifferent, he thinks it not worth his while. But we Neapolitans, we can carry a "rendetta" through a lifetime—ay, through generation after generation! This is ban, you say—im moral, unchristian. Ne doubt! We are more than half pagans at heart. When I reached my own apartments at the hotel I felt worn out and fagged. I resolved to rest and receive no visitors that day. While

giving my orders to Vincenzo a thought occurred to me. I went to a cabinet in the room and unlocked a secret drawer. In it thought lay a strong leathern case. I lifted this, and bade Vincenzo unstrap and open it. He did so, nor showed the least sign of surprise when a pair of richly ornamented pistols were displayed to his view.
"Good weapons?" I remarked, in a casual

manner. My valet took each one out of the case, and

examined them both critically.

"They need cleaning, Eccellenza."

"Good!" I said briefly. "Then clean them and put them in good order. I may require to use them." The imperturable Vincenzo bowed, and taking the weapons, prepared to leave the

"Stav!" He turned. I looked at him steadily, "I believe you are a faithful fellow, Vin-cenzo," I said.

The dark Tuscan eyes, keen and clear a mo-ment before, flashed brightly and then grew

I would give my life for you, should you desire He paused, half ashamed of the emotion that threatened to break through his mask of impassability, bowed again and would have left me, but that I called him back and held out my hand.

"Shake hands, amico," I said simply. He caught it with an astonished yet pleased look,—and stooping, kissed it before I could prevent him, and this time literally scrambled out of my presence with an entire oblivion of his usual dignity. Left alone, I considered this behaviour of his with half-pained surprise. This poor fellow loved me it was evident—why, I knew not. I had done no more for him than any other master might have done for a good servant. I had often spoken to him with impatience, even harshnes; and yet I had "won his heart"—so he said. Why should he care for me? why should my poor old butler Giacomo cherish me so devotedly in his memory; why should my very dog still love and obey me, when my nearest and dearest, my wife and my friend, had so gladly forsaken me, and were so eager to forget me! Perhaps and were so eager to forget me! Perhaps fidel by was not the fashion now among educated persons? Perhaps it was a worn-out virtue, left to the bas-peuple—to the vulgar—and to animals? Progress might have attained this result—no doubt it had.

I sighed wearily, and threw myself down in an arm-chair near the window, and watched the white-sailed boats skimming like flocks of silver necessity of eating,—of the any little graces of the table that are underst od in part by the tambourine by and by attracted my wandering attention, and looking into the street just below my balcony I saw a young girl dancing. She was lovely to look at, and she danced with exqulsite grace as well as modesty, but the beauty of her face was not so much caused by perfection of nature or outline, as by a certain wistful expression that had in it something of nobility and pride. I watched her: at the conclusion of her dance she held up her tambourine with a bright yet appealing

smile. Silver and copper were freely flung to ber, I contributing my quota to the amount; but all she received she at once emptied into a leathern bag which was carried by a young and handsome man who accompanied her, and who, alas! was totally blind. I knew the couple well, and had often seen them; their history was pathetic enough. The girl had been was patietic enough. The girl had been betrothed to the young fellow when he had occupied a fairly good position as a worker in silver filligree jewellery. His eye-sight, long painfully strained over his delicate labors, sudlenly failed him-he lost his place of course, and was utterly without resources. He offered to release his fancée from her engagement, but she would not take her freedom.—she sisted on marrying him at once. She had her way, and devoted herself to him soul and body,
—danced in the streets and sang to gain a living
for herself and him; taught him to weave baskets so that he might not teel himself entirely dependent on her, and she sold these baskets for him so successfully that he was gradually making quite a little trade of them. Poor child! for she was not much more than a hild-what a bright face she had !- glorified by the self-den al and courage of her every-day life No wonder she had won the sympathy of the warm hearted and impulsive Neapolitans,—they looked upon her as a heroine of romance; and as she passed through the streets, leading her blind husband tenderly by the hand, there was not a creature in the city, even among the most shandoned and vile characters, who would have dared to offer her the least insult, or who would have ventured to addiess her otherwise than respectfully. She was good, innocent and true; how was it, I wongood, innecent and true; now was it, I won-dered dreamily, that I c uld not have won a woman's heart like hers? Were the poor slone to possess all the old-world virtues—honor and faith, love and loyalty! Was there something in a life of luxury that sapped virtue at its root? Evidently early training had little to do with after results, for had not my wife been brought up among an order of nuns renowned for s up among an order of nuns renowned for sim, plicity and sanctity; had not her own father declared her to be "as pure as a flower on the altar of the Madonna;" and yet the evil had been in her, and nothing had eradicated it; for even religion, with her, was a mere graceful sham, a kind of theatrical effect used to tone down her natural hypocristy. My own thoughts heren to herest and warry me. thoughts began to harass and weary me. I took up a volume of philosophic essays and began to read, in an endeavor to distract my mind from dwelling on the one perpetual theme. The day were on slowly enough; and it was glad when spring-blossoms. The chairs wherein my guests the evening closed in, and when suncence, remarking that the night was come, kindled a shape and softly stuffed, so that one could lear bleasant wood-five in my room and litthe lambs. A little while before my dinner was served he handed me a letter stating that it had just been brought by the Countess Romani's coachman. It bore my own seal and motto. I opened it; it was dated, "La Santissima Annunziata," and

rau as follows:
"Beloved! I arrived here safely; the nuns are delighted to see me, and you will be made heartily welcome when you come. I think of heartily welcome when you come. I think of you constantly—how happy I felt this morning! You seemed to love me so much; why are you not always so foud of your faithful. "NINA."

I crumpled this note fiercely in my hand and flung it into the leaping flumes of the newly-lie fire. There was a faint per-fume about it that it sickened me—a subtle odor like that of a civet cat when it moves stealthily after its prey through a tangle of tropical herbage. I always detested scented note-paper—I am not the only man who does so. One is led to fancy that the fingers of the woman who writes upon it must have some poisonous or offensive taint about them, which she endeavors to cover by the aid of a chemical concotion. I would not permit myself to think of this so "faithful Nina" as she styled herself. I resumed my reading, and continued it even at dinuer, during which meal Vincenzo waited upon me with his usual silent gravity and decorum, though I could feel that he watched me with a certain solicitude. I suppose I looked weary-I certainly felt so, and retired to rest unusually early. The time seemed to me so long—would the end never come? The next day dawned and trailed its tiresome hours after it, a prisoner might trailed his iron fetters until | and sunset, and then-then, when the grey wintry sky flashed for a brief space into growing red— then, while the water looked like blood and the clouds like flame—then a few words sped along the telegraph wires that stilled my impatience, roused my soul, and braced every nerve and muscle in my body to instant action. They

were plain, clear, and concise:

"From Guido Ferrari, Rome, to Il Conte Cesare Oliva, Naples—Shall be with you on the 24th inst. Train arrives at 6.30 p.m. Will come to you as you desire without fail."

CHAPTER XXII.

Christmas Eve ! The day had been extra chilly, with frequent showers of stinging rain, but towards five o'clock in the afternoon the weather cleared. The clouds, which had been of a dull uniform grey, began to break asonder and disclose little shining rifts of pale blue and bright gold; the sea looked like a wide satin ritbon shaken out and shimmering with opaline tints. Flower girls trooped by making opaine tints. Stower girls trooped by making the air musical with their nellow cries of "Fior! cht vuol fiori," and holding up their tempting wares—not bunches of holly and mistebee such as are known in England, but roses, better such as are known in England, but roses, tletoe such as are known in Lingland, but roses, indigestible mixture at which an Italian shrings his shoulders in visible disgust. There is something barbaric, I suppose, in the British customs still,—something that reminds one of their ancient condition when the Romans conquered them—when their supreme idea of enjoyment was to have an ox roasted whole before them while they drauk "wassail" till they grovelled under their own tables in a worse condition than over-fed swipe. Coarse and vulgar plenty is still the leading characteristic at the dinners of English or American He met my glance frankly.

"The day may come," I went on quietly, "when I shall perhaps put your fidelity to the gin to implore their "dear little Jesus," their conf." own little brother," not to forget them, with a simplicity of belief that was as touching as

it was unaffected.

I am told that in England the principal

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which agreeable spectacle the passers by gape with gluttonous approval. Surely there is nothing graceful about such a commemoration of the birth of Christ as this? nothing picturof the birth of Christ as this I nothing picturesque, nothing poetic?—nothing even orthodox, for Christ was born in the East, and the Orientals are very small eaters, and are particularly sparing in the use of meat. One wonders what such an unusual display of vulgar victual and the Cavining of the Saviour who has such an unusual display of vulgar victuals has to do with the coming of the Saviour, who arrived among us in such poor estate that even a decent roof was dealed Him. Perhaps, though, the English people read their gospels ir a way of their own, and understand that the wise men

or greeto suct an ages and conditions, were set forth in tempting array, from a box of bonbons costing one franc to a jewelled tiara worth a million, while in many of the wincows were displayed models of the "Bethlehem," with babe Jesus lying in His manger, for the b nefit of the round eyed children, who, after taring fondly at His waxen image for some time would run off hand in hand to the nearest pavenus; they have scarcely any idea of the refinements that can be imparted to the prosaic French, but that perhaps never much such ab-milute perfection of tasts and skill as at the some of these are veritable "feasts of the voda," and would do honor to the fabled Olympas, and such an one I had prepared for Guido Ferrari as a greeting to him on his return from Rome

as a greeting to him on his return from Rome
—a feast of welcome and farewell!

All the resources of the hotel at which I stayed had been brought into requisition. The chef, a famous cordon blen, had transferred the work of the usual table d'kôte to his underlings, and had bent the powers of his culinary intelligence golds on the production of the contraction. ligence solely on the production of the magnifi-cent dinner I had ordered. The landlord, in spite of himself, broke into exclamations of wonder and awe, as he listened to and wrote down my commands for different wings of the rarest kinds and choicest vintages. The servants rushed hither and thither to obey my various behests, with looks of immense importance; the head waiter, a superb official who prided himself on his artistic taste, took the laying out of the table under his envire superintendence, and nothing was talked of or thought of for the time, but the grandeur of my pro-

posed entertainment. About six o'clock I sent my carriage down to the railway station to meet Ferrari as I had arranged; and then, at my landlord's invitation, I went to survey the stage that was prepared for one important scene of my drama,—to see if the scenery, side-lights, and general effects were all in working order. To avoid disarranging my own apartments, I had chosen for my dinner-party a room on the ground floor of the hotel, which was often let out for marriage-breakfasts and other purposes of the like kind; it was octagonal in shape, not not large, and I had had it must even with the constant for the had had it most exquisitely decorated had had it most exquisitely decorated for the occasion. The walls were hung with draperies of gold-colored silk and crims son velvet interspersed here and there with long mirrors, which were ornamented with crystal candelabra, in which twinkled hundreds of lights under rose-tinted glass shades. At the back of the room, a ministure conservatory was displayed to year full of rese shades. At the pack of the room, a numerous conservatory was displayed to view, fu'l of tare ferns and subtly perfumed exorics, in the centre of which a fountain rose and fell with regular and melodious murmur. Here, later o. a band of stringed instruments and a choir of boys' voices were to be stationed, so that sweet music might be heard and felt without the performers being visible. One, and one only, of the long French windows of the room was left uncurtained, it was simply draped with velver as one drapes a choice picture, and through it the eyes rested bay of Naples, white with the wintry

moonlight. The dinner table, laid for fifteen persons, glit tered with sumptuous appointments of silver, Venetian glass, and the rarest flowers; the floor was carpeted with velvet pile, in which some grains of ambergris had been scattered so that in walking the feet sank, as it were, into a bed of moss rich with the odours of a thousand 1 them or recline at ea everything was arranged with a lavish splendor almost befitting the banquet of an Eastern monarch, and yet with such accurate tasts that there was no detail one could have wished

omitted.

I was thoroughly satisfied, but as I knew what an unwise plan it is to praise servants too highly for doing well what they are expressly paid to do, I intimated my satisfaction to my landlord, by a mere careless nod and smile of approval. He, who waited on my every geture with abject humility, received this sen of condescension with as much delight as though it had come from the King himself, and I could easily see that the could easily see that the very fact of my showing no enthusiasm at the result of his labor made him consider me a greater man than ever. I now went to my own apartments to don my evening attire; I found Vincenzo brushing every speck of dust from my dress coat with careful nicety,—he had already arranged the other articles of costume neatly on my bed ready for wear. I unlocked a dressingcase and took from thence three stud-, each one formed of a single brilliant of rere clearness and shirt-front. While he was pelishing these admir-ingly on his coat-sleeve I watched him earnestly -then I suddenly addressed bim :-

(To be continued.)

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