## VENDETTA;

The Story of One Forgotten.

CHAPTER V.—CONTINUED.

I recoiled from these last words in a sort I recoiled from these last words in a sort of terror; they were like an electric tock! Was I indeed so changed? Was so possible that the horrors of a night at the vanit had made such a dire impression upon me? My hair white?—mine! I could tardly believe it. If so, perhaps Nina would, not recording to me—she might be terrified at my aspect. Livid himself might have doubts of aspect-Guido himself might have doubts of my idensity. Though, for that matter, I could easily prove myself to be indeed Fabio Romani f I had to show the vault and my own sundered coffin. While I revolved all this in my mind the old man, unconscious of my emotion, went on with his mumbling chatter.

"Ah, yes, yes! He was a fine fellow-a strong fellow. I used to rejoice that he was so strong. Mastering my feelings by a violent effort, I forced myself to speak calmly to this malignant

old brute. Why do you hate the Countess Romani so much?" I asked him with sternness.

she done you any harm?"

He straightened himself as much as he was

shle and looked me full in the eyes.

"Se you!" he answered, with a sort of leering laugh about the corners of his wicked mouth. "I will tell you why I hate her—yes— I will tell you, because you are a man and strong. Hike stong men—they are sometimes fooled by women it is true—but then they can take i as strong myself once. And you moveuge. you are dd-but you love a jest-you will understand. The Romani woman has done me anderstand The Romani woman has done me no harm. Sin laughed—once. That was when her horses kacked me down in the street. I was burt but I saw her red lips widen and her white te- n glitter-she has a baby smile-the people wit tell you—so innocent! I was picked

poher corriage drove on—her husband was

act with he —he would have acted differently.

And he began to grope among a number of

things that were thrown in a confused heap at the back of the shop. While in this attitude he looked so gaunt and grim that he reminded me of an aged vulture stooping over carrion, and yet there was something pitiable about him too. In a way I was sorry for him; a poor half-witted wretch, whose life had been full of gall and wormwood. What a different fate was his to mine, I thought. He hated Nina for an act of thoughtlessness; well, no doubt she was not the only woman whose existence annoyed him; it was most probable that he was at enmity with all women. I watched him pityingly as he searched among the worn-out garments which were his stock-in-trade, and wondered why Death, so active in smiting down the strongest in the city, should have thus cruelly passed by this forlorn wreck of human misery, for whom the grave would have surely been a most welcome release and rest. He turned

wound at last with an exulting gesture. "I have found it!" he exclaimed. "The very thing to suit you. You are perhaps a coral-fisher? You will like a fisherman's dress. Hiere is one, red such, cap and all, in beautiful condition! He that wore it was about your beight; it will fit you well as it fitted him; and, Book you! the plague is not in it; the sea has scaked through and through it; it smells of the mand and weed."

He spread out the rough garb before me. I glanced at it carelessly.
"Did the former wearer kill his wife?" I

saked, with a slight amile.

The old rag-picker shook his head and made asign with his outspread fingers expressive of

contempt. "Not he! He was a fool. He killed him-"How was that? By accident or design?"

\* Chè / Chè / He knew very well what he was doing. It happened only two months since. It was for the sake of a black-eyed jade; she lives and laughs all day long up at Sorrento. He had been on a long voyage; he brought her pearls for her throat and coral pins for her hair. He had just landed; he met her on the gray; he offered her the pearl and coral trinkets. She threw them back and told him she was tired of him. Just that—nothing more. He tried to soften her; she raged at him like a tiger cat. Yes, I was one of the little crowd that stood round them on the quay; I saw it all. Her black eyes flashed, she stamped and bit her lips at him, her full bosom heaved as though it would burst her laced bodice. was only a market-girl, but she gave herself the airs of a queen. 'I am tired of you!' she said mirs of a queen. 'I am tired of you!' she said to him. 'Go! I wish to see you no more.' He was tall and well-made, a powerful fellow; but he staggered, his face grew pale, his lips quivered. He bent his head a little-turned d before any hand could stop him, he sprang from the quav into the waves: they closed over his head, for he did not try o swim; he just sark down, down, like a stone. Next day his bod came ashere, and I bought his clothes for w rance: you shall have them for four.

And what became of the girl ?" I asked. Oh, she! She laughs all day long. What sh dd she care?" I drew out my purse. "I will take this smi," I said. "You ask four france, here are

six, but for the extra two you must show me some private corner where I can dress."

"Yes, yes. But certainly!" and the old felow trembled all over with avaricious eagerness as I counted the silver pieces into his withered palm. "Anything to oblige a generous stran-ger! There is the place I sleep in; it is not

much, but there is a mirror—her mirror—the only thing I keep of hers; come this way, come

this way!".

And stumbling hastily along, almost falling over the disordered bundles of clothing that lay about in all directions, he opened a little duor that seemed to be cut in the wall, and led me into a sort of close cupboard, smelling most wilely, and furnished with a miserable pallet

was my trade. Here is the fisherman's suit; you can take your time to put it on; fasten the door; the room is at your service."

And he nodded several times in a manner that was meant to be friendly, and left me. I tollowed his advice at one and locked myself knocked the head of the corpse to and from Then I stapped steadily to the mirror langing on the wall, and looked at my own recompunction than if he had been a block of hanging on the wall, and looked at my own refaction. A bitter pang shot through me. The
dealer's sight was good, he had said truly. I
was old! If twenty years of suffering had
passed over my head, they could hardly have
changed me more terribly. My illness had
thinned my face and marked it with deep
lands into my head, while a certain wildeis of pain; my eyes had retreated far
rack into my head, while a certain wildeis of expression in them bore witness to
te terrors I had suffered in the vault,
dto orown all my hair was indeed perfectly
lite. I understoed now the slarm of the man
hohad sold me graves on the highway that
dealer's sight was good, he had said truly. I compunction than if he had been a block of
wood. Sickened at the sight, I turned away
and said no more. On reaching one of the more
wood. Sickened at the sight, I turned away
and said no more. On reaching one of the more
wood. Sickened at the sight, I turned away
and said no more. On reaching one of the more
with eager yet shamed faces, and spoke
in low voices. A whisper reached my ears,
"The King! the King!" All heads were
turned in omore. On reaching one of the more
wood. Sickened at the sight, I turned away
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woods.

And thus encouraging my sinking spirits, I quickly arrayed myself in the Neapolitan coral-fishers garb. The trousers were very loore, ard 'were provided with two long deep pockets, convenient receptacles which easily contained the leathern bags of gold and jewels I had taken from the brigand's coffin. When my hasty toilet was completed I took another glance at the mirror, this time with a half smile. True, I was greatly altered; but after all I did not look so bad. The fisherman's picture qui costume became me well; the scarlet cap sat jauntily on the snow-white curls that clustered so thickly over my forehead, and the consciousness I had of approaching happiness sent a little of the old fearless lustre back into my sunken eyes. Besides, I knew I should not always have this careworn and wasted appearance rest, and perhaps a change of air, would infal libly restore the roundness to my face and the freshness to my complexion; even my white locks

man's face and an old man's bair.

Having finished dressing, I unlocked the door of the stuffy little cabin and called the old ragpicker. He came shuffling along with his head ent, but raising his eyes as he approached me, threw up his hands in astonishment, exclaiming, "Santissima Madonna! But you are a fine man—a fine man! Eu, eh! What height and

breadth! A pity-a pity you are old; sou must have been strong when you were young."

Half in a joke, and half to humer him in his fancy for mere muscular force, I rolled up the sleeve of my jacket to the shoulder, caying

lightly,
"Oh, as for being strong! There is plenty of strength in me still, you see."

He stared; laid his yellow fingers on my bared arm with a kind of ghoul-like interest and wonder, and felt the muscles of it with childish, almost a maudlin admiration.
"Beautiful, beautiful!" he mumbled. "Like

ircn—just think of it! Yes, yes. You could kill anything easily? Ah! I used to be like that once. I was clever at sword play. could, with well-tempered steel, cut asunder: seven-times folded piece of silk at one blow without fraying out a thread. Yes, as neatly as one cuts butter! You could do that, too, if you liked. It all lies in the arm—the brave arm that kills at a single stroke.'

And he gazed at me intently with his small blear eyes, as though anxious to know more of my character and temperament. I turned ab-ruptly from him, and called his attention to my own discarded garments.
"See," I said carelessly; "you can have

these, though they are not of much value. And, stay, here are another three francs for some secks and shoes, which I dare say you can find to suit me." He clasped his hands ecstatically, and poured

out a torrent of thanks and praises for this additional and unexpected sum, and protesting by all the saints that he and the entire contents of his shop were at the service of so generous a stranger, he at once produced the articles I asked for. I put them on,—and then stood up thoroughly equipped and ready to make my way back to my own home when I choss. But I had resolved on one thing. Seeing that I was so greatly changed. I determined not to go to the Villa Romani by daylight, lest I should startle my wife too suddenly. Women are delicate; my unexpected appearance might give her a nervous shock which perhaps would have serious results. I would wait till the sun had set, and then go up to the house by a back way I knew of, and try to get speech with one of the servants. I might even meet my friend Guido Ferrari, and he would break the joyful news of my return from death to Nina by degrees, and also prepare her for my altered looks. While these thoughts flitted rapidly through my brain, the old rag-picker stood near me with his head on one side like a meditative

raven, and regarded me intently.

"Are you going far?" he asked at last, with a kind of timidity. "Yes," I answered him abruptly; "very far."

He laid a detaining hand on my sleeve, and his eyes glittered with a malignant expression.
"Tell me," he muttered eagerly, "tell me—I will keep the secret. Are you going to a woman ? I looked down upon him, half in disdain half in amusement.

"Yes!" I said quietly; "I am going to a woman. He broke into silent laughter-hideous

laughter that contorted his visage and twisted his'b dy in convulsive writhings. I glanced at him in disgust, and shaking off his hand from my arm I made my way to the door of the shap. He hobbled after me, wiping away the moisture that his inward merriment had brought into his eyes.

"Going to a woman!" he croaked. "Ha,

ha! You are not the first, nor will you be the last that has gone so! Going to a woman! that is well-that is good! Go to her, go You are strong; you have a brave arm! Go to her; find her out, and—kill her! Yes, yes—you will be able to do it easily—quite easily!

He stood at his low door mouthing and pointing, his stunted figure and evil face reminding me of one of Heinrich Heine's dwarf devils who are depicted as piling fire on the heads of the saints. I bade him "Good day" in an indifferent tone, but he made me no answer. I waiked slowly away. Looking back once I saw him still standing on the threshold of his wretched dwelling, his wicked mouth working itself into all manner of grimaces, while with his crooked fingers he made signs in the air as if he caught an invisable something and throttled it. I went on down the street and out of it is to the broader thoroughfares, with his last words ringing in my ears, "Go and kill her!"

## CHAPTER VII.

That day seemed very long to me. I wandered aimlessly about the city, seeing few faces that I knew, for the wealthier inhabitants, afraid thed and one broken chair. A small square of the cholera, had either left the place altopane of glass admitted light enough to gether, or remained closely shut within their see all that there was to be seen, and close to this extemporised window hung the mirror alluded to, a beautiful thing set in plague. At almost every corner I met a funeralizer of antique workmarking the continue set. silver of antique workmanship, the costliness of al procession. Once I came upon a group of which I at once recognized, though into the glass itself I dared not for the moment look. The old man showed me, with some pride, that the door to this narrow den of his locked from within.

The dared the lock and lock myself," he said. "Look how neat and strong! I watched the brutal proceedings for a minute was my tinde. Here is the february work—it. You had better make sure he is quite

The beccamorti looked at me in surprise; one laughed grimly and said; "The cholera never fails, he is dead for certain—see!" And he knocked the head of the corpse to and fro tite. I understood now the alarm of the man arch, Humbert of Italy—he whom his subjects hehad sold me grapes on the highway that delight to honor. He was making a round ning: my appearance was strange enough startle anyone. Indeed, I scarcely recognize me? Almost I doubted it. This cognize me? Almost I doubted it. This ward off infection. He walked with the easy one to my year. I house the manual and assured step of a hero; his face was sometiment to my year. I house the manual and assured step of a hero; his face was sometiment to my year. I house the manual and assured step of a hero; his face was sometiment to my year. rang to my eyes. I brushed them away in what sad, as though the sufferings of his people that pressed heavily upon his sympathetic heart,

she knows of thy sufferings, will thou not be dearer to ber than ever? Will not one of her soft ambraces recompense thee for all thy past anguish, and enfice to make thee young pass without recognition—me, to whom he had spoken so often and so cordially. For when I visited Rome, as I was accustomed to do anas such seemed ne longer to have any existance—a "white haired fisherman" usurped his place. But though I thought these things I refrained from addressing the King. Some impulse, however, led me to follow him at a respectful distance, as did also many others.

Exercises on the first that the first the first the first that the first that the first the first that the firs

His Majesty strolled through the most pesti lential streets with as much unconcern as though he were taking his pleasure in a garden of roses; be stepped quietly into the dirtiest hovels where lay both dead and dying; he spoke words of kindly encouragement to the grief-stricken and terrified mourners who stared through their tears at the monarch with astonishment and gratitude; silver and gold were gently dropped into the hands of the suffering poor, and the very pressing cases received the Royal benefactor's personal attention and immediate relief. Mothers with infants in their arms knelt to implore the King's blessing,-which to pacify them he gave with a modest hesitation, as though he thought himself unworthy, and yet with a parental tenderness that was infinitely touching. One wild-eyed black-haired girl flung herself down on the ground right in the King's path; she kissed his feet, and then sprang erect with a gesture of triumph.
"Iam saved!" she cried; "the plague cannot

walk in the same road with the King! Humbert smiled and regarded her somewhat as an induigent father might regard a spoilt daughter; but he said nothing, and passed on. A cluster of men and women standing at the open door of one of the poorest-looking houses in the street next attracted the monarch's attention. There was some noisy argument going on: two o three beccamorti were loudly discussing together and swearing profusely—some women were crying bitterly, and in the centre of the excited group a coffin stood on end as though waiting for an occupant. One of the gentlemen in attendance on the King preceded him and announced his approach, whereupo the loud clamour of tongues ceased, the men bared their heads, and the women checked their

sobs.
"What is wrong here, my friends?" the monarch asked with exceeding gentleness.
There was silence for a moment; the becomment looked sullen and ashamed. Then one of the women with a fat good-natured face and eyes rimmed redly round with weeping, el-bowed her way through the little throng to the

front and spoke.

"Bless your Majesty!" she cried in shrill accents. "And as for what is wrong, it would soon be right if there shameless pigs," pointing to the beccamorti, "would let us alone. They will kill a man rather than wait an hour—one little hour! The girl is dead, your Majesty—and Giovanni, poor lad! will not leave her; thick of it! and she a cholera corpse-and do what we can, he will not be parted from her, and they seek her body for the burial. And if we force him away, poverino, ha will lose his head for certain. One little he will lose his head for certain. One little hour, your Majesty, just one, and the reverend father will come and persuade Giovanni better

than we can." The king raised his hand with a slight gesture of command—the little crowd parted before him—and he entered the miserable dwelling wherein lay the corpse that was the cause of all the argument. His attendants followed; I too, availed myself of a corner in the doorway.
The scene disclosed was so terribly pathetic that few could look upon it without emotion-Humbert of Italy himself uncovered his head and stood silent. On a poor pallet bed lay the fair body of a girl in her first youth, her tender leveliness as yet untouched even by the disliguring marks of the death that had overtaken her. One would have thought she slept, had it not been for the rigidity of her stiffened limbs, and the wax-like pallor of her free and hands. Right across her form, almost covering it from view, a man lay prone, as though he had fallen there lifeless,—indeed he might have been dead also for any sign he showed to the contrary. His arms were closed firmly round the gul's corpse,—his face was hidden from view on the cold breast that would no more respond to the warmth of his carerses. A straight beam of sunlight shot like a golden spear into the dark little room and lit up the whole scene, -the prostrate figures on the bed, the erect form of the compassionate King, and the grave and anxious faces of the little crowd

of people who stood around him.
"See! that is the way he has been ever since last night when she died," whispered the woman who had before spoken; "and his hands are clenched round her like iron-one cannot

move a finger
The King advanced. He touched the shoulder of the unhappy lover. His voice, modulated to an exquisite softness, struck on the cars of the listeners like a note of cheerful

"Figlio moi /" There was no answer. The women, touched by the simple endearing words of the monarch, began to sob, though gently, and even the men brushed a few drops from their eyes. Again the king spoke.

"Figlio mio! I am your King. Have you no greating for me? The man raised his head from its pillow on the breast of the beloved corpse and stared vacantly at the royal speaker. His haggard face, taugled hair and wild eyes gave him the appearance of one who had long wandered in a labyrinth of frightful visions from which there was no escape but self-murder.
"Your hand, my son!" resumed the King in

a tone of soldier-like authority.

Very slowly,—very reluctantly,—as though
be were forced to the action by some strange magnetic influence which he had no power to withstand, he loo ened his right arm from the dead form it clasped so pertinaciously, and stretched forth the hand as commanded. Humbert caught it firmly within his own and held it fast,—then looking the poor fellow full in the

face, he said with great steadiness and simplicity,
"There is no death in love, my friend!" The young man's eyes met his,—his set mouth softened,—and wrestling his hand parsionately from that of the King, he broke into a passion of weeping. Humbert at once placed a protecting arm around him, and with the assistance of one of his attendants raised him from the bed, and led him unresistingly away, as passively obedient as a child, though sobbing convulsively as he went. The rush of tears had saved his reason, and most probably his life. A murmur of enthusiastic applause greeted the good King as he passed through the little throng of per-

sons who had witnessed what had taken place. Acknowledging it with a quiet unaffected bow, he left the house, and aigned to the beccamorti who still waited outside, that they were now free to perform their melancholy office. He then went on his way attended by more heartfelt blessings and praises than ever fell to the lot of the proudest conqueror returning with the spoils of a hundred battles. I looked after his retresting figure till I could see it no more,-I felt that I had grown stronger in the presence of a hero,—a man who indeed was
"every inch a king." I am a royalist,
—yes. Governed by such a Sovereign, few men of calm reason would be otherwise. But royalist though I am, I would assist in bringing about the dethronement and death of a mean tyrant, were he crowned king a hundred times over! Few monarchs are like Humbert of Italy,—even now my heart warms when I think of him, -in all the distraction of my sufferings, his figure stands out like a supreme embod neticent Force surrounded by the clear light of unselfish goodness,—a light in which Italia suns her fair face and smiles again with the old sweet smile of her happiest days of high achievement,—days in which her children were great, simply because they were in carnest. The fault of all modern labor lies in the fact The fault of all modern labor lies in the fact all whether hairs are black or white? What matter how the face changes, so long as the bart is true? For a moment, perhaps, thy his attendants. Almost I betrayed myself. I betayed m

serve their own interests,-true, there are exceptions to this rule, but they are deemed fools

for their pains.

As soon as the King disappeared I also left the scene of the foregoing incident. I had a tancy to visit the little restaurant where I had been taken ill, and after some trouble I found it. The door stood open. I saw the fat land-lord, Pietro, polishing his glasses as though he nually, there were few more welcome guests at the balls of the Quirinal Palace than Count It. The door stood open. I saw the fat land-table Romani. I began to wonder stupidly who Favio Romani was; the gay gallant known had never left off; and there in the same correlations. gallant known had never left off; and there in the same of the same was the very wooden bench on which these things I had lain, — where I had — as was these things I generally supposed — died. I stepped in The landlord looked up and bade me good-day.

I returned his salutation, and ordered some coffee and rolls of bread. Seating myself careléssly at one of the little tables I turned over the newspaper, while he hustled about in haste to serve me. As he dusted and rubbed up a cup and saucer for my use, he said briskly:
"You have had a long voyage, amiso? And

successful fishing ?" For a moment I was confused and knew not what to answer, but gathering my wits together I smiled and answered readily in the affirma-

tive. "And you?" I said gaily. "How goes the

cholera? The landlord shook his head dolefully. "Holy Joseph! do not speak of it. The people die like flies in a honey-pot. Only yes-

terday,—body of Bacchus!—who would have though it?"

And he sighed deeply as he poured out the steaming coffee and shook his head more sorsowfully than before. "Why, what happened yesterday?" I asked, though I knew perfectly well what he was going

to say; -"I am a stranger in Naples, and empty of news." empty of news.

The perspiring Pietro laid a fat thumb on the marble top of the table, and with it traced a

pattern meditatively.
"You never heard of the rich Count Romani?" he inquired.

I made a sign in the negative, and bent my face over my coffee-cup.

"Ah, well!" he went on with a half groan, "it does not matter.—there is no Count Romani any more. It is all gone—finished! But he was rich—as rich as the King, they say,—yet

see how low the saints brought him! Fra Ciprisno of the Benedictines carried him in here yesterday morning—he was struck by the plague,—in five hours he was dead,"here the landlord caught a mosquito and killed it, ah! as dead as that zinzara / Yes, he lay dead on that very wooden bench opposite to you. They buried him before sunses. It is like a bad dream!"

I affected to be deeply engrossed with the cutting and spreading of my roll and butter.
"I see nothing particular about it," I said, indifferently. "That he was rich is nothing rich and pror must die alike."

"And that is true, very true," assented Pietro with another groan, "for not all his poverty could save the blessed Ciprisno."

I startled, but quickly controlled myself.
"What do you mean?" I asked, as carelessly as I could. "Are you talking of some saint?"
"Well if he was not canonized he desayes."

"Well, if he were not canonized he deserves to be," replied the landlord; "I speak of the holy Benedictine father who brought hither the Count Romani in a dying condition. Ah! little he knew how soon the good God would call him himself!"

I felt a sickening sensation at my heart.
"Is he dead?" I exclaimed.

"Dead as the martyrs!" answered Pietro. "He caught the p'ague, I suppose, from the Count, for he was bending over him to the last. Ay, and he sprinkled holy water over the corpse and laid his own crneffx upon it in the coffin. Then up he went to the Villa Romani, taking with him the Count's trinkets, his watch, ring and cigar-care—and nothing would satisfy him but that he should deliver them himself to the young Contessa, telling her how her husband

My poor Nina! - I thought. "Was she much grieved?" I inquired with a vague curi-

osity.
"How do I know?" said the landlord, shrugging his bulky shoulders. "The reverend father said nothing, save that she swooned away. But what of that? Women swoon at everything—from a mouse to a corpse. As I said, the good Cipriano attended the Count's burial—and he had scarce returned from it when he was seized with the illness. And this morning he died at the monastery-may his

soul rest in peace! I heard the news only an hour sgo. Ah! he was a holy man!"

I pushed away the rest of my meal untasted. for the noble, patient life to One hero the less in this world of unheroic, uninspired persons! I sat silent, lost in sorrowful thought. The landlord looked at me curi

onsly,

"The coffee does not please you?" he said at last. "You have no appetite?"

I forced a smile.

"Nay-your words would take the edge off the keenest appetite ever born of the breath of the sea. Truly Naples affords but sorry entertainment to a stranger; is there naught to hear but stories of the dying and the dead?"

Pietro put on an air that was almost apolo

getic.
"Well truly!" he answered resignedly-"very little else. But what would you, amico It is the plague and the will of God."

As he said the last words my gaze was caught and riveted by the figure of a man strolling leisurely past the door of the eafe. It was Guido Ferrari, my friend! I would have rushed out to speak to him.—but something in his look and manner checked the impulse as it rose in me. He was walking very slowly, smoking a cigar as he went;—there was a smile on his face, and in his coat he wore a freshly gathered rose
—a Gloire de France, similar to those that grew in such profusion on the upper terrace of my Villa. I stared at him as he passed,—my feelings underwent a kind of shock. He looked perfectly happy and tranquil—happier indeed than ever I remembered to have seen him, -and yet—and yet,—according to his knowledge. I his best friend, had died only yesterday! With this sorrow fresh upon him, he could smile like a man going to a festa, and wear a coral pink rose, which surely was no sign of mourning For one moment I felt hurt,—the next, I laugh ed at my own sensitiveness. After all, what of the smile,—what of the rose! A man could not always be answerable for the expression of his countenance,—and as for the flower, he might have gathered it en passant, without thinking, or what was still more likely, the child Stella might have given it to him, in which case he would have worn it to please her. He displayed no badge of mourning? True!—but then consider, -I had only died yesterday There had been no time to procure al thos outward appurtenances of woe which social cus toms rendered necessary, but which were no infallible sign of the heart's sincerity. Satisfied with my own self-reasoning I made no attempt to follow Guido in his walk—I let him go on his way unconscious of my existence. I would wait, I thought, till the evening,—then every-

thing would be explained. I turned to the landlord. "How much to

pay?" I asked.
"What you will, anico," he replied—"I am
never hard on the asher folk,—but times are
bad, or you would be welcome to a breakfast for nothing. Many and many a day have I done as much for your craft, and the blessed Cipriano who is gone used to say that St. Peter would remember me for it. It is true the Madonna gives a special blessing if one looks after the fishers, because all the holy apostles were of the trade; and I would be

loth to lose her protection—yet—"
I laughed and tossed him a franc. He pock eted it once and his eyes twinkled. "Though you have not taken half a franc's worth, he admitted with an honesty very unusual in a Neapolitan-"but the Saints wil make it up to you, never fear !"

I am sure of that !" I said gaily-" Addio

my friend! Prosperity to you and our Lady' This salutation, which I knew to be a com mod one with Sicilian marmers, the good Pietro respended to with amiable heartiness, wishing me luck on mynext voyage. He then betook

son glory of the sunset, which, like a wide flag of triumph, was to be the eignal of my safe re-turn to love and happiness.

It came at last, the blessed, the longed-for

## CHAPTER VIII.

evening. A soft breeze sprang up, cooling the burning air after the heat of the day, and bringing with it the odors of a thousand flowers. A regal glory of shifting colors blazed on the breast of heaven,—the bay, motionless as a mirror, reflected all the splendid tints with a sheeny lustre that redoubled their magnificence. Pricked in every vein by the stinging of my own desires, I restrained myself; I waited till the sun sank below the glassy waters, till the pomp and glow attending its departure had paled into those dim, ethereal hues which are like delicate draperies fallen from the flying forms of angels,—till the yellow rim of the round full moon rise languidly on the edge of the horizon and the lecenia had. edge of the horizon,-and then keeping back my eagerness no longer, I took the well-known road ascending to the Villa Romani. My heart beat high—my limbs trembled with excitement,—my steps were impatient and prec pitate—never had the way seemed so long. At last I reached the great gateway other was locked fast—its scriptured lions looked upon me frowningly. I heard the splash and tinkle of the fountains within, the scents of the roses and myrtle were wafted towards me with every breath I drew. Home at last I smiled,—my wholeframe quivered with ex-pectancy and delight. It was not my intention to seek admission by the principal entrance,
—I contended myself with one long loving look,
and turned to the left, where there was a small
private gate leading into an avenue of ilex and oine, interspersed with orange trees. This was pine, interspersed with orange trees. In swas a favorite walk of mine, partly on account of pleasant shade even the hottest noon,—partly because it was seldom frequented by any member of the household save myself. Guido occasionally took a turn with me there, but 1 way more often alone, and I was fond of pacing up and down in the shadow of the tress reading some fevorite book, or giving myself up to the dolce far niente of my own imaginings. The avenue led round to the back of the Villa, and as I now entered it I thought I would approach the house cautiously by this means and get private speech with Assenta, the nurse who had charge f little Stella, and who was, moreover, an old and tried family servant, in whose arms my mother had breathed her last.

The dark trees rustled solemnly as I stepped quickly yet softly along the familiar mossgrown path. The place was very still-sometimes the nightingales broke into a bub bling torrent of melody, and then were suddenly silent, as though overswed by the shadows of the heavy interlacing boughs, through which the moonlight flickered, casting strange and fantastic patterns on ground. A cloud of lucciole broke from thicket of laurel, and sparkled the air like gems loosened from a queen's Faint odours floated about shaken from erange boughs and trailing branches of white jessamine. I hastened on, my spirits rising higher the nearer I ap-proached my destination. I was full of sweet proceed by destination. I was full of sweet
anticipation and passionate longing—I yearned
to clasp my beloved Niua in my arms—to see
her lovely lustrous eyes looking fondly into
mine;—I was eager to shake Guido by the hand
—and as for Stella, I knew the child would be
in bed at that hour, but still, I thought. I must have her wakened to see me; I felt that my happiness would not be complete till I had kissed her little cherub face, and caressed those clustering curls of hers that were like spun gold ......Hush—hush! What was that? I stopped in rapid progress as though suddenly checked by an invisible hand. I listened with straiged by an invisible hand. I listened with straired ears. That sound,.....was it not a rippling peal of gay sweet laughter? A shiver shook me from head to foot. It was my wife's laugh—I knew the silvery chime of it well! My heart sank coldly—I paused irresolute. She could laugh then like that, while she thought me lying dead—dead and out of her reach for ever! All as once I perceived the glimmer of a white robe through the trees; obsymp my a white robe through the trees; obeying my own impulse, I stepped softly aside—I hid behind a dense screen of foliage through which I could see without being seen. The clear laugh rang out once again on the stillness-its bright ness pierced my brain like a sharp sword. She

was happy . . . . She was even merry . . . . . she wandered here in the moonhour ago. Ah! he was a holy man!"

I pushed away the rest of my meal untasted.
The food choked me. I could have shed tears
for the noble patient life thus self-sacrificed, kneeling before the Mater Dolorosa in the little chapel, praying for my soul's rest, and mingling

her prayers with her tears!
Yes, . . . I had expected this—we men
are such fools when we love women! Suddenly a terrible thought struck me. Had she gone mad? Had the shock and grief of my so unexpected death turned her delicate brain? Was she reaming about, poor child, like Ophelia, knowing not whither she went, and was her apparent gaiety the fantastic mirth of a disordered brain? I shuddered at the idea,—and bending slightly apart the boughs behind which I was secreted, apart the boughs behind which I was secreted, I looked out anxiously. Two figures were slowly approaching—my wife and my friend, Guido Ferrari. Well there was nothing in that—it was as it should be , was not Guido as my brother? . . . It

were the horrors of the vault—what was any-thing I had suffered to the anguish that racked me now? The memory of it to this day burns in my brain like inextir guishable fire, and my hand involuntarily clenches itself in an effort to beat back the furious bitterness of that moment! I know not how I restrained the murderous ferocity that awoke within me—how I forced myself to remain motionless and silent in my hiding-place. But I did. I watched the miserable comedy out to its end. I looked dumbly on at my own betrayal! I saw my honor stabbed to the death by those whom I most trusted, and yet I gave no sign! They-Guido Ferrari and my wife—came so close to my hiding-place that I could note every gesture and hear every word they uttered. They pause within three steps of me—his armencircled he paused waist—hers was thrown carelessly around his neck—her head rested on his shoulder. Even so had she walked with me a thousand times She was dressed in pure white save for one spot of deep color near her heart—a red rose, as red as blood. It was pinned there with a diamond pin that flashed in the moonlight. I thought wildly, that instead of that rose, there should be blood indeed,—instead of a diamond pin there should be the good steel of a straight daggar But I had no weapon-I stared at her, dryeyed and mute. She looked lovely—exquisitely lovely! No trace of grief marred the fairness of her face-her eyes were as languidly limped and tender as ever-her lips were parted in the childlike smile that was so sweet—so innocently trustful? She spoke—the old bewitching music

brain reel. "You foolish Guido!" she said, ir. dreamily amused accents. "What would have happened, I would, if Fabio had not died so opportunely?

of her low voice made my heart leap and my

I waited eagerly for the answer. Guido laughed lightly.
"He would never have discovered anything.

You were too clever for him, piccinina / Besides, his conceit saved him—he had so good an opinion of himself that he would not have deemed it possible for you to care for any other

My wife-flawless diamond-pearl of pure womanhood!—sighed half restlessly.
"I am glad he is dead!" she murmured; but Guido mio, you are imprudent. You cannot visit me now so often—the servants will talk Then I must go into mourning for at least six months—and there are many other things to

consider."
"Nay then, my love," he replied to her, "it is almost a pity Fabio is dead ! While he lived. himself anew to the polishing of his glasses, he played an excellent part as a screen—he was —and I passed the rest of the day in an unconscious, but veritable duenns of prostrolling about the least frequented streets of priety for both of us, as no one else could be!" he played an excellent part as a screen—he was an unconscious, but veritable duenna of prorustled. My wife started, and looked uneasily

round her.
"Hush!" she said, nervously. "He was buried only yesterday—and they say there are ghosts sometimes. This avenue, too—I wish we had not come here—it was his favorite walk. Besides," she added, with a slight accept of regret, "after all he was the father of my child—you must think of that."
""Ah!" exclaimed Guido, fiercely, "do I not think of it? Ay—and I curse him for every kiss he stole from your lips!"

I listened half-stupefied. Here was a new phase of the marriage law! Husbands were I thieves then—they stole kisses; only lovers were buried only yesterday—and they say there are

thieves then—they stole kisses; only lovers were honest in their embraces! Oh, my dear friend! my more than brother—how near you were to death at that moment! Had you but seen my through the day. face peering pillidly through the dusky leaves—could you have known the force of the

leaves—could you have known the force of the fury pent up within me—you would not have valued your life at one baseco.

"Why did you marry him?" he asked, after a little pause, during which he toyed with the fair curls that floated against his breast.

She looked on with a little matterns. She looked up with a little mutinous pout, and shrugged his shoulders

Why? Because he was rich, and I was

horribly poor. I cannot bear to be poor! Then he loved me,"—here her eyes glimmered with malicious triumph—" yes—he was mad for me—

You loved him?" demanded Guido, almost

fiercely.
"Ma che!" she answered, with an expressive gesture. "I suppose f did. What does one marry for at all? For coavenience—money position-he gave me these things, as you

"You will gain nothing by marrying me then," he said, jealously.

She laughed, and laid her little white hand, glittering with rings, lightly against his lips,

"Of course not! Besides,—have I said I
will marry you? You are very agreeable

as a lover . . . but otherwise . . . . . . Lam not sure! And I am free now,—I can do as I like; I want to enjoy my liberty, and"——
She was not allowed to complete her sentence,

for Ferrari snatched her close to his breast and held her there as in a vice. His face was a

held her there as in a vice. His face was a flame with passion.

"Look you, Nina," he said, hoavely, "you shall not fool me; you shall not! I have endured enough at your hands, God knows! When I saw you for the first time on the day of your marriage with that poor fool, Fabio—I loved you, madly—ay wickedly as I then thought, but not for the sin of it did I recent. I knew you were woman, not angel, and I waited my time. It came—I not angel, and I waited my time. It came-I not angel, and I waited my time. It came—I sought you—I told you my story of love ers three months of wedded life had passed over yourhead. Ifound you willing-ready-nay, eager to hear me! You led maon; you know you did! I never pltice Fabio, never; he was too easily duped, and a married man has no right to be otherwise that a warried was have no right to be otherwise that a warried was have no ready. wise than suspicious and ever on his guard; if he relaxes in his virilance he has only himself to blame when his henor is flung like a ball from hand to hand, as one plays with a child's top. I repeat to you, Nina, you are mine, and I swear you shall never escape me!"

The impetuous words coursed rapidly from his lips, and his deep musical voice had a defiant ring as it fell on the stillness of the evening air. I smiled bitterly as I heard! She struggled in his arms half angrily.
"Let me go," she said. "You are rough, you hurt me!"

He released her instantly. The violence of his embrace had crushed the rose she wore, and its crimson leaves fluttered slowly down one on the ground at her feet. Her eyes flashed resentfully, and an impatient frown contracted her fair and level brows. She looked away from him in silence, the silence of a cold disdain. Something in her attitude pained him, for he sprang forward and caught her hand, covering it with kesses.

"Forgive me, carnia mia," he cried repentantly. "I did not mean to reproach you. You cannot help being beautiful—and your beauty maddens me! You are the heart of my heart, the soul of my soul! Oh Nina mia, let us not waste words in useless anger. Think of it, we are free—free!! Free to make life a long dream of delight—delight more perfect than angels can know! The greatest blessing that could have know! The greatest blessing that could have befallen us is the death of Fabio, and now that we are all in all to each other, do not harden
yourself against me! Nina, be gentle with me
—of all things in the world, surely love is best!"
She smiled, with the pretty superior smile of

a young empress pardoning a recreant subject, and suffered him to draw her again, but with

, into his embrace. "You are so foolish, Guido mio," she pouted, passing her little jewelled fingers through his clustering hair with a light caress—"so impetuous—so jra'ous! I have told you over and over again that I love you! Do you not rememover again that I love you! Do you not remember that night when Fabio sat out on the balcony reaching his Plato, year fellow!!—here she laughed musically—"and we were trying over some songs in the drawing-room—did I not say then that I loved you hest of anyone in the world? You know I did! You ought to be satisfied!"

(Suide smiled and stroked her this in golden.

Guido smiled, and stroked her shining golden

curls.
"I am satisfied," he said, without any trace
impatience—"perfectly of his former heated impatience—"perfectly eatisfied. But do not expect to find love without jealously. Fablo was never jealous—I know—he trusted you too implicitly, he was nothing of a lover, believe me! He thought mora of himself than of you. A man who will go away for days at the time on a solitary yachting and rambling excursions, leaving his wire to her own devices—a man who reads Plato in preference to looking after her, decides his own fate, and deserves to be ranked with those so-called wise but most ignorant philosophers to whom Women has always remained an unguessed riddle. As for me—I am jealous of the ground you tread upon—of the air that touches you—if any other man dare now to dispute your love with me I would not rest till his body had served my sword as a sheath !"

Nina raised her head from his breast with an air of petulant weariness. "Again!" she murmured reproachfully, "yo are going to be angry again !"

He kissed her.
Not I, sweet one! I will be as gentle as wish, so long as you love me and only 1. e. Come—this avenue is damp and chilly for you—

My wife assented. With arms interlaced and walking slowly, they began to retrace their steps towards the house. Once they paused "Do you hear the nightingales?" asked

Guido. Hear them? Who could not hear them? A shower of melody rained from the trees on every side—the pure, sweet, passionate tones pierced the ear l ke the repeated chime of little golden bells-the beautiful, the tender, the God-inspired birds sang their love stories simply and with perfect rapture—love stories untainted by hypocrisy—unsullied by crime—different, ah! so very different from the love stories of selfish humantity! The exquisite poetic idyl of a bird's life love—is it not a thing to put us inferior creatures to shame? for are we ever as true to our vows as the lark to his mate!? true to our vows as the lark to his mate!? . . . are we as sincere in our thankegivings for the sunlight as the merry robin who sings as blithely in the winter snow as in the flowerfilled mornings of spring? Nay-not we? Our existence is but one long impotent protest against God, combined with an insatiate desire to get the better of one another in the struggle

for base coin ! Nina listened—and shivered, drawing her light scarf more closely about her shoulders.
"I hate them!" she said pettishly; "th noise is enough to pierce one's ears. And he used to be so fond of them; he used to sing-And he

what was it? "Ti saluto, Rosignuolo, Nel tuo duolo, ti saluto! Sei l'amante della rosa

Che morendo si fa sposa !" Her rich voice rippled out on the air, rivalling the songs of the nightingales them-selves. She broke off with a little laugh—

"Poor Fabio ! there was always a false note somewhere when he same. Come, Guido!"

And they peced on quietly, as though their Consciences were clean,—as though no just retri-

the city, and longing impatiently for the crim-

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riety for both of us, as no one else could be!" bothon dogged their steps,—as though no shadow. The boughs that covered me creaked and of a terrible vengeance loomed in the heaven of