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AVANTI!

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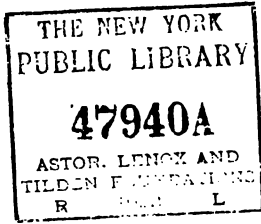
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Some of the Principal Characters

GIUSEPPE, *the Patriot* } *the Brothers.*
PAOLO, *the Priest* }
CAPTAIN CATALDO, *of the Royal Army.*
VITTORIA, *Daughter of General Bianci.*
ELENA, *Sister of the Brothers.*
AGATA, *Mother of the Brothers.*
ROBERTO PAVO, *a Traitor.*
RAFFAELLO, *a Bigoted Monk.*
THE ABBATE BERNARDO, *the Good Abbot.*
GENERAL BIANCI, *a Veteran.*
COUNT LUPIS, *a Politician.*
PADRE OMELLI, *Patriot Priest.*
LUCIA, *Maid to Elena.*
GARIBALDI, *the Emancipator.*





AVANTI!

The North had already answered. Piedmont, Lombardy and Tuscany first ; and now the summons is echoing among the Sicilian hills, "Avanti ! Forward ! with the people who are making Italian unity and freedom."

Giuseppe and Paolo Menardi were returning from a long stroll on the lower slopes of the great volcano, not far from the Alcantara Valley, and were making their way towards their own villa that gleamed through the distance in the direction of Aci Reale. The young men had eaten their pocket lunches ; then for their noon siesta had stretched out on a knoll that gave a glorious view of mountain and sea.

"Come, fratello mio," said Paolo, "it must be at least fifteen o'clock, for see ! the smoke of the volcano drops its shadow far down on the eastern slope."

Giuseppe raised his head by throwing his arms back of it as a pillow, and observed other evidences of the hour. The green lizards that had been basking sleepily in the noonday sun were now running in and out of their crannies in the loose stone walls, and darting their split tongues at the insects that must serve for their evening meal. The birds, too, which had made no sign in the midday stillness, were shaking their heads, winking the sleep-films from their eyes, and beginning to flit from bush to tree.

"Paolo," said Giuseppe, "did you ever see on the mainland the sky so blue as this over Sicily, and the clouds so white for all that they have mopped up the foulness of the atmosphere ?"

"I wish, Peppino," replied Paolo, calling his brother by his pet name, "I wish that some cloud would mop that brain of yours. It's getting full of gloomy thoughts. You brood too much. Come, cheer up !"

Giuseppe's reply was in leaping to his feet, ready to continue the walk homeward. But the marvellous beauty of the scene still held them. The brothers stood

for a while leaning over one of those wayside walls, such as line the interminable donkey paths that zigzag the almost precipitous foot-hills of Mount Etna, and overlook the kaleidoscopic waters of the Ionian Sea.

While in that attitude we may take a snap-shot of the young men.

Paolo Menardi, the younger of the two, was of about twenty-one years. He was dressed as a Sicilian contadino, in short jacket, knee-breeches, and a red sash. He wore no hat, so that the strong sunshine and strong breeze tempered each other pleasantly in the thicket of his black hair. An observer would, however, have noticed that the texture and fit of his garments were of better sort than those worn by the ordinary goatherds and turf-turners of the neighbourhood. Indeed, his clothes would have better suited his evident character if, instead of the local costume, Paolo had worn the long black robe in which he was accustomed to appear in the streets of Rome, in company with his fellow students of the Collegio Romano, where he was esteemed one of the most promising and saintly candidates for the priesthood. But when on his brief vacations at home he was fond of saying, "Now I am a Sicilian." Yet no change of apparel could disguise the student. His handsome face was a little too pallid for the swarthy complexion of his race; and there was almost too much sweetness about the curved lips to be typical of his sex. His eyes were genuinely Sicilian,—large, lustrous, black, dreaming, like cups full of the sky and the sea which his soul had been drinking in since he first looked upon them from his cradle. His forehead was high, full in front, but rather narrow across the brows, indicative of thoughtfulness on sentimental and spiritual lines, and not suggestive of a man of practical affairs.

Giuseppe Menardi was four years older, and formed on

an entirely different model from his brother. He was broad-shouldered and broad-browed. His eyes were as black as those of his companion, but less open and expressive, with a flickering hint of secretiveness about them. His mouth was almost straight, with close-pressed lips which his large mustache rather emphasized than concealed. His chin was full and strong, and made the face of a man possessed of courage, with whom to think was to act, and to act promptly and forcefully.

The background of this picture of the young men was one of the most impressive scenes that eye ever looked upon. There was Etna with his plume of steam, his helmet of ice, lifting his shoulders thirty miles broad against the western sky. The mountains of the mainland of Italy were gleaming through the mist, as if the sun which was beginning to decline had with its rays unlocked a vast casket of jewels, diamonds and rubies and turquoise. Nearer by were wild gorges in which had been cradled the earliest myths of mankind ; stories of those days when men knew not whether they belonged to the divine or bestial order of existence ; when they danced as fauns and yet dreamed as demigods. For this is the land of Homeric legend ; and he is a dull Sicilian who, even in the village wine-shop, cannot tell some tale of Ulysses' voyage along the coast.

Veritable history, too, had here its monuments in grand conical heights crowned with ancient castles, which stand like the tents of some celestial army that has accomplished its warfare on earth and abandoned the field ;—age-beaten fortifications of French, Spanish and Normans ; and, back of them, of Saracens, Romans and Greeks ; and, still more ancient, of Carthaginians and Phœnicians, and of the Sykels also ;—aye, and of tribes and races who fought about these same castles long ages before men had invented pens to record the ventures of their swords.

Square miles of vineyards lay on slopes abruptly terraced to prevent their slipping downward into the sea. Orange and lemon orchards commingled their hues of silver and gold. Dusky olive groves, relieved by the faint blush of the almond trees, interspersed far and near the barren stretches where only goats could climb to browse the sparse herbage.

Across the water gleamed the white walls of Reggio ; on this side, Aci Reale and Catania, and a ghostly wraith of Syracuse, once bustling with the life of its millions of inhabitants, struggled through the haze.

Upon the adjacent slopes of Etna were tiny walled towns, detached villas and huts, where audacious people had built their homes on the very bosom of the lava that had destroyed the homes of their fathers. Far away stretched vast plains, divided into *latifondi*, those estates of absentee landlords who lived in the sweldom of Rome or Paris, and had too little interest in either the people or the land to allow the one to subsist upon the other.

Giuseppe seemed at the moment oblivious to all this scene. The horizontal lines across his forehead had deepened into furrows ; his eyelids contracted, as if he were scrutinizing some intricate object that he could not quite make out. Yet he was looking at nothing but the stretch of water across to the Calabrian shore, sailless and waveless, its glistening brightness unbroken except by the shadows dropped from the ships of the sky that floated overhead.

“Ah, Peppino, you are brooding again,” said Paolo, touching fondly his brother’s forehead with a stick he was carrying.

“Why do you call it brooding, Paolo ? The view makes one silent. It’s too grand for words. Old Homer nearly wrecked his rhetoric in trying to describe it.”

“True,” said Paolo. “But you, Peppino, were not

making poetry about it just now. There was no inspiration in your face, I tell you. One moment your eyes flashed as Etna does when getting ready to spit fire. Then again, a black cloud settled on you, as when the sirocco from the south meets the tramontana from the north on the summit, signalling squally weather. Sometimes I catch you with your teeth set hard just as you used to do when you wrestled with our old goat Hamilcar. Come, cheer up, Peppino mio !”

Giuseppe laughed heartily,—“ Ah, Paolo, they have taught you fine rhetoric over at Rome ; and withal a little Jesuitical shrewdness in reading other people’s thoughts—or, at least, the habit of being suspicious of them. But, caro mio, I will let you practice on me as Father Confessor far enough to admit that I do have some disturbing thoughts whenever I look down upon our beautiful Sicilian land ; thoughts that, to borrow your elegant simile, butt against my brain, and my heart too, as old Hamilcar used to butt lower down.”

“ Let me share your thoughts, Peppino.”

Paolo leaned upon the wall so close to Giuseppe that the flowers seemed to blush at being caught in listening to their confidences.

“ No, no, my dear boy, you could not share my thoughts,” replied Giuseppe, glancing into his brother’s face, and letting his look linger there a moment among the fair features, as some rough warrior might roam again the happy valley of his childhood.

“ Could not, Peppino ? Why not ? You did not use to be so reserved with me. What long talks we have had together ; of everything we read and heard and thought and dreamed, out here in our walking, sitting under the starlight, and in the dark nights when our mother thought we were sleeping.”

“ True, Paolo, but that was when we were mere boys.

Now we are men ; and as men I fear that we have drifted into different worlds. I cannot comprehend yours, and I am sure that you could not appreciate mine. Your mind is full of the ancients, of traditions, of saints, of churchly ritual and life ; while I have been left here to think chiefly of what I see ; to think of Sicily ; perhaps, as you say, to brood over it. Alas, Paolo, I have looked so long over this landscape that I see things in it that you never do."

"What things?"

"Such things as should make the very devils put on mourning ;—the slavery, the poverty, the ignorance, the degradation of our people. Look, Paolo, at the thousands of wretched hovels that dot these glorious hills. The towns are even worse than the country, mere kennels of animal humanity. It makes one heart-sick to go through Castiglione over there, or Piemonte or Catalbiano. How beautiful would be this Alcantara Valley if one could be morally colour blind, and not see the squalor and hopelessness of the contadini ! I tell you, Paolo, my wrath boils over in hot words whenever I go down to Aci Reale or Catania or even to Taormina, and walk through the narrow, twisting, filth-reeking streets. Look there ! That lizard that crawls on these walls is better fed and better lodged, and better clothed in his green skin, than are most Sicilians."

"That may be," replied the student. "But consider, brother, who made both animals and men to be as they are. Is not this God's ordering,—the beautiful lizard and the ugly wart-toad ? Heaven sets men in their classes and conditions as it breaks the land into fertile fields and barren ravines. In Rome, Peppino, we are taught to take the larger view of things, that is, to see things as God has made them to be."

"I don't believe that God has anything to do with it,

except that He curses men for letting it be so," said Giuseppe, with a little show of petulance.

Paolo raised his hands in mute protest at what to him seemed blasphemy.

Giuseppe continued,—“I tell you, brother, our government is to blame. Government, did I say? We have as much government as the lava from Etna gives to the groves it burns down and the vineyards it buries. A great devil-fish called Francesco the Bourbon curls himself up in his palace at Naples, and fattens on the spoil of the people; and when he wants more he stretches out his tentacles across the Straits of Messina, and throttles the life out of Sicily.”

“The powers that be are ordained of God,” quietly interposed the student, making the sign of the cross.

“But,” replied Giuseppe, “if the people would rise and make these powers not to be, wouldn't that be the ordinance of God also? Paolo, our father's blood boils in my veins when I think of Sicily for which he so gloriously, but uselessly, died.”

The face of Giuseppe as he talked would have been a study for a dramatist. It reddened and whitened by turns; then became rigid with effort to suppress his passion. It was as when a keeper puts a straight-jacket upon the spasmodic muscles of an overexcited patient. In a moment, however, his features softened, and, taking his brother's two hands into his own, he looked into his fair face as a man might have looked into that of a woman whom he loved tenderly, but whom he had unwittingly hurt.

“Forgive me, little brother. Let us not talk of these things. We are so different.”


The young men resumed their walk down the road; that road which curves around the breast of the hills, and twists itself into tiny valleys as a vine runs through

a pile of underbrush ; and goes on stepping-stones across little streams that welcome its passing with the laugh of their ripples ; and tumbles itself into pieces over rocks so broken and steep that even donkeys stand for a moment with their four feet close together taking counsel as to where they may be safely put.

Far away gleamed a cluster of houses, the Menardi villa. From this point of view it looked to be almost at the edge of the sea ; while to those near the shore it seemed high up towards the shoulders of Etna. Such is the illusive magnitude of the mountain.

The conversation of the brothers was interrupted by the notes of a herdsman's pipe. The music at first was but a rude improvisation, not much more than a run of the gamut ; yet the notes were rhythmical, not unlike the rise and fall of a swallow in her flight over the undulations of the hills. A Sicilian's blood beats in a sort of silent melody through his veins. He talks and walks and lives in cadences ; and when a reed pipe is at his lips, his soul pours out in ebb and flow as naturally as the waves lap his island shores.

The sounds that now came up from the path below created the illusion that the ancient god Pan might himself be climbing the hills, now on lowland, now on upland. Suddenly the irregular notes took tune. And what a tune ! It was as if the nymphs and elves had darted out from their hiding-places in clefts and pools and dense-tangled thickets, and joined in a maddening dance. The weird music of the tarantella rattled among the rocks and echoed in the cactus clumps. Giuseppe and Paolo, for all the diverse excitement of their minds, could not restrain an impulse which to all genuine Sicilians is instinctive. Putting their thumbs into the armholes of their jackets they cut a few fantastic figures with their nimble feet and swaying bodies.



The musician had now come up with them. Between two enormous bundles of brushwood appeared the long ears of a donkey, and back of them, and as if belonging to them, the head of a man covered with a black cap in shape not unlike an inverted stocking. The man's face was almost entirely hidden behind the big hands that held the reed pipe.

Ricciotti Pasini was of small build, with a bullet-shaped head. His eyebrows met across the bridge of his nose, and resembled a heavy abattis, out of which his deep-set eyes gleamed like the bores of two cannon. His features were of Arab cast, denoting, perhaps, his descent from the old Saracenic inhabitants of the land,—as in other natives of the Island one detects the racial lineaments of the Normans, Romans, Greeks, and even Egyptians,—types uniquely preserved in spite of the mixture of bloods during many generations.

“Buon giorno !” was the salutation of the brothers.

“Bun jorru, Signori !” was Ricciotti's response in the abbreviated, but softer, dialect of the country.

Giuseppe loitered a moment, and let Paolo go a few paces ahead ; then, drawing close to the man, he said :

“Your brushwood, Ricciotti, is not quite thick enough. I can see the glint of the rifles through it.”

Ricciotti quickly readjusted his load. “The weapons,” said he, “are not good for much ; but, as I heard that the King's soldiers were going to make a raid on Piemonte to-night for arms, I thought I might do the main harvesting myself, and leave them only the gleanings. Signor Menardi, the nightingales sing to-night.”

“Ah ! where ?”

“At the old wine-press. Tell Beppo at the house below, Signore.”

“Bene ! I shall be there,” replied Giuseppe, and went whistling to overtake his brother.

II

EVEN WORMS TURN

THE conversation of the brothers began again. “Why are we so different, Peppino?” asked the younger. “We did not use to be so. We have the same parentage. We were nursed in the same home.”

“True,” responded Giuseppe. “You have no doubt received much of the character of our mother, so gentle, pure-minded and full of faith in the doctrines of Holy Church. But I? Well, I am a sprig from our paternal stock alone. The hot blood that our father spilled at Messina in the great uprising of '49 is my inheritance. But you, Paolo, you have such a quiet soul; so content with everything. If you are ever ruffled, it is only by some religious matter, and that always leaves you more elevated and serene than before. You make me think of the sea out yonder. That mantle of colour which the sky drops upon the water is not so beautiful to me as your pure mind which must get its tone also from heaven itself. But my soul? Well! it's only like one of these wild ravines, torn by the torrents. I am sometimes frightened at myself, and don't wonder at your being alarmed for me.”

“You mistake me, Peppino,” said Paolo, shaking his head, and blushing as if, instead of the compliment to his piety, his brother had said something offensive. “You mistake me, Peppino. My soul is not beautiful. When I look at myself in the mirror of any truly saintly life I am ugly, contorted, even vile. Gesù pity me!”

The young student crossed himself as he bowed his head upon his breast.

"Nonsense, Paolo! They teach you too many depressing things over in Rome. Half the time you are cleaning yourself with your prayers and penances, when there isn't so much as a fly-speck of sin on you."

"Yet you, Peppino," replied the student, "are depressed, too. You show it whenever you are thinking by yourself."

"True! when thinking by myself, but not about myself; only about Sicily."

"Why, Peppino," said Paolo, "why disturb yourself about affairs that you cannot change, and which, indeed, need not be changed, since Holy Church watches over us all? The eyes of the blessed saints look down upon us as many as the stars. See those men in the field yonder. They have just raised their caps, and repeated a Pater or invoked the prayers of the Blessed Ones whom they have selected to be the patrons of their fields. There is something so restful in this. These men will go to their homes, humble though they may be, and live as contented under the guard of the invisible ones as their own little children are when they go to sleep in their mother's arms."

"Do you think them contented, Paolo?" asked Giuseppe, with an incredulous arching of his eyebrows. "Touch one of them in any way adverse to his little selfish interests, though it be of less account than a sparrow he has shot for his meal on a festa, and he will draw his knife on you. I, too, am restless, Paolo. Perhaps it is because I am more Sicilian than I am Christian."

"But here is Beppo. I must have a word with him. What a home for a human being! A mere scab on the skin of nature under which the man—doubtless as good a

man as either you or I—crawls like a parasite and—lives? No, exists.”

A stone cabin not more than a good half-story high stood by the side of the mountain path, or rather in the way of it, for the path had to make a *détour* in order to avoid crowding the house off the narrow plateau. An eagle's nest on a cliff could not have afforded a sublimer view of land and sea, nor would an eagle's nest, furnished only with interwoven sticks and stones, have been a much less desirable abode for a human household than the home of Beppo Bambaro, the goatherd. Over the doorway was the ubiquitous pair of goat horns that kept away all harm, should anybody possessed of the Evil Eye be passing and look in. Old Beppo sat by the door.

“Buona sera, Beppo?”

“Bun ser, Signori!”

“On what are you working, Beppo? Oh, I see, a new bell-collar for the goat. And what are you carving on it?” asked Giuseppe, taking into his hand a piece of bent wood upon which the rustic artist had succeeded in making certain indentations that resembled a human figure as much as the dough babies his wife made resembled the half-naked child that sprawled in the doorway.

“It's a *Gesù bambino*,” said Beppo.

“Why *Gesù*?” asked Paolo. “Take some saint that cares for the goats.”

“This shall never be worn by a goat, Signori,” replied the man. “It's for the bellwether of the sheep.”

“It's a good bell,” said Giuseppe, tapping it with his finger nail. “Real bronze, I think. Certainly very old, Beppo?”

“Old? Aye, the oldest bell in all Sicily.”

“Maybe,” said Giuseppe to his brother, “maybe it is the bell of one of Polyphemus' sheep, the one that

Ulysses rode on when he escaped from the blind giant's cave up there on the side of Etna. How is that, Beppo ?”

“I don't know anything about Poly—whatever's his name. But I tell you this bell was worn on the neck of one of the sheep of the shepherds of Bethlehem, the very night the Blessed Bambino was born.”

“Who told you that, Beppo ?”

“A holy monk who made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem told it to my grandfather's grandfather.”

“You believe that, Beppo ?”

“Surely I do, Signore. Would I dare to doubt my ancestors, and they in heaven for a hundred years ? I carve a Cristo on the collar. That will keep my sheep from the pest.”

Giuseppe turned away and walked a few steps, then came back muttering to Paolo,—“The puerile superstition ! Can this people ever be made anything of ?”

The student did not reply. He was interested in the knife with which the man was carving. It was the point end of a broken sickle.

“Haven't you a better knife, Beppo ?”

“I had one, un bello cotello, but the King's soldiers took it away from me because they said the blade was long enough to reach into one's heart. Diavolo ! They said the law wouldn't let me have it because it wasn't a knife, Signore ; it was a weapon ! But”—addressing Giuseppe in a low voice—“you should see the rest of the sickle. It would go round a soldier's neck like a collar ; and I made it so sharp that it would cut his head off clean before he tumbled. San Pietro, bless me, that I may use that sickle before long !”

Giuseppe drew the man to one side. “The nightingales to-night, at the wine-press.”

“Signore, the crows are after the nightingales,” replied Beppo. “I think they have sighted the nest.”

“What do you mean, Beppo?”

“Why, the soldiers. Only yesterday they went through my house here. They rumbled everything in Leila’s chest of drawers, and even prodded the pig from under the bed. Maledetti! And if they are so sharp-eyed as that, they’re going to search the old wine-press, certamente, Signore.”

Beppo’s wife brought out a platter on which were some fruit of the prickly pear, a half loaf of black bread, and a straw-covered flask of commonest wine. The woman attempted to step over the child in the doorway, but a half-grown pig bolted for the exit at the same instant. The consequence was that the round loaf rolled from the platter to the ground. Instantly the woman set up a howl of mingled imprecation and threat, for, in falling, the loaf had landed top-side down, so that the mark of the cross imprinted upon the crust lay in the dirt.

Beppo uttered an oath, seized the loaf and flung it far down the hillside into a thicket.

“The jackals may eat it. It will kill some of the thieving brutes. But, Signori, I ought not to have done that. I ought to have saved the loaf for the next soldiers that come here. Dio mio! They say that the flour changes to poison when the loaf falls cross down, just as sure as the Padre makes bread to be flesh.”

Beppo whispered to Giuseppe,—“Signore, I’ll not go to the nightingales to-night. The crust with the cross in the dirt would bring a curse on the meeting.”

Then in louder voice Beppo said, “Pray for me, Signor Paolo, you who are going to be a priest, that neither the pig nor the child get any hurt for this.”

Paolo crossed himself. Giuseppe spoke out,—“If the pig dies, Beppo, I’ll give you another one; and if the baby is harmed I will pay Padre Omelli for a score of masses.”

The woman dropped to her knees, took the hand of Giuseppe in both hers, and kissed it at least once for each of its fingers.

“Madre Diabolica !” cried Beppo, pushing his wife away. “And your hands covered with the dough, and the flour all over the Signore’s jacket ! She’s a stupid woman, Signori, to drop the bread. Maria Santissima prevent that such a thing should happen to us as happened Filippo’s donkey.”

“What was that ?” asked Giuseppe.

“Why, the beast has become so stubborn that Padre Omelli says the devil has put the brute’s head where his tail belongs. Do you think that could be so, Signore ?”

“I have known asses to be built that way,” replied Giuseppe laughing. “But, Beppo, it wasn’t Leila’s fault that the bread fell.”

“But it was her fault,” insisted her husband, as the woman went back crying into the cabin. “And I’ll tell you more. The woman has grown so stupid or wicked that she didn’t say the prayers when she was making the bread. I listened, and not a holy sound did she utter. She mixed the dough without the blessed words to the Holy Trinity. How could the bread be good after that ? And she shaped the loaf and baked it, and put the cross on it without a whisper of

	“ ‘San Francisu, pani friscu,’
OR	
	“ ‘San Cat’aura, pani ca’ura,’
OR	
	“ ‘Santa Zita, beddu di crusta,’
OR	
	“ ‘Santa Niccola, quattu ma mola.’

Not a word did she say to the Blessed Saints, and of course they let her drop the bread. Per Dio ! The

wicked, wicked woman. But, Signor Giuseppe, is it true that the King in Naples has a new wife ?”

“Yes, Beppo ; and they say that she is very beautiful.”

“Well !” replied the man, “may the devil make her forget to say her prayers when she makes the next batch of bread for His Majesty !”

The brothers each ate a cactus fruit, and took a swallow of wine, after which Beppo carefully wiped the mouth of the flask on his sleeve. Giuseppe and Paolo then resumed their walk and conversation.

“I wish,” said Giuseppe, “that the saints in heaven would sometimes think of and do something for these poor people who are still down here on earth.”

“They do much for them,” replied Paolo. “Think of the loneliness of these contadini, living away off on these mountains, but for their sense of the nearness of the blessed spirits.”

“I wish the spirits would come closer to them,” replied Giuseppe ; “near enough to touch their hands, and teach them to build better houses and raise better crops.”

III

PIETY AND PATRIOTISM

NOT far from Beppo's house a great rock deflected the path. On the side of it had been cut a rude cross. Beneath this symbol, just where the rock touched the ground, was a little round hollow. Both men crossed themselves as they passed by; Paolo reverently, Giuseppe carelessly as if acting from the remnant of mere habit.

Giuseppe turned back, and looked a moment. "This hole, Paolo, has been worn wide and smooth by the kisses of nearly fifty generations of men, women and children who have been told the story of how the Saint there turned her horse, and how the beast made that hole with his hoof, and how the holy woman went back to Catania to martyrdom by the Pagans. But, brother, I am more interested in another hole. It's in the great rock across the gully yonder; a hole that has just been bored by living, human hands. To-morrow I am going to put some powder into it—if the soldiers don't stop me—and blast a big boulder out of the path, and so save the feet of the men and the women and the asses that have to toil over it as they climb up from the valley. I know that the King has forbidden such improvements, and that some of the priests preach against 'destroying old paths.' They say that's Scripture. You know, Paolo, better than I about such things. But, I tell you, I'm going to have the thunder of one blast at it even if the heavens are silent."

"Oh, Peppino, caro mio, I wish that you could have more spiritual vision."

“Spiritual vision! No, Paolo, I can’t have spiritual vision. I haven’t the capacity. My soul eyes are like those of the blind beggar who stands yonder down the road waiting for our alms. Maybe something has been thrown into my present life from the lower world by some spiritual earthquake, just as these hills have been twisted into gray and black rock by subterranean forces. My soul is, as I said, only a deep, ragged, dark ravine. Even those saints who fought devils don’t venture to walk through the dark shadows of my thoughts. I never see the haloed heads in my dreams:—only the haggard faces of the poor people. No blessed virgins appear to me; but only forms undeveloped, stunted, dwarfed for lack of food. Good God! and this is Sicily, where one has but to scratch the earth with a walking stick to make it prolific with tropical fruits. Don’t talk about the friends of humanity who look down upon us from heaven, or I will come to hate them, since with their supernatural power they leave humanity so pitiful. Is Santa Lucia asleep forever in her crypt over there at Syracuse, that she has not saved her city from any one of a thousand pests that have smitten it? Is Santa Rosalia, too, turned to stone, like her effigy in the cave on Monte Pellegrino at Palermo, that she leaves that Capital of Sicily a den of wild beasts in human shape? And what about Santa Letteria and Santa Placida at Messina, that they don’t keep the town from tumbling to pieces in the earthquakes? And Santa Veneri in Aci Reale, and Sant’ Agata in Catania? Have the fires of purgatory in purifying them from sin burned out their humanity?”

Paolo fairly gasped in consternation at his brother’s words. “What, Guiseppe, have you lost faith in the saints? Your talk is that of some heretic imported from Germany or America.”

“No, no, Paolo! I believe in the saints. But I be-

lieve they don't help us because we don't help ourselves. The saints were heroes, martyrs, in their days. They toiled for the right, they died for things wholesome and pure and loving; and they will not bless us until we learn to do as they did. They will not pray for us, however much we pray to them, until we become like them. So, Paolo, let us care less for washing the statues of the saints, and more about sewerage of our streets in the cities; less for garlanding their necks with gems and flowers, and more for making the homes of the people they loved when on earth more beautiful and livable; less for giving them crowns and sceptres, and more about dethroning the gamblers and prostitutes who call themselves our kings and princesses in the royal bagnios of Naples. Ah, Paolo, if the faith would only resume its ancient mission to mankind! I never go to Catania and look at the magnificent monastery of San Benedetto without recalling the splendid work which that Order alone accomplished when, with the spirit of its founder, it regarded itself as the servant of men in everything that made for human betterment. The monks took axes and grubbing hoes and went into deserted places, rooting out the tangled overgrowth of the centuries which followed the fall of the Roman Empire when the land had become almost depopulated. They built again material civilization; taught the people agriculture and architecture. So, too, they dug away the superstitions that had overgrown the human mind from the rank pagan seeding. They rebuilt society amid the savagery into which men had lapsed. They ——"

"Yes! Yes!" broke in Paolo, catching the enthusiasm from his brother's lips without waiting to hear his full thought. "Yes, as our professor at Rome has told us, those Benedictines alone have given to the Church forty popes, two hundred cardinals, forty-six hundred

bishops, over thirty-six hundred canonized saints and —— ”

“Tut! tut, boy!” said Giuseppe. “What weighs the multiplication of popes and cardinals and dead saints in comparison with the multiplication of wheat grains and books? Oh, if San Benedetto and San Francesco and San Bernardo were to come back again to earth! Then there would be no need for others to denounce the Church for having forgotten its mission. Why, Paolo, glance abroad, widen the narrow slit-windows of your outlook. The world everywhere else is throbbing with industrial life, multiplying the benefits of material and intellectual existence, doubling the yield of the fields through better systems of agriculture, quadrupling the output of factories, making all nations contribute to the comfort of each by means of ever-widening commerce. But alas! our Italy remains stagnant. Look there at the contadini plowing with sticks of wood; carrying water in casks on donkeys or on their heads. See the women weaving their own cloth on hand looms;—while Europe is humming with factories, refreshed with aqueducts, and in America they cultivate the fields with machinery, and send us grain across the ocean to keep us from starving,—and this is Sicily! Dio mio! Sicily, once the granary of the world!

“But, pardon me, Paolo. Your faith is sacred to you, and because it is yours it is sacred to me. Let us talk no more about these matters. Pray for me, brother; and now and then pray for—for our poor Sicily, too.”

IV

SOME HOLY BOGIES

THE afternoon shadows had crept along the steep sides of the ravines, leaving only the wide open spaces in the full sunshine.

“We have an hour to spare,” said Ginseppe. “Let us stop at the cottage, and see how old Menotti is getting along. Lucia, his daughter, did not come to the house this morning.”

“I wish,” said Paolo, “that our sister Elena had a better cameriera than Lucia. She is such a vain and frivolous contadina.”

“True : but even you, my ascetically inclined brother, must have noticed that she is pretty. What! you haven’t? I tell you, Paolo, that there is something wrong in your education at Rome. You are allowed to rave over the picture of a beauty, if she is labelled a pagan goddess or an early Christian saint ; but you must not admire the model, even though the artist couldn’t help falling in love with her while he copied her face.”

He had scarcely said this when Lucia herself appeared at the bend in the path. She was a girl in the upper teens ; slight in build, and thus very different from most Sicilian women, who are short and thick-set, especially those who are obliged in childhood to carry heavy burdens on their head. Lucia’s hair was black ; not raven black, but slightly touched with gold ; a russet hue not noted when in the shade, but answering to the sunshine with a ruddy tint ; possibly an inheritance from some ancient Phœnician ancestress who had escaped from the harem of

Solomon, and joined her people in the early settlement of the Island. Who knows?

"Bun sera, Signori!" she ejaculated, as, half out of breath, she told of her father's critical condition.

"And, Signori, I have run down to the village to call the Strega."

"The Strega! The witch! The sorceress!" exclaimed Paolo. "Why put faith in such rubbish? You are a heathen, Lucia. You are a ——"

He did not complete the sentence. Paolo was not yet a student of the anæmic sort. His young blood—or was it his artistic temperament?—made him see in the girl's face the rare beauty that Giuseppe had spoken of, and with native courtesy he left unspoken any other depreciatory epithet that he may have had on his tongue.

"Oh, Signori," protested Lucia, "there was nothing else to do. My poor Zu came from the field struck all through with the fever and the chill. All the neighbours when they heard it came, and brought him everything to cool his mouth and stop his thirst,—oranges and wine and real cow's milk. But they made him no better. Then the doctor came; but poor Zu wouldn't let him take the blood from his arm. Then Vecchia Maria came too; and she has seen more people die than anybody else has; and she made him drinks out of all sorts of herbs that she had seen other people take before they died. But, Signori, they didn't do him any good. Oh, my poor Zu! He is going to die."

"Your father is in God's hands," remarked Paolo, as solemnly as if he had been a priest preparing to say the last prayers.

"Si, Signore; we know he was in God's hands, and we tried to take him out," replied the girl, with a rhetoric that was as true to popular belief as it was false to proper theology. "Oh, Signore, we did everything. We

covered the bed all over with all the images of all the saints we had, and all the neighbours could find too, and all the sprays of evergreen that were left from last Palm Sunday when Padre Omelli blessed them. But, Signore, it didn't take the pain from his back, nor the ache from his head. What else could we do but send for the Strega ? Signori, Signori ! Poor Zu must not die."

The young men accompanied Lucia to her home. It was a one-storied structure, built of uncut stones picked from the hillside, and thickly stuccoed with more mud than lime. It stood as far aside from the main path as the steep hillside would permit without inviting its fall into the valley beneath. A crowd of people was gathered about the door. In the one room of the house the sick man lay. All were debating in high voices the chances of his recovery, cursing the doctor, and even questioning the sciences of Vecchia Maria, who had culled all the medicinal herbs she knew from far and near.

"If there is no virtue in the blessed images and palm sprigs," said one, "then there is nothing left but to invoke Bun Diavolo."

"Perhaps," said another, "Menotti has sinned against Diavolo some time ; maybe he has killed a cat or burned a yoke."

"Maybe he has given his soul to Diavolo and now Diavolo has come to claim it," was the awful suggestion of another. "Young men sometimes do that when the wine is in them. They forget it, but Diavolo never does. A man who was afterwards Pope once did that, and only the bronze image of San Pietro saved him. That's true, for I myself have seen the bronze image."

The others looked upon the speaker with reverence.

"But here comes La Strega."

Giuseppe and Paolo, led by their curiosity, accompanied the witch into the room.

The apartment was none too large even for one to die in, considering the fact that it takes some air to furnish one with the last breath. The walls were covered with faded pictures of the Holy Virgin, the Bambino Gesù, Santa Rosalia, Santa Lucia, San Francesco di Paoli, and even such minor saints as San Vitus, the patron of dogs, and Sant' Antonia, the guardian of pigs. At one side in an alcove was the great bed where for years had slept Zu and Za, as father and mother are fondly called, keeping watch in their very dreams over the children who slept together in a low cot beside them, lest the little ones should wander too far away in their dreamland, and never return.

On this bed now lay the sick man.

The Strega, an old woman almost hairless, toothless, and clad in a dirty black gown, took from a packet some dried leaves, some aromatic powder and a number of little crosses made of palm leaves. She sprinkled the room with a solution of salt, making in her motions the sign of the cross. She then put one of the little palm-twig crosses upon the breast of the patient, and pronounced the Creed, carefully avoiding the utterance of the names of the Holy Trinity. Next she burned some of the dried leaves, filling the room with the smoke. In the midst of this incense she prostrated herself, kissing the dust, and exposing her bare breasts to the earthen floor. While in this attitude she repeated a rigmarole of sentences, invoking all the spirits of heaven, hell and the air between.

During this solemnity the crowd suddenly parted, and there entered the parish priest, Padre Omelli.

The Padre was on the under side of middle life. He had a broad and jovial face, in which his eyes sparkled like stricken flints. The people were fond of their Padre, notwithstanding some of the older priests had reported him to the Bishop at Messina as having strange ideas.

He had even uttered words that sounded like a criticism of the political wisdom of Pio Nono. He was, however, so devoted to his parish duties, so kind to the sick and unfortunate, so wise in his advice regarding work on the farm and the savings in the little boxes hidden away in the chests of drawers, that he was as much loved for his own sake as he was venerated for his holy office.

Since Gesù drove the traders from the temple more apparently righteous wrath had not been witnessed than that of Padre Omelli as he took in the scene.

“Out of this, you she imp!” said he, taking the Strega by the shoulder, and thrusting her bodily from the door. After her went, not only the various objects used in her incantations, but most of the herbs of Vecchia Maria. Indeed, so beside himself was the priest in his zeal that he did not seem to notice that several of the clay images of the saints that were on the bed-covering fell to the ground and were broken. When the terrible omen was pointed out to him, he unceremoniously swept the fragments out of the door with the side of his foot.

“What do you mean by this, Catterina?” said the Padre to the mother.

The woman seemed paralyzed by the question. Lucia alone had sufficient self-possession to reply.

“Nothing else did any good, Padre, and poor Zu was going to die. I know he was; for when all the people were saying their Paters and Aves, and were telling us what to do, Zu put his fingers in his ears, and looked so wild that I thought his soul was going to fly out of his eyes. And, Padre, the saints wouldn't help us either.”

The wrath melted from Padre Omelli's face as he watched the features of the girl, her beauty changing its quality with almost every word, as that of the almond-tree when its branches are swayed by shifting winds.

"Ah, Lucia," said Padre Omelli, laughing,—“you didn't pray to the right saints.”

“But, Padre, how should I know what saint would cure poor Zu when I didn't know what he was sick of?” asked the girl.

“You should have asked the help of Santa Fresh Air, Santa Coolwater, Santa Go-to-sleep, and Santa Chicken-broth,” replied Omelli.

“Dear me! Are there really such saints?” asked Lucia, raising her hands in amazement at the names.

“Just so sure,” said Padre Omelli, winking at Giuseppe, “just so sure as there was once a goddess Hygeia whom our pagan ancestors worshipped on these hills.”

“Say, Padre, couldn't you catch and recononize Hygeia?” asked Giuseppe. “I'd build her a shrine, and incense it with quinine bark.”

The Padre went to the bedside, felt the pulse of the sick man, and looked at his tongue.

“There's nothing the matter with you, Menotti, except that you have let yourself get overtired in the *antu*. You can't keep up with the file of men digging in the field as you used to do. You must respect your years. I will see to it that hereafter Signor Menardi makes you the leader of the gang, so that you can set your own pace with the hoe. Eh, Signor Menardi?”

“It shall be as you say, Padre,” replied Giuseppe, approaching the bed. “I didn't know that you, Menotti, were working in the *antu*, or I would have stopped it.”

“Thank you for your kindness,” replied the sick man. Then drawing Giuseppe's head down close to his own, he added in a whisper,—“I could keep step with the boys in the march. Don't leave me behind when Garibaldi comes.”

“He will come, surely,” replied Giuseppe.

"Then I'll get well quick," rejoined Menotti, as he pressed Giuseppe's hand.

"Now, Catterina," said the Padre, turning to the mother, "make some nice bread for your man. I know you can ; for I have had many a nip of it."

"Oh, Pietro ! Pietro !" cried Lucia, as at that moment her brother appeared at the door. "Pietro, do come and see. Padre Omelli must have made a miracle, for poor Zu is going to live. Padre himself says he isn't going to die."

"Who said he was going to die ?" grunted the young man.

Pietro was a little older than Lucia, and although far from being a prepossessing youth, resembled his sister enough to indicate that he belonged to the same family stock ; as a knot on a lemon tree shows kinship to the graceful limb that sways beside it. Pietro was short and muscular. His bullet-shaped head was heavily thatched with black hair, which had apparently been barbered the last time with a pair of sheep shears, or perhaps with the knife that Pietro always carried to do pruning with, or if needful to cut a wind-pipe. A long lock hung down over his forehead, in the style affected by the devil-may-care young sprigs of the time, who esteemed such adornment as a Samsonian sign of strength, or at least a challenge to any one who should dare to dispute the prowess of the wearer.

"You had better stay at home, and look after the goats, Pietro," was Padre Omelli's greeting. "At least attend to things here until your father gets around again."

"Things ? What things worth attending to ?" replied Pietro, looking about him with an intentionally vacant stare at the meagre outfit of the peasant farm,—a score of chickens, four or five goats, together with an ass and

pig that welcomed him with a familiar bray and grunt.

"If you would stay at home and work, Pietro, there would soon be more things to look after," was the Padre's rebuke.

"What's the use, Padre?" muttered the fellow as he turned into the house.

Padre Omelli accompanied Paolo and Giuseppe in their walk towards their own villa, the red tiling of which glowed in the sunset not far below them on the mountain-side.

"I am sorry for Pietro," said Omelli. "He is throwing himself away."

"It is a sad sight, indeed," replied Giuseppe; "and not only of Pietro, but of all our young Sicilians."

"Yet our boys have good stuff in them," said the priest. "What they lack is encouragement to stir their energies, and make men of them. You heard Pietro's complaint,—'What's the use?' Signori, that cry rings all over Sicily, 'What's the use? What's the use?'"

Padre Omelli put his big hands upon the shoulders of the two brothers as he walked between them. "Signori, pray God to help us; and let's try to do something to make things such in Sicily that there will be some use of a man being born with brain and muscles."

Padre Omelli parted with the Menardis where the path turned directly towards their house.

"The nightingales sing to-night," whispered Giuseppe.

"Bene! I'll be there," replied the Padre.

GIUSEPPE'S INHERITANCE

THE main building of the Menardi villa was a long, two-storied structure. The lower story was of stone, smoothly stuccoed and tinted a light roseate pink. The upper story was of wood, painted a whitish blue. The roof was of terra-cotta tiling; the whole making a lustrous contrast with the sombre shading of the olive orchards and lava fields that covered the mountain slope on which it stood. Along the entire front of the building ran a terrace, guarded by battlements, and ornamented here and there with massive earthen jars filled with trailing flowers and vines that overflowed like ruddy wine.

A dozen other terraces made great floral steps from the house down to the more level garden, which in turn terminated in dense copses of lemon trees, whose yellow fruit seemed to be in miniature rivalry with the great disk of the sun now near its setting behind the white sheen of Etna. Beyond this closer environment and half encircling the villa grounds were vast groves of olive; and still beyond, in the black lava soil, acres of grapevines closely planted in rows, and heaped about with rich earth so that they looked not unlike the tiny mounds of an entrenched army.

All this, however, was but a relic of the once grand estate of the Menardis. Some portions of it had been sold to meet debts; other parts taken by the government in penalty for all sorts of trumped up charges of disloyalty made from time to time against the padrones.

Antonio Menardi, the father of our two young men, had been a leader in the ill-starred revolution of 1848-1849. Ill-starred, indeed, was that revolt. It had aimed only at the independence of Sicily from the mainland, and the establishment of a little insular kingdom ;—a project politically as hopeless as that of keeping alive a limb detached from the body ; for Italy from the Alps to the Ionian Sea was feeling the stir of a common nationality.

After eighteen months of Sicilian independence, the Bourbon King of Naples had reconquered the Island, and exacted terrible penance from those who had defied his autocratic power. The living were thrown into dungeons, or forced into exile beyond the sea. The dead were punished by the impoverishing of their families.

In the streets of Messina Antonio Menardi had been terribly mutilated by a fragment of a shell when King Ferdinando bombarded the rebellious city, and won for himself the title by which he is ever to be known, "King Bomba." For many hours Antonio had been counted among the dead. And half dead he was, for only the upper part of his body still lived,—that in which brain and heart throbbed. His lower limbs were utterly paralyzed. That he was relieved from further pursuit and the confiscation of his estate was due to his marriage with Agata Brignola, whose family had taken no part in the insurrection.

Agata Brignola had been espoused to Antonio Menardi almost since they were children. Their respective fathers had arranged between them the dower the young Signorina should bring to her lord ; and this they did with as much wisdom as they were accustomed to show in other business affairs. According to Sicilian custom it was not deemed necessary to take a diagnosis of the heart conditions of the young couple. Yet had that been done, the symptoms would have been pronounced favourable ; for

Antonio had often admired the tall and graceful figure that was accustomed to salute him from the balcony whenever occasion occurred—or the young wooer made occasion—to ride by the villa of the Brignolas. Indeed there had been some opportunities for the wooer to gaze closely into Agata's superbly handsome face ; as for example when he took from her hand an offered flower or other favour. Aye, he had once or twice kissed that hand in true courtesy, and then gone home to dream that he was, or at least ought to be, a happy man in his prospective possession of so goodly a bride. Once he had gone into the Church of Sant' Agata at Catania, and bowed gratefully before the statue of the canonized maiden whose name had been given to his betrothed. Indeed, on that occasion he offered to the Saint a half whimsical prayer that her veil,—which, according to a tradition, had once made the lava stream descending from Etna divide and spare her devoted city from destruction,—might now be the symbol of the bridal veil which should one day rescue him from the ills of a prolonged bachelorhood.

But of the mental qualities that lodged behind the beautiful face of Agata Brignola, of her disposition and character, Antonio Menardi had no experience. He only indulged the Platonic conceit that a fair physique must enshrine a corresponding fairness of soul.

Nor was he mistaken in this. In the brief years of their married life he had acquired a reverence for Agata's gentle goodness, so contrasted, as it was, with his own impetuous nature. He felt also almost an adoration for her exalted piety, which, however, he felt himself to worship from afar. He had learned, but not without somewhat of torturing jealousy, that in her girlhood the idea of a married condition had been repugnant to her, desiring, as she did, to enter the convent, a devotee, like her patron Saint, to the more perfect life of a spiritual

bride of the Saviour. But—and in this she never ceased to mourn her unlikeness to her great model who had given herself to martyrdom rather than to marriage—the new Agata yielded to temporal considerations, enforced by her sense of filial duty to the wishes of her parents. She comforted herself with the thought that, if the love which partakes of the nature of marital fondness were somewhat wanting between herself and her husband, it was largely compensated by her conscientious devotion as a wife and mother. She could not, however, prevent Antonio's feeling that this fidelity was due rather to the sense of a religious obligation to be true to her duties in the family, than to any spontaneity of affection for himself personally. He imagined her a voluntary martyr to domestic conditions. He was grateful to her for this sacrifice, and showed it by the faithfulness with which he devoted himself to her happiness, even if it were sometimes evident that her happiness was greater when his demonstrations of affection were less.

Many a man in similar circumstances would have been tempted to waywardness ; but it was not so with Antonio Menardi. His relief from heart-hunger was found in his gradual engrossment in public affairs. As a landed proprietor he was consulted by the leaders of the various parties that divided his unhappy country. He was not without high inducements to throw in his lot with the royal interests that dominated the Island ; but he loved Sicily too much for that. He was fond of the people.

Another consideration moved Antonio Menardi as it moved many of the more devoted Catholics. What piety he possessed was turned into the channel of patriotism by the accession of Cardinal Mastai Ferretti to the Papal chair as Pío Nono. This worthy man was reputed to be a liberal, a reformer, a lover of the common people, an Italian who in his wide oversight of Catholic Christendom

would never forget his nativity. So thoroughly patriotic was Pio Nono believed to be that the despotic Court at Naples appointed a Novena, or nine days' prayer, that heaven would thwart the liberalism of the new Pope. Antonio Menardi flattered himself that his religious duty bade him pray rather that heaven would curse the cruelty of the Bourbon reign. And he did pray, if prayer it might be called, with curses as piously sincere as those of any anathema attached to an Encyclical. He cursed the Bourbons in words, and when the opportunity came he cursed them with bullets and with the red blood of hired Neapolitan soldiers on his bayonet point. Aye, he shrived himself with a curse that day when he lay in the street of Messina, mangled by the shell from the Bourbon citadel he was assailing.

Agata had consented to her husband's soldiering, believing at the time that the warfare was under the benediction of His Holiness, as did many of the monks and priests, and even bishops of the Church. But, in '48,—overborne doubtless by the consideration that, as Primate of the Roman Church throughout the world, he could not be solely an Italian—the Pope withheld his consent to the war for expelling the Austrian invaders from Lombardy. This unfortunately changed popular opinion everywhere, and led to the expulsion of the Holy Father from Rome, when Mazzini and Garibaldi took direction of affairs until they themselves were driven out by the armies of France.

But Agata Menardi was too much of a devotee to her Church to appreciate the change in the national sentiment. It was enough for her that the infallible Head of the Church had changed his mind. Her mind changed as naturally as the current of a brook when its channel is diverted.

Not so Antonio Menardi. As day after day and month after month he sat almost motionless in the great chair,

his heart kept throbbing with the patriotic impulse, and his brain was alert with the projects of the insurgents. More than one of the leaders in that great revolt of '49, men who were presumed to be in exile in England or Malta, visited him in disguise. Poor men who, as contadini, came seeking the most menial work at the villa, might have been overheard talking about the policy of Count Cavour in sending a Piedmontese army to join the allies against Russia in the Crimea; or endeavouring to unravel the schemes of that Imperial trickster, Louis Napoleon; or debating the possibility of English intervention in case of another revolution in southern Italy.

Antonio was a sort of central telephonic station, for his ears received from some, and his tongue repeated to others, news that it was not safe to commit to paper.

One day Rosolino Pilo,—he whose bust now adorns the public garden in Palermo,—came as a fruiterer from the mainland. Francesco Crispi,—he who was later to hold the portfolio of the Italian Premiership,—chatted with Antonio as he pruned the rose-bushes that climbed on the upper terrace. Men like Ruggiero Settimo, Pasquale Calvi and Mariano Stabile talked with him as he lay on his couch under the trees:—talked presumably about the vineyards and olives, but really about another crop of a different sort that was ripening.

Three children had been the fruit of Antonio Menardi's union with Agata Brignola,—Giuseppe, Paolo, and Elena,—the latter at the time of our story in the early bloom of womanhood. Antonio had left Paolo and Elena almost entirely to the tuition of the mother. "A mother knows her daughter best," he would say, "especially a woman of Agata's culture. As for Paolo, he is a dreamy lad. He ought to have been a girl, too."

But to Giuseppe the father clung with an all appropriating affection and constant companionship. In the

young man he saw himself repeated, the same quick judgment and courage. To him he spoke his mind freely, at the same time disciplining him in that reticence and caution which the patriots found essential to preserve, especially in times when one knew not the heart of his nearest neighbour.

In Giuseppe's upper teens he was sent to England for two years' education. There the youth had profited, not so much by what is taught in the schools, as by frequent intercourse with Italian refugees, often men of rare brilliancy, especially conversant with their own times and the recent history which precluded it. He had there met with Mazzini, and made a bowing acquaintance with several of the younger English statesmen.

During the absence of Giuseppe his father passed off the stage. Padre Omelli was with Antonio at the time of his death. The priest had administered the Holy Communion. Pressing the hand of the dying man, he spoke to him of the better land.

"Yes, yes," replied Antonio, "I know, I believe in God in heaven, Padre: but is God on earth? Oh, poor Sicily, torn like my body! Is there resurrection for Sicily, Padre?"

"If God will help us, my son, Sicily too shall rise!"

"With that assurance, Padre, I can die contented, but tell Giuseppe—tell Giuseppe——"

With which the great heart ceased to beat.

VI

A WOMAN'S HEART IS HER OWN

ELENA MENARDI was of slender build. Her features were almost typically Greek ; the forehead full and on a line with the nose ; her face thus seeming to confirm the family tradition that their ancestral stock on the mother's side was in straight descent from the colonists who, more than twenty-five hundred years ago, named from their island home in the Hellenic Sea the little sickle-shaped bay of Naxos, which lay in sight of the Menardi villa.

But for the tint given it by the Ionian sun, Elena's complexion would have been fair, in harmony with the dark auburn of her hair, thus making an exquisite setting for her blue eyes ; eyes that, Mother Agata was accustomed to say, were the reflection from the sea, since they had no prototype in the family memory for several generations back, either that of the Menardis or the Brignolas.

The evening of which we are speaking Elena had gone down the great terraces to meet her brothers. Mother Agata awaited them at the door of the house above.

"I am not big enough for you both to hug at once," cried Elena, as she extricated herself from the four arms that were thrown about her.

"Nor quiet enough for that matter, you little bird," said Paolo, grasping her again. He held her face between his two hands for a moment ; when, as if it might be sinful to overindulge this domestic affection, he walked quickly up the terrace steps to where his mother awaited the kiss upon her finger with which she was accustomed to allow her children to salute her.

Elena, being thus alone with Giuseppe, turned quickly towards him ;—her expression and manner suddenly and totally changed. Her blue eyes scintillated and her pretty lips curved downwards as saucily as those of a Sabine woman might have done when, during the festival at the base of the Tarpeian hill, she anticipated being seized by one of the Romans. Her resentment seemed to have been excited by some similar episode.

“Peppino, that Signor Pavo has been about the villa all the afternoon,” she said pouting. “A dozen times at least he has passed under my loggia. Once or twice he stopped and looked up, as if expecting me to notice him.”

“And you did notice him, cara mia ; else how do you know how often he passed, and how often he stood, and which way he looked ?”

“How could I help it when he annoyed me so ?” she replied petulantly.

“If you were not interested you would not have been annoyed,” laughed her brother. “Oh, you girls never understand yourselves. Now weren’t you interested in Roberto Pavo ?”

“Oh, yes,” said she. “He is interesting, with the feather in his cap, and his gay jacket and velvet breeches. So is a monkey interesting when dressed like him.”

“But,” said Giuseppe, continuing to plague her, “Roberto is a handsome fellow.”

“Not so handsome as you, Peppino. You see I am so used to masculine beauty even unadorned that a Pavo in full bloom doesn’t attract me.”

“But Roberto is rich ; reputed rich,” pursued the inquisitor. “The Pavos once had as much land as we, and for some reason they never lost the favour of the Bourbon government as we did ; and so they have kept their fields. Now when our brother Paolo becomes a monk and espouses poverty, as he undoubtedly will, and when I

am killed off, as maybe I shall be, who knows?—then it wouldn't be a bad thing if my sister were to unite the Pavo and Menardi estates. Eh! You know that the Pavos claim to have been dukes, counts or princes some time in the long past ages. They have a sword at their villa which was worn more than two thousand years ago by Dionysius the Sicilian, or by Timoleon the Corinthian, or by Hannibal the Carthaginian. Which was it? I have forgotten. But there is no doubt about the sword's antiquity, nor that the family stock is equally ancient. The only difficulty is in determining which of these heroes, or perhaps which of the Homeric demigods, was their real ancestor. Now, as a Pavo, little one, you might come to be a duchessa. Who knows?"

Elena looked at him with indignation flashing blue fire from her fine eyes.

"What, Peppino! And cease to be a Menardi!"

There was something so dramatic, and at the same time so sincere in the outburst of family pride that Giuseppe replied:

"I believe, Elena, that we Menardis must be of some royal race too. Just now you looked as haughty as your namesake Elena of Troy must have done,—that is, before she consented to become a Trojan. But why do you so dislike Roberto?"

"I don't know why I dislike him," said Elena. "A woman, I suppose, never reasons about such matters; she just feels. I don't like him. That is enough, isn't it?"

"You may misjudge him, proud little sister; for you have never spoken to him in your life. Have you?"

"No, I haven't; but a dog knows which man to snarl at, and which to wag his tail at, doesn't he? Why shouldn't a woman have as much instinct as a dog? I could never trust Roberto Pavo."

"I will ask no more questions," said Giuseppe, patting

her cheek. "It is enough that a Menardi does not wish a Pavo's attentions. Then they shall cease."

The look on her brother's face as he said this frightened the young woman. It was to her, who understood his variable moods, like the pine-tree-shaped cloud on Mount Etna that always presages an eruption.

"Oh, Peppino," she cried, "I am sorry I told you anything about Signor Pavo. Promise that you will not quarrel with him. He is a desperate man. I know it from his face. He will retaliate."

"Retaliate!" said Giuseppe superciliously. "A Pavo retaliate on a Menardi?"

"Of course, Peppino, you could take care of yourself; but you know our Sicilian ways. It would be terrible to have the vendetta between our families. Promise me, mio caro, that you will do nothing."

She put her hands appealingly upon his breast. He stood a moment saying nothing. Gradually his features relaxed their harsh expression.

"You are wiser than I, little one. As you suggest, a quarrel with the Pavos would be unfortunate, for you, for our family——" He was about to say "our movement," but arrested the words at the tip of his tongue, only adding:

"Yet Pavo must not annoy you. I swear, Elena, that for every frown he puts upon your pretty face he shall wear a scar."

"Then I shall never frown upon Roberto," replied she, "but only laugh at him. So!"

She sat down on a stone bench beneath the broken statue of a laughing faun. Her plastic face assumed a ludicrous look like that of the image.

"You are safe," cried Giuseppe. "Roberto could never stand that face. Why, you little imp, you could baffle King Francesco in his impudent annoyance of Sicily."

As they climbed the steps leading from terrace to terrace Elena's manner entirely changed. She took her brother's arm tremblingly.

"Peppino mio, Paolo says that you think and talk too much about the King and his faults. He said it was dangerous. And I heard Fra Raffaello, the monk from San Benedetto who comes here so much to see Paolo, say to him one day that it was a sin to speak so about King Francesco who, though he may be but a stupid boy, is yet the Lord's Anointed. The Frate said that the Holy Father had said so too, and commands all Sicilians to be loyal to Naples. Fra Raffaello said also that the priests knew all the rebels against the throne; knew them from the fact that they came no more to Confessional, being afraid to tell the sins they were going to commit. Do you go to Confessional, Peppino?"

In spite of the seriousness on his sister's face Giuseppe laughed outright. "Ah, Elena, you are not my Confessor, and I cannot let you shrive me in such matters. It was enough that I told you what terrible sin I would like to commit against the Pavo if he annoyed you. And didn't I repent of that when you told me to? In such matters you have a right to play the priestess, for they are your own affairs as much as mine."

"Yet, Peppino," replied Elena, "I beg of you, do not speak against the government. Even if it were not a sin, it is dangerous to do so. They say that King Francesco has as many eyes in Sicily as there are stars above it."

"That is true," replied Giuseppe; "at least as many spying eyes as there are soldiers and hired agents, and ——" He did not finish the sentence, as they had come within the hearing of their mother.

VII

STRANGE VINTAGE AT THE WINE-PRESS

MOTHER AGATA stood in the doorway that opened upon the marble tiling of the broad upper terrace. Her tall and slender form was unbent. From its peculiar pose one might have thought that it was not accustomed to bend. It was stately rather than graceful; straight as if it were the index of her inflexible conscience; rigid, as the doctrines of Holy Church, in which she believed. Though past the meridian of physical womanhood, her face showed no shadow-line cast by the descending sun. Her black hair had a sprinkling of gray, like the high-lights on a raven's wing. Her forehead was lofty and narrow. Beneath it gleamed a pair of eyes that offenders might fear; not the less because they were of small calibre. Her mouth was straight but for the slight down curve at the ends. Had she been an ancient saint she might have excited the worship of her generation; but, unlike Sant' Agata, whose name she bore, she would hardly have induced, as the original Saint did, a free-living pagan to fall in love with her.

"You have come at last, my son," was her greeting with a little reprimand in the tone. "You take too long walks with Paolo. You should remember, Giuseppe, that he is not so stalwart as yourself. The life of a student at Rome, who gives most of his hours to study and prayer, is not like yours. But, Giuseppe, are the nightingales singing as yet?"

She did not note the quick glance of suspicious inquiry that Giuseppe gave her, but added, "It is before their usual time. Yet I overheard Tomasso, the overseer of

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the Lanzetti villa, tell our Niccolo that the nightingales were singing in some grove."

"If that be so I must go to hear them," replied Giuseppe. "I have promised Elena to catch one for her. The old one in the cage has stopped singing. You know, madre mia, that birds are more easily caught in the early season. Later the abominable habit the contadini have of shooting them for the sake of a nibble off their tiny bones makes them shy of men."

"But there is no moon to-night, my son. You can see nothing."

"So much the better, mother. Niccolo will go with me; and Niccolo is as much a superintendent of the wild beasts and birds as he is of the olives and goats. He knows the nesting places of nightingales as well as an owl does, and can see as well in the dark."

"I will go with you, too," said Paolo.

Mother Agata's solicitude for the health of her favourite son relieved Giuseppe of the necessity of employing any ruse for Paolo's detention at home.

"No, Giuseppe, you must leave Paolo with me to-night. We will have so few opportunities to be together before he returns to Rome."

After the brief evening meal Giuseppe summoned Niccolo, the massaio, or overseer of the business of the villa. They walked together for nearly a mile up a steep and narrow path that ran between two walls of black lava.

At this time there were in Sicily, outside the cities, only a few roads in which wheeled vehicles of even the rudest construction could go. It had not been the policy of the government to construct, or even to favour the construction of, highways; for these would bring the people of the Island into closer knowledge of one another; and—an equally disastrous thing for a Bourbon régime—it would invite intercourse with foreigners. It was

easier to control a population isolated in small villages or scattered without ready intercommunication into thousands of solitary villas and detached hovels. When people, even the most ignorant, commingle in multitudes they talk of other things than their pigs and goats. Those among them who have come into touch with the wider world are apt to communicate ideas that make them less docile, less infantile in their dependence upon a paternal government,—in this case as paternal as that of Saturn who ate his children.

Giuseppe and Niccolo passed up the road where a path diverged leading to the Pavo villa. Here stood two Neapolitan soldiers, their rifles slung over their shoulders. These gave Giuseppe and Niccolo a respectful "Buon sera, Signori!" and then stood watching them until a bend in the path passed them out of view.

"You have arranged, Niccolo, for the sale of the lemons?"

"Si, Signore. Alcantà at Catania will take fully half of the crop, and Murri at Messina the remainder. The American market makes good demand, and we will have more to sell than last year."

"The wine-presses are in good condition?"

"Si, Signore. And the vines give sign of being unusually full-blooded. I would advise a new vat; perhaps two. The orange crop is also especially large. Murri will take all. But we cannot yet arrange the exact price. The government is putting an extra tariff on the exportation, the excuse being that the unsettled condition of the Island necessitates a larger expenditure for the army to watch us."

"How long can this thing last?" said Giuseppe.

"As long as Sicilians are cowards," grunted Niccolo.

The two men came to a stand and listened. Niccolo's figure was especially picturesque. He wore a felt hat

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with a stiff broad brim and high sugar-loaf or steeple crown, from which dangled a half dozen variously coloured ribbons. This set off jauntily a fine face, swarthy as an Arab's; a mustache that would have been ponderous but for the sharp up-twist at the ends. His neck was thick and long, broadly based upon a pair of shoulders that would have served admirably as a model for a gladiator. His short trousers were buckled into heavy hose, which covered, yet revealed, long and slender calf muscles, like those of a trained runner.

Giuseppe went some paces down the path; Niccolo in the opposite direction.

"Two soldiers below; but they are looking the other way," said Giuseppe.

"Only the backs of a couple of monks above; and they have no eyes in their buttocks, for all some people think that monks are omniscient," was Niccolo's response.

"Then over with us! Now for the nightingales!"

In an instant the two men had vaulted the lava wall of the roadside. High clumps of cactus concealed their movements, had any one been looking in their direction. Niccolo's long knife, which he had taken from its case and placed unsheathed in his belt, was prophetic of what might happen if anybody were impertinent enough to follow them.

After a few moments walking in silence they noted a shadowy figure gliding through an olive orchard to their right.

"It's Alessandro," said Niccolo.

Another came from the dense mass of lemon trees a little beyond.

"Ah, Ricciotti! Ricciotti, did you deposit the rifles safely?"

"Yes, and five thousand cartridges that even your sharp eyes, Signor Menardi, didn't see."

“Oh! they must have been in the donkey’s belly, then,” replied Giuseppe. “What a catapult his heels would have made if the cartridges had exploded !”

The party increased moment by moment. Where they came from would have been as much of a mystery to a casual observer as is the source of the clouds that gather in the clear blue sky of a Sicilian summer day. The men crossed a *fumara*, a deep ravine, through which flowed a stream, and clambered up the almost precipitous bank on the farther side. At every step loose stones rolled down to the bottom, and splashed in the water.

“A good defense against eavesdroppers,” said Niccolo. “One might as well announce his coming with a pistol shot as climb up here.”

At the top of the bank, hidden by a dense cactus copse, the high growth of which left only the brown and mossy tiling of the roof visible from a distance, was an ancient wine-press. The building enclosed a great vat, and beside it a platform on which many generations of *pistaturi*, or grape crushers, with naked limbs, and feet covered with broad shoes studded with projecting nail-heads, had trodden the layers of purple fruit, and watched the “blood of the grape,” as it trickled down into the cistern beneath. What crowds of merry vintagers had danced upon the strip of grass in front of the house as, in long file, they came up from the vineyards and deposited their loads of ripened clusters !

But this was many years ago. Now plants were growing out from crannies in the ancient walls. The lawn had long since heard the “call of the wild,” and dissipated in all the rank vices of the vegetable world, until it had become unsightly, disreputable, an utterly abandoned tangle of bushes and vines.

Another vintage had come. It was not now for the streams of *Etnean-wine*,—but for a redder flow, and of

more vital spirit. It was to be pressed from the veins of living men. The vat was now the rendezvous of vintners of the newer kind. Eleven years had passed since the last treading of the human cluster in the insurrection of '48-'49: years devoted to the cultivation of patriotic purpose, to the preparation of better methods, and to the gathering of the people in more practicable organizations.

Among these organizations was that of the squadre, or military companies, one of which was in every large community, or drawn from every country district. There was almost no opportunity for drill under the incessant surveillance of the soldier-police who were scattered everywhere throughout the Island; but weapons were stored in out-of-the-way places. Secret communication was had between the squadre and the liberal leaders on the mainland. Thus patriotism was organized and stimulated to intense alertness, awaiting the word from some unknown centre when the insurrection would flash in a hundred places at once.

The local squadra of that part of the Etnean district met at the old wine-press. The vat was apparently filled with the staves of broken casks, rotten straw, and other indications of having been the receptacle of refuse for a score of years. But an expert garbage prospector would have found beneath this useless surface indications of something of more remarkable value. Indeed, the vat was an unclassified armoury, of which Ricciotti Pasini, the piper of the afternoon, was the custodian.

Among the men who that night were hunting for nightingales was Roberto Pavo, the unwelcome wooer of Elena Menardi. Another was Francesco Fazio, a venerable figure, his face emblazoned with a sword-cut scar, a badge of his heroic service as a semi-martyr of '48, who both for his past experience and present devotion had been chosen captain of the squadra.

VIII

THE CONSPIRATORS

WHEN a sufficient number had gathered at the old wine vat—some of whom were posted without as guards—Francesco Fazio as captain announced a letter addressed to Sicilians by Mazzini, the exiled leader. This had been printed in foreign parts, and had been distributed by some process as mysteriously effective as that of bees in cross-fertilizing flowers. It read :

“Sicilians, for whom are you waiting? Can you believe that Cavour, or King Vittorio Emanuele or Louis Napoleon will come to give you your liberties? From none of them as yet can you expect help. Be daring! Strike for yourselves! The moment has come to make united Italy. Strike!”

There was an outburst of enthusiasm at the reading of this letter. Giuseppe Menardi spoke.

“Mazzini has spoken well, my brothers; yet perhaps not with infallible wisdom. Let us strike. But first let us consider where, and how, and for what we are striking. We must not repeat past mistakes. We must not forecast the issue by consulting our zeal and not our resources. I have a right to say this, for the blood of my house, the blood of Antonio Menardi, was drained uselessly into the ground at Messina.”

“Not uselessly,” said old Francesco Fazio, “not uselessly, since that blood has found a new spring-head in the heart of his son. The Menardi blood is like the river Alpheus which disappears and reappears again in the

Fountain of Arethusa over yonder at Syracuse. The ground cannot absorb it. I have a right to say this, Giuseppe, for I stood beside your father that day in Messina. I staunched his wound. I know his blood ; and now for eleven years I have felt the throb of it in the pulse of Antonio's son."

"Thank you, Francesco!" said Giuseppe, blushing deeply as the old man laid his hand upon the wrist of his young friend. "But we must avoid mere insurrection. What availed the attempt of Carlo Pisacane but three years ago? Why sacrifice again brave fellows like Nicotera, Gagliani, Valletta and Saint Andrea, who are now in the dungeons of Naples awaiting death without even the glory of having fallen afield? Surely Sicily is not doomed to be an eternal Prometheus, writhing ever on his rock without freeing himself."

"What would the Menardi propose?" asked Roberto Pavo, with a slight tone of sarcasm in his voice.

"First of all," replied Giuseppe, "I propose close union with the rest of Italy. Herein Mazzini sees clearly. You note his very words, 'Strike for united Italy!' His voice is that of Italians everywhere. It is the voice of reason, the voice of God."

Pavo interrupted: "Union with the rest of Italy? What! Sicily in union with Naples? Not while the Straits flow between, say I. Sicily wants independence. Nature has bounded her by the seas for that. When an earthquake blocks the waters between the Ionian and Terrhenian there may be political union with Italy. Not before."

"I cannot agree with my neighbour, Signor Pavo. We want union with Naples," replied Giuseppe warmly: "that is, Sicilians must unite with Neapolitans ; people with people. And to Neapolitans we will add Romans, and to Romans Tuscans, and to Tuscans Lombards, and

to Lombards Piedmontese and Venitians, until Italy moves together, a political earthquake, indeed, shaking down all depotism, and leaving the whole land free for reconstruction on the basis of free institutions."

"But," persisted Pavo, "when all Italy is intermingled as one organic people, what becomes of Sicilianism? Would you allow other Italians to have a voice in the affairs of our Island? Are our noble families to enter a scramble for honours with the parvenus of Florence and Venice? Our aristocracy to dance attendance at a Court in Turin or Milan or Rome or Naples? I want no tax-assessor from Modena or Como inspecting my estate. Sicily for Sicilians, say I!"

Several applauded. Giuseppe shook his head. "Sicilians," he replied, "cannot of themselves conquer the situation. The enemy is not merely the hired soldiers and bribed lordlings of Naples, who now stamp upon us. The grand enemy is the coalition of despots, Bourbon King with a lot of petty dukedoms, all supported by the Austrians ever ready to cross the northern boundaries. All these must be overthrown, or no part of Italy, not even Sicily, can maintain its freedom. Let us, brothers, be done with these provincial jealousies that come out of our local conceits. Here is our shame. Not only is Sicily against Italy, but Messina is against Palermo, and even Syracuse against Catania, and little Taormina against little Letojanni that sells onions cheaper. It is scarcely safe for a Sicilian to go to another part of the Island a hundred kilometres from his birthplace. At Palermo I have been treated as a villano, even by the camerieri at villas I have had occasion to visit. Mazzini sees that this local pride and exclusiveness is a disintegrating element; that nothing hopeful can be constructed with it. It is only sand, not cement. Our despots see this too, and are fomenting this very

spirit of Sicilian independence as a diversion from the only dangerous menace to their power,—the union of Sicily with the liberals of the mainland. Their policy is ‘Divide and Conquer.’ Signor Pavo may not be aware that what he has said, doubtless in good faith with us all, was said at the Court of Naples a month ago by Count Lupis, who just now is a royal agent in Sicily. The Count said—these are his words—‘Let Sicily be for Sicilians. We do not object. Let them have their own government; it will be only a toy to amuse them. When we want to we can swallow them and their governments as a boa takes down a rabbit, bones and all.’”

Giuseppe’s voice rose high with the ardour of his convictions. He brought down his fist upon an empty wine cask as he exclaimed: “I am a Sicilian! But more, I am an Italian!”

This oratorical outburst was answered from without. A sentinel stood at the door and raised his hand for caution. There was heard a rattle of stones down in the ravine beside the house. The men slipped out silently through the darkness in the direction of the alarm. An object was discerned moving down below. Instantly a half dozen rifles were sighted upon it. As many more patriotic muzzles covered the different parts of the steep ascent. A moment or two of profound and anxious silence ensued. Then the invading noise was repeated. It was answered by the muffled clicking of the gun-locks of the wary watchers. These sounds were evidently heard in the ravine, and awakened an unanticipated response,—the long spasmodic braying of an ass. The beast, a most sociable creature, had been sniffing about the lonely house, and had doubtless taken Giuseppe’s speech as the precursor of a cudgeling. In his haste to avoid this he had slipped on the edge of the chasm and rolled to the bottom.

After this gratuitous illustration of the maxim that "Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty," the men returned to the wine-press, and the conference was resumed.

"There is one respect," said Giuseppe, "in which Mazzini, great as he is, yet lacks political prescience. He denounces dependence upon Louis Napoleon. Here he is right. That crowned trickster deserted us midway in the war last year, just after the victory at Solferino, although he had sworn to drive the Austrians out of Italy. He threw us the miserable sop of the proposed disjointed confederation of effete Bourbons and rotten dukedoms, under the presidency of the Pope. But Mazzini's distrust of Vittorio Emanuele and Cavour is sheer prejudice from his republican theories. Italian liberty is spreading from Piedmont eastward, southward, everywhere, and it is spreading on the tide of unity—of unity."

"Menardi is right," responded Captain Francesco Fazio. "Lombardy has already gravitated into organic union with Piedmont. Tuscany, Parma and Modena have voted for it. The news is that the army of Piedmont is now menacing even the Papal states. Now if we Sicilians will only rise and attack these Neapolitan Bourbons from the south, Piedmont will grasp our hand over the Apennines and across the Straits."

All applauded except Roberto Pavo, who rejoined :

"And Savoians will then outrank Sicilians! Pugh! Soldiers from the Alps to patrol the slopes of Etna! No, never! The Mafia were better. That is at least of Sicilian make."

A new voice was now heard. Alessandro Vitelli, a little man with the forehead of a giant, topped with a mass of bristling black hair that stood up like the parapet of a citadel, took the floor.

"Brothers, I too want no King of Piedmont over me.

Nor do I want a Sicilian King. I am for a republic. Make it a confederacy if you will. Let Sicily be one star among many on the flag, as is a state of the American Union ; but the flag must have wrought into it neither the shield of Piedmont, nor the insignia of Naples, nor yet the tiara of the Pope. I have lost so much blood fighting under Garibaldi for the republican cause in South America that I haven't a drop to transfuse into the veins of any King in Italy, though he may pose as a liberal monarch. A liberal monarch ! A wolf wearing wool ! Not over my flocks. I have seen negroes pretty near white, but their children may turn out black. The African blood is never safe for white blood to mix with. Nor can a monarch, however he chatters about constitutional government, be trusted to give liberty in the long run. You may as well try to hatch doves from crow's eggs,—or, pardon me, Padre Omelli,"—turning to the priest who sat back in a corner—"as to expect a Pope to be a patriot."

Padre Omelli exploded like powder at a spark's touch. "None of that talk here," he shouted. "You wrong the Holy Father. The Pope cannot limit himself to the affairs of Italy, because he is Head of the Catholic Church in many lands. I confess that I wish he wouldn't dabble in Italian politics. But you fellows must stop dabbling with religious matters."

"Well said, Padre," replied old Fazio. "The Pope's temporal estate drags him into all sorts of alliance with foreign powers. I wish that he could see that the affection of thirty million fellow Italians is worth more to him and to religion than all his collusions with Austria, and his trying to make a saint out of the French Empress Eugenia. But enough of this talk. Let's keep religion out of our movement. We can surely be good Catholics and good patriots too."

"I don't see how," grunted Vitelli.

"Hush! Everybody knows that you are a heretic," said Captain Fazio in kindly banter. "But to keep to our subject. There are lots of arguments against asking for a republic, at least just now. First, the Italian people are not ready for it. In Sicily, Calabria and the Papal states they are too ignorant. They know nothing beyond milking their goats, and pounding the grape skins, except, perhaps, the legends of saints pictured on carts and church walls. You might as well ask a donkey to sort out and load his own pack as to ask our contadini to make up the forms of their civil life. Why, even your Garibaldi, Alessandro, now stands foot and foot with Vittorio Emanuele. He is ready for a liberal King."

"Where Garibaldi goes I go," said the faithful adherent of the great fighter. "But I know that I fought with him for a republic in Rome in '49."

"Yes, but he fought for Vittorio Emanuele with the Cacciatori dell' Alpi in '59," interjected a voice.

"Further," added Fazio, "Mazzini himself is changing his mind. I didn't read you all his letter a while ago. Here is the rest of it. Listen!

"If Italy wishes to be a monarchy under the house of Savoy, let it be so. If, at the end, they choose to hail the King and Cavour as liberators or what not, let it be so. What we all require is that *Italy* shall be made——"

"I tell you, Signori," exclaimed Fazio, "that Mazzini, ardent republican that he is, is too big a man to be forever limited by even his own predilections."

"There is another reason why a republic is impracticable for us just now," said Tomasso, the massaio of Villa Lanzetti. "The rest of Europe would not allow it. Even England, though she gives asylum to Mazzini, would interdict this part of the scheme. But for an Italian limited monarchy, like her own, we can count on

England's fleet and English diplomacy. You have been in England, Signor Menardi, and know that's so. To my mind Cavour is the biggest-brained man now in control of affairs. He sees which way the international wind is blowing, and is setting sail to go with it."

Niccolo now took part,—“To my mind the kingdom of Sardinia, under Vittorio Emanuele and Cavour, is already solving the problem. It is drawing all Italy to itself. That's sure as destiny. It is well to advocate our theories, but it is better to be loyal to facts as we find them. All Italians, thank God, are not dreamers!”

“Well said, Niccolo!” was Captain Fazio's comment. “It is no time to dream. We must be wide awake if we keep step with events. Now, boys, listen again. I've got a bit of news that will stir the blood of even our friend Signor Pavo. But first, Menardi, just sit on Alessandro, or he will go up in spontaneous combustion while I tell it. I couldn't venture to give you all the news at once. Listen! Rosolino Pilo and Giovanni Corrao are both ready to leave Genoa with the advanced line of our helpers from the Peninsula. Very soon, at any day, they may be somewhere on the coast. Cairoli, Bixio and Fabrizi are ready to follow. And listen, Alessandro, you grand old Garibaldian—Crispi writes that your lion of Uruguay and the Janiculum may make a dash at any time from his lair at Caprera, and he, Garibaldi himself, will lead us. Away then with mere discussion which tends rather to divide than unite us!”

Alessandro Vitelli was upon his feet, his Garibaldian blood boiling over. “I am with you then. I'll follow Garibaldi's *Avanti!* into the mouth of hell. He'll find a back door somewhere to get us out again. *Viva Gar*——”

“Hold,” said Fazio. “The help of Garibaldi depends upon our action. That old lion seems at times incautious, but no man was ever closer in planning. Just now he

hesitates. He wants first to know if Sicilians are ready for him. Are we ready to die for Sicily to-morrow if Garibaldi consents to come ? ”

There was a roar of agreement.

“ Ricciotti Pasini, how stands our arsenal under those old clouts in the vat and elsewhere ? ”

Ricciotti was the accredited agent of an exporting house in Catania, but utilized his daily business as a buyer of fruits from the peasants by doing service for the squadra. He secured, besides the products of the trees and vines, all sorts of weapons, which the people were quite ready to dispose of, if not from patriotism, then for money, rather than lose them for naught to the police.

Ricciotti announced :

“ We have a hundred guns in the vat : over ten thousand cartridges, and some hundred pounds of loose powder. We would have more but that the King’s soldiers have been burglarizing our houses, and they have left hardly enough to shoot the crows with. Half of the sharp weapons we have were sent us by Crispi from The Boot. We have, too, a few score sickles which the contadini know how to use better than sabres. I have also a howitzer buried somewhere between here and the seashore. It’s a pity that such things when planted don’t grow as rank as finocchio does. We have also sent a load of bread loaves to Catania which will be of service, if our patriots have teeth strong enough to bite it ; that is, if the insurrection is not delayed until the loaves are changed into stone.”

“ You have worked rapidly, Ricciotti,” was Fazio’s compliment.

“ I had to,” said the man. “ The Bourbon General Clary in his last order allowed only twenty-five hours to have all guns deposited in the hands of government agents, under penalty of imprisonment.”

“How many men can we count on to use the guns, Ricciotti?”

“Over fifty in our parish. Indeed, all the men who don’t go to Confessional. I haven’t approached the others. I thought, perhaps, it wouldn’t be wise to whisper a secret to those who might whisper it again to a priest that wasn’t on our side.”

Padre Omelli resented this. His face reddened.

“It is a shame to say that, Ricciotti. We priests are under vow not to divulge what is confessed to us. You may shoot me for a traitor, Ricciotti; but I wouldn’t betray to you the confession of a spy who was going to cut your throat.”

“What would you do to prevent it, Padre?” asked Ricciotti.

“Cut his throat first, and send him to hell in company with the first devil that was going home,” replied Omelli laughing. Then he added:

“I forgive you, Ricciotti, for your slander on us priests, because of the splendid work you have done. God forbid that yours be the fate of Rammacca at Palermo last month! His load of powder was seized and the poor fellow shot.”

“Well, Padre,” replied Ricciotti, “as I am in danger, I want you to prepare for me a viaticum that I can carry in my wallet. I’ll swallow it when I hear the bullet whiz. I’ll take my chances in going to the right station in Purgatory with any ticket that Padre Omelli issues; though,” said he, winking at the Padre, “I would rather have a passport from the Frate Raffaello of San Benedetto.”

“Why choose that monk?” asked Omelli.

“Because,” said Ricciotti, “he is on better terms with the devil.”

“My thanks!” said the priest.

"Enough of this chaff," interposed Fazio. "Are we ready to strike? As Crispi says, 'The new Rubicon is in the south. Cowards are they who refuse to cross it.' Shall we cross the Rubicon, brothers? If we begin, Garibaldi will be forced to come. The old lion can't stand the smell of blood without having a taste of it."

"Besides," added Giuseppe, "our quick movement in Sicily will force the hand of Cavour and Vittorio Emanuele. They would not dare to refuse to send the army of Piedmont south to help us. Otherwise the House of Savoy would demit leadership, and that is a thing Cavour would no more do than a fox would ask a jackal to show him the way to a hen roost. We are ready, Captain Fazio. Sound the Avanti! when you will. Shall we swear it?"

"We swear it!" rang around the circle.

Each man grasped the hand of Fazio, and gave him the pledge as the acknowledged head of the squadra.

"Then we are adjourned," said the old man.

As the conspirators paused a moment for their parting salutation, Captain Fazio added, laughing:

"I suppose that as loyal subjects of King Francesco you all have lanterns under your jackets. You know that the government has forbidden any one to walk at night without signalling himself."

"It will next issue an order for all mosquitoes to change into fireflies," said Niccolo.

The conversation was interrupted by a distant report of a gun.

"That is an army rifle," said Captain Fazio. "Note the sharp crack of it. Doubtless another of the nightly murders perpetrated by our benign Sovereign, by the grace of God King of the Two Sicilies."

Roberto Pavo took the arm of Giuseppe.

"Signor Menardi, a word with you."

"Certainly," replied Giuseppe, and bade Niccolo to precede them.

"Signor Menardi," said Pavo, "I would have a word with you about another matter. Our two families should be more closely united. Our lands are adjoining. Our interests are the same. Whatever may happen in the general affairs of the country it behooves us to look after our own more personal and immediate concerns."

There was no reply. Pavo continued :

"My family is as you know a very ancient one. Its honour is, I think, such that I need not hesitate to seek alliance with your own family, Signor Menardi. Your sister, the Signorina Elena, is of marriageable age, is she not ?"

"Yes, if she is of marriageable inclination," replied Giuseppe. "But of that I cannot speak. You will pardon me, Signor Pavo, if I do not assume to be her sponsor."

"But you, Signor Menardi, are the head of your family. Your will would be law to her, I am sure."

"I wouldn't assume that," said Giuseppe, laughing. "I fear that you are not sufficiently acquainted with our Menardi moods."

"Well," replied Pavo, "if brotherly authority is not sufficient, certainly that of your mother, Signora Menardi, could be invoked."

"You mistake, Signor Pavo," replied Giuseppe, with a little fret in his tone. "The Signorina is queen absolutely over her own affection. A woman's liberty in such matters is as sacred as a man's."

"No doubt ! No doubt ! But you would not oppose my proposition ?"

"I could afford to be silent," replied Giuseppe.

"Then, Signor Menardi, I think that we understand each other."

“Perhaps so. But, Signor Pavo, we had better not walk further together now. There are too many royal spies abroad. They are as thick as night-hawks, and as sly. Buona sera, Signore !”

“Buona sera, Signore !”

Giuseppe rejoined Niccolo. “Now that Signor Pavo has gone,” said the massaio, “it is, I believe, lawful for me to walk with you ; for you know that the King’s general has ordained that two, but not three, Sicilians may be together on the public highways. How grateful we ought to be, since he has not made us go alone, which would undoubtedly be safer for his soldiers. Signor Menardi, you will pardon my intrusion if I ask whether Signor Pavo has solicited of you any financial help. I have occasion to know that his estate is greatly involved, and that he has failed to get loans at Palermo and Messina.”

“No, Niccolo, we did not speak of such matters.”

The conversation was interrupted by a guard of military policemen who suddenly emerged from either wall that lined the road. They blocked the way, and commanded the Sicilians to halt. The officers peered closely in the two faces. Having recognized them fully and called their names, they allowed them to pass.

“And this on my own land !” said Giuseppe.

“They are suspicious that something is brewing in the Island,” responded Niccolo. “Several thousand more Bourbon troops have landed at Messina and Palermo during the week, and the war vessels are keeping a closer patrol of the coast. Indeed, some are anchored off the ends of the main streets of Catania, to sweep them with grape-shot in case of rioting.”

IX

A HOLY NIGHT

THE hour was late when Giuseppe and Niccolo reached home. The house was dark, although the slight rustle of feet indicated that only the approach of the returning men had suggested the retirement of the family for the night.

The scene at the villa during the absence of Giuseppe had been in as marked contrast with that at the wine-press as the tiny land-locked cove at Taormina,—fringed with coral-lined grottoes, where the light shallop scarcely feels the heaving of the breast of the sea,—is diverse from the clashing of the billows outside the headland.

Mother Agata, Paolo and Elena had remained upon the terrace long after Giuseppe and Niccolo had gone “nightingale hunting.” The quick falling darkness had its fascination. Though there was no moon, the stars gave sufficient light to show the long bending coast from Cape Schiso past Riporto to Aci Reale. Imagination could detect through the dimly-outlined scene those sharp and solitary rocky islets that one-eyed Polyphemus flung from Etna into the sea, in his impotent rage at the wooing of Acis and Galatea. Far across the Ionian waters gleamed the lights of Reggio. The sirocco had been blowing during the day, tempering the crisp air of the dying winter with a summer breath from the parched deserts of distant Africa, and making the long waves roll with rhythmic moaning along the Sicilian shore.

For a while Agata, Elena and Paolo remained in silence. They were fascinated with the scene and the

sound. The mother clasped fondly the form of her favourite son, while Elena sat at her feet. At length Agata spoke.

“My dear Paolo, I praise to-night the Virgin Mother of God, because, unlike your brother Giuseppe, you have chosen the better part. You have been twice born to me since you have consecrated yourself to the holy life of the priesthood. And now the very stars seem radiant with the love of God ; and the sea murmur comes up as if the saints were chanting their benediction. Paolo, should I die to-night, I could say with Simeon, when he took the Blessed Bambino in his arms, ‘Now let Thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.’”

“But, madre,” said Elena, “Giuseppe is good, too.”

“Do not interrupt us, my child,” said Agata. “My dear Paolo, of what are you thinking with your face so upturned ?”

“Madre mia,” replied the student, “the sound of the water makes me think of what I have read in Rome from the Confessions of Saint Augustine. One night he and his mother, Santa Monica, were sitting by the sea at Ostia. After just such a silence as we have had, she spoke these words,—‘If all tumult of the flesh were hushed ; hushed the images of earth and air and waters ; hushed also the poles of the heavens,—yea, the very soul hushed to herself—and He alone should speak—not through tongue of flesh, nor angel’s voice, nor sound of thunder, nor in dark riddle of similitude—but I might hear His very self—were not this to enter into the joy of the Lord ?’”

The mother listened with almost ecstatic eagerness as Paolo repeated these words of the ancient saint. His voice was sweet, with wonderful depth and richness of quality that fitted the sentiment of the words he was almost intoning. Agata’s mind floated into the coming

years. She foresaw her son in his white preacher's vestments standing in the pulpit of some great Duomo, and again, walking preceded by the uplifted crozier,—another Augustine. That voice of God of which they were talking seemed to speak again as in the Benedictus, “Blessed art thou among women!”

“Oh, how good, how inspiring it must be, Paolo, to read such things! To spend days in meditation upon the words of the blessed ones who have gone before us! To have such a son makes me reconciled to what I used to regard as the great mistake of my life, when I gave up the purpose of entering the cloister.”

“But, madre mia, isn't it better to have us all, Giuseppe and Paolo and me too, than to have been a mere-nun?” said Elena, with a little querulousness in her voice.

“Hush, child, you are too young to know what you are saying. And, Paolo, it must have been such a night as this when the stars sang over the birth of Gesù at Bethlehem.”

After a few moments' pause Agata drew Paolo close to her.

“I may now tell you, my son, what you have not known heretofore. When you were born to me, I dressed you in a little frock shaped like those worn by the blessed Frati of San Benedetto. Your father did not like to see you in it. So I took you one day to Catania. With tears of joy I placed you before the statue of Sant' Agata. Then, because of my marriage vow to revere and obey my husband, I took off your little frock. I hung it upon the arms of the Saint. The priests at the Duomo still keep it among the similar votive offerings that the faithful devotees have left at Sant' Agata's shrine. I am sure our Blessed Saint loves you, Paolo. Always revere her, my son.”

The young man bowed as he felt his mother's loving hands resting upon his head.

"Madre cara," he said, "I now think I know why it was not enough for God to give us His Son as our Saviour, but gave us also the mother heart of Santa Maria."

"My son, you speak wisely. You must pray to Santa Maria as well as to Sant' Agata. For as I think of you constantly, by day and by night, so does the Holy Virgin Mother think of us both."

"Madre," interrupted Elena again, "Madre cara, Giuseppe loves us too. He is always thinking of us,—I know he thinks of me, because he thinks so much for me. He is so good that he helps me to understand how Gesù loves us."

"My child! My child! Your words are wicked."

"But," persisted Elena, "Paolo just said that you made him think of the Blessed Maria, Mother of God. Why shouldn't Giuseppe make me think of the Blessed Gesù?"

"You will retire to your room, Elena."

The girl did as she was bidden. She knelt before her little crucifix. It was one that Giuseppe had brought her when he came home from the long journey to London. Elena said her prayers, then sat a long time thinking of—Giuseppe. Then she knelt again and prayed very earnestly that Gesù and Sant' Agata and Santissima Maria, Mother of God, and all the Saints would bless Giuseppe, her Peppino. Very soon the little rebel fell asleep, not even waiting for her brother's return to see if he had found for her a nightingale.

After her retirement, Agata and Paolo remained a long time in silence. Words are not always needed for the colloquy of souls. There was a real telepathy between mother and son, whether we apply that term in its scientific meaning, or transfigure it into a mystic com-

munion of saints. As they sat together in mutual embrace, nerve almost intertwining with nerve, as when magnetic wires touch, sentiment flowed with sentiment in a common channel, and even unuttered thought communicated with thought.

“Madre cara,” said Paolo, “Fra Raffaello from San Benedetto at Catania often visits you. I too have talked much with him in Rome, where he frequently has duty with the Holy Father.”

“Yes, my son, Raffaello often comes. And what he has said greatly impresses me. He holds that the highest life of holiness is attained only in much seclusion from the world. The Secular Clergy, he says, have too many distractions; even their holy offices in ministering to the people in the churches, and in taking charge of so much business as comes upon them in their parish work, causes diversion of mind. But in the lengthened vigils and the systematic devotions of the monastic life one enters more deeply into spiritual realities. ‘Watch and pray lest ye enter into temptation,’ said the Master. All our time, day and night, is not too much for holy meditation. The flowers do not thrive, except as they feel continually the soft spring air with the constant alternation of sunshine and dews. Nor is it different with the spirit.”

“My own thought, madre cara,” said Paolo. “In our school at Rome, I find many things that lead my mind from the more blessed converse I would have with spirits unseen. I was once praying to San Paolo, as you have taught me to do daily, when the noises from the streets entered my window. They seemed the babble of fiends that were assailing my soul. I closed the window, but I could not shut out the worldly thoughts that came in, as it were, through the very crannies. I would have exchanged my room for an anchorite’s cell. Besides, madre mia, there are our daily walks along the

Corso and into the public gardens, needful for our bodily health. But we must go together in bands, and the conversation of my fellow students is not always savoury of spiritual things. And even—I do not speak of it irreverently—even the concourse of our prelates along the Corso, with their elegant equipages, often attended by worldly princes and nobility, seems to be touched with vanity. I have knelt upon the street with the crowds when our Most Holy Lord, Pio Nono, the Vicegerent of God, passed by, and, though he looked directly at me as he gave the benediction, I rose feeling unblest.”

“I can understand it all, my son,” said Agata. “Though I have tried to believe that, since Santa Maria was also a mother, there was nothing holier than a mother’s duties in the home, still I have longed for more seclusion. You are, I think, wise in inclining towards the career of a Regular. And if the monastic life appears to you to be the better, I know of no Order more truly religious than that of San Benedetto, and no spot more desirable than the Holy House at Catania. It is so near to us that we would feel your absence less. And while you would have the seclusion, you would not be deprived of so many comforts there as elsewhere. The Benedettini are more refined and less ascetic than many Orders. And the retreat at Catania is the most famous in Sicily. As I looked once upon its noble façade, and thought of the lives of the holy men within, it seemed to me like the very gate of heaven.”

The conversation was interrupted by footsteps approaching up the narrow roadway.

“Let us retire, my dear son. I do not wish that our precious thoughts should be diverted.”

Hence the house was silent and dark when Giuseppe and Niccolo reached it.

X

A FEMININE RUSE

A FEW days later Elena was sitting in the small loggia that opened out from her chamber. The graceful stone columns at either side, supporting an arch between them, had the effect of framing a picture of a bit of landscape unsurpassed by anything even in that paradise of beauty which from the classic ages has been the inspiration of poets and painters. The sea lay like a vast opal, reflecting the entire spectrum of colours. The scent of violets rose in incense from the warm earth, as if the humbler flowers were adoring the diviner beauty of the multi-coloured roses that looked down upon them from balconies and pergolas. It was one of those afternoons when the breezes were laden with sentiment, and murmured a melody of love; an accompaniment to the tender passion that renders it easier for lips to pronounce the words.

Whatever other defects Signor Roberto Pavo may have had, he was not devoid of the dramatic instinct. He had admirably chosen this stage setting of nature for what had become almost an habitual custom with him,—an afternoon walk near the Menardi villa. His form and costume fitted admirably with the idyllic scene. His jaunty hat was most artistically adapted to the horns of his mustache. Velvet jacket and short clothes rendered equal service to a fine pair of calves. Perhaps the light cane he carried and twirled belonged rather to the city Corso at Naples than to a land where still

“ Pan on his oaten pipe awakes the strain,
And fills with dulcet sounds the pastoral plain : ”

where echo is yet regarded as the living voice of a maiden who hides herself in the rocks and glens; and where fauns in their dancing keep step with the lights and shadows made by the moonbeams that fall through the swaying branches of the trees.

Elena discovered Signor Pavo. She had never spoken to him, and felt his presence beneath her loggia to be an intrusion, recognizing it as the Sicilian way of beginning an acquaintance with a view to future developments.

"I promised Giuseppe that I would laugh at Signor Pavo. Now for it," she said to herself.

"Lucia! Lucia!" she called.

Her pretty cameriera appeared instantly. Now, though Lucia could not have understood the rather transcendental description we have given of the scene, she had inhaled to the full the sentiment of it. She had herself been watching Signor Pavo from an adjacent window.

"Lucia! Dress yourself in the new clothes I have given you. You have not let me see you in them but once."

Lucia had a genius for one thing at least, however dull in some other respects. She quickly arrayed herself as finely and as fittingly as was ever a bird in its plumage.

No wonder that Sicily has been since the mythological days the birthplace of more goddesses to the square mile than any other spot on earth. In that lovely island adorable faces have the same profusion as the flowers. And Lucia, in a warranted conceit, thought herself adorable. "What eyes I have got!" She had often made the exclamation in her long talks with her mirror. "No wonder they christened me Lucia after the Saint of Syracuse, whose eyes so smote the pagan lord that he vowed his life if he could always be looking at them. Santa Lucia tore out her eyes, and sent them to her wicked lover on a silver platter. I wouldn't have done that.

Not I ! I would have made my eyes burn his heart out. I would. But, Santa Lucia, please always keep my eyes bright."

She bowed at her own reflection in the mirror as if it had been a picture of the Saint herself, and returned to her mistress.

" Lucia, you will stand at the front of the loggia where the light sets you off better. There, do not move. I will bring my pencils and brushes, and paint you ; and you may have the picture to buy a husband with some day."

" A husband ! Oh, Signorina, if you could only see me in the wedding-dress that I have made all with my own hands !"

" Wedding-dress ! Why, girl, are you really spoken for ?"

" No, Signorina, not yet : but why should one wait until she is promised to a man before she has a wedding-dress ? Mine has been done ever since I was so high," putting her hand upon her hip. " I spun the thread and wove the linen and embroidered the pattern in silk, and —— "

" But, Lucia, suppose you should never marry. Suppose the prince you think so much about should never come to you !"

" Signorina, that would make no matter. I will have the wedding-dress to be buried in. It will look so beautiful among the high candles in the Duomo ; and everybody will be saying Lucia made it all herself ; and maybe somebody will be very sorry that I had died."

While she was thus standing in the loggia, talking, and posing herself for the picture that her mistress was making, Signor Roberto Pavo passed and repassed the house. At length he, doffed his hat, doubtless with as much grace as did his pagan ancestor, the noble Roman, when he endeavoured to win the smile of Santa Lucia. And with more success, certainly ; for the object of his

courtesy did not withdraw herself, as the original Lucia had run away from her admirer into martyrdom. So Pavo repeated his salutation. Then he passed on, but stopped once more at the bend in the path. Here he performed the last act of gallantry. He boldly kissed his hand. To his grateful surprise the figure in the loggia made a movement that resembled a return of his salutation.

This transaction produced three very diverse sorts of emotion in the three actors. Signor Pavo was satisfied, supremely satisfied. He went away as a merchant goes from the market, confident that he has arranged for a good investment ; for, although Giuseppe Menardi had left himself non-committal in the matter of his sister's acceptance of him, yet she herself had apparently approved of his overture. As he dusted his leggings with slight taps of his cane he smiled as he thought what must have been his goodly appearance. His mind ran hastily through his financial condition. He foresaw what might have been a fatal chasm in his road now prospectively bridged by the Menardi dower : for in Sicilian custom a Signorina's recognition of her wooer from the balcony is regarded as an acceptance of his overture.

Lucia, poor child of dreamland, was also supremely happy. She was Cinderella, and the Prince had come.

As for Elena, she was merry. She did not know that there were stakes at issue upon the frolic.

So Signor Pavo spent that night in conning the books of his estate : Lucia in a fantastic dream in which danced and sang all the fairies she had ever heard of : Elena in wondering how she would tell Giuseppe of her prank,—or if, indeed, she would tell him at all.

After the episode in the loggia Lucia grew greatly in favour with herself. The sketch of her which Elena had made, while far from being a masterpiece of art, had

really reproduced her exquisite figure, as she stood with one hand resting against the stone pillar, her head gracefully inclined downward, looking upon Signor Pavo—an attitude which showed a neck which even Leda might have envied when Jove himself was wooing her by transforming himself into a swan. Elena had also caught the glowing colours in her dress, and had added a few modifying tones to lessen the sharpness of the contrast between the different garments, a hint which Lucia immediately pinned into her memory in view of future exhibitions, should her Prince appear again, or other connoisseurs of female beauty, such as the foreign artists, who were beginning to set up their easels on the headland, and in the nooks and near the cottages where pretty contadine lived. More than once she had posed with apparent unconsciousness at the brook, while laundering with skirts gathered high, exposing her half developed limbs for the delectation of these latter exploiters of fair Sicily.

But never again would she do such a thing. She thought more of her plumage now. Such a radiant creature did she see herself to be, that it produced in her a sort of self-hypnotic influence. She realized that she was fair, not alone in her own judgment, but in that of her accomplished young mistress who had seen the handsomest women of Palermo, and whose wardrobe contained the fashions of Paris and Rome. She did not doubt that Signor Pavo, being a man of high taste, cultivated by much observation of the belles of society, had feasted his eyes upon her. She did not wait for even a suggestion on the part of her mistress, but arrayed herself in equal splendour on other afternoons.

Once she ventured to stroll down the path that wound through the villa garden to where it met the main road. Here a gate made of wide-spaced iron rods hung between two great stone posts. Though this gate was never

locked, it made a form of defense against intrusion. No one not in service or not having business at the villa would trespass.

Now, had Lucia really contemplated an encounter with Signor Pavo, her womanly modesty, or at least her *contadina* bashfulness, would have restrained her. But it did not overtax her courage to be inside the gate, and from that safe spot to see him, and be seen by him, if he should pass without. And what if he should stop to speak to her! He had done so before. Frequently in his rambles over the hills, as he had passed her father's little stone cottage in the goats' pasture back on the mountainside, he had given her a pretty compliment; of course such as any Signore might give to a child. Once he had chucked her under the chin; but her big brother Pietro had growled at him like a dog, and the Signore had not repeated the dalliance. Now, of course, it was different. She was a woman; no longer a bare-legged and frowsy-headed child, whom anybody could speak to. She would not allow such familiarity again. Not she. That great gate would be enough to keep the devil out of Paradise.

That was not exactly the figure her thought assumed, because she had never heard of the Biblical legend, but the thought was vaguely in her mind. Her brother Pietro had called Pavo a devil, and Padre Omelli had told her that the devil was a dangerous creature because he was so attractive. Inside the gate, however, Lucia argued that she could safely gratify a little curiosity. She had never learned the story of Eve's parleying with the Serpent—one of those myths, with a moral to it, which the priests might better have taught the people, even at the expense of leaving untold some of the local legends of beings less important than his snake-crested majesty.

It turned out as Lucia had expected and wished. Signor Pavo passed the gate, and recognized the comely figure in the garden ; although the girl was seemingly unconscious of his nearness, as she inspected the fruit forming at the top of a cactus leaf.

“ Lucia ! ”

Of course she did not hear him at first.

“ Lucia ! ”

She was apparently startled, and made a fawn-like movement as if to run away ; but she conquered her timidity and turned towards him.

“ Ah, Signor Pavo, did you call me ? ”

A blush came to her cheeks as naturally as the roseate hue comes to Etna when touched with a rising sunbeam.

As she turned towards Signor Pavo, some new impression of her loveliness must have smitten him—so thought the girl—for he doffed his hat as courteously as if she had been Signorina Elena herself. Lucia responded with an appropriate naïveté of manner, picking the half-opened petals of a flower as she approached the gate.

“ Lucia, what a woman you are growing to be ! ”

She dropped her eyes, not to the ground as her modesty had intended, but to her bodice and skirt, which garments confirmed her opinion of the Signore's excellent judgment.

“ Lucia, you will give me a rose ? ”

“ Which one ? ” she asked, turning to a mass of them that drooped in a cascade of colour from the pergola at her side.

“ I want the one in your hair. ”

“ But these are more beautiful, Signore. ”

“ No, they are not ; but maybe it is your hair that sets it off. ”

“ Then it is better to leave it where it is. ”

“ Oh, come now, I'll buy it of you. See ! ” producing

a gold coin. "With this you can buy something nice at the fair in Giardini."

Lucia accepted the bargain. In making the transfer of coin and flower Signor Pavo touched and held for an instant her hand.

Voices were heard down the path outside the gate. Pavo quickly thrust a letter through the bars and passed on, as a couple of women driving a donkey laden with brushwood approached.

Lucia hastily put the letter into her bosom, and nearly fainting with the emotion inspired by this her first great romance, sat down upon the edge of a short column that held one of the great earthen jars such as were scattered about the villa garden. There she thought, or at least tried to think.

"A letter from Signor Pavo!"

Now Lucia could not read. But she had so often held in her hand letters addressed to the members of the household that she recognized the name of her mistress,—*"La Signorina Menardi."*

"Fool! Fool! Fool that I am!" said she to herself. "The Pavo buys me to be his tool with the Signorina. He doesn't care for me any more than for the other girls, those who carry dirt baskets on their heads to build his walls. Santa Lucia, strike him blind!"

She raised her hands to heaven, just as thousands of years before her pagan ancestors had appealed to their patron goddesses to aid them in taking fierce retribution upon their enemies.

"But—he shall love me. Santa Lucia, make my eyes burn fire at him!"

XI

PAOLO A MONK

PAOLO delayed his return to Rome. The spell of his own Bell' Isola was upon him. The true Sicilian never ceases to be the child of the soil, or rather, let us say, of the air, the flowers, the sea, the mountains, the sky. The ethnologist cannot interpret him as he interprets other specimens of the genus homo, that is, as merely an individual or racial type. The German, Frenchman, Englishman, or even the Italian from the mainland can be transported as an exotic, and studied as well on the slopes of the Himalayas or in the crowded streets of New York. These people carry all their racial peculiarities in their own persons as they carry their belongings in their baggage. Not so the Sicilian; he is always a piece of Sicily, or rather Sicily is a part of him. His native environment is as essential to his type as the sky that hangs over the Ionian Sea is essential to the production of the hues that lie upon its waters. This, which is evident to any foreign observer, belongs to the Sicilian's inner experience. He is not fully himself anywhere except in the homeland. Like Antæus he must be in contact with mother earth in order to preserve his strength.

So Paolo, when he returned home from Rome, felt the native passion for the Island assert itself. It is true that his soul was too alert, too sensitive, too intelligent and aspiring, to submit itself to the sensuous *dolce far niente* of the peasant class, which is content to play upon a reed pipe all day long if only the eye can rest upon the snowy

slopes of Etna. The young student's mind, so poetic and religious, busied itself in transfiguring the lights and shadows of the landscape into the legendary hosts of supernal beings with whose stories his memory, as that of every Sicilian, was filled. Every village, every ravine, every hilltop and stream in his native land has located some marvel of the border-land between the worlds of sense and spirit. If the rocks bearing the visible footprints of the devil were put in line they would equal in length the famous war wall of Dionysius at Syracuse; while those bearing some impress of the Madonna and Saints would make a Jacob's ladder reaching up to heaven. Since the day of the pagan legends which encircle the Island, the Sicilians have been mystics, who accept no natural explanation of events if a supernatural one can be imagined.

With what pious rapture, then, did the young man stretch himself on the wicker couch on the terrace during the long afternoons, and repeople with commingled faith and fancy the sacred spots! Every waving branch and fluttering wing and falling cascade and moving cloud seemed to him to have been touched and stirred by those whose faces see God.

Yet Paolo was not left to his solitary dreams and prayers. Mother Agata enriched his rhapsodies with an infusion of her own credulity, even as she gave him her love. Besides, he had the frequent visits of the Monk Raffaello from San Benedetto at Catania. Raffaello was known far and wide, if not for his piety, certainly for the astuteness with which he conducted much of the secular business of the institution he represented, although he was neither its prior nor cellarer. A waggish Frate had once suggested that he adopt an armorial device,—a dove's body in a snake's mouth, with the Scriptural legend, "Wise as a serpent, but harmless as a dove."

If Raffaello did not compare favourably with Paolo's instructors at Rome in solidity of learning and versatility of talent, he surpassed them in at least one respect ;—he could speak of sacred things more impressively and passionately than they. He had this advantage over more learned doctors ;—he never faltered in uttering what thoughts he had because of any skepticism back of them. He neither argued, nor even listened to an apology for his convictions.

“ Would that you, my son, were with us at San Benedetto ! ” said Fra Raffaello one day. “ A life wholly given to God is wholly God-filled. ”

“ My only hesitancy to urge Paolo to yield to your entreaties, Fra Raffaello, ” said the mother, “ is the delicate condition of his health. I know that monastic life is rigorous. So much fasting and vigil ! Paolo needs the nourishment he gets in his vacation to keep him strong in the college. How would it be at San Benedetto ? ”

“ Do not fear, Signora, ” replied Raffaello. “ During the novitiate the discipline is carefully graded. It is only when the soul life has become strong enough to really dominate the physical that any real severity is practiced, and then it is gladly welcomed. It will be as San Benedetto himself says in the Prologue to his rules for the brethren,—‘ When a man has walked for some time in obedience and faith, his heart will expand, and he will run with the unspeakable sweetness of love in the way of God's commandments. ’ One comes to delight in abstinence as formerly he did in taking food. The holy brother, like his Divine Master, has food to eat that the world knows not of. Santa Catterina of Siena could feast in her fasting as if from the wedding table of her adorable Heavenly Spouse. ”

The three remained a long time lost in meditative exaltation. At length Paolo resumed the colloquy.

“Fra Raffaello, I confess to a great tremor that comes upon me when I think of taking the three vows of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience, such as are required by monastic rule. For Poverty I am fully prepared. The contemplation of God delights me more than all things that money can purchase. The companionship of such choice and consecrated spirits as your own would be a thousand fold compensation for the loss of all social secular intercourse with men, even the most excellent.

“Neither does the vow of Chastity deter me. The suppression of bodily appetite I already experience to be a real liberation of the higher manhood.

“But the vow of absolute Obedience I hesitate to take. I am too willfully inclined. The authority of another would, I fear, bring me to frequent rebellion. I am accustomed to ask the reason of this and that which may be imposed upon me.”

“Ah, my dear son!” replied Raffaello, “I appreciate fully your condition of mind. It is the estate of all men from whom the roots of self have not been eradicated. I recall my own struggles with my self-will, as Laocoon with the serpent. But consider, my young brother, that the Obedience required is not an unreasoning submission; rather a higher exercise of the reason itself. Our Abbate sits in the very place of Christ, as San Benedetto says, and commands nothing that is not really the reflex of the mind of our Lord;—that mind understood, as only it can be, by years of deep study of the Divine will. *Obedientiæ laborem* is only a submission of the will of the individual to the corporate will of the Order;—a will, that is, corrected and sublimated by the lifelong reasoning and prayers of the many who have attained to the highest state of human perfection. As in learning science one submits the mind to the authority of the greater scientists; as in art one follows the laws of art determined

by the greater masters ; so in all that pertains to holy living we pursue the footsteps of the greater saints.

“Is not such a most rational obedience, my son ? As the rule of San Benedetto, the founder of our Order, prescribes,—‘*Regere animas et multorem servire moribus—se omnibus conformet et astet—semper cogitat, quia animas suscepit regendas, de quibus et rationem redditurus est !*’ ”

Paolo nodded his head. Agata looked blankly at the Frate.

“Besides,” continued Raffaello, “one is not always engaged in devotion within the walls of the monastery. We have many duties that call us outside,—as I am here to-day. A bright-minded monk is often summoned to high service in the world, or among the dignitaries of the Church. His holy character adds weight to his wisdom. I myself, though the least of my brethren,”—the Frate bowed his head as he said it—“have spent many days at the Vatican, and have been brought into intercourse with our most noted prelates, and with them discussed things that relate to the governments of the world.”

He paused long enough to allow the statement to sink its weight’s worth into the minds of his listeners.

“King Francesco at Naples, and his ancestors before him for generations, have sought the service of the monks of Benedetto. Indeed, much of the treasure of art, and the other endowments of our Sacred House, have come to us from the gratitude of princes. But of that we need not speak. We must cultivate the grace of humility,” said the Frate, folding his hands upon his breast.

Such conversations, frequently repeated, wrought a very natural result in the young student’s mind. Paolo resolved to enter San Benedetto at Catania.

XII

PAVO IN A WOLF'S DEN

ONE day Giuseppe Menardi and Signor Pavo met on the road to Catania.

“Signor Menardi,” said Pavo, “let me refer to that matter affecting our two families.”

“I fear,” interrupted Giuseppe, “that this is not an opportune time to arrange such affairs. We are about to plunge into civil war, with the possibility that both our families may be ruined.”

“Still we may wisely have an understanding, however the matter itself may be postponed,” replied Pavo. “You assured me, Signor Menardi, of your consent, if I should find the Signorina ——”

“Pardon me, Signor Pavo, this is an affair in which the Signorina alone can speak,” interjected Giuseppe.

“But unfortunately for me, Signore, she does not speak. I have communicated to her my desire, but there is no response.”

“That, Signor Pavo, should be sufficient response.”

A long silence followed.

“You have advised your sister in this matter, Signor Menardi ?”

“She needs no advice. To speak frankly, I have given her none, since she has not asked it.”

“And you decline to advise her ?”

“Most assuredly, Signor Pavo.”

“This is your final word, then, Signor Menardi ?”

“Yes, unless the Signorina should ask me to speak further.”

Pavo's horse at the moment shied at something on the path. "Damn him!" said the rider, with a violence that suggested some other occasion of the profanity than the slight movement of the beast.

The two men rode much of the time in silence, passing such remarks as were suggested by roadside scenery or happenings,—the fields black with lava soil; the beggars whose hands were projected from every turn of the road; short women standing on stools or stones to allow the flax to be spun from the distaff by the spindle that twirled below their feet; little children toilsomely turning big wheels which twisted into ropes the hemp that men walking backwards held in their hands; groups of women weaving nets or straw traps for the fishermen; the unsanitary condition of the roads showing that men were living as regardless of decency as the beasts; donkeys straining their necks to munch from the packs of grass piled upon their backs; fat men singing with voices sharp and shrill, unchanged since childhood; everybody barefooted except the priests and soldiers, and an occasional Signore.

The two men parted company at the entrance to Catania. Signor Pavo went at once to the Grand Albergo, a palatial hostelry noted for its excellent cuisine and wines.

"Ah, Conte Lupis, if I am not mistaken," said Pavo, addressing a rather foppish Signore, who seemed to be searching the outer salon as if expecting a guest.

"And you are Signor Pavo? You evidently have had a dusty ride, Signore. I was more fortunate. From Messina I came on one of our war vessels. I have ordered a room for you, Signor Pavo; for you will do me the honour to be my guest to-night; and when you are ready we will dine together in my private apartment."

It was late that night when an eavesdropper might have overheard the following conversation. And, if one

of the two gentlemen had not been a known loyalist, as Count Lupis was, there certainly would have been eavesdroppers, for it was said that the very pictures of King Francesco of the Two Sicilies, one of which adorned a wall of the chamber, were possessed of the power of hearing whatever his enemies said in their presence.

"You, Signor Pavo," said the Count, when the waiters had retired, having first opened a fresh bottle of champagne—"you, as a Sicilian, and I, as a Neapolitan, have this interest in common,—namely that no party representing the Piedmont government must be allowed to land in Sicily. That northern power is a menace both to your Island and to our Neapolitan throne."

"That is true, my dear Conte," replied Pavo. "But you will pardon my saying that the Neapolitan throne has shown itself a menace to Sicily. We landholders, though our families are dignified by most ancient extraction, are treated as if we were but parvenus, a fresh crop of human grass to be eaten by the King's asses."

"You speak boldly, Signor Pavo," interjected the Count, giving a nervous twist to his mustache. "It is well that only so good a friend as I hear you. But I remember that Sicilians generally keep their blood at about boiling point, so that I am not surprised at the ebullition."

"My thanks, Conte," replied Pavo, giving his own mustache a corresponding pull; in recognition of the fact that a Sicilian's mustache is a sort of electric battery which with the friction of the points gives off magnetic matter to the relief of the wearer.

The Count resumed with exquisite affability,—*"My dear Signor Pavo, I think we understand each other. You wish the independence of Sicily in order that your family traditions may be maintained. I am authorized to say to you that our gracious King Francesco, in the*

event of the tranquillizing of the Island, has determined upon the policy of ruling it through the native aristocracy. He desires only the sovereignty, with proper revenues to the royal treasury in return for the protection he may give you. Sicilians are to rule their own Island, under such constitution as they, with the royal approval, may select. It gives me great pleasure to tell you, my dear Signor Pavo, that you yourself have been mentioned for title of nobility and appointment to high service, on condition of your loyal support of the government."

No physician ever watched more closely the symptoms of a patient at the critical turn of a disease than Count Lupis noted the changing sentiment expressed in his companion's face. Pavo's eyes flashed eagerly as he listened to the tempter. But suddenly he dropped his gaze to the table. His face became flushed.

"No, Conte, I am too much of a Sicilian to take public service with Naples."

The Count's eyes now scintillated. He looked for a moment steadily into those of Pavo, as if to fully determine the man's honesty in declining the proposition. Uncertain if Pavo could be won by the lure just given, he fixed an additional bait to the temptation. He drew from his pocket a paper, and opened it with ominous slowness. Pavo counted three successive swirls of cigar smoke around his head while the Count was removing the document from its envelope, and five more as he glanced over the several pages of it. Pavo was impatient to see the exact wording of what he presumed to be the writ of royal favour.

"Pardon me!" said the Count, as he passed the paper across the table. "But do you recognize this, Signor Pavo?"

The Sicilian glanced at the document, turned its pages and grew deadly pale. His hand trembled. He pushed

his chair back from the table as if the thing had become a viper.

"Conte Lupis, I deny that this is my handwriting. This is not my signature."

"It is not your writing, certainly not," replied the Count. "It is only a copy. The original you will not deny, I think, Signor Pavo."

"The original ? Where is the original ?"

"In the vault of the King's banker at Naples," was the cool reply.

"How came it there ?" cried Pavo, rising and leaning as threateningly across the table as his trembling hand and voice permitted.

"Well," replied Lupis, speaking in slow, drawling tones as if to prolong the torture of his listener, "well, this note for fifty thousand lire was drawn by you to a friend in Taormina, whose name is written here. This friend, it would seem, knew your financial condition well enough to sell the note at heavy discount to the bank at Messina. The bank at Messina investigated your affairs, and thought best to auction the paper in Naples. The King, being benevolently disposed, rescued your good name from among the other flotsam of the street. Now, I assure you, my dear Signore, that you are in right royal company, for not a few of the King's subjects are equally indebted with you."

"And more loyal, no doubt, because he holds them in the double capacity of creditor and King," sneered Pavo, in the high voice which is as natural to an excited Sicilian as that of a raven when he scents danger.

"As you wish to consider it," replied the Count, with a shrug of the shoulders. "The Court at Naples will not ask the reason of your loyalty, Signor Pavo, so long as the homage is rendered. We all of us act from mixed motives. Even the saints, if I read aright their biog-

raphies, were sometimes good because they feared to go to hell. I think, my dear Signore, that you can afford to practice political sanctity rather than go to financial perdition."

The shock of the revelation produced upon Pavo a momentary stupor. He gazed at the speaker as if his facial muscles had become paralyzed. Indeed, his mind was held in suspense between the alternative of being a traitor to the Island and being pronounced a bankrupt. He could not realize himself in either position. He knew, however, that he must at once decide. He sat a moment balancing thought against thought, then suddenly became utterly unbalanced in judgment. The Sicilian fire flared within him. He was maddened to the point of insanity. He drew a dagger and started for his tormentor.

The Count dexterously retreated a few steps, and, drawing a pistol from his pocket, kept his antagonist at bay.

"Signor Pavo," said he coolly, "your blade is both too long and too short: too long for the law, and too short for me. Besides, don't you see that your rage is utterly impotent? A little noise here and the whole gang of hotel attendants will enter."

"And be at your throat," added Pavo, "for there is not a beggar but hates a Bourbon."

"Sit down, Signor Pavo," replied the Count with a mocking courtesy that would have been provocative of further quarrel, were it not for the shining barrel of the pistol and the flashing eyes that followed closely every movement of the hand of his companion.

"My dear friend,"—the Count drawled the words,—"you know that you cannot afford to quarrel with me. Now, just think, if you had killed me with that knife your debt to Naples would still remain. My heart's blood wouldn't have paid a single soldo of it. But, if

you are pleased to let me live a little longer, not only will I enjoy my macaroni and cheese, but I can help you to the Aste Spumante and the salads of existence. Shall we proceed to business, Signore? I must ask you to keep your hands upon the table. There! That way! I am sure that you have nothing in your pocket that I want while you are in your present temper."

In spite of the rather tragical character of the interview Pavo could not help seeing a glint of comedy through it all. Leaning his elbows squarely upon the table, and twirling the ends of his mustache with the fingers of both hands, he forced a laughing tone into his voice.

"Conte, I have heard that you were the very devil of a fellow."

"Doubtless," replied the Count, "and to prove it I am going to use the devil's prerogative, if I remember the Gospel accurately, and tempt you to turn stones into bread. For with that paper to be cashed you will have only the stones of your villa left to eat."

Pavo dropped his head upon his hands. He groaned as he recognized the inevitable.

"Take your time to think it out," said Lupis. "There is no hurry. I appreciate the difficulties in the problem."

The Count paced for some time the other side of the room. At length he came over to Pavo, and putting his hand upon his shoulder in a comradely sort of way, said:

"My dear Signor Pavo, so far in this affair, I have acted solely as the agent of the King at Naples. Now let me speak personally. Let us be friends. Your position will be a delicate one from your present close relation with your insurgent neighbours. I appreciate the situation, having gotten out of similar ones myself. I confess it. I can help you. I will see to it that nothing

will be required of you to cause you to openly break with your people ; at least just now. It is a fine maxim in all good works, 'Let not your right hand know what your left hand doeth !' Then why should your right hand neighbour know what you are doing beyond the hedge on your left ? I myself will not even dictate what you should do to prove your loyalty. Only let the proofs be forthcoming in some evident manner. For example, you may give the King valuable information, leading to the disarming of the Sicilians, and possibly to the arrest of some of the traitors who are especially obnoxious or dangerous."

"But," said Pavo, "to whom can I give the information ? You yourself are not here much of the time. At least you are not in evidence."

"True, my dear Pavo, for if I should be in evidence one day, your Sicilians would see that I was in Purgatory the next. Your Sicilians have hair-triggers for such as I. By the way, do you know a Frate named Raffaello, of San Benedetto ?"

"By sight," said Pavo. "He prowls frequently about our neighbourhood."

"Then give him any information your new loyalty suggests. He is a most saintly devil, like Lucifer before he fell from heaven. Half the monks hereabouts you can't depend upon. They are tinctured with rebellion. But Raffaello is loyal. With him religion and politics are one, and the divine right of Pio Nono and of King Francesco are equal. But good-night ! I must be up at dawn to sail for Syracuse. Before that I ought to visit the Duomo, and say a prayer or two to Sant' Agata for saving me from that knife of yours."

"Nonsense, Conte. That double-barrelled pistol was more efficacious than would have been the two-fingered blessing of Pio Nono himself."

XIII

TWO SIDES OF A MONK

A LONG the roads leading across the lava fields from Catania and Aci Reale to the back country sentinels challenged every passer by day and by night; examining their persons to discover concealed weapons, and appropriating, not only pistols, but every knife with blade over three inches long. But this pastime was frequently varied by the soldiers carrying a dead or wounded comrade, who had been stricken down by a patriot bullet.

When Signor Pavo returned from Catania to his villa he deemed it best to avoid the more travelled roads. While he was confident that in case of arrest he would have ultimate immunity through Count Lupis's influence, he did not care to have his relationship to the Royalists too quickly revealed. Along the more secluded ways there was little danger. Now and then a herdsman, ignorant of the treachery that was brewing beneath Pavo's jacket, would warn him of the proximity of the Bourbon soldier-police; and at times several men would accompany or precede him past spots where danger might be lurking. The Mafiosa spirit, *La Omerta*, under the impulse of which a Sicilian feels obliged to shield a neighbour from any judicial process, would have sufficed for Pavo's protection by his neighbours, even had his coquetting with the Bourbons been suspected.

But this outward immunity did not altogether quiet the man's soul. He was about to play a desperate game

in which the royal gamblers at Naples held all the aces and face cards. He could not win against them.

Had Signor Pavo believed in the success of the coming insurrection he would have adopted a waiting policy. But he had no such confidence. Indeed, so desperate and one-sided seemed the venture of war that faith in it was kept alive only by the equally desperate determination of the patriots. Pavo recalled what he had heard at the meeting at the wine-press,—how even Garibaldi hesitated to become the leader. No doubt Giuseppe Menardi's estimate was true, that over twenty thousand Bourbon soldiers were already afield.

It seemed certain to Pavo that without foreign help the people could not conquer. And what foreign help was imminent or even possible? The government at Piedmont had its hands full in caring for affairs in Lombardy. Pilo, Crispi, Bixio, even Garibaldi,—how could any expedition they might organize so much as effect a landing, having to pass through the Bourbon fleet which was blockading every open port and sentinelling the entire coast? The scheme, either of Sicilian independence or of annexation to the north, appeared to Pavo as preposterous as it was unwelcome.

Then he considered further; even if this imaginary invasion should materialize and succeed, what about himself politically in the new order of affairs? He was known to be an opponent of the proposed union with Italy, and would certainly find no favour at the hands of such victors from the mainland.

On the other hand, he asked himself, if the Sicilians unaided should work a miracle and succeed in throwing off the Bourbon yoke, what would be his personal position under home rule? He was now financially a ruined man, and could not give the help expected of him. There were already too many threadbare aristocrats like him-

self who could furnish none of the sinews of war, and who certainly would receive none of its spoils in case of victory.

Added to these thoughts was one that entered his soul like a red-hot shot in a powder magazine: his hatred of Giuseppe Menardi.

Debating thus with himself he sat down for rest in a copse close to the roadside,—there where it diverged, one path leading to his own estate, the other to that of the Menardis. A clatter of stones told of some one approaching. Glancing through the bushes he saw Fra Raffaello. How opportune! A good omen! Really providential! He would have been no more sure of it if he had tossed a handful of thistle-down into the air, and the stuff had floated in the direction of San Benedetto at Catania.

“Yes,” he said to himself, “I can work safely through Raffaello. Count Lupis was shrewd to suggest it. Besides, as a holy monk, he will shrieve me, and if there be any sin in what I may perpetrate in loyalty to the King the cause will perhaps be in his eyes a sufficient atonement.”

The scheme seemed so perfect to Signor Pavo that he instantly hailed the monk, and joined him in the walk.

“I have long desired, Fra Raffaello, to talk with you regarding a matter of great delicacy, of which I have never ventured to speak to another living soul.”

“You honour me with your confidence, Signor Pavo. But of late, if report be true, you have not been overzealous in your devotion to Holy Church. I sincerely trust that what you have to communicate will indicate a return to a better mind.”

“I have been remiss,” said Pavo in a penitent tone of voice.

“One can always repent, Signor Pavo, if disposed to

do works meet for repentance, as the Holy Apostle saith," benignly replied the Frate.

"I am so disposed," said Pavo, welcoming the opportunity thus opened to him. "And I think that what I am about to tell you will be a work meet for repentance."

"Then speak freely, my son," said the monk, giving the returning prodigal a winning smile.

Thus encouraged, Pavo continued, "I have a revelation to make that will serve the cause of our King Francesco."

The monk gave a searching look into the other's face, trying to fathom his sincerity, and slowly replied,—

"Signor Pavo, you are not reputed to be any more enthusiastic in your devotion in that direction than towards Holy Church."

The blood flushed the young man's face, even to the tips of his ears. But, making his blush rather a sign of repentance than of shame, he rejoined, "Report may slander one, Fra Raffaello."

"I trust that it is so, Signore," replied the monk.

"And yet," added Pavo, "my repute may be readily accounted for. There is so much rebellion abroad that loyalty is dangerous. My villa would not be safe for a night if I did not seem to stand in with my neighbours. It is this inconsistency that troubles me. But what I am about to reveal to you will, I think, be sufficient proof of my honesty. Fra Raffaello, a serious insurrection is planned to take place in Palermo within a few weeks."

"So I have heard," said the monk. "Signor Pavo, the very gates of hell are open, but they cannot prevail against the authorities. The King's forces are so numerous and so posted that insurrection will be quickly drowned in blood. Alas, the poor deluded people! No rebellion can now last for a twelvemonth as it did in '48. The people are blind; blinded by their own sins and

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crimes. In mercy, in pity, I say that rioting must not be allowed even to begin. It must be pinched off in the bud."

"You speak wisely, Fra Raffaello," replied Pavo. "For if it begins it will not end with Palermo. The news of the rising in that city is to be the signal of the rising of the entire island."

The monk's eyes burned their way into those of his comrade whom he stood facing upon the road. Pavo did not flinch. He added, "Of course, I, living as I do in this remote part of the Island, would have little influence in affairs at Palermo. But I can help to throttle rebellion in our own neighbourhood. There is a nest of vipers not far from where we are walking. I have been induced, through false representations of their purpose, to attend some of the gatherings of my neighbours. I supposed at first that we were to consult regarding certain local improvement of our properties hereabout; but I found that the business was treason. My conscience rebelled. But what can I do? I have attended the meetings, and heard their diabolical schemes. To report them to the authorities will cost me my life. You know my people, Fra Raffaello."

"I see your dilemma, my son," replied the monk. "That nest of traitors must be broken up. Yet you should not appear as betraying. Not only would your personal safety be menaced, as you say, but you would lose the opportunity of rendering similar service to the King in the future. The Sicilians are so secretive with their *Mafiosa*, their *Massoneria* and what not, that the authorities need informants who are in the confidence of the traitors."

Pavo blushed a whole spectrum of rainbow colours as he listened to the implied proposition.

The monk seemed to be possessed of a power of divin-

ing the thoughts of his comrade, for he continued, "It is not treason to betray treason. It is not wrong sometimes to even help an iniquity to develop fully that it may suddenly ripen and rot. The Lord sent Hushai to lead the councils of the young rebel Absalom, that in the end he might mislead him and bring destruction upon his head."

Pavo was silent from sheer sense of shame. He was strongly tempted to break off further communication with Raffaello. But he had already gone too far to retreat. The monk could use the fact of his having been in league with the insurgents, however innocently, as a sort of thumbscrew for the exaction of further information. Besides, any hesitation now would be resented terrifically by Count Lupis. He felt himself to be in the rapids. He must make the run downwards, whatever wreck awaited him. His policy was clearly to take Raffaello as his pilot for the entire sweep of the current.

Pavo, therefore, fully divulged the place of the gathering of the squadra at the old wine-press, and the stocking with arms. He hesitated when Raffaello demanded the names of the conspirators. Pavo could shoot a man in hot blood under stress of some menace personal to himself. But to denounce a neighbour to death by the hands of others! This raised repugnantly whatever sense of honour was left in his desperate soul. Besides, it seemed especially cowardly to denounce a neighbour to the authorities. Every Sicilian receives with his mother's milk at least this much of the Mafiosa spirit.

"I can mention no names," said Pavo. "It is enough that I give warning of the conspiracy itself, and locate the places where the authorities can make their own arrests."

Notwithstanding this small residuum of honour in Pavo, analogous in significance to the life in the tail of a snake,

which keeps wriggling though the reptile's head has been crushed, the man could not fully repress one contemptible temptation. At the instant there gleamed through the silver and gold of the orange grove the terra-cotta tiling of the Menardi house. Perhaps the action was more instinctive than premeditated, but he nodded his head in that direction.

"I understand you," said the monk quickly. "You have spoken no name. That elder Menardi is his sire's own son. Treason oozes down through generations, and shows the taint in families otherwise loyal. In Menardi's case, at least, the Scripture is verified,—'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge.'"

A glance into the monk's face assured Pavo that there was no need to add further words regarding Giuseppe. The poison would work, and he, Roberto Pavo, had not mentioned his neighbour's name. He could swear it on the crucifix; and Raffaello was honest enough to confirm the oath with one of his own if necessary.

"Fra Raffaello, I must ask your blessing."

The young man bowed his head.

"Pax vobiscum!" said the monk, and resumed his walk towards Villa Menardi, while Pavo turned to the left, and climbed the hill towards his own place.

XIV

A SERPENT IN PARADISE

THERE was no spot in all the world more suggestive of elegant restfulness than the monastery of San Benedetto at Catania. Deeply shaded porticos surrounded a garden in which floral Sicily condensed its loveliness of odours and hues. Here heavy green cypresses wooed graceful yellow cassias. Roses and geraniums filled the air with interlacing perfumes. Bright-winged birds skimmed the surface of the fountain in the central court, as if fascinated by the gleam of the goldfishes that sported below.

The church within the monastery enclosure, where the brethren assembled for daily worship, was modelled after St. Peter's at Rome, suggesting by its very proportions that architectural Holy of Holies, the Mecca of devout Catholics. The High Altar was one of which Benvenuto Cellini might have been proud, even after his liberation from Castle San Angelo where he had had a vision of the Christ. The organ was that which Goethe had called the finest in the world. Its very wood seemed to have absorbed melody from the souls of generations of musicians that had sat upon its bench. Its soft flutes prompted an over-poetic Brother to declare that the pipes had been wrought from quills dropped from a passing angel's wing, and that its heavier tones were borrowed from the trump that would one day wake the dead. The stalls in the choir rivalled in their exquisite carving the world-famous ones in San Pietro at Perugia, where a covey of angels might have dignified to sit without fretting

their dignity. The paintings upon the walls were like windows looking up into heaven ; and down through the windows the blessed Saints seemed to be looking upon earth.

For the scholarly disposed there was the library, renowned throughout Europe. Manuscripts, illuminated by the consecrated artistic genius of many generations, glowed upon the long tables ; and in the alcoves were stored the treasures of all the ages of Catholic philosophy and tradition.

The exquisiteness of this retreat from the world was augmented by the fact that, notwithstanding the rule of San Benedetto forbade distinctions of secular rank and station among the monks, the brethren were almost all the scions of noble, or at least of the most aristocratic, stock of Europe. Very appropriate was the painting representing San Benedetto receiving into the Brotherhood two distinguished princes. This picture was regarded as a sort of historic monogram, and hung most conspicuously.

The Frati constituted a community where real worldly refinement counteracted largely the dullness of common monastic life, and where "attic salt" seasoned the monotony of religious conversation. Some of the inmates were men who in earlier days had been satiated with overmuch worldliness. Others, disappointed in not having been able to obtain the objects of their ambitions or loves, took this holy revenge upon society by excluding themselves from it. But many were of a sincere sort who sought in this quiet spot to see in dreams the ladder that the patriarch Jacob saw at Bethel, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon it.

Paolo was now at home in this Saints' Rest. The elegance of his surroundings did not detract from his spiritual devotion. Never did a soul respond more

sincerely to the questions propounded to him by the Abbate regarding his purpose of absolute consecration to the contemplation and worship of the Divine Mystery, the central idea and the absorbing ideal of the true followers of San Benedetto. How humbled he was, and yet exalted, when the Abbate, laying aside the mitre of power and the chasuble all aglow with the insignia of holiness, and girding himself with a linen cloth, stooped down before him and washed his right foot,—the foot of a poor sinner just turning away from the dust of the world,—and kissed it, setting an example that was immediately followed by all the attendant Frati !

The second day after his admission Paolo was summoned into the presence of the Abbate, who was seated on his throne in the Sanctuary, blazing in the glory of his office. Here the student received the sleeveless cowl of the novice. A new name was given him, that of Fra Placido, by which he was greeted, together with the holy kiss, by all the monks and fellow novices.

Fra Placido took his place at the humblest service. He swept the floors, and helped prepare the meals in the kitchen, and dreamed that in this he was fulfilling the Rule of Obedience.

So passed several days ; days of happy contentment and unanticipated serenity. At night he could scarcely sleep for the quiet joy that filled his mind. He watched the stars passing his window, as if each were some heavenly visitant looking in to smile upon him. His special delight was in the worship just before the dawn of the new day, when at the stroke of the bell he joined the long line of the Frati who, hooded and with folded arms, went silently into the glorious church for Lauds. He was thrilled at his own rich voice mingling with the voices of the others in the chanting of the Psalms, accompanied by the strains of the organ when a seraphic

Brother touched the keys. The first night of his attendance at this service he was almost overcome as he saw back of the High Altar the splendid picture of the Blessed Benedetto, the Founder of the Order, dying even as he stood at the Mass. "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his," was the prayer that interjected itself into Paolo's thoughts between the words prescribed in the Ritual.

He thought he understood why to the ordinary vows of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience, Benedetto had added that of Stability, never to leave the particular family of Benedictines one had entered. Surely, if he should live a thousand years, he would never feel temptation in this respect.

One day he watched the impressive ceremony by which a novice, having spent his preparatory year, entered into full monkhood. Paolo longed for the time to hasten when he, like this Brother, should lie in the centre of the choir of the great church as one dead—dead to the world; only, instead of these stranger relatives, his own mother and sister and dear Giuseppe should hold the ends of the pall that was thrown over him, in token of their taking part in, and having a share in the reward of, his great sacrifice;—and then, when the cry should resound through the arches, "Awake from the dead, thou that sleepest, and Christ shall give thee light!" he himself would rise a new man, having burst the cerements of self and would stand forth in the liberty of entire consecration.

One day, at the hour following dinner, which the Frati spent in mutual intercourse after the long silence as they worked or prayed, Fra Raffaello sat in a corner of the cloister garden with a venerable Brother named Christofero. In Raffaello's veins ran some of the blood of men who had been cardinals at Rome. Christofero's blood

was that of Sicilian dukes who had dared in other days to dispute the sovereignty of Naples over the Island. If common "blood will tell," certainly that which possesses an aristocratic tincture is more apt to be assertive of its qualities. By heredity, therefore, Raffaello was an ecclesiastic; Christofero a patriot; that is, so far as either had any predilections other than religious.

"Brother Christofero," said Raffaello, "the revenues of San Benedetto are less than they used to be. With the increasing infidelity of the people, and the diversion of pious minds into political channels, especially with the infamous claim of the Piedmontese Cavour that there should be a 'Free Church in a Free State,'—Free State indeed!—men are forgetting the needs of such seclusion and prayer as we enjoy here."

"You know more of our endowment and revenues than I," replied Christofero. "But I had supposed that we were amply supplied. Indeed, if our income should fall to the line of merely sustaining the refectory we ought to be grateful, since the piety of former generations has furnished us with everything else. One need have but bread and water to find full enjoyment in the treasures of art and luxury that are about us. I, for one, am willing to trust San Giuseppe, the heaven-appointed Cellarer of all monasteries."

"Brother Christofero," replied Raffaello, "one should not let his personal contentment limit his zeal. I think, by the way, that I have secured a goodly donation from an unexpected quarter. You know Signor Roberto Pavo who lives near Taormina?"

"I have heard the name. Rather a free living young man, is he not?"

"He has been, but I think he is a penitent."

"You would bring him here, Brother Raffaello? and his purse with him?" asked Christofero in amazement.

“Surely, Brother, we have enough saints with battered virtue already. San Benedetto is not a hospital for diseased souls, however much they pay for the treatment.”

“No, no, Christofero. We do not want Pavo here,—but it would help his diseased soul—and us too—if he were disposed to make us a gift. A little blood-letting is good for the body, and a little purse-bleeding is healthful for the soul. Now, as I happen to know, Signor Pavo has issued a note of indebtedness against his estate. This note is in the hands of one of the King’s bankers at Naples. You see Pavo has been suspected of disloyalty to the King. But the King needs friends in Sicily. I am assured that the note will be returned to Pavo on condition of his proving his hearty return to loyalty. I have spoken to Signor Pavo of the matter, and have his promise to donate one-quarter of the amount—some fifteen thousand lire—to San Benedetto, if I can secure the release of the note at Naples. And I think I can. I have influence there.”

“Brother Raffaello,” responded Christofero drawlingly, “you should have been a statesman, rather than a monk.”

“Why not both ?” replied Raffaello, flattered by the Brother’s apparent estimate of his ability, and not turning to notice the face of his companion as he pursed his lips and winked with one eye at the clouds,—a habit of Christofero when in any dubious state of mind.

Raffaello continued,—lowering his voice, as if the ants crawling over the gravel in the path might have ears,—“There is an estate adjoining Pavo’s that ought also to yield us something—that of the Menardis. The second son is with us here ; young Placido. The mother is devoted to us. The older son is, I learn, a leader in rebellion. But he has been, or will be, arrested ; and will no doubt pay the penalty. If he is not shot, he surely will

lose his rights to the estate, which will fall to Placido, who will no doubt complete his novitiate without hindrance and become one of us in full orders. According to our vows we consecrate whatever wealth may fall to us for the benefit of our Order. The Lord works mysteriously, Fra Christofero."

His companion turned suddenly upon him,—“Frate ! Frate, I beseech you, have done with such business. Religion is being everywhere dragged in the mire of political scheming. Poor Sicily ! Poor Italy ! Torn like a man between two wild beasts by this strife of the King of Piedmont, and the King of the Two Sicilies ; and the body of our Lord torn with it ! What has our faith to do with this worldly contention ?”

Raffaello's wrath burned within him ; but he was accustomed to keep the draught turned off the fire except when he wished the flare of it to be seen.

“Ah, Christofero, it is well that no one but myself hears you. You would be thought disloyal to both our King and Holy Church. They are inseparable. Since our most Blessed Lord, Pio Nono, found refuge at Gaeta under protection of His Majesty Ferdinando, the father of our gracious King Francesco, when that ravenous beast Garibaldi held Rome in '49, there has been but one cause among the faithful in the Two Sicilies. And now that beast, if reports be true, is ready to spring down from the north upon our Island. Strange rumours are in the air. Again and again the renegade Crispi has been tracked here, in one or another disguise. And so has another traitor, named Pilo. Maniscalco, the chief of police at Palermo, has a list of traitors long enough to make a tail for the devil himself. If these wretches should succeed, think you that they would spare our convents, our churches ? And then there are the English, wretched Protestants, all atheists——”

“Are they atheists?” asked Christofero in a tone of incredulity.

“How can Protestants be otherwise? There is but one God, and the Holy Father at Rome is His Vicegerent,” replied Raffaello.

Christofero was silent for a moment, then said, “That sounds like Mahometanism, ‘Great is Allah, and Mahomet is His Prophet.’”

“What! Fra Christofero!” cried Raffaello in a tone of alarm as well as of rebuke. “Are you, too, infected with heresy?”

He gathered up his robe and went away.

“Alas!” moaned Christofero to himself, “what did I say? Oh, dear me! My poor tongue!” Then he repeated the verse from the Psalm, “‘O Lord, set a guard at the door of my lips.’ Oh, I must go to my cell and pray!”

SELF-SOUNDINGS

PAOLO had been seated but a little way from the two Brothers during this conversation. He had heard nothing of their debate, but had noted their faces. That of Raffaello startled him. At one moment it was hard and vindictive : the next, sneering and contemptuous for his companion. Had the hand of San Benedetto in the great mural painting turned to claws, the change would scarcely have been greater than that of Paolo's impression of this man who had been his spiritual guide. He had heretofore seemed to him almost angelic, so full of tenderness. Whenever Raffaello had spoken of matters of the faith his eyes gleamed as if they had taken in the light of things celestial as well as that of day. What could mean this change in his aspect? Doubtless Christofero had committed some great sin which the holy Raffaello was compelled to rebuke.

The mystery deepened in Paolo's mind during the next few days. Both Christofero and Raffaello avoided him. Now and then he observed the former gazing at him with almost tearful eagerness, as if he were about to speak ; but no words escaped his lips. Raffaello passed him with a smile, it is true, but a smile that seemed forced. What could have happened? Had he, Placido, proved himself unworthy to become a monk? For long hours he sat before his crucifix, and examined his own conduct. He prayed for light, but found nothing to condemn either in the memory of his outward actions, or in his speech with anybody. He had been faithful to every jot and tittle of

the routine of his duties. He tried to recall the regularity of his observances of Matins and Lauds, of Prime and Tierce, of Sixte and Nones, of Vespers and Compline. Every day he had chanted with full heart the seventh part of the Book of Psalms as prescribed for the weekly discipline. No punishment nor even a reprimand had been given him by the Abbate for fault in a single duty.

He then tried to sink the fathoming line into the depths of his thoughts. Alas! here was sin enough. He had an awful sense of contrition when, as the youngest of the novices, he held the holy water for the hands of the Abbate, and repeated the prayer, "Asperges me, Domine." But somehow he still felt himself to be unwashed.

Could it be that these holy brethren, with their long experience in piety, had acquired the power of reading another's thoughts, and that they knew him more thoroughly than he knew himself? Or did his unworthiness reflect itself like a dark shadow against the serene holiness of their characters? Did they intuitively turn from him, feeling that his was not the sort of soul of which saints are made?

So San Benedetto was not yet the sacred resting-place Paolo had anticipated. He had dreamed that, when he should have passed the great walls that excluded almost all the sounds of the surrounding world, they would guard also his mind from troublesome thoughts: that some spiritual power answering to the flaming sword at the gate of Eden kept the entrance to this retreat. But he now realized that there was no exorcism in the atmosphere of the place; no subtle and holy effluence passing out from the relievos of the Saints that lined the gigantic marble staircase; no celestial contagion from the passing forms of his meek brethren; no echoes of heavenly voices in the music of the grand organs in the church.

Paolo did not doubt that some day his soul eyes would be opened and his ears would be unstopped. He would then hear God speak,—as Santa Monica had said, “without voice!” He recalled the words of the prophet, “If the vision tarry, wait for it. It will surely come.” He would wait and watch and pray, until, it might be, in the total subjection of the flesh, the spirit would bloom, as plants shoot upward when the seeds have decayed.

“Gesù! Maria! San Nicolo, San Benedetto, Sant’ Agata, my mother’s helper, San Paolo, help me! Help me!”

The prayer was almost as constant as his pulse beats; and the articulation came from his soul as really as the blood throbbed from his heart.

After several days Paolo observed another change in Raffaello and Christofero. Raffaello would not even pass him, if it were possible to avoid the encounter, but would turn on his heel and walk the other way. Once when the monk was compelled to go by him, Paolo noticed that he did not so much as raise his eyes, although he was evidently, and, as it seemed to the novice, painfully, conscious of his presence. Raffaello’s face flushed red, and there was a look on it not unlike that of fright. Was he, then, he, Paolo, so wicked that his wickedness acquired a potency like that of the Evil Eye? If not, why did not the holy man look him in the face?

Fra Christofero’s changed manner was very different from that of Raffaello. Whenever the novice caught his glance he noted that it was very intense, as if the monk were trying to look through him and to read his thoughts. It was, at the same time, an anxious gaze full of sympathy. He thought of Christofero as a sort of good angel wanting to extend his arms and save him from an evil fate, but held back from this merciful deed by some necessity of justice. He was reminded of a dream he had

once had, in which he saw the Christ reaching out His hands to rescue a heretical soul; and then letting His hands fall, as if the Blessed Lord had seen the face of the Eternal Judge in frowns forbidding him.

One day Christofero, having passed him, turned around, and stood gazing after him with a look of grief. Paolo could no longer resist the impulse to have the mystery solved.

"Fra Christofero," he cried, clasping his hands as he would have done in prayer, "Fra Christofero, tell me, what have I done? What have I said? What am I, that you have so changed towards me?"

The older man put his hands upon the other's shoulders, as priests do in passing the blessing to one another after communing together in the Mass. Tears came into his eyes.

"Ah, figlio mio, my dear Placido, when did you hear from your home—from your mother—from—from your sister—from—from—from—your brother? He is older than you, is he not? And his name is——?"

"Giuseppe!" interrupted Paolo, wondering at this apparent attempt to divert his thoughts; then added:

"Only to-day good tidings were sent me. They are well, Gesù be praised!"

"And Giuseppe is well?" There was a tremor of anxiety in the tone.

"Yes," replied Paolo.

"That is well. It is well," said the monk.

Paolo wondered again at the strange light that came into his companion's face as he was told the good news. What was there in Giuseppe's personal welfare to so interest Fra Christofero, who did not even know him?

XVI

PADRE OMELLI'S CHURCH

IT was a rare Sunday morning even for that land where the atmosphere is a prism, and dishevels the light into its constituent colours, and scatters them over mountain slope and sea. The façade of the little church of the village, perched upon a pinnacle of rock on the side of Etna, showed a roseate gray tinting—perhaps the residuum of the sunbeams that for centuries had played upon its originally white stucco coating.

As seen from the inside, the large circular window over the portal, in spite of its accumulation of dust and cobwebs, gleamed in a score of bright spots, suggestive of the glory it had a century ago, the last time it was cleaned. The faded paintings on the walls, pictures of Saints and Scripture scenes—executed by hands that had long since crumbled into dust finer than that of the pigments they mixed—now revealed their full outlines. These were the Bible of an illiterate people, most of whom were persuaded of the wisdom of medieval doctors who regarded pictures as even better than the written text, since they allowed no heresies to sprout from disputed words and phrases. In the soft radiance which that Sunday morning filled the church, the artificial flowers on the High Altar seemed to have come to life, and to add their fragrance to the incense of the censers.

The paths that converged at the village were thronged with people, all chatting merrily about their pigs and goats, or telling in dolorous tones the various miseries of their lot,—reminding one of the pilgrim bands that in

the ancient time went up to Jerusalem for the Feasts,— for every Sunday in Sicily is a festa, in which, the brief morning service over, the people spend the day in friendly gossip or sport.

At the hour of worship a dense crowd had gathered at the church door. The men gallantly stood on either side while the women elbowed their way through the opening, all eager to get the wooden chairs nearest the altar.

Padre Omelli had at such times other duties than that of spiritually feeding his flock. As a good shepherd he must first secure some sort of order among the sheep when they crowded into the fold.

“Stand back there, Pietro, Francesco, and you, Luigi! It is a shame to you to block the entrance of the women. Wait a bit there, Leila! Don't you see that you are tearing the shawl off Lisabetta, and she with the bambina in her arms? For shame! You are not pigs at a trough. Behave, or I will make the sacristan put out the candles, and you will have no Mass at all to-day! The Scripture says there is silence for half an hour in heaven when the great angel swings the golden censer. You will never see him do it if you can't go in quietly. Be still, Maria! Giovanna!”

When the seats were filled with the women folk, and the men reduced to order as they stood in the aisles and against the wall, the Mass was celebrated. During this solemnity the people became utterly silent. No one so much as whispered to his neighbour. Even the clogs on the men's feet made no shuffling. A mouse ran under the women's chairs, but no one stirred. The people rested their faith upon the great Atoning Sacrifice, as for nearly two thousand years their ancestors had done, ever since as pagans they had brought their offerings to the altar of Jupiter or Venus, perhaps at the very same spot.

Mass being over, Padre Omelli ascended the pulpit at

the side of the choir, and delivered a sermon,—short, pithy, practical. Unlike most Sicilian sermons of the day, it was something more than a tirade against the people for not having given enough of their slender means for the priest's own support. It threatened no eternal damnation for neglect of church ordinances. It made no allusion to the wooden statue of San Giuseppe that was stored behind the altar screen, and had not received a coat of new paint since the last eruption of the volcano, which was supposed to have been due to the forlorn condition of his attire. Padre Omelli spoke of honesty, cleanliness, neighbourliness, the sense of obligation to the community. He denounced injustice in high places; called upon kings to cast their crowns at the feet of the King of kings who reigns in righteousness and love, rather than scatter the gems among those who pander to royal vices. He appealed for fortitude under the adversities of life, and, as one commissioned with some mysterious prophecy, bade them all to be strong for a day which at any time might dawn with blood for its ruddy sunrise.

The people were moved by the Padre's words. They breathed deeply. Many a labour-hardened hand was clenched as if about to be raised to strike. Knowing glances flashed. There were soldiers in the church, with dull, listless faces, who, even if they had understood the broad Sicilian dialect in which Padre Omelli spoke, would not have appreciated the undertone of his thought.

At the close of the service, as the crowd dispersed, a few came to the Padre bringing various complaints or requests,—to all of which he gave patient attention.

“Ah, Madre Carlotta! Out so soon? A good omen for the child! He will be a lively man. And born on San Sisto's day? That means that he, too, may become a Pope.

“Well! Well! If here isn’t Filippo! That was a bad break in the leg, Filippo. Signor Pavo should build a wall at the turn of the road where you fell off. It wasn’t the fault of either you or the ass. I will speak to Signor Pavo.”

“Thanks, Padre!” responded Filippo. “It was on San Giovanni the Hermit’s day that I walked first without a crutch. I will send the crutch to the church of the Hermit of Palermo.”

“No, don’t do that,” replied Padre Omelli. “Keep the crutch to give to some one else who breaks his leg. That will please the Saint a great deal more. Saints don’t need crutches, for they never break their legs in Paradise.”

A contadino came up with doleful face. The priest accosted him:

“Why, Tomaso! What terrible thing has happened?”

“Oh, Padre, the cow that I bought, and that cost me all that I saved for a year, has gone dry, and is good for nothing.”

“That’s too bad, Tomaso; but not half so bad as Filippo’s breaking his leg. You must go home and thank Sant’ Antonio Abbate that the cow didn’t die. You can make her work at the plow.”

“That is true, Padre,” replied Tomaso. Then his face was suddenly brightened with a happy thought.

“Padre, don’t you think Sant’ Antonio would cure the cow? I will buy a new frame for his picture if he will make her give only three quarts a day.”

“You might try,” said the Padre. “If he doesn’t help the cow, he will bless you, no doubt, in some other way;—give you good breeding with the goats in the spring perhaps. Sant’ Antonio is a most good-natured Saint. Come to me later and I will give you the form of the

prayer he likes best. I can't remember it now, but I have got it in my book.

"Now, Lorenzo," addressing another, "what is the matter with you? Your face is as crooked as the new moon!"

Lorenzo's complaint was: "The foxes are after my hen-roost. Stole four chickens last night."

"Too bad! Too bad, Lorenzo! Better call in Guillo; he is a Vinninuri. I remember, he was born not only on a Friday, but on Good Friday. Let him repeat the formula. He knows it. Don't let him forget to end with 'In nomine di lu Patri.' Whatever we do, do it unto the Lord, even keeping the hen-roost safe.

"This much of superstition doesn't hurt them," he added sotto voce.

As these applicants vanished, a group of men lingered about the door. Padre Omelli beckoned to them to come behind the altar, into the little room which served as a sacristy, and where were accumulated candles, crippled images, rusty censers, and a finely-carved stall chair in the dust of which was the rear mark of the last person who had sat in it.

Padre Omelli scanned closely each face. Then in quick whispered words he said:

"We must meet no more at the wine-press. We are about to be raided. Our rendezvous has been scented by some long-nosed Bourbon fox."

"I doubt it," said one. "We are as safe there as was ever a hawk's brood on Monte Venere."

"That is true," replied old Francesco Fazio. "But I have snared more than one hawk on Monte Venere. How does the Padre know that the wine-vat is suspected?"

"That I may not tell," replied the priest. "It is well, Signori, that we who are risking our lives for one another should have some by-paths of information that we

do not reveal in our most confidential councils. Trust me! Have I ever told you anything but the truth?"

"You have our confidence, absolutely, Padre," said Giuseppe Menardi, who had come back to the church after seeing his mother and sister safely mounted on their horses to return home. "But what would you advise, Captain Fazio?"

"That our arms be taken away from the wine-press this very night, even if it be not already too late. We must attempt it."

As Padre Omelli walked a short way with Giuseppe he said, "Signor Menardi, I have learned something which I did not care to mention before the others. An order has been issued by Prince Fitalia, the Intendente at Catania, for your arrest. I would advise your absence from the neighbourhood for a while."

"I have no fear," replied Giuseppe. "Yet your counsel, Padre, I see is wise. If I should resist arrest it would bring all the squadra to my defense, and that would lead to the discovery of others. I will take precautions. Buon giorno! and ten thousand thanks, Padre!"

That night Giuseppe lay long upon his bed devising plans. To-morrow he would go to Messina, giving out to his family—for why should they be disturbed?—that he was going to the mainland on business. If necessary he would assume disguise. He had done so before. It would not be hard for a weather-bronzed padrone to pass for a seaman, merchant or contadino. He laughed to himself as he remembered having once shipped as a sailor; and how he had talked with another water-battered compatriot named Crispi, as they sat together on a coil of rope during a voyage to Genoa, where they had met another sea-dog named Rosolino Pilo. Having made his plans he slept soundly. Early in the morning he started in his precautionary flight.

There were strange movements of people that day in the vicinity of the old wine-press. For example, it occurred to Niccolo that a great tree trunk, that had fallen not far from the wine-vat, should be removed. For some hours he and several workmen were busily engaged upon it. The oldest crow might have cawed his surprise at what he saw. The men dug into the trunk with chisels and mattocks. It was not in search for wild honey, for no bees swarmed menacingly about the heads of the workers. From here and there were brought and stowed in the artificial hollow of the trunk long black objects which glistened in the sunshine. When the cavity was full, the bark was securely fastened back into its place. With chains the great log was drawn down the path.

"That will make a glorious fire on San Giovanni eve," said a soldier whom the men passed.

"It's worth too much for that," replied Niccolo. "We will split it up for roof-beams, I think."

That ancient crow, as he inspected the contents of the great log, might have said to his mate, "I have seen nothing like that since the wooden horse which the Greeks filled with armed men at the siege of Troy; for there are certainly arms in that log."

That crow, the most expert detective of what farmers plant in the ground, would have been equally puzzled had he watched eight or nine men, arranged in an oblique line, *al antu*, as the Sicilians speak of group workers in the fields. As these men grasped each one his grubbing hoe for the day's work, the head of the file raised his cap for the usual benediction.

"Now be praised and thanked the Saints and the Holy Sacrament."

The men murmured, "Always may they be praised!" and fell to work.

Quickly a trench was made in the midst of a dense

tangle of underbrush. At a little way from the workers, under the shade of an orange tree, was a pile of jackets, tools, small sacks of food for the midday meal; and lying among these things, as immovable as a sphinx guarding an Egyptian temple, a huge mastiff. Though the beast was quiet, with his head upon his paws, his eyes were unusually wide open, and one ear was cocked. He was evidently as much puzzled as was the crow on the tree at the strange stuff the men were burying in the trench;—boxes containing bushels of grape-shot, pistols, cutlasses and other things with which only Mars ever sows the fields.

When the leader of the file proclaimed “Terza!” and raised his cap for the mid-morning prayer, all these strange plantings had been covered, and the freshly-turned ground made unnoticeable from a distance by the wild growth of vines carefully replaced above it.

“Sant’ Antonio of Padua bless the harvest that will come from that!” said one old labourer, appealing to the patron Saint of new-sown fields. The men gathered beneath the orange tree, and took their *rifocillamento*,—the nine o’clock refiring of bodily energy.

While they were thus engaged the inevitable pair of Bourbon soldiers approached. As it would have been discourtesy not to give to strangers, and equally for them not to accept, an invitation to share a repast right in sight, the King’s men broke each a fistful of bread, took a generous swig from the big-bellied, straight-necked flask, wiped their mouths on their sleeves and departed, not having observed so much as a microbe of treason in the hospitality.

“Viva Maria!” said the workmen, returning thanks for food, and equally for the gullibility of their guests.

XVII

GIUSEPPE IN THE TOILS

GIUSEPPE'S day had been even more interesting than that just described. He had scarcely parted with Niccolo in the morning when a group of soldiers blocked his way with levelled guns. Several other men covered him with their aim, their musket barrels flashing above the high wall that lined the narrow road. He saw that resistance or flight would be equally futile. They bade him dismount from his horse. He obeyed.

"Would you divide a thousand lire among you?" he asked as indifferently as if he had been making a bargain in the market.

The lure was reflected in the eagerness of their faces. There was a moment's consultation, and the proposition would have received a vote of acceptance, had not a clatter of horsemen coming up the path announced a larger detachment of the King's men. This was under the command of one of the few captains in the Bourbon service noted for loyalty rather than venality. It is enough to add that the thousand lire was accepted by the captain together with all the rest of Giuseppe's purse, but as a contribution to the war exchequer of the King of the Two Sicilies.

"You have done your duty, men," said the captain to the foot-soldiers that had made the arrest. "Your names shall be reported favourably at Catania. Now the prisoner is mine. Return to your posts."

The soldiers saluted as the officer rode away with his

captive. "Did you hear that, Carlo? Our names will be reported at Catania. I will bet you ten lire that we will never get the reward of ten scudi from the King's pocket."

"Why bet ten lire, Ricci? Make it a thousand. We can pay a thousand as well as ten, for we haven't received wages for a year."

"Well," replied Ricci, "the King is as generous as his enemies. They say"—using the South Italian pronunciation of the name of the great fighter—"they say that Galibardi, who may come down here to cut our throats, never pays any wages to his soldiers."

"That's true," interjected a third. "My father was in the King's army that chased Galibardi when the French drove him out of Rome in '49. He caught and helped hang one of his men, my father did. He asked the rebel before he was killed what Galibardi had promised him for fighting against the Pope. The man said, 'He promised us starvation, wounds and death, and now,' said the rebel, 'you are helping him keep his promise!' My father said that he wanted to save that soldier's life, for he was only a boy. But what a devil that Galibardi must be to make people follow him for nothing except to get killed!"

"Well! I don't know," said Ricci, shrugging his shoulders. "I think it would be better to get killed following Galibardi, and so to get what you expect to get, than to be shot, as many of us will be by these Sicilians."

"Hush!" said Carlo. "I saw a snake just now crawl into the wall. Maybe he is one of the King's spies. Then we'll all get shot against the barracks wall."

"What glory is there in that?"

"No glory, Carlo; but a bullet in the belly will stop hunger as quickly as if it were a chicken's leg."

"But think what we missed, Ricci, by that captain's coming! A thousand lire among us! Phew! We

could all desert and go to New York, and start a restaurant, where we would have plenty to eat, and the Americans to pay for it. Ah, Ricci, Ricci, we've kicked our pot of gold, and didn't know it."

The conversation of the captain's party was more constrained than that of the foot-soldiers. A half score of horsemen were Giuseppe's guard ; five riding before, and five behind, while the officer took his place beside his prisoner.

"For what am I arrested, captain?"

"Of that matter I cannot talk, Signor Menardi. My duty ends with your arrest and safe delivery to the authorities. I am a soldier. You will not hold me in any blame for having interrupted your journey."

"Certainly not, captain," said the prisoner. "We are all of us under duty, or ought to be."

"I have no doubt of your honesty and honour, Signore," replied the officer, "though we might not agree if we discussed it. I will allow you free rein, if I may have your promise not to attempt to escape, Signore."

"It is better, captain," replied Giuseppe, "since you decline to tell me the occasion of my having been so unceremoniously assaulted by your order, that we make no contract for my conduct."

"As you will, Signore ; but I trust that there will be no necessity of my seeming rude to you. We serve hostile causes, I imagine, but we are both gentlemen. The name of Menardi is an honoured one in Sicily."

"And yours?"

"Captain Cataldo of Naples."

"Ah, I know the name well. I have had business relations with your father. He is in good health, I trust?"

The conversation during the day came no nearer the matter that was in both minds. Captain Cataldo shared his lunch with his captive, who jocosely returned the

compliment by requesting the pleasure of the captain's company at dinner at Villa Menardi, or in the prison at Catania, as might be the more convenient.

At Aci Reale, which place they reached late in the afternoon, Giuseppe was well known. As he entered the town, surrounded by the dragoons, even the street boys recognized him.

"Signor Menardi is taken !"

"Death to the troopers !"

"To hell with the Bourbons !"

A chorus of almost infantile voices took up the cry as the tiny patriots followed the mounted men at a distance, or dodged around the corners into narrow alleys, and there stood shaking their fists, each heart longing for a body big enough to carry a musket, and strong enough to make a bayonet thrust. One little fellow, scarcely tall enough to reach a trooper's stirrup, barelegged and bareheaded, was not so alert as his fellows, and was sent sprawling by a whack of the butt end of a soldier's carbine. Instantly Giuseppe wheeled about and, seizing the trooper by the collar, hurled him headlong from his horse. A half dozen swords were at the moment over Giuseppe's head ; but Captain Cataldo's quick command held them suspended.

"You are foolish, Signor Menardi. But for my order your life would not be worth a soldo."

"All madmen are fools, Captain Cataldo," replied Giuseppe, as the subsidence of his rage allowed him voice. "Do you wonder that Sicilians are not all madmen when such damnable cruelty and cowardice is practiced by the King's soldiers ?"

"I forgive your heat, Signore," said the captain. "The deed was dastardly. The man will be punished. My orders were strict, that my men should not retaliate any insults from the people."

“Forward!”

“You understand, Signore, why the King has disarmed all Sicilians. If they had guns the very children would empty our saddles more easily than you did that of the trooper. They would make my body as full of holes as San Sebastino’s was with arrow pricks.”

“And yet the King hopes to conquer Sicily!” replied Giuseppe. “Look out! Look out!”

A crowd of men and women had blocked the street ahead. As the company halted, waiting the command to charge upon the populace, a rain of stones, clumps of hardened mortar, heavy earthen jars, bottles and whole pieces of furniture fell upon the soldiers. The deluge ceased only when Giuseppe, rising in his stirrups, raised his hand and motioned to the people, who thronged the housetops and filled the window spaces.

“Spare the Menardi! Spare the Menardi!” rang along the streets.

“You have more authority here than I have, Signore,” said the captain. “But I must clear the way. Sound the charge!”

“Hold! Hold!” said Giuseppe. “There is no need of blood.” He raised his hands to the dense crowd. Slowly it receded, dispersing within doors and down the side streets.

“See, Captain Cataldo! The Sicilians will obey where they love. Ah, if the King only knew this, he could easily govern my people. But, captain, it is now too late for him to begin it. The people cannot unlearn in a day the lesson taught them by generations of misgovernment and cruelty.”

“I must bid you be silent, Signore,” replied Cataldo. “I respect your feeling, but you must not speak it so loud. Please remember that you are my prisoner.”

“And my people will never forget it,” replied the captive, lapsing doggedly into silence.

The company passed through Aci Reale and took the road to Catania. They reached that city about night-fall. At the Grand Albergo the troopers were ranged in line before the long façade while Captain Cataldo conducted his prisoner within. Giuseppe was recognized by many a sympathetic nod from the attendants, including the host. He was confined to a room in charge of a half dozen soldiers.

An hour later Captain Cataldo reëntered in company with a man bedizzened with insignia of rank, which, however, only made more striking the contrast with his pusillanimous look and mien. He was short, lop-shouldered, pug-faced, with reddish hair well plastered on a low and retreating forehead.

“The Prince Fitalia,” said Captain Cataldo, who upon this brief introduction withdrew.

“As L’Intendente and Head of the Province of Catania, I greatly regret the disagreeable duty I have had to perform, Signor Menardi.”

Giuseppe folded his arms, and stood a moment looking with contempt upon the man who himself in ’48, when the great revolt was yet of doubtful issue, had tried to make friends with the liberal party, but upon signs of the futility of the movement made his peace with tyranny and accepted its favours,—as a whipped dog wags his tail for a bone that is thrown him by his tormentor.

“If the duty is disagreeable,” said Giuseppe, coolly looking the visitor over from head to foot, “then why engage to do it?”

The Prince coloured as red as the ribbon of the medal that hung upon his breast, pursed his short lips until his forehead wrinkled, then looked stupidly at Giuseppe for a moment before he replied stammeringly :

“Signor Menardi, I—I have received orders, or—rather advice—from General Clary, the military commandant, to have you transferred to Palermo. The people of Catania are strangely excited, and—and your presence here becoming known may lead to disturbance. I assure you, my dear Signore, that—that only the will of General Clary prevents my interference for your liberation. But—but ——”

“Stop, Prince,” said Giuseppe impatiently. “Please be brave enough to do without apology whatever you wish to do. I am your prisoner. To your own conscience and to General Clary please make whatever apology you must make. I ask but one thing, Prince, that you tell me frankly upon what charge I have been arrested.”

“That I—I cannot do, Signore,” replied the dignitary. “You will learn the specific complaint from Maniscalco, the Superintendent of Police at Palermo. You will pardon me, Signore!” extending his hand, which Giuseppe did not take, but remained with his arms folded, while the Prince bowed himself from the room.

XVIII

MY FRIEND THE ENEMY

THE day following Captain Cataldo conducted his prisoner towards Palermo. In the march across the Island from Catania they avoided as much as possible entering the villages that lay along the main road. This was a necessary precaution, for in every cluster of houses was at least the nucleus of a squadra of patriots, the whole country being like a bed of burning coals that the slightest breath of excitement might convert into a universal flame. One night they camped in a dense lemon orchard ; the next, in a ravine through which tumbled a stream of water the noise of which shielded the clatter of their tongues from being heard by any possible passer-by.

Riding as they did continually in close company, the captain and Giuseppe developed a familiarity which ripened into mutual respect ; and indeed, into as much of friendship as was possible where one was presumably leading the other to prison, perhaps to death. They conversed upon many subjects, at first with somewhat of reserve ; for the only topic which was deeply in the minds of both—the political condition—was interdicted by mutual courtesy.

There was in their environment as they rode across the Island much which furnished diversion, and helped them to forget for the time that the one was a victim and the other his executioner. The atmosphere, a mixture of mountain and sea air, was exhilarating, almost intoxicating, for they were both young men of quick nerve and

bounding blood. More than once where the road was comparatively level they gave rein to their horses. The sport was not lessened by the fact that had Giuseppe greatly distanced his comrade, he would have been recalled by a pistol shot, for Captain Cataldo was as loyal to his soldier's oath as Giuseppe was to his patriotic convictions.

At one time they halted to take in leisurely the enchanting view. The entire landscape was a parterre in which forests and orchards aflame with variegated colours seemed like flower beds. Billowy hills swelled larger and larger until they were lost in the snow-slopes of now distant Etna. The mountain itself stood like a pillar of alabaster upholding the sky. The sky was wrought over with glowing hues like tapestry lining the tent of an oriental monarch.

"Glorious Sicily!" said Captain Cataldo.

"*My* Sicily!" responded Giuseppe, touching the shoulder of his companion.

Giuseppe's exclamation was, however, the signal that they were approaching a dangerous topic of conversation.

Now and then Giuseppe could not restrain a comment upon the poverty, the squalor, that was everywhere about them; the men often as uncouth as Hottentots and, as one looked into their scowling faces, as dangerous; the women prematurely aged and dwarfed by the burdens of their lot; little children showing the incipiency of diseases that foretokened lifelong pain or imbecility; while a few palatial villa residences and the monasteries that crowned the hills absorbed within them all the comforts of existence. But the problem these things suggested was one which the captain was disinclined to talk about.

At one point, however, he was equally enthusiastic with his companion. The road led them by the base of

the broad rocky platform where the white walls of Castrogiovanni beckoned them, while its age-long rival town of Calascibetta invited from a distant hill. They avoided the city, but the remembrance that this was ancient Enna, the fabled abode of Ceres, the ruin of whose temple was still partly visible, provoked from the captain the repetition of the legend of Proserpina who, in those fields, was gathering flowers when she was seized by Pluto, and borne away to Hades.

Giuseppe ventured a comment. "You remember, captain, that Proserpina was kept in hell only half the year. But this old town of Enna is a perfect Gehenna all the year."

The remark closed that topic of conversation. Giuseppe was left for a while to his own musings. He listened to the tinkling of the bells on a train of asses toiling up the steep ascent to the town with their loads of vegetables and hay, or of brushwood for kindling the scanty house fires. These beasts would be stopped at the town gate by the officers, who with sharp prods would jab into the loads to see that not even a pumpkin entered without paying its tax. As Giuseppe mused, the church, rising above the lower houses, rang out the bell-call to worship the bountiful Creator who provides freely the food for man and beast. Giuseppe didn't cross himself as the captain did.

As the two men jogged along they spoke of the lands they had visited; of England begirt with its fogs; the islands of the Ægean rising in monoliths of porphyry and agate from the blue water; the glacial peaks of the Alps, and surpassing all, Italy. But that word "Italy" was again a warning that they were entering forbidden ground.

Captain Cataldo led the conversation to a safer, though not less entertaining, topic—the women they had met.

Giuseppe had seen the French Empress Eugenia. His description of her won from his listener a compliment upon his appreciative criticism of the sex.

"I am but a cold critic," replied Giuseppe. "But you, captain, for all that you are a bachelor, have no doubt been more ardent in your studies. Do you confess?"

"Oh, I admit it," said Cataldo. "And by the way, if I were not tied to you as my prisoner, I would visit the villa of old General Bianci. He lives a few kilometers south from Termini. He has a daughter that any king in Europe would be willing to make his Esther, even if he had to pay half his kingdom to buy a crown for her. I have frequently met Signorina Bianci in Naples, where she is more popular in the salons of Queen Maria Sophia than the old General Bianci used to be among the King's military advisers; and he was quite famous on General Pepe's staff a generation ago."

"Now, captain," replied Giuseppe, "to prove that you are not flattering the lady you must describe her to me. I challenge you. I gave you a portrait of Eugenie. Can you beat it?"

"Oh, I couldn't paint Signorina Bianci in words. If artists after several hundred years of study can't realize the smile on Leonardo da Vinci's Mona Lisa, how can a rough soldier anatomize the soul that shines through Signorina Bianci's face?"

"Try it; it's your turn, captain."

"Well, let's see! Hair a light brown. No: confound it! Though I have seen her a score of times I am so bleary-eyed that I never noticed what colour her hair is. Think of that for a connoisseur!"

"Not so brilliantly red that it dazzled you, I hope, captain. Red hair here in Sicily, you know, is a sign of possessing the bewitching eye."

"Stop, Menardi," said the captain. "You are putting

dirt into the fine colours I am trying to mix on my palette. The Signorina's hair, as I think of it, is quite light, light as flax, but finer than silk, and a profusion of it. I once saw it let down in some private theatricals we were having in Naples. She was like a sprite under a waterfall."

"You are doing finely, captain. What about her eyes?"

"Eyes? Blue. I remember that because I once penned a *bon mot* about them, and said they had the depth of the sky. Long lashes. I remember that too, because my compliment made an allusion to oriental women peeping out from behind latticed windows."

"Mouth, I suppose, as gracefully curved as a Cupid's bow," was Giuseppe's prompting.

"Hardly: her lips are stiff enough. She could say 'No' to any man, and make him think more of her for doing so."

"I trust that is not the occasion of your high opinion of her, captain."

"No, I haven't been daring enough to draw her fire. Let's see! What else? Oh! her features are clear cut, in perfect balance and proportion. A cameo-cutter in Rome offered a small fortune for a sitting. Figure? Oh, that is indescribable in its dignity and gracefulness. They say she can unsword any officer of the line in a fencing bout. She rides fearlessly as an Amazon, yet she is the most femininely winsome woman I ever met."

"By all means, captain, you should call upon that paragon of virtues. A good soldier always has his eyes open for possible strategetical points, and an unconfirmed bachelor should be as wise."

"But unfortunately," replied the captain, "I am under bonds just now."

"Ah! elsewhere engaged? I congratulate you, captain."

"Yes, I am tied fast to you as my prisoner; the only real objection I have to you, I assure you, Signor Menardi."

"Why not take me along with you, captain, when you call on Signorina Bianci? With a pair of handcuffs I could match the lady's bracelets."

"No doubt that would be entertaining to the Signorina," said the captain, "but the old general would go into a spasm over any such breach of military decorum."

After a few moments, during which Cataldo whistled a snatch of a love tune, he resumed the conversation.

"Signor Menardi, I must call at Villa Bianci to-night. Confound it! And I don't see any way to do it but by taking you along with me. Do me a favour. Reconsider your refusal to pledge me that you will make no effort to escape. I can't take you along in handcuffs, and I can't leave you. At least let up on your stubbornness while we are at the villa; just for one night."

"Oh, certainly, captain; if you offer me the bribe of meeting that rare divinity of yours, I will give you my word to remain a prisoner to her charms until your jealousy breaks the spell."

"It's a bargain, Menardi." The officer extended his hand. "But I warn you, Signor Menardi, that having once met La Signorina you will be more loath than ever to go to Palermo and fall into the embraces of Maniscalco. I shall have to watch you more closely on the morrow. But for to-night it is a bargain."

"Yes, for to-night."

XIX

FAIR WOMEN AND ARMY DISCIPLINE

VILLA BIANCI occupied a knoll that gave it a wide view of the surrounding country, and even a glimpse of the Terrhenian Sea glistening far off to the north. It was an ancestral estate, somewhat dilapidated. This was not so much from lack of money as from lack of care ; for during most of his life General Bianci had been absent from his villa, preferring the more exciting life of Naples or of the camps.

The property was a fair sample of the latifondi, immense estates owned by absentee landlords, which have done so much to keep Sicily impoverished. Far as the eye could reach there was scarcely so much as a peasant's house, however humble. The tillers of the soil lived in dirt cabins that were hardly distinguishable from the ground itself. Indeed, except during the season of actual labour, they did not live there at all, but huddled in distant villages where they were hired in gangs. There was no systematic cultivation of the fields, no regulation of labour or wages except such as might be most convenient or most lucrative to the hired padrone who acted as overseer. Still the Bianci estate was so extensive that even with this lack of economy in management it yielded an abundant income.

The general had latterly spent most of his time at the villa. He had not acquired any distaste for the more fashionable and public life elsewhere, but advancing years had stolen his vigour.

His daughter, Signorina Vittoria, in spite of her conquests in the aristocratic circles of Naples, was enamoured

rather of the freedom of the country. She was fond of nature, of her dogs and horses. As Captain Cataldo had intimated, she was an accomplished horsewoman, and frequently glided like a sprite over the hills, either alone or in company with the massaio, braving the assaults of marauders, trusting for immunity to her own daring, to her great dogs, or to the awe in which her father was held by the lawless.

Since the death of her mother Signorina Vittoria had been the presiding genius of the country home; and being a circumspect young woman, was able to observe that many of the visitors, especially those of the more youthful sort, were attracted by other considerations than her father's wise talk upon public problems or his somewhat garrulous reminiscences of military experience.

Captain Cataldo halted his company of soldiers and put them for the night into camp a half mile from the Bianci mansion. The captain's card, sent by an orderly, brought from the general a cordial invitation for him and his friend to dine and spend the night under his roof. Bianci's reception of his guests was hearty and somewhat effusive.

"Ah, Cataldo! Always welcome here! You are one of the youngsters who wears an old time head on his shoulders. Few of them left! Few of them left, nowadays. And, Signor Menardi! Yes! Yes! I knew your father. Poor fellow! Pity that he was so unwisely influenced in '48! And your mother, Signorina Brignola she was. She was a handsome woman. Per Bacco! You favour her. No flattery! No flattery, I assure you. But that Antonio Menardi was too quick for me,—well! who knows? I might have been your father, young man. Ha! Ha!" slapping him familiarly on the shoulder.

Had Giuseppe been disposed to take offense at the old general's outre manner, the entrance of Signorina Vittoria

would have prevented it. His first impression of the lady was that in Captain Cataldo's enthusiastic praise of her beauty the half had not been told.

At the dinner Giuseppe scarcely heard the talk of the general, though had he been without engrossment in his charming companion, that of his host and Cataldo would have been exceedingly interesting.

"I tell you, Captain Cataldo," said General Bianci, straightening himself in his chair and pounding the arms of it with his hands—"though the King has a hundred thousand soldiers, there isn't a real soldier among them. Who is General Clary? or Landi? or Bonarino? Mere martinets! And there is Lanzi! Oho, Lanzi! He couldn't keep his saddle one day when his horse tripped in a mud puddle in the streets of Palermo. Wonder if he would keep his head if he had to ride through a band of rioters, as I have had to do more times than Lanzi has buttons on his coat. And there is Castelcicala, whom they have made governor. Cicala indeed! a grasshopper; a chatterer. I commanded under General Pepe, and have seen things. Give me control for a month, captain, and with the force now in the Island there wouldn't be a rebel left. There is too much temporizing. I'd hang a Sicilian on the slightest suspicion, and try his case over his bones. But I am out of service now. The rebels may be thankful."

The glassware rattled under the brave beating on the table with which the general emphasized his opinion. There was something, however, in Captain Cataldo's look that put a brake on the old man's speech; for he was one of those old time dignitaries who felt that loyalty was due to a guest as well as to the King. After dinner the general drew Cataldo into an adjacent room.

"What did you mean, captain, by that nudge you gave me? Is young Menardi a rebel?"

"More than that, general; he is a prisoner. I am ordered to deliver him to Maniscalco to-morrow."

"Dio mio! Diavolo! I am sorry to hear that. He is a fine fellow,—and his mother! But these are no times for sentiment, captain. Tell me, why in the name of all the Popes, have you let him be unbound and unwatched? He can slip you; and you know your head would be forfeit for him, captain."

"I will risk that, general. Menardi is a gentleman. He has given me his word. I can't be always watching him, so I have hired him to watch himself."

"You are too confident, captain. Think of it. His life is at stake, for Maniscalco means business. And what I said about hanging every one of his sort will not make him any more careful about his oath to you while he is here under my roof. Besides, I would not care to have him leave you in the lurch at my house. I have enemies enough already without setting more tongues clacking. People say that even my daughter is getting too democratic."

"Have no fear, general," replied Cataldo. "You see I was in a sort of quandary. I must either bring him with me, or leave him with the soldiers at the camp. That wouldn't be safe. Half of our men are unreliable. But Menardi's word is as good as manacles. Of course I could have put him in irons, but that would have been unseemly at your house. Besides he is a Menardi—the best blood in Sicily."

"What you say about the soldiers is true, captain," said Bianci. "A measly lot, half of them mere boys impressed into service. If you'd prick them you'd see that their skins are full of treason. The other half are hired wretches, the camorra, cut-purses who would betray the service for the sake of stealing the gold thread out of your shoulder straps. Bah, for such an army! If that Gari-

baldi should come down here with ten thousand men he could hold the Island. And what you say about Menardi is true, at least the Brignola side of him. Mighty fine woman, his mother! Damn it! Couldn't Fitalia arrest somebody else to make a show of authority? But, captain, you are not going back to camp to-night. You must stay here. I will see to it that Menardi doesn't escape you while at the villa. But you will have to take him to bed with you, and tie yourselves leg to leg."

"I don't know a fellow I would rather chum with," said Cataldo. "His good-night! would make me sleep without anxiety."

"Ah, captain, you will know more about men before you get your colonel's brevet. Trust nobody. That's the only maxim of safety. Menardi may mean well, but when he wakes up about midnight and remembers that to-morrow maybe Maniscalco will shoot him, he will not hesitate to vanish. If you are foolhardy enough to risk that, I am not going to let him out of the house. You may tell him that every door and window is as safely guarded as a gate of Purgatory. But confound that Fitalia! Arresting a Menardi! Better have cut the throats of a hundred contadini than have done that! Fitalia is a fool."

"I agree with you about the Prince," said Cataldo; "but I don't share your fears about Menardi's escape. However, I will set a night guard."

Captain Cataldo went down to the camp to arrange for a score of soldiers to sentinel the house. The general himself beckoned his daughter, and in an adjacent room explained the situation to her. The young woman's face was a flame of wrath.

"For what," she asked, "have they arrested Signor Menardi?"

"Cataldo doesn't know. He has orders only to deliver him to Maniscalco," replied the general.

"Don't know?" cried La Signorina. "Why, Babbo, they will be arresting me next, for they don't know what I am doing."

"You, Vic! You are not a rebel at any rate. If you were, I'd—I'd ——"

"Yes, dear old Babbo, you would arrest me and keep me prisoner here in the house, and you wouldn't let anybody, not even Maniscalco, get at me. I know you, Babbo; but I know, too, if it wasn't for your stiff old military notions you yourself would help Menardi escape."

"No, my daughter. I would have held St. Peter himself in prison so that the very angels couldn't have gotten him out, if I'd been a Roman centurion. Military duty is before everything. You women are too soft-hearted. But, per Giove! I'm sorry it's a Menardi."

The general went out-of-doors, his soldierly instinct leading him to map out the stations for the night guards before Cataldo's return.

Signorina Vittoria returned to Giuseppe.

"Is it true, Signor Menardi, that you are a prisoner?"

"It is true, Signorina; and but for Captain Cataldo's insistence, I assure you I would not have intruded myself upon your hospitality. I owe you my apology."

"You are none the less welcome, Signor Menardi. But I want you to escape. Come quickly! My horse is a swift one."

"No, no, Signorina!" replied Giuseppe. "I have given my word to Captain Cataldo."

"But your life, Signore, is at stake! I know they will murder you when once you are in Maniscalco's hands."

"But, Signorina, my honour also is at stake. I have given my word."

She looked closely into Giuseppe's face. At first she

showed surprise. Then suddenly she took both his hands in her own, and, stamping her foot to give emphasis to her words, exclaimed,—

“Signor Menardi, this is splendid on your part. But, oh, the awfulness of it !”

She burst into tears, and went from the room. When a moment later she returned, a change had passed over her. She was perfectly calm, but her face seemed to have been cast in bronze.

“Signor Menardi, I swear that you shall not fall into the hands of that villainous Maniscalco !”

“Thanks, Signorina !” replied Giuseppe. “If you could only enchant the Fates it might not be so. But tomorrow I must ride by Captain Cataldo’s side towards whatever awaits me in Palermo. No ! No !” said he, seeing the agony of appeal in her face. “If anything on earth could lead me to break my parole it would be your entreaty, Signorina. I swear it. But”—he spoke very slowly—“not—even—that.”

“Do not mistake me, Signor Menardi,” she replied. “If honour is more to you than life you must go with Captain Cataldo. But you have given no such pledge to Maniscalco !”

“No, nor to the captain, beyond our mounting together in the morning.”

“I am glad of that,” was all she had time to say before the general reëntered the room, and with him Captain Cataldo.

Signorina Bianci gave her hand to her guests, and wished them a good-night.

Captain Cataldo detained her. He spoke in a low voice, and accompanied her into the dimly-lighted hallway.

“Signorina, I am disappointed that my military duty has taken me away so much of the evening. I have

missed your society. Besides, I have not forgotten your promise at Naples. You remember the night we were up at San Elmo, and watched the moon rising over Vesuvius?"

"What did I promise you, captain? I have forgotten."

"Forgotten? Alas, my misfortune. Shall I help you remember? You said that you would reserve some great pleasure for me when I visited you here in the country. I have been very patient, Signorina; or rather impatient, and have come to-night full of expectation."

He seized her hand and would have put it to his lips; but she withdrew from him to the step of the stairway.

"Oh, I remember it now, and I am going to keep my promise," she said laughing. "I will dream of you to-night, and try to dream out something which will be the happiest thing I can do for you. Buona sera, Capitano!"

Before he could respond she had disappeared.

"I know what would be the happiest thing for me. I wonder if she does. I hope so," said Cataldo to himself as he returned to the drawing-room.

The men retired to their chambers for the night.

"You had better tie me to your bed-post, captain," said Giuseppe. "From the sounds I hear outside it is a ghostly night, and ghosts sometimes spirit people away."

"Pardon me, Signor Menardi; I did not intend to order that guard outside. Your word was sufficient. But I did it out of respect for General Bianci. He is a strict disciplinarian. He would probably report me for willful indiscretion if I had not set the guard. You will occupy your own bedchamber, Signore. I will not disturb you until morning. Happy dreams, and may all come true!"

Giuseppe sat a long time by the window. There was a conflict in his mind. First of all was the impression

made upon him by Signorina Bianci. Was she a patriot, too? Or was her impulse to give him his freedom prompted by more personal sentiment? He weighed the alternatives, hardly deciding which feeling he would prefer to have actuate her.

Over against this pleasant debate was a realization of his danger on the morrow when he should fall into the hands of the authorities of Palermo. These were impressions so contrasted that he could not make them blend: so he meditated a while on each. At one moment he almost felt himself clasping a radiant form,—for he was a young man—and she? The next moment he was in imagination adjusting the black cap on his head at the bidding of an executioner,—for he was a prisoner.

As he meditated he was scarcely conscious of anything about him, except that the quarter moon cast very dark shadows beyond the projecting ell of the house and back of the tall bushes and under the thickly-leaved orange trees. Now and then, there was the tread of a clumsy-footed soldier. Suddenly a low whisper came up from just under the window:

“Signor Menardi!”

He leaned over the window sill.

“The way is clear. Come with me!”

The voice was unmistakably that of Signorina Vittoria. The window was near the ground, as the house was built partly against the hillside. To descend was easy enough. The impulse for flight was almost irresistible. Giuseppe’s foot was upon the sill. Then came quickly certain thoughts that checked the impulse.

First,—“La Signorina is endangering herself by this. What if a shot should harm her?”

Second,—“This will bring suspicion upon my host.”

Third,—“If I go, it will mean the arrest of Captain Cataldo; perhaps disgrace from his rank in the army.”

These were long steps leading up to the height of his resolution.

“I would then break my word of honour to Captain Cataldo.”

There was a whole tragedy in his reply to Signorina Bianci, but the word came,—“It is impossible. I cannot. God bless you !”

“Then I must go alone,” replied the voice.

A shadow, darker than that of the trees and bushes, moved among them, and moved away.

“She must go alone! Heavens! What does that mean?” thought the prisoner.

Giuseppe sat for two hours still by the window, sleep driven from him, until at length he detected that black shadow again threading the night darkness—for the moon had now gone down.

“You are a desperate man,” whispered the Signorina as she passed under the window and into the house.

XX

SECRET SERVICE

HAD Giuseppe known the movements of the young lady that night he would have returned with emphasis the compliment, "You are a desperate woman;" and would, perhaps, have been more desperate himself in braving death for that woman's sake.

Signorina Bianci, failing to induce Giuseppe to flight, had herself crossed the villa grounds, dexterously concealing her movements amid the taller shrubbery. She passed between the stupid sentinels, most of whom were fast asleep upon their haunches, with their backs against the trees.

One guardsman she stumbled over, but, instead of showing fright, boldly took him by the ear, and bade him be more vigilant under pain of being reported to the captain. The soldier crossed himself, fell upon his knees, and remained in that posture until the apparition had vanished from sight. He next day reported to his comrades that he had been blessed by a vision of Rosalia, the patron Saint of Palermo. His description of the appearance of the Saint was declared by a comrade to tally closely with the image of that Virgin which sleeps in her cave on Monte Pellegrino. The sentinel thus became quite a saint himself among his fellow soldiers; though the matter coming to the ears of Captain Cataldo brought him under mild censure; and a few weeks later, because of a strange event that intervened, and which we will narrate in time, subjected him to close questioning as to the size and voice of that apparition.

Passing the guard Signorina Bianci struck straight across the hills, treeless for miles, every inch of the soil reserved for the grape-vines, the lines of whose low-cut trunks guided her direction. She stood a while upon a knoll, partly to take breath, and partly to chart her way most expeditiously through the dimness. To one unfamiliar with the ground, or without almost an animal's instinct in topography, a night journey across those Sicilian hills would be as uncertain as a sea voyage through a fog without a compass. As she started onward something sprang from beneath her feet. It was only a hare that had been so accustomed to safety in that forsaken neighbourhood that it had forgotten to sleep with one ear cocked. She went down into a ravine.

"Yes, I am right, for here are the stepping stones across the brook. I take the right hand path? No; it's the left."

An owl whirled past her head. "You blundering thing!" she muttered. "You that have such good eyes for night-seeing should be more careful and polite."

A little further on a jackal almost tripped her in his hasty flight, and apologized in a snarling whine.

"Not so loud, sciacco! You will disturb the dogs. Now where am I? It must be in this direction."

She approached what seemed to her but a black shadow on the ground, but which on nearer view took the shape of a hut. It was made of turf, without window or door, resembling more a kennel than a human habitation.

"Angelo!" she called.

In an instant there emerged from what seemed a hole in the earth a creature as little meriting that name as any Plutonian imp. The dim starlight revealed that he was short of stature, and chiefly legs at that. His big head was not unlike a ball of thread held by a contadina on two knitting-needles as she is about to lay aside her work.

"Santa Maria, save me!" cried Angelo, shrinking back towards the entrance of his hut.

"Santa Maria will bless you abundantly, and so will I, Angelo, if you do me an errand at once. You know me?"

"Signorina! Signorina Bianci! I will never mistake that voice since it spoke to me so kindly, and when it made the general not to shoot me, for all I did really desert the army when they told me my Leila, my poor wife, was dying for a sight of me. Send me anywhere, anywhere, Signorina."

"Angelo, you know Palermo well?"

"Si, Signorina, every street and palace, and some of the prisons too, Signorina," making a motion to take off his cap, and executing that courtesy by pulling his hair, which was so abundant that it warranted his custom of not wearing any other head-covering.

"I want you to take this note to Via Toledo, the Palace of Baron Riso. You must go at once."

"I have been there before, Signorina."

"I know that, Angelo. And I know something more. If the Baron is not at home seek another man of the same name, Riso, a plumber that has a shop across the street from the Convento della Gancia, and give the note to him."

"I know him too."

"Of course you do, Angelo; as well as I know that Matto Lanzetti is Capo of your squadra."

Angelo's both hands protruded above his head in surprise.

"Go at once, Angelo. And here is something to help you remember to-night's service. Don't stop on the way. Don't show the letter to a soul except one of the Risos, the Baron or the plumber. And don't mention my name as having sent you."

"I'll go as quick as the shooting star up there, Signo-

rina ; and if all the stars were policemen they wouldn't know my secret."

Angelo suited his action to his words, and vanished almost as speedily as the meteor which had suggested his simile.

"Oh, if he only had wings!" said Vittoria, as she tried to watch him. "Father would have had him shot, it is true, if I had not interceded for him. But that is no reason for his devoting himself to me like a dog. The poor fellow had been impressed into the service, and forced to leave his wife when she was dying with the fever. Of course he went back home for the last kiss. What a wretch I would have been if I hadn't told Babbo that I would never kiss him again if he shot Angelo. What a good thing it is to know somebody, however degraded he may be, who will do anything, anything in the world for you. I don't believe husbands are of that sort for all their protestations. Pshaw! Captain Cataldo said ——"

She did not complete these audible meditations. Something loomed up in front of her. The shape was that of a soldier carrying a musket across his shoulder.

"Halt! woman, what business have you out at this time of night, and without a lantern too? I must put the law on you."

"Oh, the Saints save me!" cried she in apparent fright. The surprise had a marvellous effect upon Vittoria. She shrivelled instantly into half her ordinary height, and approached the soldier, crouching down before him like a decrepit old woman.

"No, surely you wouldn't put the law on a poor body like me. I am out at the night, because I must be far away at the dawn by the brook, or I shall lose the chance to earn my scudi at the washing. And I have no lantern, for I lack the price of the candle."

“Well, go on then !” said the guard. “But, if you are telling a lie, may the devil wash your soul, and wring it out with his pincers, and dry you at hell-fire. Go on about your business !”

Vittoria dropped a curtsey that she had practiced in dancing the coranto.

“Grazie, Signore illustrissimo ! May all the Saints between Palermo and Syracuse bless you,—and your grandmother, too, if you have any. May she live a hundred years longer !”

The soldier stared in the direction of her retreating form, which was marvellously elongated as she disappeared over a hillock that gave her shadowy outline against the sky. The man started after her. But with his heavy coat and gun he was like a calf chasing a deer. He quickly gave it up, muttering with panting breath,—

“An old woman ! I’ll wager she hasn’t lost a tooth yet for all her mumbling.”

Signorina Vittoria appeared upon the terrace the next morning as the general was taking coffee with his guests.

“Why so early, my child ?” was her father’s greeting.

“Captain Cataldo must esteem this a special favour. You generally hear the birds’ *matinée* in bed.”

“Oh, Babbo, it was so quiet last night that I slept soundly, and when one sleeps soundly one sleeps rapidly,” she replied, as she kissed her father on the forehead, not braving the *cheval-de-frise* of his huge mustache.

At the parting Captain Cataldo pledged himself to revisit the villa on his return. He seized and kissed the Signorina’s hand. As he went a few paces in advance with the general, whose military clatter prevented his hearing anything else, Signorina Vittoria said to Giuseppe,—

“Signor Menardi, you have kept your word with Captain Cataldo. I honour you for it. Of course,” she said

archly, "I felt slighted when you did not heed my call under your window. You were not very gallant. But I will forgive you if you will keep a word with me to-day."

"Most assuredly I will, if possible."

"It is this, that you will help anybody who tries to help you. You owe this to yourself; and now by your pledge you owe it to me."

"I will keep that pledge for—your—sake, Signorina Bianci."

He was unaware of the deliberation he put into the words; but his companion noted it, and, so far from being offended, offered her hand which he pressed to his lips.

Captain Cataldo at that moment recalled the fact that Giuseppe's parole of honour had been given solely for the time he was under the roof of General Bianci. He turned, more from official habit than intention, to put his prisoner again under surveillance. As he did so, he saw the less than formal courtesy with which Giuseppe took leave of his fair hostess. A flush of jealousy came to his face. He stepped back. What he might have said was checked by the sweet graciousness of the lady who quietly remarked,—

"Captain Cataldo, I could not allow your friend and our guest to go to Maniscalco without assuring him of my sympathy."

"Your thoughtfulness, Signorina," replied the officer, "is appreciated, I am sure, by us both."

How much the captain appreciated the lady's charity to his prisoner may have been evinced by the fact that during the ride towards Palermo he was quite demure, and the click of the horses' feet was the chief diversion of the journey.

It was afternoon when they approached Palermo. A prison wagon with a squad of police had been sent to

meet them a mile or more from the city, and there relieve Captain Cataldo of his responsibility. This was a wise expedient of Maniscalco, since the appearance of a new captive in the hands of marching soldiers, even though one whose face was not known, might be the occasion of outbreak, as it had been in Aci Reale and Catania. Indeed, in Palermo, the insurrection was daily expected; and it was understood by the authorities—thanks to some traitor—that its appearance there would be the signal of uprising throughout the Island. On the other hand a prison wagon was a common sight, and awakened little comment, as it might contain within its black curtains a common thief or no one at all.

Giuseppe was safely deposited within this moving cell. The soldiers were retired. A policeman sat beside the driver, while two others took their places in the coupé that made the rear section of the van, which was driven through Porta Macqueda into the city.

XXI

THE VICARIA PRISON

THE prison van that conveyed Giuseppe moved slowly along the various streets, as if the tired horses were returning to their stables, until they reached Piazza Ucciardone, the open square that lies before the Vicaria, that famous, but equally infamous, prison of Palermo.

The Vicaria is a picturesque pile of buildings, several stories high, concentrated like the spokes of a wheel. These are encircled by a low octagonal wall resembling the tire of said wheel. Or to make a simile more artistic—when one looks down upon the Vicaria from the neighbouring height of Monte Pellegrino, and recalls the history of the place, the buildings with their encircling walls resemble a brooch worn on the breast of Bourbon royalty, that most typical embodiment of blood-thirst and viciousness, pomposity and pusillanimity, in recent ages.

The walls of the Vicaria enclose several acres of compacted prison cells, in which for generations many of the noblest spirits of Sicily have languished in mute companionship with the common thieves and cutthroats of the city.

To an impartial observer who knows the story of the place, the chief adornments of the Vicaria are the many deep perforations in the outer wall that have been made by the bullets of an outraged populace in various attempts to liberate its inmates.

At the time of Giuseppe's enforced visit to Palermo over two thousand human beings were corralled like wild beasts within its nefarious precincts.

In the darkness of the van as it jolted along the streets of the city, Giuseppe sat thinking—"What if I am to make one more victim of this devilish tyranny! What if my fellows and my family never hear of my fate! They may not. When the Austrians caught Speri they sent his mother a bill for the price of the rope that hanged him. Perhaps this Maniscalco wouldn't be so economical as that. But, at any rate, God will not forget me. Nor will He forget—if there be any God who regards humanity and justice—nor will He forget Sicily. Some day His avenger will come. It's hard not to be allowed to die on a battle-field, or at least in a street riot for one's country. A bullet in the breast or between the eyes as I face the enemy would be better than the black cap and the hangman's noose, or to be set up against the wall as a target for hired soldiers to shoot at. But God made me—if there be any God—He fixed my lot. I can submit to destiny in whatever shape it comes. I think I will go to Judgment a little more complaisantly that I now swear to myself that I will never make peace with His enemy, the damned Bourbon. I am not much of a Christian; but I can't commit sacrilege; and it would be sacrilege to give over Sicily, Sicily that He has made so beautiful, to the further work of these Neapolitan devils. Amen! Now let come what will."

There came something that astounded Giuseppe. An earthquake or a thunderbolt from the Day of Judgment would have been as intelligible to him at the moment.

When the prison van entered the Piazza in front of the Vicaria there might have been observed at the farther side of the open space a large cart. It was one of those bits of artistic clumsiness for which Palermo is

noted. A heavy mule was fastened to it by a pair of shafts that might have flanked a half-grown elephant. The mule's head was plumed with a sheaf of peacock feathers; his back surmounted with a tower of wood, ivory, leather and brass, efflorescent with red and green tassels of silk. The cart was gorgeously painted, and from a distance resembled an enormous butterfly. A nearer view was that of a picture gallery; for the sides of the vehicle exhibited crude, but not inartistic, scenes from the lives of the Saints, from Biblical narrative, and from ancient pagan traditions,—which last, in the mind of the painter, and indeed, in the minds of many Sicilians sufficiently learned to be made priests, were very quaintly confused with saintly legends. The cart was surrounded by a group of men, apparently contadini from the back country, who stood gaping at the pictures which one of their number was explaining. This person's comments were somewhat different from those of an ordinary critic :

“Here, Signori, you see a picture of two saints, Cosmo and Damien; saints who protect fishermen from mermaids, and give them good catch.” In lower voice, “You are sure, Battisto, that he was in the van?”

“Sure,” was the response, as Battisto drew close to the other as if examining the faces of the saints.

“Now this picture,” continued the lecturer, “represents Christofero Colombo. And”—*sotto voce*—“Luigi has a score of fellows in the crowd near the gate. They will rush right behind us.”

Then raising his voice,—“And this other picture is exquisite, isn't it? It represents *La Morte di Virginia*. And this picture on the front is——” The lecturer paused, and looking sharply across the Piazza, cried out, “Diavolo! They are moving in. Ready! Filippo, cut away! Away!”

Filippo cut with his whip the flanks of the big mule. Away went the beast with the cart thundering at his heels.

“By all the devils! Is the man drunk, or a maniac?” cried the driver of the prison van as the cart rattled across the open space.

He had not time to determine an answer to his question, for the mule, blinded with rage at the blows upon his buttocks, and bewildered by the wild yells of his persecutor, struck fairly upon the flank of one of the horses attached to the prison van. The heavy shafts of the cart served as supplementary battering-rams, before which both horses went down, while the driver of the van and his attendant policeman pitched headlong into the midst of broken harness and kicking heels. At the same instant the two rear guards of the van were unceremoniously seized by the crowd, the van opened, Giuseppe hustled out, and rushed across the Piazza, down a narrow alley, into a shop, back into a squalid inner court, up a flight of stone steps, across a roof, down another flight into a chamber where a woman's gown and head-dress were thrown upon him; in which transformation—as quickly made as that of an Olympian goddess in assuming the human form—Giuseppe emerged upon a narrow street a block away from where he had first disappeared from public view. His guide in this adventure conducted him to a locksmith's shop. They passed hastily into a rear room where the housewife was unrolling a huge bed for the night's repose of herself, her husband and several small children. Into the bed Giuseppe was tumbled, for his hands still fettered made him almost helpless to perform the feat without assistance.

“On the mattress and under the blankets the filing will not be heard,” said the locksmith.

In a few moments this patriotic artisan had done his work. Giuseppe's hands were free.

"Stay in the bed for a while," said his host. "The police will search every house in this quarter before an hour is gone. If they come in here my wife will get into the bed, and I will say that she is asleep with my mother-in-law. Mothers-in-law are about the only things the police respect."

For all the danger Giuseppe could not restrain a subdued laugh at this proposed transformation of a hero into an old lady,—especially under the attendant circumstance.

"Keep still!" said the host, "unless you are able to cackle like an old woman, for the King has donkey's ears big enough to stretch over all Sicily, and the hairs on them reach down into every hole where a half-starved Sicilian goes to sleep. One can't snore in Palermo without being reported to the police that he has been swearing at the King."

Late at night Giuseppe was again spirited away. It was just before the police searched the locksmith's house, and retired, cursing their ill luck.

XXII

THE ROYAL MAIL IN SKIRTS

ONE of the most accomplished and patriotic of the younger Sicilian nobility was Baron Riso of Palermo. The Riso palace on Via Toledo was the rendezvous of much of the fashionable society of the more intellectual sort. His grand salons were thronged with notables from the Continent. His weekly balls attracted the gay life of the Island Capital. No house in Palermo was apparently more open to inspection, and no soirées better patronized or more fully reported in the papers. Even high dignitaries of the Court mingled here with detectives from the Police Department.

Between the dances at the Baron's balls and receptions, while the ladies prolonged the time of refreshment in the great drawing-rooms below stairs, the upper rooms were often filled with gentlemen who upon entering threw off their coats and rolled up their sleeves to engage in the noble pastime of moulding bullets, filling cartridges, and making hand-grenades after a fashion that Crispi had introduced. Ladies often joined them in these upper rooms, and unravelled pillow-cases and sheets into bundles of lint; packed surgical instruments and medicaments; and made red, white and green flags out of the coloured ribbons plucked from their last year's hats,—since these patriotic emblems of the Tricolour were forbidden to be sold in the shops.

In one chamber gathered night after night such noted citizens as the Duke of Cesaro, the Prince of Giardinelli; the Cavalier Nota Bartolo of San Giovanni, the Duke of

Monteleone and the Prince of Niecemi ; and sometimes old Colonel Francesco Tedaldi. They discussed the all-absorbing topic of the coming uprising, receiving and writing letters which by mysterious hands were passed between them and Crispi, Pilo, *La Farina*, Bixio and other patriots whose known detestation of the Neapolitan government had forced them into exile beyond the sea. The correspondents included also the captains of the many *squadra* which were being organized in all parts of the Island, and—it is safe now to reveal the secret—not a few of the officers in the royal army ; and, indeed, some high ecclesiastics who risked the displeasure of the authorities at the Vatican.

Among the guests of Baron Riso a few evenings after Giuseppe's escape were General Bianci and his daughter. As this couple moved through the elegant salons they attracted admiring attention. On such occasions the general compensated for his incapacity in the field by the dignity of his military appearance. His heavy gray-white mustache and his rigidly immobile face, such as astute commanders are supposed to wear amid the excitement of battle, were admirable adjuncts to the row of medals-of-honour that adorned the close-buttoned bosom of his coat. A little stiffness in the back did not detract from his martial bearing, and was hardly noticed except when he bowed to the fair women of his acquaintance.

A wrinkled Marchesa bombarded the general with her lorgnette, and reminded a veteran Duchessa near her of the days when the general could shake his legs in the tarentella as easily as he could now strut through the peacock dance of the pavana.

“ Ah, Marchesa, that was a time when you were as fair as Signorina Bianci. How gracefully she holds to the general's arm ! Ivy and oak ! Ta ! Ta ! ” striking her neighbour's bare arm with her fan.

"Ivy and oak? Rather clematis and an old olive," suggested the Marchesa. "The general is pretty well gnarled, and hasn't much foliage these days. And you, Duchessa, were once as much admired as Signorina Bianci. No, don't blush. You know it is truth. You notice how the men speak a word or two with the general, and then continue the conversation with the daughter? She is the only person in the world, except the King and Queen, whom the general ever allows to supersede himself as an object of attention."

"The coxcomb!"

"Yes, a little vain. 'Fuss and feathers,' we used to call him. But one cannot blame him. He was once, as you know, almost at the head of the army, that is, on the great Pepe's staff. What a pity we have not such commanders nowadays when affairs are so unsettled. They say that some of the nobility are with the insurgents. Can that be true, Baron Riso?"

The gentleman addressed paused an instant before the ladies.

"Yes, I am told that many are," he replied. "But one does not know what reports to believe. But we must be careful, my dear ladies, not to repeat such scandals."

"I wish," said the Duchessa, "that we had such a man as General Bianci in command of our soldiers to-day."

"I, too, wish so with all my heart," replied the Baron, as he bowed to the Marchesa and the Duchessa and then approached the general and Signorina Bianci.

"Ah, general! It is good to look again into your youthful face. But for the medals on your breast one could scarce believe that you were the veteran of '48."

"Yes, and of '30 also," replied Bianci, squaring his shoulders. "When General Pepe and I ——"

"Pardon me, general," interrupted Riso, knowing al-

ready the chronic story to follow, "pardon me if I rob you for a few moments of your daughter. I have a bit of Persian lace on which I would have her opinion."

"Certainly, Baron. Neapolitan lace and that when on a military uniform is all I am expert in. I will renew old friendship with the Duchessa and Marchesa yonder until you return."

Vittoria took the arm of the Baron. He led her a little apart.

"Signorina, your warning came just in time. I was able to arrange a rescue of Menardi."

"I heard of it. It was splendidly done, Baron. Some day you will tell me the details of it. But where is Signor Menardi now?" she asked eagerly.

"That I may not tell you. We are all obliged to be very close mouthed. But come with me. I have a guest who is in your debt for some sort of courtesy."

They ascended the stair, and turned into a small chamber. A man sat in his shirt-sleeves with his back towards the entrance, facing a pile of papers and writing hastily.

"Let me introduce Signor Frito, a gentleman from the Argentine Republic! Signor Frito can best tell what has become of Signor Menardi."

The man rose and turned. Instantly he dropped again upon one knee.

"My deliverer!"

The Baron smoothed his face with his hand, and very considerably withdrew from the room to relieve the situation of the embarrassment of a third party.

We shall imitate the Baron's courtesy, except to record a few words of the parting conversation between Vittoria and Giuseppe.

"I am confident," said she, "that any correspondence entrusted to me will be safe until its delivery. I am in

league with the jackals, and when they fall asleep the birds take up the duty. See!" pointing to the enormous crinoline skirt in fashion at the time—"I am personally equipped as a van for the Royal Mail."

Giuseppe recognized, if not this particular mail wagon, at least its type. He had during the past few days intrusted to similar vehicles many despatches addressed to exiles in Malta, Marseilles, Paris and London. These were generally written in cypher,—the numbers 1, 2, 3, etc., to be translated by corresponding letters in a Canto of Dante's *Inferno*, or in an agreed-upon prayer in the Canon of the Mass.

To Signorina Vittoria he gave a letter written in plain Italian. This was addressed to his mother. It was designed to relieve her anxiety in the distressing reports that had undoubtedly reached her, and at the same time to delude the police by diverting their attention from his actual whereabouts under their very noses. The letter was to be postmarked at Messina. It read,—

"MADRE, CARISSIMA MIA :—

"I address you with my loving devotion from Messina, which port I am leaving on very urgent business that calls me to Rome. I am in good health, thanks to your incessant prayers. I trust soon to return to you when I have accomplished an affair which I am confident will be a most useful venture to all who with myself have embarked in it. My dearest love to our little angel of the home, Elena. Pray that I may fully succeed.

"Your own devoted

"PEPPINO."

XXIII

WISE AS A SERPENT

THE letter which Giuseppe had sent, apparently from Messina, Agata read to Fra Raffaello. The holy man had made a visit to the Menardi home, prompted, as he said to himself, by the Christian purpose of consoling the family for the calamity that had overtaken them in the arrest of Giuseppe. But he was also led to do so—although he did not even confess this to himself—by the desire to learn if they had any suspicion of his own part in the plot. He was not thinking of the sagacious psychological law unfolded by Count Lupis to Signor Pavo, namely, that in single actions we may be influenced by double, or even multiple, motives ; and he did not even suspect that his absorbing incentive in this instance was similar to those with which men sometimes serve the devil. He was oblivious to the fact that, in his zeal for San Benedetto, he was slandering the very spirit of that Order, which prescribes utter guilelessness of thought and deed. The fact is that in Raffaello the man was bigger than the monk ; and the “old man” at that. His native disposition had not been eradicated, only shaped in its growth by the monastic discipline ; as poisonous ivy will climb together with innocuous vines. Whatever a snake eats becomes snake ; so the holy precepts that Raffaello consumed in daily meditation became assimilated with his decidedly unregenerate character. He was absolutely unconscious of the fact that he was growing horns instead of a halo.

So Raffaello felt no contortion of soul when, starting

for the Menardi villa, he prayed the Archangel whose cloistral name he bore to bless him as he was about to obey the apostolic injunction to "visit the widows in their affliction." He thought himself an honest Christian, utterly unaware that his conscience was a bad specimen of moral strabismus, and did not see in straight lines.

When Agata announced the latter from Giuseppe, which Raffaello presumed would convey the doleful tidings of her son's imprisonment, the monk turned his face away from her, and began to pick the violets that breathed their inviting fragrance along the terrace where they were standing. He felt that a mother's grief should hear from his lips fitting words of consolation. So he had prepared in his mind a few pious sentences in which he would express himself. They were to begin with a cry of amazement at the startling intelligence, and to slide off into a homily of compassion and pity.

As Agata began to read the letter, the holy man inhaled his lungs full of the perfumed air of the spot, preparatory to giving it out in proper articulation.

"From Messina which port I am leaving —"

Raffaello turned quickly at the words, his genuine surprise throwing him off his guard.

"From Messina, Signora?"

Agata did not notice the telltale tone of the exclamation, but read the good news of her son's health and prospective prosperous journey to the north. Now Raffaello was too well trained in diplomacy to outwardly repeat a mistake. He was perplexed, for he had received definite word from Prince Fitalia that the soldiers had delivered the victim to the police of Palermo. But, forcing a smile to his face, he quietly added his congratulation.

"You have a dutiful son, Signora. But I had thought

that his business generally took him rather to the interior of the Island, perhaps to Palermo. Will he be long absent on the mainland?"

"He is usually away for several weeks," Agata replied.

"It is perhaps well, my dear Signora, that he should be absent in safer ports; for just now there might be some annoyance to a son of Antonio Menardi, who is reported to be not unlike his father in his free criticism of our King at Naples."

Agata replied, "Good Fra Raffaello, you know my distress in this matter, for we have often spoken of it. Would that Giuseppe had more of the mind of our Paolo."

"Ah, Paolo is indeed of a different spirit, Signora. We are charmed with our dear Placido at San Benedetto. But, Signora, pardon my question. Have you thought more of what we have talked regarding your daughter Elena? In these times, so perilous to body and soul, it would be well, and well-pleasing I know to Holy Church, which desires only the salvation of her children, if your dear child could be prevailed upon to take the vow of separation from the world."

"I fear," said Agata, "that my daughter will continue to prove indifferent to such a proposal. Her mind is not so set upon religious devotion as I could wish. She is more like Giuseppe than like Paolo. I myself have been working for many months embroidering a chasuble in which Paolo may one day officiate at Mass; but Elena prefers her pencils and paint boxes, depicting I know not what."

"That is because she knows neither herself nor the world, nor yet the sweetness of the cloistral life," replied the monk. "The discipline of a year as a novice would doubtless enlighten her spirit. The plant of this violet

will not develop its beauty and fragrance until it has had its roots for a time in the earth. Similarly, the burial—for such we call the holy seclusion of the convent—will doubtless do as much for a lovely spirit such as our Elena must possess, being the daughter of such a mother.”

Agata bowed her head, and raised her hands in humble protest at the spiritual compliment paid her. Yet she could not repress a smile of gratitude for the fact that it had been spoken.

“Let us speak no more of that subject, Fra Raffaello,” she said. “I am persuaded, from what I know of my own heart, and especially from what I remember of my experience years ago, when I myself meditated such a life,—I am persuaded that Elena is not adapted for it; at least not yet.”

There was a long pause, during which Raffaello sat with his hands crossed upon his breast, not unlike a statue of Buddha meditating eternal things. At length he resumed,—

“Signora Menardi, there is another aspect of this subject upon which I hesitate to speak without your permission.”

“You have it before you ask it, Fra Raffaello. Speak freely, for I have always found you my best counsellor.”

The Buddha again moved his lips. “I would then refer to your daughter’s marriage. It may seem aside from my duty, as one devoted entirely to religious things, to be interested in these secular matters. And yet God is the Maker of both body and soul. He created both the world and the Church. And so also in our Holy Father, His Vicegerent on earth, our most Holy Lord Pio Nono, God has united both secular and spiritual powers. Thus it is not beyond my province to speak further of this. Since marriage is a Sacrament of the Church, it behooves us all, especially the ministers of the

Sacrament and of God's will, to see that marriage is made between such persons as will best serve the glory of God and the interests of Holy Church."

"You are always wise, Fra Raffaello," interjected Agata.

"Then let me proceed more definitely, my dear Signora. In our perilous times a young woman of your daughter's beauty and—and lineage—ahem!—needs the protection either of Holy Church in the cloister, or of a husband,—and that husband should be one who is himself, because of his loyalty, protected by the State."

Agata bowed her acquiescence.

Raffaello proceeded—"The rebellion which is everywhere precipitated by restless men must bring reprisals on the part of the government. Now you recall, my dear Signora, how the title to your own property here was endangered in '48 by the attitude of your late husband, and how it was re-secured to the Menardi interests only through the relation of the said Menardi interests with the loyal house of the Brignolas. Your marriage with Antonio saved this property to him and to his heirs. Is it not so? Now I am sure that of even more influence would be the marriage of your daughter to a man known for his loyalty to the King; one also of importance in the Island because of his name and estates."

"I have thought somewhat of the same thing," replied Agata, "but deemed myself too unwise to speak of it. Proceed, my dear friend. Tell me your mind fully."

"Ah," said Raffaello, "since you yourself thus lead the way, Signora, I will tell what is in my thought. You know well your neighbour, Signor Roberto Pavo?"

"Too well! Too well, Fra Raffaello," replied Agata, straightening herself and throwing back her head with a fine expression of her Brignola pride. "But, Fra Raffaello, you must be sadly misinformed, if you deem

Roberto Pavo such a man as you have described for a husband to Elena. He is reputed to be dissolute in character ; and, beside, he is bankrupt in estate. For the other matter, is he loyal ? Why, I myself have overheard remarks around the villa that would class him rather with the insurgents than with the government. Who has been your unwise informant, Fra Raffaello ? ”

“ I think, Signora Menardi,” replied her visitor, “ that I may speak, not from information given me by others, but that which I have secured first hand, from Signor Pavo himself. He has made me his confidant in many matters,—as I now would confide in you. Let it be in perfect secrecy between us, Signora —— ”

“ Certainly, I will repeat to no one what you may tell me,” replied Agata.

“ My dear Signora,” said Raffaello, assuming the look of an angel rejoicing over a sinner that had repented—
 “ my dear Signora, Roberto is a very changed man. First, and most important, is the marvellous reformation that has taken place in his character. He has confessed to me the waywardness of his earlier youth. He has given pledges of his fidelity to Holy Church ; pledges, I may say, that show the depth of his contrition and the sincerity of his new purpose ; pledges which will bind him for the future in loyalty to both the Church and the government.”

“ The Saints be praised ! ” exclaimed Agata, folding her hands and raising her eyes heavenward. Then, with a look of almost equal reverence into the face of her visitor,—

“ And you, my dear Frate, have been, I am sure, the instrument of salvation to this young man. Heaven bless you, my friend ! How sweet it must be to know that the divine grace communicates itself through your lips, your known character, your holy office of rebuke and prayer !

To be so spiritual that you live, as it were, at the very gate of heaven; so that, when the celestial ones would send out their powers upon men, you are selected to be their human agent. That my Paolo, my Placido, may be honoured as you have been is almost the limit of my prayer. God bless you, my dear friend!"

Now even the Saints, when they descend from sky thrones to earth, may be imagined to bear at least upon the soles of their feet a little of the earthiness they touch. It is not surprising, then, that Agata's intense spirituality showed a spot or two of worldly considerateness. She continued,—

"Fra Raffaello, of course, the religious transformation of Roberto Pavo chiefly interests me,—as I trust becomes a true daughter of Holy Church—still is it not true that his estates are in bad condition? It is reported that he has mortgaged the year's crops to pay debts acquired at gaming."

"Of that also I may tell you something, my dear Signora," replied the monk.

Now if the three balls of a Monte della Pieta had suddenly gleamed over Raffaello's head instead of the nimbus of his incipient sainthood, it would have fitted the shrewdness of the man of affairs that gleamed in his eyes.

"Of that, Signora, I may tell you something. But still let it be in our mutual confidence. I am informed from Naples that all encumbrances have been removed from Signor Pavo's property; and that his resumed loyalty to the King will be further rewarded by the government. The Signore has become convinced, as I have been able to show him, that the insurrection imminent in the Island will be speedily suppressed. The King's forces have been augmented, and are irresistible. The Lord's Anointed, our King Francesco, will tread the wine-press in his wrath, and there will be left in Sicily

nothing but the refuse, the dried skins, as it were, of the grapes of rebellion. Roberto Pavo will be one of the nobles of the land. And I know also, my dear Signora, that he is greatly enamoured of Elena."

"Of that I am surprised," replied Agata, "since the young man has, I think, never spoken to my daughter, at least not since she was a child."

"Ah, but that remembrance of her as a child has been supplemented by his knowledge of her mother. It is inevitable that your own graciousness should have been transmitted."

Agata blushed appropriately at the compliment, for, of course, the seraphic Brother could not be suspected of such a thing as flattery.

He resumed,—“You would not be averse, my dear Signora, to bringing about a meeting between the young people?”

“If it is your counsel I will do it.”

Raffaello departed. “San Benedetto be praised !” said the holy man, as he passed along the garden terraces, holding his hands steeple-like before his breast. Mother Agata watched him, and unconsciously clasped her hands similarly.

Elena also from her loggia had overheard something of the conversation of her mother with the monk, and very naughtily steepled her hands, and, furthermore, dropped her head and paced about, mimicking the monk's gait.

When Raffaello reached the lower terrace he turned up the roadway that led to the Pavo villa.

The monk's face at this time would have been a model for one studying the varying physiognomy of a man possessing what some have called the “dual character.” There are faces that confuse the beholder ; faces that exhibit at one and the same time a mixture, even a medley, of sentiments, so incongruous are they. We are uncer-

tain if the man be a saint or a villain, honest or treacherous. Skilled physiognomists have pronounced a photograph in profile to be that of a philanthropist, while a front face view of the same individual was declared to be that of a cutthroat. In the Vatican galleries one sometimes debates whether the person represented belongs to the Calendar or to the Police Register.

But Raffaello was no such medley. His diverse traits became dominant consecutively. They never strove together for mastery; they chased one another, as two dogs in frolic. He was not double-minded; only different-minded. His face was thus a true mask. You were never in doubt as to which characteristic was in the lead at the exact moment when you were looking at him; but at another time you saw in his aspect and manner a different man. His emotions changed like the hues of the chameleon; but each hue was distinct, unmixed, never freckled. He might have been a Proteus, but not a Centaur. At one moment Raffaello's face was as winsome in its serenity as a sunbeam in a glade; the next, it was gloomy as a ravine where only wild, half-subterranean things crawl. At times a little child might have been attracted to ask him to mend her broken doll; at other times rough men would fear the cruelty that corrugated his brow and hardened his lips.

One who watched him that day, as he went along the road to the Pavo villa, would have noted the shifting mask.

Now he might have been taken for a San Francesco of Assize thinking out a sermon to the birds; again he resembled a Torquemada ordering thumbscrews.

As he thought of his soul-saving work with Roberto Pavo, his new spiritual son, he threw back his head, opened wide his eyes as if to take in that other wide serenity of the sky, and moved his lips in prayer. A mo-

ment later he was calculating the business side of his work, the probable value of the Pavo estate, of the Menardi property, and what portion of both might fall to San Benedetto. His eyes were then half closed ; the crow's-feet at the angles deepened, and heavy furrows ridged his brows.

Again, his forehead became mantled with a black scowl ; his eyes flamed hatred,—for he was thinking of the miscarriage of his venture to get Giuseppe out of the way. Once more,—tears came into those same eyes as he pictured to himself the grief of Agata when all should be accomplished,—for he did not doubt that, even if Giuseppe had escaped from Palermo, his immunity would be but temporary, since he must at some time return to Sicily, or else suffer without appeal the alienation of his estates.

In all these changes of emotion and appearance Raffaello was not conscious of any duplicity. He esteemed himself to be the soul of honour and honesty. Beneath all the passing emotions was one consistent purpose,—that of serving the Church and his Order of San Benedetto, however mistaken he may have been as to either Church or Order requiring of him any such service. He thus moved through a labyrinth with many twistings in it, but one unbroken clue threaded them all,—his assumption of religious duty.

Fra Raffaello came to the Pavo villa. The returned prodigal was absent.

Now Signor Roberto Pavo was also a man of variant purposes as well as Raffaello ; but, unlike Raffaello, he entertained the most diverse sentiments at the same time. His varying purposes did not follow one another : they kept company. For example, his ambition to obtain further alliance with the Menardis by wooing Elena did not in the least conflict with a present passion for the

beautiful contadina who served her. So it came about that while the monk was seeking Roberto with a prayer to the Holy Virgin, Roberto was seeking Lucia with a purpose that might have been consecrated to Astarte of Babylon, or to the goddess that played the part of mistress of ceremonies at the love-makings on Olympus. These processes of thought were, in the degenerate condition of his moral sense, no more antagonistic than were the workings of the two lobes of his physical heart.

XXIV

PAOLO'S SUSPICION

THE rich endowment of the monastery of San Benedetto at Catania, its well-filled grain bins and wine jars, not only relieved the brotherhood from every temporal want, but made it impossible that they should know anything of the essential experience of poverty,—namely, the fear of the future, that dread of the days when old age or sickness brings need of bread and housing for oneself, and worse, for the dear ones depending upon the strong arm of the toiler that then has failed. Amateur poverty cannot taste its real bitterness, which is anxiety,—a pang that strikes deeper than physical famine or nakedness.

So the sense of security among the monks of Benedetto, while doubtless conducive to that tranquillity of soul which is so necessary to unruffled meditation upon spiritual things, would have tended to destroy the sense of poverty that monasticism was founded to establish. The Frati were presumed to depend alone upon the incessantly renewed goodness of God, as did the Israelites upon manna, and as do the birds and the conies upon the food that flies or hops before their mouths. The life of a monk was to be illustrative of his prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread." But when the bread was practically stored for a whole lifetime, and the nest reinforced with marble and bronze in every exquisite form of art, the monk was tempted to play the part of another sort of man described by our Lord,—the one who said to himself, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years. Take thine

ease, eat, drink and be merry." It surely would be difficult to retain proper poverty of spirit when the taste was every day regaled with the rarest productions of æsthetic genius, and even the exercises of devotion were assisted by classic refinement of ritual and conversation.

It was therefore wisely prescribed that the Frati, as a part of their holy discipline, should visit the homes of the poor, either to give or to solicit alms, as if they really belonged to the sad-eyed dependents upon the world's cold charity. "Blessed are the poor in spirit," said the Great Master. The discipline of humiliation needed the schools of the highways and hovels. The character of Lazarus must be cultivated, lest that of Dives be engendered by the luxury of the most sacred environment.

Paolo with a companion one day started upon this humble round. The two passed out through the palatial portal of San Benedetto, crossed the grand semi-circular piazza which isolates the monastery from the rest of Catania, then turned down the broad avenue from which, as from a spinal column, radiate the streets and alleys, that serve as nerves for the throbbing city life.

At one corner the passage of the two novices was blocked by an excited crowd of people. The police, in their endeavour to disperse it, only made more malignant the popular congestion at the point; for the multitude was evidently drawn together by something deeper than curiosity. The sound of voices was not a murmur of gossip, but fell upon Paolo's ears rather like the growl of some monster at bay, enraged and ready for an assault upon its tormentors.

He could not help hearing much of what the crowd was saying, for all that he attempted to divert his attention from it by repeating to himself some pious excerpts, which he had memorized, from Thomas à Kempis' "Imi-

tation of Christ," the beauty and spirituality of which had often so elevated his mind that the hum of secular things was no more diverting than meditation on a mountain top is disconcerted by the vision of distant towns. But the tongues now about him were too excited for his serenity.

"The King's men have begun it," said one.

Another added, "Our prison here in Catania is so full that they have begun to take us on to the men-of-war and to stuff us into Castello dell' Ovo at Naples. They say that Castello Nuova is fairly aleak with the best blood of Sicily."

The remark of another almost paralyzed Paolo. "The arrest of Menardi was an outrage. They have not even made a charge of any wrong-doing."

"Of course not; why should they? They couldn't get a man in all Sicily to witness against Menardi. Let anybody blab, and a bullet will cut his tongue out before he has said the words."

"A hundred witnesses would do no good now," interjected one who seemed a leader, "for Menardi has escaped. You've heard the news?"

"No! That's too good to be true."

"But it is true."

"How could he? The officer in charge of the posse of soldiers that took him reported that he was safe in the hands of Maniscalco at Palermo. The devil himself couldn't get out of the talons of that old hawk."

"But Giuseppe Menardi slipped him. That's true. The news is confirmed."

"Where is he?"

"On the Continent, maybe. So his family report. If true, he will be back with Crispi and Pilo when they come. But nobody knows where Menardi is. Maybe he is hiding in Maniscalco's own cellar."

"Look here, Frate," said one, pulling Paolo by the sleeve, "this is no place for you crows to-day. There is a rumour that the monks and priests have had something to do with Menardi's arrest. Better get back into your wine-cellar at San Benedetto."

"Menardi taken!" exclaimed Paolo. "Not Giuseppe Menardi, my brother!"

"Your brother? Good heavens! Yet I heard that he had a brother who had gone into the Church. Well! Well! A crow and a pheasant in the same family nest! Heigho, Signori! Here's a Menardi! Giuseppe's own brother! His father's own son for all he is a monk! Viva Menardi! Viva Menardi!"

Before he could make an effort to resist, Paolo was lifted upon the shoulders of several men. The crowd yelled and danced about him enthusiastically, as only Sicilians can do.

"One thing is clear," shouted one. "Our monks at San Benedetto are not all traitors. Viva San Benedetto!" The cheers were lustily given.

"I tell you, young Frate," said one, "your being in the patriot crowd to-day has saved that gilded cage of yours on the hill from being smashed. Somebody has started lying stories about you monks all being Bourbons."

Paolo would have asked questions about his brother's arrest and whereabouts, but one might as well have attempted to converse with the sirocco when it whirls the sands of the Lybian desert across the sea as to interrogate this mob.

The crowd formed a procession and carried Paolo bodily up the grand avenue. With a huzza for Frate Menardi, another for Giuseppe, another for San Benedetto, and volley after volley of vociferation for Vittorio Emanuele, Galibardi, and a deep grunted curse for King Francesco and the devils of Naples in general, Paolo was

carried to the monastery. The monks hearing the commotion had thronged the great gateway notwithstanding the mild chiding of the Abbate, supplemented by the sharper rebuke of Fra Raffaello.

“Why this idle curiosity?” said the latter. “What care we for their political follies? Father, rebuke them!”

A Brother with a broad and laughing face nudged his neighbour with his thumb,—“I’ve read in Holy Writ that even the angels desire to look into some earthly things, and tremendous things are coming into issue here in Sicily, if rumour be correct. Why can’t we hear what’s doing?”

“Be silent!” said the Abbate. “If you must be mindful of earthly things, don’t mix them with heavenly. Beware lest you debase the Scripture by profanely quoting it. And, Placido, you will retire to your cell.”

The old Abbate spoke with exceeding mildness, but was instantly obeyed by all.

As Paolo passed along the broad corridor of the cloister that opens into the private cells, Fra Christofero touched his arm, and after glancing timidly about him, whispered,—“Thank God, Placido, that Giuseppe is safe! I overheard that much from the men at the gate.”

The novice entered his room and threw himself upon his face against the pillow of his bed. He was stupefied by the concussion of his varying emotions. First of all was the terrible news of Giuseppe’s danger. Different as he was from his brother in faith, in purpose of life, and in all the dominant qualities of his character, his love for Giuseppe was passionate. For Paolo possessed a nature full of sympathy, that disposition of a generous soul to give out its finest qualities to others in unstinted affection.

As he lay upon his bed, he muttered,—“Giuseppe arrested! Branded as a criminal! Giuseppe hounded as a traitor! A fugitive from what men call justice! His very life pursued by secret agents of the government! What must be our mother's agony!”

When from his sheer nervous exhaustion this solicitude died down, another line of thought perplexed him. Why, when the world knew of his brother's arrest, had it been kept secret from him?

The question became even a closer one. How was it that Christofero had known, or at least suspected, the fact—for Paolo now gave that interpretation to the good Brother's mute sympathy, and to his occasional inquiries.

And a still deeper question; one that penetrated him like a poignard: Did not Fra Raffaello know of this danger to Giuseppe even before his arrest? Paolo counted,—several weeks had now elapsed since the monk's manner towards him had changed. He tried to silence the suspicion against Raffaello, but it came back again and again with the persistent repetition of the waves of the sea. And why Raffaello's cruelty of manner, so different from Christofero's kindness?

Paolo was not a practical psychologist. His study of character had been limited to fathoming his own feelings and motives, and to reading stereotyped delineations of what transpired in the souls of the holy men and women. He had never read a drama or a novel in which the more exceptional traits of human nature are depicted; in which the strange tangle of inconsistent incentives is unravelled, and the real tortuous inner life expressed in the countenance, the words, the actions. Yet he now intuitively divined that Raffaello's hardness towards him was associated in some way with the monk's hardness towards Giuseppe.

The terrible suspicion was intolerable to Paolo. He

would seek out Raffaello, and demand the truth from his lips.

He rose from the bed, nerved himself by exercise of will, and advanced towards the door.

Another hand anticipated his. The Abbate entered.

The Abbate Bernardo of San Benedetto was a venerable man. His head was bald, nature having performed his tonsure for the last decade of his seventy years. His beard was long and white, contrasting finely with his black robe, and artistically matching the almost ghostly pallor of his face. His forehead was high and full, based in heavy brows that overhung a pair of deep-set blue eyes, full of kindness. When he lifted his eyes in prayer he might have served Perugino for the model of the adorable and adoring Saint in his famous painting of the Assumption of the Virgin.

The good man's presence was itself as calming as a morning sunbeam after a night of terrible dreaming: a benediction even without laying his hand upon Paolo's head, as he did when the young men knelt at his feet and with mute tears sought his blessing.

"I have come," said the Abbate, "only to say to you, Placido, what one Christian man may say to another in his trouble. Your distress is deep, my son, but you are relieved to know that your brother Giuseppe has escaped from danger. For this in your name and in behalf of your mother and sister I am profoundly grateful. We are in the midst of a strife between the Islanders and the Court at Naples that bodes no good to either. The arrest and imprisonment of men like your brother, whatever may be their political opinions, is a most unfortunate policy on the part of the government."

"Did you know of Giuseppe's arrest?" asked the younger man, hesitatingly, and yet closely watching the Abbate's face as he spoke.

"I heard its rumour a little after it occurred," replied the Abbate, "but was informed by Fra Raffaello that a letter had been received by your mother from Giuseppe, which indicated that the story was untrue. I, therefore, did not even mention the matter to you, my son. Had I believed the story to have any foundation I would have sent you to be with your family during their anxiety,—for you would have been needed there rather than here. To help one another is even better than to pray. Aye, my son, to help and to love is the best of prayers. In such ministrations we discover the meaning of the saying—'Laborare est orare.'"

"Your words comfort me, Father," said Paolo. "But may I be pardoned if I make one other inquiry?"

"You have a right to ask what you will, my son; for you are the sufferer."

"Tell me, then, Father; did not Fra Raffaello know of Giuseppe's arrest at the time it occurred?"

The Abbate's face suddenly flushed. For an instant there shot across it a sign of pain. He dropped his eyes under the searching gaze of his companion, but resumed quietly,—“My dear son, let us not seek to make inquiry into one another's hearts. What Raffaello may have known I do not inquire. He is much—too much—no, I must not say it. We must not judge. Raffaello is much among those outside our monastery. Only so well seasoned a soul as his could endure without spiritual menace such close contact with worldly affairs. But, my son, the bell for Nones is striking. The Blessed Gesù be with you! Do not grieve. Do not anxiously question. Be silent to all the world. Speak only to God.”

The old Abbate imprinted a kiss upon the novice's forehead, and left there a tear.

THE EDGE OF AN ABYSS

APIECE of mechanism may run smoothly for a long time notwithstanding the fact that it is seriously out of order. It will wear itself new grooves, and grind away the minor obstructions that its irregular movement may have encountered. But if the machine receive a sudden jolt sufficient to throw its wheels and cogs out of this acquired smoothness of running, then the general derangement becomes apparent.

It is often so with the working of the mind. The judgment may become perverted, running aside from its naturally logical processes ; yet one does not at the time even suspect that one's conclusions are erroneous, so smooth are the brain grooves which the fallacious reasoning has made for itself. But let there come a shock to the mind in some particular of its aberration ; then the man awakens to a conviction that he may have been altogether wrong-headed.

Such was Paolo's experience. The revelation of the character of Raffaello affected him far beyond his opinion of that man. It shook the very roots of his faith in the monastic institution of which he esteemed this special monk a natural product. If he could have believed that Raffaello were simply a hypocrite, a false coin amid the pile of true metal, his whole trouble would have eased itself in a flash of contemptuous indignation, or at least, in some scheme of personal revenge. But the novice asked himself such questions as these, —

Was not Raffaello's character the result of education ?

If so, how much was due to the monastic devotion that absorbed his soul ?

Did not the surrender of his individual conscience to that of the Brotherhood atrophy his native power of perceiving the essential distinction between right and wrong ?

In trying to expand his manhood so as to make it commensurate with an institution, however great that institution may be, does not an individual rather contract and narrow his manhood by excluding the sense of relationship to that which is beyond the scope of that institution's interest ? In a word, is not the individual soul greater than any institution, as the vegetable principle in a single oak is vastly more significant than the shape of a whole forest ?

Thus Paolo began to think ; to have doubts for the first time in his life. Whether he thought wisely or not, we may not say. But such was the impulse of hostility to Raffaello that it carried with its rush much that did not logically belong to it. Freshets are not amenable to the river's channel, nor do we in the scientific study of channels take into account the wayward indentations made by the overflows. But Paolo's mind had momentarily lost that more comprehensive method of reasoning. Raffaello had been to him typical of the whole institution he represented. The cut of the freshet was to Paolo's distorted vision the channel itself. He forgot the tranquil flow of Benedictine life for over fifteen hundred years, its splendid beneficence as it poured through the generations. He forgot for a while the loyal friendship of Christoforo, and the character of the good Abbate whose kindness should have meant more to him than any exceptional bigotry of Raffaello.

But Paolo halted his thoughts, horrified at the precipice of unbelief opening before him. Where would such

thinking lead him ? To the trackless desert of infidelity. To the boundless ocean of speculation.

Astounded by the force of the wild torrent of free-thinking upon which he imagined himself to have embarked, the novice knelt before his crucifix. With tremendous effort he endeavoured to reverse the operation of his mind. This he could not do, any more than he could have stopped the throbbing of his brain.

He lay for a long time abjectly before the symbol of the Christ lordship, his whole soul breathing itself in a simple whispered prayer, "Teach me, Blessed Gesù, and I will obey." He kissed the crucifix, and threw himself, or rather fell—such was his physical exhaustion—upon the bed.

The Abbate entered silently. For a few moments the good man stood looking at him, saying nothing. Then he quietly knelt beside him. He put his arm tenderly about him.

"My son, let me share your grief. Speak to me fully your thoughts."

"I cannot, I cannot," groaned the young man. "They are sinful ; too sinful for you ever to hear them."

In a moment he raised himself from the bed, and knelt at the Abbate's feet.

"You would curse me, Father, if you knew my thoughts."

"No, no, my son ! The Blessed Gesù curses no one whose sins trouble him. Speak to me frankly, fully. I, too, have known the very depths of moral unrest. There are scars in here," touching his own breast, "that were once open and bleeding wounds. But thanks to the grace of our holy discipline, they are wounds no longer, only scars of memory. So, I am sure, will yours be healed. Tell me all, my son. I know how hard it is to do so. But let the wounds bleed a while if they will. They will

heal the better for it. It is a part of the medicament of Holy Confession that we confess our sins to one another."

Then Paolo opened his heart. He told it all ; his love for Giuseppe ; his belief in his brother's goodness, however much he might be mistaken ; his doubt if Giuseppe were altogether wrong in so loving his country, its poor people ; in wanting to break what seemed to him the terrible tyranny that oppressed Sicily.

Having entered upon the ordeal of Confession, Paolo did not even spare Raffaello, but began to tell his suspicion against that Brother.

"Judge not! Judge not!" said the Abbate, laying his finger kindly upon the young man's lips. "But of the other matter we may speak. I, too, can love your brother Giuseppe. I understand that spirit of patriotism which is sweeping over Sicily. I may condemn some of the methods it is adopting to accomplish its purpose, but we monks can be patriots too. My father fell at Girgenti in the insurrection of 1820, as your father fell in '48 at Messina. Oh, how futile these ill-advised attempts to destroy our political and social misery by means of the deeper misery of insurrection and carnage !

"But, my son, I would that our Brethren here should take no part in the distressing warfare which I see everywhere kindling on our Sicilian hills. Let San Benedetto remain an oasis of rest and piety into which the wild desert storms do not come !"

After a moment's pause, during which he seemed to hesitate to speak his thoughts, he added—"It may be that the gigantic movement that is shaking northern Italy will destroy the present government of the South. If so, God's will be done ! We may lament it ; we may be afraid for its ultimate consequences ; but Christ reigns. The seat of San Pietro will not be destroyed. 'The gates of hell shall not prevail against it,' as Gesù said. The

King of Sardinia is named Emanuele,—Vittorio Emanuele. It may be an omen that in some way the extension of his power southward will work for the liberation of the Church, which to-day is too much beholden to other secular powers,—that of Austria and France.

“But, my dear son, I cannot see through the dust-cloud of events that are thickening over Italy. I do not try to. Only let us of San Benedetto be patient, taking no part in the conflict. Peace! Peace, my young brother! We will pray for Sicily. We will pray for your Giuseppe that he fall not into danger, nor any sin. And we will wait.”

“But is Raffaello of your mind, Father?”

“Hush!” said the Abbate. “If any of our Brotherhood of San Benedetto become unruly we have our own discipline. But of this, I command you, not a word; and, if possible, not a thought. God be with you, my son! Be silent before God! When He shall speak—as speak He surely will through coming events—then it will be time enough for us who are now ignorant of His holy will to speak our thoughts. Silence, my son! Silence before God! Pax vobiscum!”

XXVI

A TINKER FROM URAGUAY

WHILE Paolo was in the throes of his religious tragedy at San Benedetto, his brother Giuseppe was taking part in another tragedy of vast political significance in Palermo.

The letter to his mother, which told of his being about to leave Messina for Rome, had been posted at Messina by a faithful hand. The envelope was at once opened by the postal authorities—as Giuseppe had anticipated and desired that it should be—and thus served to divert the police from searching for him in Palermo.

It was at once assumed that he had escaped over seas. Descriptions of his personal appearance were circulated. These were as accurate as could be made before the adoption of the Bertillon system of measuring finger joints and photographing mole marks, and were posted at all the ports of the Island, lest he should return. They were also sent to scores of secret agents of the Bourbons in Malta, Marseilles, Genoa, Rome and Naples, together with a price upon his head.

Giuseppe read these descriptions on the dock at Palermo, where he walked disguised by a stubby beard, a workman's shirt, and the assumed name of Sabastiano Perro, Sicilian tinker returned from Uruguay. With his soldering pot in his hand, and perhaps a bit of tin pipe under his arm, he went about his business through the streets. In this capacity he did jobs in the houses of such people as Lomonaco Ciaccio, Dottore La Loggia, Salvatore Urso and Enrico Albanese; for these houses

were among the assembly places of the various committees of the coming revolution. Giuseppe was at one hour close-headed with the leaders, inditing letters to the men of Messina, Trapani, and Catania; the next hour he was delivering messages in all parts of the city, now at a wine-shop, now in conversation with the priest Ottavio Lanza on the street corner. Now and then he got cheering news to Salva Cappello, who, behind the bars of his prison, moaned less for his own discomfort than he did for the delay of the insurrection. Sometimes Giuseppe gave help at a hand-press in some cellar, where copies of insurgent pamphlets were printed. So many of these incendiary documents were circulated that they affected the minds of the authorities everywhere with a depression like that produced by a long duration of the south wind,—as Governor General Castelficala reported to the throne at Naples,—“The factious spirit has made rapid progress with the strange and monstrous idea of Italian unification.” Maniscalco, chief of police, declared that the whole country suburban to Palermo was “like a bed of hot coals.”

But while Giuseppe was among the foremost in physical daring, he was accused by some of being timidly over-cautious as to methods. He spoke of being ready and ardent, but warned his fellow patriots against political rabies. Every day came appeals for the immediate rising even from Mazzini, Crispi, and Campo. But Giuseppe shook his head. “Not yet. Not yet,” he said.

At length it became evident that the popular ferment could no longer be restrained. Here was a dilemma. To strike without success would be to throw back the movement indefinitely; to discourage the men of the mainland from ever coming to assist; perhaps it would lead to a final crushing of the whole movement by the tremendous power amassed by the Bourbons.

But on the other hand, to longer delay the insurrection would be to allow the patriotic spirit already engendered to die out. The Sicilian passion is like steam, which when once created must do its work instantly. And never before were the popular desire and expectation so generally and so generously excited ; nor, for that very reason, were they in such danger of utterly collapsing.

Giuseppe, therefore, at a meeting in the house of Enrico Albanese on the last night of March, notwithstanding many misgivings, stood in with the others in the determination to make the rising on the fourth of April. During these four intervening days Palermo was a caldron of excitement. To keep the popular ferment sufficiently near the boiling point, and yet to prevent its prematurely boiling over in useless rioting before the right moment should have arrived, was a problem that overtaxed the ingenuity of the leaders.

The keen ears of Maniscalco, chief of police, could not escape hearing the muttering of the coming storm. It echoed everywhere from café to corner group. Housewives whispered in tremulous accents as they sharpened the long knives for their husbands and sons. Street urchins revealed the secret in the boldness and braggadocio with which they insulted the police and soldiery, marching behind them and mimicking the motions of the hangman when he should avenge on them the atrocities of many generations.

People from the country round about Palermo, from Misilmeri, Bagheria, Ciminna and Piano del Greco, accompanied by their wives and daughters, thronged the city shops as if suddenly aware of the need of groceries, furniture and clothing. What they bought and stored in the broad bosoms of their jackets and under their wide skirts would have surprised an onlooker not familiar with the

popular determination. The bakers were stacking in their back rooms great piles of bread loaves. The blacksmiths were especially busy, and worked late into the night with thud of muffled hammers and with forge-lights covered by heavy curtains extemporized from bedclothes.

Maniscalco's men were made alert by the unusual activity of some of the citizens and the unusual absence from sight of others. Through his detectives this astute detective learned that one, Francesco Riso, a plumber, had hidden a quantity of arms in an apartment under the roof of the Convento della Gancia. He tracked thither a number of men who, entering the building, did not come out again.

One incautious patriot informed another, apparently as ardent as himself, that the sound of the convent bell *a stormo* was the predetermined signal for the uprising throughout the city. The listener was a spy who had wormed himself into the confidence of the patriots. Maniscalco laid his plans accordingly. Overwhelming numbers of police and soldiers were secreted in the neighbourhood of the Convento della Gancia. Every avenue of connection between the various insurrectionary centres of the city was securely blocked by platoons of police. Cavalry stood ready to mow the streets with their sabres, while artillery was placed to sweep away the populace with grape-shot.

On the morning of April 4th, the bell of the Gancia sounded. Riso and his men rushed out from the convento with the cry "Viva l'Italia!" To their consternation there came back from hundreds of hired throats, "Viva Il Re." Riso's men fired a few shots. A hurricane of bullets was the response. Neighbouring squadre of patriots hastened to the rescue, but were caught like fish in a net. The insurrection in Palermo itself was crushed as readily as is the victim of a lion's paw. That day and

night the Bourbon police and soldiers held high carnival of blood in the streets, and of outrage in the houses of all suspected of favouring the outbreak.

The Duke of Monteleone, Cavalier Notorbartolo, the Prince of Giardinelli, the Duke of Cesaro, Prince Nicimi and others, who were accustomed to meet at Baron Riso's house, together with the Baron himself, found less elegant quarters in the prison of Castellamare and the Vicaria.

The insurrection had also been promptly started in many other places in Sicily. For some days the towns and villages maintained the unequal struggle. But at length the apparently utter defeat of the movement was recognized. The patriots were hopeless. Those whose ardour had been sustained only by the enthusiasm of their fellows—always the major part in such enterprises—lapsed into indifference; or worse, openly proclaimed their loyalty to the existing government.

Even Giuseppe Menardi began to admit to himself that Sicily might after all be the "eternal Prometheus, with the ever-living vulture at his vitals." But that did not lessen his sense of duty. His conscience and his hope were apparently dissociated faculties, like water-tight compartments in a ship, the latter of which might be flooded while the former was free from the engulfing waters. To him, and to hundreds of Sicilians like him, sacrifice absolute and entire, patient waiting, though it might be indefinitely prolonged, was as sacred an obligation as seizing an offered victory.

But popular depression was everywhere in the Island from Marsala to Messina. Many said it would take another generation to brew a repetition of the uprising; that time must lapse, like the supine period from 1820 to 1848; or, at least, like that between the insurgency of 1848 and this of 1860. Giuseppe, though he feared this,

belonged to those sturdier patriots who would not assume it to be true without another attempt, or a continuance of the present effort.

He clearly saw that the only hope for the Island was in help from the mainland. Oh, for Garibaldi and the men of the North! But would they move? He heard that even Bixio, the most daring and venturesome of fighters, hesitated. So did Medici. And Garibaldi, the old lion in his lair at Caprera, did nothing but lash his tail in rage. They would certainly not come to the rescue if the Sicilian spirit of insurgency died out. That spirit must then be fomented at whatever cost to individuals.

XXVII

ONE MOURNER AT LEAST

GIUSEPPE knew that his life might be forfeited if he returned to his villa on the slopes of Etna, and that to attempt to leave Palermo by way of the sea would be equally futile.

"I am not much of a hero," he said to himself, "but being unable to escape danger, I might as well utilize my hazards."

So he busied himself incessantly. At the first gleam of daylight he would be, perhaps, at the house of Messineo. The great vase that stood upon the balcony of that mansion, fronting the street, efflorescent with plants, was every night rolled into the kitchen, and the roots of said plants exposed. These were stranger roots than ever a botanist found in tropical swamps or on the ice slopes of the Arctic. They took the form of a small printing-press, a pot of ink, and packages of blank paper. All night long Messineo, Federico and Meli worked the press. In the morning hundreds of copies of an incendiary pamphlet were taken from the kitchen by the grocer, butcher, baker, vegetable woman, and as many as could be stuffed into whatever tinker-looking object Giuseppe could invent. Before night the city was mysteriously made aware of any news that favoured the doleful cause.

From morning until night, whenever he saw a group of long-faced Palermitans, the tinker upbraided their fears. To one group he would declare—"Garibaldi is coming. He has already left Caprera. Orlando, Crispi, Rosolini Pilo, La Masa, La Farina, all say so."

"What does that tinker know about it?" one of the crowd would ask.

"Can't you see the fellow is no mere kettle-mender?" would be the response. "He has got the tongue of Crispi himself. He must carry brains in that soldering pot. Listen to him!"

Before entering some café where politics was more openly talked, Giuseppe would smooth his hair and adjust his clothes and leave his tinker's pot outside. After listening a while he would take his part in the conversation.

"Signori, we are not at the end of the fight. I fear there is trouble ahead for the government. Vittorio Emanuele has acquired everything southward down to the Papal states. That territory is, as you know, only a narrow band across the Peninsula. Below the Pope's territory there is nothing except Naples and Sicily. If the insurgents can keep Francesco's throne teetering a little longer Vittorio Emanuele is bound to cross the Papal states. That is clear to a blind man. Cavour is clever, is he not? Do you think he will openly proclaim war on Naples? Not at all. That might cost him European sympathy. But I tell you, Signori, that Cavour is only waiting for the job of restoring order down here. Europe will let him do that. And if Cavour—that old fox—gets his paw on the hen-roost in Naples he will not give a chance to King Francesco's advisers to even cackle. If the Sicilians will only keep up the fight a little while longer, the northern armies are bound to come."

Some one would slap the speaker on the back with the whispered compliment, "Bravo for a gutter-mender!" Or perhaps another would take him aside with the suggestion that a Menardi face were better kept covered with a tinker's cap than exposed openly; especially as just now

the police were so much in love with that face that they were placarding the wharves with attempted pictures of it, and would like to set it off with a hangman's rope for a necklace.

On Sundays Giuseppe made the rounds of the barber shops in the lower quarters of the town. Wherever the tonsorial symbol of two plants of asparagus at a doorway indicated that a circle of grizzly beards were waiting their turns, within, the tinker would enter, sit a while, and when the company was known, would pass significant news to one and another. Ordinarily the barber himself was a reservoir into which poured, and from which was judiciously distributed, patriotic information. To this reservoir Giuseppe always contributed the most cheering matter, even though much of it was of his own invention.

"Keep up the excitement! Don't let it die down for an hour!" he would urge at the meetings of the committees which were in control of the movement in the various sections of the city.

After the massacre of Francesco Riso's men at the Gancia, on the morning of April 4th, some of his brave fellows had concealed themselves in the crypt of the convento. Since the living monks of the Gancia denied giving information, it must have been the ghost of some dead Brother, some Savonarola whose soul was yet unburnt for his heresies, that whispered to the liberty-loving people of the neighbourhood the fact that these men were still surviving in that hiding-place. This same friendly ghost bade the people in the vicinity listen for the scratching of jack-knives on the cracks between the stones of the wall adjacent to the street, and to be ready at the opportune moment to help these sepulchred men into their resurrection.

One day Giuseppe listened at the wall. He not only

heard quite distinctly the scratching, but saw a slight movement of a great stone as big around as a man's body. Scientists tell us that anything moving imparts its impact to the atmosphere, which in turn conveys evidence of the motion far away on ever-enlarging circles. The quiver of that stone in the wall of the convento had a similar effect. A great crowd immediately gathered about it. As those nearest watched, shielded by the people back of them, the stone moved more visibly. A hundred men and women kept the eyes of the police from seeing the phenomenon. At length strong fingers grasped the stone from without, and laid it lovingly on the ground, while one, two, three of the captives were pulled through the hole.

The police were now aware that something unusual was occurring at the spot, and charged through the crowd in time to beat back the head of the fourth victim. But the three were gone, one wearing Giuseppe's cap, another his blouse, while the third was adorned with a string of onions about his neck,—the well-known insignia of a street market vender.

The police then entered the Convento della Gancia, and with sabre points prodded the remaining men—thirteen of them—out of their hiding-places among the coffins in the crypt. They drove them to the street, and thence to the prison of Castellamare. Giuseppe with others watched daily for opportunity to communicate with the prisoners, but in vain. One afternoon he witnessed a scene strange even for one accustomed to the ghoulish rule of the Bourbon authorities.

A number of sailors were seated in front of the Church of Piedegrotta near the Castellamare. A company of soldiers issued from the portal and surrounded them. Thirteen of these sailors were selected, and forced at point of bayonet to enter the castle. In a few moments

the soldiers reappeared, guarding on either side a procession. This consisted of a file of thirteen men with bandaged eyes, black veils, and arms bound securely at the elbows behind their backs. At the right hand of each walked a priest carrying a crucifix ; on the left, one of the thirteen sailors guiding the blinded man, and supporting him with his arm. Nothing broke the stillness of the march save the shuffling sound of feet and the monotonous droning of the priests as they recited prayers.

Giuseppe followed this weird cortège out through the gate of San Giorgio. The thirteen captives were placed upon their knees facing the wall. Three files of soldiers, thirteen in each file, were ranged behind them. At command thirteen bullets sped through the toppling bodies. The clothing of the dead men took fire. Some women pushed their way through the crowd of soldiers with bowls of water, and extinguished their smoking garments.

Thus was performed the last and only ceremonial of respect for these proto-martyrs of Sicilian liberty in 1860. The dead bodies were thrust into carts and carried off, only their dripping blood marking the way they went.

Strong willed as Giuseppe naturally was, and hardened as he had become by what he had witnessed on the streets of Palermo, the commingled pathos and cruelty of this scene were too much for his self-possession. Where were the families, the parents, the brothers and sisters, the children of these murdered men, that no loved one was allowed to give them so much as a kiss of farewell ? No friend to attend them to the place of sepulchre ! These brave fellows had been the impersonation of Sicily's agonizing cry for liberty. Yet they were shot in the back like so many cowards, and fell without a word. Was it ominous of the great cause itself ?

“If so,” thought Giuseppe, “there shall be at least one devoted follower in the sad procession. One heart shall beat like a muffled drum behind these carts which are transformed into hearses !”

Giuseppe strode out boldly from the crowd. Taking off his tinker’s cap, he carried it in his hand, and walked bareheaded. Stooping he touched his finger to a clot of blood, and with it made the sign of the cross upon his breast. Then he took his place behind the last of the dripping carts, and walked along the red road.

A murmur of applause swept over the crowd. One or two of the boldest stepped behind him into the funeral line ; a woman among them.

Giuseppe saw the mistake into which his generous but indiscreet passion had led him. Even if his identity were not noted, he would be arrested for his present foolhardy sentimentalism. He stepped to one side,—but too late. A mounted officer rode towards him. This man as he came close suddenly turned his horse so that the flanks of the beast pushed Giuseppe further away. As he did so the rider said, apparently to the animal :

“Put on your cap. I will have to arrest you if I know you.”

Giuseppe recognized Cataldo. The captain further backed his horse against him, thrusting him far into the crowd. Giuseppe might have escaped by losing himself in the multitude had not the people in their enthusiasm betrayed him.

“Brav’uomo ! Viva ! Viva !” greeted him from every side.

Maniscalco’s detectives were everywhere. Two stalwart officers gripped him. Instantly a sledge-hammer fist laid one of them sprawling. The hold of the other was as suddenly wrenched away. A riot raged about the captive. But the effort of the crowd to rescue him

only kept him more securely in the eyes of the police. Giuseppe was the centre of the whirlpool, the swirling currents of which were brawny muscles, clubs, and here and there a gleaming knife. The discipline of the police was, however, too much for the wild rage of the populace. At one moment Giuseppe thought himself free; but the next he felt the manacles snap about his wrists.

He was hustled quickly to the Vicaria prison. Notwithstanding the horrible fate that awaited him, he could not repress a grim smile at the artistic impertinence that had erected at either side of the great iron gate—that portal of hell,—a beautiful fountain whose flashing spray and merry babble would intensify by contrast the misery the next step would bring to him who entered.

But what met Giuseppe's eye as he passed within the second gate was beyond criticism from the standpoint of propriety. Here was a firmly planted gallows-tree, with its ever hanging festoon of rope, released from one neck and ready for another, without any undue delay for such trifles as human sentiment or legal formality.

Giuseppe was halted before a desk in the corridor long enough to have his name recorded towards the end of a big volume already nearly filled with such entries. His crime was not inquired into,—his captors would report that later, if at all. It was enough that they had safely lodged him.

A ward jailer then conducted him up a narrow, foul-smelling, bat-nested stairway, and thrust him through a hole, called a doorway, into cell Number 345. The lock bolt creaked. Through a slit high up in the wall Giuseppe watched the clouds, and later the stars.

XXVIII

THE GOOD ABBATE

IN time the distressing news of Giuseppe's imprisonment reached the Menardi villa. The agony it produced was poured forth in a letter from Mother Agata to Paolo. This letter, according to the rule of the monastery, was first read by the Abbate. In this case, at least, the custom was salutary, for it gave that good man an opportunity to somewhat prepare the novice's mind for its contents. But, notwithstanding the Abbate's very affectionate comfort, the reading of the letter threw the young man into a hysteria of grief. It might have been supposed that his training for the unworldly life would have given him self-command; that the habit of inwardly submitting his will to others would have helped him to resign himself under the stress of outward events; that the practiced duty of holding his emotions at the dictate of judgment or checking them in the discipline of devotion would have enabled him to suppress his feeling, at least sufficiently to hold it within stiffened lips.

But Paolo had never before felt the strength of the great human emotions. His religious experiences, notwithstanding their apparent heights and depths, had been little more than sentiments—sentiments brewed of dogma, and frothed with poetic feeling. Even in those agonizing moments in his chamber, when he esteemed himself to be the chief of sinners, he was unconsciously acting a part in a drama,—it is true, the grandest, most forceful drama ever written; the composition of men presumably inspired, with the holiest of men as exem-

plary actors. Yet the fact remained that, but for his peculiar religious studies and training, he would never have had such contritions. Paolo had been, in spite of the exaltations and depressions of his soul, totally ignorant of the commoner, yet deeper, experiences and passions of mankind; their grief for those dearer to them than life; their disappointments in things they had reached for with the agony as of torn hands and quivering nerves. Amid these emotions men and women have their real conflicts, in comparison with which the soul-wrestlings of recluses are ordinarily but cloud battles.

But now Paolo is off the stage. He is no longer an actor, no longer a religious devotee; he is something deeper, fuller,—he is a man. His experience is novel, bewildering. He is like one suddenly awakened out of a dreamful sleep, and facing danger at his bedside.

A profane word had never before entered the mind of this pure and peaceful spirit. But now a horrible execration hangs from his lips. It almost falls. The hands of the Abbate on his shoulders, the serene look of the holy man into his eyes, alone hold the epithet pendant.

“Silence, my son! Silence! Speak not until you can say ‘Father forgive them, they know not what they do!’ I command you!”

“I cannot say those sacred words, Father. It would be praying a lie, for they do know. Fra Raffaello knows.”

“Silence! I command it in the name of the Christ whom you refuse to follow,” said the Abbate.

It is sometimes easier to hold oneself motionless under the knife of another than to force the soul to be still when lacerated by the sense of wrong. So the veins upon Paolo’s forehead grew thick with the blood of his rage. His whole form trembled with the violence of his emotion only held for the instant in obedience to his will, as that will was reënforced by the tremendous will of his Superior.

A long time passed without a word being spoken. At length the Abbate said, with exceeding sweetness of manner,—

“My son, I know your heart. I am suffering with you. Your agony is mine. I put my soul within your soul. Don't think of me as condemning you. No, no! I am kneeling in your Gethsemane. I pray God to let this cup pass from you! I believe the cup will pass, Placido. Your brother will be freed in some way, I know not how. The black cloud that hangs over your home, and over all Sicily, will drift away. My son, I shall put you under discipline,—a most blessed discipline—that which Gesù Himself followed. To comfort oneself, comfort others. I send you for a while to your home. Your mother and sister will need you. Think well of the words you will say to them, Placido, but first learn to say them to yourself and feel them. Pass them through your own heart. Let them be as the branch in Marah that sweetened the bitter waters. When you yourself are sweetened and refreshed, then give others to drink. Go, my son! God has clearly ordained that now you shall begin your true life as a Benedictine, a Son of Consolation, a true Placido. Go at once. But return to me within the week. Of Fra Raffaello think not at all. This I enjoin upon you. As he will be out of sight, so let him not enter your mind. This will be a hard task : but a true Benedettino controls his thoughts, even as he controls his conduct. Go to your home, Placido. And I will pray for you.”

The Abbate kissed the forehead of the novice, who bowed reverently at his feet.

An hour later another room in the monastery witnessed a very different scene. The Abbate had been dealing with Raffaello. A strange white pallor was on the face of the latter. His eyes seemed to gleam from some myste-

rious depth. They were not directed towards the Abbate, but were fixed upon a spot in the wall beyond him, as if they would burn their way through lime and stone. An observer, however trained in the art of the physiognomist, would have been in doubt whether the man was in the grip of some diabolical passion, or had just conquered it by the superior force of spiritual will. In charity we will assume the latter explanation, since the duplex characters of such men as Raffaello are still the puzzle of psychologist and novelist.

The Abbate was standing. Something had occurred which had suddenly taken from his shoulders the stoop of age. Now he was as erect as he had been forty years ago, when he commanded alike the admiration of fashion in the salons of Palermo, and a militia company of Sicilian patriots. An observer would have been in doubt whether the Abbate at the moment was at the acme of a very human pride, or was transfigured by the consciousness of exercising some heaven-delegated authority over the man who sat before him. No robes nor tiara nor sceptre would have added to his dignity at the moment.

“Brother Raffaello,” said he, “in the past I may have sinned against both yourself and the rule of San Benedetto in requiring of you no report of your life when absent from the monastery. I assumed that one so noted for wisdom in affairs, so high in favour with the Sacred Court at Rome, and withal so devoted to our Brotherhood, would make no mistake; or at least that I, not trained as you are in such matters, should refrain from being your judge. But in the affair of which we are speaking, I cannot be silent. I demand of you henceforth the strictest fulfillment of your vow of obedience. Do I have your pledge?”

Raffaello made no answer for a moment. At length he spoke with an accent that denoted somewhat of diffi-

dence,—a strange thing with him,—“I do not dispute your authority. But—but—you, Father, are, as you said, utterly untrained in these affairs. You are unwise in —”

The Abbate raised his hand. “If you think me unwise, let us call the Council of the Brotherhood to judge of these things. God forbid, my Brother Raffaello, that my authority should be weakened by not carrying with it the judgment of the best among us. Do you wish the Council, Brother Raffaello? You have only to ask for it.”

Raffaello took time to consider. At length he replied in a tone and manner that were even more laconic than the single syllable he uttered.

“No.”

“Then the matter is ended,” said the Abbate. “I command obedience, obedience absolute, unquestioning.”

It was at this dramatic moment that we caught our first glimpse of the two men, as narrated above. Several minutes more passed during which they stood like statues, changing only in features as the intensity of their emotions subsided. Slowly the fire died in Raffaello’s eyes, extinguished finally by a tear. The pallor was displaced by a blush. The monk knelt at the Abbate’s feet, kissed his hand, and very quietly said, “I obey.”

This word of submission instantly transformed the Abbate. His rigour melted away. One would have imagined that he, rather than Raffaello, had been the offender. He kissed the kneeling man upon the forehead.

“Brother Raffaello, I am your servant for Christ’s sake. Let us pray a moment together.”

The two knelt in an unuttered prayer. When they rose the Abbate said :

“Brother Raffaello, I have a business to commit to your hands which will require all your diplomatic skill. Giuseppe Menardi must be released from the prison at Palermo, and you must release him. His blood is on your hands.”

“Impossible, Father! The revolt has gone too far. There is nothing left to the government but relentless suppression.”

“God only knows results,” replied the Abbate. “But duty is yours, Fra Raffaello. Life for life, if necessary, you must secure the liberation of Menardi. In God’s name I ordain you to this duty.”

Raffaello dropped his head, crossed his hands upon his breast, shook his head, and paced the floor. The Abbate followed him with his eyes. At length he said quietly but firmly,—

“Your vow, Brother!”

“I will do what I can,” said the monk. “God help me. Man cannot.”

Raffaello passed out of the room, and along the corridor to his own cell.

“What a changed man! Has he been suddenly taken ill?” said one monk to another as they watched him.

XXIX

THE MONK'S DILEMMA

WAS Raffaello really humiliated by the Abate's present assertion of his authority? Humbled he undoubtedly was, but humility is not so very far removed from pride. They are like two tracks designed for different directions in travel; but sometimes they shunt into each other. No; Raffaello was not humiliated! Rather he had a feeling of satisfaction that he was strong enough to bring himself so meekly to submit. In self-will he had bowed his head. His neck had not suffered the relaxation of a muscle. Perhaps the man did not sufficiently analyze his experience to see in the dust of his voluntary self-abasement the sparkles of self-conceit. Yet they were there.

Raffaello's monastic obedience now involved his becoming, if possible, the liberator of Giuseppe Menardi from prison. How could he accomplish it? It had been easy to secure Menardi's arrest, because the hatred and fears of the Bourbon authorities made them eager to follow up any such hint as the monk had given them. But these officials had—and this Raffaello knew—no sentiment of mercy to which he could appeal.

Raffaello's head was never so heavily bowed upon his breast as when he walked from the monastery down the broad avenue to the palace of Prince Fitalia, the Royal Intendente at Catania.

"Ah, my dear Frate," said that functionary on learning the occasion of his visit; "your coming to me in the matter does honour to us both. But—but—your proposition is—well! I don't really see how it is possible. You

see that since Menardi once escaped them, both the army and the police authorities are very much enraged against him. Their pride is touched. Besides, don't you see, my dear Frate, that they must keep him, and make an example in his punishment, since he escaped through the connivance of other persons who are as yet unknown to even Maniscalco! These accomplices must be terrified by the fate of the man they have aided. You understand the public necessity of this, do you not? And then—I hesitate to speak of it—there is another reason why we cannot contemplate granting your request."

The Prince lowered his tone. "My dear Frate—you may not be aware of it—but you people of San Benedetto are rumoured to be inclined to—to—well! to sympathize with the insurgents of the Island."

"Heaven forbid!" cried Raffaello, raising his hands in pious protestation.

"No doubt! no doubt!" continued the Prince. "I do not doubt the rumour is false. I, myself—of course, I do not believe it. Yet it is remembered by some people that your Abbate's father was one of the rebels in his day. And some stories of the Abbate's own youth — Well! we need not speak of them, but they incline some to imagine—of course it is only imagination—that he may not prove over-loyal now. No,—of course not—I don't believe it. The Abbate is as loyal to the government as he is to Holy Church. No doubt!

"Then, besides, my dear Frate, you are aware that Menardi's brother is one of your number at San Benedetto. You must consider that, under all these circumstances, your advocacy of Menardi's release would bring suspicion upon yourself. There are so many of our monks and priests who are caught in the popular maelstrom of discontent. You cannot afford to lift a finger for Menardi.

“ Besides, Frate, I myself might be suspected of being unduly lenient. You recall things that were said against me in '48. No, no, Frate! I beg of you not to speak of the matter.”

Raffaello's head was heavier than ever, and hung lower upon his breast, as he departed from the palace.

He wandered along upon the shady side of the street, each hand thrust far up in the opposite arm sleeve, in as profound meditation as he had ever indulged even when kneeling upon a prayer stool. He walked far out on Strada Etna, but his problem was as mysterious to him as the secret of the smoking mountain that closed the distant vista. Wearied at length with his walk, he returned and went into the Duomo of Sant' Agata. He knelt for a long time before the statue of the Saint. So often had he done this during the half lifetime of his abode in Catania, that, in spite of his present vexatious problem, his thoughts ran into their accustomed channels when at the shrine. He admired for the thousandth time the rare art of Medieval Giovanni Bartoli who executed it. He thought of the five hundred years during which those carved angels had held up the arms of the Saint while she blessed the many generations that passed before her. His mind wandered to the battle-fields of the Crusades, and then to the distant shores of England, as he looked upon the crown of gold that the rough warrior, Richard Cœur de Lion, had sent for her head. Then he noted how the enamel work was cracking off in spots.

This last suggested to Raffaello a vow. “ If,” said he to himself, “ the Saint will only extricate me from my present dilemma, I will donate sufficient money to repair her statue; that is, from what we may receive from the Menardis in gratitude for my efforts in securing Giuseppe's release.”

He closed his eyes. In his well-trained imagination he

saw the descending Saint, and himself soul-prostrate before her, uttering thought by thought the vow he had contemplated.

His worship completed, he sought again the street. As he was passing out of the Duomo door a gaily-dressed person was entering.

"Ah, Fra Raffaello! You monks are sworn not to admire the sex, yet I notice that you have a desire now and then to lift the veil of Sant' Agata. Pardon me! No offense! A mere pleasantry!"

Under other circumstances Raffaello might have rebuked the flippancy of the speaker as became his holy office, but now the monk was in need of just such a counsellor as this individual; for the man proved to be no other than Count Lupis, famed for his tactfulness as a politician, which, as the reader knows, had shown itself in his dealing with Signor Pavo; and which, for that matter, was thoroughly recognized by Raffaello himself, since he had often conferred with Count Lupis upon affairs involved in our story.

"May I walk with you, Conte, after your devotions?"

"Oh, my devotions can wait," replied the Count. "You see that Sant' Agata and I are on such good terms that she will not take offense if I desert her for once, especially if I may render a favour to one of her best friends,—as you undoubtedly are, Frate."

As if a little dubious of giving offense to the Maiden Saint, Count Lupis dipped his hand in the holy water,—just as other men, and women, too, who are absorbed in worldly affairs, though they have not time for morning prayers, yet never leave their chambers without gurgitating a hasty "God bless me!"

"Conte, I wish to talk with you regarding Signor Menardi, of whose arrest and confinement at Palermo you are aware."

“Ah! you do not mention his execution?” said the Count quickly. With his accustomed vivacity he took the lead of the conversation. “Then his execution has not been ordered, as I feared it would be. I think by the way—and I mention this to you, as I know of your friendship for Signora Menardi, the mother—I imagine that the delay in signing the death warrant for the young man has been due to my own suggestion. It is a shame to deprive the country of such good men as he, if only they can be brought to the side of loyalty, as, by the way, Signor Pavo has already been,—thanks, Frate, to your religious influence! It is marvellous what a spell you monks and priests can throw about a man. I have read Machiavelli until I know him by heart. By the way, he was the shrewdest instructor in diplomacy that ever lived. I hope you read him, Frate?—No! Well, you have no need to, for the devil with his horns would not be the equal of one of your shaved heads in a butting match. But pardon my levity, Frate.”

“I will pardon your rhetoric, Conte, for the sake of the great truth that lies beneath it,” said Raffaello. “We priests and monks do have a power unmatched over the lives of men. The Blessed Gesù said that we should ‘catch men.’ Our influence is, however, spiritual. We never urge from any selfish or secular motive.”

“Of course not! Of course not!” The Count winked at a lantern post as he said it.

“And Roberto Pavo,” continued Raffaello, “is so thoroughly imbued with a better spiritual disposition that I am sure he would resist any appeal to his worldly ambition.”

“No doubt! No doubt, Frate!” replied Lupis.

Raffaello did not notice the swift glance of the Count, nor the significance of the way in which that accomplished master of the art of managing men twisted the

end of his mustache ; pulling it down, doubtless to prevent his companion seeing a slight up-curl of the corners of his mouth, as he listened to the monk's further account of Roberto's change of heart.

"You know Signor Pavo well, do you not, Conte?"

"I can't say that I fully know Signor Pavo," replied he. "I once met him, but on a purely business matter that you know of. I am thinking more of Menardi. That you are interested in him interests me the more in his fate. You are such a good judge of men, Frate, and moreover so entirely aloof from any other motive than that of love for souls, that I offer you my service for whatever I can do. Now I am convinced that Menardi might be liberated if he would simply give pledge of loyalty to King Francesco."

"That, Conte, I fear he would not do," replied Raffaello. "He has all the obduracy and folly of his father. The elder Menardi was one of those strange creatures who make the martyrs in every bad cause; men who would rather have a hangman's rope than a gold chain about their neck."

"Yes, I know the breed," replied the Count. "Our prisons at Naples are full of them. We have some fellows that have rotted their bones in the vaults for years,—relics of the insurrection of '48. They have lost the ability of wagging their jaws by not repeating the oath of loyalty—the only words we allow them to practice their speech upon. But I am told that this Giuseppe Menardi is a very capable young man; and withal somewhat judicious in his advice to his fellow insurgents! Not so hot-headed as most Sicilians. Such a man will probably be amenable to reason. Now he must see that the rebellion into which he has been drawn has utterly collapsed; that there is no more possibility of its successful revival than there is to grow an orange grove in his cell at the

Vicaria. If you could put into his head the alternative of loyalty to the inevitable or of being shot, he wouldn't think twice about the matter.

"Now, Frate," added the Count, pinching the elbow of the monk, "I can prepare the necessary papers. And you are the man to take them to him. He knows you intimately, does he not? As a religious you will have free admission to his cell, for even Maniscalco wouldn't dare to forbid your saving a soul. You see Maniscalco is a very pious man of a sort, and would be gratified to have you act as Confessor before the execution which he expects to order. Besides, Frate, as a friend of the Menardi family, you will have greatest influence upon the young man himself. If you can't really convert him from his treason, you can at least side-track him for a while on his road to perdition. I will furnish a blank for the formal oath such as the King requires; and I will also provide the royal assurance of pardon,—a matter with which I am commissioned in all cases where I see fit to use it."

Now if Raffaello was ever thoroughly honest he was so at this moment in his protestation of gratitude to Count Lupis. He warmly embraced him, and mumbled a *Benedicito*.

The two men parted. The monk hastened back to the Duomo, and knelt at the shrine of Sant' Agata. He did not doubt that her good offices had led him to encounter Count Lupis at the door of the church, and that she, who hundreds of years ago had as a mere child baffled the wisdom of the pagan judges, had now suggested to the mind of the Count his sagacious plan. The holy man upon his knees vowed again to give for the adornment of the statue of the Saint a certain percentage of any money that might, through his agency, come to San Benedetto from either the Pavo or Menardi estate.

XXX

BIRDS OF A FEATHER

SIGNOR PAVO sat at the extreme end of the long terrace that extended across the front of his villa. The pavement of this terrace had once been quite ornate, checker-blocked with white and black marbles. It was now out of repair. Some stones were broken, others were entirely missing, while seeds of grass, yielding to the fascination of the dust in the cracks, had there brought forth their kind. The terrace was thus not unlike a miniature reproduction of the landscape that stretched before it, where the great fields were marked off in squares by borders of olive trees. Similar evidence of neglect marred what had once been a beautiful prospect of garden and park. The stone pillars of a pergola were out of plumb, and the flower beds had suffered from an irruption of Goth and Vandal hordes of weeds. Vases that may once have delighted the Renaissance taste of winter exiles from Medicean Florence, or perhaps evoked appreciative grunts from rough Norman conquerors in the days of King Robert, were now propped up on broken pedestals, clumsily repaired with pieces of vases that may have been wrought by Saracens or even Greek hands of more ancient days. What a pity that art does not grow chronicling rings as the trees do! Were that so, many a Sicilian villa would rival a Roman museum.

Signor Pavo had a guest. This individual had introduced himself to the valet as Signor Trento, an exporter of fruits, ostensibly seeking contracts for the purchase of the coming season's crops. The reader, however, will

recognize him as Count Lupis. Devilish as he was, the Count did not possess the Satanic prerogative of altogether concealing his identity. Had he been able to utterly transform his physical presence, the moral tone of his speech would have betrayed him.

The two men had dined together, and as they tested the best vintage of Etna and Marsala had talked of the yield of trees and vines and also of political movements—both freely denouncing soldiers, police, spies, and kings. This was in the hearing of the servants; but when these camerieri had withdrawn the topic changed.

Under the peculiarly quieting influence of mingled Manilla and Latakia tobacco, the gentlemen were speaking with such subdued voices that a hare hobbled across the terrace without taking fright.

“Signor Pavo,” said the Count, “your information regarding the old wine-press was incorrect. I relied upon it as the monk Raffaello reported it to me,—and I so reported it to General Clary. Our soldiers found nothing there. For several weeks they have watched it; but it is as deserted as a temple at Girgenti. The vat, they say, is full of stuff that might have been in Noah’s ark, had that house-boat rested on Etna instead of Ararat. Why, the door was so rotten that it fell off its hinges when they opened it. Now, let me be plain, Signor Pavo. I cannot credit you with having been mistaken in this matter; for it is well known to the police that you were a member of the squadra, and, of course, were perfectly familiar with the place where these carrion birds nested. An attempt to deceive me, Signore, would be a fatal mis-play on your part. You must see that.”

Signor Pavo was thunderstruck at the insinuation of his treachery, for he had not attended the last few meetings of the squadra. He could only asseverate his statement that from personal knowledge the wine-press had

been, until a few days past, the rendezvous of the insurgents. He, therefore, repelled with some vehemence his visitor's attack upon his fidelity to his new masters.

"Some one on your side, Conte, has betrayed your raid. You have traitors in your own camp. You should look nearer home before throwing stones at others."

"Perhaps!" replied the Count, with a shrug of the shoulders. "No doubt, Signor Pavo," he added in a drawing tone, "no doubt there are traitors on our side also."

The Count was, however, too good a diplomat to offend his host, and continued quite suavely,—“But the place, I am informed, bore no signs of ever having been used for the storing of arms.”

“Ah, Conte, you don't know the wiliness of Sicilians. They cover their tracks as shrewdly as woodcocks conceal their brooding places in a thicket.”

There was so much sincerity in Pavo's manner that Count Lupis, who in the diversity of his dealings with men had become expert in judging their faces, replied,—

“No, Signore! No! I have no thought of your playing a double game. I mentioned the matter only that we may both be cautious, since the very flies seem to carry news on their tongues. Let me, my dear Signore, revert to a different matter. How are you getting along with Signorina Menardi? She's a rare catch. The dower ought to be a handsome one, to say nothing about the whole estate coming to your hands.”

The Count laughed gaily as he said this, grasping the knee of his comrade. Notwithstanding that his fingers had touched the funny bone in Pavo's leg, that individual was not inclined to be correspondingly mirthful.

“I don't seem to be much nearer the dower for all my love-making,” said Pavo.

“I can't understand that,” replied the Count. “A

man of your goodly parts ought to get the hand of any woman he wants. If you can't excite her love for you, there are other considerations that she might be made to appreciate. Love! Nonsense! Women ought not to play with that sentiment. It is dangerous for them, and troublesome for men. You see, love unfits a woman for practical life. It is the cause of nine-tenths of the marital unhappiness there is in the world. Without it there would be no jealousies, no women weeping themselves sick because their husbands are fond of some other men's wives. Marriage is a matter either of duty or of interest; or both, since one's interest is one's duty. Now if a woman must love, say I, let her love her brother whom God gave her, and not some man the priest gives her in the Sixth Sacrament. And right here, Pavo, I have something to suggest to you. The Signorina, of course, is in great anxiety for her brother."

"Yes, she refuses to talk about marriage or anything else until his release, so I am told," said Pavo.

"Good!" chuckled the Count. "That love for her brother may be made to throw her into your arms. Don't you see it?"

"How?" eagerly asked Pavo. "I have imagined that he was the obstacle."

"Why, my dear fellow, it is as easy as Providence. Listen! I am now getting up legal papers for reinstating you in the favour of the Court. The papers promise on the part of the government the pardon of all political offenses. This grace of the King may be made to include the members of your family."

"But," interjected Pavo, "I have no family."

"True!" said Lupis. "But if you marry a Menardi that family will be sufficiently connected with you to be regarded as your own. At least it can be so interpreted; that is, if we wish it to be so."

Pavo leaned forward in eagerness to hear the plausible reasoning.

"But," he asked, "would the Courts so interpret the paper?"

"The Courts, Pavo? What care we for Courts? We have to deal only with a Court, the royal Court of Naples. Am not I its full representative in these matters? What terms I make with you, these the King makes. If you do not believe that, Signor Pavo, you should not deal with me. I have but to declare my interpretation of my own document. There doesn't live the man in the Two Sicilies that would dare to question my word. There is Maniscalco in Palermo; much as he is interested in shooting Menardi, he is more interested in keeping his official head on his own shoulders, and he knows that with a word I can decapitate him. So it is with Prince Fitalia at Catania, General Clary, and the batch of them. So cheer up, my good fellow. I will draw up the papers. You may say to that obdurate Signorina something like this,—'If Giuseppe is my brother-in-law he is out of prison. If he is not my brother-in-law he remains.' Tell her of an old Sicilian who has been forty years in the dungeon at Naples. To-day one would not know him from a heap of rags, except that he moves now and then. Tell her about the thirteen fellows we shot against the wall in Palermo only a week or two ago. She would marry a mummy to get her brother out of that menace."

"You are complimentary," said Pavo. "But I see your plan, and I don't see how it can fail. How can I repay you for your good offices, Count?"

"Repay me? No, no, Pavo! Signor Menardi will do that. And above all I shall have the favour of La Signorina for giving back her brother, and such a man as you for a husband. Don't be jealous, my dear fellow. I will not take advantage of her affection for me."

Pavo laughed heartily, and answered,—“You will have also the benediction of the purest, whitest, iciest saint that ever escaped melting—Madre Menardi.”

The Count took his leave. As his horse jogged down the steep roadway he whistled, then sang, and at length, laughing, held this colloquy with himself,—

“Between the two schemes Giuseppe Menardi is apt to get out of prison. Let’s see! The monk Raffaello will work his game at once. Suppose Menardi accepts, and takes the oath of allegiance to the King! Humph! that would upset the Pavo business, wouldn’t it? But no matter. I can then substitute Menardi for Pavo as the King’s new appointee in this district. Menardi is worth fifty Pavos to the King, and—well, he is worth more to me. Pavo carries no weight either in person or in purse. Menardi does in both respects. I can drop Pavo with advantage. That note of indebtedness which the fool has issued is in my hands. I wonder if his old dilapidated villa is worth the face of it anyhow? So my first prayer is that the Saints will help the monk. If they don’t, then we will take up with a Pavo. There is some danger in that scheme, though. Let’s see!”

The Count let his horse stop, as if the beast were enamoured of the magnificent view; to which, however, the rider was oblivious, for he did not raise his eyes from a stone in the wayside wall, which he kicked with his boot. At length he found a clue to his tangled thoughts, and moved on.

“Let’s see! If Menardi gets out of prison as Pavo’s relative, and without taking an oath of loyalty, what then? Why, he will be the same insurrectionary nuisance that he was before. But we will rearrest him. The pardon I shall draw up will relate to only past offenses, and we may clap him into prison again the day after the wedding. So far, so good!

“But hold! There’s one other possibility. It is possible—barely possible—that the insurrection may succeed after all. If the men from the north take a hand in it—that devil of a trickster Cavour, and that devil of a fighter Garibaldi—it may be all up with Naples. True, we have a hundred thousand soldiers—mostly cowards, hirelings; no decent generals; no funds except what we pick from the people who are already plucked to the skin. If a change should come, Menardi will be a trump card for me. He must be made to think that I have got him out of prison. Yes, I will make ‘friends of the mammon of unrighteousness.’ That’s as good gospel as any I remember.

“There may be some flaws in the threads I am weaving,” he continued, in the council he was holding with himself. “But I can deal with them when I come to them. Count Eugene Lupis has never been worsted yet in a game of this sort, per Giove! Eugene Lupis! ‘Gene,’ the street boys called me once. Then ‘Signor Lupis.’ So they titled me when I was a gabello, and taxed the land owners and made them sell out to such borghese as I pleased. Then I became ‘Cavaliere Lupis,’ and was so ushered into the Grand Salons of Palermo. Now, I am ‘my dear Conte’ as the King calls me. And next—Giove twist my neck for that of his wife’s peacock, if I am not made Governor General of the Island of Sicily. The title I shall take will be ——”

A bullet whistling close to his head interrupted the Count’s premeditations. He put spurs to his horse, and was soon on the more open road leading to Catania, quite satisfied that he was still enough alive to wear any title, “Conte,” “Cavaliere,” “Signore,” or even plain “Gene Lupis.”

XXXI

HONOUR BETTER THAN LIFE

WHEN Giuseppe Menardi was thrust into the Vicaria prison at Palermo he was confined in a cell several flights of stairs from the ground. The cell was oblong, the ceiling low, resembling an enlarged coffin : and thus a poetic adaptation to the fears of most of the unhappy wretches who had inhabited it. A heavy chain on his ankles prevented Giuseppe from taking more than half a step at a time, and the weight would have made him disinclined to stand, were it not that the bag of straw, called a bed, made him equally averse to lying down.

The first day of his incarceration was spent in studying his new environment. It was not a large field, but engrossingly suggestive. The walls reminded Giuseppe of a guest-book in which are inscribed names and sentiments of visitors ; for the dirty white surface of said walls was covered over with writing expressive of the regard which the various inmates had for their entertainers. These tributes were generally curses. Notwithstanding somewhat of prejudice, occasioned perhaps by the torture that had twisted the fingers and limbs of the writers partially out of joint, these maledictions were no more damnatory of the rulers of Sicily than the remarks of historians generally have been. Here and there on the walls obscene drawings and crosses were confused. Quotations from Dante and refrains of the vilest songs of the street were intermingled and partly erased one another. Had Giuseppe been a student like his brother Paolo,

those walls would have reminded him of an ancient palimpsest,—parchments on which one writing overlays another. Indeed, they were more expressive of the real life of souls than many a manuscript prepared with prayer and studied rhetoric in monastic cells.

Giuseppe tried to picture to himself the mass of crime and punishment that those four walls, which he could touch without moving his feet, had witnessed. He pitied the poor sinners, oftentimes over-tempted, caught unawares in the flames of their own passions, ignorant of themselves and of the social order of which they were the unfortunate members, badly born, and worse reared.

Then he thought with indignation of the many noble souls who had been unjustly incarcerated, through the malignity of personal enemies, through neglect of officials to consider evidence, through the persuasion of bribery, or through the egotism of tyranny which makes a so-called seat of justice but a crunching maw of cruelty.

From his scheme of religious faith, meagre and disjointed as it was, he had been accustomed to eliminate the doctrine of sin,—regarding the teaching of the Church on this subject as so much oil on the wheels of the gigantic ecclesiastical machinery by which it was turning into merchantable grist what was really the chaff of human weakness and folly. But there now flashed upon his mind a new view. He repeated to himself the words that Robespierre uttered when awaiting death in the prison of Paris, “If a hell did not exist it would behoove a just God to make one, at least for tyrants.”

Then his mind ranged further and deeper. He caught a little of that vision of humanity which the Christ must have had, taking in, as He did with His omniscience, the whole range of history, and fathoming the darkest depths of human motives. Giuseppe thought it was no wonder that the eyes of such a Being flashed with indignation

and wrath upon willful wrong-doers, and yet wept tears of blood over the weak, the misled, the over-tempted. He had never before felt himself a part of the corporate being called Humanity as he now did. He realized that he himself, as the present occupant of that cell, was only one of a chain-gang of sinners or sinned against who had passed down the generations under the eyes of the Christ. He knelt and ejaculated the prayer, "Good Lord, have mercy upon us miserable sinners!" He did this with an intelligence and fervour never inspired within him by the associations of an altar.

These meditations of the prisoner were interrupted by the jailer who thrust through a hole in the door a piece of black bread; then closed and barred the aperture.

Night fell. A few stars gleamed through the narrow slit window. Giuseppe felt himself a castaway on strange seas. He could take his bearings geographically, if not psychologically. There was the Great Dipper, with its lips always turned towards the North Star, betokening the unquenchable thirst of mankind to know upon what or upon whom it and all things depend.

The problem suggested by the stars made Giuseppe heavy-headed. He threw himself upon his heap of straw, and, in spite of the swarm of vermin which his movement excited into ferocious activity, he was soon asleep. But the many Queen Mabs that inhabited the refuse heap, called a bed, whispered into his ear horrid dreams. He thought his flesh was being pinched off in little pieces because he refused to give the names of fellow conspirators. Awakened by the pain, he found that the dream had a realistic suggestion, and flung from his face a rat. He stood up, or paced the cell, until wearied; then again crouched at bay in the corner, and waited for dawn to come. He was eating his breakfast of black bread, and skimming the winged and other intruders from the top of

his tin cup of water, when three volleys were heard, very similar to those at Porta San Georgio the day of his arrest.

“Some more poor devils or patriots gone to ask Santa Rosalia, the patron Saint of Palermo, if it is not about time to interfere in the name of justice and mercy,” muttered Giuseppe. “How soundly that Saint must sleep not to be awakened by the screaming woes of her city !”

He stretched himself to his full height that he might look down from the window upon the green earth, or at least upon the habitations of human beings still free. The aperture was too high for that. Only the clouds and distant Monte Pellegrino were within its view,—Monte Pellegrino, that gigantic rock rising abruptly from the eastern end of the Conca d’Oro, that golden shell in which the city lived and fattened like an oyster for the feasting of tyrants. Giuseppe wondered why the old mountain did not in sheer indignation hurl itself down to the plain, and crush the wickedness upon which it had been looking for centuries.

What convulsions of the people Monte Pellegrino had witnessed ! Thousands of years ago the early Sikels fought for liberty against the Greeks ; then both against the Carthaginians ; and later, all against the Romans. Then this composite people of the Roman Empire was subdued by Goths from the North, and they in turn by the new Romans from the Bosphorus. Next the scimitars of the Saracens mowed all these out of existence, and in turn they themselves were rooted up by the Christian Normans. Then the French became masters, until the “*Sicilian Vespers*” drowned them in a sudden freshet of blood. Spaniards succeeded French, and ultimately the Neapolitan Bourbons.

Giuseppe by his prison window had time to think of this history of his Island, and muttered, “*Tyrannies, cruelties, all of them !* But the people lived through

these, and had always the same detestation for, and the same struggle against, injustice and enslavement. So the vines come up through the lava of Etna! But, alas! not until the centuries have triturerated the lava, and sown it with the seeds of many a futile harvest. Will the encrusting death never cease to flow? God knows. Does He? Is there any God that cares?"

Giuseppe gave way to utter despondency. "What is patriotism? Why are men possessed by a passion for betterment, for liberty, for reform? Why this sentiment of human rights that leads men to vain sacrifice by throwing themselves beneath the wheels of Juggernaut in attempts to impede it?"

Several days passed in such melancholy broodings. The meagre food left him physically weak. The noxious vermin frayed his nerves. The companionless solitude forced him to eat his own heart, or at least such remains of a heart as were left in him.

Now the devil knew when to tempt the Great Master,—it was when He was utterly reduced in physical condition by hunger and solitude, for then the will force is at its ebb. Giuseppe suffered a somewhat similar untimely assault. The devil appeared to him also.

This apparition of the Tempter—let us not do his Satanic Majesty injustice—was in his reputed fine form as an "angel of light." In other words, Satan appeared to Giuseppe Menardi in the shape of Fra Raffaello of San Benedetto.

Giuseppe thought he knew the occasion of the Frate's visit, and arranged his thoughts to receive submissively the lessons and consolations preparatory for death; for he was confident that nothing less significant than his own coming execution would have led the holy man to visit him; for on all lesser occasions the monk had paid him slack attention.

Giuseppe did not rebel at his expected fate. There is a place near the bottom of the sea where a human body neither sinks nor rises. Giuseppe had gone down to that stratum of equipoise in his hopes and fears. He was indifferent. He said to himself,—“The sooner it is over the better. And it is well that one familiar with my dear ones at home may be commissioned to take my last greetings to them.”

So he prepared himself with due solemnity for the monk's funereal entrance.

The Frate's greeting, however, disconcerted him. His manner was so joyous that it seemed to fit the flood of light that came with him through the open doorway.

“Ah, my dear Giuseppe,” he exclaimed, embracing him, “the angel that let San Pietro out of prison was scarcely happier in his mission than I am in mine to-day. Giuseppe Menardi,”—he almost shouted the words—“you may be a free man !”

Giuseppe was more stupefied than elated by the sudden change in his fortunes. He was like a miner who has been half asphyxiated by the atmosphere of the pit, and requires a little time before the lungs adapt themselves to the fresh air. At length he realized the situation, and his mind seized upon what to him was the only explanation of his being set at liberty ; although the selection of Raffaello to be the messenger puzzled him. He asked cautiously,—

“Has Garibaldi come ?”

“Ah, Giuseppe ! Giuseppe ! Away with delusion !” replied the monk. “Garibaldi will never come. The rebellion in which you have been engaged is crushed utterly, utterly. The just government of our King Francesco has been entirely restored throughout the Island. And His Majesty shows majesty indeed in his mercy. You are pardoned, Giuseppe ! Pardoned !”

The prisoner gazed for a moment at the face of his visitor, and read there something which his words had not fully expressed. He slowly asked,—

“And—on—what conditions does the King offer—my—I will not say pardon—my release from unjust imprisonment? Pardon is for criminals. I am no criminal, for no charge has been cited against me. The conditions of my release, Frate?”

“The simplest in the world, Giuseppe. You have but to subscribe to the oath of loyalty to our most gracious King Francesco. I have with me both the oath in blank, and the certificate of royal clemency.”

The monk began reading the latter,—

“Francesco Secondo, by the Grace of God King of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, of Gerusalemme, etc., Duke of Parma, Piacenzo, Castro, etc., etc., through the impulse of his own sovereign clemency deigns to ordain this 24th day of April in the year of our Lord 1860, that the capital sentence which has been pronounced by the Council of War of the Province of Palermo, now in state of siege, upon Giuseppe Menardi, son of the late Antonio Menardi, shall be suspended, provided nevertheless that said Giuseppe Menardi pledges loyalty to——”

Giuseppe held up his hand in protest against what had been read.

“Pledges loyalty!” cried he. “Loyalty to the tyrants who are strangling Sicily? Never, Fra Raffaello! Take that answer to those who sent you.”

“Then, Giuseppe,” cried the monk, overcome by genuine fright at the fate not only of his companion, but of himself as a Benedictine who was evidently known to his Superior as having been implicated in the arrest and condemnation of Menardi—“then, Giuseppe—O Santa Rosalia!—then you must die. You will be shot. Shot as a traitor! For heaven’s sake, Giuseppe, think! Think!”

The prisoner staggered back almost as if he had heard again the clicking of the guns of the file of soldiers at the Porta San Giorgio. His limbs trembled beneath him. He reached up and caught with his hands the bars of the window, to prevent his falling. The fresh air revived him. He would think. His eyes fell upon Monte Pellegrino. The long panorama of Sicily's wars for liberty passed again through his mind ; or rather, as under a flash of lightning at night all moving things seem to stand still, he saw that historic panorama condensed into a moveless picture ; its tyrants, its martyrs,—and himself as one of the myriads of patriots who had suffered uselessly in the long ages of fight. Why not yield ?

Then there came a reversion of feeling. He thought of his father dying in the streets of Messina. Uselessly ? No,—if there be such a thing as justice. No,—if there be a God of justice who observes human affairs. He thought of his fellow patriots, some of whom were doubtless in adjacent cells. To abandon them, to betray those to whom he had vowed blood for blood in the insurrection ? No. They to be led out and shot, and he—he—to live as a coward, who to keep breathing a few years longer denied his most sacred convictions, deserted his fellow compatriots, broke his oath to brave men ! No ! To be remembered as a renegade son of Antonio Menardi ! No ! He would die by torture on the rack sooner.

He turned towards the monk who stood, his face white as a ghost's, watching the prisoner. Giuseppe's eyes rested an instant upon the cross that hung from the monk's girdle. He advanced and touched the sacred symbol of martyrdom.

"Frate, you are a disciple of Christ. Tell me, did your Master save His life by fleeing from injustice ? Did He seek to escape by compromising with wrong ? By so much as a step did He swerve from the path of right

though it led Him to Calvary? What did He mean when He said that whosoever would not take up his cross and follow Him was not worthy the name of Christian?"

Raffaello raised both hands. Was it in silent protest at what he thought to be blasphemy? Or did he recognize some awful truth beneath his companion's words? He had heard how sometimes a victim at the stake will follow with his dying eyes those who have consigned him to his horrible fate. So he now shrank within himself at the strange gaze of Giuseppe which seemed to burn through him. He dropped his head upon his breast. Who had brought this young man to his grave? Raffaello's memory and conscience smote him. Braving execution, facing the death for which he, Raffaello, was responsible, this young man, irreligious, perhaps heretical, rather than do what to him was wrong, spurns the bribe of life. This was something as fine as the martyrdom of any Saint on the calendar. The idea forced itself in between the monk's accustomed thoughts. He saw the splendid fact, and for a moment his nobler sentiment recognized it. There were fires of personal manhood still left in him; fires not yet extinguished by the years during which he had practiced self-annihilation through absorption into a system. Now these fires burst out from their ashes—at least for an instant's flicker. Tears flooded his eyes. He gave way for once to a natural emotion. He put his hands upon Giuseppe's head, and said very humbly:

"My brother, my son, pardon me! Pardon me! Your forgiveness, Giuseppe, if—if —"

"Pardon you, Frate! How can that be? You have never done me wrong."

There was a sting in the young man's words—as if he had known all, and charged Raffaello with being

his murderer. That fire of manhood remaining in the monk flared luridly. Or was it the blush of a soul that for a moment sounds its deeper consciousness?

“Giuseppe,” said Raffaello after a long silence, “I will not take your answer to the King’s proposal to-day. You are hasty—unbalanced by passion. I can have the matter held in abeyance for a few days, and I will. Oh, Giuseppe, for your own sake, for your mother’s sake, for my sake, think again!”

The monk bowed himself from the cell.

FEMALE DIPLOMACY

GENERAL BIANCI and his daughter, La Signorina Vittoria, were walking up and down the shrub-lined path that ran through the villa grounds.

The general was in the habit of alluding to himself as "but a spavined old war-horse turned out to graze;" although others remarked that, for all that his knee-action was rather stiff, he still carried his plumes very well. There was, however, a disorder in the temper of the veteran that could not be accounted for solely by the unnerving effect of years. He had been made more and more disgruntled by the course of public events. From criticism of the incompetence of the generals in the field he had fallen into the habit of making disparaging remarks regarding the government at Naples. Of course, this was only when with his daughter, to whom he talked out his thoughts, and even his half-thoughts. In these colloquies Vittoria was his mentor, and often helped him complete his convictions.

The general was just saying,—“King Francesco is an utter weakling! A doll-baby who cries ‘Yes’ or ‘No,’ as his stepmother, the Austrian woman, pulls one ear or the other. He never consults grown men. There was more brain in one of old King Ferdinando’s gouty feet than in that royal youngster’s head. They called Ferdinando ‘Bomba’ because he bombarded the streets of Messina. Well! when he did it he did it, and was done

with it. Old Bomba had fifty thousand political prisoners in jail at one time. Maybe it wasn't good policy ; but he wasn't afraid to do it. There was only one thing that ever scared Bomba. It was that Red Devil, as they called Garibaldi eleven years ago. But our royal dawdler, Francesco, Bombino, doesn't know enough to be afraid of the Red Devil. He is now tempting him to pounce down on Sicily. I tell you, Vittoria, that if the Red Devil comes he will clean up the Island as fast as the real devil shovels sinners into hell-fire. I know him. I was with our Bourbon forces at Palestrina in '49. Dio mio ! if we weren't whipped by a handful of the red-shirted fiends. Of course, I wasn't in command. Mark my words ; King Francesco had better give the Islanders their independence rather than bring that panther down upon us. But the fool of a king doesn't see it."

Possibly the old general felt within him something of the "call of the blood," for, though on his father's side he was a Neapolitan, his mother had been a Sicilian. It is, however, equally possible that he felt somewhat the reversal of hereditary influence which often makes a daughter the mother of the father, especially when the man is aged and devotedly attached to his daughter, who happens to be quick-witted and strong-willed. General Bianci often called La Signorina a "downright rebel," although he little suspected the extent of her departure from her ancestral traditions.

"Babbo, I never like to think of our Captain Cataldo arresting Signor Menardi," said Vittoria as they walked.

"Tut ! Tut ! you are only a girl, and don't understand an officer's duty. As a military man he was compelled to do it."

"But, Babbo," insisted the daughter, "leave out the 'military.' The captain is a man, and as a man he should have let Menardi go free. And now to be arrested again

after he had won his liberty! Signor Menardi did it valiantly, too. He fought his way out of the very clutches of the police, so they say. And don't you remember, Babbo, that when he was Captain Cataldo's prisoner right here in our house he would not break his parole? He could have walked straight off; but he wouldn't do it. Why not? Why, partly because his escape would harm Cataldo's reputation. Now that's honour between man and man. I don't care a bit for your 'Military Necessity.'"

"Humph! You seem to be especially interested in Signor Menardi," grunted the old general.

"Why shouldn't I be, when my Babbo was interested in his mother? You have often told me that I inherited your good qualities, Babbo."

The general stroked his chin, and scrutinized the young woman's face, as she continued,—

"Yes, Babbo; ever since her son was here you have been talking of that charming girl, Signorina Agata Brignola. Now, Giuseppe Menardi is just as fine a fellow as his mother was charming. I know a man, Babbo, as well as you know a woman, don't I?"

"Humph!" repeated her father, stroking his chin more energetically, and even drawing it down until his mouth was gaping at her. "Humph! You like him?"

"Of course I do. I like everything that is fine and noble. That's one reason I like you, Babbo, and haven't accepted any other man for my lover."

The general most gallantly responded by kissing her forehead, and throwing his arm about her as they walked.

"I can tell you more, Babbo. Captain Cataldo was quite jealous of Signor Menardi."

"Nonsense, girl! What cause had Cataldo to be jealous? Menardi isn't in the service. You don't mean to say that that young shoulder-straps aspired to any espe-

cial favour from you, do you? From you—my daughter? A Cataldo look at a Bianci?”

“Oh, yes, Babbo! He once suggested that I might help make him your son-in-law, and heir to all these hills. Villa Bianci Cataldo! Wouldn't that look well on our gate-posts? Eh, Babbo?”

The general turned facing his daughter. He was speechless for a moment, then with his walking stick thrashed most wickedly at a bush.

“Dio mio! The imp! The scoundrel!”

“Oh, no, Babbo, he isn't. The captain showed good taste to fall in love with—with you and Villa Bianci.” As she said this she pulled his long mustache, and twisted a smile from his fierce countenance.

“But what had Menardi to do with Cataldo in that matter?” he asked, giving the bush another evidence of his state of mind.

“Oh, nothing at all, Babbo, except that when he was here as a prisoner I permitted Signor Menardi to kiss my hand; the captain saw it, and his eyes flashed fire.”

The general seemed dumbfounded. “My daughter allow a young man to do that?”

“Why not, Babbo? All the charming young Signorine used to allow you to do so when you were in your first flower of good looks and gallantry; or else, Babbo, I must believe you to be an idle boaster, like the other generals whose adventures I have heard over the wine at our table.”

The old general burst into laughter. “Yes, yes; that's all true. I was rather *débonair*. That's true.”

The flattery apparently deepened his affection. “After all,” said he, taking her hands into his own, “after all, they weren't any of them as handsome as you are.”

“What? Not even Signorina Brignola?”

“Oh, she was a beauty. But I never kissed her hand.

One might as well have tried to make love to a statue in the Duomo. . . . But tell me, figliuola mia, why do you like Signor Menardi ?”

“Because, Babbo, he likes you.”

“Likes me ?”

“Yes, and risked his life to save your reputation for loyalty to the government.”

“Dio mio ! My reputation ? What under heaven has he to do with my reputation ?”

“Why, Babbo, don't you see ? He might have escaped that night from our house. I asked him why he wouldn't. He said,—now listen, you dear old Babbo—he said, ‘Signorina Bianci, I am your father's guest. I'd rather be shot by Maniscalco than escape from this house. It might bring a shadow of suspicion on the general.’ Now that, Babbo, is the sort of man Signor Menardi is. Of course I like him. And I told him all the fine things I could think of, just to cheer him up when he might be going to be shot. And I didn't object a bit when he thanked me, and kissed my hand as he went away. And you don't either, Babbo.”

The old general folded his arms and stood a moment studying his daughter's face. He had evidently found a new feature in her make-up. He was scarcely surprised, for he had almost daily taken lessons in the novelties of her character. She was to him like an art gallery where every walk reveals unanticipated beauties. He was not, however, gifted with a vocabulary sufficiently expansive to express the variety of the sentiments his daughter awakened in him. So he confined himself to the other person involved.

“A damn fine fellow, that Menardi !”

Then, as if conscious that he was not doing full justice to the subject, he added : “A splendid fellow ! A loyal fellow !”

The word "loyal" was a favourite one with the general. He now hung on to it. "I don't care if he isn't loyal to our kinglet over in Naples. He was loyal to me,—loyal to me. Do you know, Vittoria, that all those little soldier upstarts at Palermo are jealous of me, and of my reputation? They circulated a story about Menardi being at my house, and criticized me for allowing a breach of discipline. Dio mio! if Menardi had really escaped, how they would have hounded me! And Menardi wouldn't take leg leave! Wouldn't bemean his host! That's superb. That's what I call loyalty. That's honour. Kings may come and go, but the dynasty of gentlemen goes on forever."

Vittoria seemed to catch the enthusiasm from her father, rather than to have inspired it in him. She fed the flame.

"Babbo, if Signor Menardi was loyal to you, aren't you going to be loyal to him? If he risked his life for your honour, are you going to let him die like a rat in the Vicaria?"

"Dio mio! What can I do? I am not commissioned with any authority nowadays."

"But, Babbo, the question is not one of commission, but of honour. Noblesse oblige!"

"Per Bacco, daughter, what a dilemma you are putting me into! A perfect cul-de-sac!"

"But, Babbo, you have often told me how you got the army out of a perfect cul-de-sac once. You can do it again for the man who risked his life to save your honour. That brain of yours is as fertile in expedients as it ever was. Besides, I'll help you."

"You?"

"Yes, I. Why not? I could dress as a monaca, and play the sister of charity. So!"—folding her hands as in prayer, and looking appealingly into his face. "Do

you imagine, Babbo, that any guard at the Vicaria would refuse to admit me if I looked like that ? ”

“ You shall do no such thing, you foolish girl. ”

“ But I will ; or something equally desperate—for my father’s honour, I will. ”

“ Per Dio ! I believe you would. But you shall not. ”

The general sat down on a bench by the side of the path. His face showed the sharp contention of his thoughts. His brows grew thicker with his pondering, and he twisted his mustache in keeping with his perplexity.

“ Now, Babbo, you are holding a council of war all by yourself. Something will come out of it, ” cried Vittoria, seating herself upon her father’s knee, and throwing her arms about his neck.

“ Oh, you women ! ” said the general, returning her fondness. “ I will think of any possible way of helping Menardi, if you will promise to do nothing yourself. This is a man’s business. ”

“ I will do nothing, Babbo, if you will promise to do something yourself before I do. But you must be quick about it. ”

“ I will think, figliula mia. But you women ! Oh, what scrapes you do get us into ! ”

“ Or out of, ” was her reply as they entered the house.

XXXIII

THE MONK'S PENANCE

A WEEK later Fra Raffaello revisited Giuseppe in his cell at the Vicaria. He hesitated a moment at the outer portal of the prison, apparently dreading the business before him ; then more resolutely, as if he had plucked courage from sheer desperation, he strode across the little paved court that separated the office of the chief warden from the heavy iron gate that barred the entrance to the various buildings devoted to giving criminals and unfortunate innocents a purgatorial foretaste.

“It's Menardi's last day, sure as there is a cloud over the sun,” said one guard to another. “That monk is Menardi's border-land ghost. He was here last week to shrieve him. Look at his face now. He is as solemn as a hangman in his black mask. Menardi will have to stand against the wall this time, or there is no omen in a father confessor's looks.”

Raffaello's appearance warranted this fatal prediction. His face, ordinarily rubicund, was now ashen-hued ; his whole visage elongated and narrowed as if from protracted grief or the preying of some disease. Both of these peculiarities were set off more strikingly by the black cowl in which his countenance was framed. His head was bent low ; his hands crossed upon his breast ; his steps as unsteady as if he were carrying upon his back the doomed man he was visiting.

“Cell Number Three Hundred and Forty-five,” he said with scarcely breath enough to make his words audible to the jailer at an inner door.

Pioneered by this individual he shuffled along the corridor and up the stairs until the great bolt was drawn at Number 345.

Giuseppe was haggard with the rigours of his confinement, yet met his visitor erect, proud, defiant of the fate he anticipated. The change in the appearance of the two men as they gazed into each other's faces was startling to both. Giuseppe was the first to speak.

"Fra Raffaello, I have given my life deliberately to my cause. You need not hesitate to tell me the worst. Speak plainly."

Raffaello knelt at Giuseppe's feet. "Giuseppe, your fate is still undetermined; but mine—mine is fixed—fixed—unless—unless you will save me."

"Yours?" cried the prisoner in amazement.

"I am a doomed man—doomed to hell—unless you, Giuseppe, whom I have wronged, will pardon me. Oh, my crime! My crime!"

"Your crime, Frate? I—I pardon you? You never harmed me, Fra Raffaello."

It flashed upon the prisoner that the monk had gone demented.

"Of what are you speaking? Stand up, Frate. Come here where what is left of God's daylight falls into this hole, and let me see your face. Your crime? I pardon you?"

He pushed back the cowl from the monk's head. "Tell me, Fra Raffaello, what do you mean?"

"Oh," cried the monk. "It was I—I that brought you here, Giuseppe. It was I that accused you to Prince Fitalia; and now God's curse has smitten me."

Giuseppe was confirmed in his conviction that the man had indeed gone clean out of his wits. There was but one thing for him to do,—let him tell his imagined story, and then show him its inconsistency.

But the story of the monk was too brief and too straightforward to allow disbelief in the listener. Raffaello narrated in rapid, broken sentences his denunciation of Giuseppe to the authorities, and how afterwards, smitten in conscience, he had secured from Count Lupis the writ of his conditional release.

“I was a Saul of Tarsus. I thought I was doing God’s service. Blind—deluded by my conceit, which I interpreted to be a divine prompting, I did it. I gave myself to the wretched work of informing against one whom I should have tried to save. It was my word, Giuseppe, my word that put you here ; and now only your word,—your word of pardon—can take this millstone from my neck. Giuseppe, pardon my sin against you ! For your own sake, for the sake of your mother, for my sake, for God’s sake—take the oath of loyalty to the King ! Then let us both escape—you from death, and I from this dreadful blood-guiltiness. Take the oath, Giuseppe ! Take the oath ! ”

As Giuseppe listened, his heart was at first full of hatred. “This man, my mother’s adviser, my brother’s spiritual guide, to whom we all gave our confidence as a messenger of God,—this man my would-be murderer ! ” He felt his fingers convulsively twitch as if without his further willing it they would throttle the hypocritical villain.

In a few moments this feeling gave place to one of utter contempt. “The murderer, how he cringes before himself, despised in his own eyes ! ”

Then, as he watched his visitor, contempt gave way to pity. “This man, now at least, is honest ; honest with me ; honest with God. He is his own executioner. He would, if he could, save me. Why should I, not save him ? ”

So tragically sad was the aspect of the monk that

Giuseppe felt his valiant resolution to brave death begin to waver. He put his hands upon the other's shoulders, and as he watched the agonizing features, was almost persuaded to yield.

"If I let myself be shot I can no longer serve the cause of Sicily. And, besides, the bullet that stops my heart will rankle in this man's heart so long as he lives. I am willing to die; but my death will make him my murderer. Have I a right to be his accomplice? But if I subscribe the oath I will save him as well as myself."

This impulse of Giuseppe was only momentary. It was checked by another. The wind may blow the ripples against the stream, but the downward current will bear them away. There flowed through Giuseppe Menardi's soul a current, a conviction formed years ago, and augmented by habit of thinking, until it had become a second nature to him,—his devotion to his country, his loyalty to brave men to whom he had given his oath to stand with them, in life or death, for the liberties of Sicily. It was to him as if he could see, through the stone walls, those fellow victims in neighbouring cells; their hands stretched towards him; their lips about to hiss the word "Traitor!"

Then the words came from his lips, very slowly, as if each one were weighted with the weight of his soul,—

"Fra Raffaello, I cannot take the oath of allegiance to your King. It is because I have another oath; one more sacred to me,—an oath to my fellow Sicilians, some of whom are lodged with me in this hell of the Vicaria; some of whom have already been killed by the King's order. Their souls are watching mine this moment. They bid me be firm."

Raffaello groaned as he shook his bowed head.

Giuseppe continued,—“But, Fra Raffaello, one thing I can do. I remember your Master, and my Master—for

I trust that I, too, am a Christian—I remember how He forgave those who had brought Him to the cross. 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' My brother, you knew not what you were doing when you became an informer against me. This you have confessed. Fra Raffaello, I forgive you. It is all that I can do. You have my dying pledge of pardon for anything you may have done against me. God must do the rest for us both."

He took the staggering form of the monk into his arms. He kissed him upon the forehead.

"Fra Raffaello, I forgive you, as I myself hope to be forgiven. That must suffice."

A strange light came into the monk's eyes. It told of unspeakable gratitude. But quickly his eyes filled with tears.

"Giuseppe, you are Christlike. You have learned more than I of what it is to be a Christian. Where did you learn it? Where?"

"I learned it," replied the prisoner, "from the Gospel taught me by Holy Church; from long thinking about it as I wandered over our hills, and tried to look through the eyes of the Christ upon the sufferings of our poor Sicilian people; by seeking to penetrate the meaning of our faith and duty as they lie beneath the creeds and forms of our religion. In this cell, Fra Raffaello, I have seen the Christ, perhaps as clearly as you have seen Him in your cell at San Benedetto. You thought to serve Him in the forms of your religious devotion. I thought to serve Him by serving the poor people who are so bruised and crushed; whose blood, it seems to me, must be the very tears of God, such as He once shed over the wretched streets and hovels of Jerusalem. We both of us, Frate, thought that we were doing God's service. May He forgive us if we have made a mistake."

The two men remained a long time silent. At length the monk spoke,—

“Giuseppe, I too have made a vow. In my cell at San Benedetto I made it. One night I sat by my window. The load of my sin against you was crushing me. I thought I heard a voice that came through the still air. It said ‘Life for Life.’ Then, before the sleeping heavens and the listening Saints, I made my vow. It was this: If Giuseppe Menardi refuses to escape by taking the oath of allegiance to the King, then I will give life for life,—my life for his. That vow, Giuseppe, I must keep. That alone can be my atonement as I hope in the Great Atonement. Help me keep my vow, Giuseppe. Take this cowl, this cassock, these sandals, and pass out. I will remain here.”

The monk stood with one hand raised in commingled entreaty and command.

“Take them, Giuseppe, and live. There is no other way of peace for my soul. Take them, Giuseppe. I belong in this cell. It is life for life. Take them.”

Giuseppe stood with folded arms gazing at this vicarious sacrifice. He mused,—

“What strange currents run through a human spirit! Deeper are they than the currents that move through the ocean. This man yesterday was my would-be murderer, vicious, cowardly. To-day he is a hero, a saint. But no; yesterday he was brave, too; only he mistook his battle-field. A Raffaello, indeed! What if, like his archangel patron, he had drawn his sword in the clear azure of some holy fight, instead of in the murk and tangle of his medieval casuistry! God help us both! We know not the mettle of our own spirits. But he shall not outdo me in magnanimity. What is a life anyway? A few pulse beats more or less. Why count them?”

Giuseppe with his own hands retied the rope girdle

that the monk had unloosed. "Frate, you are a better Christian than I. I only forgave you in Christ's name. That was an easy thing for a dying man to do. But you have offered life for life. That is wholly Christlike. But I cannot take your sacrifice. I must not crucify you."

They were suddenly interrupted. The jailer opened the cell door.

"Frate, your time is up. Retire!"

Seeing that the monk made no motion of going, the official entered the cell, and courteously, yet resistlessly, conducted him without.

The jailer led Raffaello through the corridor, across the court, and bowed him reverently out of the prison gate into the open piazza.

When he returned the chief warden beckoned the jailer. "Tomasso, you had better search the cell of Menardi. Maniscalco sends that order. A brother of Menardi belongs to that same Order of San Benedetto at Catania. Half the monks here in Palermo are traitors, like those of the Gancia. See that this fellow has left nothing in the way of weapon or tool with Menardi."

XXXIV

SINS COME HOME TO ROOST

RAFFAELLO had scarcely gone when General Bianci rode through the Piazza Ucciardoni in Palermo, and dismounted at the Vicaria prison. He was admitted at the great iron gateway, and conducted to the office of the chief warden.

“Ah, General Bianci! To what am I indebted for the honour of this visit?” said the warden. “I have not seen you looking so well and sprightly since our campaigning in the North.”

“I will explain my visit if we may retire to your private office, Colonel Brisco.”

When they were seated in a small room adjacent to the main office the general said, “Colonel Brisco, I have not met you since that unfortunate affair at Venice.”

Brisco coloured slightly at the reference, but covered any embarrassment with a compliment to his visitor. “Yes, it was an unfortunate affair, general. But your fair-mindedness and quick judgment in grasping the real facts of the case exonerated me from that dastardly accusation. I owe you much, general.”

“Humph!” grunted the old man. “I agree with you, colonel. I think you are under obligation to me,—more, perhaps, than you know. I want to put you under deeper obligation. There is no virtue better than gratitude,—so the Bishop used to say when I gave him a tip for his blessing.”

The general pulled hard on his mustache, knitted his brows, and gazed ominously at the ceiling. He suddenly dropped his eyes to the range of the warden’s face, who

shrank as if he had been called to look into the muzzles of a double-barrelled pistol.

"Let me come to the point," said Bianci, shutting one eye as if taking sight with the other. "I have in my possession, Colonel Brisco, some evidence that was not known at the time of your court martial. Indeed, I have had it for some years."

The warden rose, and turned the key in the door-lock. Then he exploded with rage.

"They are damned lies, General Bianci."

"Ah, then you know to what I refer? That saves me the unpleasant necessity of repeating it," said the general, touching together the forefingers of his two hands. "Well, if the evidence had been presented to the Court I am sure that the decision would have been different. Count Lupis,—Count? Pshaw! Then only Signor Lupis.—Humph! Well, Lupis has since let slip something of the plot that existed between you. He didn't intend to betray you. He did it inadvertently. He is a sharp one, though he sometimes gets his sword by the blade instead of by the handle."

"The Count is a villain, a liar," shouted Brisco.

"Oh, I wouldn't say that, colonel. It isn't grateful. You owe your position here to him. Besides, if I should simply intimate to the Count that I hold certain papers, he would be compelled for his own protection to denounce you. Just now that scoundrel has influence at Naples that you ought not to antagonize. If you do, Lupis will see that you are put further into the Vicaria than your present quarters."

The warden writhed under the general's fixed gaze. No snake ever more gladly shed his old skin than this man would have crawled out of his at that moment.

"And you, General Bianci, are going to inform Lupis?"

"That depends, colonel. Please be cool. I happen just now to be less of a friend to Lupis than I am to yourself. I am disposed to think that he was the more guilty of you two. As his name indicates he was the wolf. You were only a fox in making that raid on the army funds. Mighty shrewd fox, I confess, in covering your tracks."

The men watched each other a moment in silence. The general resumed: "Colonel, you and I are both out of the military service now. I am under no obligation to bring the matter up for rehearing, and I am disposed to be charitable."

"And you will not?" The warden's face betrayed abject entreaty.

"Well," drawled the general, "that, as I said, depends."

"Upon what?"

"Upon your doing something that will be a sort of satisfaction to my sense of justice. I suppose that I really ought to submit the new evidence to the authorities. But I hate to hurt you, colonel, and will not—that is, if you will help me make a sort of atonement to my conscience for not doing so."

"What atonement?" eagerly asked the victim.

"You swear that you will make it?"

"If possible. If possible."

"Well, let's see!" said Bianci, stroking his chin.

"The best way to merit mercy for one's faults is not to whine about them like a devil who would become a monk, but to show mercy to somebody else. Now you have got under your keys somewhere in the Vicaria a fellow in whom I am personally interested. If you can bring about his escape from your clutches, you may escape from mine. Eh! You know the prisoner Menardi."

"There is such a man here."

"Well, then, to come right to the point, his life for yours. Do you understand?"

The colonel groaned. "That will be a difficult thing to accomplish, general. Maniscalco is keeping a strict watch here. He has given especially close orders about this Menardi. I don't see how it can be done."

"Nor I," replied the general. "Nor do I care to see. How you do it isn't my problem. It's yours. But I am sure that the man who slipped us so shrewdly at Venice can let Menardi slip too. You know that when I was in command, I was never in the habit of telling my subalterns how to do what I told them to do. I just gave the order that it should be done. Now about Menardi, I don't propose to know anything about his getting out of this den. That is your business. There will be an empty saddle outside Porta Macqueda between twelve and one to-night. If you will put Menardi into it you will hear no more from me about the Venice affair. If not, Colonel Brisco, you had better go hang yourself. You understand? I think you know me. No, no, not another word. I have an engagement elsewhere."

General Bianci turned the key in the lock, and was gone.

The warden sat a long time in the little back office, studying the cracks in the wall. His eye fell upon a spider's web in the corner of the ceiling where a fly was struggling to free himself. He rose and broke the web. He then sat down again to think. For a half hour he puzzled over his problem. At length he brought his hand down upon his knee.

"I have it," said he to himself. "I'll ride Menardi out of the Vicaria on the back of that monk from San Benedetto, or something that will look like him. Maniscalco already suspects the Frate. I'll turn the suspicion into certainty, at least in his mind."

Colonel Brisco called out for Tomasso, the jailer in charge of the ward in which Giuseppe was confined.

"Tomasso, did you search cell 345 after that monk went out?"

"I did, colonel. The monk left nothing there."

"You are sure?"

"Perfectly; I examined everything; even stripped the prisoner. If there ever was a holy monk he who confessed 345 is one. I know them. My brother is a Frate, a Cappuccino. The Benedettini are just as good. I'd trust Fra Raffaello with the keys of the Vicaria, just as I'd trust him with my soul."

"Then I'll trust your judgment of him, Tomasso," replied the warden. "I have been particular about him because he is coming again to-night. He evidently thinks Menardi to be *in articulo morte* and wants to shrieve him with the last rites. You will see that he comes and stays as long as he wants to. But when he goes out, Tomasso, I want you to go with him, and see that he leaves the city. Holy man that he is, Menardi will have had enough of him. Walk the Frate to Porta Macqueda, and leave him outside the gate."

"It shall be done," replied Tomasso, touching his forehead. "But Colonel Brisco, he may object to going out of the city. Shall I take a guard?"

"Oh, I think that will not be necessary. Tell him that all monks who don't belong to the conventos in Palermo have been ordered away. He will go. Of course, if he resists, use force."

"I understand," said Tomasso, again touching his forehead, and leaving the office.

When the jailer had gone, Colonel Brisco opened a closet which was well stored with all sorts of garments; coarse blouses of contadini and artisans, robes of priests, uniforms of officers and soldiers. There were also boxes

containing false hair, mustaches, whiskers, and every article used by detectives for their various disguises. He selected a black cowl and frock, and laid them one side.

"That's the very one that Petrino wore when he wormed information out of Signora Aroldi, and so got evidence to convict her husband. I'll put it to a better use in getting myself out of old Bianci's grip. The monk? I needn't care about what happens to him. They are useless fellows anyway. Besides, his piety ought to sustain him if he gets into trouble. What's piety good for but to help a man grin and bear what he can't avoid? Having no piety of my own, I'll appropriate the monk's, and climb out of this miserable hole Bianci has got me into."

It was rather late that night when a Benedettino walked across the open court and appeared at the corridor leading to cell Number 345. Tomasso walked reverently beside the bowed form of the "holy man," unbarred the cell door, and paced the corridor until he reappeared.

It was twenty-three of the clock, the hour before midnight, when the monk emerged. He folded his hands upon his breast and nodded to the jailer. Tomasso glanced into the cell before closing the door. He saw a form stretched upon the cot, with the ragged prison blanket drawn over it, the hands touching each other at the chin as if the man were in prayer. As he accompanied the monk he noticed,—and had occasion to think of it afterwards—that he kept the cowl very close about his head, that his form was more bent than when he entered the cell, and that he faltered, almost staggered in his steps.

Tomasso felt a real compassion for his companion, and thought to himself,—“It must be sad work shrieving a dying man. I'd as soon be a hangman. Hangmen don't have to talk to the victim; only slip the black bag over his head, and then draw the bolt. The devil does all the

rest. But to sit down for an hour and look into the face of a man, who is going to turn ghost, and talk to him about his body that the worms are going to eat, and about his soul being scorched in Purgatory, and to mumble prayers over him—that—that would make my teeth fall out. I couldn't do that. No, I have got a better job than my brother Francesco, the Cappuccino, has got. I'll stick to my own."

He walked away with the Benedettino,—talking as they went.

"Sorry for you, Frate. I've got to take you out of the city. The chief of police says there are enough Padri and Frati of one sort and another in Palermo to take care of all the prisoners he is going to hang and shoot. Porta Macqueda is the nearest gate."

"As God wills!" replied a husky voice that scarcely made itself heard through the monk's hood.

At Porta Macqueda Tomasso gave the sentinel the watchword according to the warden's instruction, and the two men passed around the double barricade.

"Your Benedicite, Frate," said Tomasso, bowing his head to receive it.

"Pax vobiscum!" replied his companion, touching Tomasso's forehead with two fingers.

"Grazie, Frate!"

The jailer returned by the barricades, leaving Giuseppe Menardi on the roadway leading to the open country.

The clock of the Duomo had just sounded midnight when two horses came down the road. The rider of one of them dismounted. Giuseppe stripped off the monk's cowl and frock. An ordinary priest's hat and cassock were substituted. Only with assistance could he mount into the saddle. "Is the Padre unaccustomed to ride, or ill?" asked a passer-by.

Two hours later Giuseppe was resting, utterly exhausted, in the chamber at Villa Bianci which he had occupied a month before. He did not close his eyes, however, until he had kissed a fair hand that was laid upon his forehead, and heard the sweetest of commands to go to sleep.

“Thank God!” said Signorina Vittoria.

“And you!” was the response. “Buona Notte!”

When Tomasso made his usual rounds the following morning he was amazed to find cell Number 345 empty. He excitedly reported it to the warden. Colonel Brisco greeted the news with a volley of curses, supplemented by an ink-stand which he hurled at the jailer’s head.

“You’ll hang for this, Tomassó. You traitor! In league with the monk, eh? You’d trust him with the keys as you would trust him with your soul, would you? And you did both, you perjured brute. I tell you that not all the monk’s prayers will catch up with the devil who will have your soul under his arm before another day.”

The warden rang the bell. Guards came quickly.

“Away with Tomasso! Put him in irons. Put him to the torture. Wring his tongue out but that you get his full confession. Per Giuda Iscariote! This is the most damnable treachery I ever heard of. And that hypocrite of a monk! Diavolo! Maniscalco should have known better than to give him a pass into the prison. To shrieve a prisoner? Bah! And that prisoner a man who had once before tricked the chief out of his very eyelashes! Luigi, go to the Pretoria and inform the chief. Advise him to send men instantly on the road to Catania, and overtake the monk. Be quick about it.”

Colonel Brisco was so good an actor that he seemed about to shed his brass buttons in the vehemence of his simulated rage.

A SISTER'S SACRIFICE

THE news of the swift suppression of the uprising in Palermo on the fourth of April, after the affair at the Convento della Gancia, had floated like a cloud of direst omen over the entire Island. The patriots with sickened hearts saw their great hope deferred:—for how long? Another generation, perhaps. They could bequeath to their children the memory of another “lost cause”; but it was a cause without many heroes, with no astute leaders, with nothing in either its planning or execution to stimulate another attempt at Sicilian liberty. Men like old Fazio, the captain of the Etnean squadra, shook their heads, and thought of the thousands of brave fighters and martyrs of '48 and '49, and of the year and a half during which they excited the applause of the world for their glorious endeavour. But this fiasco at Palermo!

The time-servers—always the crowd that follows with loudest shouting any movement that promises quick success—remembered, not their enthusiasm of yesterday, but their doubt of the day before; and masked their present timidity by reminding their neighbours of their past sagacity, saying, “I told you so.”

The loyalists, on the other hand, were elated, and from many a villa where it had not been seen for years floated the flag of Naples. Bourbon soldiers were welcomed at houses which had hitherto been closed to them from fear of popular hatred.

Some persons of prominence who had taken part in the patriotic movement now openly deserted it, and turned

state's evidence against their former partisans, eager to compound their first treason by a second.

Signor Roberto Pavo was among these latter. He openly proclaimed his loyalty to Naples, and was rewarded by a detachment of soldiers being quartered upon his estate to guard it from depredations, and his person from being assaulted by the infuriated populace he had betrayed.

One day, a military officer, quite bedazzled with insignia of rank, attended Pavo as he visited the Menardi home. With much show of courtesy, not to say obeisance, this officer parted with him at the terrace before the entrance.

The Menardi family, despairing for the life of Giuseppe, and facing the possible confiscation of their estate, had secluded themselves from their neighbours; but, upon Pavo's announcing that he had news from Palermo, he was eagerly received by the mother and daughter.

The reader will readily surmise the nature of the interview. Signor Pavo somewhat pompously read to them the royal document granting immunity to him and to his family, and commending them to the protection of all the King's representatives in the Island.

To the queries of Agata and Elena as to how this good fortune that had fallen to Pavo could affect the Menardis, Roberto produced a letter from Count Lupis interpreting the royal document to include in the term "family" certain lateral lines of consanguinity, such as sons-in-law, brothers-in-law, cousins, nephews, all kinsmen who had not been actually taken with arms in their hands, or who were not under specific charge of having murdered the King's servants.

"If Signora Menardi will claim me as her son," said Pavo, smiling most persuasively in the direction where Elena was sitting, but not quite daring to seek her eyes,

—“then, then I can claim Giuseppe as my brother. Our love for each other,—Giuseppe and I,—has always been intimate and sincere ; and I am sure that I have never spared anything, even to the risk of my life, for the happiness of Signorina Elena,—and never will.”

Agata turned most maternally upon the visitor. Elena's face was in deathly pallor. Her head drooped an instant. Then she rose, and spasmodically stretching out her arms—whether to reject or to embrace, one could not have determined from the action itself—she fell fainting to the floor.

Help was summoned. In the hysteria that seized upon all no one knew how to minister to her. Pavo, pushing them aside, himself lifted the rigid form, and placed it upon the wicker lounge.

Elena opened her eyes. A glance at the face bending closely down over hers seemed to produce a convulsive contraction of her muscles, as if she shrank from the vision, and would hide herself within herself from some dreaded invasion of her personality.

From the doorway of the room there came suddenly a shrieking voice, suggesting that of some wild animal whose den had been invaded. Lucia sprang to Elena's side.

“Away, Signore ! Away ! Don't you see ? Can't you see ? You are killing her !”

She pushed Pavo back with as little ceremony as if he had been a piece of furniture. Signora Agata stared at the girl. There was something about her presumption of familiarity with Signor Pavo that puzzled the matron, especially when Lucia added,—“This is no place for you.”

Then, as if fearful lest her words might be too personally interpreted by others, she added, “It is no place for men.”

Signor Pavo went out. Mother Agata rose from beside Elena where she knelt, and followed Pavo to the great open hallway, or semi-court, leading to the terrace.

"I cannot let you go, Signore, my dear Roberto—for such I may surely call you—without expressing my thanks. I beg of you, do not lay over-stress upon Elena's manner. She is young, and does not know herself yet. But a little rest and counsel which I shall give her will lead her to be reasonable and grateful. Gesù bless you, Roberto! I give you all that is meant by a mother's blessing."

Agata imprinted a kiss upon Roberto's forehead. He blushed. Was that blush due, as Agata thought, to his rare modesty which disowned the merit of such praise? Or was it from a sense of shame at his conscious duplicity?—Something that floated to the surface from the soiled depths of his nature?

Agata retired to her own chamber. She knelt and blessed Sant' Agata, her protector and monitor in all good ways; thanked her for the agency of Roberto in the terrible crisis of her affairs; besought the all-potent influence of her prayers for the health of Elena, and for the speedy restoration of Giuseppe to liberty and to—a better mind. Thus, prepared for any illumination the Saint might send her, she folded her hands and waited.

But, being practical as well as pious, she tried to think out for herself how things would probably go. Elena well married; the estate protected by royal grace from the result of Giuseppe's folly; Giuseppe himself taught a needed lesson by his imprisonment; Paolo safely emparadised at Catania,—she could scarcely pray for more, except her translation to that heavenly country where one has the enjoyments without the hazards that beset souls in this world. She thus set her mind to watch the terrestrial underside of the tapestry the angels were work-

ing, having in her soul no doubt of the perfection of the pattern as it would one day be seen from the celestial standpoint.

Meanwhile, however, the threads of that tapestry as seen from the underside were becoming strangely knotted and tangled.

When Agata and Signor Pavo had left the room, Elena turned to Lucia,—

“Oh, Lucia, why did you ever tell me about this man, how wicked he is? If I had not known what you said I might have married him, and then Giuseppe, my Peppino, would be saved!”

She buried her head in the pillow, moaning, “But now they will kill him! Kill Giuseppe! Why? Because I—I will not save him!”

There followed a silence broken only by her groans. An occasional tremor ran through her body, which not even the caressing hand of Lucia stroking her hair and her forehead could assuage.

Suddenly Elena raised herself, and would have flung herself off the couch had not the wary Lucia caught her. She raised her arms above her head, and with frantic determination exclaimed,—

“But I will save Giuseppe! I will save him! I give my life for his! Oh, if he can only live, I will die a hundred deaths, or I will live in misery, the slave of Pavo. Go, Lucia! Call back Signor Pavo. Oh, my poor Peppino! In prison! With chains on his hands! And they will lead him out to be killed! What am I that I should let him die? I—a mere girl—and he so good, so noble! No! No! No! Go, Lucia, call the Signore back!”

Lucia made no movement to obey this wild command of her mistress.

“Hear me, Lucia! Go, call him back!”

The contadina stood like a statue. Only the changing colour of her face showed that she, too, was struggling with diverse emotions.

At length Lucia spoke, letting each word sound like a separate protest,—

“And you—a Menardi—will—be—the wife—of Roberto Pavo?”

“The—wife—of—Pavo——” Elena had intended when she began the sentence to make it affirmative. But the words echoed themselves in new depths of her soul, and she completed the sentence with a rising inflection. “I—the wife—of—Pavo! The wife—of Pavo!” The words of the expression were spoken as if each letter had been a sting. She flung herself again upon the couch.

“No, no! Giuseppe himself would not permit it. He would rather die than that his Elena, his lamb, should go to the wolf; to a Pavo. Oh, Sant’ Elena, why do I bear your name, if you will not help me? Help your child! Help me! Help me!”

Did the prayer work as a spell? Or was it due to utter exhaustion that Elena fell asleep? She dreamed of Giuseppe so beautiful, so strong, his arm about her slender form as so often in past days when she used to tell him all the complaints of her childish fears.

Elena’s sleep was a long one—longer than she knew—a sleep of days which ran into weeks. A merciful sleep, in that it gave rest to a brain almost shattered by the violence of its own action! A sleep which, while it postponed the dread decision that the waking mind must make, gave the watchers another problem—equally tragic—that of the sleeper’s own life or death!

XXXVI

WAITING

WHEN at last Elena awoke to consciousness her open eyes fell upon a face bending down to her own.

The Pavo? The memory of that face had not been obliterated by the sweet dreams of the intervening weeks. It was clear-cut in her bewildered imagination, like the face of the jailer shutting upon a victim the dungeon door that had been open for a little while. She closed her eyes that she might not see again the horrid vision; but the inner eye of memory having the stronger lens, she saw it still. Indeed, so vivid was the mental impression that it had contorted the sense vision. It was not Pavo's face.

As Elena's mind vacillated, now on the one side, now on the other, of the line dividing the real world from that of her fancy, she caught the tones of a familiar voice. It spoke quietly, but with a remembered sweetness. Was it angelic? Had some one, very dear to her, died, and thus met her in the celestial world? She listened intently,—

“Thank God! Thank God! She is with us again!” so spake the voice.

There were other words, but they seemed to die out in distance as if her spirit receded into an atmosphereless world, utterly silent to all things in this. Now and again she thought she heard, but the words were quickly lost in the babble of a hundred fancies that confused her brain. As one, drifting back into the sea on a billow,

strives to cling to the rocks, so Elena convulsively reached out towards the voice. Her hand found a familiar resting place. She knew the shape of the shoulder she touched, and the face, and the hair. Was it dream or reality? At length she fully understood. The form was kneeling by the bedside. She felt her hand held by another; a kiss upon it; and a tear. Then she heard a prayer.

“Blessed Gesù, we thank Thee! Thou hast let this cup pass from us! Oh, Thou who art the Light of lights, lift from us that other great shadow. If Thou, O Lord, hast turned away Thy face because of our sins, let my life, I beseech Thee, be for penance! For Elena I offered it. Thou hast heard me. Oh, accept my life—for—for —”

The name failed to reach the sick girl's ear. Was it really spoken, or did it fall, a mere fragment of an utterance, from the speaker's lips?

Elena grasped the hand that touched her own. With it to hold she seemed to draw herself out of the engulfing surf of semi-consciousness. She gave a cry for help.

“Paolo!”

Then sight came. Her eyes rested long on that loving face. Not Pavo's! She glanced searchingly around the room. There was a faint smile of recognition for Mother Agata who was kneeling at Paolo's side.

“But where is Peppino? He, too, was here!”

The search for the missing form wearied her; and, like a little child tired of too long wakefulness, her eyelids closed.

A person who had been a distant watcher, having purposely kept himself beyond Elena's view, now approached the bedside. For a few moments he looked closely at her face, noting the lessening rigidity in the features, the smile that slowly vanished from her lips, the softness of

the breathing and—putting his finger about her wrist—the lightness, but the regularity of the pulse beats.

“It is well,” he said. “She must sleep again before she comes back to stay with us. All but her mother should leave her. Come, Paolo !”

So advised Padre Omelli. He had been summoned by Paolo for the possible event of administering Extreme Unction in case of his sister’s death ; but came also for the sake of being a companion to Paolo, who needed him in this his first experience of looking so narrowly down into the “Valley of the Shadow.”

“You have every reason, Brother Paolo, for confidence,” said he. “I have seen many cases like that of Elena. Why does it not cheer you, Paolo ? Come ! Come ! When God pours down the sunshine, you have no right to be looking at shadows.”

“One thing troubles me greatly,” replied Paolo. “You heard what she said about Giuseppe ? He has appeared to her in her dreams. She cannot divest herself of a sense of his presence. That to my mind forebodes Giuseppe’s death. Only the spirits who have departed this life acquire the power of visiting those who are far away in body. Is it not so ? And the apparition was very vivid to her. She has seen him, Padre. She has spoken with him. I fear for Giuseppe.”

“I know, Paolo,” said Padre Omelli, “that such is the common belief. But it is mere credulity ; one of the thousand superstitions that obsess Sicilian minds. Lucia told me that your sister has been talking to Giuseppe out loud in her dreams ever since her flightiness began weeks ago ; yet he must have been living then, or we would have heard of his death.”

“I must, then, go to Palermo,” exclaimed Paolo. “My life is unendurable so far away from Peppino. Now that Elena is out of danger, I am not needed here. And

perhaps"—he seized convulsively the arm of Padre Omelli—"perhaps something may occur when—when—even a Maniscalco would let a brother see a prisoner."

"You need have no immediate fear," replied Padre Omelli, putting his arm soothingly about Paolo. "The authorities at Palermo have other things to think about just now than the execution of their prisoners."

"What things?"

"I may not tell you, Paolo. But the air is full of strange rumours. One is that there may be an invasion by Garibaldi from the North.

"Yet," continued the Padre, after a moment's thinking, "yet it may be that in their fright at such an invasion the authorities would order the execution of all political prisoners. That is possible, and not unlike the action of the cowardly Neapolitan —"

A look of surprise on Paolo's face warned the Padre that he was speaking his mind too openly.

"Yes," he continued, "I would advise your going to Palermo. If there should be no such need as we fear, there might be some opportunity of service. Your influence with Maniscalco, since you are from San Benedetto, might be favourable."

XXXVII

GOOD NEWS

SIGNOR ROBERTO PAVO did not relinquish his demand for the hand of Elena. Nor did Mother Agata lose confidence in the honour and piety of the young man. She was most gracious to him. No doubt if Lucia could have had her ear, the mother's admiration for her prospective son-in-law might have been modified, but she took no counsel with that *birba*, that hussy ; nor did Lucia dare to challenge the inspection of La Signora's holy eyes with a story that she might have told of Pavo's attentions to herself.

As Elena grew stronger her mother spoke to her of the subject upon her heart : at first in suggestion, then in more urgent appeals, and at length in such commands as were within the limits of maternal authority. Giuseppe must be saved, and there was but one possible means. Elena might be guilty of her brother's death. Oh, what bitter, blasting memory would follow her all her life if the news of his execution should come !

Elena wavered. Others had gone to the stake for those they loved—yes, even for the sake of a truth. Though marriage with Pavo were as repugnant to her as flames about her body,—yet should she not be a martyr for one so dear to her as her Peppino ?

One day, wearied beyond further endurance with her problem, she said, "For Giuseppe's life I consent," and shut herself within her chamber, as resignedly as another martyr might have entered a sepulchre to be entombed alive.

Agata sent at once a message to Signor Pavo.

As her messenger was going another came. He was a strange looking creature, dwarfed in height, with enormous head and breadth of shoulders, and his long and clumsy legs seeming to split him almost to the throat. He had fairly pushed his way through the servants, and demanded to transact his business directly with the Signora. When admitted he, without a word, thrust a sealed letter into her hand.

Agata uttered a cry of amazement and delight.

"It is Giuseppe's writing."

She eagerly tore open the letter, and read :

"MY DEAREST ONES :

"I am free. Escaped from prison. How, I cannot tell you. May not tell you where I am now, lest the authorities should discover it. I write to assure you of my perfect safety. God bless you.

"Your own

"PEPPINO."

"Who are you?" they asked of the man.

He shrugged his great shoulders, and condensed the usual stupidity of his countenance, but made no reply.

"Where are you from?"

"Maybe from Marsala, maybe from Messina," he grunted dubiously.

Seeing his determination to be reticent Agata brought several pieces of gold ; but, though his eyes glittered at the sight, he shook his head.

"What is your name?"

"Angelo," said the man. But instantly he was seized with fright. Evidently he had broken his word to those who had sent him in giving even that hint of his personality. He ran from the room, darted down the terraces, leaped the walls with the agility of an orang-outang, and was out of sight.

The joy which this letter brought was marred by the

coming of Signor Pavo. The news of Giuseppe's escape, which he heard from many lips before he had climbed the terraces to the house, did not vanquish his purpose.

"Giuseppe may be out of the walls of the Vicaria," said Pavo, "but he cannot escape; or, if at all, only by flight beyond the seas. In such an event the Menardi estate will no doubt be confiscated. You need my protection none the less for the news. And I am come to offer it, and to accept from our mother's hands my wife. Your letter, Signora—madre cara—I hold as sufficient guaranty for all legal points. And now"—he extended his arms to embrace Elena—"now I claim my bride. You do not know the happiness ——"

Elena stood as impassive as a stone. Had she become petrified indeed? Only for an instant. Pygmalion's statue did not come to life under his caresses more thoroughly than Elena when, on a second approach, Pavo's arms attempted to encircle her. But the stone awoke far from being an acquiescent beauty,—rather a fair fury.

"Your word! Your mother's word!" said Pavo, summoning authority to face and manner.

"I promised myself only for the life of my brother," said Elena with a voice shrill with excited passion. "But now he lives."

Then her voice dropped into ominous solemnity as she added, "I shall not be your wife, Signor Pavo. As truly as there is a just God who hears us, I shall not be your wife."

"My child! My child!" cried Mother Agata, extending her hands with averted palms as if shrinking from some dreadful apparition.

Signor Pavo was at first disconcerted, as when one running in the dark strikes against an obstacle. He stared at Elena. Then gradually his features became

rigid with diabolical determination. Clutching the letter that Agata had sent him, he exclaimed,—

“I demand the fulfillment of this contract. By the laws of God and man, I demand it.”

“And I reject it,” replied Elena with a stamp of her foot.

Pavo could not restrain his rage—“Reject it! Reject me! Reject this!” shaking the letter before her face.

“I reject it,” repeated Elena, meeting his wild look with contrasting coolness.

Even Pavo was not altogether without a vague sense of admiration for the splendid dignity of the young woman as she clasped her hands behind her back, and, straightening herself to her full height, repeated,—

“Yes, Signor Pavo, I reject it.”

Elena’s self-command commanded also her antagonist. So long as he looked at her he was speechless. He dropped his eyes, then suddenly turned away, as a fierce beast tries to break away from the eye of its tamer. But, freed from the spell, his passion resumed its sway. Looking in her direction, but not at her, he clenched his fists, and shouted,—

“You reject my love,—then—then you shall have my vengeance.”

In the insanity of his fury it seemed as if he was about to strike her.

His attention was diverted. Padre Omelli stood at the entrance to the room. The priest in passing the villa had heard the news of Giuseppe’s escape, for the house servants had shouted it to the outdoor labourers, and they to every passing contadino, so that the report flew through the neighbourhood as swiftly as the cloud-shadows flit over the hills.

The Padre walked to Elena’s side, while Signora Agata threw herself hysterically into a chair.

“What is the meaning of this?” asked the Padre.

"Signor Pavo, explain yourself. You are evidently intruding."

"Padre Omelli, I am here in assertion of my right. I am not an intruder, but came in answer to this—this letter. Read it yourself, Padre."

The letter shook in his hand. Omelli took it. He read its contents, thought a moment, then turned to Agata,—

"Signora Menardi, you wrote this letter?"

A sob from the great chair was the answer.

"And this, Signorina Elena, was written with your knowledge and concurrence?"

"Yes, Padre, at the time. It was my sacrifice for the liberty of my Peppino. I was made to believe that it was the only condition upon which Peppino could escape being killed. But Peppino is free—thank God, free, and without this—this awful man's help."

"And now, that you know the truth, you repudiate it?" asked the priest.

"I repudiate it, Padre."

The priest would have torn the letter into pieces, had not Pavo seized it.

"Signor Pavo," said Padre Omelli, folding his arms into the sleeves of his cassock, and looking quietly at the man, "Signor Pavo, you have heard the Signorina's repudiation of this letter. That is surely enough for any honourable man."

"Honourable man! Do you dispute my honour, you damned priest! The honour of a Pavo —"

Something broke his sentence. Was it a glance at Lucia? At least the trend of his thought was diverted. He vented his wrath upon Omelli.

"You traitor of a priest. You, you too, have been already denounced to the King. A Menardi may escape, but not an Omelli."

With which Pavo strode from the house.

XXXVIII

A RUDE AWAKENING

DURING the next few days a large number of men was employed about the Menardi villa. A surprising amount of ditching, road-mending, pruning, trellis-repairing was being done. Many of the men remained at the villa during the night instead of going to their homes on the neighbouring hills. Niccolo, the massaio, judged it wise to have about the premises a sufficient guard against any deviltry that Pavo might hatch in his wrath.

Pietro, the brother of Lucia, was one of those who, under pretense of working, were really watching at the villa. Pietro had a triple incentive for his devotion; he loved Giuseppe; he hated Pavo; and he suspected Pavo of undue intimacy with Lucia. Why did he have such suspicion? Possibly he was informed by the goats who more than once had their little white eyes full of wonder at the double apparition in some cozy nook where the cacti grew thick, or the young lemon trees made a secluded retreat.

Pietro was something of a braggart. The wine shops knew of the high heroics, indeed of the tragedies, he would be willing to enact if there should ever be occasion for uncorking the valour that effervesced beneath his breast. It was he that one day put on the old olive tree, that stood outside the village gate, a red paper heart inscribed "Il Re," with the point of a broken knife blade through it. Pietro knew, of course, that no Sicilian, though he were drunk, would inform against him.

Yet Pietro was not a coward. Though he was incapable of sustaining for any length of time any heroic purpose, yet his native Sicilian ferocity would carry him through a desperate deed, if only the deed could be accomplished while his fury was at full head.

Pietro was too impetuous to remain quiet during the night-watch within the Meuardi grounds. He prowled in the neighbourhood of Pavo's house, a self-appointed sentinel against danger that might start in that direction.

It was just after sunset. The gold had melted from the clouds back of Etna. The snow-white shoulders of the mountain had put on their cape of gray ; then that had faded into dusky brown, and the brown into black, and the black dissolved into night-haze. So Pietro's mind was nursing its darkest thoughts. He stopped at the spot where the path to Signor Pavo's place diverged from the main road. He could here watch in either direction. That he might be unobserved by any passing patrol of soldiers he selected a little alcove made by a group of cacti. This was overhung by an almond tree whose pink blossoms were blanched by the beams of the rising moon, so that the white canopy above made more obscure by contrast the spot beneath it. He threw himself down in the comparative darkness, and indulged the debate that had recently become chronic with him, between his hatred of Pavo and his solicitude for Lucia.

"I'll kill that traitor anyway,—and if he has touched her I'll kill her too."

He had scarcely muttered this when he heard some one coming up the main path. It was a woman's footfall. Where the ways parted she stopped. She was certainly not in doubt as to her direction, for every one knew the two ways. Was she hesitating which to take ? Or was she waiting for some one ? She moved slowly into the Pavo path. Then she went back and took the other.

Again she stopped ; and at length, as if having made up her mind, returned and entered the byway. After some further hesitation she gave a little bird-like whistle, and waited for response. None answering, she repeated the call.

Pietro imitated it. The figure came near, and peered into Pietro's hiding-place.

"Where are you ?"

Pietro recognized Lucia.

"Why, Roberto, you should not tease me so. I was dreadfully frightened. Where are you ?" she said approaching.

"Here I am," said Pietro. With a bound he seized her. His hands gripped her throat. With an oath, he whirled her headlong among the thorns of the cacti. She fell with a groan ; then was silent.

There was a sound up the Pavo path. Pietro drew his long knife, and moved to the edge of the covert. The newcomer approached slowly. He gave a whistle like the call Lucia had made. Pietro imitated the notes as well as he could, but his excitement betrayed him. The person turned hastily away, leaped the roadside wall, and was gone.

"Santo Diavolo !" growled Pietro, as hoarsely as a hyena robbed of its prey. "I'd had the heart of him if his cowardice hadn't saved him."

He turned towards the bushes where Lucia lay.

"Disgrazia ! Prostituita !" he hissed as he reached for her.

There was no reply. The silence sobered the man. Perhaps he had killed her. He grasped her hand as it protruded from the thick cactus pads. It was limp and nerveless.

"Lucia ! Lucia !" he called. "Lucia, speak to me !"

No response. Had she replied and taunted him for his

deed, the knife might have completed his threat of a little while ago ; such was the uncontrollable passion of his nature. But the stillness of her form ! It smote him with the remorse of a murderer. He put the knife back into its sheath, and thrust it into his pocket. For a few moments he stood almost paralyzed by his possible crime. Then a contrasting frenzy took possession of him. He tore away the heavy, thorn-covered leaves of the cacti, and threw himself upon the motionless body.

“ Lucia mia ! Lucia mia ! Speak to me.”

He lifted the body and drew it out into the moonlight. The face was bleeding profusely from the tearing of the thorns.

“ Oh, Gesù Maria ! ” he cried. “ Give me back my Lucia. I didn’t mean to kill her. No, no ! Lucia mia ! Lucia mia ! No, no ! ”

Was his prayer answered ? Or did his passionate love revive her ? The girl opened her eyes. She stared blankly at him for a moment, then wildly threw her arms about her brother.

“ Oh, Pietro, Pietro ! You have saved me. Pavo tried to kill me. It was he, Signor Pavo, that threw me in there.”

Lucia’s delusion awakened another characteristic in the strange compound of Pietro’s nature : his cunning. He saw at once that he could relieve himself from being suspected, and, at the same time, break his sister’s infatuation with her lover.

“ Yes,” he said. “ I was just in time. He was kidnapping you. When he saw me he struck you, threw you in here and ran ; ran like a jackal. The coward ! I’ll have the heart out of him.”

An hour later Pietro and Lucia were in their home on the mountainside. Zu and Za heard the terrible story about the Pavo. Old Menotti was for starting at once

for Pavo villa. Pietro persuaded him that such an attempt at vengeance would come to nothing because of the soldiers who were guarding that place since his betrayal of the popular cause.

"It's my job, Zu," protested Pietro.

"Do it quick, then," said his father, "or I'll make it mine."

Towards noon of the next day Signor Pavo was seen on the village street. A half dozen soldiers were several rods ahead of him, and as many more about an equal distance behind. Pietro had gone into a wine shop. By what secret communication it was brought about we may not say, but men slipped out from their shops. The rope-maker dropped his bunch of flax; the cobbler his shoe. The fisherman pushed his basket into an alley, oblivious to the dog that had trailed him for a half mile with increasing appetite. The vender of clay animals and images of the Saints balanced his tray on the butcher's meat block. All crowded into the narrow street; crowding further back and further forward the soldiers. Pietro joined in the throng. All made way for him. He made straight for Signor Pavo, and without a word plunged a knife at his heart.

But Pavo was on his guard. He knew how obnoxious his political defection had made him to his neighbours, and, as a native Sicilian, he understood the meaning of the crowd blocking his way. His eye rested upon Pietro, whose swaggering indifference as he pushed his way through the throng did not conceal his furtive, nervous glances, and whose "job" was evidently recognized by the way the others allowed him to pass. Pavo was therefore alert, and warded his assailant's blow with his arm, and at the same instant presented a pistol at Pietro's head. As the pistol was being discharged old Menotti, the father of Pietro, gave Pavo a sledge-hammer blow

upon the neck, which diverted the aim, and felled him to the ground. Pietro would have repeated his assault had not the soldiers, seeing the *mêlée*, made a sudden onslaught upon the mob. They demanded the assailant ; but neither by word nor by sign was there given the slightest indication that anybody knew. What *noblesse oblige* is to the higher ranks, *omerta*, the right of personal revenge, is to the common people.

The soldiers helped Pavo to his feet, and took him away. No further questions were asked, because it was understood that no questions would be answered. Very strangely, Signor Pavo was utterly reticent as to the person who attacked him. As he went up the hill towards his villa, he kept his own counsel, which counsel was as to the best means of rooting out the whole Menotti family, and how he should give the final turn to the wrench which he felt sure he had on the Menardi estate.

THE WOLF TRAPPED

CAPTAIN CATALDO was ordered to report for duty to Count Lupis at the Palazzo Reale in Palermo.

“Ah, Cataldo—‘Captain’ Cataldo now, but I hope that when we next meet it will be ‘Colonel’ Cataldo.”

“I fear,” replied Cataldo, “that I am not enough of a grasshopper to jump the intermediate grades. But I thank you, Conte, for the good wish.”

“Come, come now, captain,” said Lupis familiarly, “you are too modest a man for the son of Luigi Cataldo, banker at Naples. In the present condition of the King’s finances you ought to ask for what you want.”

Captain Cataldo bowed very low ;—not to acknowledge a compliment, but to hide a flush of resentment that came to his face at the insinuation that his honours were to be purchased rather than earned.

“Captain,” continued the Count, throwing a leg over the arm of a great chair in which he was sitting, and offering his companion a cigar, “captain, you were once stationed in the Etnean district, were you not? And know it well? If I am not mistaken, you made the arrest of Menardi, the fellow who has given Maniscalco the slip.”

“He didn’t slip through my hands. The police, not the soldiers, were to blame,” replied the captain.

“That’s true. But you may have to get him again. By the way, that district is in trouble. The very devil is let loose.”

"The devil was never chained in those parts, Conte."

"Well, captain, you are just the man to sprinkle holy water on his tail. You know Signor Pavo?"

"Yes."

"Well, they have tried to murder him."

"They? Who?"

"That's for you to find out, captain. He was assaulted in broad daylight, with a crowd looking on, and a score of soldiers guarding him; yet nobody knows the assailant."

"Of course not, Conte. You forget that you are dealing with Sicilians."

"Damn all Sicilians," said the Count. "They are more closely leagued than the Camorra."

"There may have been no league against Signor Pavo," replied the captain, "but something more difficult to deal with. You can ferret out the secrets of any organization, if you have spies enough. But here you are dealing, not with a society, but with a sentiment which you can't catch, any more than you can catch a ghost. Sicilians never tell on one another. They are born mute on certain subjects. Now, unless the soldiers or some one in the pay of the government saw this attack on Signor Pavo, you will not find any tongues to witness against the perpetrator if you tear them from their jaws."

"Well, Cataldo, you are to try the job."

"By whose order is this my job, Conte? I don't like the business."

"By my orders," said the Count, bringing his hand down upon his knee.

"You are not my superior. You are not even in the army, Conte."

"True. I suppose I must respect the red tape, Cataldo. Well, General Clary — Hold on, I might as well show you his order. Here it is. In it he delegates you to any

special service I may direct. Now I want you for some very delicate business; and I have asked Clary to let me have you because I confide in you—in fact, I like you, captain.”

“Thank you, Conte. What are your instructions? Nothing is mentioned here.”

“Of course not. It’s special business. You are to find out the assailants of Pavo if you have to cut the throats of fifty of the witnesses of the crime. Now this may help you. I have good reason for believing that the plot was hatched in Villa Menardi; indeed, that Signor Menardi is himself back and hiding near his home. He and Pavo have had a quarrel about their estates. Pavo had some claim to Menardi’s land. That may be the cause of the attack on him. But the upshot of the whole business is that the Menardi estates are to be confiscated to the King; that is”—grasping his comrade by the knee—“to the King with some commissions off for doing the business. Now, of course, Menardi is to be retaken, dead or alive, it doesn’t matter much which. The family are to be ejected. Signora Menardi, the mother, will be sent to Naples. Then there is a Signorina Menardi who is to be brought here to Palermo. Maniscalco insists on that, if Signor Menardi is not otherwise caught; for his sister will serve as a decoy.”

“That’s mighty fine business for a soldier,” said Cataldo, who, while the Count was detailing this plan, had risen to his feet.

“If it’s fine enough for me, it’s fine enough for you, captain. Do you shirk the order?”

“A soldier must obey,” replied Cataldo, but in a tone and manner which were themselves like open rebellion.

“Yes, or be shot,” drawled the Count. “I know you won’t take the alternative. I admire you, captain, for your scruples. I have some myself. I confess that I’d

rather elope with Signorina Menardi than put her under Maniscalco's clutches. They say she is pretty. Then, captain, you need not be harsh with Signorina. You can assure her that no harm will come to her here in Palermo. I have arranged all that with Maniscalco. She will simply be 'Detained'; that is a better word than 'Arrested.' There's a difference, you know."

Captain Cataldo was choking with a speech which even the brazen face of Count Lupis preferred not to hear; so the latter rose to cut short the interview.

"We understand each other, captain. You may withdraw. Come back again at fifteen o'clock. I'll have the detailed instructions drawn up by that time. Good-day! I have just now another pressing engagement."

Cataldo did not at once move. He was like a blast furnace full of molten metal; but before he could arrange the moulds of expression in which to run the fiery stream of his wrath the Count had rung a bell, and the usher had drawn the curtain to admit another visitor.

Captain Cataldo left the Palazzo. He walked for a while out beyond Porta Nuova. But neither the fresh air from the hills of Monreale nor the blue sky that canopied them clarified his thoughts.

"A pretty service this that makes a man choose between being a deserter and a fiend!" he muttered to himself.

Several fellow officers passed him. He gave them the salute, but without raising his eyes. He turned back into the city. He went down Via Toledo, blind to everything except the dilemma in which his wits were entangled. Before he was aware of it he had butted squarely into the arms of General Bianci.

"Ecco! Rather an inconsiderate charge you are making upon a friend, captain!" grunted the old warrior. "But Dio mio! what's the matter with you this morn-

ing? You are generally cool-faced, but you look as if you had stepped on a porcupine."

"Ah, General Bianci! You are just the man I want to talk to."

"Never more at your service, captain," was the genial reply. "Let's turn in here, and have a glass of wine."

They entered a café garden. Cataldo drew his friend to a far corner where was a little table under the boa-like branches of a fig tree.

"General, you have heard of the escape of Menardi from the Vicaria?"

"Escaped? No. Dio mio! When? How?" exclaimed Bianci, using the whole of his big hand to press out any telltale lines from his face.

"Yes. He's out of that hole," replied Cataldo. "But the authorities are for some reason keeping the matter hushed up."

"No trace of him?"

"Yes, they have tracked him to the eastern end of the Island. He is somewhere near his own villa."

"Diavolo!" exclaimed the general. "That Maniscalco is a shrewd one. But I doubt if Menardi is fool enough to stay in that neighbourhood. He will doubtless go across the Straits into Calabria or the Abruzzi, and work his way north."

"I hope to God that it's so; for, general, I am ordered to arrest him."

"You! You, Cataldo, arrest Menardi! You have done that once, and it is enough."

"But, general, that's not the worst of it," said the captain. "I am to take over the Menardi estates for the King; carry Signora Menardi to Naples; and bring Signorina Menardi to Palermo."

The ping of a bullet would not have brought the

general quicker to his feet than did this information. Only the remembrance that they were not secure from listeners prevented a volcanic explosion of his wrath. He reached across the little table, grasped Cataldo by the shoulders, and grated out the words,—

“You—you shall do no such thing.”

“But, general, tell me how as a soldier I can avoid it. That’s what I want your advice about.”

“Avoid it! Why shoot your leg off, and get out of the army as a cripple. Dio mio! I’d shoot you myself before I’d let you obey such an order. Who commands this? General Clary?”

“It’s Conte Lupis’ doing,” replied Cataldo.

“Lupis! Gene Lupis! That—that——” But the old man’s wrath so choked him that he could find no words in a reputable dictionary with which to egurgitate it. When he had worked his way through some of the minor expletives, and outflanked the worst of them, he growled,—

“What! Make the army a Camorra! A lot of kid-nappers of women! And for a Lupis—for a—a——”

Bianci’s tongue got tangled again. He sat down and pulled his mustache as if it were a faucet with which to start a flow of ideas. This expedient seemed to work; for in a moment his face assumed a more amiable expression. His deep-set eyes sparkled with a sort of humour, such as a card-player displays when he discovers the winning spots in his hand.

“When do you get your final orders, captain?”

“At fifteen this afternoon.”

“All right, captain. I’ll meet you at the Palazzo before you go in. We’ll see about this cowardly business. And Lupis! The wolf. I’ll fang him.”

The men parted. Cataldo took a walk along the Marina, baring his head to the sea breeze. Bianci went

up the Toledo, swinging his shoulders as if he were a whole battalion on the march. He made straight for the Palazzo Reale, returned the salute of a score of stiffly brocaded officers who were loitering about the inner court, climbed the stairway of red marble, and, after a few minutes' waiting, was ushered into the grand Sala Normanna.

Here Count Lupis was in as high dignity as if he had been old Roger the Norman himself come back through the haze of centuries. The Count was transacting much business and of vast importance, if the number and quality of the persons about him gave true evidence. General Bianci, while waiting an opportunity to address the great man, wandered about the salon, studying the glorious mosaics that line the walls, where warriors in brass ogle fair ladies with diamond eyes, and golden leopards stalk silver stags.

At length the Count was at leisure.

"General Bianci!" he exclaimed with enthusiastic politeness. "As flourishing as ever, I see. Per Bacco! Men of your sort of brain never die at the top. You are not a day older than when we used to meet at Venice."

"Yes," replied Bianci. "My brain doesn't seem to be withering much, for my memory of those days is still good. I have not forgotten Signor Lupis. You are in better feather nowadays than then, Signore?"

The Count stiffened a little at the word "Signore," which he had not been accustomed to hear of late.

"Let us have a moment's private talk, Lupis," said Bianci.

"Certainly, general."

With a wave of his hand the room was cleared of visitors.

"Lupis," said the general, "I have certain letters

that I don't know exactly what to do with;—some written by yourself, and some by one Georgio Batti."

The Count's face suddenly blanched.

"These letters you may wish to get possession of, Lupis. They concern you more than they do me."

The Count's face brightened. He replied,—“Of course, I don't know what letters you refer to, but any correspondence of mine should be in my hands, I suppose.”

“Of course. Of course,” said Bianci; then in a drawling tone, “Unless—unless—a certain case that we had supposed was settled years ago should come up again.”

A whole tragedy with its varying emotions was enacted on the Count's visage while the general was uttering these few words.

“You will give me the letters, general?” he said eagerly.

“Well, Lupis, I haven't come quite to that point yet. Possibly I might be prevailed upon not to use them.”

The Count's eyes flickered as he made the pretense of looking into those of his visitor.

Suddenly the general's manner changed. His eyebrows dropped; every particular hair in them like a bayonet lowered for the charge.

“Lupis, you are about to perpetrate a contemptible, a cowardly piece of business; to arrest a girl, and bring her here to be a stool-pigeon for her brother, Signor Menardi.”

“That's General Clary's order, not mine,” replied the cowed man.

“You lie, Lupis! No, no! Don't get up. If you raise a hand the papers go to the government. Sit down, please! We had better talk this out than fight it out. You see the point, Lupis. Now I want to know to whom you have committed this affair of Menardi's rearrest.”

"I—I—can't divulge official secrets, general."

"Oh, yes, you can, Lupis. You've done it often before. Who is going to execute your order against the Menardi estate and against his family?"

"An officer who will be here at fifteen. But, General Bianci, you ——"

"Say no more, Lupis. I will wait until the officer comes. Before he arrives I want you to write out an order placing this whole business in my hands. In my hands, do you understand? Detail this officer for secret service under my direction: so secret that he needn't report details to you or anybody else. Do you comprehend me, Lupis?"

"Why, general, that is impossible. I don't see ——"

"No, Lupis," interrupted his visitor, "I don't suppose that you do see just now; but I am going to trust the man who was the bottom devil in the military theft at Venice to see what he wants to see. Give me a blank order. Here! Now put your signature at the bottom. I will fill in what goes above. It will be best for you not even to read it."

"General Bianci, I can't do this."

The old man glowered at him. "Can't? You can, Lupis. You have no more scruples about it than your namesake, the wolf. Can't? You haven't forgotten how to write, have you? Take your time. I am in no hurry."

The general turned away, and whistled as if to call one of the mosaic hounds from the wall. The Count looked at the coved ceiling; but he found there no more hint of how to get out of his dilemma than did the silver stag trying to escape the golden leopard. He saw the reminders that the Normans outwitted the Saracens, but none of those metal-and-glass worthies who had been looking so sspiently from the side-walls for centuries offered him any

counsel. At length the Count took the pen, and after a preliminary oath, made the worst scrawl that ever passed for his signature.

"Why, my dear fellow, your years are telling on you," said Bianci, picking up the paper. "You wrote a steadier hand ten years ago. I have recently had the pleasure of reading over some of it. But let that go. I promise you, Lupis, that this paper will be as good a document as you have ever issued; something that you won't blush to read in the firelight of Purgatory."

The usher announced Captain Cataldo.

Lupis, the wolf, did not need to put on a sheep's skin. He changed his manner instantly when he saw that it was the thing to do.

"Ah, Captain Cataldo, just in time. You know General Bianci? I wish we had more such men at the head of affairs to-day. As to the matter of which we spoke this morning, I have put it all into the hands of the general. You may trust his wisdom implicitly."

The Count bowed his visitors from the Grand Salon with as much courtesy as if they had been commissioners from the King offering him the coveted governorship of the Island.

But when the curtain swung back behind their retreating forms, the Count walked violently up and down the room. His fingers twitched as if they were on the wind-pipe of Bianci. After a while he sat down at a table whose top was strangely veined with variegated marble. One who watched him might have imagined that he was puzzling his brains to make out what sort of a map those veins made. At length he indulged in a soliloquy.

"Found my match this time. Pavo is certainly out of the game. I must then reshuffle the cards. Let's see! I'll make Menardi himself my trump. If he is not shot, I will make friends with him. The confiscation? I can

hold that up, and hold it over him. The estate is worth five hundred thousand lire. He ought to give me twenty thousand. Bianci has some interest in the family. I wonder what. At any rate he will take care of them—and he will do it in my name, too. Good! But, Buon Diavolo! That old moulting peacock has got those letters. No matter. I'll pluck him yet."

The Count sat still for a whole hour, until an attendant, thinking he was asleep, touched his arm.

"Aquavita-soda!" was his response, without raising his eyes.

XL

A GALLANT ENVOY

SEVERAL days later Captain Cataldo appeared at Villa Menardi. He was unaccompanied by soldiers, since a Bourbon uniform had become an attractive target for the contadini.

“Your errand, captain?” was the courteous but rather resentful salutation of Niccolo, the massaio.

A number of men suddenly emerged from the various paths leading to the gardens and fields, and made a throng about the house that would have required a whole company of militia to cope with, had they been antagonized.

Captain Cataldo presented his card,—

“I will await here outside Signora Menardi’s invitation. I shall not intrude.”

Had the Signora been petrified into a statue of Minerva she could not have received her visitor with colder dignity. Her erect form made not the shadow of a return to the captain’s obeisance.

“To what am I indebted for the honour of this visit, captain?”

Cataldo presented a sealed letter. “This will be my introduction.”

Now Captain Cataldo had intended during the opening and reading of the letter to maintain a perfectly impassive attitude, as became him. But his attention was diverted. He was, as we know, a connoisseur in female beauty; and at the side of Signora Menardi was a specimen of it that baffled his critical art; indeed, that by its very exquisiteness—so it seemed to him—forbade his attempt to analyze it. He was like a botanist who is so enamoured

of a flower that he forgets to count its petals. Elena's presence seemed to exhale a spiritual perfume that entranced him.

Had the captain been a more conceited man, he might have noticed that the Signorina's attention was also divided,—between the letter her mother was reading and its bearer. But, being a modest man, Cataldo gave himself up to the spell the fair woman threw over him, without the slightest consciousness that he himself was an object of admiration.

The thoughts of both, whatever they may have been, were interrupted by an exclamation of the Signora.

“Why, it is from General Bianci! Old General Bianci!”

While she read, the immobility of her countenance gave way as the ice of a Sicilian winter morning melts in the first ray of sunshine. She handed the letter to her daughter, and addressed the visitor,—

“Captain Cataldo, pardon the rudeness of my reception. I utterly mistook the occasion of your coming to me. For some days I have been disturbed by rumours that my son's escape was to be punished by some sort of an attack upon his home. The soldiers have been insolent to my daughter and myself. My repugnance to a visit from a King's officer was therefore natural.”

“I had anticipated nothing less,” replied Cataldo.

“I trust, however, that the letter will relieve you and Signorina Menardi from all anxiety. I may further ask you to confide in me as the son of Signor Cataldo of Naples.”

“Ah! You are the son of my old friend, Signor Cataldo?” She extended her hand.

“As my father would doubtless do,” said he, raising her hand to his lips.

The letter read,—

"MY DEAR SIGNORA :

"This will introduce to you my friend, Captain Cataldo, in whom I wish you to confide as you would in myself. Do you remember how, many years ago, in dismissing me from your father's villa, you assured me of your prayers; and I, concealing my discomfiture, promised that I would ever be watchful to serve you. I know that you have kept your pledge; else why have I been so blessed in my life? Perhaps the time has come when I am able to redeem my promise.

"I have learned with great distress of annoyances to which you are subjected; and, further, of some personal danger that may threaten you in case of your remaining longer in your home. If such danger or over-annoyance should occur, I wish you and your daughter to come to Villa Bianci. Here you will be safe; and here, too, I trust that before long you will hear cheering news of your son, Giuseppe. This is more than an invitation. It is an urgent request that you will come. In it joins me my daughter, Vittoria, who since the death of my dear wife has kept both my heart and my home.

"You may trust implicitly in Captain Cataldo. With happy memories and happy expectation, I wait to welcome you.

"I am, my dear Signora, yours devotedly,

"GUGLIELMO BIANCI."

Captain Cataldo made his headquarters in the village, but for some reason he found himself much absorbed in daily business at Villa Menardi. It was assumed that he was engaged in details for the transference of that estate to the King, for reports of the coming confiscation had emanated from Signor Pavo, and had gained wide and indignant credence among the people. Let it be confessed that only a few days had passed before the captain had become impressed with the necessity of confiscating, not for the King, but for himself, one member of that household.

As a man of military training he held a council of war with his own thoughts. He laid down this proposition

without the hesitancy of a doubt as to its urgency,—“Signorina Elena holds the key to the whole situation so far as my happiness is involved.” He had studied the art of “slow approach,” the methods of zigzagging trenches until an assailing party has drawn close to the besieged before delivering an assault. But the captain found himself of too impetuous a nature to endure that deliberate process in the present case. He could not wait on time, since at any time he might be ordered away. Though he had resolved upon a very discreet reserve in his manner and speech, he was aware that his look and words were unmasking him. Yet he was a courageous man, and took the fire of Elena’s fine blue eyes heroically and in the open, and he did not attempt to conceal his wounds.

As for his fair antagonist, though exceedingly modest and with none of the conceit of a coquette, Elena knew of her conquest ; and, being the gentlest and sweetest of souls, she so sympathized with the vanquished that she offered him abundant comfort in his discomfiture.

Naturally the captain had found a mighty auxiliary in his protested love for Giuseppe. He gained point after point in this battle of hearts as he told the story of his first acquaintance with her brother during the journey to Palermo, when the captive had captivated the captor ; of how Giuseppe’s word of honour was stronger than manacles that night at Villa Bianci ; of his attempt to rescue him after the massacre of the thirteen at Porta San Georgio ; of his delight on hearing of his ultimate escape from the Vicaria ; of his present purpose in coming to Villa Menardi to guard those whom Giuseppe loved.

“Where is Giuseppe now ?”

Captain Cataldo did not know, except that every sign indicated his perfect safety. The suspicion on the part of the authorities that he was somewhere in that im-

mediate neighbourhood, and in communication with his family, showed their utter inability to track him.

During his visits at the villa Cataldo heard the entire story of Signor Pavo's insolent demands. Elena and her mother were not the only reporters. Niccolo, though cautious in speaking with an army officer, did not spare the villainies of his neighbour.

Lucia, too, had something to tell. She was captivated by the goodly presence of the captain with shoulder-straps and clanking sword. She knew also which way the wind blows in mating time—whether of birds or humans—and, having noted the growing interest of her mistress in the guest, brought a few straws for the prospective nest. To Elena she chatted incessantly about the handsome captain. She attracted the attention of the visitor by her rare beauty and childish vivacity. Cataldo was convinced that from her he could get the summary of all the village gossip, and learn more of affairs in an hour than from the most careful espionage for weeks. He, therefore, discreetly encouraged her willing tongue. Incidentally she let in much light upon the assault on Signor Pavo in the village—for her hot hatred of that individual led to her telling of his presumed attack upon herself as she was going to her home on the mountain.

Captain Cataldo made occasion to visit Villa Pavo. Towards him the Signore was cordially, even jovially, hospitable. He produced wines and cigars.

“Captain, it warms one's heart to see a person like you. It's rather monotonous for us landed proprietors, having to hobnob chiefly with our contadini. The business of farming shuts us out from life in the city, and from the good fellowship you must find with the military fraternity everywhere. Besides, life hereabouts for a loyal man is decidedly dangerous. You know the brutes

came near doing me up the other day. An honest man, especially one who like myself is well known for his service to the King, might as well walk barefoot among scorpions, as to go alone through the streets. Of course, now that you are here, captain, it is different. The rebels know that they can't play with the man who didn't hesitate to arrest Giuseppe Menardi."

"Where is Menardi?" asked Cataldo.

"Doubtless somewhere in our neighbourhood. Otherwise I can't account for some things that are happening," replied Pavo.

"Explain, Signore; for you know that I am interested in Menardi's whereabouts. What things are happening that point to his presence near his home?"

"Why, his interference with my marriage. Menardi has taken a violent prejudice against me because of my stand for the King. He has even threatened to shoot me at sight. No doubt the attack upon me the other day was at his suggestion. Though I would not mention the name of the man who drew dagger on me, I will say this much, that he is one of Menardi's tenants."

"But what about your marriage?" asked Cataldo.

"Well," replied Signor Pavo, "you know that Signorina Elena and I were lovers from her childhood. As the years passed she developed a sincere affection for me. We were formally promised to each other. Then came a black-hand warning that I would be assassinated if I pursued the matter further. That's where Giuseppe Menardi comes in. He dare not show himself anywhere; but he has his agents."

"You were actually betrothed to the Signorina?"

"Oh, yes; in all but the formal papers regarding dowry, and so forth."

Signor Pavo opened a locked drawer of his secretary and showed a note which read,—

“SIGNOR ROBERTO PAVO :

“My dear son :—The time has come when I may call you by this endearing name. My daughter fully consents to your proposal of marriage. Come at once, that you may receive the welcome that awaits you in our love.
(Signed) AGATA MENARDI.”

“That would seem to be conclusive,” said Cataldo, glancing around at the rafters of the room. “When will the nuptials take place?”

“As soon as that traitor Giuseppe is out of the way. If he is not shot, of course he will be outlawed. I am expecting papers from my friend, Count Lupis, proclaiming his outlawry. Then he will have nothing to say about the dowry. Of course, captain, we shall marry out of sheer love. I would take Signorina Menardi if she did not bring me ten scudi. You know, captain, how a man feels when he is boots deep in love. But as a man of property, and in view of future contingencies when a man has a family, I have considered other matters. The case stands this way ;—Giuseppe out of the case ; Paolo, a younger brother, turned monk, and under his vow of poverty relinquishing his interest in the estate ; Elena, the daughter, comes practically into inheritance. So the Pavo and Menardi properties will be united. There is some talk of confiscation by the government, but my friend, Count Lupis, assures me that my marriage with Elena will result in the transference of the estate to myself.”

Signor Pavo threw himself back, with his thumbs in the arm-sockets of his jacket ; emptied his wine glass, refilled it, and made intertwining circles of cigar smoke in the air.

Captain Cataldo sat for a long time stroking his nose. At length he said :

“You know, Signor Pavo, that in my position I am hearing all sorts of reports. One is that a pretty con-

tadina may have been at the bottom of that attack upon you the other day."

Pavo jumped to his feet. "It is a damned lie; a damned lie, captain; a ruse to hide treason. The perpetrators of that cowardly assault know that in personal feuds there is no appeal to law among Sicilians; but that rebellion is different. In the former case I would do nothing, no matter what the provocation: I would simply defend myself. But when men rebel and assault me for my loyalty, then I would have them arrested as traitors—especially as you are now here, captain. So they invent this ridiculous story of its being a personal matter about which they assault me. A woman in the case! Nonsense. It's rebellion; treason, captain. No doubt there is another 'personal matter' they would like to invent."

"What's that, Signore?"

"You know, captain, or ought to know," replied Pavo, "that there is a scheme to kill you. Some one is to pick a quarrel with you about a contadina or the price of a bottle of wine, or some other trickery,—and then to shoot. I can tell you who some of the desperadoes are. There's a man named Menotti and his son, Pietro, a young cutthroat."

"Hold a moment, Signore," said Cataldo, rubbing his nose, and even pulling it as if he were milking out some idea that flowed too slowly. "Menotti! Pietro! I have heard those names. Why, they are kin of the pretty contadina I was speaking about. Are they not? Pietro? Menotti? Yes, and a Lucia."

"Captain Cataldo, you intend to insult me. You—you —"

"Hold on, Signore," said Cataldo, raising his hand. "You might say some word that you would regret. Think a moment. Now go on."

Pavo inhaled a long breath, a cooler to his inner heat, perhaps.

“What is the meaning of this, Captain Cataldo? Have you debased the military service into an espionage over private affairs? I shall report this to higher authorities. No mere captain in the army can meddle with my life. I do business with men of better grade, I assure you.”

“Ah! With whom would you deal?” asked Cataldo with provoking coolness. “With Conte Lupis, perhaps. Well, my commission to visit you is from the Conte himself, as I will show you if you wish. He desired me to give you his special regards, and to be very careful to inquire into all the details of the assault upon you in the street. I have evidently done so with good results. The Conte will surely be pleased with the way in which I have fulfilled his commission.”

Pavo was bursting with rage,—

“Lupis? Lupis? Has that—that villain ——”

The room was growing sulphurous with a fore-scent of the oaths that were about to issue from the crater of Pavo's soul.

“Hold! Hold, Signore! Not so loud,” suggested Cataldo. “It will be better if the guard outside does not hear nor know that we differ in opinion.”

XLI

BUON VIAGGIO!

AT this moment an orderly appeared at the door. Saluting the captain, he handed him a missive. It was from General Clary, requiring that Captain Cataldo's company should immediately report at Palermo, since there were signs of a Garibaldian invasion from the north. Similar orders had been sent everywhere, looking to the concentration of all the Bourbon forces in the neighbourhood of the capital.

Having read the order, and knit his brows for a few moments over its contents, the captain said :

"Signor Pavo, I am summoned at once to Palermo. I regret that in any investigation of the matter referred to, I cannot be of more service to you."

"I shall be sorry to miss so good a friend," replied the Signore, with a mocking effort at courtesy.

"I regret also," added Cataldo, "that I must withdraw the soldiers who have hitherto protected your estates, but they are needed elsewhere."

"What," cried Pavo, "and leave me to—the people? Why, Captain Cataldo, they will murder me."

"Oh, no, I think not, Signore. You have been training yourself to dance among the scorpions. But you need not remain here. I would advise you to go over to the mainland."

"I have business here that, per Dio! I shall settle first," replied Pavo, as Captain Cataldo withdrew.

The order from his general perplexed the captain. He must obey it; yet he must not leave the Menardis unpro-

tected. He, however, recalled a clause in General Bianci's letter to the Signora, asking that, in case of danger, she and her daughter would find refuge in the Villa Bianci. Of course, the women could not go with the swift-riding cavalry company, across the almost roadless country. They must go around by sea ; and the captain easily persuaded himself that it was his duty to personally accompany them. His first lieutenant was a capable fellow, and could conduct the company in their march ; while he himself, the captain, could join them by the time they should reach Palermo.

It was not difficult to convince the women of the wisdom of the plan. Niccolo, having been called into counsel, concurred. He had special reason for acquiescence. The local squadra of which he was a member had already been summoned to the western end of the Island. By what means ? Wireless telegraphy had not yet been dreamed of, but, by some agency seemingly as subtle as that which whispers at the same instant on a thousand mastheads scattered over the ocean, this news had been passed to the captains of the squadre in all parts of Sicily,—“He is coming !” Old Francesco Fazio informed the patriots who had met at the wine-press. Not since Cadmus sowed the famous Dragons' Teeth that sprang up into soldiers, was there such a resurrection of buried arms. Niccolo must go with the boys. So Padre Omelli would do also, for he must follow his parish. The entire slope of Etna, so far as population counted, seemed to be sliding eastward towards Palermo.

The next night a small sailing vessel slipped out from Giardini. On it were Captain Cataldo, the Signora and Signorina Menardi, en route ostensibly for Palermo.

The scenic glory along the coast of Sicily is such as to make one forgetful of personal cares. Sunrise on the Ionian Sea ! How it monopolizes the soul, even as its

splendours fill earth and sky ! As the dawn advanced the little party watched, or rather bathed in, the golden flush that spread over the waters.

Captain Cataldo was of a somewhat poetic temperament. This was excited not only by the splendour about them, but by the fact that in order to witness it he had to take in a nearer vision of Elena who was sitting opposite him. The knowledge that he was rescuing this fair creature stirred his genius like that of a troubadour. His heart sang with the rhythmic motion of the waves. He called attention to every changing hue in sky and sea as the morning deepened its glories. How the golden light was displaced by purple, which in turn dissolved into azure mantling the vast sheet of water to the agate cliffs of Calabria, except where it was torn by the glistening white roadways of the winds ! Then look at Etna ; its snow cape dyed a soft pink, with the cloud of smoke hanging down upon the giant's shoulder like a Sicilian cap. Now see how the lower slope emerges from its dun night blankets and puts on its purple robe-de-chambre ! And the houses, how they gleam like pearls on the titanic breast, some detached, others strung along roadways, or gathered into village clusters.

As they sailed under the great bluff of Taormina, the bells of San Domenico and half a score of churches and convents rang out sweetly—even the tiny church at Mola, a thousand feet overhead, dropping its thin thread of silvery notes—just as they had sounded half a million mornings before. The voyagers bent their heads in prayer.

Captain Cataldo knew his Homer and Virgil, his Theocritus and Ovid. The interest shown by the face of his companion quickened his memory of the classic antiquity that embroiders the Island with its fascinating myths and traditions almost as continuously as the white foam begirts the shores. Behind them were the rocks

that Polyphemus hurled after the fleeing Ulysses. Before them were Scylla and Charybdis, and, more fortunate than ancient sailors, they saw neither the six-headed sea monster on the Calabrian shore nor the all-engulfing mouth on the Sicilian side. "A happy omen," suggested Cataldo, in view of their present escape. They had turned the northeastern corner of Sicily when the Æolian Islands appeared dimly through the far mists; there where the truant winds were confined in a cave, and let out on holidays to play their mad pranks with the ships that were voyaging against the will of Æolus, the god.

So passed the day. At night the voyagers sought haven in a little landlocked bay.

During the early night Captain Cataldo's conversation took a deeper vein than that of poetry or myth. Indeed, it ran into a more ancient channel than either of these:—the channel that only a young man enamoured of a young woman who reciprocates his sentiment ever finds; but which was discovered by swains long ages before man learned to write out the songs that sang themselves in his heart.

A few hours of such exclusive companionship are more revelatory of character, disposition and accomplishments, than as many years of mere social acquaintance. It happened, also, that the hearts of these two young people were fully sensitized to take appreciative photographic impression of each other. And, we need not say it, both were inclined to make full "exposure."

Mother Agata was held aloof by her own meditations. During the day she was most interested in the stately walls of churches and convents that crowned the promontories; or she let her thoughts float on the sounds of the bells that were wafted to her across the water. When night fell the distant stars deepened sentiment. She thought of Paolo, and his quotation of the sublime words

of Santa Monica, about "the hushed poles of the heavens," when only God Himself, His very Self, spoke without words, without voice. She thought of him, too, in his retreat at San Benedetto. She thought of Giuseppe—where? She commended her dear ones to Him whose eyes, like the stars, never slumber nor sleep. Then she called Elena to retire.

What thoughts floated through the dreams of the younger woman as she lay in her berth need not be recorded. Nor those that kept Captain Cataldo awake until a remembered line of Virgil, "Suadentque cadentia sidera somnos," led him to seek his room.

It was noon the following day when the vessel dropped anchor behind the breakwater at Termini. Captain Cataldo mounted the ladies upon horses which he readily secured. They rode through the narrow streets of the great white town, and out to Villa Bianci, reaching it about nightfall.

"You are as gallant as ever," said Agata as the general assisted her to dismount.

"I am sure that we shall be sisters," was Vittoria's greeting to Elena.

Captain Cataldo put spurs to his beast, and at dawn reported with his company at Palermo.

XLII

HER OWN JOB

THE dampness and darkness of his cell at the Vicaria, his sleepless nights, half starvation, the tragedy of his thoughts in the uncertainty of his personal fate and that of the great cause to which, perhaps, he was uselessly giving his life,—these things had broken down Giuseppe's strength. Now that the strain that had given tension to his will was taken off by the luxuriant quiet of Villa Bianci he yielded to his weakness. For several days after his release from the Vicaria he lay, not only passive in body, but in almost a stagnation of thought,—except when Signorina Vittoria entered the chamber. Then his spirit revived. But he was, so he thought, awaking into an entirely different world ; a softer world, one of which he had not dreamed since childhood days, when he lived among the fantasies that danced over the Etnean hills. He now found himself shaking off the dreary memories of the Vicaria, its rats, its fetid food. A strange acquiescence in the working of human affairs took the place of his wrath at men and things. He almost ceased to think of the damnable Bourbons. He was fascinated with such things as the ever-changing lights and shadows that the fluttering leaves of the lemon tree close outside the window scattered over the floor. He would try to count the mingled yet distinct odours of orange and violet and a score of perfumes that were floated in to him from the garden. He imagined the notes of robin and nightingale to be shreds of music from some far-away chorus of universal

nature. Then he would chide himself for his foolish sentimentalism.

Now and then Giuseppe became very serious as he realized the meaning of all this,—namely, that he was under a woman's spell; that Signorina Bianci was the fountain, and all these pleasing indulgences were but the spray of her charming personality.

With the coming of his mother and Elena, Giuseppe's contentment would have been complete had it not been for two things. He was anxious regarding the affairs of his estate. General Bianci, however, was in sufficient communication with officials at the capital to assure Giuseppe that, except for that of Count Lupis, which had been foiled, no order had been issued as yet for the sequestration of the Menardi property.

The conduct of Signor Pavo was something that more thoroughly stirred his blood. He swore great oaths of vengeance; oaths so big with damnatory significance that he cut them midway in the utterance, as really too horrible for his own ears to hear. He longed to return to his villa, and deal the villain the only justice that the laws or customs of Sicily then permitted. But the danger to the national cause in the event of his rearrest suggested that personal vengeance should wait upon patriotic duty.

Meanwhile strange things were occurring in the neighbourhood of Villa Menardi.

The devil in Lucia had assumed another of his many Protean shapes. The first day of May had passed. Possibly the girl had omitted to observe the custom of the day, which was to pray to the blessed Saints, Filippo and Jacopo—the special jailers of all diabolical imps—to prevent them from coming out of the abyss, and stirring up hurricanes in the atmosphere, and worse storms in the hearts of men. Or, perhaps, Lucia had only omitted

to fortify herself against Satanic attacks by eating raw garlic at the opening of the month, the odour of which was thought by the contadini to be as obnoxious to demons as is the perfume of church incense. With such sweetened breath, she undoubtedly had sung with her neighbours the May song,—

“Santu Fulippu e Japicu biati,
Apostuli putenti e putintati,
L' ariu binidiciti ed annittati !”

but perhaps she had not put sufficient heart into the invocation.

However it was occasioned, Lucia's soul was certainly in a whirlwind of excited emotions. Signor Pavo's imagined assault upon her had completely destroyed all love for him, and disillusioned her of any dreams she may have had of his regard for herself. Her hatred of him was now of the fanged sort.

Other influences also augmented her venom. Pietro called her hard names, insulting, degrading, in reference to her clandestine meeting with Pavo. In one outburst of anger he declared his wish that the Pavo had succeeded in killing her. Her father, Menotti, did not upbraid her, but worse, scarcely spoke to her at all, though all day long she was now at home, since the absence of Signora and Signorina Menardi did not take her to the villa. Menotti evidently felt that disgrace had come to his household. Her mother gave license to her tongue, and though her speech was salted with abundant tears, she said things that her daughter had never heard from her lips except when speaking of the profligate sort of women. When Lucia walked through the village the young men did not seek to talk to her, but, as she noted, spoke quite freely among themselves when she had passed by.

Lucia longed for sympathy. Had Padre Omelli been at the church, she would have gone to confession, and told him all ; but the good man had gone away with the squadra. She regarded the Padre's absence as itself an omen. Had she talked with him she knew that he would never let her do that which she had in her purpose. But now she could act as she pleased, and not offend either Holy Church or the Saints. So her dwarfed conscience grew no thorns. She gave freedom to her hatred of Pavo, her eagerness to avenge her shame. This feeling increased until her soul became indeed a devil's caldron, the fumes of which lethargized what little judgment she possessed.

But the most brainless animals have cunning. Their plots are simple, yet they follow them with a patience and persistency that compensate for lacking wit, whether in hunting food or in wreaking vengeance upon an annoyer of their nest or den. Lucia's mind could not hold together many parts of a plot, but her single purpose of revenge channelled her brain like a rushing torrent. One would have noted that there was a fiercer fire in those black eyes ; perhaps have suspected something uncanny in her half-dishevelled hair, had they met her in the lonely paths she now sought, instead of, as formerly, on the main highways where she invited the gaze of admirers. Some of these by-paths had been her trysting places with Signor Pavo. A different sort of fascination now led her to linger at certain spots where she recalled some special familiarity of the smiling villain. She seemed to inhale with the air of these places a more vengeful spirit.

One day she detected Pavo approaching. She quickly attempted to rearrange her hair, and with her fingers to press out the hard lines from her lips and brow. She was surprised at the kindness, even gratification, the

Signore showed on seeing her. For an instant it seemed impossible that he could ever have made upon her that murderous assault. But she took a lesson from her own craftiness, and said to herself, "As I am luring him, so he is luring me. For some reason he wants to get rid of me—to kill me."

"Ah, Lucia mia, what good fortune has brought us together again? I thought that you, too, had deserted me, like all the other people about," was Pavo's exclamation as they met.

She returned his advances with equal warmth.

"I will not desert you, Roberto, never."

"Then I will not desert you, Lucia, my pretty one. But I am going away. My life is not safe here any longer. I am going to Naples, to live in the splendid city. Lucia, go with me. We will live together. I swear that I will always love you. You shall have everything to make you happy. It's a shame that one so beautiful should waste herself among such beggarly people as around us here. Now that the Menardis have run away there is no one to care for you, as I will. Come with me."

He took her hands. She made no resistance. He put his arms around her, and drew her down to a seat beside himself on the great projecting root of an old olive tree. She felt his kiss upon her lips.

Then two spirits strove within her. Why not yield? Her home had become unendurable. There came visions of the gay life of Naples, bright clothes, new companions who would admire, or be jealous of, her beauty,—she need not care which.

This, however, was but for a moment. "Is he true? No, this man who so brutally struck me will do it again—perhaps now."

Her face must have shown something of what was passing in her thought; for he withdrew his arm. His

look changed. She was convinced that he meditated some instant villainy. Her hand went to her bosom. It gleamed as she withdrew it. Pavo uttered a sharp cry. He tried to grasp her as she leaped away. But his arms dropped.

A knife had entered his heart.

Lucia stood paralyzed by the consciousness of what she had done. Then as the blood trickled from the wound, and her companion's body fell forward upon the earth, an awful fear took possession of her. She tried to run, but her feet seemed weighted by her guilt. Had any one seen her? She listened. Nobody was near. Then she ran, not by the path, but where the underbrush was thickest, where the rocks were highest. But she could not hide herself. She was her own pursuer. The rustling noise of her feet seemed the tramp of multitudes. The whole world knew what she had done. The birds flew away crying out to one another in fright. In a little open space the sheep stood looking at her with accusing eyes. The lizards scurried out of her way as if the murderess would trample them to death. The wind whispered to the trees, "It is she—she—Lucia! Let's away from her."

On she sped until she reached her home. There she fell in convulsive sobbing upon the earthen floor.

Za lifted her. "Why, it's blood! It's blood. She is killed. Menotti! Pietro! Oh, Gesù! Maria Santissima! Help! Help!"

The outcry brought her father and brother from a wall they were mending.

"The Pavo has done this," cried Pietro.

"Yes, it was Pavo," said Lucia. "It is Pavo's blood. I have killed Pavo. Santa Vendetta! I killed him. He would have killed me—because I would not go away with him—leave my Zu and Za and my Pietro."

The girl had risen to her knees as she said this, but sank again to the floor, groaning and muttering to herself.

For a while the three watched her or stared stupidly at one another.

At length Menotti spoke. "Pietro, it was her job. Dio! Pietro, God would not let you or me do this, because—because it was her job. Lucia, where is the knife?"

"On the path by the big olive tree. There he would have killed me. I know it. Oh, Maria! Santa Lucia!"

"Pietro," said the old man, after a little pause, "Pietro, go, get the knife."

"Yes, and I will say I did it. I swore I would when he escaped me on the street."

"No, no," replied Menotti. "Tell everybody that Lucia did it. Everybody knows it was to be her job. She has kept her honour. She has wiped away our disgrace. Oh, mia povera figlia! You didn't give yourself to Pavo. I knew it. I knew it!"

Signor Pavo was buried. Candles lighted the high altar. Candles were grouped about the dead body as it lay in the church. A neighbouring Padre said the service for the dead. The village church was crowded with people; but there were no mourners. No inquest was held. No one asked questions. Only from day to day, men and women went up to Menotti's cottage. They pressed the hand of Zu and Za. They repeated prayers for Lucia. But of the deed they spoke not.

In the wine shops men slapped Pietro on the back, and said, "It's all right, Pietro. It was her job."

What future investigation might have been made was prevented by a rush of public affairs in Sicily that made a single murder like one ruddy drop in a river of blood.

XLIII

GIUSEPPE'S FIRST TASTE OF BLOOD

GIUSEPPE MENARDI was rapidly gaining in strength under the tonic of Sicilian hill air and the cordial of his daily companionships. Indeed he was better than he wished to admit to himself. If his friends really knew how tough were his calf muscles as he walked, and how steady his nerves when he wrote, what excuse could he give for remaining longer in the *dolce far niente* of Villa Bianci? So the make-believe priest played the invalid with cane and easy chair, while the very goats were calling him to competitive tramps over the hills. But his patriotic conscience troubled him.

"I am all right again," he said to Vittoria. "I could carry a gun, and march twenty miles a day."

"But you shall do no such foolish thing," was her reply. "Maniscalco's detectives are everywhere. Only yesterday one of them talked with the gardener about a man of your description. He pictured you exactly, except the pious face you have to wear as you do your cassock. The only other safe place for you would be in Angelo's hut among the jackals. Would you really like to make the change of companions?"

"No!" replied Giuseppe with an enthusiasm that required an embracing gesture to fully express. "You are my *custode angelo*. I never could understand why angels are represented as of the male persuasion. I suppose it is because priests and theologians are generally not married. At least that is my interpretation since you have been my guardian spirit."

The rest of Giuseppe's speech was lost in a sound less articulate than a whisper, such as celibate mystics never understand.

What further scene might have transpired we cannot say, for it was interrupted by the entrance of General Bianci, all excitement. His tongue tied itself in an inextricable knot of Italian oaths, which, unravelled, ran something like the following :

“Dio mio! The Red Devil has arrived at last. He must have come up from the infernal regions and be immune from fire, for he made his landing at Marsala in spite of the broadsides of the Neapolitan navy. At Calatafimi he just clawed our General Landi to pieces. He is now making straight for Palermo. Per Lucifero! The fellow must ride the lightning. Pilo, that *corriere avanzato* of his, who has been going up and down the Island exciting revolt, has fortified the heights back of Monreale. That means that Garibaldi will attack the city from that side.”

Giuseppe leaped from the couch where he had been sitting.

“Diavolo!” he fairly shouted. “Then, general, my parole is up. I can't play priest any longer. You will lend me a horse, general; or let me steal one?”

“No! Per Dio! no, you rebel!” He pressed Giuseppe back upon the couch.

To the general's astonishment Giuseppe found an advocate in Vittoria.

“Can't you see, Babbo, that Giuseppe will chafe himself to death here?”

“Are you a rebel, too? Maria Santissima! Why, we can no more keep down insurrection than we can keep the cactus from growing everywhere. And in my own house? Villa Bianci a rendezvous for— for —”

“Yes, Babbo, for patriots. And you are one of them, too, only you don't know it, dear old graybeard.”

“I? I a rebel? Dio mio! He shall not have a horse of mine.”

“Then he shall ride my colt, Babbo. And more than that, I shall ride by his side in a red shirt. I'll rip up a petticoat to make one.”

General Bianci was confounded. He folded his arms and looked at his daughter for at least a minute.—“You, a Bianci, in a red shirt, riding with a Garibaldino!” He turned away, grunting to himself,—“Per Dio, I believe she would.”

The general summoned a council of war that night. Mother Agata said nothing, only held up her hands in what she knew was useless protestation. Elena was in tears. She threw herself into Giuseppe's arms, but yielded her judgment to her brother's determination. Vittoria compromised with her father so far that she consented to remain at home if Giuseppe went with the best weapons that the general's miniature armoury could furnish.

“No, Babbo; I shall accept no other conditions of my neutrality,” she declared.

“Dio mio!” exclaimed the general. “If Pepe had had such a staff as I have got he would have been ruined.”

Late that night Giuseppe was mounted on the best horse in the Bianci stables. There was a brace of pistols in his priest's cassock, a finely-tempered sword beneath an outer cloak, a carbine across the saddle bow, and a haversack of provisions strapped behind. Mother Agata remained in the house praying. Elena and Vittoria whispered their “Addios” as he leaned from the saddle. The old general pulled hard upon his mustachios, and remarked,—

“Santo Diavolo! What a fighter that fellow will make!”

When they could no longer hear the sound of the horse's hoofs through the lengthening distance they returned to the house.

In the early dawn a groom led the horse, white with sweat-flakes, back into the stable.

"Say, Tonio, where did the beast take the priest last night?" asked one of the men.

Tonio put his finger to the side of his nose, then waved it across his face,—a Sicilian sign of intentional ignorance.

Towards noon the priest, converted into an ordinary contadino in full array of weapons, like many of the squadre when they came in from the country, approached San Martino, back of Monreale. Passing through a storm of bullets with which the Bourbons were sweeping the heights, he joined the band of Rosolino Pilo and Giovanni Corrao.

"Great God!" exclaimed Pilo as he saw him. "It's Giuseppe Menardi. But, man, you were reported in the Vicaria prison. In your name I have sworn the death of a hundred of these damnable Bourbons."

"It must have been a thundering oath, Pilo," replied Giuseppe, "for the detonation of that swear, or something else, burst open the prison doors."

There was a hearty embrace between the men.

"When these bullets stop whistling so that we can talk, you must tell me all about it, Menardi."

"Where is Garibaldi?" asked Giuseppe.

"I don't know," said Pilo, "except that he is always where nobody is looking for him. He sent me orders from Calatafimi to occupy these heights, and hold them until he comes. But let's get out of this rain of balls."

Pilo at this moment was standing behind a clump of rocks, writing a despatch to Garibaldi. He used for his desk the back of a soldier standing in front of him. He

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had written only a few words when a bullet crashed through his skull and the brave man, to whom more, perhaps, than to any other was due the coming of Garibaldi to Sicily, fell dead in his tracks. Giuseppe's first experience of actual war was in helping to carry the lifeless form of his old friend, and his father's friend, to a covert among the rocks where it would be safe from further mutilation by the flying missiles that almost roofed the air above their heads.

Giuseppe bowed over the dead body. Then there came upon him the full battle rage. Human blood is scarcely distinguishable from that of brutes. As Giuseppe afterwards recalled the experiences of that day it seemed to him that his blood had been transformed into that of a tiger. His bayonet was a fang, a part of himself, and his very soul seemed to drink the lives he took among the Bourbons who assailed him.

Under command of Corrao, who assumed leadership after the death of Pilo, the company of Sicilians cut its way through outnumbering hordes of the enemy. The brave men would have abandoned the apparently hopeless field but for a command, mysteriously brought to them from the as yet invisible Garibaldi, to press closer to the city. Why such an order, and how to obey it, were problems which only their desperate valour and unquestioning obedience to their great chieftain enabled them to solve.

XLIV

PAOLO'S SEARCH

WHEN Paolo, at the end of his week at home, returned to San Benedetto, he did not at first gain the Abbate's permission to seek Giuseppe in Palermo. But the novice's state of mind, almost a frenzy of grief and anxiety, at length won the good man's consent.

This was given on condition that Paolo should, while at Palermo, put himself under the direction of the Archbishop, and that he should lodge at the Monastery of the Cappuccini.

It so happened that the news of Giuseppe's escape from the Vicaria had not reached San Benedetto when Paolo started across the hills for the capital, and the condition of affairs about the city prevented any transmission of the tidings.

As he entered Palermo the novice experienced a strange feeling. There was around him something oppressive, almost frightening. It was not in the atmosphere, for never did the sun shine in a bluer depth, and never did the mountains that shape the Conca d'Oro stand more clear-cut against the sky.

There is a sub-base note of a great organ that sends a tremor through the nerves, while it causes no vibration of the tympanum. There are colours so faint that the human eye cannot detect them, but under which, when spread upon glass, insects fear to crawl. Thus over the city of Palermo rested a mysterious something. Invis-

ible, it yet cast a shadow over people's faces. Unheard, it made them start with fear.

Paolo noticed that some of the people on the street turned to look at him with apparent suspicion; and he overheard one remark to another, "That fellow doesn't belong here." A policeman stopped him, and allowed him to pass only upon his showing the address of a letter given him by the Abbate, commending him to the counsel of the Archbishop.

Most of the shops were closed. Groups of idlers crowded the corners. Yet it was not a holiday. Some men walked rapidly as if impelled by excitement. Women gathered in knots at the doorways of their various tenements, and talked hysterically until a policeman came near, when they became silent, or slunk away as caged beasts do when they see the approaching prodding-iron. Cavalrymen dashed rapidly to and fro. Through the chief thoroughfares, like Via Toledo and Via Macqueda, which intersect each other in the centre of the city, companies of infantry marched in quick-step as if hastening to make an assault. Yet Paolo observed that the same men a little later marched as eagerly in the opposite direction. He thought of an ant-hill disturbed from without, the tiny inhabitants of which run about in bustling bewilderment.

He inquired of one, "What is going on in the city to-day?"

"In the city? Nothing. They say that Garibaldi with two shiploads of men from the North has landed at Marsala."

"Impossible!"

"Of course it is impossible; but it's impossible things that devil of a fighter is always doing. You see, Frate, if Garibaldi would only do something that could be done, then the authorities might anticipate him and head him

off. But San Pietro himself can't prevent the impossible from happening. Of course, it's nonsense to think that Garibaldi could sail straight through our royal navy, and land safely on a pier where one broadside would send his whole army to hell. Yet, being Garibaldi, I'm inclined to think he did it. Say, young Frate, perhaps you can tell me something. You know all the traditions of the saints, don't you ?”

“Some of them,” replied Paolo. “What can I tell you ?”

“Tell me this,” pursued the man ; “what was Santa Rosalia's father's name ?”

This antiquarian question rather astounded Paolo, and gave rise to almost a suspicion that some sort of dementia had fallen upon all Palermites. He, however, responded,—

“Your patron Saint's father's name was, if I remember the legend, Sinibaldi.”

“Sinibaldi ? Yes, that's the name,” replied the man. “I shouldn't be surprised if there's something in it after all. There's a wild sort of a monk who says that Garibaldi and Sinibaldi are the same, and that Santa Rosalia sent Garibaldi to Sicily. If so, of course he has landed ; and the government couldn't stop him if they had twenty million instead of twenty thousand soldiers.”

A crowd was gathering about the talker, so Paolo went on up Via Toledo and past the intersection of Via Macqueda, where the throng was dense. A little beyond he came to the grand Piazza in front of the Cathedral. In the centre of this open space was a battery of howitzers pointing outward towards the various gateways. Paolo made his way around the Cathedral to the Archbishop's palace. His mind was in a state too excited with present problems to note either the exquisite beauty or the historic mementoes that crowded the place. He pulled the chain

that rang the palace bell, and was admitted into the court, where, having sent his letter to the Archbishop, he was left alone for over an hour. At length he was summoned. He ascended the ancient staircase, and was admitted to audience.

The venerable prelate was exceedingly gracious in manner, but his words were not hopeful.

"My dear son," said he, when Paolo had risen from his knees before him, "I wish I could give encouragement regarding your brother. While I may regard Maniscalco, the royal representative in the Department of Police, as perhaps too severe, yet I know that he is confronted with a most desperate situation. The people are *en masse* against him. A little while ago he was himself shot by a demagogue, and naturally his mind smarts under the wound. The suppression of the insurrection a month since—I refer to the affair at the Convento della Gancia—was not so thorough as it was at the time thought to be. The rebellion has been but partially smothered. Like fire under the leaves it runs everywhere over the Island, ready to burst out at any moment. And now comes the distressing news that that restless demon Garibaldi has made a descent upon Sicily. I do not believe the reports. They partake too much of the miraculous. Evil as the times are, one cannot credit the devil with such wonder-working powers as are attributed to this adventurer. You can understand, my son, that until the news of Garibaldi's assault is contradicted it would be worse than useless to approach Maniscalco with a proposition to release any political prisoners."

"Is there danger of my brother's execution?" asked Paolo anxiously.

"No, not of any writ for his execution. But there is, however, a rumour that the people threaten to break open the Vicaria and the Castellamare prisons and liberate the

inmates. Maniscalco has made a counter threat to burn the buildings and everybody in them if the attack is made. That keeps the mob away. There is no need, then, of present alarm for your brother. When this wild report about Garibaldi has blown over,—as doubtless it will, for the whole story is too extravagant for belief—then you may approach Maniscalco. In the meantime I will simply countersign this letter from the good Abbate of San Benedetto, so that you may present it as your introduction to the chief of police whenever you find it expedient. In the meantime, my son, avoid the people on the streets. They are full of fanaticism. Entreat Santa Rosalia to pray for you. Her prayers are all potent to-day, as they have been in the past, when, by their efficacy, earthquake and pestilence have been averted from our city.”

Paolo, on leaving the Archiepiscopal residence, lingered long in the Cathedral before the statue of the Virgin Martyr Rosalia. He experienced a calmer state of mind ; indeed, imbibed from the very place a strange quiet of soul which seemed to him could be due to nothing less than the presence of the blessed Saint herself. One cannot say how much of this change of feeling came from his nervous exhaustion, or from the reaction of his mind after prolonged tension of thought upon a given topic, or, indeed, from what the Archbishop had said about the futility of his own personal efforts for his brother's release. He attributed his tranquillity to supernal influence ; in which belief he was happier than if by a process of psychological vivisection he had discovered a reason for doubting it.

After a while Paolo's inner calmness developed into confidence. It seemed to him impossible that heaven should not avert the cruel fate that hung over Giuseppe's head. So strong was this feeling that he determined at

once to make his appeal to Maniscalco. Surely a brother's prayer would move a heart of stone.

He retraced his steps around the Cathedral Piazza, and down the Toledo. Passing Piazza Bologne he felt an involuntary shudder as he recalled that on that spot were once burned the victims of the Inquisition. Holy Church had thus set the seal of its approbation upon the slaughter of her enemies. Was not the state equally justifiable? Poor Giuseppe! What could he plead on his behalf?

The streets now contained a denser and more excited crowd than when a few hours before he had threaded his way through them. He heeded the Archbishop's advice, and passed on speaking to no one. A little way down Via Toledo was Piazza Pretoria, and facing it the Palazzo Municipale, where Maniscalco sat like a spider watching the web he had spun through the city. Paolo inquired his way of one of the hundred policemen who thronged the little circular park awaiting orders to sally out in bands to quell disturbances.

The Archbishop's countersign to his letter gave Paolo access to the office of the noted chief of police. This official was seated at his desk hearing reports and giving orders to a multitude of subalterns that surrounded him.

A glance at Paolo's letter evoked from him a muttered curse about the interference of priests high and low with political affairs. He turned to the young man.

"Well, Frate, your business? Be brief about it."

Paolo struggled with his tears as he made his appeal. Maniscalco's face also showed a struggle, but it was between his wrath and his curiosity. He turned to his secretary, and in an undertone not heard by Paolo asked,—

"Has Menardi been recaptured?"

"No," whispered the secretary, "but they have got the monk who lifted him. They put him through the

ordeal, yet they couldn't squeeze a drop of information. He protested on his crucifix that he knew nothing about the matter."

"Inferno! That monk is a perfect devil. So are they all when once they get on the wrong track. I wish my men had half his wit. If I don't hang the monk I had better put him on the police force. This young Frate here is a simple fellow. He doesn't know that his brother has escaped."

"You are right, chief," replied the secretary. "Don't tell him."

Maniscalco faced Paolo across the broad table where he was sitting.

"When did you come from Catania, young man?"

"Three days ago, and reached Palermo only this morning, Signore."

"You know a Frate called Raffaello?"

"Yes."

"When did you last see him?"

"More than a month ago."

The chief watched closely the face of Paolo, to detect the telltale motion of a muscle if he should be lying; then suddenly asked,— "Where is your brother?"

"In the Vicaria."

The chief swung himself half around in his chair, coolly lit a cigar, and without giving Paolo another glance, said,—

"Well, the Vicaria is the right place for a son of the damned traitor, Antonio Menardi. It's the worst blood in Sicily. You may go, young man."

Paolo was heard no further. Various officers crowded him away from the desk. As he was being ushered from the chamber he overheard snatches of Maniscalco's methods of doing business.

"Monelli, your report."

Monelli responded, "The rumour of Garibaldi's landing confirmed, but he was surrounded and cut to pieces by General Landi."

"Don't believe it," said the chief ; " but let that report be bulletined. It will give the rabble something to think about. Sergeant Petra, signal the war-ships to be ready to shell the neighbourhood of Castellamare and Vicaria in case of any rioting about them."

Paolo emerged upon the Piazza Pretoria. He was faint. His poor brain had been buffeted with blow after blow. He staggered to the base of one of the statues that surround the central fountain. Here he sat down. Had he fallen asleep ? It took a hard shake and some rough words on the part of an officer to arouse him and send him about his business.

"His business ?" What could he do ? As he moved away he remembered that he had promised the Abbate at San Benedetto to seek lodging at the Convento dei Cappuccini. He made his way thither. There was no need of any letter of introduction here. He had never before seen the Brother who welcomed him, but it was as if they had been friends from childhood.

TYRANNY TRIUMPHANT

NOTWITHSTANDING the loving hospitality and words of cheer from the Cappuccini Frati, Paolo passed a night of horrors. He could almost pray that he might take his place in the crypt of the convent as one of the mummified monks who, unburied, at least lie at rest. What was the meaning of the strange tranquillity and confidence that had come upon him during the day, when praying to Santa Rosalia in the Cathedral? Had not the Saint soothed him very much as a surgeon quiets a patient before applying the knife—and with the same need? He could not otherwise account for her interposition.

As he lay tossing upon the hard and narrow bed of the cell there came to him a thought, so strange, and so nearly heretical that he prayed to be forgiven for having indulged it; yet he could not keep it from his mind. What if there were something in what the man on the street had said,—that play upon the words “Sinibaldi” and “Garibaldi”? If Garibaldi should conquer the Island then Giuseppe would be saved. But how else? He recalled with bitterness that Fra Raffaello had had something to do with Giuseppe’s arrest. He thought through and through the words of the Archbishop,—they were kind, but not a syllable of hope in them. And then the heartless, mocking cruelty of Maniscalco! Was not Giuseppe right, after all, when he declared that there was no hope of Sicilian liberties except in the rise

of some new power which would sweep away the existing order? He recalled also the complacency with which his Abbate at San Benedetto had contemplated the possible conquest of all Italy by the House of Savoy under Vittorio Emanuele. "But," thought Paolo, "Garibaldi is reputed to be not even a Catholic. How could his coming be anything but a disaster?" Then his mind reverted to his Biblical studies. King Cyrus of Persia, a Zoroastrian pagan, was the Lord's Anointed for the restoration of the Jews to their land and the rebuilding of their Temple. Why might not Garibaldi in some way serve a sacred cause? But this thought was far from being a conviction;—or even a hope,—only the white fleece of a cloud against the black, black night sky, with no suggestion of a dawn in it.

The darkness deepened over Paolo's soul. Like the outer darkness of night it had in it a soporific potency. He gradually ceased to think. Mind and body fell asleep. It was sleep unbroken by the bells of the night vigil in the convent; sleep unbroken by the uproars that now and then came from the city streets, as some new report elated or discouraged the people; sleep unbroken by an old Cappuccino who came to his cell, looked upon his face, so beautiful, so sad, and went away shaking his head, muttering, "I will let the boy sleep, and I myself will double my prayers for his sake."

Day after day Paolo wandered through the streets. Though his heart was immured with Giuseppe in the Vicaria prison it was impossible not to feel the excitement of the crowds through which he passed. He sought it as a diversion from the corroding thoughts that assailed him when alone.

There were two sources of news; one, the bulletins placarded by the authorities; the other, statements given out at the wine gardens and barber shops. The people

read the former in silence, but repeated the latter with all the fabled tongues of Fame.

Thus the bulletin said, "The enemy cut to pieces by the royal troops near Marsala." On the other hand, the crowd knew that the "Lion of Caprera" had bounded over the hills as far as Calatafimi.

The bulletins reported, "Invaders defeated. Garibaldi captured. His flag taken. The rebels annihilated at Calatafimi." The people tore down the bulletins when, a day later, the royal force marched back to Palermo, half shot to pieces in the battle, and the remnant mobbed by the indignant people of the villages through which they had fled.

Paolo's mind was not unlike the city itself, divided between its royal castles and its restless populace. In his soul was loyalty entrenched by habit and education ; yet he felt passing through him a thrill of enthusiasm as the crowds shouted at news of the success of the invaders ; and now and then his teeth gritted when these popular outbursts were suppressed by policemen with pistol and sword.

Much of the time Paolo spent in the neighbourhood of the Vicaria. He was thrust back by police or soldiers whenever he approached the open space near the prison gate. From a distance he made circuits of the pile of buildings. He watched every window in the structures that could be seen above the surrounding high wall, and tried to catch some sign of a human occupant. To one and another of these apertures he signalled with his arms. Now he extended them over his head, now spread them wide from the shoulders—parts of the code the brothers had practiced from childhood in their games on the hill-sides. He struck up snatches of familiar songs. Once he thought he had awakened a response, but closer inspection revealed the face which pressed close to the

window bars to be that of a woman. So passed the first week of Paolo's hopeless sojourn in Palermo.

It was the ninth day from the landing of Garibaldi and his thousand veterans at Marsala. The city was awakened to the fact that the invaders, in spite of having been several times "annihilated," had reached the mountains just back of Monreale; and on that superb hill suburb of the capital, which lies like another pearl on the opposite rim of the Concha d'Oro, Garibaldi had joined the band of Pilo and Corrao.

The people of the city from housetops and walls watched the sunset flashes from the windows of the old Norman Cathedral of Monreale with emotions different from those that usually moved them. These flashes were not now thought of as the ghosts of thirty dead generations, but were ominous of cannon blasts that might on the morrow send many of the living to join the purgatorial hosts.

Such notions of the common crowd were not, however, entertained by the astute Bourbon generals. Governor Castelcicala congratulated General Landi on the childish blunder of Garibaldi in putting his forces directly within the grasp of the royal armies. Said he, "You have now, general, but to close your hand, and this pestiferous annoy will be done for."

The next day the people of Palermo thronged the streets and open places to see the exodus of the Pharaonic host that was to crush the rebellion. Regiments of infantry made almost a continuous line along the six miles of straight road leading up to Monreale. Squadrons of cavalry, whose brazen helmets gleamed terror to the disloyal, dashed over the roadways that threaded the adjacent hills. Artillery lumbered along the highways to be parked on commanding heights.

Thus the choicest of his Majesty's glorious twenty thousand prepared to crush the daring intruder. How could

even the hero of two continents, with his ill-equipped "Thousand," followed by the untrained squadre of Sicilians that had joined him on the march, hope to contend against the splendid armament that represented the puissance of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies?

Paolo, who had never witnessed any martial display greater than the parade of the Papal Guards at Rome, was convinced of the folly of his dream of hope through the success of the insurrection. He now prayed that the royal victory might be so signal and crushing as to satisfy the righteous vengeance of the government, and leave neither necessity nor desire to further prosecute those who, like Giuseppe, had not, as Paolo supposed, actually taken up arms.

News from the front confirmed the general expectation of the repulse of the invaders. The Garibaldini fought desperately, but were so tremendously outnumbered—fully ten to one—that they relinquished one after another of their positions. After several days they were reported to be in headlong retreat.

For this information Paolo had not only the bulletins issued by the city authorities, but reports directly from the fields. The successful stratagems of the Bourbons were described by those who had devised and executed them. Was not the flight of the insurgents thrillingly pictured by the very men who had hung upon their rear? General Landi had given the pursuit into the hands of the Swiss Colonel von Mechel, who with three thousand men thought that he had followed the Garibaldini far south into the interior of the Island, where, his bulletins reported, he was now busy thrashing out any possible retreats of the scattered remnants of the beaten army.

The city became sullenly silent under the general disappointment. The barber shops and wine gardens were deserted by their accustomed throngs. Men who

had yesterday been outspoken in their insurgent passion were now in timely hiding. Women kept within their doors.

But jubilation reigned in the Palazzo Reale. All the day after the reported defeat of the Garibaldini bands discoursed triumphant music to the throngs of loyalists that gathered in the broad square upon which the massive Palazzo fronted. At night every window of the vast building flared its illumination across the city. The magnificent chapel of the Palazzo, amid whose priceless mosaics princes had worshipped for seven hundred years since the days of Roger the Norman, was being especially decorated for High Mass and Te Deum on the morrow. The royal armies were encamped among the high hills about Monreale, assuring the people that they were at length and finally safe from the depredations of the "Lion," whose teeth and claws they assumed had been effectively drawn.

Paolo spent the early part of that night in his usual wandering places near the Vicaria, praying towards it, and making the stars his altars of invocation for blessing upon Giuseppe. So wrought by excitement was his mind that one moment he seemed to be in actual communion with his imprisoned brother. His eyes penetrated the stone. He saw Giuseppe wakeful upon a pallet of straw, trying to raise his maniced hands to embrace him.

As the night deepened his spirit became more sad, more wakeful. That mysterious something that brooded in the air the first day of his arrival at Palermo was now even more oppressive. The scurrying clouds seemed to him battalions. The soft soughing of the wind from the hills was full of whispers. The weirdness of his environment fitted his mood. He determined not to return to the Convento dei Cappuccini for the night. He needed the tonic of the cool, crisp air in the open to exorcise the

demons that were ready to pounce upon him in dreams if he should attempt to sleep.

Paolo therefore walked along the water-front of the city, baring his head to the salt breezes that flowed over the harbour. He turned into Piazza San Giorgio. Had he known that this was the scene of Giuseppe's arrest, the day he watched the execution of the thirteen martyrs, Paolo might have accounted for the wave of depression that rolled upon him. He stood a moment before the gloomy outline of Castellamare, and shuddered at the thought of the hundreds of prisoners now incarcerated in that fortress, and the thousands before them who had suffered for crimes against the state. He struck the street leading to the ancient market-place, the Fiera Vecchia, noted as the spot where the revolution of '48 began. He sat a long time upon the curb of the fountain, and thought of that unfortunate movement which had orphaned him, and given the Menardis a reputation for "bad blood," as Maniscalco had called it.

It was now past midnight. A slight chill in his bones urged him to walk further. He passed out the Porta di Termine. Here had been erected a huge barricade spanning the entire width of the way. A few men posted at this spot could, unless they lost their nerve, sweep thousands to destruction, should the invaders attack the city by that avenue. The barricade was unoccupied except by a solitary sentinel who kept his beat behind it.

"Which way, black coat?" was the guardsman's challenge.

"May I pass the barrier?"

"Si, Signore, spread your cloak for wings, and fly over it. But where, in the name of all the bat-winged devils, are you going? Maybe to see the ghosts dance on Ponte dell' Ammiraglio. It's just the hour for them. It is a good mile walk to the bridge, Frate."

Paolo climbed over the heap of stones and débris, and pursued his way. As he went along he recalled the history of the city, and how it was by this very road and across the adjacent fields that over two thousand years ago the Carthaginians under Hasdrubel had invaded Sicily, from beyond the Southern Sea; and how they were conquered right here by the Roman Metellus—just as the Garibaldian invaders from across the Northern Sea were now crushed by the Bourbon hosts.

XLVI

THE GREAT "AVANTI!"

THUS brooding Paolo came to the old Saracen bridge, Ponte dell' Ammiraglio, with its quaint arches spanning the now streamless ancient channel of the little river Oreto. He sat down on the projecting base of the ancient Water Tower. A tall pine tree spread its top like a floating island, making a dark spot against the night sky. Among the sharp needles of the tree the light wind seemed to whisper and become articulate with weird fancies. How many legends that old story-teller had repeated to the generations that had listened to his murmuring voices!

At one side of the bridge was the tiny church Dell' Anime dei Corpi Decollati, dedicated to the souls of those who had been beheaded for crime. Paolo mused, "How many bodies have been interred within the little garden in front of this church,—common criminals and martyrs for liberty! The Bourbons have made no distinction between the two classes. If Giuseppe were shot perhaps here his body would be buried."

Then the ancient Ponte dell' Ammiraglio engrossed Paolo's attention. He had no faith in the belief of the people that the ghosts of the beheaded were accustomed to return for a night airing on the bridge, and that by close watching he might detect them passing and repassing above the half-sunken arches. But Paolo was willing to let his mind float off any whither, into any land of myth or miracle, if he could thereby find relief from more distressing thoughts.

Did he dream it? Or was there really a rustling as of half-embodied spirits? The sound was not from so near a point as the bridge; but surely there was something stirring on the hills beyond, in the direction of Gibilrossa. "No," he said, "it is all imagination. The spirits are trying to beat tunes on my ear-drums." He laughed out loud at the silly conceit.

Suddenly there was the sound of a gun. It must have been several miles back in the hills; for he heard only the reverberations, rather than the shot that started them. Had it come from the other side of the city, from Monreale, he would not have thought more of it, for there the grand army was encamped, and the soldiers jubilantly celebrating their victory over the Garibaldini.

"Some contadino has shot a night marauding jackal," mused Paolo. "Yet that is strange, for the people have all been disarmed. To fire a shot like that would bring the country police."

There were others beside Paolo interested in the problem of that sound. One sentinel spoke of it to another. In a little time strange noises came from the direction of the city. Company after company of royal troops hastened down the road from Porta Termini at double-quick, and ranged themselves on either side of the way. Bourbon cannon were rapidly placed to converge their fire upon the bridge.

The mysterious sounds from the mountain grew more distinct. Paolo heard distant footfalls, the crackling underbrush, and subdued orders. Suddenly it was as when a great dam has burst, and the freshet tears down on its course. The farther end of the old Saracen bridge was covered with dusky forms.

The next instant a hundred Bourbon muskets flashed upon the invaders. There was a frightful screech of canister shot. The attacking party from the hills re-

coiled, and then disappeared as if into the ghostdom inhabited by the legendary denizens of the neighbourhood.

But what was that? A voice like a resurrection trumpet sounded above the din,—

“Avanti! Avanti! Entrate nel centro! Nel centro! Avanti!”

They were resurrectionary words indeed, for those whom Paolo had surely thought to have been blown out of the world by the Bourbon fire reappeared. There was a moment's hesitation in their movement. Then that great voice of command seemed to impel the oncomers as if they were wraiths of smoke driven by his breath.

“Avanti! Avanti!”

The shout of command was drowned in the war-cries of the men who obeyed it. In front of the rush of these close phalanges of steel nothing could stand. The Bourbon soldiers were thrust out of the road as so much dust of the highway before the wind, and after them went the human hurricane. The roar of excited voices now and then took definite accent. Here it was “Tukory!” There “Bixio!” “Nullo!” and everywhere “Garibaldi! Garibaldi!” and the tremendous response “Avanti! Avanti!”

The mile from the Ponte dell' Ammiraglio to Porta Termini was quickly passed by the invaders. Paolo was swept along with the tide. There was no alternative but to obey that omnipotent “Avanti!” He had thought of himself as an incipient monk. He was now moved by a strange impulse that he had never felt before and never suspected to exist within himself. He was a part of this human tide. He afterwards remembered that he had caught himself crying with the others, “Avanti! Avanti!”

A soldier fell at his side, struck in the breast by a ball that had evidently come from the barricade at Porta Termini. He grasped the man's musket and took his

place. Others dropped around him, for the streets were swept with canister from cannon near the Porta Antonio, and from the other direction by the guns of a man-of-war.

Paolo did not realize that he himself had been temporarily transformed into a battle-fiend. The excitement must have turned his head. Over the barricade he went as if his black frock had been a veritable pair of wings. On the farther side of the barrier he tripped in his skirts and fell. He thus lost position among "The Thousand," and became involved in a crowd of motley-clothed and diversely armed Sicilians. Some had guns, some pistols, some swords, some only short scythes or mattocks. Yet they moved in compact bands. As the bullets rained down upon them they frequently hesitated; but the white horse of Garibaldi instantly penetrated a lagging throng, and his thundering "Avanti!" never failed in its magical effect.

Amid the *mêlée* Paolo occasionally heard a voice that had to his ears a familiar ring. He worked his way towards it. It was that of old Francesco Fazio. About this scar-blazoned hero of '48 were crowded the men from the Etna district, whose faces Paolo recognized, for day was breaking.

"Ah, Paolo Menardi!"

The veteran Captain Fazio drew him within the covert of a projecting doorway.

"And Giuseppe? No news?" There was no opportunity for an answer. A shell burst just outside the doorway, covering them with dust. "On! On, Paolo! Our squadra is getting out of reach. On!" cried Fazio.

The air overhead was interlaced with whistling bullets, and torn with shrieking shells, which rained their exploded pieces upon the advancing invaders. Almost as deadly a storm fell from the windows and roofs of the houses upon the retreating Bourbons. Paolo could

scarcely restrain a grim smile—now that he was a fiend—at seeing a soldier fairly helmeted by a broken vase.

At Fiera Vecchia the victors paused. The Sicilians of the squadra crowded about Garibaldi to get their first look into his face. Paolo saw a most impressive countenance and head. He had been fond of studying in Roman galleries those faces in which great masters sought to depict the souls that had wrought splendid deeds, or been possessed of masterful character,—apostles, saints, martyrs, reformers, warriors, poets. But this chieftain's physiognomy was beyond deciphering. It was a face that fascinated ; beautiful, full of sweetness, even tenderness,—utterly unfitting this man of blood, thought Paolo. But to a second glance it was one of tremendous strength. The student realized that at moments it might become terrific. The head was leonine. The long nose was on a line with the high forehead ; and, with the thick beard and tawny hair streaming about his neck, made it evident why he had been called the "Lion of Caprera."

The general sitting upon his horse took off his round Spanish cap, loosened the flamboyant coloured kerchief from his neck, and acknowledged the cries that came from all sides,—

"Viva Garibaldi ! Viva Galibardi ! Viva l'Italia ! Viva la Talia !" according as the shouter spoke the dialect of the North or the South.

"Viva Sicilia !" replied the general, waving his cap.

What a voice ! It was soft, yet detonating like distant thunder.

The general raised his hand. "We will rest a moment, Comrades of the Red Shirt, and Brothers of the Squadre."

His words were echoed in the bursting of bombs overhead which almost deluged them with shrapnel. Garibaldi gave quick laconic orders, at first to "The

Thousand," and then to the captains of the squadre. He put on his round cap, and raised his sword,—

"Avanti!"

On flowed the tide, spotted with crimson.

"Our shirts need redyeing, Bixio. That was an ugly wound you got at the barricade. More caution! I command it."

"You set me a bad example, general," was Bixio's response.

The uproar drowned their voices. Paolo heard no more. Steadily the cold steel cut its way. Small groups of fighters would detach themselves from the main body, and, making détours through the side streets, attack the Bourbons on the flank, throwing them into confusion, so that many fell under the bullets of their own comrades. Along Via Toledo flowed the main current of slaughter until at length the Bourbons fled, not pausing until they were within the defenses about the Cathedral.

As if by the work of invisible hands the main thoroughfares were quickly cross-barred with new barricades, the victors thus securing every inch they had taken. For several hours Garibaldi made his headquarters in Piazza Bologni, the site of the ancient Autos-da-fe; later at Piazza Pretoria, where Paolo had had his unfortunate interview with Maniscalco, the chief of police.

By noon the city was practically possessed by the patriots. The Bourbons, retreating from all outlying parts, crowded the Piazza about the Cathedral, where with shots and dashes they vented their impotent rage upon the defenseless population, sparing neither residences nor churches. The contrast of the victor's protection of the homes and the monuments of Palermo gave rise among the more superstitious to the belief that Sinibaldi in the guise of Garibaldi had, indeed, been sent by Santa Rosalia to save her city.

XLVII

THE PRISONER

THE second day's fighting in the streets was as desperate as the first. The Bourbons were assailed, not only by the Garibaldini and the squadre, but also by the populace who rained upon them from windows and housetops every sort of thing that could tear the flesh or crush a skull. Tiling torn from roofs, stones wrenched out of walls, masses of stucco, cornices, chimney-pots, stoves, heavy furniture,—these, having done duty as missiles, were further economized by being built into barricades.

Especially ferocious was the struggle around Porta Macqueda. It was on a side of the city remote from where Garibaldi had entered. It was now attacked from without, evidently by a band of patriots who had not entered with "The Thousand" of Garibaldi. Paolo had gone to the neighbourhood of Porta Macqueda in company with a Cappuccino, who, observing the wrecked condition of both the young Benedettino's mind and body, insisted upon being his comrade. The Cappuccino was clad in the dark-brown habit of his Order, with sandals that left bare his heels; but Paolo's black robe, covered with the dirt of the street and torn by his extemporized soldiering of yesterday, was scarcely distinguishable from the dress of his companion.

Surely Dante and Virgil, as they watched the demoniac dwellers in the Inferno, had no stranger vision than that which these two men witnessed at Porta Macqueda, which had now become a veritable gate of

hell. The crowd that poured over its barricades and into the city might have been projected *en masse* by some Plutonian catapult. "Red-shirted Devils!" How well the name fitted them! They scattered here and there, dodged behind projecting walls, crouched behind heaps of débris, yet fired with unerring aim. Then, at a bugle note, they reassembled and swept away the Bourbons at the point of the bayonet. Their war-cry, the name of their leader, well fitted throats torn by a diabolical rage.

"Corrao! Cor-r-r-a-a-o! Cor-r-r-a-a-o!"

The Cappuccino put his fingers into his ears; but Paolo had become familiar with battle shrieks. As the human avalanche rushed by, one of Corrao's soldiers stopped, and stared a moment as if he would approach the Frati; but he was borne away in the mad rush.

Paolo thought of Giuseppe, he scarcely knew why. He imagined that he had been dazed for a moment.

The capture of Porta Macqueda by these newcomers relieved that section of the city from the presence of the King's soldiers, and thus isolated the Vicaria, leaving it unprotected except by the warden and his posse of jailers. Paolo and the Cappuccino hastened to the prison.

A panic had seized upon the custodians of the Vicaria. They fled from their posts, and escaped in every direction where the rage of the crowd was less violent or its eyes less vigilant. From within the prison came a mighty uproar, men shouting curses and calls for help. To those outside, the Vicaria seemed a vast cage of wild beasts,—and wild they were, those two thousand men; and as diverse characters as there are species of brutes in a menagerie,—patriots, pickpockets, nobles, lazaroni, noted publicists and the ignorant broth of the demi-monde. The vocal performance of shrieks had an instrumental accompaniment of doors being battered down and window bars being wrenched out.

The crowd caught the warden, Colonel Brisco, as he was escaping across the square. He was forced to return and unlock the great gates of the prison. Out poured a motley multitude, suggesting to a watcher that they might have been a horde of emigrants from the Stygian shores. All were in rags, unshaven, unkempt, with haggard faces. Some seized whatever bludgeon was at hand—a bolt, a pair of handcuffs, an iron cooking-pot—and with it rushed forth to fight to the death for their new-found liberty. Others moved slowly, emaciated and weakened by long years of confinement. They put their hands above their eyes to shut out the unaccustomed glare from the sky. Here and there were groups that kept together,—perhaps helping with their arms to support or carry a fellow prisoner. Some stood singly for a moment, then darted across the Piazza, into any doorway that was open, or down narrow alleys, as if they feared lest the light of day should lead to recapture.

Paolo and the Cappuccino watched closely the long line that poured out the prison gate. Would Giuseppe never come? The crowd of fugitives grew thinner. Now only here and there a belated man hobbled out, looked about him in a dazed manner, perhaps started back again as if afraid that the onlookers were enemies, or that the long wall was the place where they should stand to be executed. At length the human current ceased. Giuseppe had not come!

“Let us search the cells,” said the Cappuccino. “It may be that he is ill.”

As they went slowly along the narrow corridors the Cappuccino sought in vain to comfort with words the agony of his companion. At length he said:—

“Brother, there is only one thing we can do.”

“What is that?”

“Help these other poor wretches. Come!”

Paolo sank down to the floor. His comrade lifted him.

“Brother, there are two things we can do. Help these others, and then in the ranks you can take vengeance, if God calls for it, for Giuseppe’s blood. Come!”

“I will go to the army,” said Paolo, tearing the words through his clenched teeth.

“But first, Paolo, the duty nearest hand. We must help these others. Remember we are Christians. Mercy is urgent. Vengeance, even justice, can wait. Come, Brother!”

Paolo with difficulty controlled himself. He would hasten away. He would know the fate of Giuseppe.

“But, Brother, you cannot know it now. If Maniscalco has killed him, or has released him, how can you find it out? Where is that monster Maniscalco? You will not find him sitting to-day at his desk in Palazzo Municipale. Later Garibaldi will avenge Giuseppe if any harm has come to him. We must let justice wait. Come! Mercy first, Brother. For Gesù’s sake, come!”

As they passed through a narrow corridor they heard a groan. Following the direction of the sound they came to Number 345.

“You go in here, Brother,” said the monk. “There’s another man a little further down the corridor that needs help. I’ll go to him.”

Paolo turned the great bar, and flung open the door of Number 345. On the cot of straw a man was kneeling, his face upturned towards a thread of light that came through the narrow window of the cell. He seemed in an ecstasy of prayer, as if his soul were trying to climb upward by the ray and so rise to full liberation. Paolo was startled at the face, thin, pale; the eyes sunken, yet flashing with almost maniacal lustre. For all the change that had passed upon it he could not but recognize the features.

He was Fra Raffaello.

"What is it, jailer? An earthquake? Has Etna burst?"

"Yes, Fra Raffaello," shouted Paolo, "an earthquake, indeed. Garibaldi has taken the city. But, Raffaello! Raffaello, how came you here?"

At the well-known voice the Benedettino was upon his feet.

"Placido! Paolo Menardi!" he cried. He stared a moment; then passed his hands over his face as if to tear away the veil of some illusion. At length he realized that what he saw was flesh and blood, and not the incorporeal form of an angel such as had once opened the prison doors of San Pietro in Jerusalem. He knelt at the feet of the young novice, embraced his knees, and exclaimed,—

"Placido! Placido! God has sent you to me."

"Yes, God and Garibaldi," cried Paolo, in his enthusiasm, without a suspicion of uttering any blasphemy.

"And—and Garibaldi?" repeated the monk, drawing back from him.

"Where—where is Giuseppe?" Paolo fairly shouted the question, for the din outside the prison was such as to drown more quiet speech.

"I know not," said Raffaello. "In this cell I offered life for life, my life for Giuseppe's life; but he would not take it. Then Maniscalco thrust me in here; but Giuseppe was gone. Gesù grant that he is safe! I have made my sacrifice as I desired. Oh, heaven forbid that it has been a useless one!"

"Then let us be gone, Fra Raffaello. The battle may turn at any moment. Come! We must escape while we can."

"I cannot escape, Paolo, until I know that I have your forgiveness."

“Forgiveness? Oh, I forgive everybody—everybody, if we may only find Giuseppe—my Peppino.”

When Paolo and Raffaello reached the open space before the Vicaria they were joined by the Cappuccino, who came supporting a poor body that had been wracked by long confinement until the man had lost the power and the will to help himself.

Seated upon a stone in the Piazza in front of the Vicaria, near where the wall had been riddled by bullets in many a previous attempt to batter down the hideous prison, Raffaello told the story of his arrest on the road to Catania; and Paolo told the story of his futile search for Giuseppe.

It was agreed that Palermo was no place for Raffaello in case of any reversion of the Garibaldian success, since he was well known to the police.

The screech of the bullets over their heads hastened Raffaello's resolution. He sought the road to Catania.

“Now, Brother, you can go again to the soldiers. Let us seek your Etnean squadra,” said the Cappuccino.

This was a difficult thing to do. There were many barricades, to some one or other of which the various squadre had been assigned. To pass between these was, with all their caution, slow and dangerous work, for the open streets were swept with bullets, compelling the two men now to dodge from doorway to doorway, and to take covert temporarily in the openings of narrow alleys.

Paolo with his Cappuccino comrade turned down Via Toledo to the Piazza Pretoria. This little circle was comparatively a “belt of calm” amid the storm that raged elsewhere. The tranquillity was not due, however, to any diminution of flying missiles, for the Bourbons, having discovered that Garibaldi had made the adjacent Palazzo Municipale his headquarters, used the spot as the very bull's-eye of their target. The calm was of an-

other sort,—in the unperturbed figure of the great general, who sat at the base of one of the statues surrounding the fountain, the very seat that Paolo had himself occupied on coming from his interview with Maniscalco. The general was apparently as unchafed by the screeching of shells overhead and the occasional bounding of some fragment of them across the Piazza as if he himself were one of the marble custodians of the fountain. Now and then he would snap at the intruding missiles with a little whip he held in his hand, as a child might do in frightening away the birds that were too venturesome in their approach.

As Paolo and the Cappuccino stood a moment in admiring gaze at his coolness, Garibaldi's attention was drawn to them. He beckoned them to approach.

"Ah, Frati, have you lost your way?"

"I am not lost," replied Paolo. "I would find the squadra from Etna."

"Oh, Francesco Fazio's boys! You will soon hear from them somewhere. Brave fellows!" responded the general.

Paolo in hasty sentences told of his fears regarding Giuseppe.

"Giuseppe Menardi?" exclaimed Garibaldi. "I have heard much of him from Crispi and Rosolino Pilo. Poor Pilo! killed at San Martino."

As he mentioned the name of this martyr, the news of whose death at San Martino a few days before was a great shock to the patriots, the voice of Garibaldi choked with emotion.

"But for Pilo's insistence I would not have come to Sicily," said Garibaldi. "Pilo mentioned your brother as one of the best men in the Island. Are you not both the sons of Antonio Menardi, who fell at Messina in '48? I know the names of those men as well as a nun knows

the calendar of the Saints. You have good blood in you, Menardi. I swear that I will take terrible vengeance if any treachery has come to Giuseppe Menardi."

Paolo felt a strange thrill as he heard this praise of his father from the great chief. In his home he had been accustomed to hear his father's name spoken with pity, as if for some weakness or fault he had committed. Giuseppe had always resented this, and worshipped his father's memory. Now to hear Antonio Menardi called a hero by the foremost hero of the age stirred Paolo like a trumpet. And the words, "good blood," from such lips, how they compensated for the insult of Maniscalco's "bad blood."

But Paolo was completely overcome when Garibaldi put his hand upon his head as lovingly as ever did the good Abbate of San Benedetto.

A messenger spoke hastily to the general. In an instant, dispensing with any service of an orderly, Garibaldi was in the saddle and dashing up Via Toledo towards the Cathedral, where the fighting had been resumed more desperately than ever by the Bourbons.

XLVIII

FOR MY SAKE!

ONLY the strongest spirits can maintain for a long time one continuous emotion. A tremendous passion, like a fever in the blood, burns up its own fuel. So the battle rage in Paolo's breast died down. Especially did the fiercer feeling weary the fineness—almost effeminacy—of his nervous constitution. Furthermore, his grief for Giuseppe softened him. It might be said that his tears dissolved everything in his heart that was hard and hateful.

He was overwhelmed by the possibility of Giuseppe's fate. The Cappuccino noted the physical weakness of his friend. He advised his retirement to the comparative quiet of the convent, and led him thither. At times he had to sustain with his stronger arm Paolo's almost fainting form, as together they climbed over barricades, and trod among the dead and dying who clogged their passage through the streets.

Many of the monks were gone from the convent. Some had taken refuge within the Bourbon lines. Others, like frightened sheep, were wandering over the hills towards Monreale. A few of the monks had joined the Garibaldini, their Sicilian patriotism asserting itself without detriment to their piety. A number had given themselves to works of mercy among the wounded of either party.

The venerable Cappuccino, who had prayed by his side and watched him the first night of his lodging at the convent, now made Paolo his special charge. He encouraged

him to take food, and sat by his bedside. For hours Paolo could not sleep. He tried to silence his wild thoughts by effort of will, but they were as little amenable to his command as were the noises of the street. He repeated prayer after prayer, keeping tally on his beads. At length the very monotony of this exercise lulled him. He fell asleep.

It was a dreamful sleep. In Paolo's imagination were repeated the horrible scenes of the day; except that fighting men were changed into demons. The incessant booming of guns, the shrieking of shells, the crash of falling buildings, the thousand noises which the thick walls of the convent could not exclude, prompted visions of an infernal pandemonium where devils clashed in armour and the very battlements of heaven were undermined and toppling.

As he dreamed, the lurid glare gave place to a softer radiance, which fell about him like that of the dawn he had so often watched as it broke over distant Calabrian mountains, flashed iridescently across the Ionian Sea, and rested in roseate hues upon the snowy slopes of Etna. The light seemed to Paolo to take form—the form of a man. His face glowed as the sun. His garments were soft and white as the fleecy clouds that fleck the blue sky over Sicilian hills. Oh, the sadness of that face! It was turned downwards, looking eagerly, lovingly, pitifully. His arms were extended, the palms earthward as in blessing. At what was this superhuman being gazing? Paolo saw that beneath those hands lay a vast battle-field covered with ghastly corpses, as thick as the little mounds about the grape-vines planted in the fields around Catania; writhing bodies, staring eyes, lips parched and opened in voiceless entreaty.

What did it mean? He had no time to inquire, for another light blotted out this vision. This was the glare

of a bursting shell that came through the narrow window and illumined the cell. Paolo started wide awake. There was another flash, in which he saw the old Capuccino sitting upon the stool at the foot of the bed, asleep, his head bowed upon his bosom, his hands clasped as in prayer.

The monk, awakened by Paolo but not by the crashing noises, came and gently pressed him back upon his pillow.

“Lie down again, my Brother.”

“I cannot sleep,” said Paolo. “Did you not see it?”

“See what? I have seen nothing,” replied the monk.

“You have been dreaming. Dream on again. Would that all this hideous noise of the street were but a dream, the rattling of my poor old brain. Sleep on again, my boy. It is better than waking.”

“Dreaming!” thought the student. “Did not God of old appear to men in dreams? Why not now?”

He lay back upon the pillow, and tried to weave again the fleecy shreds of his vision; but the effort was as futile as if one should attempt to reknit the clouds dishevelled by the winds.

He then tried to interpret the apparition. What could it mean? That it was a message to himself he could not doubt. Paolo was by nature and from his Sicilian environment a mystic. From childhood the visible world had been to him little more than the mask of the spiritual. Beneath the lightest zephyrs there were whispering voices; only he could not quite hear their articulation. The torrents were so many declaiming spirits, whose discourse he could not quite translate. The night darkness was the accumulation of the shadows of passing beings whom his eyes were too dull to fully recognize. The stars were the abodes of departed saints whose ministries were as incessant as the sparkling

streams of light they poured upon the earth. All of which is simply saying that Paolo was a Sicilian who at Rome had read Dante, and become a thorough mystic. He had no doubt that his dream was a communication. But what did it mean ?

When the matin bell floated through the din of the city's strife its first call to prayer, Paolo thought he had found an interpretation of his vision. That luminous figure must have been the presence of the Master. The extended hands, the palms turned downwards towards the wounded and dying, was it not a command to him to go out and minister to the suffering ?

The fighting during the third day was, if possible, more ferocious than that of the two preceding. Paolo went where the *mêlée* was thickest, but he refused to be armed except with the crucifix suspended from his girdle. He helped to carry to protected places those stricken down by bullets and shrapnel. He gently closed many eyes with the death-stare in them. He wrote in his memory the last messages of the dying, that he might transmit them to loved ones far away over Sicilian hills, and across the seas. Penetrating the wild war-cries of the contestants he seemed to hear constantly a gentle voice whispering to him,—

“Do this for My sake.”

That voice called him here. It called him yonder. Now he knelt by a mangled Bourbon soldier ; now by a patriot—both alike to him in the strange brotherhood of suffering and mortality.

Thus borne along on the shifting blood currents Paolo found himself in Via Toledo at a moment when the royalists were making supreme effort to reconquer that section of the city. Issuing from the Cathedral Piazza, by sheer momentum of numbers they routed all before them. On they swept down the Toledo. It seemed to

Paolo, who from a sheltered point took in the scene, that the city must now be lost to the patriots.

In front of the Bourbon howitzers the street was empty, the living having fled within doors, only the dead lying in piles.

Suddenly from far down the Toledo came shouts—"Garibaldi!" "Garibaldi!" "Piddu!"—this last a familiar title of affection that the Sicilians gave to their great chieftain. The name was caught up by hundreds who leaned far out of the windows ignoring danger from the bullets that, flattened by impact upon walls and cornices, whistled dirges about their heads.

It transpired that Garibaldi, hearing that his forces were being driven back by the enemy, had gathered a nondescript body of some threescore men who were about him at the Pretoria headquarters. There were a few red shirts, many in contadino clothes, several of the better sort of citizens.

"Avanti!" cried Garibaldi. "Avanti!"

The motley company advanced rapidly, taking covert within one doorway after another, whence they gave deadly aim at the less cautious Bourbons who in their conceit of easy victory crowded the centre of the street.

"Garibaldi!" The sound was like a pæan of victory to the patriots.

"Avanti!" was the response.

No longer losing time in picking cartridges and loading muskets, the Garibaldini emerged from their coverts, formed into lines, lowered bayonets, and, as if they were one man—or rather the various muscles in the compact body of a single leopard—sprang upon the enemy. The charge was checked for an instant by a volley from the Bourbons that wrought sad havoc among them. But the thunder of the leader's voice seemed to shock the fallen back to their feet, and with limping steps and dripping

footprints they covered the space between themselves and their opponents. Cold steel, except when he could plunge it into the back of an antagonist, was something the ordinary hired Neapolitan soldier abominated. The victors of a few moments before turned and fled.

One company of the Bourbons was less hasty than the others in getting away. There was a brave man among them whose ferocity infected his comrades, so that for a while his men kept their ranks: and when at last they broke before the furious impact of the assailants their captain was still standing in his place, under the delusion of the battle mania that, with his sword, he could withstand the momentum of the bayonet.

This captain was directly opposed by a Garibaldino in citizen's dress—so far as he was dressed at all. This man was about to deliver the fatal thrust at the Bourbon's breast, when he hesitated an instant, then raised the point of his bayonet so that it avoided its victim. The captain slipped and fell. Over his body would have gone the whole crowd of the Garibaldini had not this citizen soldier covered the prostrate form with his own, and dragged it hastily to one side.

"You are my prisoner, Captain Cataldo," said Baron Riso. "I must take your word to stay here."

"I give it, Baron," was the reply.

Riso hurried away after his general. In a few moments he returned to claim his captive.

"Your stand, captain, was the bravest thing I ever saw a Bourbon do," said Riso, lifting Cataldo to his feet.

"Don't talk of that, Baron. But for the fact that an old friend, and not one of your red-shirted fiends was pitted against me, I wouldn't be here now," gasped the captain.

"I am afraid that you are not altogether here, captain," replied the Baron, as he noted the blood streaming from the shirt-sleeve of his friend.

"That's nothing," said Cataldo. He tried to walk, but fell back fainting. Baron Riso's arm held him.

Another incident of deeper moment occurred further down the Toledo. When Garibaldi's charge was staggered by the last volley of the retiring royalists Paolo, from his covert in the doorway of a wine shop, noticed a soldier reel and fall. He thought that the body would be torn to fragments by the bullets and canister shot that made their white marks on the paving stones about it.

Then he seemed to hear that mysterious Voice,—

"For My sake! For My sake do it!"

Instantly he darted from his shelter out among the missiles, and pulled the body back into the shelter. The door was opened, for every house was a hospital. Other hands helped him. The apparent corpse was stretched upon the floor. With a sharp cry Paolo flung himself upon it.

"It's Giuseppe! It's Giuseppe! Oh, Peppino mio! Peppino mio!"

He kissed the face though it was smeared with blood.

A bullet had struck the victim at the top of the forehead. A long cut marked its course back, making a furrow in the bone.

"Oh, Peppino mio! Peppino mio!"

"Stand back, men! Stand back! Water! Water!" cried others, and the half-demented brother was led one side.

"Room for another!" was shouted at the doorway. Baron Riso appeared, with the help of a comrade bringing the limp form of Captain Cataldo.

"Good God!" cried the Baron, when Cataldo was stretched upon a counter and he recognized Menardi. "Menardi killed!" He quickly probed with his finger the course of the latter's wound.

"The ball has not broken the bone," he said. "It

has only dented it. Maybe he is only stunned by the concussion. Thank God! He is reviving. Brandy! Quick! Ah, Menardi, you are too grand a fellow to be killed by a cowardly Bourbon's shot."

"Menardi? A cowardly Bourbon? Who says that?"

The voice came from the counter where Cataldo was just awaking to consciousness. He raised himself to his elbow, and stared at the group on the floor, but lapsed again into stupor.

Paolo bent eagerly over his brother's face. The eyes opened. The lips moved.

"Paolo! Paolo! You here?"

"You know, then, who saved your life, Menardi?" said Baron Riso. "The general sent me back to look after you. But I am not needed here. The Frate who pulled you in will take care of you. I will be back again."

Baron Riso was gone.

XLIX

VICTORS AND VANQUISHED

WITH that third day's fight the battle of Palermo was practically over.

The following day Garibaldi was at the Pretoria taking stock of his arms and ammunition. He smiled grimly as he heard the various reports, which he summed up as follows,—

“Less than four hundred muskets left, and about a dozen rounds of cartridges! Twenty thousand Bourbons at the other end of the street, and their whole navy bombarding us from off the Marina!”

Secretary Crispi approached at the moment. He was a tall man, very spare, if not in original build certainly made thin by the wear and tear of his fugitive life in dodging Bourbon detectives.

“Crispi, unless you can work a miracle we have dug too deep a hole for ourselves to get out of.”

“There is no need of our working miracles,” replied Crispi. “General Lanzi has done that for us. Look here!”

He presented a letter addressed to “His Excellency General Garibaldi.”

“Well,” replied the general, “we have taught him at least to be respectful. He used to call me ‘that wild beast.’”

Garibaldi read aloud the astounding contents of the letter,—proposing a suspension of hostilities!

"The coward! The fool!" was the victor's laconic response.

One week later papers of capitulation were signed by the Royal Commissioners, and as soon as sufficient transports could be sent from Naples the twenty thousand of His Majesty's finest embarked at the Marina amid the clanging of church bells, the delirious yells of a liberated population, and volleys of musketry with which the Garibaldini used up much of the scarce remnant of their ammunition.

The army of "Red-shirted Devils" was transformed into hospital and burial corps, guards for public buildings and churches, policemen among the denizens of the slum sections, temporary teachers in schools, superintendents of a score of charities with which the victors endeavoured to complete the redemption of the city. Garibaldi seemed to forget that he was a soldier, and went among the sick and wounded with a tenderness that makes it easy to believe the stories of his life in his island home of Caprera, where in the interval of wars he watched the goats and carried in his arms the kids that had fallen into mishaps among the rocks. The nuns in Palermo came in procession from the convents and kissed his hands. The Archbishop blessed his banners, and the ever-credulous people told again the legend of Santa Rosalia's father, whose name was Sinibaldi.

Captain Cataldo did not go back to Naples with the Bourbon army. One reason for his remaining was that Baron Riso had carried him off to his own palace on the Toledo, since from the wound that had cut well between the ribs he was too sick a man to be other than submissive to his captor.

"Menardi," said Cataldo turning to his fellow patient, "I would rather my family should mourn me dead than

see me marching home with that cowardly crowd. Besides, Menardi, the game is up. King Francesco has lost Sicily. No doubt he will put up another fight across on the mainland where he has almost a hundred thousand soldiers. But if Garibaldi crosses the strait at Messina half of them will desert. The only thing that can save the throne is the King's giving the people a liberal constitution like that which Vittorio Emanuele has given to Northern Italy. But, Menardi, I am through soldiering, at least until I find a cause worth spilling blood for."

This speech was as much as Cataldo could get through. He lay back upon the pillow of his lounge. Giuseppe, with his bandaged head supported by a big bolster on an adjacent cot, took up the conversation.

"You guess right, Cataldo. Garibaldi is moving again. General Medici, who is like his right arm, is going along the north coast of the Island towards Messina. If any Bourbons are left there he will clear them out, and the panther, as they call our chief, will spring across the Straits. And when he does that, Vittorio Emanuele will have to send his armies down from the north, else he will lose prestige, and Count Cavour is too much of a statesman to allow that. Now, I tell you, Cataldo——"

"Silence!" interrupted a light, but commanding, voice which came from beautiful lips beneath the white head-dress of a hospital nurse. "You two boys must be still, or we will never be able to get you out to Villa Bianci. Just think of it:—Sister Elena and I have been here over a week, and you two have taken up more of our time than the other forty whom the Baron has brought to this house. Besides, Signor Menardi,"—she put her head close to the big bolster as she smoothed it—"besides, Peppino mio, I want you to be strong enough to have a good long talk with Paolo to-morrow.

You know that he goes back to San Benedetto the next day. What a loving fellow he is! Old Francesco Fazio, who is dying on the top floor, in his wandering last night, called Paolo 'Cristo' until Padre Omelli diverted his mind."

L

THE ABBATE'S BLESSING

PAOLO returned to San Benedetto. The place seemed changed to him. Perhaps this was due to a change in himself. A new atmosphere enveloped him, through which all things took on a different hue.

Yet one change was outwardly, and sadly, real. Fra Christofero's chair at the table in the refectory was empty. According to the ancient custom in the convent, his plate was filled with the food portioned out to him; but before it stood a crucifix. This told the story without need of question;—the Brother had passed away. For thirty days the viands that he would need no more were conveyed to some poor body to whom he had been accustomed to minister in his rounds of charity.

Warned by frequent heart failures, Christofero had one day asked to be laid upon the ashes strewn over the floor in the shape of the cross. Around him gathered the Frati. A rosary and crucifix were placed in one hand, a lighted candle in the other. He asked forgiveness of all if he had ever offended any; then repeated the words of his last prayer, "Into Thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit." The Frati chanted the "Suscipe me, Domine." On the third day his body was placed in the vault.

Paolo's grief for his old friend was mitigated by the kindness of the Abbate's reception. The good man showed as much joy at the account of Giuseppe's rescue as if both the brothers had been his own children. Over

and over again he made Paolo tell the story of the happenings at Palermo.

While listening to the description of Garibaldi's charge up the Toledo the old man's eyes flashed with fire very different from the serene light that usually shone in them. It was as if he had lowered his eyes from heavenly visions to seeing things infernal. An old soldier's blood never becomes cool ; it only drops below the boiling point. A little martial excitement will set it again in ebullition. Paolo thought he had never seen the holy man raise his knees so high as he did while walking with him around the cloister garden, and listening to his account of the Garibaldini.

"Garibaldi, I am told," said Abbate Bernardo, "is a fierce-looking man."

"No. The gentlest face I ever saw," replied Paolo. "He is terrific only in fight. A strange man ; seraphic and diabolical by turns. I saw him once beside himself with rage. A hundred fiends seemed to struggle in his face as he drew sword on a soldier that had insulted a nun. The next moment a tear suffused his eyes, as he refused to let the nun kiss his hand in gratitude."

"My son," said the Abbate, "let us talk no longer of these things,—of blood and battle rage. It carries me back to my unregenerate days. You found, did you not, sweet companionship among our Cappuccini brethren at Palermo ?"

Paolo endeavoured to describe that wonderful vision of the Christ in the cell. To Bernardo the young man seemed to be inspired in his language. It was as if San Giovanni were repeating parts of the Apocalypse. The old man's face shone, reflecting the ecstasy of his spirit.

Paolo hesitated to break in upon the Abbate's rapture, but was impelled by the great burden on his own mind, and said,—

“Father, a thing greatly disturbs me. You are wise. Let me lay my very soul open before you. That day in the wine shop, as I was bowing over what I thought was the dead body of Giuseppe, I made a vow—a vow to give my life to being a Son of Consolation to human suffering. But, Father, I have been taught that Holy Church regards the passive virtues as superior to the active virtues ; the life of a recluse, of an ascetic, of one who separates himself from close contact with one’s fellow men, as more sacred and acceptable to God than a life of outward devotion. But amid those pitiable scenes I felt that I must forego the life of mere spiritual meditation and prayer. Oh, this life here at San Benedetto seemed so selfish to me. I felt that I must work with these fleshly hands to lift up the fallen : that my place was not in the cell, but in the garret where poverty groans, in the hospital where men are crying with pain, in the pulpit of the churches where sinful men and unbelievers throng. Did I sin in that ? Tell me, my Father. I have opened to you my whole soul.”

The Abbate did not at once respond. At length he said,—

“There are those, my son, who hold the doctrine that the passive are the more excellent virtues. The greatest theologians, the holiest saints, have so taught. Surely there is nothing more sacred than a life wholly given to meditation and prayer. When our Lord would come nearest to His Father, He communed with Him in the silence of the desert. Heaven enwrapped Him doubtless most closely when He remained all night in prayer. And have you not, my son, felt God nearest to you here in your cell, yonder in the oratory, or in partaking of the divine mystery in the Mass ?”

There was a cry as of a lost child in the voice of the novice as he replied,—

“My Father, you will forgive me when I confess that it has not been so with me. Gesù never came so near me as when I seemed to hear amid the battle groans His words, ‘Do this for My sake.’ I could feel His very breath upon me when I carried some poor mangled creature in my arms. Through the blood of the streets I seemed to be tracing His footsteps as I never saw them in the corridors of even San Benedetto.”

“What, my son! was He not closest to you during the vision in the Cappuccini cell?”

“No, Father. There He strengthened me to go forth and seek higher visions. And the higher visions came, not in my dreams, but, as it were, reflected from the living faces of those men and women and children I was helping. Oh, Father, I have seen the Christ-face in their faces so marred with suffering; the Christ-face blessing me in their faces so full of gratitude. Forgive me, Father, if I have sinned in this.”

Paolo drew a little away from the Abbate as if expecting his rebuke. Instead, the good man enclosed him in even kindlier embrace.

“My son, you may be mistaken, but you are not sinning in such thoughts. It may be that the Master has been speaking to you as He has not spoken to me. I would not by any word of mine, even though I repeated the very rule of our conventual life, disturb that inner voice. The holiest thing in all the world, Placido, in this world or the next, is the word of God within the soul itself.”

“Then, Father,” exclaimed Paolo, “I cannot become a monk.”

Still the Abbate made no rebuke, but continued kindly,—

“Says the Great Shepherd, ‘My sheep know My voice.’ To me the rule of San Benedetto is the very

echo of the Divine will. Yet the Master also said, 'Other sheep I have which are not of this fold.' 'To his own master,' as San Paolo also says, 'every man standeth or falleth.' My son, we will go to your cell and pray together. Perhaps He will speak again. Come, let us go!"

Paolo did not complete his novitiate at San Benedetto. Yet he had no thought of abandoning the priesthood. That he should give up the life of a Regular for that of a Secular priest was regarded by most of the brethren as a sad defection, a lapse from the highest form of consecration. Their manner towards him during the few days that he remained in the convent was very kindly, but compassionate, as towards one who had been strangely misguided. A few, however, evidently regarded him with stronger feeling, even with reprobation, and but for the Abbate's rigid rule of silence regarding such as left the cloistral life, they would have openly rebuked this slight which the novice had put upon their better piety.

Fra Raffaello was also back in San Benedetto. Within a few weeks he had become emaciated and haggard as if some swift-working disease were preying upon him. He would sit motionless in the garden, changing his posture only to keep facing the sunshine, as if he feared that death might lurk in the shadows. He spoke to no one, but muttered incessantly to himself.

One day, the last of Paolo's abode at San Benedetto, just before sunset, Raffaello beckoned to him to come and sit beside him in the garden. He put his hand upon those of the younger man. Paolo remembered the former firmness of that hand: how its very touch was compelling. But now he could feel a tremor that seemed to make every nerve in it vibrate.

"Placido, you will leave San Benedetto?"

"Yes."

“And go where?”

“To Rome, perhaps.”

“And be a priest?”

“If God wills.”

“Then, Placido, be a priest of God, and—not a priest of men.”

“Are not all priests ordained of God?” asked Paolo.

“Yes, my Brother, but they sometimes forget it.”
Fra Raffaello was a long time silent. At length he took the two hands of Paolo into his own, and spoke very slowly, as if each word were drawn from some great depth in his soul. “Touch the world, my Brother, only to help it, never to hurt it,—never to hurt a living soul. Never, Paolo, never, I enjoin it upon you, never hurt another soul.”

He groaned as he said it. “Souls, souls, Placido, are God’s holiest altars. Do not desecrate them. Purify them, cleanse them, build them up.”

The monk was silent for a moment and then added, “Placido, your pure soul is to me like an altar of God against which I have committed sacrilege.”

Tears streamed down his face.

“My Brother, I have sinned : sinned against God ; sinned against Giuseppe ; sinned against you. Pardon me ! Pardon me !”

He fell upon his knees, and cried like a little child.

The Abbate came, lifted Fra Raffaello, and throwing his arms about the two men, the three stood in the light of the setting sun. As the red orb dropped below the western horizon, he said :

“So, my children, let the past be forgotten. A new day will come ; a day of God’s peace to you both—and let us pray for it—a new day to Sicily ! Come ! the bell is calling us to worship.”

LI

WOUNDS HEALED

GIUSEPPE MENARDI, when he and Captain Cataldo were safely nested at Villa Bianci, recuperated rapidly. The wound upon the exterior of his head was helped by a marvellous medicament that worked most beneficently from the inside. This healing agency was compounded of two things:—realization of the grand success of the patriot party, and that wonderful panacea for a broken head, a love-filled heart.

The victory of the Garibaldini at Palermo had set the Island in a blaze of enthusiasm,—and enthusiasm of the most healthful sort; for political reorganization. The ablest men—men who had proved their patriotism by the consecration of their financial means, and in many cases by months, even years, of imprisonment,—now came into popular leadership. Crispi was urgent that Giuseppe should give the benefit of his intimate knowledge of the eastern end of the Island to the great work of reconstruction. General Medici, one of the best of “The Thousand,” was equally insistent that he should join him in a military dash along the north coast, to wipe off the last stain of Bourbon domination. The taste of blood, though it was largely his own, inclined Giuseppe to this latter appeal.

Signorina Vittoria made no objection to Giuseppe’s playing soldier a little longer.

“I can understand,” said she, “how Anita Garibaldi rode by the side of her husband through the mountains and campos of South America in fighting for liberty and

the Republic of the Rio Grande. Never saint died more nobly than she when carried by the general on the saddle before him to her grave in the northern Italian swamps."

"And you would do that?" asked Giuseppe.

"Certainly I would for Italy and—for a man I loved."

"And you would do it for—me?"

"Don't you know me yet, Peppino?" was her response, with a little hurt feeling in her voice.

"Forgive me, *cara mia*," he said quickly; "I believe you would. But I shall be equally gallant, and not let you."

"Not let me? Why, Peppino, you could no more keep me back than Captain Mario can prevent his wife, Jessie White, from going everywhere with him."

"Oh, yes, I could."

"How could you?"

"By not going myself. I confess, *carissima mia*, that my blood is up, and that my nerves tingle to get a thrust at some of the Bourbons I know. But Crispi is wiser than I am. It is as he says,—Sicily is safe from a military point of view. Even if Garibaldi were with his present force unable to hold the Island, all Italy would come to his help. Already the boys from Genoa and Venice, from Florence and even Rome, are migrating to Sicily in bands as thick as quails from Africa. There are swords enough. But there are not heads enough to think out the deeper problem—how to conserve our victories. We are to build here a new civilization. The old is utterly rotten. *Risorgimento!* That's what is happening. Resurrection—a new spirit. But it hasn't a body suited to it yet. It must shuffle off the grave-clothes of superstition, and worse, the old clinging flesh of the abominable habits of our people. Crispi wants me. Even Garibaldi says I ought to belong to the civil army. That hurts me; but he is right. You see,

carissima mia, he doesn't know what an Anita type of a wife I am going to have, or he would send me to the front with Medici, and then across the Straits,—for there he is going."

Captain Cataldo was in a very different state of mind from Giuseppe. He was depressed. The surgeon said that, if he could only get some counter-irritant in the form of great cheer beneath that wound in the ribs, he would soon heal. But there was nothing in the situation of public affairs that lifted his spirits.

"I belong to an army of cowards," said Cataldo. "I am attached to a cause that is doomed—and ought to be. If it were not for you, Elena, I could wish that the wound had gone deeper and ended me."

"Very foolish talk, Carlo mio," replied Elena. "Besides, I don't believe your flattery. If I am worth your living for, why don't you live heartily? It's not complimentary to tell me, as you do every day, that I am all the world to you, and then to say it with such a doleful face."

"Oh, if I were a Sicilian I would be as jolly as Peppino is," he replied.

"Why be a Sicilian?" asked Elena. "Doesn't Naples need patriots? Just be an Italian, Carlo. Fight for the unity of our Italy. I am going to make you a tricolour at once, and make you wear it whenever you put on that dismal look."

"Good!" said the captain. "I'll wear it always; and fight for unity, if you will only call yourself Signorina Italia."

He tried to tie together her arms, which had somehow got about his neck, as she stood beside his chair.

General Bianci came upon them.

"Corpo di Bacco! What conspiracies are going on in my house? Every room full of plotting! Out yonder is

a Sicilian making love to my daughter, and she a Neapolitan. In here is a Neapolitan doing the same with a Sicilian. Diavolo! I'll go see Signora Menardi, and we will make complaint to each other."

"You needn't do that," said Signora Menardi, who at the moment had also appeared upon the scene. "It's all your own fault, general. If you hadn't been so good-hearted to me and mine there would have been no chance for such happenings. You deserve your fate, General Bianci."

"And I bow to it," replied the old soldier, making an obeisance that was hardly warranted by his age-stiffened spine.

Signora Menardi forgot for the moment her usual pose as a marble saint. Marbles have been known to blush under sunset rays. So did the Signora when this old beau whose day was about done beamed amatively upon her. She returned his courtesy with the remark,—

"As gallant as ever, general!"

"And you as fair," he replied with another bow in which his gray mustache touched the rings on her fingers.

The Signora straightened herself into her chronic dignity.

"We are too old for such things, General Bianci. What will these young people think of us? Besides, here is Paolo."



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