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C.E.Richardson.

THE BRAVO.



VOL. III.

THE BAYLIS

A HISTORY OF

THE BAYLIS FAMILY

LONDON:

HENRY BAYLIS, JOHNSON'S-COURT, FLEET-STREET.

BY THE AUTHOR

IN 1801

PRINTED

BY HENRY BAYLIS, JOHNSON'S-COURT, FLEET-STREET.

THE BRAVO.

A VENETIAN STORY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

“THE PILOT,” “THE BORDERERS,” “THE
WATER WITCH,” &c.

“Giustizia in palazzo,
E pane in piazza.”

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:

HENRY COLBURN AND RICHARD BENTLEY,
NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1831.

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THE BRAVO.

CHAPTER I.

“ We'll follow Cade, we'll follow Cade.”

Henry VI.

THE night wore on. The strains of music again began to break through the ordinary stillness of the town, and the boats of the great were once more in motion on every canal. Hands waved timidly in recognition, from the windows of the little dark canopies, as the gondolas glided by, but few paused to greet each other in that city of mystery and suspicion. Even the

refreshing air of the evening was inhaled under an appearance of restraint, which, though it might not be at the moment felt, was too much interwoven with the habits of the people, ever to be thrown entirely aside.

Among the lighter and gayer barges of the patricians, a gondola of more than usual size, but of an exterior so plain as to denote vulgar uses, came sweeping down the great canal. Its movement was leisurely, and the action of the gondoliers that of men either fatigued or little pressed for time. He who steered, guided the boat with consummate skill, but with a single hand, while his three fellows, from time to time, suffered their oars to trail on the water in very idleness. In short, it had the ordinary listless appearance of a boat returning to the city, from an excursion on the Brenta, or to some of the more distant isles.

Suddenly, the gondola diverged from the centre of the passage, down which it rather floated than pulled, and shot into one of the

least frequented canals of the city. From this moment its movement became more rapid and regular, until it reached a quarter of the town inhabited by the lowest order of the Venetians. Here it stopped by the side of a warehouse, and one of its crew ascended to a bridge. The others threw themselves on the thwarts and seemed to repose.

He who quitted the boat threaded a few narrow but public alleys, such as are to be found in every part of that confined town, and knocked lightly at a window. It was not long before the casement opened, and a female voice demanded the name of him without.

“It is I, Annina,” returned Gino, who was not an unfrequent applicant for admission, at that private portal. “Open the door, girl, for I have come on a matter of pressing haste.”

Annina complied, though not without making sure that her suitor was alone.

“Thou art come unseasonably, Gino,” said the wine-seller’s daughter; “I was about to go

to St. Mark's to breathe the evening air. My father and brothers are already departed, and I only stay to make sure of the bolts."

"Their gondola will hold a fourth."

"They have gone by the footways."

"And thou walkest the streets alone at this hour, Annina!"

"I know not thy right to question it, if I do," returned the girl, with spirit. "San Teodoro be praised, I am not yet the slave of a Neapolitan's servitor!"

"The Neapolitan is a powerful noble, Annina, able and willing to keep his servitors in respect."

"He will have need of all his interest—but why hast thou come at this unseasonable hour? Thy visits are never too welcome, Gino, and when I have other affairs, they are disagreeable."

Had the passion of the gondolier been very deep or very sensitive, this plain-dealing might

have given him a shock ; but Gino appeared to take the repulse as coolly as it was given.

“I am used to thy caprices, Annina,” he said, throwing himself upon a bench, like one determined to remain where he was. “Some young patrician has kissed his hand to thee as thou hast crossed San Marcò, or thy father has made a better day of it than common on the Lido — thy pride always mounts with thy father’s purse.”

“Diamine ! to hear the fellow, one would think he had my troth, and that he only waited in the sacristy for the candles to be lighted, to receive my vows ! What art thou to me, Gino Tullini, that thou takest on thee these sudden airs ?”

“And what art thou to me, Annina, that thou playest off these worn-out caprices on Don Camillo’s confidant ?”

“Out upon thee, insolent ! I have no time to waste in idleness.”

“Thou art in much haste to-night, Annina.”

“To be rid of thee. Now listen to what I say, Gino, and let every word go to thy heart, for they are the last thou wilt ever hear from me. Thou servest a decayed noble, one who will shortly be chased in disgrace from the city, and with him will go all his idle servitors. I choose to remain in the city of my birth.”

The gondolier laughed in real indifference at her affected scorn. But remembering his errand, he quickly assumed a graver air, and endeavoured to still the resentment of his fickle mistress, by a more respectful manner.

“St. Mark protect me, Annina!” he said. “If we are not to kneel before the good priore together, it is no reason we should not bargain in wines. Here have I come into the dark canals, within stone’s throw of thy very door, with a gondola of mellow *Lachryma Christi*, such as honest *Maso*, thy father, has rarely dealt in, and thou treatest me as a dog, that is chased from a church!”

“I have little time for thee or thy wines to-

night, Gino. Hadst thou not stayed me, I should already have been abroad and happy."

"Close thy door, girl, and make little ceremony with an old friend," said the gondolier, officiously offering to aid her in securing the dwelling. Annina took him at his word, and as both appeared to work with good will, the house was locked, and the wilful girl and her suitor were soon in the street. Their route lay across the bridge already named. Gino pointed to the gondola, as he said, "Thou art not to be tempted, Annina?"

"Thy rashness in leading the smugglers to my father's door will bring us to harm some day, silly fellow!"

"The boldness of the act will prevent suspicion."

"Of what vineyard is the liquor?"

"It came from the foot of Vesuvius, and is ripened by the heat of the volcano. Should my friends part with it to thy enemy, old Beppo, thy father will rue the hour?"

Annina, who was much addicted to consulting her interests on all occasions, cast a longing glance at the boat. The canopy was closed, but it was large, and her willing imagination readily induced her to fancy it well filled with skins from Naples.

“This will be the last of thy visits to our door, Gino?”

“As thou shalt please.—But go down and taste—”

Annina hesitated, and, as a woman is said always to do when she hesitates, she complied. They reached the boat, with quick steps, and without regarding the men who were still lounging on the thwarts, Annina glided immediately beneath the canopy. A fifth gondolier was lying at length on the cushions, for, unlike a boat devoted to the contraband, the canopy had the usual arrangement of a bark of the canals.

“I see nothing to turn me aside!” exclaimed the disappointed girl. “Wilt thou aught with me, Signore?”

“Thou art welcome. We shall not part so readily as before.”

The stranger had arisen while speaking, and as he ended, he laid a hand on the shoulder of his visitor, who found herself confronted with Don Camillo Monforte.

Annina was too much practised in deception to indulge in any of the ordinary female symptoms, either of real or of affected alarm. Commanding her features, though in truth her limbs shook, she said, with assumed pleasantry—

“The secret trade is honoured in the services of the noble Duke of St. Agata!”

“I am not here to trifle, girl, as thou wilt see in the end. Thou hast thy choice before thee—frank confession, or my just anger.”

Don Camillo spoke calmly, but in a manner that plainly shewed Annina she had to deal with a resolute man.

“What confession would your eccellenza have from the daughter of a poor wine-seller?” she asked, her voice trembling in spite of herself.

“The truth—and remember, that this time we do not part until I am satisfied. The Venetian police and I are now fairly at issue, and thou art the first fruits of my plan.”

“Signor Duca, this is a bold step to take in the heart of the canals.”

“The consequences be mine. Thy interest will teach thee to confess.”

“I shall make no great merit, Signore, of doing that which is forced upon me. As it is your pleasure to know the little I can tell you, I am happy to be permitted to relate it.”

“Speak, then, for time presses.”

“Signore, I shall not pretend to deny you have been ill-treated. Capperi! how ill has the Council treated you! A noble cavalier, of a strange country, who, the meanest gossip in Venice knows, has a just right to the honours of the senate, to be so treated, is a disgrace to the republic! I do not wonder that your eccellenza is out of humour with them. Blessed St. Mark

himself would lose his patience to be thus treated !”

“ A truce with this, girl, and to your facts.”

“ My facts, Signor Duca, are a thousand times clearer than the sun, and they are all at your eccellenza’s service. I am sure I wish I had more of them, since they give you pleasure.”

“ Enough of this profession.—Speak to the facts themselves.”

Annina, who in the manner of most of her class in Italy, that have been exposed to the intrigues of the towns, had been lavish of her words, now found means to cast a glance at the water, when she saw that the boat had already quitted the canals, and was rowing easily out upon the Lagunes. Perceiving how completely she was in the power of Don Camillo, she began to feel the necessity of being more explicit.

“ Your eccellenza has probably suspected that the Council found means to be acquainted

with your intention to fly from the city with Donna Violetta?"

"All that is known to me."

"Why they chose me to be the servitor of the noble lady is beyond my powers to discover. Our Lady of Loretto! I am not a person to be sent for, when the state wishes to part two lovers!"

"I have borne with thee, Annina, because I would let the gondola get beyond the limits of the city; but now thou must throw aside thy subterfuge, and speak plainly. Where didst thou leave my wife?"

"Does your eccellenza then think the state will admit the marriage to be legal?"

"Girl, answer, or I will find means to make thee. Where didst thou leave my wife?"

"Blessed St. Theodore! Signore, the agents of the republic had little need of me, and I was put on the first bridge that the gondola passed."

"Thou strivest to deceive me in vain. Thou wast on the Lagunes till a late hour in the

day, and I have notice of thy having visited the prison of St. Mark as the sun was setting; and this, on thy return from the boat of Donna Violetta."

There was no acting in the wonder of Annina.

"Santissima Maria! You are better served, Signore, than the Council thinks!"

"As thou wilt find to thy cost, unless the truth be spoken. From what convent didst thou come?"

"Signore, from none. If your eccellenza has discovered that the senate has shut up the Signora Tiepolo, in the prison of St. Mark, for safe-keeping, it is no fault of mine."

"Thy artifice is useless, Annina," observed Don Camillo, calmly. "Thou wast in the prison, in quest of forbidden articles that thou hadst long left with thy cousin Gelsomina, the keeper's daughter, who little suspected thy errand, and on whose innocence and ignorance of the world thou hast long successfully practised. Donna

Violetta is no vulgar prisoner, to be immured in a gaol."

"Santissima Madre di Dio!"

Amazement confined the answer of the girl to this single, but strong, exclamation.

"Thou seest the impossibility of deception. I am acquainted with so much of thy movements as to render it impossible that thou shouldst lead me far astray. Thou art not wont to visit thy cousin; but as thou enteredst the canals this evening—"

A shout on the water caused Don Camillo to pause. On looking out he saw a dense body of boats, sweeping towards the town as if they were all impelled by a single set of oars. A thousand voices were speaking at once, and occasionally a general and doleful cry proclaimed that the floating multitude, which came on, was moved by a common feeling. The singularity of the spectacle, and the fact that his own gondola lay directly in the route of the fleet, which was composed of several hundred

boats, drove the examination of the girl, momentarily, from the thoughts of the noble.

“What have we here, Jacopo?” he demanded, in an under-tone, of the gondolier who steered his own barge.

“They are fishermen, Signore, and by the manner in which they come down towards the canals, I doubt they are bent on some disturbance. There has been discontent among them since the refusal of the doge to liberate the boy of their companion from the gallees.”

Curiosity induced the people of Don Camillo to linger a minute, and then they perceived the necessity of pulling out of the course of the floating mass, which came on like a torrent, the men sweeping their boats with that desperate stroke which is so often seen among the Italian oarsmen. A menacing hail, with a command to remain, admonished Don Camillo of the necessity of downright flight, or of obedience. He chose the latter, as the least likely to interfere with his own plans.

“Who art thou?” demanded one, who had assumed the character of a leader. “If men of the Lagunes and christians, join your friends, and away with us to St. Mark’s for justice!”

“What means this tumult?” asked Don Camillo, whose dress effectually concealed his rank, a disguise that he completed by adopting the Venetian dialect. “Why are you here in these numbers, friends?”

“Behold!”

Don Camillo turned, and he beheld the withered features and glaring eyes of old Antonio, fixed in death. The explanation was made by a hundred voices, accompanied by oaths so bitter, and denunciations so deep, that had not Don Camillo been prepared by the tale of Jacopo, he would have found great difficulty in understanding what he heard.

In dragging the Lagunes for fish, the body of Antonio had been found, and the result was, first, a consultation on the probable means of his

death, then a collection of the men of his calling, and finally the scene described.

“Giustizia!” exclaimed fifty excited voices, as the grim visage of the fisherman was held towards the light of the moon; “Giustizia in Palazzo e pane in Piazza!”

“Ask it of the senate!” returned Jacopo, not attempting to conceal the derision of his tones.

“Thinkest thou our fellow has suffered for his boldness yesterday?”

“Stranger things have happened in Venice!”

“They forbid us to cast our nets in the Canale Orfano, lest the secrets of justice should be known, and yet they have grown bold enough to drown one of our own people in the midst of our gondolas!”

“Justice, justice!” shouted numberless hoarse throats.

“Away to St. Mark’s! Lay the body at the feet of the doge—away, brethren—Antonio’s blood is on their souls!”

Bent on a wild and undigested scheme of

asserting their wrongs, the fishermen again plied their oars, and the whole fleet swept away, as if it were composed of a single mass.

The meeting, though so short, was accompanied by cries, menaces, and all those accustomed signs of rage which mark a popular tumult among those excitable people, and it had produced a sensible effect on the nerves of Annina. Don Camillo profited by her evident terror to press his questions, for the hour no longer admitted of trifling.

The result was, that while the agitated mob swept into the mouth of the Great Canal, raising hoarse shouts, the gondola of Don Camillo Monforte glided away across the wide and tranquil surface of the Lagunes.

CHAPTER II.

“ A Clifford, a Clifford! we'll follow the king and Clifford.”

Henry VI.

THE tranquillity of the best ordered society may be disturbed, at any time, by a sudden outbreaking of the malcontents. Against such a disaster there is no more guarding than against the commission of more vulgar crimes; but when a government trembles for its existence, before the turbulence of popular commotion, it is reasonable to infer some radical defect in its organization. Men will rally around their in-

stitutions, as freely as they will rally around any other cherished interest, when they merit their care, and there can be no surer sign of their hollowness than when the rulers seriously apprehend the breath of the mob. No nation ever exhibited more of this symptomatic terror, on all occasions of internal disturbance, than the pretending republic of Venice. There was a never-ceasing and a natural tendency to dissolution, in her factitious system, which was only resisted by the alertness of her aristocracy, and the political buttresses which their ingenuity had reared. Much was said of the venerable character of her polity, and of its consequent security, but it is in vain that selfishness contends with truth. Of all the fallacies with which man has attempted to gloss his expedients, there is none more evidently false than that which infers the duration of a social system, from the length of time it has already lasted. It would be quite as reasonable to affirm that the man of seventy has the same chances for

life as the youth of fifteen, or that the inevitable fate of all things of mortal origin was not destruction. There is a period in human existence, when the principle of vitality has to contend with the feebleness of infancy, but this probationary state passed, the child attains the age when it has the most reasonable prospect of living. Thus the social, like any other, machine, which has run just long enough to prove its fitness, is at the precise period when it is least likely to fail; and although he that is young may not live to become old, it is certain that he who is old was once young. The empire of China was, in its time, as youthful as our own republic, nor can we see any reason for believing that it is to outlast us, from the decrepitude which is a natural companion of its years.

At the period of our tale, Venice boasted much of her antiquity, and dreaded, in an equal degree, her end. She was still strong in her combinations, but they were combinations that

had the vicious error of being formed for the benefit of the minority, and which, like the mimic fortresses and moats of a scenic representation, needed only a strong light to destroy the illusion. The alarm with which the patricians heard the shouts of the fishermen, as they swept by the different palaces, on their way to the great square, can be readily imagined. Some feared that the final consummation of their artificial condition, which had so long been anticipated by a secret political instinct, was at length arrived, and began to bethink them of the safest means of providing for their own security. Some listened in admiration, for habit had so far mastered dulness, as to have created a species of identity between the state and far more durable things, and they believed that St. Mark had gained a victory, in that decline, which was never exactly intelligible to their apathetic capacities. But a few, and these were the spirits that accumulated all the national good which was vulgarly and falsely ascribed

to the system itself, intuitively comprehended the danger, with a just appreciation of its magnitude, as well as of the means to avoid it.

But the rioters were unequal to any estimate of their own force, and had little aptitude in measuring their accidental advantages. They acted merely on impulse. The manner in which their aged companion had triumphed on the preceding day, his cold repulse by the doge, and the scene of the Lido, which in truth led to the death of Antonio, had prepared their minds for the tumult. When the body was found, therefore, after the time necessary to collect their forces on the Lagunes, they yielded to passion, and moved away towards the palace of St. Mark, as described, without any other definite object than a simple indulgence of feeling.

On entering the canal, the narrowness of the passage compressed the boats into a mass so dense, as, in a measure, to impede the use of oars, and the progress of the crowd was neces-

sarily slow. All were anxious to get as near as possible to the body of Antonio, and, like all mobs, they in some degree frustrated their own objects, by ill-regulated zeal. Once or twice the names of offensive senators were shouted, as if the fishermen intended to visit the crimes of the state on its agents, but these cries passed away in the violent breath that was expended. On reaching the bridge of the Rialto, more than half of the multitude landed, and took the shorter course of the streets to the point of destination, while those in front got on the faster, for being disembarassed of the pressure in the rear. As they drew nearer to the port, the boats began to loosen, and to take something of the form of a funeral procession.

It was during this moment of change, that a powerfully manned gondola, swept with strong strokes, out of a lateral passage, into the Great Canal. Accident brought it directly in front of the moving phalanx of boats, that was coming down the same channel. Its crew seemed stag-

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gered by the extraordinary appearance, which met their view, and for an instant its course was undecided.

“A gondola of the republic!” shouted fifty fishermen. A single voice added—“Canale Orfano!”

The bare suspicion of such an errand, as was implied by the latter words, and at that moment, was sufficient to excite the mob. They raised a cry of denunciation, and some twenty boats made a furious demonstration of pursuit. The menace, however, was sufficient; for quicker far than the movements of the pursuers, the gondoliers of the republic dashed towards the shore, and leaping on one of those passages of planks, which encircle so many of the palaces of Venice, they disappeared by an alley.

Encouraged by this success, the fishermen seized the boat as a waif, and towed it into their own fleet, filling the air with cries of triumph. Curiosity led a few to enter the

hearse-like canopy, whence they immediately re-issued, dragging forth a priest.

“Who art thou?” hoarsely demanded he, who took upon himself the authority of a leader.

“A Carmelite, and a servant of God.”

“Dost thou serve St. Mark? Hast thou been to the Canale Orfano, to shrive a wretch?”

“I am here, in attendance on a young and noble lady, who has need of my council and prayers. The happy and the miserable, the free and the captive, are equally my care!”

“Ha!—Thou art not above thy office?—Thou wilt say the prayers for the dead, in behalf of a poor man’s soul?”

“My son, I know no difference, in this respect, between the doge and the poorest fisherman. Still I would not willingly desert the females.”

“The ladies shall receive no harm. Come into my boat, for there is need of thy holy office.”

Father Anselmo—the reader will readily anticipate that it was he—entered the canopy, said a few words in explanation, to his trembling companions, and complied. He was rowed to the leading gondola, and, by a sign, directed to the dead body.

“Thou seest that corpse, father?” continued his conductor. “It is the face of one who was an upright and pious christian!”

“He was.”

“We all knew him as the oldest and the most skilful fisherman of the Lagunes, and one ever ready to assist an unlucky companion.”

“I can believe thee!”

“Thou mayest, for the holy books are not more true than my words. Yesterday he came down this very canal, in triumph, for he bore away the honours of the regatta from the stoutest oars in Venice.”

“I have heard of his success.”

“They say that Jacopo, the Bravo—he who once held the best oar in the canals—was of the

party! Santa Madonna! such a man was too precious to die!"

"It is the fate of all—rich and poor, strong and feeble—happy and miserable, must alike come to this end."

"Not to this end, reverend Carmelite, for Antonio having given offence to the republic, in the matter of a grandson, that is pressed for the gallies, has been sent to purgatory without a christian's hope for his soul."

"There is an eye that watcheth on the meanest of us, son; we will believe he was not forgotten."

"Cospetto!—They say that those the senate looks black upon, get but little aid from the church! Wilt thou pray for him, Carmelite, and make good thy words?"

"I will," said Father Anselmo, firmly. "Make room, son, that no decency of my duty be overlooked."

The swarthy, expressive faces of the fishermen gleamed with satisfaction, for in the midst

of the rude turmoil, they all retained a deep and rooted respect for the offices of the church in which they had been educated. Silence was quickly obtained, and the boats moved on with greater order than before.

The spectacle was now striking.— In front rowed the gondola which contained the remains of the dead. The widening of the canal, as it approached the port, permitted the rays of the moon to fall upon the rigid features of old Antonio, which were set in such a look, as might be supposed to characterize the dying thoughts of a man so suddenly and so fearfully destroyed. The Carmelite, bare-headed, with clasped hands, and a devout heart, bowed his head at the feet of the body, with his white robes flowing in the light of the moon. A single gondolier guided the boat, and no other noise was audible but the splash of the water, as the oars slowly fell and rose together. This silent procession lasted a few minutes, and then the tremulous voice of the monk was heard chanting the prayers

for the dead. The practised fishermen, for few in that disciplined church, and that obedient age, were ignorant of those solemn rites, took up the responses, in a manner that must be familiar to every ear that has ever listened to the sounds of Italy; the gentle washing of the element, on which they glided, forming a soft accompaniment. Casement after casement opened while they passed, and a thousand curious and anxious faces crowded the balconies, as the funeral cortége swept slowly on.

The gondola of the republic was towed in the centre of the moving mass, by fifty lighter boats, for the fishermen still clung to their prize. In this manner the solemn procession entered the port, and touched the quay at the foot of the piazzetta. While numberless eager hands were aiding in bringing the body of Antonio to land, there arose a shout from the centre of the ducal palace, which proclaimed the presence, already, of the other part of their body in its court.

The squares of St. Mark now presented a novel picture. The quaint and oriental church, the rows of massive and rich architecture, the giddy pile of the Campanile, the columns of granite, the masts of triumph, and all those peculiar and remarkable fixtures, which had witnessed so many scenes of violence, of rejoicing, of mourning, and of gaiety, were there, like land-marks of the earth, defying time; beautiful and venerable in despite of all those varying exhibitions of human passions, that were daily acted around them.

But the song, the laugh, and the jest, had ceased. The lights of the coffee-houses had disappeared, the revellers had fled to their homes, fearful of being confounded with those who braved the anger of the senate, while the grotesque, the ballad-singers, and the buffoon, had abandoned their assumed gaiety, for an appearance more in unison with the true feelings of their hearts.

“Giustizia!”—cried a thousand deep voices,

as the body of Antonio was borne into the court —“ Illustrious Doge ! Giustizia in palazzo, e pane in piazza ! Give us justice ! We are beggars for justice ! ”

The gloomy but vast court was paved with the swarthy faces and glittering eyes of the fishermen. The corpse was laid at the foot of the Giant's Stairs, while the trembling halberdier at the head of the flight, scarce commanded himself sufficiently to maintain that air of firmness, which was exacted by discipline and professional pride. But there was no other shew of military force, for the politic power, which ruled in Venice, knew too well its momentary impotency to irritate when it could not quell. The mob beneath was composed of nameless rioters, whose punishment could carry no other consequences than the suppression of immediate danger, and for that those who ruled were not prepared.

The Council of Three had been apprised of the arrival of the excited fishermen. When the mob entered the court, it was consulting in

secret conclave, on the probabilities of the tumult having a graver and more determined object, than was apparent in the visible symptoms. The routine of office had not yet dispossessed the men already presented to the reader, of their dangerous and despotic power.

“ Are the Dalmatians apprised of this movement ?” asked one of the secret tribunal, whose nerves were scarcely equal to the high functions he discharged. “ We may have occasion for their vollies, ere this riot is appeased.”

“ Confide in the ordinary authorities for that, Signore,” answered the Senator Gradenigo. “ I have only concern, lest some conspiracy, which may touch the fidelity of the troops, lies concealed beneath the outcry.”

“ The evil passions of man know no limits ! What would the wretches have ? For a state in the decline, Venice is to the last degree prosperous. Our ships are thriving ; the bank flourishes with goodly dividends, and I do

assure you, Signore, that, for many years, I have not known so ample revenues for most of our interests, as at this hour. All cannot thrive alike !”

“ You are happily connected with flourishing affairs, Signore, but there are many that are less lucky. Our form of government is somewhat exclusive, and it is a penalty that we have ever paid for its advantages, to be liable to sudden and malevolent accusations, for any evil turn of fortune that besets the republic.”

“ Can nothing satisfy these exacting spirits? Are they not free—are they not happy?”

“ It would seem that they want better assurance of these facts, than our own feelings, or our words.”

“ Man is the creature of envy !. The poor desire to be rich—the weak, powerful.”

“ There is an exception to your rule, at least, Signore, since the rich rarely wish to be poor, or the powerful, weak.”

“ You deride my sentiments, to-night, Signor Gradenigo. I speak, I hope, as becomes a senator of Venice, and in a manner that you are not unaccustomed to hear !”

“ Nay, the language is not unusual. But I fear me, there is something unsuited to a falling fortune, in the exacting and narrow spirit of our laws. When a state is eminently flourishing, its subjects overlook general defects, in private prosperity, but there is no more fastidious commentator on measures than your merchant of a failing trade.”

“ This is their gratitude ! Have we not converted these muddy isles into a mart for half Christendom ; and now they are dissatisfied that they cannot retain all the monopolies that the wisdom of our ancestors has accumulated.”

“ They complain much in your own spirit, Signore,—but you are right in saying the present riot must be looked to. Let us seek his highness, who will go out to the people, with

such patricians as may be present, and one of our number as a witness: more than that might expose our characters."

The Secret Council withdrew to carry this resolution into effect, just as the fishermen in the court received the accession of those who arrived by water.

There is no body so sensible of an increase of its members as a mob. Without discipline, and dependant solely on animal force for its ascendancy, the sentiment of physical power is blended with its very existence. When they saw the mass of living beings which had assembled within the wall of the ducal palace, the most audacious of that throng became more hardy, and even the wavering grew strong. This is the reverse of the feeling which prevails among those who are called on to repress this species of violence, who generally gain courage as its exhibition is least required.

The throng in the court was raising one of its loudest and most menacing cries as the train of

the doge appeared, approaching by one of the long open galleries of the principal floor of the edifice. The presence of the venerable man who nominally presided over that factitious state, and the long training of the fishermen in habits of deference to authority, notwithstanding their present tone of insubordination, caused a sudden and deep silence. A feeling of awe gradually stole over the thousand dark faces that were gazing upwards, as the little cortége drew near. So profound, indeed, was the stillness caused by this sentiment, that the rustling of the ducal robes was audible, as the prince, impeded by his infirmities, and consulting the state usual to his rank, slowly advanced. The previous violence of the untutored fishermen, and their present deference to the external state that met their eyes, had its origin in the same causes;—ignorance and habit were the parents of both.

“Why are ye assembled here, my children?” asked the doge, when he had reached the summit of the Giant’s Stairs,—“and

most of all, why have ye come into the palace of your prince, with these unfitting cries?"

The tremulous voice of the old man was clearly audible, for the lowest of its tones was scarcely interrupted by a breath. The fishermen gazed at each other, and all appeared to search for him who might be bold enough to answer. At length one in the centre of the crowded mass, and effectually concealed from observation, cried, "Justice!"

"Such is our object," mildly continued the prince; "and such, I will add, is our practice. Why are ye assembled here, in a manner so offensive to the state, and so disrespectful to your prince?"

Still none answered. The only spirit of their body, which had been capable of freeing itself from the trammels of usage and prejudice, had deserted the shell which lay on the lower step of the Giant's Stairs.

"Will none speak?—are ye so bold with

your voices, when unquestioned, and so silent when confronted?"

"Speak them fair, your highness," whispered he of the council, who was commissioned to be a secret witness of the interview;—"the Dalmatians are scarce yet appalled."

The prince bowed to advice which he well knew must be respected, and he assumed his former tone.

"If none will acquaint me with your wants, I must command you to retire, and while my parental heart grieves——"

"Giustizia!" repeated the hidden member of the crowd.

"Name thy wants, that we may know them."

"Highness! deign to look at this!"

One bolder than the rest had turned the body of Antonio to the moon, in a manner to expose the ghastly features, and, as he spoke, he pointed towards the spectacle he had prepared. The prince started at the unexpected sight, and slowly descending the steps, closely accompanied

by his companions and his guards, he paused over the body.

“Has the assassin done this?” he asked, after looking at the dead fisherman, and crossing himself. “What could the end of one like this profit a Bravo?—haply the unfortunate man hath fallen in a broil of his class?”

“Neither, Illustrious Doge! we fear that Antonio has suffered for the displeasure of St. Mark!”

“Antonio! Is this the hardy fisherman who would have taught us how to rule in the state-regatta!”

“Eccellenza, it is!” returned the simple labourer of the Lagunes,—“and a better hand with a net, or a truer friend in need, never rowed a gondola, to or from the Lido. Diavalo! It would have done your highness pleasure to have seen the poor old christian among us, on a saint’s day, taking the lead in our little ceremonies, and teaching us the manner in which our fathers used to do credit to the craft!”

“ Or to have been with us, Illustrious Doge,” cried another, for the ice once broken the tongues of a mob soon grow bold, “ in a merry-making, on the Lido, when old Antonio was always the foremost in the laugh, and the discreetest in knowing when to be grave.”

The doge began to have a dawning of the truth, and he cast a glance aside to examine the countenance of the unknown inquisitor.

“ It is far easier to understand the merits of the unfortunate man, than the manner of his death,” he said, finding no explanation in the drilled members of the face he had scrutinized. “ Will any of your party explain the facts ?”

The principal speaker among the fishermen willingly took on himself the office, and, in the desultory manner of one of his habits, he acquainted the doge with the circumstances connected with the finding of the body. When he had done, the prince again asked explanations with his eye, from the senator at his side, for he

was ignorant whether the policy of the state required an example, or simply a death."

"I see nothing in this, your Highness," observed he of the council, "but the chances of a fisherman. The unhappy old man has come to his end by accident, and it would be charity to have a few masses said for his soul."

"Noble senator!" exclaimed the fisherman, doubtingly, "St. Mark was offended!"

"Rumour tells many idle tales of the pleasure and displeasure of St. Mark. If we are to believe all that the wit of men can devise, in affairs of this nature, the criminals are not drowned in the Lagunes, but in the Canale Orfano."

"True, eccellenza, and we are forbidden to cast our nets there, on pain of sleeping with the eels at its bottom."

"So much greater reason for believing that this old man hath died by accident. Is there mark of violence on his body?—for though the state could scarcely occupy itself with such

as he, some other might. Hath the condition of the body been looked to?"

"Eccellenza, it was enough to cast one of his years into the centre of the Lagunes. The stoutest arm in Venice could not save him."

"There may have been violence in some quarrel, and the proper authority should be vigilant. Here is a Carmelite!—Father, do you know aught of this?"

The monk endeavoured to answer, but his voice failed. He stared wildly about him, for the whole scene resembled some frightful picture of the imagination, and then folding his arms on his bosom, he appeared to resume his prayers.

"Thou dost not answer, Friar?" observed the doge, who had been as effectually deceived, by the natural and indifferent manner of the inquisitor, as any other of his auditors. "Where didst thou find this body?"

Father Anselmo briefly explained the manner

in which he had been pressed into the service of the fishermen.

At the elbow of the prince there stood a young patrician, who, at the moment, filled no other office in the state, than such as belonged to his birth. Deceived like the others, by the manner of the only one who knew the real cause of Antonio's death, he felt a humane and praiseworthy desire to make sure that no foul play had been exercised towards the victim.

“ I have heard of this Antonio,” said this person, who was called the Senator Soranzo, and who was gifted by nature with feelings that, in any other form of government, would have made him a philanthropist,—“ and of his success in the regatta. Was it not said that Jacopo, the Bravo, was his competitor?”

A low, meaning, and common murmur ran through the throng.

“ A man of his reputed passions and ferocity, may well have sought to revenge defeat, by violence !”

A second, and a louder murmur denoted the effect this suggestion had produced.

“Eccellenza, Jacopo deals in the stiletto!” observed the half-credulous but still doubting fisherman.

“That as may be necessary. A man of his art and character may have recourse to other means to gratify his malice. Do you not agree with me, Signore?”

The Senator Soranzo put this question, in perfect good faith, to the unknown member of the secret council. The latter appeared struck with the probability of the truth of his companion’s conjecture, but contented himself, with a simple acknowledgment to that effect, by bowing.

“Jacopo!—Jacopo!” hoarsely repeated voice after voice in the crowd—“Jacopo has done this! The best gondolier in Venice has been beaten by an old fisherman, and nothing but blood could wipe out the disgrace!”

“It shall be inquired into, my children, and strict justice done,” said the doge, preparing to

depart. "Officers, give money for masses, that the soul of the unhappy man be not the sufferer. Reverend Carmelite, I commend the body to thy care, and thou canst do no better service than to pass the night, in prayer, by its side."

A thousand caps were waved in commendation of this gracious command, and the whole throng stood in silent respect, as the prince, followed by his retinue, retired as he had approached, through the long, vaulted gallery above.

A secret order of the Inquisition prevented the appearance of the Dalmatians.

A few minutes later and all was prepared. A bier and canopy were brought out of the adjoining cathedral, and the corpse was placed upon the former. Father Anselmo then headed the procession, which passed through the principal gate of the palace into the square, chanting the usual service. The Piazzetta and the Piazza were still empty. Here and there, indeed, a curious face, belonging to some agent

of the police, or to some observer more firm than common, looked out from beneath the arches of the porticoes on the movements of the mob, though none ventured to come within its influence.

But the fishermen were no longer bent on violence. With the fickleness of men little influenced by reflection, and subject to sudden and violent emotions—a temperament which, the effect of a selfish system, is commonly tortured into the reason why it should never be improved—they had abandoned all idea of revenge on the agents of the police, and had turned their thoughts to the religious services, which, being commanded by the prince himself, were so flattering to their class.

It is true that a few of the sterner natures, among them, mingled menaces against the Bravo, with their prayers for the dead, but these had no other effect on the matter in hand, than is commonly produced by the by-players on the principal action of the piece.

The great portal of the venerable church was thrown open, and the solemn chant was heard issuing, in responses, from among the quaint columns and vaulted roofs within. The body of the lowly and sacrificed Antonio was borne beneath that arch, which sustains the precious relics of Grecian art, and deposited in the nave. Candles glimmered before the altar and around the ghastly person of the dead, throughout the night, and the cathedral of St. Mark was pregnant with all the imposing ceremonials of the Catholic ritual, until the day once more appeared.

Priest succeeded priest, in repeating the masses, while the attentive throng listened, as if each of its members felt that his own honour and importance were elevated by this concession to one of their number. In the square the maskers gradually re-appeared, though the alarm had been too sudden and violent, to admit a speedy return to the levity which ordinarily was witnessed in that spot, between the setting and the rising of the sun.

CHAPTER III.

'Tis of a Lady in her earliest youth,
The very last of that illustrious race.

ROGERS.

WHEN the fishermen landed on the quay, they deserted the gondola of the state to a man. Donna Violetta and her governess heard the tumultuous departure of their singular captors with alarm, for they were nearly in entire ignorance of the motive which had deprived them of the protection of Father Anselmo, and which had so unexpectedly made them actors in the extraordinary scene. The monk had simply explained that his offices were required in behalf of the dead,

but the apprehension of exciting unnecessary terror prevented him from adding that they were in the power of a mob. Donna Florinda, however, had ascertained sufficient, by looking from the windows of the canopy, and from the cries of those around her, to get a glimmering of the truth. Under the circumstances, she saw that the most prudent course was to keep themselves as much as possible from observation. But when the profound stillness that succeeded the landing of the rioters announced that they were alone, both she and her charge had an intuitive perception of the favourable chance, which Fortune had so strangely thrown in their way.

“They are gone!” whispered Donna Florinda, holding her breath in attention, as soon as she had spoken.

“And the police will be soon here to seek us!”

No further explanation passed, for Venice was a town in which even the young and innocent were taught caution. Donna Florinda stole another look without.

“ They have disappeared, Heaven knows where ! Let us go ! ”

In an instant the trembling fugitives were on the quay. The Piazzetta was without a human form, except their own. A low, murmuring, sound arose from the court of the ducal palace, which resembled the hum of a disturbed hive ; but nothing was distinct, or intelligible.

“ There is violence meditated,” again whispered the governess ; “ would to God that Father Anselmo were here ! ”

A shuffling footstep caught their ears, and both turned towards a boy, in the dress of one of the Lagues, who approached from the direction of the Broglio.

“ A reverend Carmelite bid me give you this,” said the youth, stealing a glance behind him, like one who dreaded detection. Then putting a small piece of paper in the hand of Donna Florinda, he turned his own swarthy palm in which a small silver coin glittered, to the moon, and vanished.

By the aid of the same light the governess succeeded in tracing pencil-marks, in a hand that had been well known to her younger days.

“ Save thyself, Florinda—There is not an instant to lose. Avoid public places, and seek a shelter quickly.”

“ But whither ?” asked the bewildered woman, when she had read aloud the scroll.

“ Any where but here,” rejoined Donna Violetta ; “ follow me.”

Nature frequently more than supplies the advantages of training and experience, by her own gifts. Had Donna Florinda been possessed of the natural decision and firmness of her pupil, she would not now have been existing in the isolated condition which is so little congenial to female habits, nor would Father Anselmo have been a monk. Both had sacrificed inclination to what they considered to be duty, and if the ungenial life of the governess was owing to the tranquil course of her ordinary

feelings, it is probable that its impunity was to be ascribed to the same respectable cause. Not so with Violetta. She was ever more ready to act than to reflect, and though, in general, the advantage might possibly be with those of a more regulated temperament, there are occasions that form exceptions to the rule. The present moment was one of those turns in the chances of life, when it is always better to do any thing than to do nothing.

Donna Violetta had scarcely spoken, before her person was shadowed beneath the arches of the Broglio. Her governess clung to her side, more in affection than in compliance with the warning of the monk, or with the dictates of her own reason. A vague and romantic intention of throwing herself at the feet of the doge, who was a collateral descendant of her own ancient house, had flashed across the mind of the youthful bride, when she first fled, but no sooner had they reached the palace, than a cry from the court acquainted them with its situ-

ation, and, consequently with the impossibility of penetrating to the interior.

“ Let us retire, by the streets, to thy dwelling, my child ;” said Donna Florinda, drawing her mantle about her in womanly dignity. “ None will offend females of our condition ; even the senate must, in the end, respect our sex.”

“ This from thee, Florinda !—Thou, who hast so often trembled for their anger ! But go, if thou wilt—I am no longer the senate’s.—Don Camillo Monforte has my duty.”

Donna Florinda had no intention of disputing this point, and as the moment had now arrived when the most energetic was likely to lead, she quietly submitted herself to the superior decision of her pupil. The latter took the way along the portico, keeping always within its shadows. In passing the gateway, which opened towards the sea, the fugitives had a glimpse of what was passing in the court. The sight quickened their steps, and they now flew, rather

than ran, along the arched passage. In a minute they were on the bridge, which crosses the canal of St. Mark, still flying with all their force. A few mariners were looking from their felucas and gazing in curiosity, but the sight of two terrified females, seeking refuge from a mob, had nothing in itself likely to attract notice.

At this moment, a dark mass of human bodies appeared advancing along the quay in the opposite direction. Arms glittered in the moonbeams, and the measured tread of trained men became audible. The Dalmatians were moving down from the arsenal in a body. Advance and retreat now seemed equally impossible to the breathless fugitives. As decision and self-possession are very different qualities, Donna Violetta did not understand so readily as the circumstances required, that it was more than probable the hirelings of the republic would consider their flight perfectly natural, as it had appeared to the curious gazers of the port.

Terror made them blind, and as shelter was now the sole object of the fugitives, they would probably have sought it in the chamber of doom, itself, had there been an opportunity. As it was, they turned and entered the first, and indeed the only, gate which offered. They were met by a girl, whose anxious face betrayed that singular compound of self-devotion and terror, which probably has its rise in the instinct of feminine sympathies.

“Here is safety, noble ladies,” said the youthful Venetian, in the soft accent of her native islands; “none will dare do you harm within these walls.”

“Into whose palace have I entered?” demanded the half breathless Violetta. “If its owner has a name in Venice, he will not refuse hospitality to a daughter of Tiepolo.”

“Signora, you are welcome,” returned the gentle girl, curtseying low, and still leading the way deeper within the vast edifice. “You bear the name of an illustrious house!”

“ There are few in the republic of note, from whom I may not claim, either the kindness of ancient and near services, or that of kindred. Dost thou serve a noble master ?”

“ The first in Venice, lady.”

“ Name him, that we may demand his hospitality as befits us.”

“ St. Mark.”

Donna Violetta and her governess stopped short.

“ Have we unconsciously entered a portal of the palace ?”

“ That were impossible, Lady, since the canal lies between you and the residence of the doge. Still is St. Mark master here. I hope you will not esteem your safety less, because it has been obtained in the public prison, and by the aid of its keeper’s daughter.”

The moment for headlong decision was passed, and that of reflection had returned.

“ How art thou called, child ?” asked Donna Florinda, moving ahead of her pupil, and taking

the discourse up, where in wonder the other had permitted it to pause. "We are truly grateful for the readiness with which thou threwest open the gate for our admission, in a moment of such alarm—How art thou called?"

"Gelsomina;" answered the modest girl. "I am the keeper's only child—and when I saw ladies of your honourable condition, fleeing on the quay, with the Dalmatians marching on one side, and a mob shouting on the other, I be-thought me that even a prison might be welcome."

"Thy goodness of heart did not mislead thee."

"Had I known it was a lady of the Tiepolo, I should have been even more ready; for there are few of that great name now left to do us honour."

Violetta curtsyed to the compliment, but she seemed uneasy that haste and pride of rank had led her, so indiscreetly, to betray herself.

"Canst thou not lead us to some place less public?" she asked, observing that her con-

ductor had stopped in a public corridor to make this explanation.

“ Here you will be retired as in your own palaces, great ladies ;” answered Gelsomina, turning into a private passage, and leading the way towards the rooms of her family, from a window of which she had first witnessed the embarrassment of her guests. “ None enter here, without cause, but my father and myself ; and my father is much occupied with his charge.”

“ Hast thou no domestic ?”

“ None, lady. A prison-keeper’s daughter should not be too proud to serve herself.”

“ Thou sayest well. One of thy discretion, good Gelsomina, must know it is not seemly for females of condition to be thrown within walls like these, even by accident, and thou wilt do us much favour, by taking more than common means, to be certain that we are unseen. We give thee much trouble, but it shall not go unrequited. Here is gold.”

Gelsomina did not answer, but as she stood

with her eyes cast to the floor, the colour stole to her cheeks, until her usually bloodless face was in a soft glow.

“Nay, I have mistaken thy character!” said Donna Florinda, secreting the sequins, and taking the unresisting hand of the silent girl. “If I have pained thee, by my indiscretion, attribute the offer to our dread of the disgrace of being seen in this place.”

The glow deepened, and the lips of the girl quivered.

“Is it then a disgrace to be innocently within these walls, lady?” she asked, still with an averted eye. “I have long suspected this, but none has ever before said it, in my hearing!”

“Holy Maria pardon me! If I have uttered a syllable to pain thee, excellent girl, it has been unwittingly and without intention!”

“We are poor, lady, and the needy must submit to do that which their wishes might lead

them to avoid. I understand your feelings, and will make sure of your being secret, and Blessed Maria will pardon a greater sin, than any you have committed here."

While the ladies were wondering, at witnessing such proofs of delicacy and feeling in so singular a place, the girl withdrew.

"I had not expected this in a prison!" exclaimed Violetta.

"As all is not noble, or just, in a palace, neither is all to be condemned unheard, that we find in a prison. But this is, in sooth, an extraordinary girl for her condition, and we are indebted to blessed St. Theodore, (crossing herself,) for putting her in our way."

"Can we do better than by making her a confidant and a friend?"

The governess was older and less disposed, than her pupil, to confide in appearances. But the more ardent mind and superior rank of the latter had given her an influence, that the former did not always successfully resist. Gels-

mina returned before there was time to discuss the prudence of what Violetta had proposed.

“Thou hast a father, Gelsomina?” asked the Venetian heiress, taking the hand of the gentle girl, as she put her question.

“Holy Maria be praised!—I have still that happiness.”

“It is a happiness—for surely a father would not have the heart to sell his own child to ambition and mercenary hopes! And thy mother?”

“Has long been bed-ridden, lady. I believe we should not have been here, but we have no other place so suitable for her sufferings, as this gaol.”

“Gelsomina, thou art happier than I, even in thy prison. I am fatherless—motherless—I could almost say, friendless.”

“And this from a lady of the Tiepolo!”

“All is not as it seems in this evil world, kind Gelsomina. We have had many doges, but we have had much suffering. Thou mayst

have heard that the house of which I come is reduced to a single youthful girl like thyself, who has been left in the senate's charge?"

"They speak little of these matters, lady, in Venice; and of all here, none go so seldom into the square as I. Still have I heard of the beauty and riches of Donna Violetta. The last I hope is true; the first I now see is so."

The daughter of Tiepolo coloured, in turn, but it was not in resentment.

"They have spoken in too much kindness for an orphan," she answered; "though that fatal wealth is perhaps not over-estimated. Thou knowest that the state charges itself with the care and establishment of all noble females, whom providence has left fatherless?"

"Lady, I did not. It is kind of St. Mark to do it!"

"Thou wilt think differently, anon. Thou art young, Gelsomina, and hast passed thy time in privacy?"

"True, lady. It is seldom I go farther than

my mother's room, or the cell of some suffering prisoner."

Violetta looked towards her governess, with an expression which seemed to say, that she anticipated her appeal would be made in vain, to one so little exposed to the feelings of the world.

"Thou wilt not understand then, that a noble female may have little inclination to comply with all the senate's wishes, in disposing of her duties and affections?"

Gelsomina gazed at the fair speaker, but it was evident that she did not clearly comprehend the question. Again Violetta looked at the governess, as if asking aid.

"The duties of our sex are often painful," said Donna Florinda, understanding the appeal with female instinct. "Our attachments may not always follow the wishes of our friends. We may not choose, but we cannot always obey."

"I have heard that noble ladies are not suffered to see those to whom they are to be

wedded, Signora, if that is what your eccellenza means; and, to me, the custom has always seemed unjust, if not cruel."

"And are females of thy class permitted to make friends, among those who may become dearer at another day?" hastily asked Violetta.

"Lady, we have that much freedom even in the prisons."

"Then art thou happier than those of the palaces! I will trust thee, generous girl, for thou canst not be unfaithful to the weakness and wrongs of thy sex."

Gelsomina raised a hand, as if to stop the impetuous confidence of her guest, and then she listened intently.

"Few enter, here," she said; "but there are many ways of learning secrets within these walls which are still unknown to me. Come deeper into the rooms, noble ladies, for here is a place that I have reason to think is safe, even from listeners."

The keeper's daughter led the way into the little room, in which she was accustomed to converse with Jacopo.

“ You were saying, lady, that I had a feeling for the weakness and helplessness of our sex, and surely you did me justice.”

Violetta had leisure to reflect, an instant, in passing from one room to the other, and she began her communications with more reserve. But the sensitive interest that a being of the gentle nature and secluded habits of Gelsomina took in her narrative, won upon her own natural frankness; and, in a manner nearly imperceptible to herself, she made the keeper's daughter mistress of most of the circumstances under which she had entered the prison.

The cheek of Gelsomina became colourless as she listened, and when Donna Violetta ceased, every limb of her slight frame trembled with interest.

“ The senate is a fearful power to resist !” she said, speaking so low as hardly to be au-

dible. "Have you reflected, lady, on the chances of what you do?"

"If I have not, it is now too late to change my intentions. I am the wife of the Duke of Sant' Agata, and can never wed another."

"Gesu!—This is true.—And yet, methinks, I would choose to die a nun, rather than offend the council!"

"Thou knowest not, good girl, to what courage the heart of even a young wife is equal.—Thou art still bound to thy father, in the instruction and habits of childhood, but thou mayest live to know that all thy hopes will centre in another."

Gelsomina ceased to tremble, and her mild eye brightened.

"The council is terrible," she answered, "but it must be more terrible to desert one, to whom you have vowed duty and love at the altar!"

"Hast thou the means of concealing us, kind girl?" interrupted Donna Florinda, "and canst

thou, when this tumult shall be quieted, in any manner help us to farther secrecy or flight?"

"Lady, I have none. Even the streets and squares of Venice are nearly strangers to me. Santissima Maria! what would I give to know the ways of the town as well as my cousin Annina, who passes at will, from her father's shop to the Lido; and from St. Mark's to the Rialto, as her pleasure suits. I will send for my cousin, who will counsel us in this fearful strait!"

"Thy cousin!—Hast thou a cousin named Annina?"

"Lady, Annina. My mother's sister's child."

"The daughter of a wine-seller, called Tomaso Torti?"

"Do the noble dames of the city take such heed of their inferiors!—This will charm my cousin, for she has great desires to be noted by the great."

"And does thy cousin come hither?"

“ Rarely, lady—We are not of much intimacy. I suppose Annina finds a girl, simple and uninstructed as I, unworthy of her company. But she will not refuse to aid us, in a danger like this. I know she little loves the republic, for we have had words on its acts, and my cousin has been bolder of speech about them, than befits one of her years, in this prison.”

“ Gelsomina, thy cousin is a secret agent of the police, and unworthy of thy confidence—”

“ Lady !”

“ I do not speak without reason. Trust me, she is employed in duties that are unbecoming her sex, and unworthy of thy confidence.”

“ Noble dames, I will not say any thing to do displeasure to your high rank and present distress, but you should not urge me to think thus of my mother’s niece. You have been unhappy, and you may have cause to dislike the republic, and you are safe here—but I do not desire to hear Annina censured.”

Both Donna Florinda and her less experienced pupil knew enough of human nature, to consider this generous incredulity as a favourable sign of the integrity of her who manifested it, and they wisely contented themselves with stipulating that Annina should, on no account, be made acquainted with their situation. After this understanding, the three discussed more leisurely, the prospect of the fugitives being able to quit the place, when ready, without detection.

At the suggestion of the governess, a servant of the prison was sent out by Gelsomina, to observe the state of the square. He was particularly charged, though in a manner to avoid suspicion, to search for a Carmelite of the order of the bare-footed friars. On his return, the menial reported that the mob had quitted the court of the palace, and was gone into the cathedral, with the body of the fisherman who had so unexpectedly gained the prize in the regatta of the preceding day.

“ Repeat your aves and go to sleep, Bella Gelsomina,” concluded the sub-keeper, “ for the fishermen have left off shouting to say their prayers. Per Diana ! The bare-headed and bare-legged rascals are as impudent as if St. Mark were their inheritance ! The noble patricians should give them a lesson in modesty, by sending every tenth knave among them to the gallies. Miscreants ! to disturb the quiet of an orderly town with their vulgar complaints !”

“ But thou hast said nothing of the friar ; is he with the rioters ?”

“ There is a Carmelite at the altar—but my blood boiled at seeing such vagabonds disturb the peace of respectable persons, and I took little note of his air and years.”

“ Then thou failedst to do the errand on which I sent thee. It is now too late to repair thy fault. Thou canst return to thy charge.”

“ A million pardons, Bellissima Gelsomina ; but indignation is the uppermost feeling, when

one in office sees his rights attacked by the multitude. Send me to Corfu, or to Candia, if you please, and I will bring back the colour of every stone in their prisons, but do not send me among rebels. My gorge rises at the sight of villany !”

As the keeper's daughter withdrew, while her father's assistant was making this protestation of loyalty, the latter was compelled to give vent to the rest of his indignation in a soliloquy.

One of the tendencies of oppression is to create a scale of tyranny, descending from those who rule a state, to those who domineer over a single individual. He, who has been much accustomed to view men, need not be told that none are so arrogant with their inferiors, as those who are oppressed by their superiors; for poor human nature has a secret longing to revenge itself on the weak for all the injuries it receives from the strong. On the other hand, no class is so willing to render that deference,

when unexacted, which is the proper meed of virtue, and experience, and intelligence, as he who knows that he is fortified on every side against innovations on his natural rights. Thus it is, that there is more security against popular violence and popular insults in these free states, than in any other country on earth, for there is scarcely a citizen so debased as not to feel that, in assuming the appearance of a wish to revenge the chances of fortune, he is making an undue admission of inferiority.

Though the torrent may be pent and dammed by art, it is with the constant hazard of breaking down the unnatural barriers; but left to its own course, it will become the tranquil and the deep stream, until it finally throws off its superfluous waters into the common receptacle of the ocean.

When Gelsomina returned to her visitors, it was with a report favourable to their tranquillity. The riot in the court of the palace, and the movement of the Dalmatians, had drawn all

eyes in another direction ; and although some errant gaze might have witnessed their entrance into the gate of the prison, it was so natural a circumstance, that no one would suspect females of their appearance of remaining there an instant longer than was necessary. The momentary absence of the few servants of the prison, who took little heed of those who entered the open parts of the building, and who had been drawn away by curiosity, completed their security. The humble room they were in was exclusively devoted to the use of their gentle protector, and there was scarcely a possibility of interruption, until the Council had obtained the leisure and the power of making use of those terrible means, which rarely left any thing it wished to know concealed.

With this explanation Donna Violetta and her companion were greatly satisfied. It left them leisure to devise means for their flight, and kindled a hope, in the former, of being speedily restored to Don Camillo. Still there existed

the cruel embarrassment of not possessing the means of acquainting the latter with their situation. As the tumult ceased, they resolved to seek a boat, favoured by such disguises as the means of Gelsomina could supply, and to row to his palace; but reflection convinced Donna Florinda of the danger of such a step, since the Neapolitan was known to be surrounded by the agents of the police. Accident, which is more effectual than stratagem in defeating intrigues, had thrown them into a place of momentary security, and it would be to lose the vantage-ground of their situation to cast themselves, without the utmost caution, into the hazards of the public canals.

At length the governess bethought her of turning the services of the gentle creature, who had already shewn so much sympathy in their behalf, to account. During the revelations of her pupil, the feminine instinct of Donna Florinda had enabled her to discover the secret springs which moved the unpractised feelings of their

auditor. Gelsomina had listened to the manner in which Don Camillo had thrown himself into the canal to save the life of Violetta, with breathless admiration; her countenance was a pure reflection of her thoughts, when the daughter of Tiepolo spoke of the risks he had run to gain her love; and woman glowed in every lineament of her mild face, when the youthful bride touched on the nature of the engrossing tie which had united them, and which was far too holy to be severed by the senate's policy.

“If we had the means of getting our situation to the ears of Don Camillo,” said the governess, “all might yet be saved; else will this happy refuge in the prisons avail us nothing.”

“Is the cavalier of too stout a heart to shrink before those up above?” demanded Gelsomina.

“He would summon the people of his confidence, and ere the dawn of day we might still be beyond their power. Those calculating senators will deal with the vows of my pupil,

as if they were childish oaths, and set the anger of the Holy See itself at defiance, when there is question of their interest."

"But the sacrament of marriage is not of man; that, at least, they will respect!"

"Believe it not. There is no obligation so solemn as to be respected, when their policy is concerned. What are the wishes of a girl, or what the happiness of a solitary and helpless female, to their fortunes? That my charge is young, is a reason why their wisdom should interfere, though it is none to touch their hearts with the reflection that the misery to which they would condemn her, is to last the longer. They take no account of the solemn obligations of gratitude; the ties of affection are so many means of working upon the fears of those they rule, but none for forbearance; and they laugh at the devotedness of woman's love, as a folly to amuse their leisure, or to take off the edge of disappointment in graver concerns."

"Can anything be more grave than wedlock, lady?"

“To them it is important, as it furnishes the means of perpetuating their honours and their proud names. Beyond this, the councils look little at domestic interests.”

“They are fathers and husbands !”

“True, for to be legally the first, they must become the last. Marriage to them is not a tie of sacred and dear affinity, but the means of increasing their riches and of sustaining their names ;” continued the governess, watching the effect of her words on the countenance of the guileless girl. “They call marriages of affection children’s games, and they deal with the wishes of their own daughters, as they would traffic with their commodities of commerce. When a state sets up an idol of gold as its god, few will refuse to sacrifice at its altar !”

“I would I might serve the noble Donna Violetta !”

“Thou art too young, good Gelsomina, and I fear too little practised in the cunning of Venice.”

“Doubt me not, lady; for I can do my duty like another, in a good cause.”

“If it were possible to convey to Don Camillo Monforte a knowledge of our situation—but thou art too inexperienced for the service!”

“Believe it not, Signora,” interrupted the generous Gelsomina, whose pride began to stimulate her natural sympathies with one so near her own age, and one too, like herself, subject to that passion which engrosses a female heart. “I may be apter than my appearance would give reason to think.”

“I will trust thee, kind girl, and if the Sainted Virgin protects us, thy fortunes shall not be forgotten!”

The pious Gelsomina crossed herself, and, first acquainting her companions with her intentions, she went within to prepare herself, while Donna Florinda penned a note, in terms so guarded as to defy detection in the event of accident, but which might suffice to let the lord of St. Agata understand their present situation.

In a few minutes the keeper's daughter reappeared. Her ordinary attire, which was that of a modest Venetian maiden of humble condition, needed no concealment; and the mask, an article of dress which none in that city were without, effectually disguised her features. She then received the note, with the name of the street, and the palace she was to seek, a description of the person of the Neapolitan, with often repeated cautions to be wary—and departed.

CHAPTER IV.

“ Which is the wiser here?—justice or iniquity ?”

Measure for Measure.

IN the constant struggle between the innocent and the artful, the latter have the advantage, so long as they confine themselves to familiar interests. But the moment the former conquer their disgust for the study of vice, and throw themselves upon the protection of their own high principles, they are far more effectually concealed from the calculations of their adversaries, than if they practised the most refined

of their subtle expedients. Nature has given to every man enough of frailty to enable him to estimate the workings of selfishness and fraud, but her truly privileged are those who can shroud their motives and intentions in a degree of justice and disinterestedness, which surpass the calculations of the designing. Millions may bow to the commands of a conventional right, but few, indeed, are they who know how to choose in novel and difficult cases. There is often a mystery in Virtue. While the cunning of Vice is no more than a pitiful imitation of that art, which endeavours to cloak its workings in the thin veil of deception; the other, in some degree, resembles the sublimity of infallible truth.

Thus men, too much practised in the interests of life, constantly overreach themselves, when brought in contact with the simple and intelligent; and the experience of every day proves, that, as there is no fame permanent which is not founded on virtue, so there is no policy secure which is not bottomed on the good of the whole.

Vulgar minds may control the concerns of a community, so long as they are limited to vulgar views; but woe to the people who confide, on great emergencies, in any but the honest, the noble, the wise, and the philanthropic; for there is no security for success when the meanly artful control the occasional and providential events which regenerate a nation. More than half the misery which has defeated, as well as disgraced, civilization, proceeds from neglecting to use those great men that are always created by great occasions.

Treating, as we are, of the vices of the Venetian system, our pen has run truant with its subject, since the application of the moral must be made on the familiar scale suited to the incidents of our story. It has already been seen that Gelsomina was entrusted with certain important keys of the prison. For this trust there had been sufficient motive with the wily guardians of the gaol, who had made their calculations on her serving their particular orders,

without ever suspecting that she was capable of so far listening to the promptings of a generous temper, as might induce her to use them in any manner prejudicial to their own views. The service to which they were now to be applied, proved that the keepers, one of which was her own father, had not fully known how to estimate the powers of the innocent and simple.

Provided with the keys in question, Gelsomina took a lamp, and passed upward from the mezzinino in which she dwelt, to the first floor of the edifice, instead of descending to its court. Door was opened after door, and many a gloomy corridor was passed by the gentle girl, with the confidence of one who knew her motive to be good. She soon crossed the Bridge of Sighs, fearless of interruption in that unfrequented gallery, and entered the palace. Here she made her way to a door that opened on the common and public vomitories of the structure. Moving with sufficient care to make impunity from detection sure, she extinguished the light,

and applied the key. At the next instant she was on the vast and gloomy stair-way. It required but a moment to descend it, and to reach the covered gallery which surrounded the court. A halberdier was within a few feet of her. He looked at the unknown female with interest; but as it was not his business to question those who issued from the building, nothing was said. Gelsomina walked on. A half-repenting, but vindictive being, was dropping an accusation in the lion's mouth. Gelsomina stopped involuntarily, until the secret accuser had done his treacherous work and departed. Then, when she was about to proceed, she saw that the halberdier, at the head of the Giant's Stair-way, was smiling at her indecision, like one accustomed to such scenes.

“Is there danger in quitting the palace?” she asked of the rough mountaineer.

“Corpo di Bacco! There might have been, an hour since, Bella Donna; but the rioters are muzzled, and at their prayers!”

Gelsomina hesitated no longer. She descended the well-known flight, down which the head of Faliero had rolled, and was soon beneath the arch of the gate. Here the timid and unpractised girl again stopped, for she could not venture into the square without assuring herself, like a deer ready to quit its cover, of the tranquillity of the place, into which she was about to enter.

The agents of the police had been too much alarmed by the rising of the fishermen, not to call their usual ingenuity and finesse into play, the moment the disturbance was appeased. Money had been given to the mountebanks and ballad-singers to induce them to re-appear, and groups of hirelings, some in masks and others without concealment, were ostentatiously assembled in different parts of the piazza. In short, those usual expedients were resorted to, which are constantly used to restore the confidence of a people, in those countries in which civilization is so new, that they are not yet considered suffi-

ciently advanced to be the guardians of their own security. There are few artifices so shallow that many will not be its dupes. The idler, the curious, the really discontented, the factious, the designing, with a suitable mixture of the unthinking, and of those who only live for the pleasure of the passing hour, a class not the least insignificant for numbers, had lent themselves to the views of the police; and when Gelsomina was ready to enter the Piazzetta, she found both the squares partially filled. A few excited fisherman clustered about the doors of the cathedral, like bees swarming before their hive; but, on that side, there was no very visible cause of alarm. Unaccustomed as she was to scenes like that before her, the first glance assured the gentle girl of the real privacy which so singularly distinguishes the solitude of a crowd. Gathering her simple mantle more closely about her form, and settling her mask with care, she moved with a swift step into the centre of the piazza.

We shall not detail the progress of our heroine, as avoiding the common-place gallantry that assailed and offended her ear, she went her way, on her errand of kindness. Young, active, and impelled by her intentions, the square was soon passed, and she reached the place of San Nicolo. Here was one of the landings of the public gondolas. But, at the moment, there was no boat in waiting, for curiosity or fear had induced the men to quit their usual stand. Gelsomina had ascended the bridge, and was on the crown of its arch, when a gondolier came sweeping lazily in from the direction of the Grand Canal. Her hesitation and doubting manner attracted his attention, and the man made the customary sign, which conveyed the offer of his services. As she was nearly a stranger to the streets of Venice—labyrinths, that offer greater embarrassment to the uninitiated, than perhaps the passages of any other town of its size—she gladly availed herself of the offer. To descend to the steps, to leap into the boat, to utter the word

“Rialto,” and to conceal herself in the pavilion, was the business of a minute. The boat was instantly in motion.

Gelsomina now believed herself secure of effecting her purpose, since there was little to apprehend from the knowledge, or the designs of a common boatman. He could not know her object, and it was his interest to carry her, in safety, to the place she had commanded. But so important was success, that she could not feel secure of attaining it, while it was still unaccomplished. She soon summoned sufficient resolution to look out at the palaces and boats they were passing, and she felt the refreshing air of the canal revive her courage. Then turning, with sensitive distrust, to examine the countenance of the gondolier, she saw that his features were concealed beneath a mask that was so well designed, as not to be perceptible to a casual observer by moonlight.

Though it was common, on occasions, for the servants of the great, it was not usual for the

public gondoliers to be disguised. The circumstance itself was one justly to excite slight apprehension, though, on second thoughts, Gelsomina saw no more in it, than a return from some expedition of pleasure, or some serenade, perhaps, in which the caution of a lover had compelled his followers to resort to this species of concealment.

“ Shall I put you on the public quay, Signora,” demanded the gondolier, “ or shall I see you to the gate of your own palace ?”

The heart of Gelsomina beat high. She liked the tone of the voice, though it was necessarily smothered by the mask ; but she was little accustomed to act in the affairs of others, and less still in any of so great interest, that the sounds caused her to tremble like one less worthily employed.

“ Dost thou know the palace of a certain Don Camillo Monforte, a Lord of Calabria, who dwells, here, in Venice ?” she asked, after a moment’s pause. The gondolier sensibly be-

trayed surprise, by the manner in which he started at the question.

“Would you be rowed there, lady?”

“If thou art certain of knowing the palazzo.”

The water stirred, and the gondola glided between high walls. Gelsomina knew, by the sound, that they were in one of the smaller canals, and she augured well of the boatman's knowledge of the town. They soon stopped by the side of a water-gate, and the man appeared on the step, holding an arm, to aid her in ascending, after the manner of people of his craft. Gelsomina bade him wait her return, and proceeded.

There was a marked derangement in the household of Don Camillo, that one more practised than our heroine would have noted. The servants seemed undecided, in their manner of performing the most ordinary duties, their looks wandered distrustfully from one to the other, and when their half-frightened visitor entered the vestibule, though all arose, none advanced

to meet her. A female masked was not a rare sight, in Venice, for few of that sex went upon the canals, without using the customary means of concealment; but it would seem, by their hesitating manner, that the menials of Don Camillo did not view the entrance of her, who now appeared, with the usual indifference.

“ I am in the dwelling of the Duke of St. Agata, a Signore of Calabria ?” demanded Gelsomina, who saw the necessity of being firm.

“ Signora, si——”

“ Is your lord in the palace ?”

“ Signora, he is—and he is not. What beautiful lady shall I tell him does him this honour ?”

“ If he be not at home, it will not be necessary to tell him any thing. If he is, I could wish to see him.”

The domestics, of whom there were several, put their heads together, and seemed to dispute on the propriety of receiving the visit. At this instant, a gondolier, in a flowered jacket, entered

the vestibule. Gelsomina took courage at his good-natured eye and frank manner.

“Do you serve Don Camillo Montforte?” she asked, as he passed her, on his way to the canal.

“With the oar, Bellissima Donna,” answered Gino, touching his cap, though scarce looking aside at the question.

“And could he be told that a female wishes, earnestly, to speak to him in private?—A female.”

“Santa Maria! Bella Donna, there is no end to females who come on these errands, in Venice. You might better pay a visit to the statue of San Teodoro, in the piazza, than see my master at this moment; the stone will give you the better reception.”

“And this he commands you to tell all of my sex who come!”

“Diavolo!—Lady, you are particular in your questions. Perhaps my master might, on a strait, receive one of the sex, I could name,

but on the honour of a gondolier he is not the most gallant cavalier of Venice, just at this moment."

"If there is one to whom he would pay this deference—you are bold for a servitor. How know you I am not that one?"

Gino started. He examined the figure of the applicant, and lifting his cap he bowed.

"Lady, I do not know any thing about it," he said; "you may be his Highness the Doge, or the ambassador of the emperor. I pretend to know nothing in Venice, of late ——"

The words of Gino were cut short by a tap on the shoulder from the public gondolier, who had hastily entered the vestibule. The man whispered in the ear of Don Camillo's servitor.

"This is not a moment to refuse any," he said.—"Let the stranger go up."

Gino hesitated no longer. With the decision of a favoured menial he pushed the groom of the chambers aside, and offered to conduct Gelsomina, himself, to the presence of his master.

As they ascended the stairs, three of the inferior servants disappeared.

The palace of Don Camillo had an air of more than Venetian gloom. The rooms were dimly lighted, many of the walls had been stripped of the most precious of their pictures, and, in other respects a jealous eye might have detected evidence of a secret intention, on the part of its owner, not to make a permanent residence of the dwelling. But these were particulars that Gelsomina did not note, as she followed Gino through the apartments, into the more private parts of the building. Here the gondolier unlocked a door, and regarding his companion with an air, half-doubting, half-respectful, he made a sign for her to enter.

“My master commonly receives the ladies here,” he said. “Enter, eccellenza, while I run to tell him of his happiness.”

Gelsomina did not hesitate, though she felt a violent throb at the heart, when she heard the key turning in the lock, behind her. She was

in an ante-chamber, and, inferring from the light which shone through the door of an adjoining room, that she was to proceed, she went on. No sooner had she entered the little closet, than she found herself alone with one of her own sex.

“ Annina !” burst from the lips of the unpractised prison-girl, under the impulse of surprise.

“ Gelsomina !—The simple, quiet, whispering, modest Gelsomina !” returned the other.

The words of Annina admitted but of one construction. Wounded, like the bruised sensitive plant, Gelsomina withdrew her mask, for air, actually gasping for breath, between offended pride and wonder.

“ Thou here !” she added, scarce knowing what she uttered.

“ Thou here !” repeated Annina, with such a laugh, as escapes the degraded, when they believe the innocent reduced to their own level.

“ Nay—I come on an errand of pity.”

“ Santa Maria ! we are both here with the same end !”

“ Annina ! I know not what thou wouldst say !—This is surely the palace of Don Camillo Monforte !—A noble Neapolitan who urges claims to the honours of the senate ?”

“ The gayest—the handsomest—the richest, and the most inconstant cavalier in Venice ! Hadst thou been here a thousand times, thou couldst not be better informed !”

Gelsomina listened in horror. Her artful cousin, who knew her character to the full extent that vice can comprehend innocence, watched her colourless cheek and contracting eye, with secret triumph. At the first moment, she had believed all that she insinuated, but second thoughts, and a view of the visible distress of the frightened girl, gave a new direction to her suspicions.

“ But I tell thee nothing new,” she quickly added. “ I only regret thou shouldst find me, where, no doubt, you expected to meet the Duca di Sant’ Agata himself.”

“ Annina !—This from thee !”

“Thou surely didst not come to his palace to seek thy cousin !”

Gelsomina had long been familiar with grief, but until this moment she had never felt the deep humiliation of shame. Tears started from her eyes, and she sunk back into a seat, in utter inability to stand.

“I would not distress thee out of bearing,” added the artful daughter of the wine-seller. “But that we are both in the closet of the gayest cavalier of Venice is beyond dispute.”

“I have told thee that pity for another brought me hither.”

“Pity for Don Camillo.”

“For a noble lady—A young, a virtuous, and a beautiful wife—a daughter of the Tiepolo—of the Tiepolo, Annina !”

“Why should a lady of the Tiepolo employ a girl of the public prisons !”

“Why !—because there has been injustice by those up above. There has been a tumult among the fishermen—and the lady with her

governess were liberated by the rioters—and his Highness spoke to them in the great court—and the Dalmatians were on the quay—and the prison was a refuge for ladies of their quality, in a moment of so great terror—and the Holy Church itself has blessed their love—”

Gelsomina could utter no more, but breathless with the wish to vindicate herself, and wounded to the soul by the strange embarrassment, of her situation, she sobbed aloud. Incoherent as had been her language, she had said enough to remove every doubt from the mind of Annina. Privy to the secret marriage, to the rising of the fishermen, and to the departure of the ladies, from the convent on a distant island, where they had been carried on quitting their own palace, the preceding night, and whither she had been compelled to conduct Don Camillo, who had ascertained the departure of those he sought without discovering their destination, the daughter of the wine-seller readily comprehended, not only the errand of

her cousin, but the precise situation of the fugitives.

“ And thou believest this fiction, Gelsomina ?” she said, affecting pity for her cousin’s credulity. “ The characters of thy pretended daughter of Tiepolo and her governess are no secrets to those who frequent the piazza of San Marco.”

“ Hadst thou seen the beauty and innocencé of the lady, Annina, thou wouldst not say this !”

“ Blessed San Teodoro ! What is more beautiful than vice ! ’Tis the cheapest artifice of the devil to deceive frail sinners. This thou hast heard of thy confessor, Gelsomina, or he is of much lighter discourse than mine.”

“ But why should a woman of this life enter the prisons ?”

“ They had good reasons to dread the Dalmatians, no doubt. But, it is in my power to tell thee more, of these thou hast entertained, with such peril to thine own reputation. There are women in Venice who discredit their sex in various ways, and these, more particularly she

who calls herself Florinda, is notorious for her agency in robbing St. Mark of his revenue. She has received a largesse, from the Neapolitan, of wines grown on his Calabrian mountains, and wishing to tamper with my honesty, she offered the liquor to me; expecting one like me to forget my duty, and to aid her in deceiving the republic!"

"Can this be true, Annina!"

"Why should I deceive thee? Are we not sisters' children, and though affairs on the Lido keep me much from thy company, is not the love between us natural? I complained to the authorities, and the liquors were seized, and the pretended noble ladies were obliged to hide themselves this very day. 'Tis thought they wish to flee the city, with their profligate Neapolitan. Driven to take shelter, they have sent thee to acquaint him with their hiding-place, in order that he may come to their aid."

"And why art thou here, Annina?"

"I marvel that thou didst not put the ques-

tion sooner. Gino, the gondolier of Don Camillo, has long been an unfavoured suitor of mine, and when this Florinda complained of my having—what every honest girl in Venice should do, exposed her fraud to the authorities, he advised his master to seize me, partly in revenge, and partly with the vain hope of making me retract the complaint I have made. Thou hast heard of the bold violence of these cavaliers when thwarted in their wills.”

Annina then related the manner of her seizure, with sufficient exactitude, merely concealing those facts that it was not her interest to reveal.

“ But there is a lady of the Tiepolo, Annina !”

“ As sure as there are cousins like ourselves. Santa Madre 'di Dio ! that women so treacherous and so bold should have met one of thy innocence ! It would have been better had they fallen in with me, who am too ignorant for their cunning, blessed St. Anna knows !—but who have not to learn their true characters.”

“ They did speak of thee, Annina !”

The glance, which the wine-seller's daughter threw at her cousin, was such as the treacherous serpent casts at the bird ; but, preserving her self-possession, she added—

“ Not to my favour ; it would sicken me to hear words of favour from such as they !”

“ They are not thy friends, Annina.”

“ Perhaps they told thee, child, that I was in the employment of the council ?”

“ Indeed they did.”

“ No wonder. Your dishonest people can never believe one can do an act of pure conscience. But, here comes the Neapolitan.—Note the libertine, Gelsomina, and thou wilt feel for him the same disgust as I !”

The door opened, and Don Camillo Monforte entered. There was an appearance of distrust in his manner, which proved that he did not expect to meet his bride. Gelsomina arose, and, though bewildered by the tale of her cousin, and her own previous impressions, she stood resembling a meek statue of modesty, awaiting

his approach. The Neapolitan was evidently struck by her beauty, and the simplicity of her air, but his brow was fixed, like that of a man who had steeled his feelings against deceit.

“Thou wouldst see me?” he said.

“I had that wish, noble Signore, but—
Annina——”

“Seeing another, thy mind hath changed.”

“Signore, it has.”

Don Camillo looked at her earnestly, and with manly regret.

“Thou art young for thy vocation—here is gold. Retire as thou comest.—But hold—dost thou know this Annina?”

“She is my mother’s sister’s daughter, noble Duca.”

“Per Diana! a worthy sisterhood! Depart together, for I have no need of either. But mark me,” and as he spoke Don Camillo took Annina by the arm, and led her aside, when he continued with a low but menacing voice—“Thou seest I am to be feared, as well

as thy Councils. Thou canst not cross the threshold of thy father without my knowledge. If prudent, thou wilt teach thy tongue discretion. Do as thou wilt, I fear thee not; but remember, prudence."

Annina made a humble reverence, as if in acknowledgment of the wisdom of his advice, and taking the arm of her half-unconscious cousin, she again curtsied, and hurried from the room. As the presence of their master in his closet was known to them, none of the menials presumed to stop those who issued from the privileged room. Gelsomina, who was even more impatient than her wily companion to escape from a place she believed polluted, was nearly breathless when she reached the gondola. Its owner was in waiting on the steps, and in a moment the boat whirled away from a spot, which both of those it contained were, though for reasons so very different, glad to quit.

Gelsomina had forgotten her mask, in her

hurry, and the gondola was no sooner in the great canal, than she put her face at the window of the pavilion in quest of the evening air. The rays of the moon fell upon her guileless eye, and a cheek that was now glowing, partly with offended pride, and partly with joy at her escape from a situation she felt to be so degrading. Her forehead was touched with a finger, and turning she saw the gondolier making a sign of caution. He then slowly lifted his mask.

“Carlo!” had half burst from her lips, but another sign suppressed the cry.

Gelsomina withdrew her head, and, after her beating heart had ceased to throb, she bowed her face and murmured thanksgivings, at finding herself, at such a moment, under the protection of one who possessed all her confidence.

The gondolier asked no orders for his direction. The boat moved on, taking the direction of the port, which appeared perfectly

natural to the two females. Annina supposed it was returning to the square, the place she would have sought had she been alone, and Gelsomina, who believed that he whom she called Carlo, toiled regularly as a gondolier for support, fancied, of course, that he was taking her to her ordinary residence.

But, though the innocent can endure the scorn of the world, it is hard indeed to be suspected by those they love. All that Annina had told her of the character of Don Camillo and his associates came gradually across the mind of the gentle Gelsomina, and she felt the blood creeping to her temples, as she saw the construction her lover might put on her conduct. A dozen times did the artless girl satisfy herself with saying inwardly, "he knows me and will believe the best," and as often did her feelings prompt her to tell the truth. Suspense is far more painful, at such moments, than even vindication, which, in itself, is a humiliating duty to the virtuous. Pretending

a desire to breathe the air, she left her cousin in the canopy. Annina was not sorry to be alone, for she had need to reflect on all the windings of the sinuous path on which she had entered.

Gelsomina succeeded in passing the pavilion, and in gaining the side of the gondolier.

“Carlo!”—she said, observing that he continued to row in silence.

“Gelsomina?”

“Thou hast not questioned me!”

“I know thy treacherous cousin, and can believe thou art her dupe. The moment to learn the truth will come.”

“Thou didst not know me, Carlo, when I called thee from the bridge?”

“I did not—Any fare that would occupy my time was welcome.”

“Why dost thou call Annina treacherous?”

“Because Venice does not hold a more wily heart, or a falser tongue.”

Gelsomina remembered the warning of Donna

Florinda. Possessed of the advantage of blood, and that reliance which the inexperienced always place in the integrity of their friends, until exposure comes to destroy the illusion, Annina had found it easy to persuade her cousin of the unworthiness of her guests. But here was one who had all her sympathies, who openly denounced Annina herself. In such a dilemma the bewildered girl did what nature and her feelings suggested. She recounted, in a low but rapid voice, the incidents of the evening, and Annina's construction of the conduct of the females whom she had left behind in the prisons.

Jacopo listened so intently that his oar dragged in the water.

"Enough," he said, when Gelsomina, blushing with her own earnestness to stand exculpated in his eyes, had done; "I understand it all. Distrust thy cousin, for the senate itself is not more false."

The pretended Carlo spoke cautiously, but

in a firm voice. Gelsomina took his meaning, though wondering at what she heard, and returned to Annina within. The gondola proceeded, as if nothing had occurred.

CHAPTER V.

“ Enough.

I could be merry now : Hubert, I love thee ;
Well, I'll not say what I intend for thee :
Remember.

King John.

JACOPO was deeply practised in the windings of Venetian deceit. He knew how unceasingly the eyes of the Councils, through their agents, were on the movements of those in whom they took an interest, and he was far from feeling all the advantage circumstances had seemingly thrown in his way. Annina was certainly in his power, and

it was not possible that she had yet communicated the intelligence, derived from Gelsomina, to any of her employers. But a gesture, a look in passing the prison-gates, the appearance of duress, or an exclamation, might give the alarm to some one of the thousand spies of the police. The disposal of Annina's person in some place of safety, therefore, became the first and the most material act. To return to the palace of Don Camillo, would be to go into the midst of the hirelings of the senate; and although the Neapolitan, relying on his rank and influence, had preferred this step, when little importance was attached to the detention of the girl, and when all she knew had been revealed, the case was altered, now that she might become the connecting link in the information necessary to enable the officers to find the fugitives.

The gondola moved on. Palace after palace was passed, and the impatient Annina thrust her head from a window to note its progress. They came among the shipping of the port, and her

uneasiness sensibly increased. Making a pretext similar to that of Gelsomina, the wine-seller's daughter quitted the pavilion, to steal to the side of the gondolier.

“I would be landed quickly at the water-gate of the doge's palace,” she said, slipping a piece of silver into the hand of the boatman.

“You shall be served, *Bella Donna*. But—*Diamine!* I marvel that a girl of thy wit should not scent the treasures in yonder *feluca!*”

“Dost thou mean the *Sorrentine?*”

“What other *padrone* brings as well-flavoured liquors within the *Lido!* Quiet thy impatience to land, daughter of honest old *'Maso*, and traffick with the *padrone*, for the comfort of us of the canals.”

“How! Thou knowest me then?”

“To be the pretty wine-seller of the *Lido*. *Corpo di Bacco!* Thou art as well known as the sea-wall, itself, to us gondoliers.”

“Why art thou masked? thou canst not be *Luigi!*”

“It is little matter whether I am called Luigi, or Enrico, or Giorgio—I am thy customer, and honour the shortest hair of thy eyebrows. Thou knowest, Annina, that the young patricians have their frolics, and they swear us gondoliers to keep secret till all danger of detection is over ; were any impertinent eyes following me, I might be questioned as to the manner of having passed the earlier hours.”

“Methinks it would be better to have given thee gold, and to have sent thee at once to thy home.”

“To be followed, like a denounced Hebrew, to my door. When I have confounded my boat with a thousand others, it will be time to uncover. Wilt thou to the Bella Sorrentina?”

“Nay, 'tis not necessary to ask, since thou takest the direction of thine own will!”

The gondolier laughed and nodded his head, as if he would give his companion to understand that he was master of her secret wishes. Annina was hesitating in what manner she should

make him change his purpose, when the gondola touched the feluca's side.

"We will go up and speak to the padrone," whispered Jacopo.

"It is of no avail; he is without liquors."

"Trust him not—I know the man and his pretences."

"Thou forgettest my cousin."

"She is an innocent and unsuspecting child."

Jacopo lifted Annina, as he spoke, on the deck of the *Bella Sorrentina*, in a manner between gallantry and force, and leaped after her. Without pausing, or suffering her to rally her thoughts, he led her to the cabin stairs, which she descended, wondering at his conduct, but determined not to betray her own secret wrongs on the customs to a stranger.

Stefano Milano was asleep, in a sail, on deck. A touch aroused him, and a sign gave him to understand that the imaginary Roderigo stood before him.

“A thousand pardons, Signore,” said the gaping mariner; “is the freight come?”

“In part only. I have brought thee a certain Annina Torti, the daughter of old Tomaso Torti, a wine-seller of the Lido.”

“Santa Madre! does the senate think it necessary to send one like her from the city in secret?”

“It does—and it lays great stress on her detention. I have come hither with her, without suspicion of my object, and she has been prevailed on to enter thy cabin, under a pretence of some secret dealings in wines. According to our former understanding, it will be thy business to make sure of her presence.”

“That is easily done,” returned Stefano, stepping forward and closing the cabin door, which he secured by a bolt. “She is alone, now, with the image of our Lady, and a better occasion to repeat her aves cannot offer.”

“This is well, if thou canst keep her so. It

is now time to lift thy anchors, and to go beyond the tiers of the vessels with the feluca."

"Signore, there wants but five minutes for that duty, since we are ready."

"Then perform it, in all speed, for much depends on the management of this delicate duty. I will be with thee, anon. Hearkee, Master Stefano; take heed of thy prisoner, for the senate makes great account of her security."

The Calabrian made such a gesture, as one initiated uses, when he would express a confidence in his own shrewdness. While the pretended Roderigo re-entered his gondola, Stefano began to awaken his people. As the gondola entered the canal of San Marco, the sails of the feluca fell, and the low Calabrian vessel stole along the tiers towards the clear water beyond.

The boat quickly touched the steps of the water-gate of the palace. Gelsomina entered the arch, and glided up the Giant's Stairway, the route by which she had quitted the palace. The halberdier was the same that watched as

she went out. He spoke to her, in gallantry, but offered no impediment to her entrance.

“Haste, noble ladies, hasten for the love of the Holy Virgin !” exclaimed Gelsomina, as she burst into the room in which Donna Violetta and her companion awaited her appearance. “I have endangered your liberty by my weakness, and there is not a moment to lose. Follow while you may, nor stop to whisper even a prayer.”

“Thou art hurried and breathless,” returned Donna Florinda ; “hast thou seen the Duca di Sant’Agata ?”

“Nay, question me not, but follow, noble dames.”

Gelsomina seized the lamp, and casting a glance that appealed strongly to her visitors for tacit compliance, she led the way into the corridors. It is scarcely necessary to say that she was followed.

The prison was left in safety, the Bridge of Sighs was passed, for it will be remembered

that Gelsomina was still mistress of the keys, and the party went swiftly by the great stairs of the palace into the open gallery. No obstruction was offered to their progress, and they all descended to the court, with the quiet demeanour of females who went out on their ordinary affairs.

Jacopo awaited at the water-gate. In less than a minute he was driving his gondola across the port, following the course of the feluca, whose white sail was visible in the moonlight, now bellying in the breeze, and now flapping as the mariners checked her speed. Gelsomina watched their progress for a moment in breathless interest, and then she crossed the bridge of the quay, and entered the prison by its public gate.

“Hast thou made sure of old ’Maso’s daughter?” demanded Jacopo, on reaching the deck of the *Bella Sorrentina* again.

“She is like shifting ballast, Master Roderigo; first on one side of the cabin, and then

on the other; but you see the bolt is undrawn."

"'Tis well; here is more of thy freight—thou hast the proper passes for the galley of the guard?"

"All is in excellent order, Signore; when was Stefano Milano out of rule in a matter of haste? Diamine! let the breeze come, and though the Senate should wish us back again, it might send all its sbirri after us in vain."

"Excellent Stefano! fill thy sails, then, for our masters watch your movements, and set a value on your diligence."

While the Calabrian complied, Jacopo assisted the females to come up out of the gondola. In a moment the heavy yards swung off, wing and wing, and the bubbles that appeared to glance past the sides of the *Bella Sorrentina*, denoted her speed.

"Thou hast noble ladies in thy passengers," said Jacopo to the padrone, when the latter was released from the active duties of getting his

vessel in motion ; “and though policy requires that they should quit the city for a time, thou wilt gain favour by consulting their pleasures.”

“Doubt me not, Master Roderigo ; but thou forgettest that I have not yet received my sailing instructions ; a feluca without a course, is as badly off as an owl in the sun.”

“That in good time ; there will come an officer of the republic to settle this matter with thee. I would not have these noble ladies know, that one like Annina is to be their fellow-passenger, while they are near the port ; for they might complain of disrespect. Thou understandest, Stefano ?”

“Cospetto ! am I a fool ? a blunderer ? if so, why does the Senate employ me ? The girl is out of hearing, and there let her stay. As long as the noble dames are willing to breathe the night-air, they shall have none of her company.”

“No fear of them. The dwellers of the land little relish the pent air of thy cabin. Thou wilt go without the Lido, Stefano, and

await my coming. If thou shouldst not see me before the hour of one, bear away for the port of Ancona, where thou wilt get further tidings."

Stefano, who had often previously received his instructions from the imaginary Roderigo, nodded assent, and they parted. It is scarcely necessary to add that the fugitives had been fully instructed in the conduct they were to maintain.

The gondola of Jacopo never flew faster, than he now urged it towards the land. In the constant passage of the boats, the movements of one were not likely to be remarked; and he found, when he reached the quay of the square, that his passing and re-passing had not been observed. He boldly unmasked and landed. It was near the hour when he had given Don Camillo a rendezvous in the piazza, and he walked slowly up the smaller square, towards the appointed place of meeting.

Jacopo, as has been seen in an earlier chap-

ter, had a practice of walking near the columns of granite in the first hours of the night. It was the vulgar impression that he waited there for custom in his bloody calling, as men of more innocent lives take their stands in places of mark. When seen on his customary stand he was avoided by all who were chary of their character, or scrupulous of appearances.

The persecuted and yet singularly tolerated Bravo, was slowly pacing the flags on his way to the appointed place, unwilling to anticipate the moment, when a laquais thrust a paper into his hand, and disappeared as fast as legs could carry him. It has been seen that Jacopo could not read, for that was an age when men of his class were studiously kept in ignorance. He turned to the first passenger who had the appearance of being likely to satisfy his wishes, and desired him to do the office of interpreter.

He had addressed an honest shop-keeper of a distant quarter. The man took the scroll, and good-naturedly commenced reading its contents

aloud. "I am called away, and cannot meet thee, Jacopo!" At the name of Jacopo, the tradesman dropped the paper and fled.

The Bravo walked slowly back again, towards the quay, ruminating on the awkward accident which had crossed his plans; his elbow was touched, and a masker confronted him when he turned.

"Thou art Jacopo Frontoni?" said the stranger.

"None else."

"Thou hast a hand to serve an employer, faithfully?"

"I keep my faith."

"'Tis well,—thou wilt find a hundred sequins in this sack."

"Whose life is set against this gold?" asked Jacopo, in an under tone.

"Don Camillo Monforte's."

"Don Camillo Monforte!"

"The same; dost thou know the rich noble?"

"You have well described him, Signore.

He would pay his barber this for letting blood."

"Do thy job thoroughly, and the price shall be doubled."

"I want the security of a name. I know you not, Signore."

The stranger looked cautiously around him, and raising his mask for an instant, he shewed the countenance of Giacomo Gradenigo.

"Is the pledge sufficient?"

"Signore, it is. When must this deed be done?"

"This night.—Nay, this hour, even."

"Shall I strike a noble of his rank in his palace—in his very pleasures?"

"Come hither, Jacopo, and thou shalt know more. Hast thou a mask?"

The Bravo signified his assent.

"Then keep thy face behind a cloud, for it is not in favour here, and seek thy boat. I will join thee."

The young patrician, whose form was effect-

ally concealed by his attire, quitted his companion, with a view of rejoining him anew, where his person should not be known. Jacopo forced his boat from among the crowd at the quay, and having entered the open space, between the tiers, he lay on his oar, well knowing that he was watched, and that he would soon be followed. His conjecture was right, for in a few moments a gondola pulled swiftly to the side of his own, and two men in masks passed from the strange boat into that of the Bravo, without speaking.

“To the Lido,” said a voice, which Jacopo knew to be that of his new employer.

He was obeyed, the boat of Giacomo Gradenigo following at a little distance. When they were without the tiers, and consequently beyond the danger of being overheard, the two passengers came out of the pavilion, and made a sign to the Bravo to cease rowing.

“Thou wilt accept the service, Jacopo Fron-

toni?" demanded the profligate heir of the old senator.

"Shall I strike the noble in his pleasures, Signore?"

"It is not necessary. We have found means to lure him from his palace, and he is now in thy power, with no other hope than that which may come from his single arm and courage. Wilt thou take the service?"

"Gladly, Signore—It is my humour to encounter the brave."

"Thou wilt be gratified. The Neapolitan has thwarted me in my—shall I call it love, Hosea? or hast thou a better name?"

"Just Daniel! Signor Giacomo, you have no respect for reputations and surety! I see no necessity for a home-thrust, Master Jacopo; but a smart wound, that may put matrimony out of the head of the Duca for a time at least, and penitence into its place, would be better—"

"Strike to the heart!" interrupted Giacomo.

“It is the certainty of thy blow which has caused me to seek thee.”

“This is usurious vengeance, Signor Giacomo,” returned the less resolute Jew. “’Twill be more than sufficient for our purposes if we cause the Neapolitan to keep house for a month.”

“Send him to his grave. Harkee, Jacopo, a hundred for thy blow—a second for insurance of its depth—a third, if the body shall be buried in the Orfano, so that the water will never give back the secret.”

“If the two first must be performed, the last will be prudent caution,” muttered the Jew, who was a wary villain, and who greatly preferred such secondary expedients, as might lighten the load on his conscience. “You will not trust, young Signore, to a smart wound?”

“Not a sequin. ’Twill be heating the fancy of the girl with hopes and pity. Dost thou accept the terms, Jacopo?”

“I do.”

“Then row to the Lido. Among the graves

of Hosea's people—why dost thou pull at my skirts, Jew? wouldst thou hope to deceive a man of this character with a flimsy lie? Among the graves of Hosea's people thou wilt meet Don Camillo, within the hour. He is deluded by a pretended letter from the lady of our common pursuit, and will be alone, in the hopes of flight; I trust to thee to hasten the latter, so far as the Neapolitan is concerned. Dost take my meaning?"

“ Signore, it is plain.”

“ 'Tis enough. Thou knowest me, and can take the steps necessary for thy reward, as thou shalt serve me. Hosea, our affair is ended.”

Giacomo Gradenigo made a sign for his gondola to approach, and dropping a sack which contained the retainer in this bloody business, he passed into it, with the indifference of one, who had been accustomed to consider such means of attaining his object, lawful. Not so, Hosea; he was a rogue, rather than a villain. The preservation of his money, with the temp-

tation of a large sum which had been promised him, by both father and son, in the event of the latter's success with Violetta, were irresistible temptations to one who had lived contemned by those around him, and he found his solace for the ruthless attempt in the acquisition of those means of enjoyment, which are sought equally by Christian and Jew. Still his blood curdled, at the extremity to which Giacomo would push the affair, and he lingered to utter a parting word to the Bravo.

“Thou art said to carry a sure stiletto, honest Jacopo,” he whispered. “A hand of thy practice must know how to maim, as well as to slay.—Strike the Neapolitan smartly, but spare his life. Even the bearer of a public dagger like thine, may not fare the worse, at the coming of Shilo, for having been tender of his strength, on occasion.”

“Thou forgettest the gold, Hosea!”

“Father Abraham! what a memory am I getting, in my years! Thou sayest truth,

mindful Jacopo ; the gold shall be forthcoming, in any event—always provided that the affair is so managed as to leave my young friend, a successful adventurer with the heiress.”

Jacopo made an impatient gesture, for at that moment he saw a gondolier pulling rapidly towards a private part of the Lido. The Hebrew joined his companion, and the boat of the Bravo darted ahead. It was not long ere it lay on the strand of the Lido. The steps of Jacopo were rapid, as he moved towards those prescribed graves, among which he had made his confession to the very man he was now sent to slay.

“ Art thou sent to meet me ?” demanded one, who started from behind a rising in the sands, but who took the precaution to bare his rapier as he appeared.

“ Signor Duca, I am,” returned the Bravo, unmasking.

“ Jacopo !—this is even better than I had hoped !—Hast thou tidings from my bride ?”

“ Follow, Don Camillo, and you shall quickly meet her.”

Words were unnecessary to persuade, when there was such a promise. They were both in the gondola of Jacopo, and on their way to one of the passages through the Lido, which conducts to the gulf, before the Bravo commenced his explanations. This, however, was quickly made, not forgetting the design of Giacomo Gradenigo on the life of his auditor.

The feluca, which had been previously provided with the necessary pass, by the agents of the police, itself, had quitted the port under easy sail, by the very inlet, through which the gondola made its way into the Adriatic. The water was smooth, the breeze fresh from the land, and in short all things were favourable to the fugitives. Donna Violetta and her governess were leaning against a mast, watching with impatient eyes the distant domes, and the midnight beauty of Venice. Occasionally, strains of music came to their ears from the canals, and

then a touch of natural melancholy crossed the feelings of the former, as she feared they might be the last sounds of that nature, she should ever hear from her native town. But unalloyed pleasure drove every regret from her mind when Don Camillo leaped from the gondola, and folded her in triumph to his heart.

There was little difficulty in persuading Stefano Milano to abandon, for ever, the service of the Senate, for that of his feudal lord. The promises and commands of the latter were sufficient of themselves, to reconcile him to the change, and all were convinced there was now no time to lose. The feluca soon spread her canvass to the wind, and slid away from the beach. Jacopo permitted his gondola to be towed a league to sea, before he prepared to re-enter it.

“You will steer for Ancona, Signor Don Camillo,” said the Bravo, leaning on the feluca’s side, still unwilling to depart, “and throw yourself, at once, under the protection

of the Cardinal Secretary. If Stefano keep the sea, he may chance meet the gallies of the Senate.”

“Distrust us not—but thou, my excellent Jacopo — what wilt thou become, in their hands?”

“Fear not for me, Signore. God disposes of all, as he sees fit. I have told your eccellenza that I cannot yet quit Venice. If fortune favour me, I may still see your stout castle of Sant’ Agata.”

“And none will be more welcome, within its secure walls. I have much fear for thee, Jacopo!”

“Signore, think not of it. I am used to danger—and to misery—and to hopelessness. I have known a pleasure, this night, in witnessing the happiness of two young hearts, that God, in his anger, has long denied me. Lady, the Saints keep you, and God, who is above all, shield you from harm!”

“He kissed the hand of Donna Violetta,

who, half ignorant still of his services, listened to his words, in wonder.

“Don Camillo Monforte,” he continued, “distrust Venice to your dying day. Let no promises—no hopes—no desire of increasing your honours, or your riches, ever tempt you to put yourself in her power. None know the falsehood of the state, better than I, and with my parting words I warn you to be wary!”

“Thou speakest, as if we were to meet no more, worthy Jacopo!”

The Bravo turned, and the action brought his features to the moon. There was a melancholy smile, in which deep satisfaction at the success of the lovers was mingled with serious forebodings for himself.

“We are certain only of the past,” he said, in a low voice.

Touching the hand of Don Camillo, he kissed his own and leaped hastily into his gondola. The fast was thrown loose, and the feluca glided away, leaving this extraordinary being, alone,

in the waters. The Neapolitan ran to the taffrail, and the last he saw of Jacopo, the Bravo was rowing leisurely back towards that scene of violence and deception, from which he himself was so glad to have escaped.

CHAPTER VI.

My limbs are bowed, though not with toil,
But rusted with a vile repose,
For they have been a dungeon's spoil,
And mine hath been the fate of those
To whom the goodly earth and air
Are bann'd, and barr'd—forbidden fare ;

Prisoner of Chillon.

WHEN the day dawned on the following morning, the square of St. Mark was empty. The priests still chanted their prayers for the dead, near the body of old Antonio, and a few fishermen still lingered in and near the cathedral, but half persuaded of the manner in which their companion had come to his end.

But, as was usual at that hour of the day, the city appeared tranquil, for though a slight alarm had passed through the canals, at the movement of the rioters, it had subsided in that specious and distrustful quiet, which is, more or less, the unavoidable consequence of a system that is not substantially based on the willing support of the mass.

Jacopo was again in the attic of the doge's palace, accompanied by the gentle Gelsomina. As they threaded the windings of the building, he recounted to the eager ear of his companion, all the details connected with the escape of the lovers; omitting, as a matter of prudence, the attempt of Giacomo Gradenigo on the life of Don Camillo. The unpractised and single-hearted girl, heard him in breathless attention, the colour of her cheek, and the changeful eye, betraying the force of her sympathies, at each turn in their hazardous adventure.

“And dost thou think they can yet escape from those up above?” murmured Gelsomina,

for few in Venice would trust their voices, by putting such a question aloud. "Thou knowest the republic hath, at all times, its gallies in the Adriatic!"

"We have had thought of that, and the Calabrian is advised to steer for the mole of Ancona. Once within the States of the Church, the influence of Don Camillo and the rights of his noble wife will protect them. Is there a place here, whence we can look out upon the sea?"

Gelsomina led the Bravo into an empty room of the attic which commanded a view of the port, the Lido, and the waste of water beyond. The breeze came, in strong currents, over the roofs of the town, and causing the masts of the port to rock, it lighted on the Lagunes, without the tiers of the shipping. From this point, to the barrier of sand, it was apparent, by the stooping sails, and the struggles of the gondoliers who pulled towards the quay, that the air was swift. Without the Lido, itself, the element was shadowed and fitful, while farther in the

distance, the troubled waters, with their crests of foam, sufficiently proved its power.

“Santa Maria be praised!” exclaimed Jacopo, when his understanding eye had run over the near and distant view—“they are already far down the coast, and with a wind like this, they cannot fail to reach their haven, in a few hours.—Let us go to the cell.”

Gelsomina smiled, when he assured her of the safety of the fugitives, but her look saddened when he changed the discourse. Without reply, however, she did as he desired, and in a very few moments they were standing by the side of the prisoner’s pallet. The latter did not appear to observe their entrance, and Jacopo was obliged to announce himself.

“Father!” he said, with that melancholy pathos which always crept into his voice when he addressed the old man, “it is I.”

The prisoner turned, and though evidently much enfeebled, since the last visit, a wan smile gleamed on his wasted features.

“And thy mother, boy?” he asked, so eagerly as to cause Gelsomina to turn hastily aside.

“Happy, father—happy!”

“Happy without me?”

“She is ever with thee, in spirit, father. She thinks of thee in her prayers. Thou hast a saint for an intercessor, in my mother—father.”

“And thy good sister?”

“Happy too—doubt it not, father. They are both patient and resigned.”

“The Senate, boy?”

“Is the same: soulless, selfish and pretending!” answered Jacopo, sternly; then turning away his face, in bitterness of heart, though without permitting the words to be audible, he cursed them.

“The noble Signori were deceived in believing me concerned in the attempt to rob their revenues,” returned the patient old man; “one day they will see and acknowledge their error.”

Jacopo made no answer, for, unlettered as he was, and curtailed of that knowledge, which should be, and is, bestowed on all, by every paternal government, the natural strength of his mind had enabled him to understand, that a system, which on its face professed to be founded on the superior acquirements of a privileged few, would be the least likely to admit the fallacy of its theories, by confessing it could err.

“Thou dost the nobles injustice, son; they are illustrious patricians, and have no motive in oppressing one like me.”

“None, father, but the necessity of maintaining the severity of the laws, which make them senators and you a prisoner.”

“Nay, boy, I have known worthy gentlemen of the Senate! There was the late Signor Tiepolo who did me much favour in my youth. But for this false accusation, I might now have been one of the most thriving of my craft in Venice.”

“Father, we will pray for the soul of the Tiepolo.”

“Is the illustrious senator dead?”

“So says a gorgeous tomb in the church of the Redentore.”

“We must all die at last,” whispered the old man, crossing himself. “Doge as well as patrician—patrician as well as gondolier.—Jaco—”

“Father!” exclaimed the Bravo, so suddenly as to interrupt the coming word, then kneeling by the pallet of the prisoner he whispered in his ear, “Thou forgettest there is reason why thou shouldst not call me by that name. I have told thee, often, that if thus called, my visits must stop.”

The prisoner looked bewildered, for the failing of nature rendered that obscure which was once so evident to his mind. After gazing long at his son, his eye wandered between him and the wall, and he smiled childishly.

“Wilt thou look, good boy, if the spider is come back?”

Jacopo groaned, but he rose to comply.

“I do not see it, father; the season is not yet warm.”

“Not warm! my veins feel heated to bursting. Thou forgettest this is the attic, and that these are the leads, and then the sun—oh! the sun! The illustrious senators do not bethink them of the pain of passing the bleak winter below the canals, and the burning summers beneath hot metal.”

“They think of nothing but their power,” murmured Jacopo—“that which is wrongfully obtained, must be maintained by merciless injustice—but why should we speak of this, father? hast thou all thy body needs?”

“Air—son, air!—give me of that air, which God has made for the meanest living thing.”

The Bravo rushed towards those fissures in the venerable but polluted pile, he had already striven to open, and with frantic force he endeavoured to widen them with his hands. The

material resisted, though blood flowed from the ends of his fingers, in the desperate effort.

“The door, Gelsomina, open wide the door!” he cried, turning away from the spot, exhausted with his fruitless exertions.

“Nay, I do not suffer now, my child—it is when thou hast left me, and when I am alone with my own thoughts, when I see thy weeping mother and neglected sister, that I most feel the want of air—are we not in the fervid month of August, son?”

“Father, it is not yet June.”

“I shall then have more heat to bear! God’s will be done, and blessed Santa Maria, his mother undefiled!—give me strength to endure it.”

The eye of Jacopo gleamed with a wildness, scarcely less frightful than the ghastly look of the old man; his chest heaved, his fingers were clenched, and his breathing was audible.

“No,” he said, in a low, but in so determined a voice, as to prove how fiercely his reso-

lution was set, "thou shalt not await their torments; arise, father, and go with me. The doors are open, the ways of the palace are known to me, in the darkest night, and the keys are at hand. I will find means to conceal thee until dark, and we will quit the accursed republic for ever."

Hope gleamed in the eye of the old captive, as he listened to this frantic proposal, but distrust of the means immediately altered its expression.

"Thou forgettest those up above, son."

"I think only of One truly above, father."

"And this girl—how canst thou hope to deceive her?"

"She will take thy place—she is with us in heart, and will lend herself to a seeming violence. I do not promise for thee, idly, kindest Gelsomina?"

The frightened girl, who had never before witnessed so plain evidence of desperation in her companion, had sunk upon an article of furni-

ture, speechless. The look of the prisoner changed from one to the other, and he made an effort to rise, but debility caused him to fall backward, and not till then, did Jacopo perceive the impracticability, on many accounts, of what, in a moment of excitement, he had proposed. A long silence followed. The hard breathing of Jacopo gradually subsided, and the expression of his face changed to its customary settled and collected look.

“Father,” he said, “I must quit thee; our misery draws near a close.”

“Thou wilt come to me soon again?”

“If the saints permit;—thy blessing, father?”

“The old man folded his hands above the head of Jacopo, and murmured a prayer. When this pious duty was performed, both the Bravo and Gelsomina busied themselves, a little time, in contributing to the bodily comforts of the prisoner, and then they departed in company.

Jacopo appeared unwilling to quit the vicinity

of the cell. A melancholy presentiment seemed to possess his mind, that these stolen visits were soon to cease. After a little delay, however, they descended to the apartments below, and as Jacopo desired to quit the palace, without re-entering the prisons, Gelsomina prepared to let him out by the principal corridor.

“Thou art sadder than common, Carlo,” she observed, watching with feminine assiduity his averted eye. “Methinks thou shouldst rejoice in the fortunes of the Neapolitan, and of the lady of the Tiepolo.”

“That escape is like a gleam of sunshine in a wintry day. Good girl—but we are observed! who is yon spy on our movements?”

“’Tis a menial of the palace; they constantly cross us in this part of the building; come hither, if thou art weary. This room is little used, and we may again look out upon the sea.”

Jacopo followed his mild conductor into one of the neglected closets of the second floor, where, in truth, he was glad to catch a glimpse

of the state of things in the piazza, before he left the palace. His first look was at the water, which was still rolling southward, before the gale from the Alps. Satisfied with this prospect, he bent his eye beneath. At the instant, an officer of the republic issued from the palace gate, preceded by a trumpeter, as was usual, when there was occasion to make public proclamation of the senate's will. Gelsomina opened the casement, and both leaned forward to listen. When the little procession had reached the front of the cathedral, the trumpet sounded, and the voice of the officer was heard.

“Whereas many wicked and ruthless assassinations have of late been committed on the persons of divers good citizens of Venice,”—he proclaimed—“the senate, in its fatherly care of all whom it is charged to protect, has found reason to resort to extraordinary means of preventing the repetition of crimes so contrary to the laws of God and the security of society. The Illustrious Ten therefore offer, thus pub-

licly, a reward of one hundred sequins to him who shall discover the perpetrator of any of these most horrible assassinations; and, whereas, during the past night, the body of a certain Antonio, a well-known fisherman, and a worthy citizen, much esteemed by the patricians, has been found in the Lagunes, and, whereas, there is but too much reason to believe that he has come to his death by the hands of a certain Jacopo Frontoni, who has the reputation of a common Bravo, but who has been long watched, in vain, by the authorities, with the hope of detecting him in the commission of some one of the aforesaid horrible assassinations; now, all good and honest citizens of the republic are enjoined to assist the authorities in seizing the person of the said Jacopo Frontoni, even though he should take sanctuary: for Venice can no longer endure the presence of one of his sanguinary habits, and for the encouragement of the same, the senate, in its paternal care, offers the reward of three hundred se-

quins." The usual words of prayer and sovereignty closed the proclamation.

As it was not usual for those who ruled so much in the dark, to make their intentions public, all near listened, with wonder and awe, to the novel procedure. Some trembled, least the mysterious and much-dreaded power was about to exhibit itself; while most found means of making their admiration of the fatherly interest of their rulers audible.

None heard the words of the officer with more feeling than Gelsomina. She bent her body far from the window, in order that not a syllable should escape her.

"Didst thou hear, Carlo?" demanded the eager girl, as she drew back her head; "they proclaim, at last, money for the monster who has committed so many murders!"

Jacopo laughed; but to the ears of his startled companion the sounds were unnatural.

"The patricians are just, and what they do is right," he said. "They are of illustrious

birth, and cannot err ! They will do their duty."

"But here is no other duty than that they owe to God, and to the people."

"I have heard of the duty of the people, but little is said of the senate's."

"Nay, Carlo, we will not refuse them credit when in truth they seek to keep the citizens from harm. This Jacopo is a monster, detested by all, and his bloody deeds have too long been a reproach to Venice. Thou hearest that the patricians are not niggard of their gold, when there is hope of his being taken.—Listen ! they proclaim again !"

The trumpet sounded, and the proclamation was repeated between the granite columns of the Piazzetta, and quite near to the window occupied by Gelsomina and her unmoved companion.

"Why dost thou mask, Carlo?" she asked, when the officer had done ; "it is not usual to be disguised, in the palace, at this hour."

"They will believe it the doge, blushing to

be an auditor of his own liberal justice, or they may mistake me for one of the Three, itself."

"They go by the quay to the arsenal; thence they will take boat, as is customary, for the Rialto."

"Thereby giving this redoubtable Jacopo timely notice to secrete himself! Your judges up above are mysterious when they should be open, and open when they should be secret. I must quit thee, Gelsomina; go, then, back to the room of thy father, and leave me to pass out by the court of the palace."

It may not be, Carlo—thou knowest the permission of the authorities—I have exceeded—why should I wish to conceal it from thee?—but, it was not permitted to thee to enter at this hour."

"And thou hast had the courage to transgress the leave, for my sake, Gelsomina?"

The abashed girl hung her head, and the colour which glowed about her temples was like the rosy light of her own Italy.

“Thou wouldst have it so,” she said.

“A thousand thanks, dearest, kindest, truest Gelsomina, but doubt not my being able to leave the palace unseen. The danger was in entering. They who go forth, do it with the air of having authority.”

“None pass the halberdiers masked by day, Carlo, but they who have the secret word.”

The Bravo appeared struck with this truth, and there was great embarrassment expressed in his manner. The terms of his admittance were so well understood to himself, that he distrusted the expediency of attempting to get upon the quays by the prison, the way he had entered, since he had little doubt that his retreat would be intercepted by those who kept the outer gate, and who were probably, by this time, in the secret of his true character. It now appeared that egress by the other route was equally hazardous. He had not been surprised so much by the substance of the proclamation, as by the publicity the senate had seen fit to

give to its policy,—and he had heard himself denounced, with a severe pang, it is true, but without terror. Still he had so many means of disguise, and the practice of personal concealment was so general in Venice, that he had entertained no great distrust of the result until he now found himself in this awkward dilemma. Gelsomina read his indecision in his eye, and regretted that she should have caused him so much uneasiness.

“It is not so bad as thou seemest to think, Carlo,” she observed; “they have permitted thee to visit thy father, at stated hours, and the permission is a proof that the senate is not without pity. Now that I, to oblige thy wishes, have forgotten one of their injunctions, they will not be so hard of heart as to visit the fault as a crime.”

Jacopo gazed at her with pity, for well did he understand how little she knew of the real nature and wily policy of the state.

“It is time that we should part,” he said,

“lest thy innocence should be made to pay the price of my mistake. I am now near the public corridor, and must trust to my fortune to gain the quay.”

Gelsomina hung upon his arm, unwilling to trust him to his own guidance in that fearful building.

“It will not do, Carlo; thou wilt stumble on a soldier, and thy fault will be known; perhaps they will refuse to let thee come again; perhaps altogether shut the door of thy poor father’s cell.”

Jacopo made a gesture for her to lead the way, and followed.—With a beating but still lightened heart, Gelsomina glided along the passages, carefully locking each door as of wont, behind her, when they had passed through it. At length they reached the well known Bridge of Sighs. The anxious girl went on with a lighter step, when she found herself approaching her own abode, for she was busy in planning the means of concealing her

companion in her father's rooms, should there be hazard in his passing out of the prison during the day.

“But a single minute, Carlo,” she whispered, applying the key to the door which opened into the latter building—the lock yielded, but the hinges refused to turn. Gelsomina paled as she added—“They have drawn the bolts within!”

“No matter; I will go down by the court of the palace, and boldly pass the halberdier unmasked.”

Gelsomina, after all, saw but little risk of his being known by the mercenaries who served the doge, and, anxious to relieve him from so awkward a position, she flew back to the other end of the gallery. Another key was applied to the door by which they had just entered, with the same result. Gelsomina staggered back, and sought support against the wall.

“We can neither return nor proceed!” she exclaimed, frightened she knew not why.

“ I see it all,” answered Jacopo ; “ we are prisoners on this fatal bridge.”

As he spoke, the Bravo calmly removed his mask, and shewed the countenance of a man whose resolution was at its height.

“ Santa Madre di Dio ! what can it mean ?”

“ That we have passed here once too often, love. The council is tender of these visits.”

The bolts of both doors grated, and the hinges creaked at the same instant. An officer of the inquisition entered armed, and bearing manacles. Gelsomina shrieked, but Jacopo moved not limb or muscle, while he was fettered and chained.

“ I too !” cried his frantic companion. “ I am the most guilty—bind me—cast me into a cell, but let poor Carlo go.”

“ Carlo !” echoed an officer, laughing unfeelingly.

“ Is it such a crime to seek a father in his prison !—They knew of his visits—they permitted them—he has only mistaken the hour.”

“ Girl, dost thou know for whom thou pleadest ?”

“ For the kindest heart—the most faithful son in Venice ! Oh ! if ye had seen him weep as I have done, over the sufferings of the old captive—if ye had seen his very form shivering in agony, ye would have pity on him !”

“ Listen,” returned the officer, raising a finger for attention.

The trumpeter sounded on the bridge of St. Mark, immediately beneath them, and proclamation was again made, offering gold for the arrest of the Bravo.

“ ’Tis the officer of the republic, bidding for the head of one who carries a common stiletto,” cried the half-breathless Gelsomina, who little heeded the ceremony at that instant ; “ he merits his fate.”

“ Then why resist it ?”

“ Ye speak without meaning !”

“ Doting girl, this is Jacopo Frontoni !”

Gelsomina would have disbelieved her ears,

but for the anguished expression of Jacopo's eye. The horrible truth burst upon her mind, and she fell lifeless. At that moment the Bravo was hurried from the bridge.

CHAPTER VII.

“Let us lift up the curtain, and observe
What passes in that chamber.”

ROGERS.

THERE were many rumours, uttered in the fearful and secret manner which characterised the manners of the town, in the streets of Venice that day. Hundreds passed near the granite columns, as if they expected to see the Bravo occupying his accustomed stand, in audacious defiance of the proclamation, for so long and so mysteriously had he been permitted to appear in public, that men had dif-

ficulty in persuading themselves he would quit his habits so easily. It is needless to say that the vague expectation was disappointed. Much was also said, vauntingly, in behalf of the republic's justice, for the humbled are bold enough in praising their superiors; and he, who had been dumb for years, on subjects of a public nature, now found his voice like a fearless freeman.

But the day passed away without any new occurrence to call the citizens from their pursuits. The prayers for the dead were continued, with little intermission, and masses were said before the altars of half the churches, for the repose of the fisherman's soul. His comrades, a little distrustful, but greatly gratified, watched the ceremonies with jealousy and exultation singularly blended. Ere the night set in, again, they were among the most obedient of those the oligarchy habitually trod upon; for such is the effects of this species of domination, that it acquires a power to appease by its flattery, the

very discontents created by its injustice. Such is the human mind : a factitious but deeply seated sentiment of respect is created by the habit of submission, which gives the subject of its influence a feeling of atonement, when he who has long played the superior comes down from his stilts, and confesses the community of human frailties !

The square of St. Mark filled at the usual hour, the patricians deserted the Broglio as of wont, and the gaieties of the place were again uppermost, before the clock had struck the second hour of the night. Gondolas, filled with noble dames, appeared on the canals ; the blinds of the palaces were raised for the admission of the sea-breeze ;—and music began to be heard in the port, on the bridges, and under the balconies of the fair. The course of society was not to be arrested, merely because the wronged were unavenged, or the innocent suffered.

There stood, then, on the grand canal, as there stands now, many palaces of scarcely

less than royal magnificence. The reader has had occasion to become acquainted with one or two of these splendid edifices, and it has now become our duty to convey him, in imagination, to another.

The peculiarity of construction, which is a consequence of the watery site of Venice, gives the same general character to all the superior dwellings of that remarkable town. The house to which the thread of the narrative now leads us, had its water-gate, its vestibule, its massive marble stairs, its inner court, its magnificent suites of rooms above, its pictures, its lustres, and its floors of precious stones embedded in composition, like all those which we have already found it necessary to describe.

The hour was ten, according to our own manner of computing time. A small, but lovely family picture presented itself, deep within the walls of the patrician abode, to which we have alluded. There was a father, a gentleman who

had scarce attained the middle age, with an eye in which spirit, intelligence, philanthropy, and, at that moment, paternal fondness were equally glowing. He tossed in his arms, with parental pride, a laughing urchin of some three or four years, who rioted in the amusement which brought him, and the author of his being, for a time, seemingly on a level. A fair Venetian dame, with golden locks, and glowing cheeks, such as Titian loved to paint her sex, reclined on a couch nigh by, following the movements of both, with the joint feelings of mother and wife, and laughing in pure sympathy with the noisy merriment of her young hope. A girl, who was the youthful image of herself, with tresses that fell to her waist, romped with a crowing infant, whose age was so tender as scarcely to admit the uncertain evidence of its intelligence. Such was the scene as the clock of the piazza told the hour. Struck with the sound, the father set down the boy, and consulted his watch.

“Dost thou use thy gondola to-night, love?” he demanded.

“With thee, Paolo?”

“Not with me, dearest; I have affairs which will employ me until twelve!”

“Nay, thou art given to cast me off, when thy caprices are wayward.”

“Say not so. I have named to-night for an interview with my agent, and I know thy maternal heart too well, to doubt thy being willing to spare me for that time, while I look to the interests of these dear ones.”

The Donna Giulietta rang for her mantle and attendants. The crowing infant and the noisy boy were dismissed to their beds, while the lady and the eldest child descended to the gondola. Donna Giulietta was not permitted to go unattended to her boat, for this was a family in which the inclinations had fortunately seconded the ordinary calculations of interest, when the nuptial knot was tied. Her husband kissed her hand, fondly, as he assisted her into

the gondola, and the boat had glided some distance from the palace, ere he quitted the moist stones of the water-gate.

“Hast thou prepared the cabinet for my friends?” demanded the Signor Soranzo, for it was the same senator who had been in company with the doge, when the latter went to meet the fishermen.

“Signore, si.”

“And the quiet, and the lights—as ordered?”

“Eccellenza, all will be done.”

“Thou hast placed seats for six—we shall be six.”

“Signore, there are six armed chairs.”

“Tis well: when the first of my friends arrive, I will join them.”

“Eccellenza, there are already two cavalieri in masks, within.”

The Signor Soranzo started, again consulted his watch, and went hastily towards a distant, and very silent, part of the palace. He reached a small door unattended, and closing it, found

himself, at once, in the presence of those who evidently awaited his appearance.

“ A thousand pardons, Signori,” cried the master of the house ; “ this is novel duty to me, at least—I know not what may be your honourable experience—and the time stole upon me unmarked. I pray for grace, Messires ; future diligence shall repair the present neglect.”

Both the visitors were older men than their host, and it was quite evident by their hardened visages they were of much longer practice in the world. His excuses were received with courtesy, and, for a little time, the discourse was entirely of usage and convention.

“ We are in secret here, Signore ?” asked one of the guests, after some little time had been wasted in this manner.

“ As the tomb. None enter here unbidden, but my wife, and she has, this moment, taken boat, for better enjoyment of the evening.”

“ The world gives you credit, Signor Soranzo, for a happy *ménage*. I hope you have duly

considered the necessity of shutting the door, even against the Donna Giuletta to-night?"

"Doubt me not, Signore; the affairs of St. Mark are paramount."

"I feel myself thrice happy, Signori, that in drawing a lot for the secret council, my good fortune hath given me so excellent colleagues. Believe me, I have discharged this awful trust, in my day, in less agreeable company."

This flattering speech, which the wily old senator had made regularly to all with whom chance had associated him in the inquisition, during a long life, was well received, and it was returned with equal compliments.

"It would appear that the worthy Signor Alessandro Gradenigo was one of our predecessors," he continued, looking at some papers; for though the actual three were unknown, at the time being, to all but a few secretaries and officers of the state, Venetian policy transmitted their names to their successors, as a matter of

course ;—“ a noble gentleman, and one of great devotion to the state !”

The others assented, like men accustomed to speak with caution.

“ We were about to have entered on our duties at a troublesome moment, Signori,” observed another. “ But it would seem that this tumult of the fishermen has already subsided. I understand the knaves had some reason for their distrust of the state !”

“ It is an affair happily settled,” answered the senior of the three, who was long practised in the expediency of forgetting all that policy required should cease to be remembered, after the object was attained. “ The gallies must be manned, else would St. Mark quickly hang his head in shame.”

The Signor Soranzo, who had received some previous instruction in his new duties, looked melancholy ; but he, too, was merely the creature of a system.

“ Is there matter of pressing import for our reflection ?” he demanded.

“ Signori, there is every reason to believe that the state has just sustained a grievous loss. Ye both well know the heiress of Tiepolo, by reputation at least, though her retired manner of life may have kept you from her company.”

“ Donna Giulietta is eloquent in praise of her beauty;” said the young husband.

“ We had not a better fortune in Venice ;” rejoined the third inquisitor.

“ Excellent in qualities, and better in riches, as she is, I fear we have lost her, Signori ! Don Camillo Monforte, whom God protect until we have no future use for his influence ! had come near to prevail against us ; but just as the state baffled his well-laid schemes, the lady has been thrown by hazard into the hands of the rioters, since which time there is no account of her movements !”

Paolo Soranzo secretly hoped she was in the arms of the Neapolitan.

“ A secretary has communicated to me the disappearance of the Duca di Sant’ Agata, also,” observed the third,—“ nor is the feluca, usually employed in distant and delicate missions, any longer at her anchors.”

The two old men regarded each other, as if the truth was beginning to dawn upon their suspicions. They saw that the case was hopeless, and as theirs was altogether a practical duty, no time was lost in useless regrets.

“ We have two affairs which press,” observed the elder.—“ The body of the old fisherman must be laid quietly in the earth, with as little risk of future tumult, as may be—and we have this notorious Jacopo to dispose of.”

“ The latter must first be taken;” said the Signor Soranzo.

“ That has been done already. Would you think it, Sirs ! he was seized in the very palace of the doge !”

“ To the block with him, without delay !”

The old men again looked at each other, and

it was quite apparent that, as both of them had been in previous councils, they had a secret intelligence; to which their companion was yet a stranger. There was also, visible in their glances, something like a design to manage his feelings, before they came more openly to the graver practices of their duties.

“For the sake of blessed St. Mark, Signori, let justice be done openly in this instance!” continued the unsuspecting member of the Three. “What pity can the bearer of a common stiletto claim? and what more lovely exercise of our authority than to make public an act of severe and much-required justice?”

The old senators bowed to this sentiment of their colleague, which was uttered with the fervour of young experience, and the frankness of an upright mind; for there is a conventional acquiescence in received morals, which is permitted, in semblance at least, to adorn the most tortuous policy.

“It may be well, Signor Soranzo, to do this

homage to the right," returned the elder. "Here have been sundry charges found in different lions' mouths, against the Neapolitan, Signor Don Camillo Monforte. I leave it to your wisdom, my illustrious colleagues, to decide on their character."

"An excess of malice betrays its own origin;" exclaimed the least-practised member of the Inquisition. "My life on it, Signori, these accusations come of private spleen, and are unworthy of the state's attention. I have consorted much with the young lord of Sant' Agata, and a more worthy gentleman does not dwell among us."

"Still hath he designs on the hand of old Tiepolo's daughter!"

"Is it a crime in youth to seek beauty! He did great service to the lady, in her need, and that youth should feel these sympathies is nothing strange."

"Venice hath her sympathies as well as the youngest of us all, Signore."

“ But Venice cannot wed the heiress !”

“ True. St. Mark must be satisfied with playing the prudent father’s part. You are yet young, Signor Soranzo, and the Donna Guilietta is of rare beauty ! As life wears upon ye both, ye will see the fortunes of kingdoms, as well as families, differently.—But we waste our breath uselessly in this matter, since our agents have not yet reported their success in the pursuit. The most pressing affair, just now, is the disposition of the Bravo. Hath his highness shewn you the last letter of the sovereign pontiff, in the question of the intercepted despatches, Signore ?”

“ He hath. A fair answer was returned by our predecessors, and it must rest there.”

“ We will then look freely into the matter of Jacopo Frontoni. There will be necessity of our assembling in the chamber of the Inquisition, that we may have the prisoner confronted to his accusers. ’Tis a grave trial, Signori, and Venice would lose in men’s estimation, were not

the highest tribunal to take an interest in its decision."

"To the block with the villain!" again exclaimed the Signor Soranzo.

"He may haply meet with that fate, or even with the punishment of the wheel. A mature examination will enlighten us much on the course, which policy may dictate."

"There can be but one policy when the protection of the lives of our citizens is in question. I have never before felt impatience to shorten the life of man, but in this trial I can scarce brook delay."

"Your honourable impatience shall be gratified, Signor Soranzo; for, foreseeing the urgency of the case, my colleague, the worthy senator, who is joined with us in this high duty, and myself, have already issued the commands necessary to that object. The hour is near, and we will repair to the chamber of the Inquisition in time to do our duty."

The discourse then turned on subjects of a

more general concern. This secret and extraordinary tribunal, which was obliged to confine its meetings to no particular place, which could decide on its decrees equally in the Piazza, or the palace; amidst the revelries of the masquerade, or before the altar; in the assemblies of the gay, or in their own closets; had of necessity much ordinary matter submitted to its inspection. As the chances of birth entered into its original comparison,—and God hath not made all alike fit for so heartless a duty,—it sometimes happened, as in the present instance, that the more worldly of its members had to overcome the generous disposition of a colleague, before the action of the terrible machine could go on.

It is worthy of remark, that communities always establish a higher standard of justice and truth, than is exercised by their individual members. The reason is not to be sought for, since nature hath left to all a perception of that right, which is abandoned only under the stronger im-

pulses of personal temptation. We commend the virtue we cannot imitate. Thus it is that those countries, in which public opinion has most influence, are always of the purest public practice. It follows as a corollary from this proposition, that a representation should be as real as possible, for its tendency will be inevitably to elevate national morals. Miserable, indeed, is the condition of that people, whose maxims and measures of public policy are below the standard of its private integrity, for the fact not only proves it is not the master of its own destinies, but the still more dangerous truth, that the collective power is employed in the fatal service of undermining those very qualities which are necessary to virtue, and which have enough to do, at all times, in resisting the attacks of immediate selfishness. A strict legal representation of all its interests is far more necessary to a worldly than to a simple people, since responsibility, which is the essence of a free government, is more likely to keep the agents of a nation

nearer to its own standard of virtue than any other means. The common opinion that a republic cannot exist, without an extraordinary degree of virtue in its citizens, is so flattering to our own actual condition, that we seldom take the trouble to inquire into its truth; but, to us, it seems quite apparent that effect is here mistaken for the cause. It is said, as the people are virtually masters in a republic, that the people ought to be virtuous to rule well. So far as this proposition is confined to degrees, it is just as true of a republic as of any other form of government. But kings do rule, and surely all have not been virtuous; and that aristocracies have ruled with the very minimum of that quality, the subject of our tale sufficiently shews. That, other things being equal, the citizens of a republic will have a higher standard of private virtue than the subjects of any other form of government, is true as an effect, we can readily believe, for responsibility to public opinion existing in all the branches of

its administration, that conventional morality, which characterizes the common sentiment, will be left to act on the mass, and will not be perverted into a terrible engine of corruption, as is the case when factitious institutions give a false direction to its influence.

The case before us was in proof of the truth of what has here been said. The Signor Soranzo was a man of great natural excellence of character, and the charities of his domestic circle had assisted in confirming his original dispositions. Like others of his rank and expectations, he had, from time to time, made the history and polity of the self-styled republic his study, and the power of collective interests and specious necessities had made him admit sundry theories, which, presented in another form, he would have repulsed with indignation. Still the Signor Soranzo was far from understanding the full effects of that system, which he was born to uphold. Even Venice paid that homage to public opinion, of which there has just been

question, and held forth to the world but a false picture of her true state maxims. Still many of those which were too apparent to be concealed were difficult of acceptance, with one whose mind was yet untainted with practice; and the young senator rather shut his eyes on their tendency, or, as he felt their influence, in every interest which environed him, but that of poor, neglected, abstract virtue, whose rewards were so remote, he was fain to seek out some palliative, or some specious and indirect good as the excuse for his acquiescence.

In this state of mind the Signor Soranzo was unexpectedly admitted a member of the Council of Three. Often, in the day-dreams of his youth, had he contemplated the possession of this very irresponsible power as the consummation of his wishes. A thousand pictures of the good he would perform had crossed his brain, and it was only as he advanced in life, and came to have a near view of the wiles which beset the best-intentioned, that he could bring himself to believe

most of that which he meditated was impracticable. As it was, he entered into the council with doubts and misgivings. Had he lived in a later age, under his own system, modified by the knowledge which has been a consequence of the art of printing, it is probable that the Signor Soranzo would have been a noble in opposition, now supporting with ardour some measure of public benevolence, and now yielding, gracefully, to the suggestions of a sterner policy, and always influenced by the positive advantages he was born to possess, though scarcely conscious himself he was not all he professed to be. The fault, however, was not so much that of the patrician as that of circumstances, which, by placing interest in opposition to duty, lures many a benevolent mind into still greater weaknesses.

The companions of the Signor Soranzo, however, had a more difficult task to prepare him for the duties of the statesman, which were so very different from those he was accustomed to per-

form as a man, than they had anticipated. They were like two trained elephants of the east, possessing themselves all the finer instincts and generous qualities of the noble animal, but disciplined by a force quite foreign to their natural condition into creatures of mere convention, placed one on each side of a younger brother, fresh from the plains, and whom it was their duty to teach new services for the trunk, new affections, and haply the manner in which to carry, with dignity, the howdah of a Rajah.

With many allusions to their policy, but with no direct intimation of their own intention, the seniors of the council continued the conversation, until the hour for the meeting in the doge's palace drew nigh. They then separated, as privately as they had come together, in order that no vulgar eye might penetrate the mystery of their official character.

The most practised of the three appeared in an assembly of the patricians, which noble and beautiful dames graced with their presence,

from which he disappeared in a manner to leave no clue to his motions. The other visited the death-bed of a friend, where he discoursed long and well, with a friar, of the immortality of the soul and the hopes of a christian : when he departed, the godly man bestowing his blessing, and the family he left being loud and eloquent in his praise.

The Signor Soranzo clung to the enjoyments of his own family circle until the last moment. The Donna Guilietta had returned, fresher and more lovely than ever, from the invigorating sea-breeze, and her soft voice, with the melodious laugh of his first-born, the blooming ringlet-covered girl described, still rang in his ears, when his gondolier landed him beneath the bridge of the Rialto. Here he masked, and drawing his cloak about him, he moved with the current towards the square of St. Mark, by means of the narrow streets. Once in the crowd, there was little danger of impertinent observation. Disguise was as often useful to

the oligarchy of Venice, as it was absolutely necessary to elude its despotism, and to render the town tolerable to the citizen. Paolo saw swarthy, bare-legged men of the Lagoon entering occasionally into the cathedral. He followed, and found himself standing near the dimly lighted altar, at which masses were still saying for the soul of Antonio.

“ This is one of thy fellows ? ” he asked of a fisherman, whose dark eye glittered in that light, like the organ of a basilisk.

“ Signore, he was—a more honest, or a more just man, did not cast his net in the gulf.”

“ He has fallen a victim to his craft ? ”

“ Cospetto di Bacco ! none know in what manner he came by his end. Some say St. Mark was impatient to see him in paradise, and some pretend, he has fallen by the hand of a common Bravo, named Jacopo Frontoni.”

“ Why should a Bravo take the life of one like this ? ”

“ By having the goodness to answer your

own question, Signore, you will spare me some trouble. Why should he, sure enough? They say Jacopo is revengeful, and that shame and anger at his defeat in the late regatta, by one old as this, was the reason."

"Is he so jealous of his honour with the oar?"

"Diamine! I have seen the time when Jacopo would sooner die, than lose a race; but that was before he carried a stiletto. Had he kept to his oar, the thing might have happened, but once known for the hired blow, it seems unreasonable he should set his heart so strongly on the prizes of the canals."

"May not the man have fallen into the Lagunes, by accident?"

"No doubt, Signore. This happens to some of us daily; but then we think it wiser to swim to the boat, than to sink. Old Antonio had an arm in youth, to carry him from the quay to the Lido."

"But he may have been struck in falling,

and rendered unable to do himself this good office."

"There would be marks to shew this, were it true, Signore!"

"Would not Jacopo have used the stiletto?"

"Perhaps not, on one like Antonio. The gondola of the old man was found in the mouth of the Grand Canal, half a league from the body, and against the wind! we note these things, Signore, for they are within our knowledge."

"A happy night to thee, fisherman."

"A most happy night, eccellenza;" said the labourer of the Lagunes, gratified with having so long occupied the attention of one he believed so much his superior. The disguised senator passed on. He had no difficulty in quitting the cathedral unobserved, and he had his private means of entering the palace, without attracting any impertinent eye to his movements. Here he quickly joined his colleagues of the fearful tribunal.

CHAPTER VIII.

“ *There* the prisoners rest together ; they hear not the voice of the oppressor.”

Job.

THE manner in which the Council of Three held its more public meetings, if aught connected with that mysterious body could be called public, has already been seen. On the present occasion, there were the same robes, the same disguises, and the same officers of the inquisition, as in the scene related in a previous chapter. The only change was in the character of the judges, and in that of the ac-

cused. By a peculiar arrangement of the lamp, too, most of the light was thrown upon the spot it was intended the prisoner should occupy, while the side of the apartment on which the inquisitors sate, was left in a dimness that well accorded with their gloomy and secret duties. Previously to the opening of the door, by which the person to be examined was to appear, there was audible the clanking of chains, the certain evidence that the affair in hand was considered serious. The hinges turned, and the Bravo stood in presence of those unknown men who were to decide on his fate.

As Jacopo had often been before the council, though never as a prisoner, he betrayed neither surprise nor alarm at the black aspect of all his eye beheld. His features were composed, though pale, his limbs immoveable, and his mien decent. When the little bustle of his entrance had subsided, there reigned a stillness in the room.

“Thou art called Jacopo Frontoni?” said

the secretary, who acted as the mouth-piece of the Three, on this occasion.

“ I am.”

“ Thou art the son of a certain Ricardo Frontoni, a man well known as having been concerned in robbing the republic’s customs, and who is thought to have been banished to the distant islands, or to be otherwise punished ?”

“ Signore—or otherwise punished.”

“ Thou wert a gondolier in thy youth ?”

“ I was a gondolier.”

“ Thy mother is—”

“ Dead ;” said Jacopo, perceiving the other paused to examine his notes.

The depth of tone, in which this word was uttered, caused a silence, that the secretary did not interrupt, until he had thrown a glance backward at the judges.

“ She was not accused of thy father’s crime ?”

“ Had she been, Signore, she is long since beyond the power of the republic.”

“ Shortly after thy father fell under the displeasure of the state, thou quittedst thy business of a gondolier?”

“ Signore, I did.”

“ Thou art accused, Jacopo, of having laid aside the oar for the stiletto?”

“ Signore, I am.”

“ For several years, the rumours of thy bloody deeds have been growing in Venice, until of late, none have met with an untimely fate, that the blow has not been attributed to thy hand?”

“ This is too true, Signor Segretario—I would it were not!”

“ The ears of his highness, and of the Councils, have not been closed to these reports, but they have long attended to the rumours with the earnestness which becomes a paternal and careful government. If they have suffered thee to go at large, it hath only been that there might be no hazard of sullyng the ermine of

justice, with a premature and not sufficiently supported judgment."

Jacopo bent his head, but without speaking. A smile so wild and meaning, however, gleamed on his face at this declaration, that the permanent officer of the secret tribunal, he who served as its organ of communication, bowed nearly to the paper he held, as it might be to look deeper into his documents. Let not the reader turn back to this page in surprise, when he shall have reached the explanation of the tale, for mysticisms quite as palpable, if not of so ruthless a character, have been publicly acted by political bodies in his own times.

"There is now a specific, and a frightful charge brought against thee, Jacopo Frontoni," continued the secretary; "and, in tenderness of the citizen's life, the dreaded council itself hath taken the matter in hand. Didst thou know a certain Antonio Vecchio, a fisherman here in our Lagunes?"

“ Signore, I knew him well of late, and much regret that it was only of late.”

“ Thou knowest, too, that his body hath been found, drowned in the bay?”

Jacopo shuddered, signifying his assent merely by a sign. The effect of this tacit acknowledgment on the youngest of the three was apparent, for he turned to his companions, like one struck by the confession it implied. His colleagues made dignified inclinations in return, and the silent communication ceased.

“ His death has excited discontent among his fellows, and its cause has become a serious subject of inquiry for the Illustrious Council.”

“ The death of the meanest man in Venice should call forth the care of the patricians, Signore.”

“ Dost thou know, Jacopo, that thou art accused of being his murderer?”

“ Signore, I do.”

“ It is said that thou camest among the gondoliers in the late regatta, and that, but for

this aged fisherman, thou wouldst have been winner of the prize?"

"In that, rumour hath not lied, Signore."

"Thou dost not, then, deny the charge!" said the examiner, in evident surprise.

"It is certain that, but for the fisherman, I should have been the winner."

"And thou wished it, Jacopo?"

"Signore, greatly;" returned the accused, with a shew of emotion, that had not hitherto escaped him. "I was a man condemned of his fellows, and the oar had been my pride, from childhood to that hour."

Another movement of the third inquisitor betrayed, equally, his interest and his surprise.

"Dost thou confess the crime?"

Jacopo smiled, but more in derision than with any other feeling.

"If the illustrious senators here present will unmask, I may answer that question, haply, with greater confidence;" he said.

"Thy request is bold and out of rule. None

know the persons of the patricians who preside over the destinies of the state. Dost thou confess the crime?"

The entrance of an officer, in some haste, prevented a reply. The man placed a written report in the hands of the inquisitor in red, and withdrew. After a short pause, the guards were ordered to retire with their prisoner.

"Great senators!" said Jacopo, advancing earnestly towards the table, as if he would seize the moment to urge what he was about to say:—"Mercy! grant me your authority to visit one in the prisons, beneath the leads!—I have weighty reasons for the wish, and I pray you, as men and fathers, to grant it!"

The interest of the two, who were consulting apart on the new intelligence, prevented them from listening to what he urged. The other inquisitor, who was the Signor Soranzo, had drawn near the lamp, anxious to read the lineaments of one so notorious, and was gazing at his striking countenance. Touched by the

pathos of his voice, and agreeably disappointed in the lineaments he studied, he took upon himself the power to grant the request.

“ Humour his wish,” he said to the halberdiers; “but have him in readiness to reappear.”

Jacopo looked his gratitude, but fearful that the others might still interfere to prevent his wish, he hurried from the room.

The march of the little procession, which proceeded from the chamber of the inquisition to the summer cells of its victims, was sadly characteristic of the place and the government.

It went through gloomy and secret corridors, that were hid from the vulgar eye, while thin partitions only separated it from the apartments of the doge, which, like the specious aspect of the state, concealed the nakedness and misery within, by their gorgeousness and splendour! On reaching the attic, Jacopo stopped, and turned to his conductors.

“ If you are beings of God’s forming,” he

said, "take off these clanking chains, though it be but for a moment."

The keepers regarded each other in surprise, neither offering to do the charitable office.

"I go to visit, probably for the last time," continued the prisoner, "a bed-ridden—I may say—a dying father, who knows nothing of my situation,—will ye that he should see me thus?"

The appeal, which was made, more with the voice and manner, than in the words, had its effect. A keeper removed the chains, and bade him proceed. With a cautious tread, Jacopo advanced, and when the door was opened he entered the room alone, for none there had sufficient interest in an interview between a common Bravo and his father, to endure the glowing warmth of the place, the while. The door was closed after him, and the room became dark.

Notwithstanding his assumed firmness, Jacopo hesitated, when he found himself so suddenly introduced to the silent misery of the forlorn captive. A hard breathing told him the situ-

ation of the pallet, but the walls, which were solid on the side of the corridor, effectually prevented the admission of light.

“ Father !” said Jacopo, with gentleness.

He got no answer.

“ Father !” he repeated, in a stronger voice.

The breathing became more audible, and then the captive spoke.

“ Holy Maria hears my prayer !” he said, feebly. “ God hath sent thee, son, to close my eyes !”

“ Doth thy strength fail thee, father ?”

“ Greatly—my time is come—I had hoped to see the light of the day again ; to bless thy dear mother and sister—God’s will be done !”

“ They pray for us both, father. They are beyond the power of the senate.”

“ Jacopo—I do not understand thee !”

“ My mother and sister are dead ; they are saints in Heaven, father !”

The old man groaned, for the tie of earth had not yet been entirely severed. Jacopo heard

him murmuring a prayer, and he knelt by the side of his pallet.

“ This is a sudden blow !” whispered the old man. “ We depart together.”

“ They are long dead, father.”

“ Why hast thou not told me this before, Jacopo ?”

“ Hadst thou not sorrows enough without this ?—now that thou art about to join them, it will be pleasant to know, that they have so long been happy.”

“ And thou ?—thou wilt be alone—give me thy hand—poor Jacopo !”

The Bravo reached forth, and took the feeble member of his parent ; it was clammy and cold.

“ Jacopo,” continued the captive, whose mind still sustained the body, “ I have prayed thrice within the hour—once for my own soul—once for the peace of thy mother—and, lastly, for thee !”

“ Bless thee, father !—bless thee !—I have need of prayer !”

“I have asked of God—favour in thy behalf. I have bethought me—of all thy love and care—of all thy devotion to my age and sufferings. When thou wert a child, Jacopo—tenderness for thee—tempted me to acts of weakness—I trembled lest thy manhood might bring upon me—pain and repentance. Thou hast not known the yearnings—of a parent for his offspring—but thou hast well requited them. Kneel, Jacopo—that I may ask of God—once more, to remember thee.”

“I am at thy side, father.”

The old man raised his feeble arms, and with a voice, whose force appeared reviving, he pronounced a fervent and solemn benediction.

“The blessing of a dying parent will sweeten thy life—Jacopo,” he added, after a pause, “and give peace to thy last moments.”

“It will do the latter, father.”

A rude summons at the door interrupted them.

“Come forth, Jacopo,” said a keeper;—“the Council seeks thee!”

Jacopo felt the convulsive start of his father, but he did not answer.

“Will they not leave thee—a few minutes longer?” whispered the old man—“I shall not keep thee long!”

The door opened, and a gleam from the lamp fell on the group in the cell. The keeper had the humanity to shut it again, leaving all in obscurity. The glance which Jacopo obtained, by that passing light, was the last look he had of his father’s countenance. Death was fearfully on it, but the eyes were turned in unutterable affection on his own.

“The man is merciful—he will not shut thee out!” murmured the parent.

“They cannot leave thee to die alone, father!”

“Son, I am with my God—yet I would gladly have thee by my side!—Didst thou say—thy mother and thy sister were dead?”

“ Dead !”

“ Thy young sister, too ?”

“ Father, both. They are saints in Heaven.”

The old man breathed thick, and there was silence. Jacopo felt a hand moving in the darkness, as if in quest of him. He aided the effort, and laid the member in reverence on his own head.

“ Maria undefiled, and her son, who is God ! —bless thee, Jacopo !” whispered a voice, that to the excited imagination of the kneeling Bravo, appeared to hover in the air. The solemn words were followed by a quivering sigh. Jacopo hid his face in the blanket, and prayed. After which there was deep quiet.

“ Father !” he asked, trembling at his own smothered voice.

He was unanswered. Stretching out a hand, it touched the features of a corpse. With a firmness, that had the quality of desperation, he again bowed his head, and uttered fervently, a prayer for the dead.

When the door of the cell opened, Jacopo appeared to the keepers, with a dignity of air that belongs only to character, and which was heightened by the scene, in which he had just been an actor. He raised his hands, and stood immoveable, while the manacles were replaced. This office done they walked away together, in the direction of the secret chamber. It was not long ere all were again in their places, before the Council of Three.

“ Jacopo Frontoni,” resumed the secretary, “ thou art suspected of being privy to another dark deed, that hath had place of late, within our city. Hast thou any knowledge of a noble Calabrian, who hath high claim to the senate’s honours, and who hath long had his abode in Venice ?”

“ Signore, I have.”

“ Hast thou had aught of concern with him ?”

“ Signore, yes.”

A movement of common interest made itself apparent among the auditors.

“Dost thou know where the Don Camillo Monforte is, at present?”

Jacopo hesitated. He so well understood the means of intelligence possessed by the council, that he doubted how far it might be prudent to deny his connection with the flight of the lovers. Besides, at that moment, his mind was deeply impressed with a holy sentiment of truth.

“Canst thou say, why the young duca is not to be found in his palace?” repeated the secretary.

“Illustrissimo, he hath quitted Venice for ever.”

“How canst thou know this?—Would he make a confident of a common Bravo?”

The smile which crossed the features of Jacopo was full of superiority; it caused the conscious agent of the Secret Tribunal to look closely at his papers, like one who felt its power.

“Art thou his confident—I ask again?”

“Ignore, in this, I am.—I have the assu-

rance from the mouth of Don Camillo Monforte himself, that he will not return."

"This is impossible, since it would involve a loss of all his fair hopes and illustrious fortunes."

"He consoled himself, Signore, with the possession of the heiress of Tiepolo's love, and with her riches."

Again there was a movement among the Three, which all their practised restraint, and the conventional dignity of their mysterious functions, could not prevent.

"Let the keepers withdraw;" said the inquisitor of the scarlet robe. So soon as the prisoner was alone with the Three, and their permanent officer, the examination continued; the senators themselves, trusting to the effect produced by their masks, and some feints, speaking as occasion offered.

"This is important intelligence that thou hast communicated, Jacopo," continued he of the robe of flame. "It may yet redeem thy

life, wert thou wise enough to turn it to account."

"What would your eccellenza, at my hands! It is plain that the Council know of the flight of Don Camillo, nor will I believe, that eyes, which so seldom are closed, have not yet missed the daughter of the Tiepolo."

"Both are true, Jacopo; but what hast thou to say of the means? Remember, that as thou findest favour with the Council, thine own fate will be decided."

The prisoner suffered another of those freezing gleams to cross his face, which invariably caused his examiners to bend their looks aside.

"The means of escape cannot be wanting to a bold lover, Signore;" he replied. "Don Camillo is rich, and might employ a thousand agents, had he need of them."

"Thou art equivocating; 'twill be the worse for thee, that thou triflest with the Council—who are these agents?"

"He had a generous household, eccellenza ;

—many hardy gondoliers, and servitors of all conditions.”

“Of these we have nothing to learn. He hath escaped by other means—or art thou sure he hath escaped at all?”

“Signore, is he in Venice?”

“Nay, that we ask of thee. Here is an accusation, found in the lion’s mouth, which charges thee with his assassination.”

“And the Donna Violetta’s too, eccellenza?”

“Of her, we have heard nothing. What answer dost make to the charge?”

“Signore, why should I betray my own secrets?”

“Ha! art thou equivocating and faithless? Remember, that we have a prisoner beneath the leads, who can extract the truth from thee.”

Jacopo raised his form to such an altitude, as one might fancy to express the mounting of a liberated spirit. Still his eye was sad, and spite of an effort to the contrary, his voice melancholy.

“ Senators,” he said, “ your prisoner beneath the leads, is free.”

“ How ! thou art trifling, in thy despair !”

“ I speak truth. The liberation, so long delayed, hath come at last !”

“ Thy father—”

“ Is dead ;” interrupted Jacopo, solemnly.

The two elder members of the council looked at each other, in surprise, while their junior colleague listened with the interest of one; who was just entering on a noviciate of secret and embarrassing duties. The former consulted together, and then they communicated as much of their opinions to the Signor Soranzo, as they deemed necessary to the occasion.

“ Wilt thou consult thine own safety, Jacopo, and reveal all thou knowest of this affair of the Neapolitan ?” continued the inquisitor, when this by-play was ended.

Jacopo betrayed no weakness at the menace implied by the words of the Senator, but, after a moment’s reflection, he answered with as much

frankness as he could have used at the confessional.

“It is known to you, illustrious senator,” he said, “that the state had a desire to match the heiress of Tiepolo, to its own advantage; that she was beloved of the Neapolitan noble; and that, as is wont, between young and virtuous hearts, she returned his love, as became a maiden of her high condition, and tender years. Is there any thing extraordinary in the circumstance, that two of so illustrious hopes should struggle to prevent their own misery? Signori, the night that old Antonio died, I was alone, among the graves of the Lido, with many melancholy and bitter thoughts, and life had become a burthen to me. Had the evil spirit which was then uppermost maintained its mastery, I might have died the death of a hopeless suicide. God sent Don Camillo Monforte, to my succour—praised be the immaculate Maria, and her blessed Son, for the mercy! it was there, I learned the wishes of the Neapo-

litan, and enlisted myself in his service. I swore to him, senators of Venice, to be true; to die in his cause, should it be necessary; and to help him to his bride. This pledge have I redeemed. The happy lovers are now in the states of the church, and under the puissant protection of the cardinal secretary, Don Camillo's mother's brother."

"Fool! why didst thou this? Hadst thou no thought for thyself?"

"Eccellenza, but little; I thought more of finding a human bosom to pour out my sufferings to, than of your high displeasure. I have not known so sweet a moment in years, as that in which I saw the Lord of Sant' Agata fold his beautiful and weeping bride to his heart!"

The inquisitors were struck with the quiet enthusiasm of the Bravo, and surprise once more held them in suspense. At length, the elder of the three resumed the examination.

"Wilt thou impart the manner of this escape,

Jacopo?" he demanded. "Remember thou hast still a life to redeem!"

"Signore, it is scarce worth the trouble. But to do you pleasure nothing shall be concealed." Jacopo then recounted, in simple, and undisguised terms, the entire means employed by Don Camillo, in effecting his escape; his hopes, his disappointments, and his final success. In this narrative nothing was concealed, but the place in which the ladies had temporarily taken refuge, and the name of Gelsomina. Even the attempt of Giacomo Gradenigo on the life of the Neapolitan, and the agency of the Hebrew, were fully exposed. None listened to this explanation so intently as the young husband. Notwithstanding his public duties, his pulses quickened as the prisoner dwelt on the different chances of the lovers, and when their final union was proclaimed, he felt his heart bound with delight. On the other hand, his more practised colleagues heard the detail of the Bravo, with politic coolness. The

effect of all factitious systems is to render the feelings subservient to expediency. Convention and fiction take place of passion and truth, and like the Mussulman with his doctrine of predestination, there is no one more acquiescent in defeat, than he who has obtained an advantage in the face of nature and justice; his resignation being, in common, as perfect as his previous arrógance was insupportable. The two old senators perceived at once, that Don Camillo, and his fair companion, were completely beyond the reach of their power, and they instantly admitted the wisdom of making a merit of necessity. Having no farther occasion for Jacopo, they summoned the keepers, and dismissed him to his cell.

“It will be seemly to send letters of congratulation to the cardinal secretary, on the union of his nephew, with so rich an heiress of our city;” said the Inquisitor of the Ten, as the door closed on the retiring group. “So great an interest as that of the Neapolitan, should be propitiated.”

“But should he urge the state’s resistance to his hopes?” returned the Signor Soranzo, in feeble objection to so bold a scheme.

“We will excuse it as the act of a former council. These misconceptions are the unavoidable consequences of the caprices of liberty, Signore. The steed that ranges the plains, in the freedom of nature, cannot be held to perfect command, like the dull beast that draws the car. This is the first of your sittings, in the Three, but experience will shew you, that excellent as we are in system, we are not quite perfect in practice. This is grave matter of the young Gradenigo, Signori!”

“I have long known his unworthiness,” returned his more aged colleague. “It is a thousand pities that so honourable and so noble a patrician should have produced so ignoble a child. But neither the state, nor the city, can tolerate assassination.”

“Would it were less frequent!” exclaimed the Signore Soranzo, in perfect sincerity.

“Would it were, indeed! There are hints

in our secret information, which tend to confirm the charge of Jacopo. Though long experience has taught us to put full faith in his reports."

"How—is Jacopo, then, an agent of the police?"

"Of that more at our leisure, Signor Soranzo. At present we must look to this attempt on the life of one protected by our laws."

The Three then entered into a serious discussion of the case of the two delinquents. Venice, like all despotic governments, had the merit of great efficiency in its criminal police, when it was disposed to exert it. Justice was sure enough in those instances, in which the interests of the government itself were not involved, or in which bribery could not well be used. As to the latter, through the jealousy of the state, and the constant agency of those who were removed from temptation, by being already in possession of a monopoly of benefits, it was by no means as frequent, as in some other communities, in which the affluent were less interested. The Signor Soranzo had now a fair occasion for the

exercise of his generous feelings. Though related to the house of Gradenigo, he was not backward in decrying the conduct of its heir. His first impulses were to make a terrible example of the accused, and to shew the world that no station brought with it, in Venice, impunity for crime. From this view of the case, however, he was gradually enticed by his companions, who reminded him that the law commonly made a distinction, between the intention and the execution of an offence. Driven from his first determination by the cooler heads of his colleagues, the young inquisitor next proposed that the case should be sent to the ordinary tribunals, for judgment. Instances had not been wanting, in which the aristocracy of Venice sacrificed one of its body to the semblance of Justice; for when such cases were managed with discretion, they rather strengthened, than weakened their ascendancy. But the present crime was known to be too common, to permit so lavish an expenditure of their immunities, and the old inquisitors opposed the

wish of their younger colleague, with great plausibility, and with some shew of reason. It was finally resolved that they should themselves decide on the case.

The next question was the degree of punishment. The wily senior of the council began by proposing a banishment for a few months, for Giacomo Gradenigo was already obnoxious to the anger of the state, on more accounts than one. But this punishment was resisted, by the Signor Soranzo, with the ardour of an uncorrupted and generous mind. The latter gradually prevailed, his companions taking care that their compliance should have the air of a concession to his arguments. The result of all this management was, that the heir of Gradenigo was condemned to ten years' retirement in the provinces, and Hosea to banishment for life. Should the reader be of opinion that strict justice was not meted out to the offenders, he should remember, that the Hebrew ought to be glad to have escaped as he did.

“We must not conceal this judgment, nor its motive,” observed the Inquisitor of the Ten, when the affair was concluded. “The state is never a loser for letting its justice be known.”

“Nor for its exercise, I should hope;” returned the Signor Soranzo. “As our affairs are ended for the night, is it your pleasures, Signori, that we return to our palaces?”

“Nay, we have this matter of Jacopo.”

“Him may we, now, surely turn over to the ordinary tribunals!”

“As you may decide, Signori; is this your pleasure?”

Both the others bowed assent, and the usual preparations were made for departure.

Ere the two seniors of the Council left the palace, however, they held a long and secret conference together. The result was a private order to the criminal judge, and then they returned, each to his own abode, like men who had the approbation of their own consciences.

On the other hand, the Signor Soranzo has

tened to his own luxurious and happy dwelling. For the first time, in his life, he entered it with a distrust of himself. Without being conscious of the reason, he felt sad, for he had taken the first step in that tortuous and corrupting path, which eventually leads to the destruction of all those generous and noble sentiments, which can only flourish apart from the sophistry and fictions of selfishness. He would have rejoiced to have been as light of heart as at the moment he handed his fair-haired partner into the gondola that night ; but his head had pressed the pillow many hours, before sleep drew a veil over the solemn trifling with the most serious of our duties, in which he had been an actor.

CHAPTER IX.

“Art thou not guilty? No, indeed, I am not.”

ROGERS.

THE following morning brought the funeral of Antonio. The agents of the police took the precaution to circulate in the city, that the senate permitted this honour to the memory of the old fisherman, on account of his success in the regatta, and as some atonement for his unmerited and mysterious death. All the men of the Lagunes were assembled in the square at the appointed hour, in decent guise, flattered with the notice that their craft received, and more than half disposed to forget their former anger

in the present favour. Thus easy is it for those who are elevated above their fellow creatures by the accident of birth, or by the opinions of a factitious social organization, to repair the wrongs they do in deeds by small concessions of their conventional superiority.

Masses were still chanted for the soul of old Antonio before the altar of St. Mark. Foremost among the priests was the good Carmelite, who had scarce known hunger or fatigue, in his pious desire to do the offices of the church, in behalf of one, whose fate he might be said to have witnessed. His zeal, however, in that moment of excitement passed unnoticed by all, but those whose business it was to suffer no unusual display of character, nor any unwonted circumstance to have place, without attracting their suspicion. As the Carmelite finally withdrew from the altar, previously to the removal of the body, he felt the sleeve of his robe slightly drawn aside, and yielding to the impulse, he quickly found himself among the

columns of that gloomy church, alone with a stranger.

“Father, thou hast shrived many a parting soul?” observed, rather than asked, the other.

“It is the duty of my holy office, son.”

“The state will note thy services; there will be need of thee when the body of this fisherman is committed to the earth.”

The monk shuddered, but making the sign of the cross, he bowed his pale face, in signification of his readiness to discharge the duty. At that moment the bearers lifted the body, and the procession issued upon the great square. First marched the usual lay underlings of the cathedral, who were followed by those who chanted the offices of the occasion. Among the latter the Carmelite hastened to take his station. Next came the corpse, without a coffin, for that is a luxury of the grave, even now unknown to the Italians of old Antonio's degree. The body was clad in the holiday vestments of a fisherman, the hands and feet being naked. A

cross lay on the breast ; the grey hairs were blowing about in the air ; and, in frightful adornment of the ghastliness of death, a bouquet of flowers was placed upon the mouth. The bier was rich in gilding and carving, another melancholy evidence of the lingering wishes and false direction of human vanity.

Next to this characteristic equipage of the dead walked a lad, whose brown cheek, half naked body, and dark, roving eye, announced the grandson of the fisherman. Venice knew when to yield gracefully, and the boy was liberated, unconditionally, from the gallies, in pity, as it was whispered, for the untimely fate of his parent. There was the aspiring look, the dauntless spirit, and the rigid honesty of Antonio, in the bearing of the lad ; but these qualities were now smothered by a natural grief ; and, as in the case of him, whose funeral escort he followed, something obscured by the rude chances of his lot. From time to time the bosom of the generous boy heaved, as they marched along

the quay, taking the route of the arsenal, and there were moments that his lips quivered; grief threatening to overcome his manhood.

Still not a tear wetted his cheek, until the body disappeared from his view. Then nature triumphed, and straying from out the circle, he took a seat apart, and wept, as one of his years and simplicity would be apt to weep, at finding himself a solitary wanderer in the wilderness of the world.

Thus terminated the incident of Antonio Vecchio, the fisherman, whose name soon ceased to be mentioned in that city of mysteries, except on the Lagunes, where the men of his craft long vaunted his merit with the net, and the manner in which he bore away the prize from the best oars of Venice. His descendant lived and toiled, like others of his condition, and we will here dismiss him, by saying, that he so far inherited the native qualities of his ancestor, that he forbore to appear a few hours later in the crowd which curiosity and vengeance drew into the Piazzetta.

Father Anselmo took boat to return to the canals, and when he landed at the quay of the smaller square, it was with the hope that he would now be permitted to seek those of whose fate he was still ignorant, but in whom he felt so deep an interest. Not so, however. The individual who had addressed him in the cathedral was, apparently, in waiting, and knowing the uselessness, as well as the danger of remonstrance, where the state was concerned, the Carmelite permitted himself to be conducted whither his guide pleased. They took a devious route, but it led them to the public prisons. Here the priest was shewn into the keeper's apartment, where he was desired to wait a summons from his companion.

Our business now leads us to the cell of Jacopo. On quitting the presence of the Three, he had been remanded to his gloomy room, where he passed the night, like others similarly situated. With the appearance of the dawn the Bravo had been led before those who

ostensibly discharged the duties of his judges. We say ostensibly, for justice never was yet pure under a system in which the governors have an interest, in the least separated from that of the governed ; for in all cases which involve the ascendancy of the existing authorities, the instinct of self-preservation is as certain to bias their decisions, as that of life is to cause man to shun danger. If such is the fact in countries of milder sway, the reader will easily believe in its existence in a state like that of Venice. As may have been anticipated, those who sat in judgment on Jacopo had their instructions, and the trial that he sustained was rather a concession to appearances than a homage to the laws. All the records were duly made, witnesses were examined, or said to be examined, and care was had to spread the rumour in the city, that the tribunals were at length occupied in deciding on the case of the extraordinary man, who had so long been permitted to exercise his bloody profession with impunity, even in the centre of the

canals. During the morning, the credulous tradesmen were much engaged in recounting to each other the different flagrant deeds that, in the course of the last three or four years, had been imputed to his hand. One spoke of the body of a stranger that had been found, near the gaming-houses frequented by those who visited Venice. Another recalled the fate of the young noble, who had fallen by the assassin's blow even on the Rialto, and another went into the details of a murder, which had deprived a mother of her only son, and the daughter of a patrician of her love. In this manner, as one after another contributed to the list, a little group, assembled on the quay, enumerated no less than five and twenty lives, which were believed to have been taken by the hand of Jacopo, without including the vindictive and useless assassination of him whose funeral rites had just been celebrated. Happily, perhaps, for his peace of mind, the subject of all these rumours, and of the maledictions which they drew

upon his head, knew nothing of either. Before his judges he made no defence whatever, firmly refusing to answer their interrogatories.

“Ye know what I have done, Messires,” he said, haughtily. “And what I have not done, ye know. As for yourselves, look to your own interests.”

When again in his cell, he demanded food, and ate tranquilly, though with moderation. Every instrument which could possibly be used against his life, was then removed, his irons were finally and carefully examined, and he was left to his thoughts. It was in this situation that the prisoner heard the approach of footsteps to his cell. The bolts turned, and the door opened. The form of a priest appeared between him and the day. The latter, however, held a lamp, which, as the cell was again shut and secured, he placed on the low shelf that held the jug and loaf of the prisoner.

Jacopo received his visitor calmly, but with the deep respect of one who revered his holy

office. He arose, crossed himself, and advanced as far as the chains permitted, to do him honour.

“Thou art welcome, Father,” he said; “in cutting me off from earth, the Council, I see, does not wish to cut me off from God.”

“That would exceed their power, son. He who died for them, shed his blood for thee, if thou wilt not reject his grace. But—Heaven knows I say it with reluctance—thou art not to think that one of thy sins, Jacopo, can have hope without deep and heartfelt repentance!”

“Father, have any?”

The Carmelite started, for the point of the question, and the tranquil tones of the speaker, had a strange effect in such an interview.

“Thou art not what I had supposed thee, Jacopo!” he answered. “Thy mind is not altogether obscured in darkness, and thy crimes have been committed against the consciousness of their enormity!”

“I fear this is true, reverend monk.”

“Thou must feel their weight in the poignancy of grief—in the—” Father Anselmo stopped, for a sob, at that moment, apprised them that they were not alone. Moving aside, in a little alarm, the action discovered the figure of the shrinking Gelsomina, who had entered the cell, favoured by the keepers, and concealed by the robes of the Carmelite. Jacopo groaned, when he beheld her form, and turning away, he leaned against the wall.

“Daughter, why art thou here—and who art thou?” demanded the monk.

“’Tis the child of the principal keeper,” said Jacopo, perceiving that she was unable to answer; “one known to me, in my frequent adventures in this prison.”

The eye of Father Anselmo wandered from one to the other. At first its expression was severe, and then, as it saw each countenance in turn, it became less unkind, until it softened, at the exhibition of their mutual agony.

“This comes of human passions!” he said,

in a tone between consolation and reproof.

“Such are ever the fruits of crime.”

“Father,” said Jacopo, with earnestness, “I may deserve the word; but the angels in Heaven are scarce purer than this weeping girl!”

“I rejoice to hear it. I will believe thee, unfortunate man, and glad am I, that thy soul is relieved from the sin of having corrupted one so youthful.”

The bosom of the prisoner heaved, while Gelsomina shuddered.

“Why hast thou yielded to the weakness of nature, and entered the cell?” asked the good Carmelite, endeavouring to throw into his eye a reproof, that the pathos and kindness of his tones contradicted. “Didst thou know the character of the man thou lovedst?”

“Immaculate Maria!” exclaimed the girl—
“no—no—no!”

“And, now, that thou hast learned the truth, surely thou art no longer the victim of wayward fancies!”

The gaze of Gelsomina was bewildered, but anguish prevailed over all other expression. She bowed her head, partly in shame, but more in sorrow, without answering.

“ I know not, children, what end this interview can answer,” continued the monk—“ I am sent hither to receive the last confession of a Bravo, and surely, one who has so much cause to condemn the deception he has practised, would not wish to hear the details of such a life?”

“ No — no — no —” murmured Gelsomina again, enforcing the words with a wild gesture of the hand.

“ It is better, father, that she should believe me all that her fancy can imagine, as monstrous,” said Jacopo, in a thick voice; “ she will then learn to hate my memory.”

Gelsomina did not speak, but the negative gesture was repeated frantically.

“ The heart of the poor child hath been sorely touched ;” said the Carmelite, with con-

cern. "We must not treat so tender a flower rudely. Harken to me, daughter, and consult thy reason, more than thy weakness."

"Question her not, Father ;—let her curse me, and depart."

"Carlo !" shrieked Gelsomina.

A long pause succeeded. The monk perceived that human passion was superior to his art, and that the case must be left to time ; while the prisoner maintained, within himself, a struggle more fierce than any which it had yet been his fate to endure. The lingering desires of the world conquered, and he broke silence.

"Father," he said, advancing to the length of his chain, and speaking both solemnly, and with dignity, "I had hoped—I had prayed that this unhappy but innocent creature might have turned from her own weakness with loathing, when she came to know that the man she loved was a Bravo.—But I did injustice to the heart of woman !—Tell me, Gelsomina,

and as thou valuest thy salvation, deceive me not—canst thou look at me without horror?”

Gelsomina trembled, but she raised her eyes, and smiled on him as the weeping infant returns the earnest and tender regard of its mother. The effect of that glance on Jacopo was so powerful, that his sinewy frame shook, until the wondering Carmelite heard the clanking of his chains.

“ ’Tis enough,” he said, struggling to command himself; “ Gelsomina, thou shalt hear my confession. Thou hast long been mistress of one great secret—none other shall be hid from thee.”

“ Antonio!” gasped the girl,—“ Carlo! Carlo! what had that aged fisherman done, that thy hand should seek his life?”

“ Antonio!” echoed the monk; “ dost thou stand charged with his death, my son?”

“ It is the crime for which I am condemned to die.”

The Carmelite sank upon the stool of the

prisoner, and sat motionless, looking with an eye of horror, from the countenance of the unmoved Jacopo, to that of his trembling companion. The truth began to dawn upon him, though his mind was still enveloped in the web of Venetian mystery.

“ Here is some horrible mistake !” he whispered. “ I will hasten to thy judges and undeceive them.”

The prisoner smiled calmly, as he reached out a hand to arrest the zealous movement of the simple Carmelite.

“ ’Twill be useless,” he said ; “ it is the pleasure of the Three, that I should suffer for old Antonio’s death.”

“ Then wilt thou die unjustly !—I am a witness that he fell by other hands.”

“ Father !” shrieked Gelsomina, “ oh ! repeat the words—say that Carlo could not do that cruel deed !”

“ Of that murder, at least, is he innocent.”

“ Gelsomina !” said Jacopo, struggling to

stretch forth his arms towards her, and yielding to a full heart, "and of every other!"

A cry of wild delight burst from the lips of the girl, who in the next instant lay senseless on his bosom.

We draw the veil before the scene that followed. Near an hour must pass before we can again remove it. The cell then exhibited a group in its centre, over which the lamp shed its feeble light, marking the countenances of the different personages with strong tints and deep shadows, in a manner to bring forth all the force of Italian expression. The Carmelite was seated on the stool, while Jacopo and Gelsomina knelt beside him. The former of the two last was speaking earnestly, while his auditors caught each syllable that issued from his lips, as if interest in his innocence were still stronger than curiosity.

"I have told you, Father," he continued, "that a false accusation of having wronged the customs, brought my unhappy parent under

the senate's displeasure, and that he was many years an innocent inhabitant of one of these accursed cells, while we believed him in exile, among the islands. At length we succeeded in getting such proof before the Council, as ought to have satisfied the patricians of their own injustice. I am afraid that when men pretend that the chosen of the earth exercise authority, they are not ready to admit their errors, for it would be proof against the merit of their system. The Council delayed a weary time to do us justice—so long, that my poor mother sunk under her sufferings. My sister, a girl of Gelsomina's years, followed her soon—for the only reason given by the state, when pressed for proof, was the suspicion, that one who sought her love, was guilty of the crime for which my unhappy father perished."

"And did they refuse to repair their injustice?" exclaimed the Carmelite.

"They could not do it, Father, without publishing their fallibility. The credit of certain

great patricians was concerned, and I fear there is a morality in these Councils, which separates the deed of the man from those of the senators, putting policy before justice.”

“ This may be true, son ; for when a community is grounded on false principles, its interests must, of necessity, be maintained by sophisms. God will view this act with a different eye !”

“ Else would the world be hopeless, Father ! After years of prayers and interest, I was, under a solemn oath of secrecy, admitted to my father’s cell. There was happiness in being able to administer to his wants—in hearing his voice—in kneeling for his blessing. Gelsomina was then a child approaching womanhood. I knew not their motive, though after-thoughts left it no secret, and I was permitted to see my father through her means. When they believed that I was sufficiently caught in their toils, I was led into that fatal error which has destroyed my hopes, and brought me to this condition.”

“ Thou hast affirmed thy innocence, my son !”

“Innocent of shedding blood, Father, but not of lending myself to their artifices. I will not weary you, holy monk, with the history of the means by which they worked upon my nature: I was sworn to serve the state, as its secret agent, for a certain time. The reward was to be my father’s freedom. Had they taken me in the world, and in my senses, their arts would not have triumphed; but a daily witness of the sufferings of him who had given me life, and who was now all that was left me in the world, they were too strong for my weakness. They whispered to me of racks and wheels, and I was shewn paintings of dying martyrs, that I might understand the agony they could inflict. Assassinations were frequent, and called for the care of the police—in short, Father”—Jacopo hid his face in the dress of Gelsomina,—“I consented to let them circulate such tales as might draw the eye of the public on me. I need not add that he who lends himself to his own infamy, will soon attain his object.”

“ With what end was this miserable falsehood invented?”

“ Father, I was applied to as to a public Bravo, and my reports, in more ways than one, answered their designs. That I saved some lives is at least a consolation for the error, or crime, into which I fell !”

“ I understand thee, Jacopo. I have heard that Venice did not hesitate to use the ardent, and brave, in this manner. Holy St. Mark ! can deceit like this be practised under the sanction of thy blessed name !”

“ Father, it is, and more. I had other duties, connected with the interests of the republic, and of course I was practised in their discharge. The citizens marvelled that one like me should go at large, while the vindictive and revengeful took the circumstance as a proof of address. When rumour grew too strong for appearances, the Three took measures to direct it to other things ; and when it grew too faint for their wishes, it was fanned. In short, for three long

and bitter years did I pass the life of the damned —sustained only by the hope of liberating my father and cheered by the love of this innocent!”

“ Poor Jacopo, thou art to be pitied ! I will remember thee in my prayers.”

“ And thou, Gelsomina !”

The keeper’s daughter did not answer. Her ears had drunk in each syllable that fell from his lips, and now that the whole truth began to dawn on her mind, there was a bright radiance in her eye, that appeared almost supernatural to those who witnessed it.

“ If I have failed in convincing thee, Gelsomina,” continued Jacopo, “ that I am not the wretch I seemed, would that I had been dumb !”

She stretched a hand towards him, and dropping her head on his bosom, wept.

“ I see all thy temptations, poor Carlo,” she said, softly ; “ I know how strong was thy love for thy father.”

“ Dost thou forgive me, dearest Gelsomina, for the deception on thy innocence ?”

“ There was no deception—I believed thee a son ready to die for his father, and I find thee what I thought thee.”

The good Carmelite regarded this scene with eyes of interest and indulgence.—Tears wetted his cheeks.

“ Thy affection for each other, children,” he said, “ is such as angels might indulge.—Has thy intercourse been of long date ?”

“ It has lasted years, Father.”

“ And thou, daughter, hast been with Jacopo in the cell of his parent ?”

“ I was his constant guide, on these holy errands, Father.”

The monk mused deeply. After a silence of several minutes, he proceeded to the duties of his holy office. Receiving the spiritual confession of the prisoner, he gave the absolution, with a fervour, which proved how deeply his sympathies were enlisted in behalf of the youthful pair. This duty done, he gave Gelsomina

his hand, and there was a mild confidence in his countenance, as he took leave of Jacopo.

“ We quit thee,” he said ; “ but be of heart, son. I cannot think that even Venice will be deaf to a tale like thine ! Trust first to thy God—and, believe that neither this faithful girl nor I will abandon thee, without an effort.”

Jacopo received this assurance like one accustomed to exist in extreme jeopardy. The smile which accompanied his own adieux, had in it as much of incredulity, as of melancholy. It was, however, full of the joy of a lightened heart.

CHAPTER X.

“Your heart

Is free, and quick with virtuous wrath to accuse
Appearances; and views a criminal
In innocence's shadow.”

Werner.

THE Carmelite and Gelsomina found the keepers in waiting, and when they quitted the cell, its door was secured for the night. As they had no farther concerns with the gaolers, they passed on unquestioned. But when the end of the corridor, which led towards the apartments of the keeper, was reached, the monk stopped.

“ Art thou equal to a great effort, in order that the innocent shall not die ?” he suddenly asked, though with a solemnity that denoted the influence of a high and absorbing motive.

“ Father ! ”

“ I would know if thy love for the youth can sustain thee in a trying scene ; for without this effort he will surely perish ?”

“ I would die to save Jacopo a pang !”

“ Deceive not thyself, daughter !—Canst thou forget thy habits, overstep the diffidence of thy years and condition ; stand and speak fearlessly, in the presence of the great and dreaded ?”

“ Reverend Carmelite, I speak daily, without fear, though not without awe, to one more to be dreaded than any in Venice.”

The monk looked in admiration at the gentle being, whose countenance was glowing with the mild resolution of innocence and affection, and he motioned for her to follow.

“ We will go, then, before the proudest and the most fearful of earth, should there be occa-

sion," he resumed. "We will do our duty to both parties; to the oppressor and the oppressed, that the sin of omission lie not on our souls."

Father Anselmo, without further explanation, led the obedient girl into that part of the palace, which was known to be appropriated to the private uses of the titular head of the republic.

The jealousy of the Venetian patricians, on the subject of their doge, is matter of history. He was, by situation, a puppet in the hands of the nobles, who only tolerated his existence, because the theory of their government required a seeming agent in the imposing ceremonies that formed part of their specious system, and in their intercourse with other states. He dwelt, in his palace, like the queen-bee in the hive, pampered and honoured to the eye, but in truth devoted to the objects of those who alone possess the power to injure, and perhaps we might add, like the insect named, known for consuming more than a usual portion of the fruits of the common industry.

Father Anselmo was indebted to his own decision, and to the confidence of his manner, in reaching the private apartments of a prince, thus secluded and watched. He was permitted to pass by various sentinels, who imagined from his holy calling and calm step, that he was some friar employed in his usual and privileged office. By this easy, quiet method did the Carmelite and his companion penetrate to the very ante-chamber of the sovereign, a spot that thousands had been defeated in attempting to reach, by means more elaborate.

There were merely two or three drowsy inferior officers of the household in waiting. One arose, quickly, at the unexpected appearance of these unknown visitors, expressing, by the surprise and the confusion of his eye, the wonder into which he was thrown by so unlooked-for guests.

“His highness waits for us, I fear?” simply observed Father Anselmo, who had known how to quiet his concern, in a look of passive courtesy.

“ Santa Maria ! holy Father, you should know best, but ——”

“ We will not lose more time in idle words, son, when there has already been this delay— shew us to the closet of his highness.”

“ It is forbidden to usher any unannounced, into the presence ——”

“ Thou seest this is not an ordinary visit.— Go, inform the doge that the Carmelite he expects, and the youthful maiden, in whom his princely bosom feels so parental an interest, await his pleasure.”

“ His highness has then commanded ——”

“ Tell him, moreover, that time presses ; for the hour is near when innocence is condemned to suffer.”

The usher was deceived by the gravity and assurance of the monk. He hesitated, and then throwing open a door, he shewed the visitors into an inner room, where he requested them to await his return. After this, he went on the desired commission, to the closet of his master.

It has already been shewn that the reigning doge, if such a title can be used of a prince who was merely a tool of the aristocracy, was a man advanced in years. He had thrown aside the cares of the day, and, in the retirement of his privacy, was endeavouring to indulge those human sympathies that had so little play in the ordinary duties of his factitious condition, by holding intercourse with the mind of one of the classics of his country. His state was laid aside for lighter ease and personal freedom. The monk could not have chosen a happier moment for his object, since the man was undefended by the usual appliances of his rank, and he was softened by communion with one who had known how to mould and temper the feelings of his readers at will. So entire was the abstraction of the doge, at the moment, that the usher entered unheeded, and had stood in respectful attention to his sovereign's pleasure, near a minute before he was seen.

“What would'st thou, Marco?” demanded the prince, when his eye rose from the page.

“Signore,” returned the officer, using the familiar manner in which those nearest to the persons of princes are permitted to indulge—“here are the reverend Carmelite, and the young girl, in waiting.”

“How sayest thou?—a Carmelite, and a girl!”

“Signore, the same. Those whom your highness expects.”

“What bold pretence is this!”

“Signore, I do but repeat the words of the monk. ‘Tell his highness,’ said the Father, ‘that the Carmelite he wishes to see, and the young girl, in whose happiness his princely bosom feels so parental an interest, await his pleasure.’”

There passed a glow, in which indignation was brighter than shame, over the wasted cheek of the old prince, and his eye kindled.

“And this to me—even in my palace!”

“ Pardon, Signore.—This is no shameless priest, like so many that disgrace the tonsure. Both monk and girl have innocent and harmless looks, and I do suspect your highness may have forgotten.”

The bright spots disappeared from the prince's cheeks, and his eye regained its paternal expression. But age, and experience in his delicate duties, had taught the Doge of Venice caution. He well knew that memory had not failed him, and he at once saw that a hidden meaning lay concealed beneath an application so unusual. There might be a device of his enemies, who were numerous and active, or, in truth, there might be some justifiable motive to warrant the applicant in resorting to a measure so hardy.

“ Did the Carmelite say more, good Marco ?” he asked, after deep reflection.

“ Signore, he said there was great urgency, as the hour was near when the innocent might suffer. I doubt not that he comes with a petition in behalf of some young indiscreet, for

there are said to be several young nobles arrested for their follies in the carnival. The female may be a sister disguised."

"Bid one of thy companions come hither; and thou, when I touch my bell, do thou usher these visitors to my presence."

The attendant withdrew, taking care to pass into the ante-chamber, by doors that rendered it unnecessary to shew himself, too soon, to those who expected his return. The second usher quickly made his appearance, and was immediately despatched in quest of one of the Three, who was occupied with important papers, in an adjoining closet. The senator was not slow to obey the summons, for he appeared there as a friend of the prince, having been admitted publicly, and with the customary honours.

"Here are visitors of an unusual character, Signore," said the doge, rising to receive him whom he had summoned in precaution to himself, "and I would have a witness of their requests."

“Your highness does well to make us of the senate share your labours; though if any mistaken opinion of the necessity has led you to conceive it important to call a counsellor each time a guest enters the palace—”

“It is well, Signore,” mildly interrupted the prince, touching the bell. “I hope my importunity has not deranged you. But here come those I expect.”

Father Anselmo and Gelsomina entered the closet together. The first glance convinced the doge that he received strangers. He exchanged looks with the member of the secret council, and each saw in the other's eye, that the surprise was mutual.

When fairly in the presence, the Carmelite threw back his cowl, entirely exposing the whole of his ascetic features, while Gelsomina, awed by the rank of him who received them, shrunk abashed, partly concealed by his robes.

“What means this visit?” demanded the prince, whose finger pointed to the shrinking

form of the girl, while his eye rested steadily on that of the monk, “and that unusual companion? Neither the hour, nor the mode is customary.”

Father Anselmo stood before the Venetian sovereign for the first time. Accustomed, like all of that region, and more especially in that age, to calculate his chances of success warily, before venturing to disburthen his mind, the monk fastened a penetrating look on his interrogator.

“Illustrious prince,” he said, “we come petitioners for justice. They who are thus commissioned had need be bold, lest they do their own character, and their righteous office, discredit.”

“Justice is the glory of St. Mark, and the happiness of his subjects. Thy course, Father, is not according to established rules, and wholesome restraints, but it may have its apology—name thy errand.”

“There is one in the cells, condemned of the

public tribunals, and he must die with the return of day, unless your princely authority interfere to save him."

"One condemned of the tribunals may merit his fate."

"I am the ghostly adviser of the unhappy youth, and in the execution of my sacred office, I have learned that he is innocent."

"Didst thou say condemned of the common judges, Father?"

"Sentenced to die, highness, by a decree of the criminal tribunals."

The prince appeared relieved. So long as the affair had been public, there was at least reason to believe he might indulge his love of the species, by listening farther, without offence to the tortuous policy of the state. Glancing his eye at the motionless inquisitor, as if to seek approbation, he advanced a step nearer to the Carmelite, with increasing interest in the application.

"By what authority, reverend priest, dost

thou impeach the decision of the judges ?” he demanded.

“Signore, as I have just said, in virtue of knowledge gained in the exercise of my holy office. He has laid bare his soul to me, as one whose feet were in the grave; and, though offending, like all born of woman, towards his God, he is guiltless as respects the state.”

“Thinkest thou, Father, that the law would ever reach its victim, were we to listen only to self-accusations! I am old, monk, and have long worn that troublesome cap,” pointing to the horned bonnet, which lay near his hand, the symbol of his state, “and in my day, I do not recal the criminal that has not fancied himself the victim of untoward circumstances.”

“That men apply this treacherous solace to their consciences, one of my vocation has not to learn. Our chief task is to shew the delusion of those, who, while condemning their own sins, by words of confession and self-abasement, make a merit of humility; but, Doge of Ve-

nice, there is still a virtue in the sacred rite I have this evening been required to perform, which can overcome the mounting of the most exalted spirit. Many attempt to deceive themselves, at the confessional, while, by the power of God, few succeed."

"Praised be the blessed mother and the incarnate son, that it is so!" returned the prince, struck by the mild faith of the monk, and crossing himself, reverently. "Father, thou hast forgotten to name the condemned?"

"It is a certain Jacopo Frontoni;—a reputed bravo."

The start, the changing colour, and the glance of the prince of Venice, were full of natural surprise.

"Callest thou the bloodiest stiletto that ever disgraced the city, the weapon of a reputed bravo! The arts of the monster have prevailed over thy experience, monk;—the true confession of such a wretch, would be but a history of bloody and revolting crimes."

“ I entered his cell with this opinion, but I left it convinced that the public sentiment has done him wrong. If your highness will deign to hear his tale, you will think him a fit subject for your pity, rather than for punishment.”

“ Of all the criminals of my reign, this is the last, in whose favour I could have imagined there was aught to be said!—Speak, freely, Carmelite; for curiosity is as strong as wonder.”

So truly did the doge give utterance to his feelings, that he momentarily forgot the presence of the inquisitor, whose countenance might have shewn him that the subject was getting to be grave.

The monk ejaculated a thanksgiving, for it was not always easy, in that city of mystery, to bring truth to the ears of the great. When men live under a system of duplicity, more or less of the quality gets interwoven with the habits of the most ingenuous, although they may remain, themselves, unconscious of the

taint. Thus Father Anselmo, as he proceeded with the desired explanation, touched more tenderly on the practices of the state, and used more of reserve in alluding to those usages and opinions, which one of his holy calling and honest nature, under other circumstances, would have fearlessly condemned.

“It may not be known to one of your high condition, sovereign prince,” resumed the Carmelite, “that a humble, but laborious mechanic of this city, a certain Francesco Frontoni, was long since condemned for frauds against the republic’s revenue. This is a crime St. Mark never fails to visit with his heavy displeasure, for when men place the goods of the world before all other consideration, they mistake the objects which have brought them together in social union.”

“Father, thou wert speaking of a certain Francesco Frontoni?”

“Highness, such was his name. The unhappy man had taken to his confidence and

friendship, one, who, in pretending to his daughter's love, might appear to be the master of his secrets. When this false suitor stood on the verge of detection, for offences against the customs, he had a snare of deception, which, while he was permitted to escape, drew the anger of the state on his too ^{soon} confiding friend. Francesco was condemned to the cells, until he might reveal facts which never had an existence."

"This is a hard fate, reverend friar, could it be but proved!"

"'Tis the evil of secrecy and intrigue, great doge, in managing the common interests—"

"Hast thou more of this Francesco, monk?"

"His history is short, Signore; for at the age when most men are active in looking to their welfare, he was pining in a prison."

"I remember to have heard of some such accusation—but it occurred in the reign of the last doge—did it not, Father?"

“And has endured to near the close of the reign of this, highness !”

“How ! The senate when apprised of the error of its judgment, was not slow to repair the wrong !”

The monk regarded the prince earnestly, as if he would make certain whether the surprise he witnessed was not a piece of consummate acting. He felt convinced that the affair was one of that class of acts, which, however oppressive, unjust, and destructive of personal happiness, had not sufficient importance to come before them, who govern under systems which care more for their own preservation, than for the good of the ruled. “Signore Doge,” he said, “the state is discreet in matters that touch its own reputation. There are reasons that I shall not presume to examine, why the cell of poor Francesco was kept closed, long after the death and confession of his accuser left his innocence beyond dispute.”

The prince mused, and then he bethought

him to consult the countenance of his companion. The marble of the pilastre, against which he leaned, was not more cold and unmoved than the face of the inquisitor. The man had learned to smother every natural impulse in the assumed and factitious duties of his office.

“And what has this case of Francesco to do with the execution of the Bravo?” demanded the doge, after a pause, in which he had in vain struggled to assume the indifference of his counsellor.

“That, I shall leave this prison-keeper’s daughter to explain—stand forth, child, and relate what you know; remembering, if you speak before the prince of Venice, that you also speak before the King of Heaven!”

Gelsomina trembled, for one of her habits, however supported by her motives, could not overcome a nature so retiring without a struggle. But faithful to her promise, and sustained by pure affection for the condemned, she ad-

vanced a step, and stood no longer concealed by the robes of the Carmelite.

“Thou art the daughter of the prison-keeper?” asked the prince mildly, though surprise was strongly painted in his eye.

“Highness, we are poor, and we are unfortunate; we serve the state for bread.”

“Ye serve a noble master, child. Dost thou know aught of this Bravo?”

“Dread sovereign, they that call him thus, know not his heart! One more true to his friends, more faithful to his word, or more suppliant with the saints, than Jacopo Frontoni is not in Venice!”

“This is a character which art might appropriate, even to a bravo. But we waste the moments.—What have these Frontini, in common?”

“Highness, they are father and son. When Jacopo came to be of an age to understand the misfortunes of his family, he wearied the senators with applications in his father’s behalf; until

they commanded the door of the cell to be secretly opened to a child so pious. I well know, great prince, that they who rule cannot have all-seeing eyes, else could this wrong never have happened. But Francesco wasted years in cells, chill and damp in winter, and scorching in summer, before the falsehood of the accusation was known. Then, as some relief to sufferings so little merited, Jacopo was admitted."

"With what object, girl?"

"Highness, was it not in pity? They promised too, that in good time, the service of the son should buy the father's liberty. The patri-cians were slow to be convinced, and they made terms with poor Jacopo, who agreed to undergo a hard service, that his father might breathe free air, before he died."

"Thou dealest in enigmas."

"I am little used, great doge, to speak in such a presence, or on such subjects. But this I know, that for three weary years hath Jacopo been admitted to his father's cell, and that

those up above consented to the visits; else would my father have denied them. I was his companion in the holy act, and will call the blessed Maria and the saints—”

“ Girl, didst thou know him for a bravo ?”

“ Oh ! Highness, no. To me he seemed a dutiful child, fearing God and honouring his parent. I hope never to feel another pang, like that which chilled my heart, when they said, he I had known as the kind Carlo, was hunted in Venice as the abhorred Jacopo ! But it is passed, the mother of God be praised !”

“ Thou art betrothed to this condemned man ?”

The colour did not deepen on the cheek of Gelsomina, at this abrupt question, for the tie between her and Jacopo had become too sacred, for the ordinary weaknesses of her sex.

“ Highness, yes; we were to be married, should it have pleased God, and those great senators, who have so much influence over the happiness of the poor, to permit it.”

“And thou art still willing, knowing the man, to pledge thy vows, to one like Jacopo?”

“It is because I do know him to be as he is, that I most reverence him, great doge. He has sold his time and his good name to the state, in order to save his imprisoned father, and in that I see nothing to frighten one he loves.”

“This affair needs explanation, Carmelite. The girl has a heated fancy, and she renders that obscure she should explain.”

“Illustrious prince, she would say that the republic was content to grant the son the indulgence of visiting the captive, with some encouragement of his release, on condition that the youth might serve the police by bearing a bravo’s reputation.”

“And for this incredible tale, Father, you have the word of a condemned criminal!”

“With the near view of death before his eyes. There are means of rendering truth evident, familiar to those who are often near the dying penitents, that are unknown to those of

the world. In any case, Signore, the matter is worthy of investigation."

"In that thou art right. Is the hour named for the execution?"

"With the morning light, prince."

"And the father?"

"Is dead."

"A prisoner, Carmelite?"

"A prisoner, Prince of Venice."

There was a pause.

"Hast thou heard of the death of one named Antonio?" resumed the doge, recovering from the shock.

"Signore, yes. By the sacred nature of my holy office, do I affirm that of this crime is Jacopo innocent. I shrived the fisherman."

The doge turned away, for the truth began to dawn upon him, and the flush which glowed on his aged cheek, contained a confession that might not be observed by every eye. He sought the glance of his companion, but his own expression of human feeling was met by the disci-

plined features of the other, as light is coldly repelled from polished stone.

“Highness!” added a tremulous voice.

“What would’st thou, child?”

“There is a God for the republic, as well as for the gondolier! Your highness will turn this great crime from Venice?”

“Thou art of plain speech, girl!”

“The great danger of Carlo has made me bold. You are much beloved by the people, and none speak of you, that they do not speak of your goodness, and of your desire to serve the poor. You are the root of a rich and happy family, and you will not—nay, you cannot if you would, think it a crime for a son to devote all to a father. You are our father, and we have a right to come to you, even for mercy—but, highness, I ask only for justice.”

“Justice is the motto of Venice.”

“They who live in the high favour of providence do not always know what the unhappy undergo. It has pleased God to afflict my own

poor mother, who has griefs that, but for her patience and christian faith, would have been hard to bear. The little care I had it in my power to shew, first caught Jacopo's eye, for his heart was then full of the duty of the child. Would your highness consent to see poor Carlo, or to command him to be brought hither, his simple tale would give the lie to every foul slander they have dared to say against him."

"It is unnecessary—it is unnecessary. Thy faith in his innocence, girl, is more eloquent than any words of his can prove."

A gleam of joy irradiated the face of Gelsomina, who turned eagerly to the listening monk, as she continued—

"His highness listens," she said, "and we shall prevail! Father, they may menace in Venice, and alarm the timid, but they will never do the deed we feared. Is not the God of Jacopo my God, and your God?—the God of the senate, and of the doge?—of the Council, and of the republic? I would the secret members of

the Three could have seen poor Jacopo, as I have seen him, coming from his toil, weary with labour, and heart-broken with delay, enter the winter or the summer cell—chilling or scorching as the season might be—and struggling to be cheerful, that the falsely-accused might not feel a greater weight of misery.—Oh ! venerable and kind prince, you little know the burthen that the feeble are often made to carry, for to you life has been sunshine ; but there are millions who are condemned to do that they loathe, that they may not do that. they dread.”

“ Child, thou tell’st me nothing new.”

“ Except in convincing you, highness, that Jacopo is not the monster they would have him. I do not know the secret reasons of the councils for wishing the youth to lend himself to a deception that had nigh proved so fatal ; but now all is explained, we have nought to fear. Come, Father ; we will leave the good and just doge to go to rest, as suits his years, and we will return to gladden the heart of Jacopo with

our success, and to thank the blessed Maria for her favour."

"Stay!" exclaimed the half-stifled old man. "Is this true that thou tellest me, girl?—Father, can it be so?"

"Signore, I have said all that truth and my conscience have prompted."

The prince seemed bewildered, turning his look from the motionless girl to the equally immovable member of the Three.

"Come hither, child," he said, his voice trembling as he spoke. "Come hither, that I may bless thee." Gelsomina sprang forward, and knelt at the feet of her sovereign. Father Anselmo never uttered a clearer or more fervent benediction than that which fell from the lips of the prince of Venice. He raised the daughter of the prison-keeper, and motioned for both his visitors to withdraw. Gelsomina willingly complied, for her heart was already in the cell of Jacopo, in the eagerness to communicate her success; but the Carmelite lingered to cast a

look behind, like one better acquainted with the effects of worldly policy, when connected with the interests of those who pervert governments to the advantage of the privileged. As he passed through the door, however, he felt his hopes revive, for he saw the aged prince, unable any longer to suppress his feelings, hastening towards his still silent companion, with both hands extended, eyes moistening with tears, and a look that betrayed the emotions of one anxious to find relief in human sympathies.

CHAPTER XI.

“On—on—

It is our knell, or that of Venice.—On.”

Marino Faliero.

ANOTHER morning called the Venetians to their affairs. Agents of the police had been active in preparing the public mind, and as the sun rose above the narrow sea, the squares began to fill. There were present the curious citizen in his cloak and cap, bare-legged labourers in wondering awe, the circumspect Hebrew in his gaberdine and beard, masked gentlemen,

and many an attentive stranger from among the thousands who still frequented that declining mart. It was rumoured that an act of retributive justice was about to take place, for the peace of the town and the protection of the citizen. In short, curiosity, idleness, and revenge, with all the usual train of human feelings, had drawn together a multitude eager to witness the agonies of a fellow creature.

The Dalmatians were drawn up, near the sea, in a manner to enclose the two granite columns of the Piazzetta. Their grave and disciplined faces fronted inwards, towards the African pillars, those well known land-marks of death. A few grim warriors, of higher rank, paced the flags before the troops, while a dense crowd filled the exterior space. By special favour more than a hundred fishermen were grouped within the armed men, witnesses that their class had revenge. Between the lofty pedestals of St. Theodore and the winged lion lay the block and axe, the basket and the saw-dust; the

usual accompaniments of justice in that day. By their side, stood the executioner.

At length a movement in the living mass drew every eye towards the gate of the palace. A murmur arose, the multitude waved, and a small body of the Sbirri came into view. Their steps were swift, like the march of destiny. The Dalmatians opened to receive these ministers of fate into their bosom, and closing their ranks again appeared to preclude the world, with its hopes, from the condemned. On reaching the block between the columns, the Sbirri fell off in files, waiting at a little distance, while Jacopo was left before the engines of death, attended by his ghostly counsellor, the Carmelite. The action left them open to the gaze of the throng.

Father Anselmo was in the usual attire of a bare-footed friar of his order. The cowl of the holy man was thrown back, exposing his mortified lineaments, and self-examining eye, to those around. The expression of his counte-

nance was that of bewildered uncertainty, relieved by frequent, but fitful, glimmerings of hope. Though his lips moved constantly in prayer, his looks wandered, by an irrepressible impulse, from one window of the doge's palace to another. He took his station near the condemned, however, and thrice crossed himself, fervently.

Jacopo had tranquilly placed his person before the block. His head was bare, his cheek colourless, his throat and neck uncovered to the shoulders, his body, in its linen, and the rest of his form, was clad in the ordinary dress of a gondolier. He kneeled, with his face bowed to the block, repeated a prayer, and rising he faced the multitude, with dignity and composure. As his eye moved slowly over the array of human countenances by which he was environed, a hectic glowed on his features, for not one of them all betrayed sympathy in his sufferings. His breast heaved, and those nearest to his person thought the self-command of

the miserable man was about to fall him. The result disappointed expectation. There was a shudder, and the limbs settled into repose.

“Thou hast looked in vain, among the multitude, for a friendly eye?” said the Carmelite, whose attention had been drawn to the convulsive movement.

“None here have pity for an assassin.”

“Remember thy Redeemer, son. He suffered ignominy and death, for a race that denied his God-head, and derided his sorrows.”

Jacopo crossed himself, and bowed his head, in reverence.

“Hast thou more prayers to repeat, Father?” demanded the chief of the Sbirri; he who was particularly charged with the duty of the hour. “Though the illustrious councils are so sure in justice, they are merciful to the souls of sinners.”

“Are thy orders peremptory?” asked the monk, unconsciously fixing his eye, again, on

the windows of the palace. "Is it certain that the prisoner is to die?"

The officer smiled at the simplicity of the question, but with the apathy of one too much familiarized with human suffering to admit of compassion.

"Do any doubt it?" he rejoined. "It is the lot of man, reverend monk; and more especially is it the lot of those on whom the judgment of St. Mark has alighted. It were better that your penitent looked to his soul."

"Surely thou hast thy private and express commands? They have named a minute, when this bloody work is to be performed?"

"Holy Carmelite, I have. The time will not be weary, and you will do well to make the most of it, unless you have faith, already, in the prisoner's condition."

As he spoke, the officer threw a glance at the dial of the square, and walked coolly away. The action left the priest and the prisoner again alone, between the columns. It was evident

that the former could not yet believe in the reality of the execution.

“Hast thou no hope, Jacopo?” he asked.

“Carmelite, in my God.”

“They cannot commit this wrong! I shrived Antonio—I witnessed his fate, and the prince knows it!”

“What is a prince and his justice, where the selfishness of a few rules! Father, thou art new in the senate’s service.”

“I shall not presume to say that God will blast those who do this deed, for we cannot trace the mysteries of his wisdom. This life, and all this world can offer, are but specks in his omniscient eye, and what to us seems evil, may be pregnant with good.—Hast thou faith in thy Redeemer, Jacopo?”

The prisoner laid his hand upon his heart, and smiled, with the calm assurance that none but those who are thus sustained can feel.

“We will again pray, my son.”

The Carmelite and Jacopo kneeled, side by

side, the latter bowing his head to the block, while the monk uttered a final appeal to the mercy of the Deity. The former arose, but the latter continued in the suppliant attitude. The monk was so full of holy thoughts, that, forgetting his former wishes, he was nearly content the prisoner should pass into the fruition of that hope which elevated his own mind. The officer and executioner drew near, the former touching the arm of Father Anselmo, and pointing towards the distant dial.

“The moment is near ;” he whispered, more from habit, than in any tenderness to the prisoner.

The Carmelite turned instinctively towards the palace, forgetting, in the sudden impulse, all but his sense of earthly justice. There were forms at the windows, and he fancied a signal, to stay the impending blow, was about to be given.

“Hold !” he exclaimed. “For the love of Maria of most pure memory, be not too hasty !”

The exclamation was repeated by a shrill female voice, and then Gelsomina, eluding every effort to arrest her, rushed through the Dalmatians, and reached the group between the granite columns. Wonder and curiosity agitated the multitude, and a deep murmur ran through the square.

“’Tis a maniac !” cried one.

“’Tis a victim of his arts !” said another, for when men have a reputation for any particular vice, the world seldom fails to attribute all the rest.

Gelsomina seized the bonds of Jacopo, and endeavoured, frantically, to release his arms.

“I had hoped thou wouldest have been spared this sight, poor Gessina !” said the condemned.

“Be not alarmed !” she answered, gasping for breath. “They do it in mockery—’tis one of their wiles to mislead—but they cannot—no, they dare not harm hair of thy head, Carlo !”

“Dearest Gelsomina !”

“Nay, do not hold me.—I will speak to the citizens, and tell them all. They are angry now, but when they know the truth they will love thee, Carlo, as I do.”

“Bless thee—bless thee!—I would thou hadst not come!”

“Fear not for me! I am little used to such a crowd, but thou wilt see that I shall dare to speak them fair, and to make known the truth boldly. I want but breath.”

“Dearest! Thou hast a mother—a father to share thy tenderness. Duty to them will make thee happy!”

“Now, I can speak, and thou shalt see how I will vindicate thy name.”

She arose from the arms of her lover, who, notwithstanding his bonds, released his hold of her slight form with a reluctance greater than that with which he parted with life. The struggle in the mind of Jacopo seemed over. He bowed his head, passively, to the block, before which he was kneeling, and it is pro-

bable, by the manner in which his hands were clasped, that he prayed for her who left him. Not so Gelsomina. Parting her hair, over her spotless forehead, with both hands, she advanced towards the fishermen, who were familiar to her eye, by their red caps and bare limbs. Her smile was like that which the imagination would bestow on the blessed, in their intercourse of love.

“Venetians!” she said, “I cannot blame you; ye are here to witness the death of one whom ye believe unfit to live—”

“The murderer of old Antonio!” muttered several of the group.

“Ay, even the murderer of that aged and excellent man. But, when you hear the truth, when you come to know that he, whom you have believed an assassin, was a pious child, a faithful servant of the republic, a gentle gondolier, and a true heart, you will change your bloody purpose, for a wish for justice.”

A common murmur drowned her voice, which

was so trembling and low, as to need deep stillness to render the words audible. The Carmelite had advanced to her side, and he motioned earnestly for silence.

“Hear her, men of the Lagoon!” he said; “she utters holy truth.”

“This reverend and pious monk, with Heaven, is my witness. When you shall know Carlo better, and have heard his tale, ye will be the first to cry out for his release. I tell you this, that when the doge shall appear at yon window and make the signal of mercy, you need not be angry, and believe that your class has been wronged. Poor Carlo—”

“The girl raves!” interrupted the moody fishermen. “Here is no Carlo, but Jacopo Frontoni, a common bravo.”

Gelsomina smiled, in the security of the innocent, and, regaining her breath, which nervous agitation still disturbed, she resumed.

“Carlo, or Jacopo—Jacopo, or Carlo—it matters little.”

“Ha! There is a sign from the palace!” shouted the Carmelite, stretching both his arms in that direction, as if to grasp a boon. The clarions sounded, and another wave stirred the multitude. Gelsomina uttered a cry of delight, and turned to throw herself upon the bosom of the reprieved. The axe glittered before her eyes, and the head of Jacopo rolled upon the stones, as if to meet her. A general movement in the living mass denoted the end.

The Dalmatians wheeled into column, the Sbirri pushed aside the throng, on their way to their haunts, the water of the bay was dashed upon the flags, the clotted saw-dust was gathered, the head and trunk, block, basket, axe and executioner disappeared, and the crowd circulated around the fatal spot.

During this horrible and brief moment, neither Father Anselmo nor Gelsomina moved. All was over, and still the entire scene appeared to be delusion.

“Take away this maniac!” said an officer

of the police, pointing to Gelsomina as he spoke.

He was obeyed with Venetian readiness, but his words proved prophetic, before his servitors had quitted the square. The Carmelite scarce breathed. He gazed at the moving multitude, at the windows of the palace, and at the sun which shone so gloriously in the Heavens.

“Thou art lost in this crowd!” whispered one at his elbow. “Reverend Carmelite, you will do well to follow me.”

The monk was too much subdued to hesitate. His conductor led him, by many secret ways, to a quay, where he instantly embarked, in a gondola, for the main. Before the sun reached the meridian, the thoughtful and trembling monk was on his journey towards the states of the church: and ere long he became established in the castle of Sant' Agata.

At the usual hour the sun fell behind the mountains of the Tyrol, and the moon re-appeared above the Lido. The narrow streets of

Venice again poured out their thousands upon the squares. The mild light fell athwart the quaint architecture, and the giddy tower, throwing a deceptive glory on the city of islands.

The porticoes became brilliant with lamps, the gay laughed, the reckless trifled, the masker pursued his hidden purpose, the cantatrice and the grotesque acted their parts, and the million existed in that vacant enjoyment which distinguishes the pleasures of the thoughtless and the idle. Each lived for himself, while the state of Venice held its vicious sway, corrupting alike the ruler and the ruled, by its mockery of those sacred principles which are alone founded in truth and natural justice.

THE END.

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