



The Oath-Keeper of Forano.—Frontispiece.



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THE OATH-KEEPER OF FORANO.

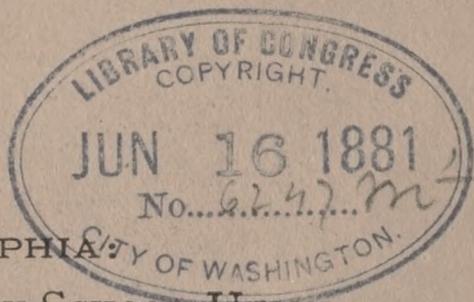
A TALE OF ITALY AND HER EVANGEL.

BY MRS. JULIA McNAIR WRIGHT.

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"SECRETS OF THE CONVENT AND CONFSSIONAL,"

"EARLY BRITISH CHURCH," ETC.



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NOTE BY THE AUTHOR.

THIS story is historically true. A correct picture is here given of the methods and progress of the Vaudois Church during the last twenty years. Padres Trentadue, Postiglione, and Innocenza are sketched from life. The Marchese and Marchesa Forano, the sapient Gulio, the Polwarths, and Assunta, are actual portraits. The conversations recorded with the Marchesa Forano are given *verbatim* as they occurred. The story of the Parish of Santa Marie Maggiore on the hills was related to the author by two Evangelical Pastors. The terrible *facts* of the Barletta massacre are taken from the Tuscan papers of that date. Finally the book, as it was written just after a lengthened residence in Italy, may be relied on as a careful study of Italian life and Evangelism.

THE OATH-KEEPER OF FORANO:

A TALE OF ITALY AND HER EVANGEL.

CHAPTER I.

THE LAST DAY OF THE CARNIVAL.

“Oh vows, oh convent, I have not lost my humanity under your inexorable discipline: you have not made me marble by changing my habit!”—ELOISE TO ABELARD.

BEHOLD the afternoon of the maddest day of the Italian year: the last day of the Carnival, the day when all the merry-making grows wilder and more frantic, until the bell tolls in mid-night and the austerities of Lent. When the sun rose on this last day of Carnival, 1860, there rose also along the horizon a cloud like a man's hand; it grew with the growing day.

None of the merry-makers heeded either the sun or the cloud; the business in hand was to

prepare for the "Corso" in the afternoon; for this special occasion had been reserved the most gorgeous costumes, the quaintest conceits, and the most fantastic masks, wherewith to contest for the civic prize of buffoonery, and by three o'clock the "Corso" was crowded with nearly all the vehicles of the city, private and public, fine and shabby, all pressing toward the Piazza.

Among the carriages was one containing three nuns, evidently *bona fide* members of an order, not maskers bent on a frolic, and just as evidently desirous of escaping the crowd. To do that was impossible, and finally their carriage was brought to a full stop immediately in front of the British Consulate.

One nun on the back seat leaned forward to calculate the probable length of the delay by counting the vehicles entangled before them; the nun beside her looked backward to see how near to her shoulders were the heads of the horses of the coach next in the rear; the third nun leaped at a bound from the front seat (which she occupied alone), to the sidewalk, and rushed into the Consulate. Evidently a woman of quick mind and equal to emergencies, she no

sooner gained the office than she selected the Consul from his two subordinates, and grasping his arm exclaimed, with an unmistakable English accent;

“I demand your protection! I am a British subject unlawfully imprisoned in a convent. Here in your office I am in England, and I claim your aid, my lawful rights, the protection of my country’s flag!”

At this instant the two other nuns ran in, crying in Italian:

“*Illustrissimo Signore!* pardon; our poor sister Theresa is insane; we are removing her to a hospital. Aid us in replacing her in the carriage and we will no longer trouble you. A thousand pardons for the poor unhappy one’s intrusion.”

“You *see* I am *not* insane,” said the first comer eagerly, fixing an agonized look on the perturbed Consul. “I beseech your help as you are a gentleman; I claim it as I am unfortunate; I demand it from an officer of my own government, set here to aid those who are oppressed as I am. I am English, and you *must* protect me!”

The other nuns, not understanding her words,

but well imagining their purport, began again, rather angrily, with "*Illustrissimo*," and asserted that their insane "sister" was an Italian, educated in England—demanding that she should be restored to their care. They were much excited, especially as the crowd outside had laughed and hooted when their "sister" so unexpectedly deserted them. The Consul looked uneasily at the nun who held him by the arm.

"How shall I know that you are a British subject and have a right to my interference for you? Why not go with these ladies until I have opportunity to examine into your claims?"

"Because it would be to go to my death. I should never be heard of after I left your door. Indeed you *know* that I am English from my language. Six years ago I was Judith Lyons, of No. — Portland Place. My father was David Lyons, of No. — Ludgate Hill. I was seized while returning to England, and have been imprisoned in a convent five years. I must have your protection!"

"Lyons—1854—Portland Place," said one of the clerks, who looked deeply interested. "Here's a London Directory for '56;" he hastily turned

over the leaves. "The names are here, sir. Yes, Lyons of Ludgate Hill; three large establishments."

The Italian nuns, with a volley of "pardons," darted at their "sister" and endeavored to drag her away with them.

Holding by the Consul with one hand the fugitive strove to keep off her assailants with the other arm. Her bonnet and head wrappings fell away, and showed a face which, though worn and marked by grief, was remarkably beautiful. The Consul by words, and one of his clerks by a gentle laying on of hands, interfered to protect the stranger, and the second clerk vouchsafed the remark that in his opinion it was a clear case.

The Consul loath to quarrel with the holy church, found that the refugee had two champions besides his own sympathies, and now insinuatingly addressing the defendants as *signorinas*, assured them that he was certain the affair could be satisfactorily explained, but that his duty compelled him to hear the prayer of one who was evidently an Englishwoman; and that he must certainly protect her until the

matter could be laid before the right authorities, and a proper and legal decision arrived at. At this stage of his remarks a happy thought came to him.

“You know the excellent Father Salvatore Zucchi, of the Duomo?”

The nuns brightened. “He is the confessor of our convent.”

“We can then settle the business speedily and amicably, I presume,” said the Consul, “at least, I had better deal directly with the *Padre*. If you two would wait upon him and state your case, and request him to come at his earliest convenience to the Consulate, I trust we shall be able to arrive at a proper understanding without any public scandal.”

The word scandal was well used. Mother Church objects to open scandals, and the two nuns began to feel that their best resort would be to Father Zucchi. The Consul took advantage of their hesitation, he gently pushed the claimant of his protection into an inner room, and begged leave to escort the *signorinas* to their carriage, assuring them that he should not leave the Consulate during the remainder of the

day, and would not miss the expected visit from *Padre Zucchi*.

Bare-headed, and with the utmost deference, the Consul waited upon the irate nuns to their *fiacre*; the crowd had thickened—news of a nun's escape had spread—and as the two sisters appeared without the third, laughter, queries, and jibes met them. Happily this was but for an instant, for just then a rabble, carrying a platform on which was seated in state, crowned, and sceptered, and tinsel-decked, an enormous figure, appeared at a corner, and the easily diverted Italian crowd followed it with a shout—it was King Carnival going to the grand piazza, to be burned at midnight.

The disappointed sisters drove off in search of Father Zucchi, and the Consul returned to his *protégé*. As he opened the door of the inner room, he found that she had torn off her veil, kerchief, rosary, crucifix, all of the nun's gear of which she could free herself, and was trampling them under her feet in a fury.

“Ah!” she said, with a deep breath; “you think from this that I *am* insane. But consider these are the tokens of my captivity, my cruel

slavery; of separation from my kindred, from my home, from my religion; these are the trappings of the accursed woman-worshippers. May the God of Israel deal with you as you deal with me, and bless you as you protect me!"

"You are a Jewess," said the Consul.

"Yes, a Jewess, and by reason of that none the less an English subject, with English rights."

"Not at all," said the Consul, calmly; "and be sure that I will protect those rights."

"I show very little gratitude for what you have already done," said the stranger, growing more quiet; "but when you know my history you will not wonder at my excitement."

"And I must know your history immediately, before Father Zucchi comes, that I may better understand how to deal with him. Let me hear what you can tell me, and be calm and explicit, I beg of you."

The junior clerk here entered with a glass of wine for the lady, and placed a chair for her. She accepted these attentions mechanically, with her eyes fixed on the Consul.

"Now, then," said the brisk official, "your

name, age, birthplace—let us know what we are doing.”

“ My name, Judith Lyons—born in London ; my age, twenty-six. Six years ago I married in London an Italian named Nicole Forano, a younger half-brother of the Marchese Forano. Nicole was a Roman Catholic—I, a Jewess ; and as we were neither of us ready to change our religion, we were married by a magistrate. My family consented to the match, but did not prefer it. Soon after we came to Italy. You know that here by his church a civil marriage would not be recognized, but Nicole hoped that before long I would unite with his church, and we could be remarried by a priest. I might have made such a change in time ; I cannot tell. I had then never seen the inside of a convent. A marriage at any time by a priest would have satisfied the clergy, and legitimated any children born during the existence of the merely civil marriage. A year passed ; we were very happy in a little mountain villa of our own. Forano had not presented me to his family ; he was waiting for the time when I should belong to their church. When the year ended I had a

son; and alas! sir, before that son was a month old, my husband was dead. I had known all along that the priest near us was my great enemy. The Marchese Forano was elderly and childless; my husband was the next heir of the little estate, and after him our child, if our marriage was legitimated, or if the Marchese should see fit to adopt the child as his heir; without that, lacking an heir, he very probably would bequeath his property to the church. Nicole had explained all this to me, and when he was dead, and I had no defender, my whole desire was to go with my child to my family; I knew I should be welcome, and their fortune was ample. I wrote them when I would come. A young man, the favorite servant of Nicole, a youth whose family had always served the Foranos, was to be my only attendant. I had made my preparations; we were to start at day-break. After I lay down that night with my child in my arms, eager for the hour to come when I should escape from the scene of my great happiness and my great misery, I knew nothing that happened; when I again became conscious of myself I was in a narrow bed in a

convent hospital, and nuns were about me; they told me that a month had passed, that my child was dead, and that I had been ill of a fever. I do not believe that, for fevers weaken and emaciate, and I found myself in my usual flesh and strength. I gradually learned that I was a prisoner. I was not allowed to communicate with the outer world, nor to go to England. They strove to convert me, as they said, but what Nicole's love might have done, could not be accomplished by their harshness. They made a nun of me, as they retained me against my will. All my desire now is, to get to England to my friends. If my child is dead I have no tie here; if he lives I cannot find him if I stay. I wish you to send me to my friends."

A tap on the door. "The *Padre* Zucchi!" said the junior clerk. "Take him to my private parlor," said the Consul. Then turning to his companion, he said: "I, abiding by our own law and recognizing that your marriage is valid in England, must call you only Madame Forano, and be sure that I will defend your rights, and endeavor to accomplish all your wishes—"

"And—if you could find out anything about

my child!" said Madame Forano, earnestly. The Consul bowed and left the room.

His first care was to send a particularly delightful collation to the parlor, as his avant courier to the waiting priest; when he followed the collation which the priest was lovingly eyeing, he made his first words complimentary to an extent that would have done honor to an Italian. Then drawing two chairs near the table, he continued: "It is true that we have a little matter of business to discuss, but even business can be made agreeable over good viands and good *Chianti*, and as Carnival is going and Lent is coming, we will make the best of our time, and also reach a pleasant settlement of a little matter which I could not conveniently conclude with the ladies. I hope *Chianti* suits your taste?"

Father Zucchi replied that *Chianti* particularly suited him, and when his glass was filled proceeded with alacrity to empty it. Meanwhile the Consul was called from the room.

Mr. — had been in office but three years, his predecessor having died in 1857. The senior clerk, who had requested a moment's

conversation with him, said that he had been looking over the papers of 1855 and 1856, and had found a letter from David Lyons, requesting the fact of his daughter Judith Lyons Forano's death to be inquired into. A note made by a previous clerk on the letter stated that the death had been attested by a certain parish priest.

The Consul returned to *Padre* Zucchi, and plied him well with food and wine, as they proceeded to the consideration of the question in hand.

"Of course," said the Consul, "you could affirm that this is not the daughter of David Lyons, of London. In which case, after application to the proper court, I must send for some one of the Lyons family to come and identify the lady, if they so desired. If you admit her to be Judith Lyons, you have two courses before you: either to yield the validity of the marriage, and put her in communication with the Marchese Forano, as the head of the family; or, rejecting the marriage, and taking no more trouble about her, simply to permit me quietly to send her to England, which I pledge you my word to do within three days."

“What she tells you is false,” said *Padre Zucchi*. “She desired to enter a convent, and voluntarily assumed vows, and now yields to her evil heart and renounces her vocation.”

“Then I am sure your convent would be well rid of her.”

“But we have a duty to ourselves, to her, to the church, to the family Forano—always very good Catholics.”

“Perhaps we had better communicate with the Marchese?”

“Not at all. He is feeble and elderly. I must consider his interest.”

“And why not return the young woman to her friends? The sin of breaking a vow would be hers only; you would be free of the trouble of her, and the Forano family need never hear of her again, unless they make the first advances.”

“But they would hear of her again, and be continually put to trouble by her. She is a very evil-disposed, ambitious young woman. In London, aided by her friends, she would begin to persecute the Foranos about her child.”

“Then her child is living?” said the Consul, quickly.

“Not at all; he is dead; but she would not believe it.”

“If you gave me your word as a gentleman that you know the child to be dead, and I so assure her of its death, she will accept the fact, I am confident. I feel certain that she would hereafter annoy no one. I argue this matter thus, trusting that you may see, as I do, that a quiet settlement is best for all concerned. I have never had any disputes with your government or church; I desire none. If you will agree to hush all reports, and release all claims—another glass of *Chianti*—and the lady is only desirous to go home, and I promise to set her on the way to England at once—really you are scarcely tasting the salad (Father Zucchi had eaten half of it)—then nothing further need be said. If this cannot be, I must communicate with the British Ambassador—try the truffles—and it is not needful that I should tell you that the world is full of people to comment on church quarrels and church scandals. I think you had better try some more *Chianti*, and agree to let this rebellious young lady return to the care of her parents.”

“It is evident that her marriage with Nicole Forano is, in Italy, quite invalid,” began *Padre* Zucchi.

“Then she can have no claim on the Foranos, if we accept that view,” said the Consul; “and *if* her child is dead —”

“Oh, but her child is certainly dead,” interrupted the priest.

“Then she has no tie here, and by all means had better return to her early home.”

The Consul had no desire but to arrive at an amicable settlement with the priest. He must quiet his own conscience by securing the safety of the woman who had cast herself on his protection; and the more quietly he could do this the better satisfied he would be. To this end he mollified the *Padre* with *Chianti* and compliments, and urged him by logical reasonings which the confessor could not rebut. After a long discussion the priest agreed to release all claim on “Sister Theresa,” and to tell the Consul, in the presence of the clerks, that he was quite willing that she should be sent to England, provided that the Consul would see to it that no rumors derogatory to the church got

abroad, and that nothing capable of establishing an evil precedent might happen; provided, also, that "Sister Theresa" should depart within three days. To this the Consul agreed, and the *Padre* then gave way to a fatherly anxiety as to the means to be provided for the departure of his recreant daughter, and the route which she should pursue. On these points, however, the Consul was reticent; all he would say was that by the evening of the third day Judith Lyons Forano should be out of Italy.

It was nearly sunset when *Padre* Zucchi left the Consulate. As the vexed ecclesiastic proceeded towards the Duomo for vespers, a little boat upon the bay began to draw near the land, and the cloud in the sky, which had rapidly increased, hung like a black curtain over all the west. Beneath the edge of this curtain the setting sun shot a long level ray across the waters upon the little boat, as if he had nothing else to shine upon. Against the molten gold of this last blaze of sunset Gorgonia loomed like a black spectre, the whole heaven gathered darkness, and a fierce wind rushed forth, with the rain on its wings.

The little boat which was speeding landward hailed from a small xebec bound for Corsica, a vessel with the sharply pointed, red, triangular sails peculiar to the Levant. The man who rowed the boat was in the costume of a Tuscan mountaineer—low shoes, long white hose, black velveteen knee-breeches and jacket, a crimson silk sash about his waist, a profusion of silver bell buttons, and an elaborately embroidered shirt-front; a muscular, handsome fellow of thirty, with thick black curls clustering from under his small round fox-skin cap. Before him in the boat was a bag of loose white sacking, standing up steadily in virtue of its contents, whatever they were, but having at times a tremulous motion, perhaps imparted by the vigorous oar-strokes that drove the boat through the water. Whenever the rower looked at his freight a curious expression of mingled amusement, pain and anxiety crossed his face.

The sun had dipped below the horizon, and the evening was closing darkly when the boat touched the shore. The rower made it fast, pocketed his fur cap, donned in its stead a Carnival cap of white cotton trimmed with ribbons,

lightly swung his bag on his shoulder, and choosing by-streets hastened toward the centre of the city. After a ten-minutes' walk he passed a huge antique Palazzo, with carved front, a great arched carriage gateway, and a porter's lodge beside it. The gateway stood open, the inner court was empty, no face peered from the window of the porter's lodge. Our gay boatman, with a keen scrutiny, passed the Palazzo once, muttered some curse on his own irresolution as he went by, then turned, darted in at the gateway, and went with long, silent strides toward the *piano nobile*, the first floor above the ground in Italian houses—the ground floor in such a Palazzo as we describe being devoted to the porter, the fuel, the carriages and the stables. The intruder entered the *piano nobile* unchallenged. A lamp made darkness visible in the large, vaulted, brick-paved hall, and through this he darted to the door of a grand salon, which he very cautiously set ajar. The salon was unoccupied; Carnival seemed to have drained the house of its inmates.

A wood fire blazed at the farther side of the salon, and before it lay a great velvet rug, like a

heap of summer flowers. On this rug the mountaineer set his bag, busied himself one instant with it, and then, the sack having fallen to the floor, revealed as its contents a handsome little boy. The man made the child a low *congé* in a merry, mocking way, kissed his hand between love and respect, tossed the bag upon his shoulder, and hurried from the room. Unnoticed, he gained the street, stole by one or two narrow ways to a dark corner, replaced his fur cap, took from the bag a long cloak of faded green cloth with a fur collar, wrapped it over his finery, threw the sack away, and in five minutes more was lounging into a wine shop on the Corso, ready to gossip with any stranger whom he might meet.

But let us look to the child in the drawing-room of the Palazzo Borgosoia. The salon had a vaulted, gorgeously frescoed ceiling; the walls were in panels of yellow satin, divided by strips of mirror-glass, extending from floor to ceiling; the blazing fire gave just then the only light, and revealed several statues, which were reduplicated fitfully in the narrow mirrors; the fire-place and mantle were a mass of elaborate

carvings, heavily gilded; the entire wood-work of all the furniture in the room was gilded, while it was upholstered with blue satin; a great basket of flowers occupied the centre of the mosaic table. Amid all this magnificence the little stranger stood in the full light of the fire, an erect, well-made child. He wore the favorite Carnival costume of the poor: sandals of undressed cowskin; the white knitted hose which even the poorest Italians always wear; white cotton drawers, with wide, stifly-fluted ruffles at the ankles; a white shirt reaching to the knee, and similarly ruffled at neck, skirt and wrists; and a high conical cap like a dunce-cap, of white cotton, with yard-long streamers of red and blue ribbons falling from its apex. On this white, quaint figure the firelight shone, touching his thick black curls with gold, reflected in his great, eager black eyes, and deepening the glow of his olive cheeks. He looked in wonder at the dimly revealed angels on the ceiling, and the marble gods of Hellas in the corners. Having never seen gold, except one small coin and one thin ring, he believed that all this that glittered about him was gold indeed; he, who had never

seen a looking-glass, beheld in the mirror opposite a beautiful little boy, dressed like himself; he looked about and saw just such a little boy behind him, and a succession of such little boys, in whole or in part revealed, at regular intervals along the wall. As he meditated curiously on this multiplicity of little boys, the door opened to the entrance of an old man and a young lady.

The pair stopped, amazed at the stranger. Presently the young lady exclaimed:

“A fairy, elf, brownie, nis—whatever is the local genius of Italy!—or perhaps the spirit of the Carnival!”

“Stop, Honor! don’t move! Bless my soul, what a study for a picture! Stay until I fix it on my mind. Ah, if I had my brushes and could paint by electricity, to catch this before it vanishes!” cried the old man.

“We could reproduce it at any time, uncle,” said the girl; “we have the room, and if the child is a reality and not a phantom I suppose he will be obtainable whenever you wish to make a study of him.”

“That firelight—those lights and shadows—

that child so brightly brought out—that sullen red glow,” murmured the old artist. But Honor, kneeling down before the small visitor, and taking his brown hand in hers, said in Italian:

“Good-evening, little sir. What is your name, and where did you come from?”

The child regarded her tranquilly, yet as one not understanding a word. Having asked several other questions in Italian, Honor, having no success in the language of the country, tried French. Still the bright eyes were fixed on hers, but no reply came.

“Speak to him in German, uncle,” she said. But the German was quite as ineffectual as the other tongues. “Our own language, then—English,” said Honor. But English was sound without sense to the child.

“I will ring for Assunta,” said the old gentleman; “but I apprehend, Honor, that the child is a deaf mute.”

The child, however, immediately disproved this, for, as Assunta entered, saying “Signore,” the boy quickly turned his head to the side whence the sound came.

Assunta, the lady’s maid, was as greatly sur-

prised at the presence of the child as her master had been. She was sure no one could have entered the house, and seemed inclined to suspect witchcraft.

But now the excitable old artist was sure robbers were in his Palazzo, and the police must be sent for to search every corner. Honor, however, desired to have the search committed to herself and the gate porter, putting little faith in the Italian police.

“And then, uncle, they might insist on carrying off the child, and how shocking to have such a charming little fellow in one of their dreadful dens. And then you might not be able to get him to paint in your new picture.”

This suggestion was well put. Uncle Francini consented that Honor should explore his dwelling, accompanied by Assunta and the porter.

To her satisfaction Honor discovered nothing suspicious. Meanwhile the artist had devoted himself to the child, and could only make out that his hearing was perfect, yet that he did not comprehend a word of the half dozen languages which had been addressed to him. As-

sunta, returning with her mistress, suggested that the child might be an idiot; but Signore Francini indignantly declared that the little fellow had the most beautiful head that he had ever seen.

Assunta's next suggestion met with more favor, namely, that the child had been abandoned by its parents or guardians, who had trusted that his extraordinary beauty would win him the favor and protection of a famous artist like the Signore. This compliment had its effect on old Francini; yet, after carefully re-examining the waif, he gave it as his fixed opinion that he was no common child, but must be of good family. They would, on the morrow, strive to unravel the mystery; meanwhile Assunta might give the boy his supper and put him to bed.

This done, Assunta returned to the parlor declaring that the child was a marvel of health and perfect form; and any sculptor in Italy might rejoice in him as a model; in fine, that he was as beautiful as the cherubs painted by Signore Francini himself.

"And did he speak, Assunta?" asked Honor.

“Not the half a quarter of a word, Signorina.”

“Did he, then, know anything of a prayer, or of worship?”

“He crossed himself, Signorina, looked about as for some picture which he had been used to see, and got into bed,” replied Assunta, shrugging her shoulders.

“Send up our supper, Assunta, and see to it that you have the boy locked into his room; and he is by no means to be let go without my orders,” said Signore Francini.

By this time it was raining heavily; the rain dashed against the windows and swept the streets clear of merry-makers. Doleful disappointment reigned in the city. This last evening was to have been the climax of the festival; florists had prepared bouquets, and confectioners' boxes of candies, and bakers hundreds of cakes, wherewith the crowd were to have pelted each other and regaled themselves. But now florists, bakers, and confectioners ground their teeth in despair. The company who had erected pavilions and tiers of seats on the grand piazza tore their hair, since they had their workmen to pay and no one to hire the seats.

The mob which was to have burned King Carnival had prepared wood, tar, oil, pitch, wherewith to offer the giant puppet as a holocaust to the austere spirit of Lent, but now crowded the wine shops, anathematizing the unpropitious saints who had sent foul weather and brought the Lenten Winter of their discontent twelve hours before its time. A great tempest lashed the Mediterranean; the mighty waves battered the sea-wall, besieged the lighthouses, took by wild sorties the quiet nooks of the shore, hurled white foam-crests fifty feet into the air as they charged against the piers, and whirls of spray swept far over the city. In such a storm it was quite evident that a bonfire would be a failure; neither gunpowder nor petroleum would have been likely to burn amid so many disadvantages; the fuel, tar, and rockets prepared for midnight were a certain loss; King Carnival could not and would not burn; and if he would, there would have been nobody there to see.

The end of the merry time was more doleful than a funeral.

CHAPTER II.

THE MYSTERIOUS BOY.

“Be still, then, O my soul!
To manage in the whole,
Thy God permitting.”

THE evening of the second day after Carnival was as bright and peaceful as if there had never been a storm; and as the tumult of the elements had settled into calm, so the small excitement which had been occasioned in the British Consulate by the flight of a nun, and in the Palazzo Borgosoia by the mysterious appearance of the little boy, had also died away. The Consul had provided for the nun, and Honor Maxwell had provided for the little boy.

At breakfast-time on the morning of the day after he had been found standing in the salon, Assunta brought the little boy for inspection.

Our Uncle Francini had his hobbies, and one of them was *blood*. Trotting out this hobby for

a morning amble, Uncle Francini discovered from the boy's fine head, erect, fearless bearing, noble physique, and especially from the nice conformation of his hands and feet, that he was a child of good *family*. Alas! when our hero was seated at the table he conducted himself like the lowest of the people, and put Uncle Francini to shame. However, the good gentleman brightened when Honor undertook to instruct the child in etiquette, and found that he instantly apprehended and practised her lessons concerning his knife, fork and napkin, his eating and drinking. They also endeavored to make him speak.

The child, for instance, wanted a roll, and pointed at it, making the sounds and gestures of an untaught mute. "Please," said Honor; "say *please*." The boy watched her lips, made one or two herculean efforts, and said "please" with tolerable plainness. Uncle Francini at once became emulous. He gave the roll and said, "*grazie*; say *grazie*." After similar attempts the pupil said "*grazie*." English and Italian seemed equally foreign to him, and his speech, when he acquired it, was likely to be of

the composite order—Miss Honor teaching him English and Francini Italian.

“What shall we do with him, uncle? shall we keep him? He will make a charming model for you—so much better than the children we hire,” said Honor.

“Let us keep him until some one who has a right claims him,” said Uncle Francini; “he will be an interest to you, my child. I fear you grow dull here; there is not so much to interest young ladies here as in America. You pine, perhaps, for your charities, for your schools, for your services, to be able to go in and out and teach people without being accused of proselyting. You give up a great deal for your old uncle, my Honor.”

“Not at all,” said Honor. “I like to stay here, and,” she added, with a flash in her eyes, “I *shall* stay here until I may go in and out and teach as freely here as at home—until I may give a Bible or a tract, open a school, buy a church, without a priest daring to molest me.”

“Dear girl, that day will never come,” said Uncle Francini.

"It must come, uncle. All the world is waking up."

"All the world is returning to darkness," sighed Francini. "The old masters have no successors. There is now no Buonarroti to inspire the world with his triple talents."

"But *art* is not the world's regenerator!" cried Honor, giving her musing uncle's arm a shake. "During the French Revolution the mob preserved their statues and murdered their savants. The Bible is the means, God's promise is our assurance, and by an open Bible Italian liberties will be established. Do you not suppose there are prayers of St. Paul for Italy yet waiting to be answered by the prayer-Hearer? As for art, I have my doubts but the world would be better if every copy of those idolatrous *old masters* were out of existence."

"My dear Honor," remonstrated Francini, "I trust your pupil will be more amenable to your instructions than you are to mine concerning art."

"And I am to have the boy, uncle, and teach him, and dress him, and you are to paint him, eh? Then I had better send Assunta to buy

him some clothes; his costume is too airy for this chilly morning."

"It is quite warm enough by the fire," said Francini, pulling the bell. "Paulo must bring my easel and brushes and a new canvas at once, and I will sketch little—little—ah, Cospetto! *mia cara*, he has no name."

"We must name him," cried Honor. "What shall it be? Pietro, after your uncle? or—Jasper is a delightful name?"

"No, no," said the old artist, "after none but the divine singer, painter and sculptor, Michael—"

"What a blessing that you never married, uncle," said Honor; "if you had had ten sons they must all have been named Michael Angelo Buonarroti—what a confusion!"

"And none of them heir to *his* genius," sighed Francini. "The world does not produce Buonarrotis now-a-days."

"Perhaps not," said Honor; "they come to show what man may be in genius hereafter. But the world to-day produces men who make a really nobler mark on time, and sow grander harvests for eternity than even Angelo."

"*Che, che,*"* said Francini, too courtly to dispute further; "let the child be called Michael; he is extremely like the glorious Michael of Guido Reni. Place him as he stood last night, that I may begin to paint."

Michael, the newly-named, was standing near them as Honor turned to him with a bright smile; as if quite enraptured with her appearance, the child caught her hand and kissed it twice.

"It was the act and air of a courtier," said Francini. "I am sure, Honor, the child is of even noble blood."

Paulo had prepared for his master's work, and Francini was presently engrossed in his beloved employment. Honor quietly took Master Michael's measurement, and despatched Assunta to the outfitter's for a supply of child's clothing.

Assunta, a pretty girl from the hills, who for two years had been Honor's attendant, still wore, to please the artistic taste of the old painter, the bright and charming costume of the Italian peasant girl. On her way to the outfitter's Assunta met an old acquaintance, a gorgeous

* A common Italian exclamation of doubt or denial.

mountaineer, in velveteen, scarlet sash, buttons and embroidery.

“Why, Gulio,” said Assunta, “here in all your finery for the carnival, and never come to me, to tell me a word of the dear Marchesa, or to take my duty to her!”

“On the contrary, I have just arrived in town, and was now on my way expressly to see you,” said Gulio, lying with entire glibness and ease of mind. “Believe me, two years of absence from the sight of your smiles have made me pine.”

“You don’t show it,” said Assunta, briskly.

“It is my duty to hide my woes,” laughed Gulio. “I am here on an hour’s business about the sale of some olive oil for the Marchesa. Shall I tell our Signora that you are well and happy, and do not regret that you missed taking the veil?”

Assunta tossed her head. “The veil would not have suited me at all, only Father Damiano had me over-persuaded. I bless the Signora every day for having prevented it.”

“The Signora singularly undervalues convents, for a good Catholic,” said Gulio, in his

light way. "She considers them good only for widows and aged spinsters. She also holds the priesthood lightly, and asserts that a good family man is better than a bad priest. I have my pocket now encumbered with a pair of slippers sent her by Ser.* Jacopo, the cobbler, who owes it to her that he is not a priest, and who yesterday had his eighth son christened."

"Speaking of sons," said Assunta, "a boy came to our house on the last evening, in the early part of the storm."

"Ah, then, your Signorina has married."

"Not at all," said Assunta, "the boy was five years old, very handsome, dumb, and no one knows where from."

"And you sent the little vagabond packing to the police."

"*Altro*, are we heathen?" said Assunta. "Our Palazzo is full large, our purse is not empty. No, we keep the infant in the name of God. I am now buying clothes for him."

"And what is his name?" asked Gulio, who was carefully inspecting his knee-buckles.

"How can one tell, when he cannot tell one?"

* The usual abbreviation of Signore.

We have called him Michael, and we propose to bring him up."

"Davvero! the saints will reward such a charity. And yet, *perhaps* he will be brought up a heretic."

"There may be worse things than heretics," said Assunta.

Gulio looked keenly in her face and laughed. "Ah, he! it has been out of the frying-pan into the fire with you, Signorina; out of convent into heresy. But I'll not tell of you."

"Well," said Assunta, uneasily, "I cannot stand here with *you*. Give my duty to the Marchesa, and tell her I shall yet come over the mountains to see her. Perhaps I will bring our pretty boy; she loves little children."

"Tutt, tutt," cried Gulio, earnestly; "come alone if you would be welcome. The Signora grows old; she has nerves in her head; she will not be pleased to see a strange child."

"I'll not bring the boy to copy *your* manners," said Assunta, and waving her hand, with a smile pleasanter than her speech, she hurried on.

As for Gulio, he probably sold the olive oil—

if, indeed, he had any to sell—by the next evening, for at five on the second day after Carnival we find him entering a little boat to be rowed to a small felucca which lay outside the mole, ready to sail to Elba. No ships lie at the piers in Mediterranean ports; they anchor at a greater or less distance from the shore, and transact their business on shore by means of small boats. Near the felucca lay a steamer bound for England, and waiting for some passengers.

When Gulio stepped into the boat, the two boatmen, who were old acquaintances, began to jest with him about the splendor of his head-gear, for he wore a black velvet smoking-cap, embroidered with oak leaves in blue, and decorated with a long blue tassel.

“You must be going to your wedding, Gulio!”

“Not at all. I go to Elba on business about some wine.”

“Perhaps, then, you have the purse of the Marchesa in your pocket, and have been tapping it. Look out, or we may be called on to row you over to Gorgona!”*

* An island used as a convict station.

"The Marchesa would not feel rich enough to buy such a cap."

"It is true," said Gulio, with dignity, "that my Signora is not rich, but to be a poor noble in these days is to be a true noble. What we lack in scudi we make up in pedigree."

The boatmen laughed, but one of them said, "Yes, yes, the Forani have not enriched themselves by oppressing the poor."

The mouth of an Italian harbor is made narrow, in order to bring the boats passing to and from the ships readily under the surveillance of the custom-house officers. When several boats are pressing through this outlet at once they frequently get wedged together. In this way Gulio's boat was driven alongside a handsomer craft, containing, besides its crew, a gentleman, a lad, two ladies, and some baggage. As the boats momentarily delayed, one of the ladies suddenly screamed, "Gulio Ravi!"

Gulio turned quickly, and as quickly turned away.

"Altro!" said the boatman, "Gulio's cap has fascinated the English Signorina."

Again the lady cried, "Gulio Ravi!" and

throwing herself forward, tried to grasp the side of his boat. The gentleman near her caught her arm and besought her to be quiet.

“Bother on the lady,” said Gulio, still keeping his face averted; “from some mistake about me she will upset her boat, and then we must all be in the water to fish her out.”

The rowers were striving to part the boats, but were hindered by the number of the craft about them. The excited woman who had called to Gulio, struggled from her companions, and shrieked, “Gulio! Tell me, is my child living?”

“The woman is mad,” said Gulio, uneasily.

The gentleman in the other boat endeavored to hush the lady, who was attracting general notice. She was not to be quieted; breaking loose from his grasp, she flung herself on her knees as the boats were rapidly parting, stretched forth her arms, and cried, “Gulio! if my child lives, I conjure you to raise your hand!”

“Confound it!” cried Gulio. “I will sit where she cannot see me!” He started up to change his place, and in so doing he was turned from his boatmen, and towards the lady.

Was it by accident or intention that for one second he held up his hand with the palm turned to her? Certainly she thought it was the reply to her entreaty. "My child lives!" she said, passionately. "Where are you taking me? I will return; I will rescue him—my child lives."

"Madame Forano," said the Consul, "you distress, you anger me! I have pledged my word to get you quietly away, and you make a scene, which will in two hours be discussed over all the city. That man did not recognize you; he made you no sign; you are mistaken in him."

Mrs. Bruce, the lady with whom Madame Forano was to travel, knew a better method of calming her: she clasped her arms about her, drew her head to her shoulder, and began to speak softly in her ear. Whatever she said, it was potent; Madame Forano made no further disturbance, and reaching the waiting steamer, she went quietly to the state-room which she was to occupy with her friend. The Consul had recovered his affability. "I think you will be comfortable here," he said, glancing about the saloon and state-room. "Mrs. Bruce, let me

suggest that you appear the better sailor, and that your *soi disant* maid keep her room under plea of sea-sickness. She had better remain closely in this place."

"I am sure she will not object," said Mrs. Bruce.

"No, no. Oh, if I might only sleep until I reach England!" exclaimed Madame Forano, laying aside her bonnet.

"Good-bye," said the Consul, shaking her hand, and looking at her with sympathy. "It will be one of the pleasantest memories of my life, that I have been able to assist you."

"And I could not forget you, nor cease to be grateful to my preserver in an eternity," said Madame Forano. "My friends will write you, and join their thanks to mine; you have more than delivered my soul from death!" The tears were in her large black eyes as she clasped his hand. Then an intenser feeling of passion and resolution rose in her soul, and burned the tears away. "You will hear of me again! My child lives, and I will find him if I turn over every stone in this wicked land!"

"Good-bye, good-bye," said the Consul, un-

willing to commit himself on the dangerous question of the child. "Confide all to your friends, and be entirely guided by them."

He left the state-room door, and found Mrs. Bruce seated at a table near by. "Thank you for coming to my rescue in extremity," he said; "and do not let your charge say or do anything to attract the notice of Italian servants on this ship; they will be back here and spread reports. I think her troubles have turned her mind a little astray. I hope you will find her family. If not, communicate with the address I gave you, and you will be relieved of responsibility."

"I will not leave her until she is safe with her friends," replied Mrs. Bruce.

"Even if her parents are dead, she says she has some elder brothers, and there is a strong family and clannish feeling among Jews; she will be sure to find protection."

Bidding Mrs. Bruce and her son farewell, the Consul returned to his boat; the felucca was already off for Elba, and presently the steamer *Orient* was hurrying on its way. Mrs. Bruce was an American lady of the Consul's acquaint-

ance; he had interested her in Madame Forano's story, and obtained a passport for the fugitive to travel as Mrs. Bruce's maid. Mrs. Bruce had procured her, dress suitable to the supposed station, and agreed to see her safely established among her friends, and the steamer had been chosen as the safest method of departure, especially as it sailed the day before the time when the Consul had promised to have Judith leave Italy.

But this is a world where many things are being done at once; therefore it is not strange that while the felucca steered toward Elba, the *Orient* toward Gibraltar, the Consul toward shore, Honor Maxwell and Master Michael should have sallied out of Palazzo Borgosoia, and with thoughts intent on shoes rather than on ships, directed their steps to the shop of Ser. Jacopo.

Ser. Jacopo had secured the custom of Signorina Maxwell by favor of Assunta, with whom he was slightly acquainted. Indeed, Assunta had but just purchased of him a pair of shoes for Michael, telling the marvellous tale of the foundling, and now that Honor had come to

buy Sunday boots for the same child, the garrulous artisan was ready to talk with even more than his usual fluency. It was Honor's custom to talk freely with her Italian tradespeople, that she might thus assure them of her friendly interest in them, and drop by times the words of instruction and Scriptural reproof and consolation of which they were in perishing need. Ser. Jacopo felt at ease with the young lady, and after bidding her "*buona sera*,"* he continued:

"And here is the *bellissimo bambino* † of which Assunta told me. Truly, Signorina, thus to take him into your gracious care is a deed that looks for reward only from heaven. To do such works of charity, Signorina, is what I call true religion. It was especially the religion of my patroness, the Marchesa Forano, to whom I owe it that I have this shop, my wife and eight sons. I have never heard the Marchesa called a learned lady, but she had very valuable practical sense. She has always held that a good citizen was better for Italy than an idle priest; and she said the country had more need of honest fathers than of clerics with nothing to do.

* Good-evening.

† The most beautiful boy.

When I was a young lad my mother designed to make me a priest for three reasons: first, as an expiatory offering to the church; second, to free herself from responsibility; and third, to secure me a living—which is poor enough, being but two francs a day and pay for a mass, if you can get one to repeat. I was of an age to agree to anything, but the Marchesa considered for me. She proved to my mother that she could not make expiation for herself through me. I consider that sound doctrine, Signorina, though Madame did not learn it from the holy church, but out of her own sense; and yet the Marchesa is an excellent Catholic, always keeps her fasts, and attends mass.”

Ser. Jacopo had by this time fitted Michael with shoes, and stood with them in his hand, while he continued his favorite story:

“Besides, the Marchesa showed my mother, Mary be merciful to her soul! that she had no right to escape from accountability concerning me; and lastly she said: ‘Here is a great, strong boy; he will want plenty to eat and drink; he must be busy, or he will fall into mischief, and you set him to starve on two francs a day with

nothing to do. Instead of expiating *your* sins, he will increase his own. Very need will drive him to lying and cheating the poor, ignorant and dying, to get a few more francs for his food and lodging. There are good priests,' said the Marchesa, 'but they are men with a vocation, who have not donned the gown for the sake of two francs a day. Che, che!' said the Marchesa, 'the world must always wear shoes—make him a calzolaio,* and I will pay his fee.' And so it was, Signorina, and since then I have made my way. I took care of my mother until the holy angels assumed that responsibility; I married the daughter of a calzolaio of Barletta; I named my first boy Sandro, for the Marchese; my second, Joseph, for the honored Marchesa Josepha; my third, Forano, from the estate; my fourth, Marchese, for want of any other name belonging to my patrons, and since then I have been obliged to cease paying my duty to the family, in naming my children for them, simply because there were twice as many children as names." .

"The Marchesa was certainly a good friend to you," said Honor, rising to leave the shop.

* A shoemaker.

“I hope your children are all quite well, and their good mother also.”

“Well enough, Signorina, grazie. But I have sent Sandro to Firenze,* in care of a vetturino, to inquire after my wife’s brother. He went there as a journeyman calzolajo in the Piazza San Marco, and we have heard that he has fallen in with some Vaudois, and is becoming heretical.”

“And you would think that very evil, Ser. Jacopo?”

“It would be very *dangerous*, Signorina, and people like ourselves, who stand well with the authorities, had better not risk anything. See what heresy has done for the Vaudois.”

“Yes, truly many of them have died for it. They must, therefore, believe it. What if their views should be true? I suppose, then, Ser. Jacopo, you feel it right that Vaudois should be outcasts?”

Ser. Jacopo glanced about, lowered his voice. “*Ecco*, † Signorina, I cannot forget that the Vaudois are our Italian brothers. I’d much rather have the Vaudois than Austrians, and the

* Florence.

† Behold!

Marchesa always held all persecution to be wrong. Cospetto,* what can one do? Only the best that one can. I have sent Sandro to bid brother Nanni † come and work with me, and avoid danger."

"Good-day, then, Jacopo. I hope God will guide you and yours."

"Felicissima notte, Signorina! May all the saints protect you."

Honor did not turn toward the Palazzo Borgosoia, but down the Corso, to a substantial dwelling, which served as a church and parsonage for a congregation of British subjects, who worshipped God under the protection of their own flag, and were closely watched lest they should do any proselyting. When Honor was admitted by the front door of this dwelling, she saw a room opposite open, and the minister seated at a table. Before him stood a priest of some thirty years old, who seemed in the height of passion. As Honor followed the servant upstairs to the drawing-room in the *piano nobile*, she heard the priest thus:

"You are not ashamed to say, to teach, that

* Look! † The usual contraction of Giovanni, or *John*.

we are saved wholly by grace through faith, without aid of our good works? Infamous fellow, ten thousand times infamous! I will meet you, refute you—”

The closing of the drawing-room door shut out the priest's voice. Mrs. Polwarth presently entered, and the first thing was to discuss Michael.

“Very likely some of your servants know more about him than they admit, and are trading, for his support, on his beauty and your generosity,” said Mrs. Polwarth. “These Italians are very artful.”

“At least, I shall have the advantage of instructing him, and he seems a bright child. As long as I call him my protégé, and provide for him, there will be one Italian whom I can evangelize without let or hindrance,” replied Honor.

“That is one comfort,” said Mrs. Polwarth. “Do you know that little room which we hired for the Vaudois school, and paid for in advance, has been taken away on pretense of some flaw, and we lose all our rent after one week's occupation.”

“Oh, really! I would appeal to the Consul. That is shameful.”

“And it is the third time it has happened. But appeal is useless; it would only attract attention and opposition. I have taken our boxes out of the little room on the *terremo*, and shall have the school there, in a little, dark, close place. Then our house has been watched for three nights, so that our class of four catechumens could not get in. If we are to evangelize Italy by such means as are now in hand, our prospect is of slow success.”

“This is our day of patience, of waiting, of small things,” said Honor, “but by-and-by you will see the great and effectual door opened, and great things will be done for us, whereof our souls shall be glad. There is even now some fruit.”

“And very poor fruit, I assure you. To-day I feel discouraged. We have news that a priest whom we thought converted and got off to England, is leading an idle, dissolute life. In the number of years we have spent here, we have aided the escape of three priests and a nun, and not one of them has turned out well,” said Mrs. Polwarth mournfully.

“And yet you would continue to teach, and

send to England those who professed to be converts, and must escape for their lives."

"Why, certainly; to do the work we find is our business, the event is for God," said Mrs. Polwarth.

"And you are only now complaining that God has not properly managed the event," said Honor, quietly.

"Thank you, I see; I will not distress myself about God's part in the work. Besides one true convert would pay for all our disappointment; look at a De Sanctis."

Dr. Polwarth coming in caught the last word. "The Padre Innocenza, with whom I have just parted, is far from being a De Sanctis: he is in a white hot fury. Would be glad to imprison or assassinate me, and debarred those privileges, is about to destroy me in a controversy."

"Oh, by no means!" cried Mrs. Polwarth; "a public controversy would awake hostility enough to ruin our work here. Though you defeated your opponent, you would be still more defeated yourself. Besides, I thought it was against canon law for priests to enter into controversy."

"But this is to be a private controversy, on

paper, my dear; and as for canon law, it is not my affair if Padre Innocenza disregards it: he is a priest from the hills, some miles from the city. I am to write my views, and he is prepared triumphantly to refute them, and reduce me to contempt."

"I would have nothing to do with it," said Mrs. Polwarth, "he will garble your paper and publish its distorted form to your detriment."

"Nevertheless," said the doctor, after a short consideration, "I think I will enter into the matter, and leave the Lord to protect the exposition of my faith. You see, the proposal is, that I give him a statement of the doctrines I hold, and the reasons or proofs thereof. Now that gives me opportunity to preach to the poor young man a full gospel, such a thing as he has never heard in his life. Perhaps for this very end God has sent him to me, boiling over as he is with rage; and taking my letter to contradict it, he may be led by it to the light. Yes, I shall write a full, careful, scriptural letter on faith in Christ Jesus, and asking God's blessing on it, may get my answer of peace after many days."

Dr. Polwarth now turned his attention to Michael, and declared him to be a Greek. To prove his point he sent for a young Greek who lodged in an opposite attic, who might converse with the boy in his native tongue, and solve the mystery of his appearance and parentage. The Greek was accordingly brought over. Michael listened gravely to his discourse, laughed melodiously, and comprehended not a word.

Mrs. Polwarth then went out to walk with Honor. On the pier they met a turbaned Turk, who had carried his square of carpet thither to say his sunset prayers. When his devotions were finished, Mrs. Polwarth begged *him* to speak to Michael. The Turk did so; the boy shook his head, and repeated the three words he had learned, "lady," "please" and "grazie."

CHAPTER III.

SER. JACOPO AND HIS FRIENDS.

“How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, *sweeter than*
honey to my mouth!”

WHEN Jacopo had started his son Sandro toward Firenze on an admonitory mission to his Uncle Nanni, the lad was in a state of high delight, the weather was charming, the vetturino was almost sure to drive very slowly, and to the boy of fourteen, who had never been five miles from home, a trip to the Tuscan capital was a glorious event. Leaving his father about four o'clock, Sandro in less than three hours stopped for the night in a little hillside village, where the vetturino had a relative. After supper and a chat by the wood fire, in which country people indulge, and which amazed Sandro by its prodigality, the boy wrapped himself in his father's great cloak, lined with fur, and lay down to sleep among the parcels in the vetturino's cart,

having no canopy above him but the sky, which he saw through a breathing-hole which he had left for himself in the folds of his cloak. Sandro had very little on his mind. His father had bidden him keep his especial mission to Uncle Nanni from the ears of strangers, and his message to his relative was short and simple—merely to come to his loving sister, and forget Vaudois. As for the Vaudois, Sandro had heard of them in school, and considered them a sort of cross between the dragon which fought with St. Michael and Monacello—the goblin of the Italian nursery, so that the little rascal was very glad of the existence of the Vaudois, else there would have been no occasion for his journey to Firenze.

The next day the cart, drawn by its strong, mouse-colored, sure-footed mules, still wound slowly along hill and level, the driver walking beside his favorite mule and Sandro lagging behind, both gossiping with every man, woman and child that met them, and tarrying long before every drogheria and village albergo. Evening found them again in a mountain hamlet, supping on wine, black bread and sausages in a

small tavern. As they sat thus the door opened and a keen, handsome face looked in. The face was set off by a velvet smoking-cap with blue embroidery and tassel. Sandro's back was toward the door, and as the newcomer saw only three or four villagers, a heavy-faced vetturino and a boy, he considered it safe to come in; he threw by his green cloak, seated himself with a lordly air at the table, and called for sausages and a bottle of wine. The sound of his voice diverted Sandro from his supper.

"Ecco! are you here, Ser. Gulio? This is rather out of your way to the Forano villa. And you have sold your olive oil, then? I hope you made a good bargain. Why you stare at me as if you didn't know me; you remember I saw you in my father's shop two days ago. He met you in the street and brought you in about some slippers."

"Cospetto! how boys do gabble now-a-days," said Gulio, testily. "Yes, Ser. Sandro, I remember you; and davvero, I could not be permitted to forget you if I wished. As to being out of my way, pray what brought *you* here?"

"Oh, I am going to visit my uncle," said the

sharp little Italian; "that is only a nephew's duty, I suppose."

"And I," said Gulio, quickly, "have just been to visit my aunt—that is only a nephew's duty, I suppose—and I shall be at the Villa Forano to-morrow, and deliver the slippers."

(The ubiquitous Gulio, who certainly had never been to Elba, since he ostensibly sailed for that island, did indeed deliver the slippers to the Marchesa, telling her he had received them from Sandro at a wayside inn.)

"Ha, Ser. Vetturino, you are already nodding," cried Gulio.

"Si, si, Signore, it is very troublesome work driving mules all day."

"But not such a troublesome thing as to have soldiers quartered at your casetta,"* said one of the villagers.

"I wonder what is the most troublesome thing in the world," said Sandro; and then the talk became general, some suggesting one thing and some another. Gulio, who had disposed of two bottles of wine almost in two draughts, authori-

* Cottage.

tatively remarked that to take an oath was the most troublesome thing.

"I have made two in my life," said Gulio: "one to a priest, one to a woman, and truly I have grown thin under the obligations imposed, for they were oaths exactly contrary to each other."

"Then you broke that one you made to the priest," said Sandro.

"No, no; the one made to the woman; that would be less a sin," said the now wakeful vetturino.

"A chi lo dice!* I kept them both," said Gulio. "It is the one thing which I dare not do, is to break an oath."

"To keep them must have been the most difficult thing in the world," said the innkeeper.

And then the irrepressible Sandro, anxious for information, asked what *was* the most difficult thing in the world. Gulio might have given as his experience, "To speak the truth," but he had never even made an effort in that line. He had early made up his mind that per-

* To whom do you speak? Used as an exclamation; as we say, "What do you mean?"

fect safety would best be secured by never telling the truth; but by telling lies in a perfectly truthful manner, keeping his own counsel, Gulio was accepted as a thoroughly reliable person by all who knew him. It never occurred to him to laugh at his dupes, nor to plume himself on his own sharpness. He merely considered that it was well for him to deceive, and for everybody to be deceived. Following these, his principles of action, Gulio appeared next day at the Villa Forano, stating that his aunt was dead, and that he had remained to bury her! Indeed, he had heard from one of the boatmen that the old woman was very ill, and a few weeks after, by some circuitous means, he heard of her death.

All these wanderings and falsehoods had been used for what? Merely to cover a hasty visit of Gulio to a chestnut-wooded, purple mountain north of Firenze, where he took the little Michael from a solitary deaf and dumb woman, who lived by gathering nuts and fagots and knitting hose. Gulio had given this woman some silver, descended to the sea by way of Pisa, where he procured the child's carnival cos-

tume and a boat, and thence he had departed in a fishing vessel. When he reached the Villa Forano, and laid aside his gala costume for the plain garb of a vine-dresser, he took from his purse half a franc. It was the very last money remaining of a sum which Judith Forano had given him five years before, when he was about to act as her courier in her journey to London. Gulio turned it over and over.

“It shall never be spent,” he said. “I will keep it to show that I have fulfilled the oaths I made to a priest and to a woman, and to warn me never to make another.”

He drilled a hole in the bit of silver, and hung it about his neck with a silken cord.

While Gulio was thus occupied, Sandro entered Firenze, and made his way to the shop on the Piazza San Marco, where his uncle worked. A slender, fair-complexioned young man, with a kindly honesty in his face and a grave sincerity in his air, that made him the very opposite of the acute Gulio, Nanni Conti was busily pegging a shoe when his little nephew looked in at the door of the bottega.

“Hey! Can that be Sandro!” cried Nanni,

as a shadow fell over his work. "Has any evil befallen mia sorella?"*

"We are all well, Uncle Nanni, but my father thought I had better visit you and get a look at the world," said the boy, casually regarding the workers in the shop. "Nevertheless, uncle, I have some news from home such as that we have yet another brother duly christened Paulo by Father Zucchi, in the Duomo, and perhaps, if you are not too busy, we might walk about the piazza while I answer all your questions."

Nanni laid aside the shoe, took off his leathern apron, and donned his cap. Sandro was looking very important, and leading the way from the shop the lad glanced quickly about and directed his steps to the open door of the little church of San Marco. The front of this church is only a hundred years old, but the remainder of the building dates from the thirteenth century, and is historic. Here Fra Savonarola preached, flashing upon the city a day-beam, which presently perished in a deepening night of persecution. Here Fra Angelico dreamed of angels, and painted them—creations of singular

* My sister.

beauty, but unfortunately with gold platters behind their heads. Here also Fra Bartolommeo had enrapturing visions, and contributed them to the world of art. To the right of the entrance door is one of Bartolommeo's pictures—a Virgin enthroned. A few people were scattered about the chapel praying, and Sandro, seeing no one near the Virgin, sat down beneath the picture, first making it a reverence, and motioned his uncle to a place beside him.

“The fact is, Uncle Nanni,” said the young ambassador, “my father has sent me on an errand which is not for strange ears. He has heard that you have fallen in with Vaudois (the boy crossed himself), and he says these are days when it is well to let heresy alone. He says no friends would stir for you as for the Madai, whoever they were, and it would go far to break my mother's heart if you were put in prison. Your old father at Barletta will not be the worse for seeing you, and you must not bring grief to his gray hairs. Moreover, our shop and home are yours, and my father wants you to return with me.”

“And what, Sandro, are Vaudois?” asked Nanni, quietly.

“Why, uncle,” said Sandro, puzzled now that he was beyond the limits of his instructions, “a Vaudois is—a—a something that destroys the souls of young infants like my new brother, and blasphemes most terribly.”

“And do you think, mio Sandro, that I would be with *such* a people as that?” asked Nanni, looking kindly at him.

“Why no, uncle; now that I think of it such evil seems quite impossible to you.”

“I hope so,” said Nanni. “Instead of growing worse I strive to grow better. But you do well to speak of my old father. I was just thinking of going to Barletta. You will like to stop here to-day and to-morrow, to rest and see the sights, and then I will go with you to your father. If we make good traveling comrades perhaps he will let you go with me to Barletta.”

Sandro was enraptured with this proposal and he and his uncle soon left the church. The boy did not fail to make a reverence toward the tabernacle, but he did not notice that his uncle neglected both this and the holy water.

In the afternoon Sandro was sent, with a boy of his own age, to see some of the piazzas and

bridges, and in the evening his uncle told him that he was going to meet some friends and would be glad of his company.

The night had fallen when Sandro and his uncle stumbled along the almost unlighted, narrow streets of Florence. Here and there a lamp or two burned dimly at some street-corner shrine (invariably a Virgin): the markets had closed, but the wine-shops were open and crowded, and in the restaurants many men could be seen playing at dice at little tables. Nanni finally rung a bell by a great archway, and was admitted to a narrow court. He crossed this and knocked at a door.

“Chi é?”* said a voice within.

“Amici,” responded Nanni.

Now any enemy might have answered *friends*, but the word seemed talismanic, for the door opened and admitted them to a dull, small, bare room, lighted by several dim oil-lamps. Half a dozen more “amici” swelled the numbers present to thirteen. All shook hands, and seemed *friends* indeed, and Sandro was kindly greeted by each one. An old man then opened

*“Who’s there?”

a little book and read for a long time, stopping to answer questions, to make remarks, or listen to the remarks of others. All seemed so easy and home-like, and the reading was so delightful that Sandro, never a timid youth, made bold at last to speak out.

“Will you tell me the name of that book which has such beautiful stories of Ser. Jesus? * I can read a bit, and would like to have one.”

There was a little stir through the room. The aged reader sighed deeply.

“My son, it is the Evangel.”

“My father shall get me one,” said Sandro, confidently.

“God grant it,” said the voice of Uncle Nanni in his ear.

There was a little girl present, also a young infant in arms; and after a time the old man read a very lovely story of the Lord blessing children, and a young man, kneeling down, prayed very fervently for the young children present, for the babe, for the girl, for the

* “Ser. Jesus” is the ordinary way of the Italian speaking of the Lord Jesus. The prefix “Ser.” strikes a reverent foreigner unpleasantly.

“strange bambino,” to be kept in life and received at last to heaven. Sandro’s eyes filled with tears, it was all so pathetic and so beautiful.

“Oh, Uncle Nanni!” cried Sandro when they were returning home, “what very nice friends you have! Who are those people?”

“Sandro,” said Nanni, “I see that you are a lad who can keep his own counsel. Say nothing to any one about these people, and I will tell you the whole secret in a month’s time.”

Sandro had spent a Sabbath in his coming to Firenze—your Catholic Italian is oblivious of the command which begins “Remember.”

On Wednesday Sandro and Nanni set out on their journey, and on Thursday evening their entrance, after a brisk trip, brought joy to the home of Ser. Jacopo.

The calzolajo regarded the prompt arrival of his brother-in-law under his Catholic roof as an evidence that he was amenable to instruction, and concluded that it might be best to ignore altogether his reported derelictions toward heresy, and simply keep him out of harm’s way for the future. Therefore while Mona Lisa, his wife, fried an omelette in honor of her brother and son, Jacopo said:

“I take it kind, Nanni, that you have come to help me; my man does not please me, and I have work for two. Besides, it is well for relatives to keep close together.”

“Thanks, brother Jacopo; that will be as time shows best. My father is aged, as you say. I was thinking of going to Barletta when Sandro came to Firenze. I will now visit the parents and afterwards return to you.”

“That may be well,” said Jacopo, “but it is time you settled in life, if you would lay up a few lire for old age.”

“I am intent on making a sure provision for my future,” said Nanni. “You will have a fine band of sons about your old age, Jacopo. Sandro is well grown, and he tells me he is now working with you in the shop.”

“Yes,” said Jacopo, vexedly; “I kept the boy in school at expense for seven years to have him learn to read and write.”

“He reads indifferently well, and can barely write his name, I find,” said Nanni. “He should be able to do better.”

“Ah, the rascal, there is nothing in him,” said Jacopo, angrily; “many a lire I paid out for

him, and he will never be the scholar you are; he needs thrashing."

Sandro, secure from the oft-threatened, never-visited infliction, began grinning behind his father's back, as he nursed the last baby but one, and Mona Lisa shook her head over the last baby and the omelette. Said Nanni:

"The boy seems bright; very likely the teachers were at fault."

"Si, si, si,"* cried Jacopo; "that is it. Twice I went to the school for my boy, and each time I found the *mastro* asleep in his chair, and the boys standing on their heads and firing paper balls at each other. Seven years Sandro stayed, and the *mestres* have only taught him to boggle over a bit of reading, and make a chicken-track he calls his name! Brother Nanni, I desired the boy to be *scrivano* enough to make out my bills properly. Now I, being no clerk, must make them out on this wise. Perhaps you cannot read this, Nanni?"

Jacopo handed the young man this hieroglyphic: ||  50   +

* "Yes, yes, yes."

“No,” said Nanni, after looking, “I cannot.”

“Let me read it to you as I do to my customers, and then they understand it,” said Jacopo. “These two strokes and the boots mean two pair of boots—that is surely plain, Nanni; the round things are lire—read, therefore, fifty lire, the price of two pair of boots, evidently; the open hand means that I want my money; when I get it I put the shut hand, to show that I have it—and I think it is a neat way of expressing it, Nanni; and I put my mark as the *Padre* had me do when I was married.”

“But there is no name of the debtor,” said Nanni.

“That is not needed, for I give it to the man myself.”

“Well, brother Jacopo, it is truly ingenious; but I think if Sandro could fairly write out a bill, and attend to taking receipts for you when you make payments, it would give your shop a business-like appearance. Then if he could read you the newspapers handsomely in the shop of an evening, it would be very agreeable, and you would like to know what Italy and the world are doing.”

“Very true, but after seven years’ schooling, ecco, I am disappointed!”

“Well, now, brother Jacopo, if you will let the boy go to Barletta with me, I will have him back in two months able to do all this. I will see to it that he can read, make out a bill, and sign his name properly.”

Ser. Jacopo thought of the Vaudois, but he thought of the advantages offered; besides, the boy would be going to his Catholic grandfather—to the truly Catholic town of Barletta, almost under *il Papa’s* nose. And then Nanni—why Nanni was evidently the most decent young man that could be found.

Mona Lisa put her bread, omelette and coffee on the table, and Ser. Jacopo said that Sandro should start on Monday with Nanni to visit his Grandfather Conti.

“And mind, my lad, if now you don’t learn to read, and to make me out a proper bill, then I *will* give you a thrashing!”

At this promise Sandro broke into a loud fit of laughter.

“What are you laughing at?” demanded his father.

“Oh, to think it possible I should *not* learn of Uncle Nanni.”

After tea Nanni read several newspapers—not over a month old—to his brother-in-law. Gradually Mona Lisa and her eight sons gathered about him. The three smaller sons fell asleep, one on his father’s knee, one in Sandro’s arms, one on Mona Lisa’s lap; the rest sat with wide-open black eyes, listening while Nanni passed from reading the papers to reading a little book which he carried in his pocket—a book beginning, “Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us.” The words came very appropriately among a people who had had the Gospel of the grace of God garbled by many generations of ignorant and vicious priests. Very sweetly flowed the Scripture story, read by the gentle voice of Nanni, in the melodious, many-voweled Italian tongue. He read three chapters very slowly. “Ah,” said Mona Lisa, hugging her baby, “how very beautiful that is! and how one feels as if the good Elizabeth and the Blessed Virgin were real people, not just pictures; and

that the Ser. Jesus was truly a babe like little Paulo."

"Dear me," said Jacopo, "would you read those words about 'low degree' again. This is truly a book for the poor, Nanni."

None of them thought to question if it were a good book; the words had been their own vindication; it did not occur to them to ask if the priests permitted this reading. God for the first time had spoken to them in his own word, and they received it as good, as they received sunshine, fresh air, cold water. There was but one interruption—Assunta looked in with a pair of slippers for mending; it was while Nanni was yet reading the newspapers. "The maiden has a most comely face," said Nanni.

Early next morning Nanni and Sandro entered Jacopo's little shop, and proceeded to set it in order; they then put on their leather aprons and sat down to work; Nanni, an expert workman, taking the slippers which Assunta had brought, and proceeding to mend them. Some little time after, Jacopo came in rubbing his eyes. "Hey," he said, "this is like work; and so, Nanni, you got that sleepy boy of mine up?"

“Aye, he must rise and labor while he is with me; I have a motto which he also must practice, ‘Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord.’”

“Davvero,* I like the first part: that is good for a calzajo or any other man earning a living; but I don’t understand the second bit about ‘fervent,’ and as to the last, why, don’t that smack of heresy, Nanni?”

“‘Fervent in spirit,’ that means earnest, honest, single-minded, whole-hearted,” said Nanni. “And I take it that whatever a man does, whether he cobbles shoes, makes love, builds a house, or teaches school, he will not do it truly *well* unless he is fervent in spirit; eh, brother Jacopo?”

“That is so,” said Jacopo; “and if you’ll make my Sandro like *that*, why, thank you heartily.”

“And as for the last bit of the motto, brother Jacopo, it would be sad indeed if to serve the Lord should be heresy; to serve the Lord is surely the part of a good christian.”

“That *sounds* reasonable, sure enough,” said

*Truly.

Jacopo; “but, Nanni, as good Catholics, we are all supposed to serve the Lord, just by *being* good Catholics, do you see? and I never heard that any but heretics made trouble about anything further than that. So to be strenuous about serving the Lord seems flavored with heresy;—but I hope you are all right, Nanni.”

“Now, brother Jacopo, suppose Sandro sat all day tapping at a shoe, and by night you found that he had not driven a peg, would you be satisfied with his seeming to work when he did not really do it?” asked Nanni.

“Not I. He had better not try that trick on me.”

“Then do you think the Lord will be satisfied with any of us if we *seem* to be serving him merely by being good Catholics, and yet, in point of doing, we have really not served him at all?”

Ser. Jacopo pondered a long time, and slowly shook his head.

“Do you ever feel, brother Jacopo, that just as you are here—a master in your shop—so the Lord is a present Master among us?—that just as your eye is on your workmen, his eye is on

us?—that just as you inspect the men's work, he inspects our work? that just as you pay for what is done, so he pays us according to our service, for by our works we shall be justified, or by our works we shall be condemned?"

"Such a feeling of God's eye and presence would make me very uncomfortable," said Ser. Jacopo, uneasily.

"So your presence might make an unfaithful workman uncomfortable, but it is none the less a fact. And who has a better right to be watching and present than God, whose workshop the universe is? Believe me, the only way is *willingly* to serve him."

"Truly I am glad for one thing to hear you speak so, Nanni, for I have heard that Vau—heretics eschew good works, and I see that you do not, so of course you must be a good Catholic; and indeed our priests often talk to us of the seven good works, but to practice them, Nanni: here is where you are getting ahead of the priests—to practice them."

"I am not getting ahead of common sense," persisted Nanni.

"Ah, common sense! My Marchesa was

particularly strong on common sense. And what you say does look reasonable!"

The reasonableness of Nanni's speech seemed to impress Jacopo, for about the middle of the morning he flung by a boot-leg which he was stitching, exclaiming:

"Nanni, I cannot get out of my head what you said: that, in effect, I might go tap, tap, tapping, in mass, and vespers, and confession, and all that, and never drive a peg of real serving of God in all my life. Hard lines that, Nanni."

"But if it is *true*," said Nanni, doggedly.

"Altro! Do you tell me, Nanni, that God is in this shop?"

"Your existence is the proof. Could you exist where God was not, to keep you in being? do you make your own heart beat?"

"And does he know that this is second-quality leather which I am putting in this boot-leg?"

"Surely, Jacopo, having made *your* mind he knows as much as you do!"

"And you think he heard me promise first-quality?"

“Having made *your* ears he is not likely to be deaf,” said Nanni.

“Well,” said Jacopo, picking up his work, “I’m very sorry, but if I don’t use this leather I lose two *lire* and my time. Your doctrines are too hard for *me*, Nanni. I’ve heard Father Zucchi preach on the seven goodly works, and seven times seven, for all I know, and *he* never disturbed me about my leather.”

Nanni worked on placidly. Jacopo retained an injured air for some time, indeed until that sharp Sandro demanded:

“Father, shall *I* practice what Uncle Nanni teaches, by putting in my best work for you?”

“Oh, certainly. If you make the shoes well I can charge full ten *centesimi* more a pair; so you see Uncle Nanni’s rule proves good there, and ought to be followed; but it proves bad for me, and ought not, in my case, to be followed. If I lose two *lire* so easily, how will I provide for a wife and eight sons? You should think of that, Nanni.”

Nanni remained until Monday with Jacopo. Every day but Sabbath he worked diligently in the shop. Meanwhile Monna Lisa was busy

making Sandro a new shirt, and completing a handkerchief and a pair of socks, which he was to take as gifts for her old parents. Jacopo, greatly pleased with his brother-in-law's work, his attention to the shop, and the interest he showed in all the business, strongly urged him to return and live with him. "I will pay you more than another would," he said. Nanni would make no promises until he had been to Barletta.

Sabbath morning found Ser. Jacopo a little later in rising than usual. His shop was not opened when he came down, and Nanni had left the house.

"He has gone to mass," said Ser. Jacopo. "I would go, too, if I had time; but here are these shoes to heel, and the rip to sew in Ser. Francini's boot, which I vowed to send home last night; and I must go with these gaiters and get my money."

An Italian artisan makes a point of never getting through his work on Saturday night, but leaves odds and ends of business enough to occupy all Sabbath morning. However, if his wife and children get occasionally to mass, if he

himself pays his dues, and confesses before Easter, his priest is quite satisfied.

As Nanni was not working for pay, Jacopo could not complain of his taking a holiday, although the young man did not return until night.

If we had followed Nanni on this Sabbath we should have found him climbing to the "piano quarto" (or fourth story above the ground) of a house in a poor street; thence he issued, some two hours after, with a young man, and being joined in the street by two others, they walked up the great Strada Mare, or seaside road, and at a little distance from the town turned aside to the rocky coast, and finally established themselves in a snug nook under an overhanging cliff. People seeing them from a distance might have supposed them playing cards or dice, or idly basking in the sun. They had their bread and cheese with them, and remained here all day. All this Sabbath Nanni Conti was learning the way of God more perfectly from his Vaudois brethren.

CHAPTER IV.

ALONG THE ROAD.

“Instead of funeral torches
The sun above our tomb
Keeps watch in changeless radiance;
Here rose and violet bloom,
With vine and olive mingled
Shall twine a mourning wreath:
O, lovely graveyard that might make
The living covet death!”

—*Tuscan poem, “The Land of the Dead.”*

NOTHING could be more delightful than the season in which Nanni and Sandro made their journey to Barletta. It was for the most part a pedestrian tour—not that public conveyances both of railway and diligence were lacking, nor were the travelers quite unable to pay for them: but both were strong, and expected to enjoy the trip made in their own fashion. Sandro secretly anticipated adventures, and Nanni had a reason of his own for

preferring to walk southward over hill and valley, stopping to converse with wayfarers such as himself, and at night entering the country inn or the lonely cabin. The spring comes in Italy with face more beautiful than beauty, and prodigal with flowers; the grass, which has been fresh all winter, takes a richer tint; the olive assumes a brighter green under its silver gray; the well-trimmed vines swell with purple buds; white and purple anemones, golden crocus, gay cinquefoil, blue violets and celandine, and rosy cranesbill weave a rich embroidery over every sod; each distance melts into amethyst, while nearer space lies flooded with molten gold.

One while our travelers walked by the shore of that great sea around which history has repeated itself, until the very refrain of its waters seems to come to us ("The thing that hath been is the thing that shall be") as they lap in low music at the feet; again they clambered the hills where figs and vines and olives yielded to chestnut, and these to pine. They passed through the doleful, blasted Maremma, whose fatal malaria now slept, to rise in mists of death under a summer's sun. Nanni and Sandro, looking

at the Mediterranean, had no memories of ancient fables, no dreams of Trojan fleets, no thought of the ships of Carthage, nor of the Roman galleys; so when they passed through the Maremma they had no musings of days when this unhappy spot bloomed like God's own garden; of mysterious races who here reared mighty cities, which have left but crumbling walls to mock research, or low foundations of palaces which, like their masters, have died out of the memory of a world. Sandro's heart, boy-like, was filled with vague dreams of the future; Nanni pondered that sleep like death into which his countrymen had been paralyzed by the poison of the giant Superstition; he looked up to the cloudless skies and longed to behold, as the seer, that mighty angel flying between earth and heaven, bearing the everlasting Gospel—an open Bible. He thought of the dead indifference of most of his nation, inaccessible to any consideration but of *live*, or the struggling visions of a half-understood *freedom*. The voice came to him, "Can these bones live?" His soul replied, "O Lord, thou knowest!"

Thus pondered Nanni, traveling through the Maremma in 1860. The world hastens its work in these days; Nanni was to live to see the dry bones come together, and flesh and sinews laid upon them, and a divine breath blowing from the four quarters of heaven, and the long prostrate, scattered and destroyed sons of Italy standing up, an exceeding great army. If Nanni could have foreseen this when he trod, staff in hand and wallet on back, through the damp Maremma, his step would have grown lighter than Sandro's; had he seen what was to befall himself before that day his heart would have died.

It is thus God leads his people, by a way which they know not, to fulfill his will. Nanni, and many another humble pupil of the Vaudois, had, half unconsciously, a mission to Italy— forerunners of the evangel of liberty—not less busy and sincere than Gavazzi, and Garibaldi, and Cavour in their loftier sphere.

Nanni and Sandro sat often by the wayside to rest, and had, also, each day an hour for their noontide meal. These intervals Nanni devoted to fulfilling his promise to Jacopo about improving the education of his son. The Gospel

of Luke, a newspaper, and a small slate were Nanni's instruments. He tutored his nephew carefully in reading, drilling him well even on the advertisement columns. On the slate he speedily reduced that "chicken track" whereof Ser. Jacopo complained, to a legible signature, wherein Sandro greatly gloried. Then did Nanni also exercise his pupil on making out a bill. What innumerable pairs of slippers at five *lire* a pair, shoes at twelve *lire*, boots at twenty-five *lire*, tapping, footing, heeling, and soleing, at various prices, did Nanni dictate, making goodly bills, which Sandro must set down, compute the total, and write "Received payment," etc.; and then were the changes rung on boots and shoes, *lire*, *centesimi*, slippers, and cobbling, in a manner to make glad the heart of Ser. Jacopo. But Nanni had deeper lessons than these. He poured into his young comrade's ear Bible history like a pleasant tale. The apostles, and prophets, and holy families, which Sandro had known as pictures in church, became to him elder brethren, ensamples to the flock, sons of God without rebuke, followers of that Christ of whom Nanni had learned as a present Saviour.

The name *Vaudois* had been prudently avoided, like a contagion, by Ser. Jacopo; but Sandro was less cautious; when it occurred to his mind he spoke freely:

“I am glad, uncle, that you are not a Vaudois. Vaudois, the maestro told me, deny the Virgin and the Apostles, and reject the Lord Jesus, and devour young children.”

“It is quite idle for a boy of your age to believe that any Italians devour young children,” said Nanni. “Did your maestro never tell you of the cardinal virtue of charity?”

“Charity! Well, perhaps he did; but he did not know one-half so nice things as you do about the Holy Family and Ser. Jesus.”

[Here Sandro discerns between the Jesus of the Gospel and the *Bambino* of the Holy Family as presented by his church.]

“If the maestro taught you, as he should, of charity, he would have told you that we should not condemn unheard, that we should know of a man’s faith from his own mouth before we call him either a cannibal or an infidel. Delay your judgment on the Vaudois until you know about them.”

The Gospel of Luke was not opened for Sandro's benefit only. Often did the boy, as he was prancing along the road, now scaling a wall, now climbing a tree, now delaying to lie on a green bank, see his uncle in deep converse with some wayfarer, and mark how he frequently referred to his little book, or stood on the road reading whole chapters.

Frequently at those wayside shrines—ever erected to the *Virgin* in Italy—did Nanni pause when he saw some devotee at prayers, and when the form was concluded a few kindly words would draw from the talkative Italians the thought of the heart, and Nanni would bring some balm for their griefs, some encouragement for their distress, they knew not how.

In the evenings at their lodging places Nanni was soon the centre of the group of travelers or villagers gathered about the fire. He did not seem to put himself forward, but somehow questions were addressed to him, and his answers enlisted attention. Besides, Nanni had been in scenes of interest. "You saw our volunteers march out to help the Piedmontese?" "You were in the Piazza Sta. Croce when the Duke's

troops fired on unarmed citizens?" "Cospetto! you were in Firenze when the Grand Duke found, last twenty-seventh of April, that he was no longer wanted in Tuscany. Hah! did not the flower of cities bloom like her own roses when she had cast out the destroyer from her heart?" "Ecco! the Austrians in the garden of Italy were as Il Diavolo in the Garden of Eden." "And how fares it in Firenze now? We shall all talk *liberta* under Vittorio Emmanuele, I hope. Are the Italians not men, that they must be gagged when their opinion is yet in their throat—and yet Englishmen can bawl out what they please, and the Americans are forever boasting of liberty? But they say all is to be free, even religion! Trust me. I don't believe that; the padres and frates will look to that! Not to have religion free is their living. If religion were free we should all fly away from them fast enough!" "Che, che," said another, "we were well enough off under the Grand Duke. And now under the king, trust me, we shall have greater taxes, and not half the chance for smuggling!"

So the peasants talked among the hills when

first fair Tuscany had taken her place under the Italian monarchy. The few months since this change of government had not sufficed to enfranchise opinion; the priests held their terrors over the people; the Tuscans, for the most part, were cautious of committing themselves, lest the fair promise of freedom should melt like the airy fabric of some morning vision, and leave them once more in the power of their tyrants.

As the travelers approached the Estates of the Church, the influence of the clergy—the doubts they engendered about the liberal Government, and the hostility to the idea of religious toleration—became more marked. Near Orbetello, Nanni turned into the hills, and ascending by an unfrequented road gained a little casetta, where, after a private conference with the owner, who was cutting firewood, they were very cordially received and given the best place by the hearth. The only inhabitants of this house were an aged man and his wife; people of larger frame and greater physical vigor than is common to the dwellers of Italian cities; they possessed also an unusual intelligence. Their hut, for it was little more, was beautifully

clean; the evening meal was well prepared; their speech was the pure Tuscan of Firenze. Sandro, being very weary, fell asleep, after a hearty supper, on a mat by the fire; the old man and woman drew their chairs on either side of Nanni, and bent forward in eager converse. Said the old man:

“Then you really think that the days of our people’s mourning are ended? that the sea of blood has ebbed out of the Piedmontese valleys forever? that the last persecution has spent its force? I was, as you know, a servant of the good Count Guicciardini. On the 7th of May, 1851, my dear master was preparing for departure to England. He was reading the 15th of St. John, with seven friends, when suddenly the gendarmes rushed upon them. I was listening to the reading, standing in the doorway, and dashing past *la polizia* I hid in a closet under the stairs, while my dear master and his friends were carried off to the filthy Bargello. The Count had for two years been holding religious meetings, and my wife and I were by him brought to know Christ. It was but a small thing, to show my gratitude, that I did when I

aided in scattering his *Confession* through Italy while he was in exile. You cannot remember how the Papal party raged at that. I was suspected—alas! through my sister, who was questioned in *the confessional*—and being in danger of the galleys I fled to the Maremma. My wife lay six weeks in the Bargello, but being dismissed she joined me here. What has been the dismal history of persecution since then? The Madai were seized in 1852; dear Cechetti was imprisoned in 1855. And now, after all this, can Bibles be read, and bought and sold, in Tuscany? can evangelical schools be opened? can people gather to hear the truth without being fallen on by gensdarmes? Ah, if that hour comes, my wife and I will return to Firenze, to see the salvation of God in the city where to be an Evangelical was worse than to be a thief!”

“And from a place where you may hope to labor in peace, my son, you go to Barletta, where, if you speak the truth, the enemies of the Gospel will oppose you?” said the old woman.

“Remember,” said Nanni, “that my own aged parents are yet in darkness. I go to bring glad

tidings to their last days. And, good Monna, I am sure that hereafter we have in Italy no persecution to fear beyond the hard word, the bitter slander, the aversion, the petty spite and private malice, which will melt away as our lives prove our good intentions."

Monna Marie shook her head.

"Be not too sanguine, my son. We had once a liberal Pope, liberal until—he was Pope; no longer. Intolerance will not die easily here in Italy."

"I have had visions of him—that smiling man of sin," said the aged cottager. "I live alone here in the forest and ponder until strange visions come to me; and I see him filling full the measure of the evil of the line of pontiffs. How I cannot see; perhaps by some deluge of blood over the Italian fields; perhaps by some new pretense which shall, by its arrogance, draw down the long slumbering wrath of God!"

The old man shook his head and fixed his eyes on space. His wife touched Nanni's elbow:

"He sees visions!"

The patriarch turned suddenly toward Nanni.

"There is a Capuchin friar in Barletta; I

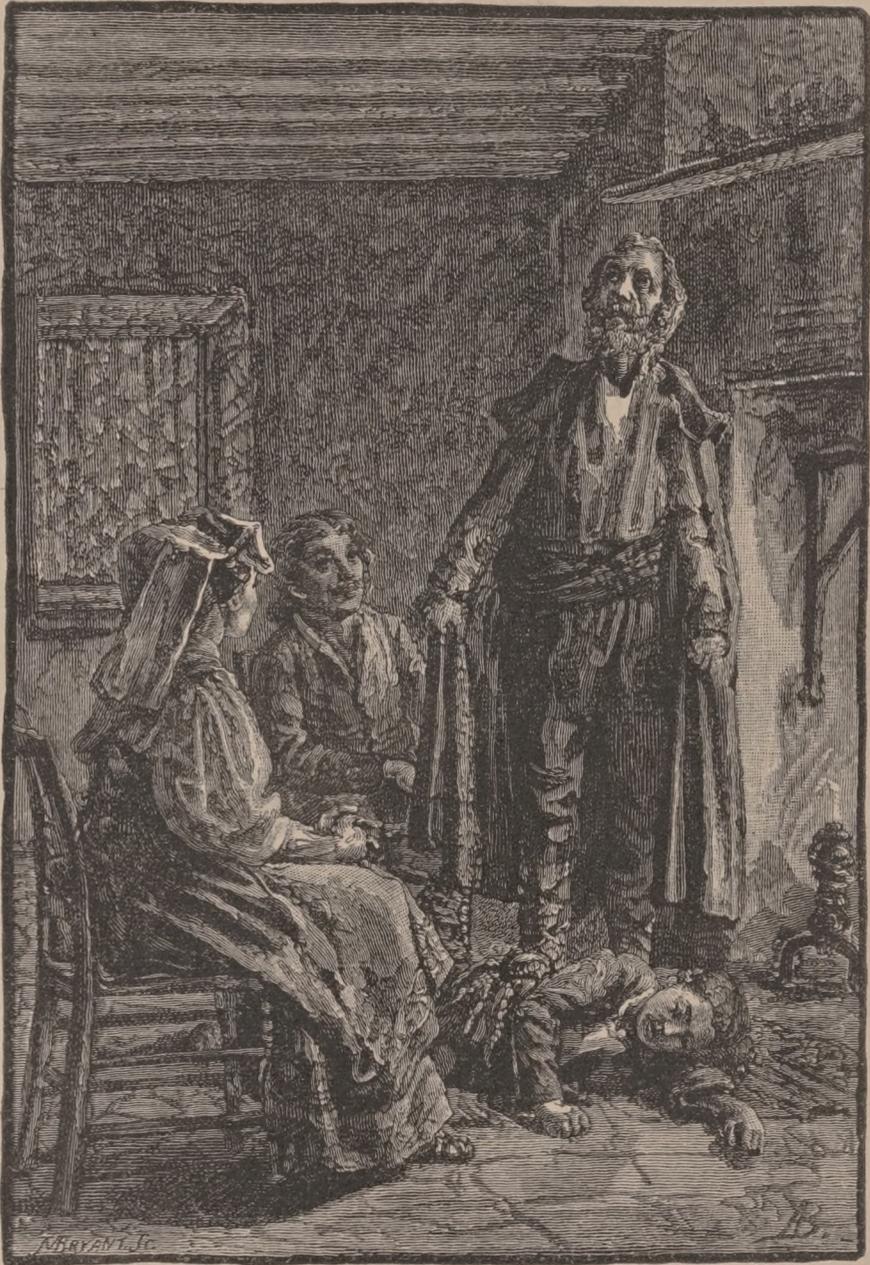
know him; he has eaten of my bread. I see him pursuing you, my son: I know not why. Alas! so ever have the friars been on the track of God's sons."

Monna Marie looked awed; the old man still meditated; ten years in those lonely wooded hills had set a mysterious mark on the pair. Presently the patriarch arose slowly, and just as slowly lifted his arms above his head; his white hair and beard met as masses of snow, his eyes burned as he stretched himself upward, and the green baize cloak in which he was habitually wrapped fell from his gaunt shoulders, his stature seemed something gigantic.

"The day comes!" he cried, "the day comes when I shall stand and proclaim the free Gospel of my Lord under the gates of the Vatican! The day comes when I shall give Bibles to the guards at St. Angelo! The day comes when I shall distribute tracts on the steps of the Lateran! These things I have asked of God, and he will answer me."

"Woe is me, then," said Monna Marie, tears stealing over her wrinkled cheeks, "for if you do these things, mio amico, you will burn like Fra Savonarola!"

The Oath-Keeper of Forano.



“The day comes!” he cried, “the day comes when I shall stand and proclaim the free gospel of my Lord under the gates of the Vatican!”

The next morning Monna Marie was early astir, preparing of her best to set before her guests. After the breakfast and worship the good woman filled the travelers' wallet with food, and the old man, folding his green cloak closer about him and putting on a high, bell-crowned hat, accompanied them for two miles on their way. At the heels of the patriarch ran a gaunt, shaggy dog and two goats, the three in entire amity following their master through all his walk.

Arriving where the roads divided, before a shrine, the patriarch bade his friends farewell. To Nanni he said: "God make you his messenger in Italy;" to Sandro, with a troubled face: "God give you grace to witness a good confession;" and then he turned, striding up the hills homeward, with his three dumb companions gamboling behind him.

"Well, Sandro," said Nanni, after they had journeyed on in silence for some time, "how did you like those people?"

"Most splendid!" replied Sandro. "How clean they were, and how kind, and what nice little cheeses the Monna gave us for our lunch; and then, we had new-laid eggs for supper!"

“Ah, I did not know but you would think them very evil-minded people,” said Nanni.

“Evil-minded! How can they be evil-minded—they gave us fried chickens for breakfast?”

“That *is* to the purpose, certainly. But, Sandro, they were—Vaudois.”

“Eh, what, uncle? Cospetto! they looked just like other people!”

“Yes; but they were Vaudois—Evangelicals. They have been converted by the Vaudois, and joined them ten years ago.”

The Padre’s teachings were a half-forgotten medley in Sandro’s mind; the chickens were a present fact; he was walking in the strength of fried chickens; a cold chicken was in the wallet. Replied Sandro, manfully:

“Vaudois or not, I like ’em all the same.”

“It is a wise lad who can keep his own counsel,” said Nanni.

Having kept to the shore as far as Civita Vecchia, our travelers turned due east, keeping prudently to the north of Rome. Once out of Tuscany Nanni’s quiet evangelistic labors had to be carried on with exceeding circumspection.

Rounding the southern base of Mount Ave-

line, and winding through the romantic passes of the Neapolitan Apennines, sleeping one night in a mountain monastery and two nights out of doors, riding sometimes in carriers' carts, taking the railroad once for a few hours, and once the diligence, our travelers passed Loggia and struck out for the Adriatic coast. The two sabbaths of the journey they had spent resting, one with some hidden Evangelicals of whom Nanni had once heard in Florence, in a little inn. On the Saturday evening, the twentieth day after they had set out, the pleasant but long journey ended at Barletta, and Nanni Conti, the only and long-absent son, was joyfully received by Ser. Conti, the calzolajo. Sandro also, the eldest son of the daughter whom they had not seen since her marriage, was made much of by his grandparents. Sandro found the old people rather feeble in health and lonely, living in a house by themselves. Next door lived his mother's only sister, Mariana, a widow, with three little children.

An Italian home of the humbler sort is not to be judged by one of the same sort in England, or especially in America; for instance: in

Ser. Conti's house the front of the *terremo* was a little shop, where he worked ; it had no fireplace, but Ser. Conti sat in cold weather with an earthen pot of *brace* (a sort of charcoal) between his knees.

When, in the morning, this basket is taken to the *carboniere*, or fuel merchant, for filling, he lays with the *brace* a few burning coals ; the whole slowly ignites, and being stirred now and then with a chip, or, by women, with a hair-pin, it serves to keep warm the hands and feet—now being held in the lap, or again put under the knees.

Behind the fireless and low-ceiled shop was another room, devoted to some chickens and two goats ; beyond this opened a court, common to the inhabitants of several houses, where a cow, a donkey, a number of children, and some fowls ran freely. This court was undrained, unevenly paved, shadowed by the houses gathered about it, and had a well in the centre where all water for washing or drinking was obtained for the adjacent houses. When any washing was done the suds were dashed into the court or into the street, and as drains were unknown, the

dirty water probably filtered through the pavement and underlying soil, and so returned to the well.

Ser. Conti's house had—which is unusual—a dark dungeon of a cellar, the abode of worms, rats, spiders, broken bottles, and irretrievably bad shoes, which were flung down the staircase to fall where they would. The cellar had an arch-like great oven, and a dark nook behind it, known but never visited.

The *piano primo* contained two bed-rooms and a smaller room; the *secundo* ignobly ended the house in an unceiled garret. Monna Conti kept the place as neat as she could, but she was old, the brick floors and bare ceilings gave more than fair play to dust and cobweb festoons; and the picture of the Virgin, with its ever burning lamp in front, was the only thing in the place which shone.

The aged calzolajo and his wife, in their ceaseless round of housework, cobbling, narrow means, winter chill and loneliness may have been less pleasantly situated than is well for old people, but the true gloom of their lot was interior—a heart gloom; their souls were dark as

pagans'. Old age had come, death was drawing near; but age was uncheered, death unlighted by religious consolation. The old pair mumbled their confessions, knelt at mass, paid their dues, and yet had no knowledge of the love of Jesus, no consciousness of a sustaining, present Saviour, no hope of a blissful home beyond death, no sense of God's fatherhood. No, to them God was a being of tremendous terrors for those who did not obey holy church; heaven was a frowning citadel, whereof Peter held huge iron keys; multitudes of saints, all to be placated, stood between them and far-off Ser. Jesus. To die was to be flung by strangers into some foul pit, reeking with several score of their dead townspeople,* and after that—purgatory. No wonder that a pathetic shadow rested on the faces of Conti and his wife, and Mariana the widow.

To this dull home came Nanni with the happy heart, and Sandro the merry lad.

The work that had been done in Nanni's soul

* Death has no sanctity among the Italian Catholic poor. This, in the towns, is the horrible way of interment, and frequently the priest strips off the shroud.

pervaded all his life. He followed the motto he had explained to Jacopo: he was as tidy as industrious, and as kindly as tidy. The very day after Nanni reached home he rose betimes and swept the shop, washed the windows, scrubbed the brick floor, sorted the debris lying about, and set in order the day's work. In all this he was helped by Sandro. When the old father appeared he was affectionately brushed and dusted and given the best seat. Old Conti had become melancholy and careless from working alone; now three were busy in his shop, and one of them a superior workman.

"This looks like old times," said Conti, and his wrinkled hands moved briskly. The work long promised and often neglected began to be finished satisfactorily.

"I shall cut out a pair of shoes, a pair of slippers and a pair of boots," said Nanni, "and make them, as I have time, for sale. We will keep a bit of work in the window, just to show the people what we can do for them."

But as days went by it was not merely companionship, increasing work, the sale of Nanni's boots, the neatness of the shop, which brought

the peace to the old man's face, the light to his eye, the hopeful ring to his voice. His wife and Mariana shared these marks of changed feelings; a new life had come to them; their hearts God had touched; they heard and they believed. When Nanni Conti left his father's roof there were three members of an evangelical church in Barletta—the calzolaio, his wife and daughter. Not that there was any foundation of a church, or any formal profession of faith—the Evangel had only entered their souls, and they were living it.

Nanni Conti, feeling for his father's loneliness and weakness, was ready to remain with him; but to this the old man would not consent. Nanni's desire—in which his father united—was that he should spend his time traveling up and down the country, acting the part of a peddler, but making trade subservient to teaching the Gospel.

The old man, however, much desired that Sandro should remain with him. The boy had greatly improved, not only in reading and writing and accounts, but in shoemaking, under his uncle's instructions, and could be very useful to his grandfather.

Ser. Jacopo had told Nanni to write him, if there was occasion, and that he would get the public scribe, or letter-writer, to read the letter for him. This functionary still sits near the post-office of Italian towns, to read and write for the pupils of priests.

Nanni therefore wrote to Ser. Jacopo, and the calzolajo agreed to resign his son for the time being to the grandfather.

Nanni therefore left Sandro in Barletta when he himself set out for Florence to lay in his stock in trade, and especially some Gospels, tracts and hymns, which he should distribute as he had opportunity.

Sandro received from his uncle a New Testament, which he was to keep with care and read as his grandfather desired. Thus to the boy was committed the sole distribution of the Gospel in the whole town of Barletta. Sandro could read intelligibly the letter of the Evangel; but his grandparents and aunt could understand its spirit, and, taught of God, could teach the friends who, one by one, began to drop in of evenings to hear the wonderful good news.

Among these were a family named Fari—a

man, his wife, a girl of sixteen, and a lad of Sandro's age. When old Conti talked to this man of his new light, he always received the same reply :

“It is good doctrine, but dangerous for us. Our priests will never let us hold it in peace, and we will come out losers if we oppose them.”

Still the Fari family often came to hear Sandro's reading, and seemed to be especially friendly to all the Conti family.

On his way to Firenze Nanni stopped to see Ser. Jacopo and give him news of his son and parents. Ser. Jacopo and Lisa were very eager to hear more of the “little book” which Nanni carried, and the shoemaker questioned the young man very closely about the presence of God, the manner of serving him, and the promises to the obedient. Nanni saw that his soul was troubled, and, explaining to him the Gospel more fully than he had before ventured to do, left him, with a prayer in his heart, and a hint to some of his evangelical friends to stop sometimes at the shop and teach as they had opportunity.

It was to Honor Maxwell, however, that Jacopo turned as to a safer counsellor. Italians have learned to be suspicious of each other; but Jacopo could trust both the wisdom and discretion of the young lady, and many were the errands he found for himself at the Palazzo Borgosoia, and numerous were the fittings needful to the Signorina's new boots, while Jacopo spoke more of the Gospel than of his trade.

Meanwhile in the Palazzo Borgosoia, Uncle Francini had painted Michael in various attitudes, and had lent him to his friend the sculptor as a model for an infant Jove, and for the juvenescence of the Archangel Michael (in which it would be very hard for most people to believe). Michael was learning rapidly to speak; his manners, now that training was added to their natural grace, so pleased Uncle Francini that he often proved "good family" from the manners, and the manners from "good family," in a manner very satisfactory—to himself.

Easter had passed when Nanni returned from Barletta, and angered Ser. Jacopo by announcing that he was to travel up and down the country as a vender of small wares, and then

mollified him by offering to sell for Jacopo many pairs of slippers and infants' shoes.

The spring grew into summer, and summer throve apace; and the Consul meanwhile had heard from Judith Lyons. David Lyons wrote, as well as his daughter, and while warmly thanking the Consul for his kindness to his child, he proceeded to press upon him the need of making inquiry for her son, whom she firmly believed to be living. True, the priests said the boy was dead, but so they had said that the mother was dead.

A controversy with priests is weary work; to get the truth from them is impossible. The Consul desired to avoid the inquiry; he tried in several letters to persuade the Lyons family that the child was dead: but they would not be persuaded. No; his mother's marriage had been ignored; his father's family rejected him; the Hebrew blood was up; a scion of the house of Israel was branded as illegitimate; his relatives must find him and repair the errors of unjust fortune to him. And this they were prepared to urge upon, not only the Consul, but the whole British Legation. They had money and

to spare, and they would pour it out liberally for the attaining of their end. The Consul yielded to his fate. He tried to joke, and even told his senior clerk that "a man who falls among *lions* must needs be overpowered."

"Not if he is a Daniel," said the clerk.

The Consul was not a Daniel. He invited Father Zucchi to a supper, and made Mayonaise and Chianti his strong points.

When the Consul informed the priest that the Lyons family were disposed to press the question concerning the child, Father Zucchi did not know whether to be enraged at the ex-nun's presumption, or triumphant at the fulfillment of his own prophecy.

"I told you so," said Father Zucchi.

"I know you did," replied the Consul, mildly; "and you will consider that the fact that her own death was carefully certified to her parents has gone far to cause the mother to doubt the statement of the decease of her child."

"That little mistake about her death can be easily explained," said the priest; "and the death of the child can be incontrovertibly established."

“Then if your courtesy will grant me the proper references, we can doubtless finally conclude this business.”

“Davvero!” cried the priest, “if women were allowed so many liberties here as in England we would be worse off than we are! What business has this woman with the child? I fancy children belong to their fathers; and if any one is to inquire about this *bambino** it should be the Foranos.”

“Oh, you admit the marriage?” said the Consul, briskly.

“By your pardon, *excellenza*: a civil marriage may do in your country, but my church never admits it.”

“Then you are shut up to assigning the mother the sole right to the child if he is not legitimate?”

“Pur troppo!† but a dead child is of little use. Come, *excellenza*, your courtesy, your Chianti, our cordiality must not be disturbed. The priest near whose church Nicole Forano lived during the last year of his life, who certified this woman’s death—which, unfortunately, did not

* Small boy.

† “Only too clear!”

occur—and who can testify to the decease of the child, is the Father Innocenza, a most learned and agreeable young man, whom you will find at the chapel of the Sta. Maria Maggiore, about fifteen miles back among the hills. Let me give you a note to him, and you will understand all.”

The Consul designed sending his senior clerk to Padre Innocenza; however, the weather was delightful, and cool for the season; the hill country was beautiful; the Consul had of late been busy—for a Consul; he loved horseback exercise; he determined to be his own messenger; therefore, one golden, fragrant morning he might have been seen pacing easily between vineyards and olive orchards, climbing gently by degrees far above the level of the shining sea, and reaching, before mid-day, the chapel of Santa Maria Maggiore, a namesake of the oldest church in Florence. Man had done little for the chapel and its surrounding village; nature had done everything. The chapel, a low, gray, blank-walled building, with an arched doorway and a small, square tower, stood on a bold hill, almost hidden in foliage, the road winding

steeply down in front, and a yet sharper hill, chestnut-clothed, rising behind. The modest casette of the contadini * clustered about. Lying in a wilderness of roses was the tiny villa where Judith and Nicole had spent one brief year of happiness. Higher up the slope, in a magnificent vineyard, stood a farm-house, inhabited by a *fattore* who farmed this estate. From the chapel porch one had an unbroken view for miles and miles: the Arno; the distant towers of Pisa, beauty's sanctuary; the blue line of the Carrara, the wide, unruffled expanse of the Mediterranean. The Consul had looked on many a lovely scene, but he drew his rein, forgot his errand, and believed that he had wandered within the borders of a Paradise.

The opening of a gate recalled him; a half-naked, brown urchin was offering him access to the Padre's garden; and Father Innocenza, amazed at the appearance of a visitor, stood in his doorway.

Having read Father Zucchi's letter, Padre Innocenza seated his guest under a tree, and presently had placed before him a little table

* Country people.

containing figs, the common wine of the country, and the dark, tough Italian bread. The wine, like bitter vinegar, and the black bread are not disagreeable, however, to those who are accustomed to them, and when Innocenza, waving his hand with grace, said, "Accept my humble refreshment; the contadini and their padre are poor; only the English are rich," the Consul was prepared to make a hearty refection. The Padre, with Father Zucchi's note in one hand, and a crust, which he dipped in wine, in the other, sat deeply musing: his square-set chin and firm mouth indicated a great strength of resolution; his keen eyes showed rare quickness of apprehension; the noble development of the head gave promise of fine intellectual powers. Father Innocenza was thirty years old, and for twenty-five years he had been a pupil of the priests, who had kept his mind in swaddling-bands until he was fit to become one of themselves. And yet in spite of this dwarfing and repressing process, the young Padre was remarkably free from that, not merely animal, but markedly *swinish* appearance, whereof Mrs. Browning took special notice in Italian priests.

On our own part, we have often seen in the baptistry of Florence a young assistant, who not alone in form and countenance, but in the very tones of his voice, was more like a young porker in a surplice than anything else which the world contains. The Padre Innocenza was a type of a far nobler class, one of those sudden outbreaks in long priest-ruined generations of those high qualities, which once made Italians rulers of the world, and yet lie latent to be developed by more propitious circumstances into something of the pristine greatness of the race. And in Father Innocenza these better qualities, if he possessed them, were buried deep under lying, cruelty, hypocrisy, hatred, superstition, and under this superstrata of evil the god within, the conscience, buried so long ago that it had been quite forgotten, had begun strangely to stir and tremble like a seed bursting into life, for it had caught the distant warmth of a light that beamed, the softness of a dew that fell from Heaven!

At last said Padre Innocenza, with a final glance at Father Zucchi's note, "You desire that I should explain the error concerning the death

of an English woman, daughter of David Lyons, of London. May I inform your highness, that Nicole Forano died of fever. This place is, at times, malarious—(not a bit of it)—the times were evil; many were ill. It is not surprising that the young woman caught the infection; that her child also received it, and that they sickened nearly at the same hour. I had them conveyed to a convent hospital several miles from here. Many patients were brought there during that week—some foreigners—an English servant, a Swiss nurse, and so on. In the press of care the Sisters mistook the English servant for the patient I had sent them. She died; a few days after the child died. There was no mistake about that, for it was the only child in the hospital. The Sisters buried the babe in the grave of its supposed mother. Not until the young woman, who had been with Nicole Forano, recovered did the Sisters discover their mistake, and they spared her the recital of it. In her desolation she begged to take the veil, and for two years was content. Then I suppose memory faded, and her evil heart desired to go into the world and find a new lover; or, her

maternal passions blighted in her babe's loss, her filial love revived greatly, and she longed for her parents. Had she confided this to the Superior all would have been well; instead, she took the violent and scandalous method of public escape. That is her whole story; her child is dust long ago."

Well, it looked a reasonable, consistent story, and Innocenza told it impressively. The Consul conveyed it to David Lyons, but Judith was not satisfied. Mr. Lyons wrote again, stating that his daughter based her conviction of her son's life on a sign made her by Gulio Ravi, an old servant. Let Gulio Ravi be found and his testimony taken. The Consul inquired for Gulio for some time unsuccessfully, and then advertised for him. "Would Ser. Gulio Ravi, formerly attendant on Ser. Nicole Forano, kindly call at the British Consulate?" Newspapers were not frequent nor well studied at Villa Forano, but at last Gulio became aware of the oft-repeated advertisement. He ignored it carefully.

Not so the Marchese, that chevalier *sans reproche*: he summoned Gulio to his presence.

"Are you aware, Gulio, that you are advertised for?"

“No, Signore, it is quite impossible!”

“But here is the advertisement—read it. True, there may be several of your name; but this means you, as the attendant of my lamented brother. Gulio, you must go there.”

“Impossible, illustrissimo!* I cannot spare time.”

“It may be to your advantage, Gulio.”

“Signore, I despise my advantage when I consider your vines.”

“But I must consider for you, then, Gulio; you must go to the Consulate—go this week.”

Gulio prudently kept out of sight of his master for several days, but did not leave the estate. Again the advertisement. Again was Gulio summoned.

“Gulio! here is this advertisement again; why have you not been to answer it?” demanded the Marchese, sternly.

“Cospetto, ten million pardons; I forgot it, Signore.”

“There must be no more forgetting. The Foranos live without shadow on their names;

* The Italians use *eccellenza*, *milord*, *illustrissimo*, etc., very freely.

you were born among us; you are in a measure a Forano; you cannot be advertised for as if you were ashamed to appear, as if you were hiding for a crime. Mind, I know that there is no error can be proved against you, and I am prepared to defend you from every charge; but answer this you must to-morrow, or I will go in your place the day following."

"Illustrissimo! You make too much of it; but ecco! I obey you. I go to-morrow at day-break. Consider me gone!"

Thus was Gulio compelled to report at the Consulate; if he only made a pretence, that abominable advertisement would continue, and the Marchese would go himself. With the first yellow dawn Gulio was trotting northwest on a good horse, and by noon he entered the Consul's private room. Who doubts that Gulio made the best of himself—"he had but last night observed the advertisement of the illustrious Signore, and hastened to obey." The Consul was brief. "You were with Ser. Nicole Forano in London, and knew of his marriage? You accompanied him on his return to Italy? You knew of the birth of his child? Of Ser. Nicole's death? Of

Madame Forano's intention of returning to England?"

To all these queries Gulio could only reply, "Si, Signore;" he had never told so many truths before.

"You last saw Madame Forano on the second day of Lent, in a boat on the bay, and you made her a sign that her child lived?"

"O, ten million pardons, illustrissimo Signore, nothing of the kind!" exclaimed the ingenuous Gulio.

"Do you deny seeing Madame Forano that day?"

"Signore, I did indeed see a Signora who called me by name. I leave it to your Excelenza if it were Madame Forano. I could not tell after so many years and changes."

"Suppose you *had* recognized her; would you have made her a sign that her child lived?"

"O, Signore, utterly impossible."

"And why so?"

"Merely because the unhappy bambino died long ago."

"In a hospital, of fever, as Father Innocenza deposes?"

“It is needless for *me* to inform your Excellence.”

“Then I have your assurance that you did not, and could not give Madame Forano such a sign as she supposed, because you knew that her child was dead.”

“Signore, you state it precisely. I cannot better it.”

The Consul handed Gulio twenty francs, and that guileless young man, glad on the whole that he had answered the advertisement, betook himself to a Trattoria to get his dinner; he afterwards bought himself a silk neckerchief of a golden hue.

The next morning Gulio presented himself before the Marchese.

“Ah, you went to the Consulate, Gulio?”

“Truly, Signore.”

“And what was wanted?”

“Merely some nonsense, Signore.”

“I beg your pardon, Gulio,” said the old gentleman, stiffly, returning to his book.

“And I beg your pardon, Signore, a thousand times; it was only modesty that silenced me. Pray listen, Signore. Merely an English milord

who had seen me with Ser. Nicole in London thought I would make a good courier, and advertised for me. Davvero, would I leave the Forano service for all the milords *inglese* in creation!"

"It might be for your advantage, my good Gulio."

"Ah, Signore, consider, here I am at home; with the milord *inglese* I am forever a stranger. I had rather trim your vines, Ser. Marchese, than have all the milord's money. No; and he thereupon hired another courier."

"Well, you have chosen for yourself, Gulio, and I am glad not to lose you; be sure, I shall not forget it."

"Your approbation, mio Marchese, is a thousand compensations;" and thus the honest Gulio came off as usual with flying colors.

CHAPTER V.

THE MARCHESE FORANO.

“Their views indeed were indistinct and dim,
But yet successful, being aimed at Him,
Christ and his character their only scope,
Their object, and their subject, and their hope.”

DURING this same summer the story of Judith Forano drifted to the Palazzo Borgosoia, borne along on the tide of events, as a bit of weed is borne on the incoming waves of the sea. Mrs. Bruce, deeply interested in her protégé, wrote to her own countrywoman, Honor Maxwell, reciting the story of the Jewess' wrongs. “She believes her child is living. I believe in the *mother instinct* that causes her to know in some mysterious manner that her son is not dead. If the boy is living, suppose it should happen that you should see him or hear of him.” Thus Honor read from the letter to Uncle Francini.

“Why,” says Uncle Francini, “she has lost a

child: you have found one: perhaps they are the same." "O uncle!" cried Honor, in excitement—"but how could I tell—stay, here is a slip of paper on which Mrs. Bruce writes Madame Forano's description of the child. Come to me, Michael!" Michael, who was lying on a rug on the farther side of the great salon, playing with a back-gammon board, sprang up and planted himself before her; Uncle Francini leaned forward to compare the boy with the description. Honor read: "her babe was very fair:" a look at Michael: *his* skin was a clear, dark olive, the blood burning ruddy in his cheeks and lips, and on the tips of his ears, and now flushing his throat, from the warmth of the day: "its eyes were a lovely violet." Honor looked at her foundling, but knew well enough already that his great, laughing eyes were black as jet; "and its hair was curly and golden." Michael's hair was curly enough, his locks fell in shining masses, gently lifted by the sea-breeze, stirring through the room about his shoulders; but these locks matched his eyes, except where a strong light creeping through the blinds, which were now

down to keep out the sun, tinged their waves with bronze. Honor was reading a mother's description of a babe of a month old, lost nearly six years before; she was looking upon a great, romping boy; there was nothing in common between the picture of Judith Forano's memory and the boy of Honor Maxwell's reality. I think both Uncle Francini and Honor were glad that there was not: on these hot days, when he could not paint, what could the old man do without the boy?

The summer brought forth harvest and vintage, and vintage and harvest were gathered; meanwhile the seed which Nanni had sown in Ser. Jacopo's heart in early spring, had also brought forth its fruit. All summer the honest man had come to Honor for counsel, and she had ever taken him to the law and to the testimonies. As his thirst for the very word of God grew greater, Assunta had gone evening after evening with her Italian Bible, and shut in, in an inner room with the calzolajo and his wife, had read to them by the hour. Honor Maxwell had taught her maid to read the Scriptures; the Spirit of God brought home their meaning with Divine efficiency.

We come to the evening of one of the regular meetings of the Vaudois Church. The room was dark, rough, low ceiled, the floor brick; the benches backless, the lights dim and few—our Vaudois brethren are poor. The Swiss pastor sat at a little table with his Bible before him; Doctor and Mrs. Polwarth came in, presently also Honor Maxwell and her maid, then shortly after appeared two who had never hitherto gathered with the Vaudois band, Ser. Jacopo and Monna Lisa. There was reading, prayer, exhortation from one and another. Then Ser. Jacopo rose, and there was a waiting silence. He began to speak in the firm, calm voice of a man whose mind has been cautiously and irrevocably made up. “At the close of last Carnival, my brother-in-law came to my house, having a copy of the Evangel. He had also the Evangel in his heart. He read to me in the book, and I found it good; he taught me much which I felt to be the TRUTH. But this *truth* was something different from all that I had before heard or practiced, and there arose a contest in my heart. I did not wish to draw enmity upon myself; I did not wish to endanger my business,

myself, my family, by provoking the priests; and especially, I did not wish to sacrifice a few *lire* by changing certain habits in my business; I did not wish to speak truth and act truth at all times; so I shut my heart to the Evangel. But, my brothers, we may shut the gates of our city to our friends or our foes, but thereby we cannot shut out the sun of heaven, he still shines on us; so though I shut my heart, I felt the eye of God like a burning sun, look down into my soul; and as our locked gates do not keep out the air, I felt a new knowledge stirring within me. I cannot tell you *why* I went for relief to the Evangel, instead of to the priests; God alone knows *why* I went to the Signorina Maxwell, and she read me the Evangel. At last, my brothers, what did I feel? I saw Ser. Jesus leaving his throne of glory to live on earth—for *me*; I saw him poor, weary, despised, homeless—for *me*; I beheld him dying, buried, risen—for *me*—and my soul said, What then, cannot I leave a Church which hides his Evangel, cannot I suffer loss and scorn, cannot I give up a few *lire* for Ser. Jesus, who did all this—for *me*? Ah, my brothers, when I did feel that I could

even lose the *lire* for Ser. Jesus, then all was done. I no longer feared the priests, I no longer withheld anything. This is my wife, Lisa. I said to her, 'Lo, I am become an Evangelical for Ser. Jesus; must I therefore lose you and my children? Even so, I am content to give up all for him.' But my wife replied, 'Ecco, Jacopo, what has Ser. Jesus done for you that he has not done for me? What do you owe him that I do not? No, we will be Evangelicals together.' 'In that case,' I said, 'there is no division; we will take all our eight sons with us into the service of Ser. Jesus, for for that cause he gave us the eight.' And then finally, my brothers, I said to the maiden Assunta, who had read the Evangel to me, 'Do you fear to confess Ser. Jesus before men?' and she replied 'No;' therefore she is here with us to-night. Take us—we belong to you—because we belong to Christ!" Ser. Jacopo spread out his brawny arms as if he would embrace the whole assembly; tears were falling from many eyes; the Vaudois pastor sobbed aloud; Mrs. Polwarth and Honor Maxwell thought of the maid Mercy, who went to the heavenly city with Christiana and her sons;

and they remembered the good journey from the City of Destruction to the Celestial Gate—but they forgot that Vanity Fair lay across their road.

The winter came, clear, bright, with a beauty of its own; the last olives were gathered; the roses disappeared with Christmas, but along the hills the hawk-weed with its golden eye defied the frost, and bloomed the winter through. During these months Nanni, with a pack on his back, travelled up and down in Tuscany; the pack held the usual light wares of a peddler, but he had a wallet of gospels, and Testaments, and copies of hymns, and his heart was stored with the truth which his lips dispensed.

When the spring came Nanni left Tuscany by "reedy Trasemene," crossed Umbria, passed through the Apennines north of Mount Carno, and traveled along the Adriatic coast to Barletta. The evangelist found the country people, as a rule, less accessible, more under the dominion of the priests, less realizing the possibilities of liberty than the people of the cities. Arriving at Barletta, he found his parents well, and indeed bearing fruit in old age, for several Bible meet-

ings were held at their house weekly, Sandro reading, and his grandfather explaining the Scriptures, and the number of believers had already increased to eight. Sandro seemed to have reached a very remarkable degree of experience for his age; the Fari family were still hearers but not doers of the word. The eight believers of Barletta rejoiced greatly in Nanni's visit of a month; he left them to go to Ser. Jacopo with an important proposition. Signore Conti was not likely to be able to continue his business for many years, and desired that Ser. Jacopo should remove to Barletta, and keep the *bottega* in his stead. A calzolajo in the town had just died, and his widow was willing to sell out his interest and stock in trade for a small sum, which frugal Ser. Conti was able to pay in behalf of his son-in-law.

Italians are accustomed to crowding in their houses, and by using one of the widow Mariana's rooms in the house next door, the Jacopo family could be accommodated with the old man's home. Not only would a family thus be united, but a household of believers would be established in Barletta, to strengthen each other's

hands, and set an example of Christian domestic life.

Charged with this mission of bringing Ser. Jacopo to comfort the declining years of his father-in-law, Nanni turned his steps toward the north.

Ser. Jacopo readily accepted the proposal; it would unite him to his son, his wife to her parents: they would be placed in a little community of converts like themselves; the work of God promised fair to progress in the southern city: they might not only share in the seed-sowing, but help to gather in the harvests.

More than fifteen years have passed since then. I am writing *history*. I look back and see how indeed they sowed the seed, and how they gathered the harvest and brought home the vintage. I see, and a great blackness falls over Ser. Jacopo and Monna Lisa and their seven sons, going toward Barletta; and, as in the vision of Abraham, after the darkness, a smoking furnace and a burning lamp moving up and down.

So Ser. Jacopo was gone south, and Easter had come; and in Easter week Father Innocenza

—from whom Dr. Polwarth had heard nothing for the year since his first visit—suddenly reappeared at the pastor's study. Padre Innocenza was even in more of a passion than before; his frame quivered with excitement; he was angry with himself, his lot in life, his church, with Dr. Polwarth and his letter; and after the first courtesies of meeting trembled on his tongue his suppressed rage broke forth at the minister's mild question:

“Have you honored me by bringing your answer to my letter?”

“No, I have not brought an answer. You must explain yourself. Your letter is dishonest and unfair. I must know what you mean and why you mean it.”

“I am ready to explain my meanings. I had hoped my letter was so simple as to need nothing to make it clearer.”

“Ciarle!* Answer me this: I hear that you have called my church Anti-Christ's church, my Pope Anti-Christ, our spirit Anti-Christ. Tell me—have you?”

Now Dr. Polwarth had never thus spoken to

* “Mere talk,” or “nonsense.”

Romanists, but he had said many things in the course of his life.

“Yes, I have said so,” he replied.

“And why did you say so?”

“Because I believe it to be true.”

“On what authority?” roared the padre, in a white heat.

“On the authority of God’s own word,” replied the pastor, coolly.

“I will tell you what you shall do,” said Padre Innocenza, nearly choking with rage; “you shall sit down here and you shall draw me out those references in God’s word whereon you base that opinion. I go to prove them. If you do not make them plain, if it is not as you have said, then, son of infamy, preacher of lies, first-born of Satan, *you* are Anti-Christ yourself!”

Dr. Polwarth at first felt those risings of the natural man which tempted him to thrust the abusive ecclesiastic into the street; but he had learned of Him who when he was reviled, reviled not again. Moreover, he looked into the priest’s eyes and saw, under all this passion, a man divinely troubled. Therefore, instead of becoming excited, the Doctor said, quietly:

“I will write out these references and send them to you.”

“You shall not!” cried Innocenza. “I will have them *now*. There is your paper, your pen, your book; sit there and write, and I will wait for it.”

He at once began to pace up and down the study, like an excited wild beast restive in its cage.

Dr. Polwarth placed himself at his table and opened his Bible. He had the Scriptures in his head and in his heart. He had studied this question, and found the prophecies of the great apostasy in the Old Testament as well as the New.

He began turning over the leaves of his Bible and placing on a sheet of foolscap the references in fair script, writing out not the whole verses, but their first and concluding words. Thus he went rapidly on, gathering from the Prophets, the Gospels, the Epistles, the Apocalypse, the portrait of the Roman heresy. After more than an hour of incessant labor on his part, incessant walking on the part of Padre Innocenza, the minister said:

“I have done. You have now to search out and verify these passages. If I offer you an Italian Bible, you will not consider it reliable. Where will you find the word of God with which to compare these Scriptures?”

Padre Innocenza grasped the paper, and, folding it small, thrust it into an inner pocket.

“E basta!” * he cried; “don’t trouble yourself, Signore; I will see to it that these are properly compared with a *true* Bible—one that I accept as no garbled product of heresy!” And hardly waiting for a parting salutation, he rushed away.

It was late in the afternoon when Padre Innocenza’s weary and dripping steed climbed the last steep ascent to the Chapel of “Sta. Maria Maggiore of the Hills.” He gave the rein to the half-naked sprite who acted as his valet, stable-boy and general factotum, and as the lad turned to the stable the priest entered his chapel. The air was chill—all Italian churches have the cold of the grave. The floor was brick paved; the benches were backless and worn, like the seats of country schools an hundred

* That is enough.

years ago; along the walls were set tablets, bearing the epitaphs of the richer parishioners of Sta. Maria Maggiore for the last two centuries; here and there a more ambitious memorial had marble festoons, scrolls, cherubs' heads and skulls wrought about it.

Above the altar was a Virgin borne by angels, a work of *Aurelio Lomi*; beneath it was a tabernacle wrought in brass, and a worm-eaten crucifix, by a pupil of Giotto. On the altar were the usual tall candles and faded bunches of artificial flowers. To the left, and partly behind the altar, lay along the floor the marble figure of a man in priest's robes. Padre Innocenza walked over this monument to his predecessor of three-quarters of a century back, and then, drawing aside a faded and dusty crimson curtain, entered his sacristy and locked the door behind him. The sacristy had one window high up in the wall; it was a lonely room, and Padre Innocenza looked lonely standing therein. The stone floor had sunken and twisted unevenly; the table in the centre of the room was dusty and time-eaten; against the door swung a long rusty cassock, something like a murderer hang-

ing from a gibbet in chains. There was a delf pitcher and basin, with a towel flung thereon, but the half-clad factotum had failed to put water in the pitcher or bring a clean towel; a server with several little cups and glasses for holding salt, oil, water and such things, for mass, stood on a shelf, and beside it a ewer, a broken glass and two or three empty bottles. Under the shelf were two rows of large drawers. Father Innocenza knew well what each one held, yet could not prevail upon himself to go directly to what he wanted.

He opened the first drawer; there, in a careless heap, lay a great curtain of purple velvet embroidered in gold; but the velvet had grown dingy, threadbare, moth-eaten, the broidery was blackened with age, a little cloud of dust rose as the priest turned over its folds. Beneath the curtain was a huge missal, with great brass clasps and leather bindings; the book and the curtain were alike worn out with a century and a half of use. The second drawer which Padre Innocenza opened was full of ancient stoles, surplices, and altar veils; the muslin was yellow with time, full of rents and darns;

the lace and embroidery were frayed and torn away. In this drawer was a book, a volume of "rites and ceremonies." Still to another drawer went the Padre; here were more vestments—purple vestments for Lent; white vestments, glowing with embroidery and golden with great crosses; scarlet vestments, black vestments; they were not yet beyond using, and were folded with some little care; the psalter and prayer book lying with them were evidently yet in service. The fourth drawer held various basins, crucifixes, an old tabernacle, a prie-dieu cover, a cap or two, a rosary, a bent salver. Then the Padre came to the last drawer of the treasures which had been gathered here during two hundred years. He opened the drawer more reverently. Here was a priest's rusty frock, a shabby hat, an hour-glass, a skull, a stole, and under all a purple Lenten altar-veil. This was wrapped into a large package; Padre Innocenza unfolded it, and lo! a book. The volume was square, had been bound in white sheepskin, which was now brown with age, riddled with holes, and cut with winding lines by worms; the clasps were dull and bent. He opened it; the page

was yellow, clouded, and had marks as of a book that had been in the water, or long buried in the earth. The paper was like parchment in finish and thickness, the type, huge, black, antique—a wonderful and precious book, not only to the enthusiastic collector, but yet more to the man who held it in his hand. It was a complete Bible, and on the front blank page was written: “This is the true and unadulterated word of the Lord God of Heaven and Earth,” and the name signed was that of the priest who had worn this rusty robe and faded stole; who had counted by this hour-glass the time of his prayers; who had kept this skull by his bedside as a *memento mori*; whose head this battered hat had covered; who had served at the altar which this veil had draped; who had gone down to dust three-quarters of a century ago, and over whose grave Padre Innocenza had walked when he came into the sacristy.

What had been the history of the Bible? It must have been very old and defaced when it came to the dead priest's hands; it was marked with notes and comments in faded ink; it was worn and thumbed as if it had been labored

over by hungry souls—well, it was in the chapel ten years ago, it is there now, a book with a marvelous unwritten history that will never be known until the last day. Padre Innocenza placed between the leaves of this Bible the paper given by Dr. Polwarth. Then he heard the shrill voice of his factotum calling him to supper, and so replaced the book in hiding, and went into his house.

If we had looked for the Padre for two days following, we should have found him locked in the sacristy, the Bible spread out before him, Dr. Polwarth's paper in his hand, the pain and passion in his face darkening every hour.

On the third day Padre Innocenza locked the paper in a drawer, and opened the Bible at the first page; here he began to read rapidly, yet with the air of one who compares the word under his eye with something which he has previously learned.

In such reading and pondering Padre Innocenza spent the spring, the summer, and the autumn of 1861. But after the first week of this reading a change came upon the parish of "Sta. Maria Maggiore of the Hills."

From fifty to a hundred people had been wont to come on Sabbath to the Padre's ministrations. He had looked on them exactly as the Sanhedrin looked on the rabble of their day when they said, "This people who knoweth not the law are cursed." But after the first week of his new studies Padre Innocenza looked on his flock as *men*; he began to take an interest in them; to feel that he had a duty to them; to compassionate their ignorance, to strive to relieve it. Hitherto the Padre had been supposed to preach once a month, perhaps; and at such times he had read or said something, without caring at all whether his people understood it or were likely to profit by it. The parishioners, isolated on their hills, seldom went five miles from their homes, unless an occasional member of the flock vanished toward France, England, or America, and was heard of no more. Once in several years, a Bishop came from Firenze to confirm the few young people who might be of age for that rite; and for the rest the congregation were entirely remitted to Padre Innocenza, who had hitherto been to them the minister of death. And yet

there was a tradition in the church, a tradition that in the time of the oldest peoples' grandfathers the priest who now slept behind the left hand of the altar had stood in the carved, high-up pulpit of this chapel and had so preached to the people that tears had rolled over their faces; that the whole chapel was crowded; that envy, strife, theft, profanity nearly perished from among them; that the dying died serenely; and the little children lived as saints. It was very far from this in Padre Innocenza's day.

But now the Padre began each Sabbath to preach, not coldly, on some incomprehensible theme, but simply, earnestly, as one who speaks to children, and his first sermon was how God made all things. The people went away wondering to each other how wise their Padre was, how he had told them new things, how kindly and plainly he had spoken. So the next Sabbath more came out, and the Padre told them of Eden on its four rivers. He was a man of rich imagination naturally, and now that some of the fetters had been struck from his soul, he spoke to these simple *contadini* not as a stranger would have done, but as their beauty-loving

hearts rejoiced to hear. For them he replanted the delightful Garden; he placed it on a sunny slope, and poured around it such rivers as they loved, likening them to the Arno, the Tiber, the Ombrone and the Po; he set it with the vine, the olive, the rose, and all the fair flowers of Italy; he put their own birds to sing in the midst of it; and then he showed them those trees of mystery, the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge. The listeners were captivated, and they reflected their enthusiasm upon him.

Thus it went on. He taught them new lessons of family life from Adam and Eve; he instructed them on the training of their children by the history of Cain and Abel; and when he came to such themes as the doleful fall, the reviving promise, the offerings of the two brothers, his half-enlightened soul hung on the edge of diviner revelations, and his interested people caught the first gleam of glory yet to be.

Thus there was a spiritual work beginning among the hills unguessed by the priests, unknown to the evangelicals, undreamed of by Dr. Polwarth, unrealized by the very people

among whom it was being wrought; and here we leave them for a while.

Meanwhile it was a summer of exceeding heat, and in July, Uncle Francini hired a little villa some fifteen miles from the city, a villa on the hills, where the air was cooler, and there he removed with Honor, Michael, Assunta, and two or three household servants. It was a charming place; the garden and the vineyard were rich with fruit and bloom; the road wound through delicious groves; there was a far-off view of the sea; near the house, on a rise in the road, stood a large shrine to the Virgin, built as a pavilion, marking the limits of the Forano estate, and a little distance beyond this stood the rambling Villa Forano.

It happened one day that Gulio Ravi was busy in the Forano vineyard, a very beautiful piece of property, surrounded by a high wall. In this wall was a door, which Gulio supposed to be locked. In the midst of his work he turned about, and had he been a superstitious man he might have fancied he saw a vision of the Madonna and the heavenly Bambino; for the door stood open, and in the archway a

young woman clad in celestial blue, and by her side a bambino of extraordinary beauty. As Gulio looked at them this bambino gave a cry, and ran a few steps toward him, but the benignant Gulio frowned so fiercely that the child immediately retreated.

“I *thought*,” said Michael, who could now speak fluently, to Honor, “I *thought* I knew that man.”

Gulio at once laid down his hoe, and walked to another part of the vineyard.

“Evidently he does not know you,” said Honor.

But immediately Gulio returned with some fruit, which he coolly offered to Michael, saying to Honor: “Signora, I saw your little son once at the shop of Ser. Jacopo. He must have a beautiful memory; I thought, when he looked at me, he remembered me.”

Between the frown and the fruit Michael was quite bewildered about Gulio, and Honor fully accepted the fabrication concerning Ser. Jacopo. As for Gulio, he waited for the future, as a further and finer field for lying, and with a true Italian relish for intrigue.

And now the story of Judith Forano made another advance, as if the tide had risen higher and flung the drift further in shore—it reached the Villa Forano. The old Marchesa Forano was a most kindly woman ; she heard of the new occupants of the little villa and desired to show them courtesy. One morning the Signora Forano, as was her custom, went to the shrine, and as she sat there Honor passed by. Rising, the lady said : “ Pray, enter and sit to rest. This pavilion was made for travelers, and for the beautiful view.”

Honor at once accepted the invitation, and the two fell into conversation. Miss Maxwell had readily acquired a sufficient knowledge of Italian for ordinary conversation, and it had been her custom from her first coming to Italy to talk with Italians whenever she had opportunity. In her intercourse with Francini his native Italian had aided greatly her obtaining a good acquaintance with the language, and yet better, a just estimate of Italian tones, a readiness in understanding the idioms, and some degree of sympathy with them. Italians enjoy conversing with strangers who will meet them as Honor

did, but they resent any attempt on a foreigner's part to force himself upon them as a *teacher*. There is a deal of pride kept in reserve in the Italian heart, and this pride is sorely wounded when a foreign barbarian, who cannot speak pure Tuscan, offers to *teach* the possessor of that "tongue of heaven."

This is where foreign missionaries are ever at a disadvantage in Italy; the people are crafty, and very accessible to considerations of *lire*, but while for some exterior gain they will *seem* to hear, the soul is shut to teaching given by one who can err in construction, or use false quantities in the speech wherein Dante sung. It is better, then, that Italians teach Italians, except where familiarity, friendship or respect win the outer citadels of the proud heart, and the Italian comes freely to ask instruction of the stranger. In this manner Honor Maxwell had learned from Uncle Francini to treat his countrymen, and now, when Signora Forano opened a conversation with her, Honor was scrupulously careful to let the Marchesa lead the way, while she, on her part, only continued the themes which the lady suggested. The Marchesa, too

often left lonely, as she had few neighbors but *contadini*, was greatly pleased with her new acquaintance, and expressed a hope that she should see Honor at the Pavilion next day. In a few days both the Marchese and his wife called on the occupants of the Villa Anteta; the visit was returned, and as the meetings at the Pavilion occurred every morning, the ladies soon became intimate. The Pavilion was, as we have said, a shrine to the Virgin; its area was about ten feet square; its top was a dome surmounted by a gilt cross, and on three sides it was open, the dome being supported by columns; the floor was laid in red and blue tiles, seats were provided, and the wall at the back was devoted to a picture of the Ascension of the Virgin; beneath this was a tablet stating that the whole was a votive offering of a certain Marchese Forano, "for favor bestowed by the Queen of Heaven."

One morning as Honor and the Marchesa sat in the Pavilion, the eye of the elder lady fell upon this tablet, and she said:

"This shrine was built by my husband's mother. One is very happy who vows for the

obtaining of some great blessing and receives the gift. Our names are in the Tuscan Gold Book: we are therefore of the old nobility; but a fate seems on such families—they are dying out. Behold, dear Signorina, the cities and the country swarm with the children of the poor, and we, whose names should continue in the Gold Book, are slowly disappearing.” After musing for a time, the Marchesa continued:

“My husband’s mother was married five years without children. She vowed to erect this shrine to the Holy Mother if she might have a son: my husband was born and the shrine was built. For twenty years she had no other children, and then a second son was born. The Marchesa died when this second son was two years old. The next year my husband and myself married. When the young Nicole was five years old his mother died, and then the boy lived with us as our own. As years passed on and we had no children Nicole consoled us, for he seemed like our own; my husband was so much the elder that his brother seemed like his child, and we looked to him as our heir, and to continue our house. Alas! Signorina, how

dark are the ways of heaven! My husband and I live lonely in our advancing years, and all I can say of Nicole is that his tomb is in that little chapel by the grove: you can see it from this side of the Pavilion. When you first passed by here with that beautiful little boy, Signorina, I thought you were his mother, and I said in my heart, 'Here is one who may never have besieged the Virgin with vows, and yet heaven has been more bountiful to her than to me; but I find the child is not your son.'

"No," said Honor; "and we have no idea whose son he is. He came very singularly into our hands. He seemed to have no protectors; his grace and beauty pleased us, and I seemed to hear God saying to me, as was said of the infant Moses, 'Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give *thee* thy wages.'

"Moses, I believe, was a Jew," said the Marchesa. "For my part I think it wrong to hate Jews. This lovely child is Italian. Come to me, Michael;" and as the boy leaned on her lap and laughed in her face she caressed his flowing locks, saying: "Sometimes I have wished that we had adopted a child, if we could

only have found one with a drop of Forano blood.”

“And your brother-in-law did not marry?” asked Honor.

“Would that he had! No; he, I heard, became entangled in some way—so many young men do. It is very wrong, but not for us to speak of, Signorina; such matters are only for confessors to speak of to the young men. Nicole did not die here at Forano, but at some *casseta*, where he lived—with—well we heard a rumor, and my husband asked Padre Innocenza, who brought the body to us, and the Padre said that poor Nicole had become entangled, but that before he died all was repented; he confessed and took the sacrament, and sent the young woman away. I admit that my heart ached for her, Signorina; with loss and sin both on her she must have been very desolate. But such people always go to convents—and that is an advantage in having convents; though I hear that Vittorio Emmanuelo is going to break up all such institutions.”

“But suppose Ser. Nicole had been really married to this young person, Signora?” said

Honor, mindful of Mrs. Bruce's letter, which had told her Madame Forano's side of the story.

"Impossible! He would then have brought her to us. We would have received her with joy, and hoped for the continuance of our house. Do not let us speak of it, Signorina."

"Pardon me, dear Marchesa; do let me speak, for I have heard of this story before, and I heard that Ser. Nicole *was* married."

The Marchesa trembled.

"O Signorina! do not distress me with mere suppositions. Do you *know* anything of this?"

"I heard on good authority as I think, that Ser. Nicole married in England, but the lady was not of his church. The marriage was legal in England—a civil marriage as you would say—but it was not legal here, and the ceremony was not re-performed."

"But, Signorina, a marriage is a marriage. These little wicked diversities of human law cannot be regarded in the eyes of God," said the Marchesa, with that common sense for which Ser. Jacopo praised her. "A woman married in one land must be esteemed as married in all lands. What, is it not cruel that she must lose

her rights, her honor, her name, merely by crossing a boundary! *I* would have recognized a wife once, as a wife always—a wife in one land, a wife everywhere.”

“But, Marchesa, your church does not call civil marriage legal, and I heard that Ser. Nicole waited for his wife to enter his church freely that they might be remarried; he waited—and it became too late.”

“Signorina,” said the Marchesa, much moved, “this is very grievous; yet more my heart compassionates that poor wife, whose estate was denied when she was a stranger in a strange land. Nothing in this world is perfect; our priests are not perfect, our church itself is not perfect. I know this, because our church has consented to evil; she has put men to death for conscience sake; their conscience may be wrong, but that is no reason why they should be burnt. Our church cannot be right when she burns men, because burning men is a thing wrong in itself; so our church is wrong when she denies a woman’s marriage, a marriage that was meant to be legal, and was legal where it was performed. Oh, Signorina! where can that

poor woman be? We would have received her. Oh, Nicole! how could you, on your dying bed, reject your wife?"

"He did not, Marchesa; she was with him when he died. She is now with her parents in England, recognized there as the widow Forano."

The Marchesa began to weep.

"Here has been a very cruel deed. Padre Innocenza has greatly deceived us. Doubtless he did not recognize the marriage; he is very hard on heresy, and that blinds him to justice; but he knows our way of thinking. He should have told us the truth, that we might have consoled that bereaved one before she left Italy."

"Perhaps I was wrong to disturb you with this story," said Honor.

"No; if this is the truth, it is right that I should see the memory of Nicole free from what rested in my mind as a blot on him. Besides, one that has suffered so much as that poor lady should not be esteemed by me as a light-minded young person, when she was a faithful and desolate wife. Dear Signorina, will you come with me to the chapel? I will show you Nicole's tomb."

Honor took Michael's hand and went with the Marchesa to the little "Chapel of the Assumption," where all the Foranos had been buried during several centuries, their tombs being in little chapels on either side the nave and transept. The newest tomb was that of Nicole. The childless Marchese had expended, in spite of his poverty, a large sum on the monument, and a full-length statue of Nicole, wrapped in a cloak, had been sculptured in Florence. This snowy image of death lay on a block of dark marble; a wreath of faded flowers hung over the feet.

"It is a perfect likeness of our Nicole—a light-hearted, loving, thoughtless boy. Alas! why, why did he die so young?" cried the Marchesa.

As the two ladies stood looking on the tomb, the fearless Michael, with a child's curiosity, climbed, unnoticed, on the block of dark marble until he had seated himself behind the head of the statue, the face being turned from him. Eager to see, he put his plump brown hand upon the marble throat, and, bending over, his glowing olive cheek almost touched

the cheek of the sculpture, and his bright eyes gazed into the unseeing eyes of the image of Nicole.

Thus there appeared a startling picture of life and death; the child, brilliant, glowing, eager, all the world opening before him, interrogating with his looks the cold, white, insensible semblance of him whose life had ended in its earliest prime.

Honor quietly lifted the boy to the floor, and reproved him with a look; the Marchesa went sobbing to the steps before the high altar, where she knelt to pray.

On the following morning the Marchese appeared with his wife at the Pavilion, and questioned Honor concerning her knowledge of Nicole's wife, and her story. Honor told him that she had the history from an American lady, under whose care Madame Forano had returned to London, and that she could give Madame Forano's present address. She said nothing of the date of that return, nor of the convent part of the story.

"It is of course idle to ask you if there was a child, Signorina," said the Marchese; "had there been we must have heard."

“But, Signore, I understand that there was a child.”

The Marchese turned very pale, and his wife became violently agitated.

“This is very important, Signorina. A child—Nicole’s child—would be nearly as old as your little lad; and is there such a child living? and are we left without an heir, with no young Forano in our home?”

“Signore,” said Honor, “I fear I have done wrong to mention what I know. I cannot tell you whether the child is living or dead—probably dead; and, since I must tell you all, the lady was a Jewess, and Jews are especially obnoxious to your church; while since her troubles in this country, Madame Forano has become very strict in her own religion.”

“A Jewess?” said the Marchese, “of good family and position?”

“Very good indeed: of wealth, and superior refinement and education.”

Being further questioned, Honor told all that she knew of Judith’s history, and promised to send the Marchesa an Italian translation of Mrs. Bruce’s letter.

“The child,” said the Marchese, “is undoubtedly dead. There would be no object in pretending so, if it were living. There is no one to be harmed by its life—no other heir—and we could have brought it up in the church properly. Putting the widow in a convent was merely an earnest but ill-advised effort of Padre Innocenza to convert her. He had no right to use coercion, but you know priests feel that the saving of the soul is worth everything.”

Honor had hinted nothing about the church desiring to be the Forano heir; indeed, perhaps she had heard nothing of the kind. The idea certainly never entered the mind of the Marchese, who fully accepted the story of the babe’s dying at the hospital and being there buried.

“It is a great loss to us,” he said, “but all this ignorance of it hitherto, arises from Padre Innocenza not accepting any marriage made outside of his church. I don’t condemn his way of thinking, but I do not share it. And as for the Jew, I could get over that, if we could but have had a Forano to be the comfort of our old age.”

However, that evening the Marchese sent for

Gulio. The excellent young man expected some discussion of vines and orchards; but he was never unprepared for anything that happened, and when the question of his late master's marriage was sprung upon him he retained his presence of mind.

"Gulio, your master, Nicole, brought a lady with him from England," said the Marchese.

"Si, Signore," said Gulio.

"Was he married to that lady?"

Gulio shrugged his shoulders to his ears.

"It was not my business to question Ser. Nicole of his private affairs."

"But he spoke to her and of her as his wife?"

"Possibly, Signore. I do not deny it."

"Why did you not inform me of this, Gulio?"

"Signore, an English marriage does not always go for a marriage here—not if Holy Church has not blessed it. The Padre Innocenza did not take it for legal, and who am I, to dispute him? Moreover consider, *illustrissimo*, I have no more right to tell Ser. Nicole's secrets when he is dead than when he was living. Gulio Ravi's soul becomes the grave of knowledge which a Forano desires to bury. Did Ser. Nicole

tell you of the Signora from England? No? Then surely the poor Gulio must not be the first to tell it!"

"But, Gulio, what about the child?" demanded the Marchese.

"Oh, Signore! I know nothing at all."

"Is the child dead, Gulio?"

"I heard so," said the cautious servant.

"Do you believe so?"

"Oh, yes, excellenza; I believe all that I hear."

"That is very foolish, Gulio."

"All that I hear from good people. Si, si, Signore, do not distress yourself. The child—I hope is happy; probably it was baptized." Gulio bowed, and was about to leave the room, when his soul was rent by seeing a tear rolling over the old Marchese's cheek. He pretended not to notice, but said: "May I ask your excellenza a question on my own account? I have had some business with these vittadini* which troubles me. If I make a promise—take an oath—must I keep it, even if I repent of it?"

"Why, surely you must, Gulio."

* City people.

“If I make two contrary oaths, must I keep both?”

“Let me warn you against such dangerous doings. But you must keep both, just so far as you possibly can.”

“At any sacrifice, excellenza?”

“At any sacrifice, Gulio.”

“It may turn out badly, caro Signore.”

“You should have thought of that beforehand.”

“But suppose I have been entrapped?”

“You must be more wary in future. Keep your promises, Gulio.”

“Padrone, Signore.* Buona notte. Signore, you have said.”

Most innocent, and unsuspecting of his race, the Marchese Forano went to his priest with his story, and sent this priest to Padre Innocenza to ask for further information, and if he knew Nicole's child to be dead.

Now Signore Forano's priest knew this whole history from the beginning, and was one of the plotters with Padre Innocenza. He went from the Marchese to Sta. Maria Maggiore on the

* Thanks, sir. Good-night; it rests with you.

hills, and both he and Father Innocenza resolved sharply to dispute and deny the validity of Nicole's marriage, and both were honest in their views; they did not believe there could be valid marriage outside of Holy Church.

Had the old Marchese gone himself to ask about the child I do not know what the Padre Innocenza, with his softening heart, would have said: but to the priest from Villa Forano he remarked:

“Well, we cannot go back on what we have done.”

“Cospetto! I should say not! My coming is a mere farce.”

“And of course the child could not be found if it were living; and there is hardly a doubt but that it is dead by this time.”

“Pur troppo!” said his confrere; “well, I hope this ends the story, and that we shall hear no more of Nicole, and the evil-minded English Jew, and their bambino.”

CHAPTER VI.

THE PADRE INNOCENZA.

“Forthwith this frame of mine was wrenched
With woeful agony,
Which forced me to begin my tale,
And then it left me free.”

THAT Gulio Ravi should be troubled by some prickings of any little remnant of conscience that was left him after thirty years of very hard wear is not surprising; and that he should, in his own crooked and ingenious fashion, seek instruction from the Marchese Forano, the only man whom he loved or venerated, seems natural. But what shall we say if called to contemplate Padre Innocenza, troubled in his conscience and taking his natural enemy, Dr. Polwarth, for his father confessor! But such a spectacle must present itself, and would be immediately under our gaze were not our vision first intercepted by the shrine built

where four roads met, by the late Marchesa Forano.

It is in the latter part of a September afternoon. As the sun nears the sea, his beams are shorn of their heat; a soft breeze wakes from the slumber that seized it in the fervid noon, and now goes abroad on errands of mercy; so, wooed by the softening light, those who have lingered in shady places all day, come out in the wake of the breeze. We see approaching the Pavilion from the eastern road a young man with a pack on his shoulders, and a bundle covered with oiled silk in his hands. Arriving at the shrine he gladly avails himself of a seat and puts his pack by his side. Immediately after the door of the Forano vineyard opens, and Gulio appears. He is in no holiday glory, but in working costume: leathern leggins, shoes made of undressed hide drawn together with thongs, clay-colored shirt and breeches, wide, green belt, and flapping straw hat of domestic manufacture, with his curls moistened by the sweat of labor, a red silk kerchief loosely knotted about his smooth, brown throat, full of easy good nature, even we, who know his moral

idiosyncrasies, must regard Gulio with some pleasure. He has been peeping through the enormous keyhole of his vineyard gate, and seeing Nanni pass, has expected him to rest in the Pavilion, and has hastened out for a gossip. The two young men exchange remarks on the warm day, the roads, the advancing season. Gulio questions: "Whence do you come? What have you for sale?" But now, from the road leading from the Villa Ameta, come Assunta and Master Michael. Nanni at once recognizes the "comely maiden."

"A happy evening, Signorina. I have had the pleasure of seeing you before."

"I'm sure I don't remember where," remonstrates Assunta.

"Yonder in the city—at the *bottega* of Ser. Jacopo. I had the honor of mending a pair of slippers for you."

"I don't remember any pair of slippers that wore especially better than the others," said Assunta, with a little toss of her head.

"It was not for want of my good will and good wishes, Signorina," suggested Nanni, meekly; and Assunta is passing on, but he

detains her. "I have many things cheap and good in my pack—would you deign to look at them?"

"Pardon; I need nothing, and have no money with me."

"But I need things! I have money!" shouts Michael, breaking loose from the maid and diving into his pocket for coins, presently bringing up from the depths two ten centime* pieces. "See, Assunta, I will buy things for you and me."

And so, as Michael rushes to patronize, and Nanni readily undoes his pack, Assunta must needs stop. Gulio feels compelled to say something civil.

"Pray, Signorina Assunta, will you kindly choose a ribbon and let me present it to you?"

At this Nanni throws an uneasy look at Gulio; but Assunta says, with a little tartness:

"Padrone, Ser. Gulio, I buy my own ribbons."

"But just one this time in memory of old days," says Gulio.

"If old days are worth anything they can be remembered without ribbons; if they are worth

* Five centimes equal an American cent, an English half-penny.

nothing let them be forgotten," replies the sage Assunta; and Nanni greatly admires her wisdom.

Meanwhile Michael has purchased a toy with half his money; and it is truly wonderful what treasures he finds himself able to buy for Assunta with the other half. The girl, however, is wise; she is unallured by the singularly good bargains, and tries to turn the boy's mind from them. Nanni, who has been covertly watching her, says:

"Stay; I have in my small parcel what may please," and opens the oiled silk, showing a variety of little books, and some tracts on colored paper. "Two of these, sir, for your ten centimes," and he holds out several. Assunta is not loath to show that she can read, so she selects two for Michael to buy for her. To these Nanni adds a little tinted sheet with a fancy border and a hymn printed thereon—a hymn dear to all believers, "The Rock of Ages"—in Italian. At once Assunta understood who this peddler was.

"Oh, you are Ser. Jacopo's brother-in-law! Monna Lisa told me of you;" and she flashed on him a look of pleasure and confidence that filled Nanni's soul with happiness.

“You will accept the hymn, Signorina?” he said; “and it has such a lovely tune—I might show you how it goes.”

He moved a little, holding the paper, and Assunta sat down beside him to hear the tune. Gulio, feeling that he had been too long silent, said:

“Do, Signore, let us have a new tune, if you know one. I’ve sung mine until they are quite worn out.”

So Nanni began—

“Roccia de’ secoli,”

and presently Assunta found herself able to join him, and Gulio beat time and hummed in concert, and the sweet harmony floated on the evening air.

“*Davvero!*” cried Gulio, “that is charming; quite better than—

“‘Com’ e gentil,

La notte a mezzo April!’”

As they sing the hymn once, and then begin it again, Nanni hands Gulio a copy. Now Gulio cannot read, but he took the paper with calm-

ness, and followed in humming the tune, with his eyes fixed on the page. During the singing several *contadini* come from various roads, and pausing to listen and look, augment the little group at the shrine. Nanni, being heartily *encored*, sings one or two other hymns, and then some of his auditors buy pins, needles, and other small wares. Next the news from Florence is asked after, and Vittorio Emmanuelo is freely praised or blamed—praised, generally, for what he has done for Italy, while it is confidently predicted that judgments will fall on him for disobedience to the church. As the talk proceeds, Nanni opens that little book which he carries in his waistcoat pocket. One of his admirers cries:

“Anything new there, Signore?”

“Just a little story,” replies Nanni.

“Let us have it, by all means. A love tale, I hope,” says a girl.

Nanni begins, “What woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece—”

“Oh, but that would be a loss,” says Gulio.

“Doth not light a candle and sweep the house—”

“*Si, si,*” cries a woman, “in every crack and corner, *cospetto.*”

“‘And seek diligently until she find *it.*’”

“‘She would be a fool else,’ says a vine-dresser; “a piece of silver does not grow on every bush.”

“‘And when she hath found *it—*’”

“*Ecco!* I’m glad it’s found. I feared it was quite gone,” said a woman.

“‘She calleth *her* friends and *her* neighbors together—’”

“*Altro!* she will do well to lock her ten pieces up first, unless she wants another search,” sneers Gulio.

“‘Saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost.’”

“Ah, *davvero!* and they have a bottle of wine, and they *are* glad,” adds the vine-dresser.

So Nanni’s voice grows more solemn as he concludes:

“‘Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.’ Oh, my brothers, we are all sinners before God. Our hearts accuse us, and God is greater than our hearts, and knows what

we know not ; calls that sin which we know not as sin ; remembers against us what we have forgotten. Then, how very guilty are we before him. Then, when we feel our guilt, and go to blessed Jesus for his pardon, for his cleansing blood, then are we saved from our lost estate, and there is joy not only in our hearts, but in heaven. Do not forget this, *amici*, but be found in Christ."

After a little silence the group begins to break up.

"*Che, che,*" whispers Gulio in Nanni's ear, "you are Vaudois-bitten, my friend. Well for you that the Vaudois are free to-day."

Assunta shook hands with Nanni, and continued her walk with Michael.

The Marchesa and Honor had passed slowly by, and heard Nanni's last words.

"How odd," said the Marchesa, "to hear any one speaking of religion on a Tuesday, on the roadside!"

"And why odd, Marchesa?" asked Honor.

"Why, dear me, religion does not seem made for that."

"And would you mind telling me just what

religion does appear to you to belong to and to be?"

The Marchesa mused a little to collect her thoughts.

"Religion appears to me something for Sunday morning, and for the hour of death. It also includes performing those little duties of prayer and penance which our priest sets us in confession. There are other duties which, I think, belong rather to our humanity than to religion, as benevolence, kindness to the poor and sick, honesty, industry, the protection of the rich over the common people, watching over our servants. Thus if we are kind to our fellow-beings, and use our common sense, and do not disobey the church, I think that is our duty in life. Some go farther, and say we must believe *all* that the church believes, and must consider the church incapable of error. Now, *I* do not go so far as that. I cannot say I believe *all* that the church does, for there may be parts of that belief of which I am ignorant; and if I knew them, my common sense might not accept them. So I cannot believe the church incapable of error, for history tells me she has done what my common sense calls wrong."

(Had the Marchesa lived earlier she would likely have died for this exercise of her common sense.)

“And what do you think of God and heaven, dear Signora?”

“In truth they are so far away, that they seldom come into my mind at all. Consider how far God is from us mortals. Sitting away on a throne, somewhere up above that distant sky; old, and never young, and never older; approached only by Ser. Jesus, the blessed Mother, the Dove, and, perhaps, by some of the Saints, like holy Peter. But what think you?”

“Something very different. To me, Marchesa, religion is the daily living in, and with the blessed Lord Jesus. He is God, one with the Father; where he is the Father is, and heaven is. I believe that Jesus atones for my sin, so that through him I can enter the presence of the Father, and the Father himself loves me. I believe that Jesus by the Holy Spirit is always present to my soul, cleansing it from sin, teaching me what to do, overcoming Satan for me, comforting my sorrow, making my weakness strong. He is my com-

panion, my fellow-traveler, and as he leads me on through life I am safe, and by-and-by I shall come to death, and that will be shutting my eyes to this world, so that the eyes of my soul can open on the very face of Christ; my voice will be silent here, my soul voice singing in heaven; my flesh also shall rest in hope until Jesus brings it from the dead. Signora, this is a life worth living."

"I have heard something—but not so good as this, of sorrowful but holy people, who lived in convents," said the Marchesa, "but you are bright and happy, and live in the world, and yet you do find this possible? you do so receive and realize Ser. Jesus?" She stopped and looked earnestly at Honor.

"Signora, believe me, I am giving you a simple, actual experience."

"There is one very comfortable thing about you Protestant women," said the Marchesa. "You make a practice of speaking the truth—one can depend on what you say. Besides, Signorina, I have always seen something in you different from other people—a joy, a rest, a diligence: this explains it."

“But, dearest Marchesa, this is no singular experience; you can have it if you want it—if you fix your desires on the Lord Jesus, and ask him to dwell in your soul, and lead you in your daily life.”

“How do I know he would hear me?”

“Would you truly desire such a presence, Marchesa?”

“Oh, unspeakably, Signorina; it would be heavenly.”

“Then your very desire for it is an earnest of obtaining it, for such desires come from God alone—not from our hearts, not from the Evil One.”

The Marchesa made no reply, but concluded the walk absorbed in thought. She did not again speak to Honor on this theme during that year.

The next day Nanni called at the Villa Anteta. He was there several times before the family returned to the city, in the middle of October. Uncle Francini went back to the Palazzo Borgosoia very happy. He had covered a great canvas with a scene from the lovely “Vineyard Forano,” and had used Gulio, As-

sunta, Michael, and other handsome people as models for his figures. The Marchese Forano had visited the picture and praised it every day, and Uncle Francini had already promised it to a patron in New York.

By this time the Marchesa Forano had written a long letter to Judith Forano, telling her that the Marchese and herself recognized her marriage, that they mourned the concealment that had been used to them, and that they deplored the loss of the child, who should have been their heir, with a grief hardly second to her own. The Marchesa said that the evidence of the child's death was conclusive; they wished it were not; if it were not, they would search Italy for the last of the Foranos.

Judith had turned all the bitterness of an intense nature against Italians and the church, from which she had suffered such cruelties. She received the Marchesa's letter with wrath, and would have either ignored it or answered in person had not her father's calmer judgment forbidden either course.

As David Lyons insisted on a civil reply being sent within a reasonable time, Judith at

last took the letter to Mrs. Bruce, who was yet staying in London, and for whom she had a warm affection. Mrs. Bruce had heard of the Marchesa from Honor Maxwell. "She is surely a good, kind woman, Judith," said Mrs. Bruce; "and if you had only known her when you first went to Italy, all your misfortunes but the loss of your husband would have been averted. This letter is the outpouring of a generous heart."

"But how ready she is to believe my boy dead!"

"But what strong grounds she has for believing it."

"I don't believe it. I will one day, just as soon as I can get my family persuaded to send my brother with me, go to Italy and seek for my boy!"

"Suppose you do? Consider then what an invaluable ally this Marchesa would be; her heart enlisted for your success, her home open to you, her experience at your disposal, her influence, her recognition of your relationship: can you throw all this away? You had better secure her friendship."

This was a new view, and Judith yielded to it; but when she began to write to the Marchesa, and considered that she wrote to her dead husband's most loving relatives, that she wrote to those who mourned her child, the reserve of her proud heart broke down, and she poured forth a passionate story of her Nicole's last hours, of her lost babe, of her fears, her hopes—such a letter that both the Marchesa and her husband wept plentifully over it.

Indeed, the Marchese sent for Gulio, and, saying that he had a letter from Ser. Nicole's widow, undertook to read some of it, but broke down in sobs, the tears raining over his cheeks and upon his gray beard as he cried:

“Oh, Gulio, if we only had had that little child!”

Gulio fled out of his master's presence, ran to his room like one distraught, began to search through his possessions; tore from his neck the bit of silver hanging on a cord, tramped it under foot, and cried, “I will reveal all!” but as he turned to go from the room, a fit of trembling seized him, a sweat of horror broke forth from his whole body, a superstitious agony rent him,

he saw his soul imperiled—as it could never be by lies, or other vice—he seemed in the clutch of a demon, his head reeled. He dashed into the open air, then to a height in his vineyard which looked toward “Sta. Maria Maggiore of the hills,” and there Gulio shook his fist, and foamed, and, we are loath to write it, cursed and swore about Padre Innocenza until he was hoarse. Padre Innocenza held Gulio’s soul in awful chains, the falling tears of his good master had almost rent them off, but now they were riveted closer than before.

The Marchese recovered his outward serenity, and Gulio by degrees forgot the impression which had been made.

And so the winter came, and we find ourselves in all its chill, watching Padre Innocenza coming from the hills.

By the time that the priest thus comes from his parish, it is indeed the beginning of another year, for it is February, 1862.

Caution is largely developed among priests, and Innocenza has a superabundant supply. Reaching the city he pays his first visit to Father Zucchi. Now that a priest should do *no*

work in his parish is legitimate; that he should labor among his people is suspicious; and presently Father Zucchi says:

“I think I have heard something about your people coming out to church lately.”

“So they do,” replies Innocenza. “I don’t know any better place for them than the church, and so I make them come. If I’m teaching them, I know what they’re learning.”

“That’s right,” says Zucchi; “there is a deal of heresy and fanaticism abroad now-a-days. I wish we had the Grand Duke back; we’ll be starved out else. Do your folks pay their dues?”

“Yes; they pay more than usual, and they all keep right to me and the chapel. I don’t hear of any straying off.”

“Very good,” replies the cathedral priest; “I must look to my people about that. Here we have the Vaudois undermining on the one hand, and that heretic Polwarth, bold as brass, on the other, and *Liberalism* preached on every corner, to mean throwing off religion altogether. That Polwarth is a very vile man—did you ever see him?”

“Yes; I’ve handled him pretty roughly once or twice.”

And then Innocenza had a glass of wine with his brother ecclesiastic, and, night having fallen, he left him, as Padre Zucchi supposed, to get his supper at a trattoria. On the contrary, Innocenza darted along in the shadow of the houses until he found himself once more in Dr. Polwarth’s study. He seemed less fluent than usual, but in a moment or two asked for the Doctor’s Italian Bible, and stood reading different parts of it for nearly a quarter of an hour. Then he dropped it on the table, saying:

“Yes, that’s a true copy. Tell me, do you accept all that book?”

“Every word of it,” said the Doctor.

“And you hold such principles of honor, truth, humanity, as it teaches?” he asked, nervously.

“Certainly I do, and try with all my heart to practice them.”

“There’s one good in you heretic priests,” said Innocenza, “one can trust your word.” He stood with his back to the Doctor looking into the fire for some time, then turning suddenly,

he exclaimed: "I come to you a man distressed, miserable, hopeless, torn by a thousand doubts—"

"Perhaps for that I should rather be glad than grieve," said the pastor. "If God has troubled you he can also console you."

"And how can I get that consolation?" urged the priest.

"By prayer—prayer to Jesus only, without any intermediary."

"And is *that* all the help you can offer me?"

"It is all, and enough. If you truly desire help, fully believe that Jesus can give it to you and go directly to him, that is all."

"Fool that I was to hope for help!" cried Innocenza. "You send me to dry streams and broken reeds. What! do you count me an idiot? Do you suppose I did not see this way? and would I not be likely to try it before I humbled myself to come to you? Why, I tell you I desire help, with a very passion of desire! I *do* believe Jesus is able to help! I have gone to him only, a thousand times; but what better am I for going? He will not hear me, will not help me; he is as cold as our dead saints."

Dr. Polwarth looked at his visitor fixedly some moments ; then said, sternly :

“ I see ; you are not willing to pay the price.”

“ What price ? Hah ! have I not heard that *ours* was the religion of price ? of earning things of God ? and *yours* was the religion of free grace, of unbought salvation ? and now you say—*price !*”

“ But do you know,” persisted Dr. Polwarth, “ what it will cost you to get this help of Christ ?”

“ No !” shouted Innocenza. “ I thought it was something free, and I wanted something free.”

“ Listen to me. You wanted Christ’s peace, on your own terms, not on his ; you demanded amity with him while your bosom hoarded unrighteous gains, while your hands were full of forbidden fruits. Peace comes from being filled with Christ. We must be emptied of self : we must relinquish the wages of ungodliness before there is room within us for him. God has dealt with you ; he has opened your eyes to see a need of Christ ; he has given you a desire for Christ ; he may have even shown you by what things you keep Christ out of your heart, yet you will not yield them.”

“No, no. I protest to you I would give up everything,” said the priest.

“You may have evil practices ; you may have certain falsehoods, certain self-indulgences, certain practices forbidden in God’s law, which you will not relinquish, which you desire to keep, while you have Christ.”

“No,” said Innocenza ; “I am honest in my speech, moderate in my wishes, decent in private life. I am willing to give up all evil habits which God may show me, which you may search out.”

“Perhaps you know that you have been teaching errors of doctrine. You may have taught as God’s word, what now you see not to be in God’s word, and you are not willing to alter your teachings, to provoke the wrath of your church. You want to be secretly for Christ, but outwardly as you have been. And this is what it must cost you to get peace ; you must prove the sincerity of your desire for Christ by readiness to have none but him. Have you bargained that you must keep what you have, and get Christ too ?”

“No. I have begun to teach as I have had

light, and if I could only get this peace I would willingly abandon my position. I would cease teaching error—I would publicly retract error.”

“Perhaps you have had some plan for your future spiritual life. Will you tell me what it was that you wanted and expected?”

“Your letter,” said Innocenza, “stirred the very depths of my soul; your teachings commended themselves to my mind. I said: Here is a religion worthy of God as its propounder; here is a religion which, while loftier than our reason, does not contradict reason. In the light of the truths which you presented I saw what untruths I had held as sacred. But then I could not understand what my church was, and how it had grown, and been held as *the* church, if, instead of being the exponent of God on earth, it was his antagonist. Your second paper sent me to the Scriptures for explanation of this. When once I opened the Bible I read on as one fascinated. I have gone through the Holy Book three times. I felt that I lacked true piety, the real peace of God. This I must get from Christ only. I besought his help. I thought I should receive assurance of my par-

don and acceptance and have joy in him; this would make me strong. I should then call my flock together and tell them what errors I in my darkness had taught, and what was the true way; I would exhort them to try and search the Scriptures and examine their faith. Then I meant to go to England and America, where I could be more fully taught, and get something to do—for of course I could not stay in my parish, and I could get no work in Italy, where the priests would be ever on my track.”

“Padre Innocenza,” said Dr. Polwarth, “I will deal plainly with you. I know in a measure what priests are. I must fear that in the ten years of your life as parish priest you have been a partner to some evil deeds. Look back; are there lives which you have ruined? are there any whom you have distrained of liberty? is there any prisoner of your making? any family broken up by your means? any soul persisting in sins which you have pretended to condone? Will Christ give you peace while you refuse actual repentance, withhold restitution? If you are now continuing any deception by silence, God will not hear you. If you thus hold back

part of the price, evidently you are not ready to give up all for Christ—you are uselessly, hopelessly lying to the Holy Ghost. Christ never rejects the soul which seeks him in sincerity and truth. If you cry for help, and are unhelped, believe me, the fault is not Christ's, but yours; you are not ready to yield all on your part, but you want all on his part. Look back on your life and consider this question."

"What!" said Padre Innocenza, "must I not only cease from sin, but go back to undo the past? I thought Christ would atone for that. And do you ask me to repair these errors myself?"

"Christ will atone—you cannot. But if there is anything which, in outward act, you can do to make restitution, he demands it. He will not pardon a man for theft while the man resolves to live on the proceeds of that theft. Remember how Zaccheus proved his sincerity; he said: 'If I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore *him* fourfold.'"

"But there are some deeds which I *cannot* now undo."

"God only demands the possible, but he de-

mands that absolutely. Consider that for years you have lived in darkness; God has enlightened you; these desires, these strivings of soul are his divine gift to you; they are an earnest of what he is able and willing to do; but you know what David says: 'If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear *me*.' Ask God to search your heart for these sins that are between you and him; ask his help to do what he demands. Cease asking selfishly for peace; up and do your duty, and peace will come."

"Well," said Padre Innocenza, "my life, in God's light, looks bad enough; but let me tell you, that most of my sins have been of the heart, and not so much of outward act. Many of the crimes common to my order have been unshared by me. Some sins I would repair, but death has come between. My chief error has been a passionate zeal for my church, and an ambition to rise in her honors; and the greatest sins of outward act have been committed to serve myself in my church—and perhaps I cannot repair them."

"Are you willing to try faithfully, continually, disregarding your own comfort, pride, profit, to do what is right as in the sight of God?"

“Perhaps there is a way,” said Padre Innocenza, half to himself, “in which I can set one matter right privately.”

“Privately or publicly, you must be willing to do your utmost.”

“Farewell,” said the priest, starting from his seat; “I wanted salvation, comfort, peace, for nothing. Instead, you talk of what it will cost—of restitution, of duty. I am much disappointed.”

The priest hurried along the street toward his albergo, his soul in a greater tumult than before. At a crossing he ran across Nanni Conti, who had just left the Palazzo Borgosoia, where he had been paying a visit to Assunta. Nanni’s heart was happy—happier than ever; a little song was on his lips. The priest was most miserable; ready to mutter a curse. Their ways in life should cross more than once.

Nanni was happy as a humble follower of Christ; striving to live honestly with all men, and also to do good to all as he had opportunity. He rejoiced also in fruit of his labor; he had brought the Gospel to his father’s house, and they had received it, and in their turn were working in Christ’s service. Nanni was, more-

over, hopeful in regard to the future. He expected within a few years to be ordained as an evangelist in the Vaudois Church, and perhaps to make his home in Barletta, with Assunta for his wife. Such were the visions which filled his mind when he ran against Padre Innocenza in the little dark street.

At the same time Assunta, in the Palazzo Borgosoia, shared Nanni's hopes and joy. Her present home was very pleasant, and she trusted, by Miss Maxwell's instructions, to become more fitted for the life which seemed to lie before her. While Nanni was studying in Firenze and traveling about as colporteur, Assunta would improve mentally, in housekeeping, in sewing, and use her liberal wages in preparing the plenishing of her future home. So all seemed to be prospering well; and when June came, with its oppressive heats, the household of Uncle Francini again took up their abode in the Villa Anteta.

Of course, the first visitors were the Marchese Forano and his wife, who rejoiced greatly in the return of last summer's pleasant friends, although the sight of little Michael tore open the old

wound about Nicole, and the loss of the little child. The Marchesa expressed a hope that she should see Honor, as before, at the Pavilion: "I so enjoy our morning talks," she said; but there was evidently some new trouble or anxiety in her mind. This anxiety exhibited itself the next day when she met Honor.

"Do you know, Signorina, I have never got out of my mind what you said about the constant presence of Christ and every-day religion. I see, now, religion should be in our daily lives, in all our thoughts. I desire to have Jesus continually with me: but how can I when I know almost nothing of him? It would surprise you, Signorina cara, to be told how little I know of Ser. Jesus. I have heard that he was born in a carpenter's house, and was very poor; and yet in the pictures the Madonna looks magnificently rich."

"The pictures, you know, are a painter's fancy, and are painted for ornament, and to show his skill. It is true that Jesus, for our sakes, became poor, and for us left the glory of heaven."

"And he really did have twelve Apostles?"

and his mother lived as long as he did on earth? —is all that so, Signorina? And then, of course, he lived in Rome, and spoke Latin?”

“Your pardon, Marchesa: he was never in Rome. He lived in Palestine, and died at Jerusalem. He was born at a village near that city, and his grave, for three days, was in a garden of the city.”

“And was he never at the Holy City of Rome? And you think, Signorina, he did these miracles and good deeds we hear of?”

“I am sure that he did—and very many more.”

“How I wish I had some way of knowing all about him!”

“Signora, why not read his life, written fully and truly for us in the four Gospels?” said Honor, taking an Italian Testament from her pocket and holding it toward her.

The Marchesa drew back.

“Oh, no, no! That would only involve me in confusion. You educated women may be able to read such things safely—not Italian women like me. No, Signorina—but do you tell me what you know.”

“And yet, Marchesa, I draw all my knowledge of Christ from this very book. I only tell you what is here.”

“But you are wise to know what to accept, what to reject.”

“But I reject nothing of it. I take the whole as God’s truth.”

“Nevertheless, I cannot read it; but I have confidence in your word, and will be glad to hear what you tell me.”

Honor sat in silent distress at finding her word regarded as safer, more truthful, more reliable than God’s word. The Marchesa’s eye fell on the picture of the Virgin. She said:

“Here is the Divine Mother, set by God for the especial help of us women; I do know something of her. Do you pray to her, eh?”

“I have found no command to do so in the Bible,” said Honor.

“Ca, ca! that proves it, you see. The Bible don’t tell all we need to know. That, I understand, is why Christ came: to teach us what had been, by carelessness or evil, left out of the Bible; and the worship of his blessed mother was one of those things. You see, the Jews

were the holders of the Scripture, and they, being wrong, made some of the Scripture wrong. To this day, poor things, they don't worship Madonna; but do you do it?"

"But how could I expect her to hear so many prayers, from so many people of different tongues and countries, all at once?"

"Surely you believe that God can?" said the Marchesa, earnestly.

"Oh, to be sure," replied Honor.

"Then," said the Marchesa, triumphantly, "Mary can. She is divine, divine like God and Christ. God can do all things. He made Mary for his helper, and she can do all things."

"Tell me, do your priests teach you *that*?"

"Surely. They tell us she can do all things; they make her just like God in hearing and helping; they say she has all the power of divinity. Then my common sense tells me she must be divine, as God. Their teachings mean nothing else. I must believe that Mary is divine, or I must believe that she cannot do all that they say she can."

After this the Marchesa, although she had sought instruction, feared to accept it, and while

occasionally asking a question which showed what subject was uppermost in her mind, generally strove to keep her conversation from taking a religious direction.

This arousing of the Marchesa's mind was a part of that singular and almost universal interest in religious matters which had previously begun in Italy. The dead were stirred into life. Italy had been one great cemetery of souls, over which prowled the priests, whose great anxiety was that those who were buried should give no signs of resurrection; and yet, in spite of all their care, in that very charnel-pit life began to appear. As soon as the pressure of tyranny was partially relieved, by the union of Tuscany with the Italian Kingdom, evidences of life, which for ten years had been stirring here and there, became more numerous; men, bound hand and foot, in their grave-clothes, obeyed the voice, "Come forth," and stood above their graves waiting to be loosed and let go.

When the Liberal Government secured its triumph and entered Rome, suddenly the work which had long been going on appeared in its fullness; thousands flung off the yoke of

bondage; whole churches sprung up where before one inquirer had been hardly suspected; the fields showed so ripe to the harvest that laborers enough could not be found to gather in the fruit.

But our story has not reached that wonderful day, the entry into Rome—we are only in 1862—when people were questioning and wondering, when the first awakenings of heart had begun here and there, among whom was our good Marchesa. She was “not far from the kingdom of God,” and her soul at this time seemed to be trembling on the threshold of light.

But how different is the character of Gulio Ravi! How can we discover in his crooked soul yearnings toward a straight path? It is only as by accident that Gulio surprises us with such indications. The Marchesa sends him to the city on business, and Gulio is roving about on the bay, waiting to catch the little boat of a steamship to whose captain he has an errand. As Gulio thus hangs about the anchored steamship, he falls into conversation with Lugi, the man who rows him, and who is,

indeed, an old acquaintance, having lived at Sta. Maria Maggiore, on the hills, in Ser. Nicole's day; and Lugi says:

"*Davvero*, Gulio, two years ago I was on a steamship myself, as waiter. Our ship went to England, but I could not get used to the sea, so I left her. However, one trip, I am sure we had on board the English woman whom Ser. Nicole brought to Italy. So, the Marchese never found out about her? Poor thing, she was very beautiful!"

"I wish the Marchese had known of her; she would have been saved the most of her trouble," said Gulio.

"*Altro!* he would not have recognized the marriage."

"Indeed, he would," said Gulio; "he would have felt bound as the head of the family, and as a gentleman, to do so."

"But, *sicora*, the woman was a Jew!"

"The Marchese don't hate Jews; says we should like 'em same as other men: *sicora*, perhaps more, for he says they are our human brothers, and also that the blessed Ser. Jesus was a Jew."

“O, *cospetto!* Ser. Jesus a Jew; am I an idiot?” cried Lugi.

“It’s true. The Marchese explained it all to me, and he is a man of letters; besides he is very curious in some things. He would not tell a lie for any price. But that is quite proper for him: he is a noble and in the Gold Book: no need for him to lie.”

“But, Gulio, Ser. Jesus a Jew; *che, che*, then the adorable Virgin must have been a—Jewess.”

“Exactly, Lugi, the Marchese explained that to me. They were the Jewish kings, born in the land of the Jews, and always lived there, died there, were Jews entirely, I assure you.”

“What, then; was Ser. Jesus never in Italy, never in the Holy Rome, never using the Latin tongue sacred to Mass?”

“Believe me, I have the word of the Marchese for it.”

“Hah, and since he is a gentleman and in the Gold Book we can take his word any day before those fellows, the priests. There’s another item in my score against them. Why they teach us to hate and abuse Jews, because they are Jews,

and hold the church right to slay them for their race, when if Ser. Jesus is a Jew, and is bodily reproduced in the sacrament, he comes in Jew flesh. Then they say Rome is the holiest city, when if Ser. Jesus was never there, the city where he was must be holiest. Beggar the priests, *sicora!*”

“But Rome, you know, is so holy as the seat of St. Peter, Lugi.”

“Tutt, *altro*; but Peter was only somebody because he was the apostle of Ser. Jesus, and got from him the keys to keep.”

“We weary ourselves about too high questions,” said Gulio, “and yet you make me think of what I heard from a young heretic named Nanni Conti, who has come about the Villa Forano this two years. He said, may the saints preserve us! that holiness is not in places nor in things, but is of God, and is something from him set in our souls. As, for instance, Lugi, it is not possible for a coat to be holy, as at Treves, nor for a foot-print to be holy, as on the Appian Way; but that we, our hearts, yours and mine, Lugi, may be holy, that God has commanded holiness, and so expects it. I shall

never forget his words, 'Be ye holy.' *Bene, bene*, they are very troublesome to me. The idea that Gulio Ravi, whose outside may look well enough," said Gulio, with a fresh flash of conceit, "but of whose inside the less said the better, must be holy before God, or meet God's anger. *Ecco*, I wish I had never met that disastrous Nanni Conti."

This was the way the awakening Word spread slowly in Italy from lip to lip. This enfranchisement of religious thought began in Italy after the promulgation, in 1848, of the statute for the "Emancipation of the Waldensians" by King Charles Albert, father of Victor Emmanuel. For twelve years the Word worked almost imperceptibly—and had its martyrs; then Victor Emmanuel entered Florence, and for ten years the Word spread more evidently—and there were also martyrs. The year eighteen hundred and seventy saw full religious freedom, a free Gospel in the streets of Rome, streets voluntarily abandoned by the Pontiff; let us hope that there will be no more martyrs.

So it was that, in this decade, we see such

divers characters as the Marchesa Forano, Ser. Jacopo, Assunta, Gulio Ravi, and the Padre Innocenza, all wrought upon in different fashions by the same truth. The Marchesa closed her ears voluntarily, lest she should depart from her old faith. Ser. Jacopo and Assunta received the Word with joy. Gulio's shallow nature could not be deeply stirred. As for Padre Innocenza, the experience of Jacob at Peniel was reversed: Jacob held the angel and would not let him go until he received a blessing; the angel grasped the soul of Innocenza and would not relax the hold until his heart would yield to receive the benediction. Thus for months—from February to October—Padre Innocenza struggled in an overmastering clasp.

The priest looked back over his life and saw sins past his helping, and rejoiced to leave them with God; he saw other wrongs which it would cost his pride little to repair; he saw a wrong to Judith Forano, a sin by which he could now gain nothing, but which it shamed him sorely to confess or endeavor to remedy. Finally Padre Innocenza resolved to compro-

mise the matter—poor fool, he thought he could compound his offence with God—he would make a restitution and save his own pride.

Padre Innocenza went, therefore, to Forano, and as he did not desire to meet the family of the Marchese, he sent privately, on the edge of evening, to bid Gulio Ravi come to him at the shrine. Gulio went, not knowing whom he was to meet. Of all men he feared Padre Innocenza, the only priest with whom he had had particular dealings. Superstition held Gulio with awful chains, which intercourse with the Marchese had not unloosed. To Gulio, Padre Innocenza was a man able to bind his soul in hell, to cut from him all hope of heaven, to call demons from the pit if he so chose, to pursue him to madness; a man who could, if angered, blight all his hopes and comforts, smite him with plagues, and by the mighty power of his cursing make him an astonishment to his fellow-men. Cold terror shook his soul when the voice of Innocenza bade him—

“*Buona sera.*”

“Well met, *reverendissimo,*” said Gulio. “I have long been too busy to go to you for

your blessing. I hope you are well, Excel-
lenza?"

"Gulio, do you remember that several years ago, I gave you a commission—a bit of work to do for me?" said the priest, abruptly.

"Pardon, *reverendissimo!* Did you not bid me obey and then forget all about it? I obeyed—so much that, as you ordered, all is forgotten."

"*Figaro!* Ravi, you promised—swore to obey strictly my orders!"

"*Si, si, Padre!* but swearing was needless; my word is good as an oath."

"*Bene,* Ravi, I gave you a babe to take to the Innocenti at Firenze. Tell me, Gulio, did you do it?"

"*Reverendissimo,* you had my assurance of it when the affair was fresh in my mind," remonstrated Gulio.

"And I told you to leave no name, no token, no slightest clue."

"Your words refresh my memory. *Ecco,* Signore, I took the child to Firenze. At the depot there I gave the woman who nursed it her ticket back. The child was in common folks' swaddling bands, and wrapped round with red

flannel. I made haste to the Hospital of the Innocenti. I rang the bell with fury; a holy sister appeared at a small window; I thrust my basket in at the window. The sister began to speak—I turned; the porter cried Signore!—I fled; the porter's wife shrieked Ser., Ser.!—I lost myself in a great crowd pouring from the Annunziata.”

“Then, Gulio, there was no clue, no possibility of discovery?”

“*Reverendissimo*, not the least. *Cospetto!* was I likely to disobey you?”

Padre Innocenza, heavy of heart, walked two miles to his albergo. How could he know that what Gulio had told him was entirely fiction?

CHAPTER VII.

FALLEN INTO HIS OWN TRAP.

“The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit.”

EARLY in the morning after his interview with Gulio, Padre Innocenza mounted his horse and set out from his albergo toward “Sta. Maria Maggiore.” He rode slowly along, his head sunk on his breast, and his heart as down-cast as his head. Like Job, he cursed his day; he cursed also his training at the hands of that church which brings up her children in the paths of deceit. He appeared to think that, as a nursling of that church, his spiritual case was utterly hopeless, his sins past forgiveness, his condemnation written. But in mind as in matter nature seeks equilibrium; and, as a rule, the soul which most swiftly and deeply descends into despair will in the rebound most

illogically and unexpectedly reach heights of self-confident joy. Thus Padre Innocenza, from considering himself the undeniable heir of perdition, suddenly began to ask himself what, after all, had he ever done that was so very evil? As for badness, he was not half so bad as other priests; while they were sensuous, besotted, superstitious, ignorant, he had been thoughtful, studious, active, decent. "That Polwarth fellow merely undertook to condemn me, that he might elevate himself," quoth Padre Innocenza; and so saying, he held up his head and chirruped to his horse.

In this more comfortable frame of mind the Padre began to reach the boundaries of his own parish; and as he passed, looks from the men friendly and honestly respectful, from the women of adoring reverence, from the little children of awe, as gazing on a superior being, cheered his very soul. He thought of the church, well filled each Sabbath with attentive audiences; of the good counsels which he gave in private and in public; of his recent diligent care for souls; and, reviewing these things, he held his head higher yet, and felt that he

merited something of God—enough, indeed, to quite wipe out any errors of ignorance or misguided zeal which were in the past. In the light of these imaginations of his heart, Padre Innocenza braced himself to be henceforth the architect of his own spiritual fortunes. He did not expect, as some less acute minds have done, to regenerate the Church of Rome, but he meant to regenerate himself and the parish of Santa Maria Maggiore of the hills. To this end Padre Innocenza began a series of visitations of his flock. He went from house to house, to set all in good spiritual order. He insisted on having the children of the church gathered together for instruction, and when they so gathered, on Sabbath afternoons, he taught them earnestly in Bible history, and had them learn the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, and the seven Penitential Psalms. In the pulpit the Padre became more diligent in inculcating moral duties, and more particular in discourses on Bible history and biography (though the word BIBLE never passed his lips). He also undertook to be the rival of Hercules, for he set himself to purge the augean stables of the confessional.

As soon as a Romanist becomes a little stirred in conscience, gets a little light, he betakes himself more rigorously to confession; this is his only known outlet of spiritual pain and inlet of religious instruction and consolation.

Since Padre Innocenza had begun to preach truth, even in his partial manner, to his people, attendance at the confessional had been more diligent; indeed the Padre was obliged to sit in the stall all of Saturday afternoon and for several hours of Sabbath morning to accommodate his penitents.

In the confessional the Romish priest is afforded by his church the largest liberty in the exercise of his natural characteristics. If he is of a depraved, sensual, gross, inquisitive nature, the church offers him ample scope for the indulgence of his depravity; if he is of a temperament more refined, delicate, and devoid of petty curiosity, he can limit his subjects of inquiry, ignore the liberties his church accords him, and confine himself to set or general forms.

Padre Innocenza had always possessed more decency of mind than is common to Italian

priests, or perhaps to priests anywhere; but hitherto he had been content to leave confession as a form. He now considered that he might make it a means of good. He set himself, therefore, to ferret out all deceit and dishonesty practiced in trade or in ordinary dealings, and demanded instead truth and fairness. He sought out all quarrels, to insist upon reconciliation; all disobedience to parents, to enforce subordination. Had Padre Innocenza undertaken this rigorous use of the confessional before he began to teach his people, they would have resented it and rebelled against it. Active morality inculcated in the confessional was a mere monstrosity in the Church of Rome. But these peasants now added to their customary veneration of the priest an intense devotion to Padre Innocenza personally, as a learned man, an almost saint, who treated them as rational beings, and really cared for them; therefore they submitted with some degree of grace to his unheard-of use of the tribunal of penance.

Actively pursuing the path which he had marked for himself, our new reformer reached Christmas; and of course there were at his

church the usual mummeries—the manger, the babe, the waxen madonna: all the gewgaws which decorate a Popish Christmas. There was a sermon also, and here Padre Innocenza outdid himself. That Spirit which seemed to have left him for a time to his own devices again strove within him; a new life flooded his own soul, and perforce it shone upon his people. As he told of the Christ forsaking the abodes of glory and being born in low estate, not because the Virgin prayed, not because love of Mary wooed him from celestial heights, but from love alike to all his people, to save the souls of all who should believe in him; as he painted Christ now ready to dwell in contrite hearts; as he set forth a holy life inspired by the Babe of Bethlehem, his hearers, who had never before been told such wonders, and to whom his feeble half-utterances were a glorious revelation, wept aloud. As he left his pulpit the people crowded near him for his blessing; the women strove to touch his garments; they reached out to touch his hand, and then kissed their own hands in homage.

Now by this adulation was Padre Innocenza swept to some giddier height of self-assurance? No. By the grace of God the very reverence done him gave him a new view of his own defiled heart, and he shuddered back from the sight, crying, "Unclean, unclean! How shall man be just with God?"

And still, in every new strife within him, in every renewed soul conflict, inexorable conscience stood sternly pointing to his cruelty to a helpless stranger, his betrayal of the dying charge of Nicole, his treachery to a widow, his robbery of a babe from its mother, his designs on the Forano estate, which designs, if he could not repair his wrong-doings, would ripen until Forano swelled the riches of the church which he now knew to be Anti-Christ.

Thus, while on Christmas day the people of his flock talked one with another that their priest was surely holier than any bishop; that he would soon be able to work miracles; that after death he would surely be canonized; that perchance he would advance from Sta. Maria to the Pontifical throne; or even that some day, in the midst of one of his eloquent sermons, he

might be rapt away from their eyes in some act of consecration, and their chapel henceforth become a shrine—while they spoke thus, Innocenza, cast down in the sacristy upon his face, mourned before God. “My confusion is continually before me, and the shame of my face hath covered me.”

And yet so strong and pitiless is the bondage of Rome, so warped and hard is the heart which she has trained, that Padre Innocenza was not yet willing to give up all to God; the hand which he would hold out to receive the ineffable grace was yet closed fast over the wages of unrighteousness. This heart, in some things so obdurate, in others so gracious, passed through another tremendous struggle of some weeks' duration, and then Padre Innocenza made a further effort to set himself right with his past and make himself just with God. We find him, on a warm, bright February morning, riding toward Pisa. He did not go quite to the city of Beauty, but entered a tract of wild land which lies between Pisa and Leghorn. He was seeking a little hovel in this neighborhood when he came upon its owner herself, an old

woman, out in the wood gathering brambles, twigs, dead weeds, every possible form of dry vegetable rubbish, which she bound into small scraggly bundles, called *fachies* by the poor. These bundles she sold for an infinitesimal price to some peasant a trifle better off than herself, through whose intervention they reached the dismal shop of some town *fachino*, fuel seller, and were used as kindling, bringing finally part of a cent per bundle. When the Padre came upon this old woman she had raised a great pile of *fachies*, and having bent for his benediction she sat down on the heap of brush to rest while she talked with him. She had once been his parishioner, but had abandoned the hills for the swampy plain, following the fortunes of her son.

“*Bellissima journata, Padre,*” said the old woman with a doleful whine. “I hope your *reverendissimo* is better off than I.”

“I am sorry to hear you are in distress, *mea amica.*”

“*Ecco, Padre,* the better hearts people have the less good things God Almighty gives them,” groaned the wood-gatherer.

“*Davvero*, Carola! why do you think that?” asked Innocenza.

“Oh, Signore, it is but now that one of my poor neighbors came by in a sad, hungry case. My heart ached to help her, but I could do nothing; I am so poor that I have not enough for myself. And, Padre, it is always so. It is from the good hearts that God takes things.”

“*Bene, bene*, Carola, listen to me. You felt for this woman because you are poor yourself, and know what a bitter thing poverty is. You have learned sympathy by suffering. If you had been rich you might have committed sin by not feeling pity, because you would have had no experience to plead her case in your soul.”

“*Davvero*, Padre! I never thought of that.”

“*Ecco*, Carola, it is not because God takes away good fortune from those who have good hearts, but that misfortune, coming first, has made their hearts tender.”

“*Si, si, reverendissimo.*”

“And perhaps, Carola, it is better by affliction to have learned charity, and in poverty to possess a kindly spirit, than to be rich and unfeeling, for in the first case the Lord accepts

your intention, and in the second he holds you guilty for that, seeing your brother have need, you had no compassion."

"It may be so."

"And yet, Carola, I perceive that you had rather try the other fortune and be rich, and take your chance of being liberal."

"*Davvero! davvero!* I would indeed, Signore."

"But even on the rich, loss, disease, death come. You remember Ser. Nicole, who died at Sta. Maria Maggiore some years ago?"

"In truth I do. That is just it, Padre. He had youth, friends, plenty to eat and drink, and his life was some good to him, so of course he dies; *cospetto!* and poor beggars live on to starve!"

"Such things are hard to explain, Carola."

"*Sicora*, they are; and I think the saints have got the world in a sad muddle managing it. They take the wrong men out and leave the wrong men in, without any regard to our feelings."

"And there was Ser. Nicole's little child, Carola."

"Eh? So there was;—and there it is again."

A poor man gets a child, and he keeps it, owns it, feeds it—it comes up somehow; but that child, and those like it, have been sent to the wrong place. It don't do to have strangers in a great Gold Book family like Forano; so, because its father and mother *might* do well by it they can't, and off goes the baby, the saints know where. So it goes, Padre. Most any of us poor people could tell how the world might be vastly improved, but our advice is not asked, Signore."

"And you think that child was likely to live, Carola?"

"Tutt, *altro!* what difference? Of course, it was likely to live, for folks wanted it to die. Babes at the Innocenti get small encouragement to live, but they hang on to life for all."

"I think I remember, it *did* go to the Innocenti."

"Remember! Well, *reverendissimo*, I remember, because my mind is not so full of business as yours. Yes, I know it went, for Gulio Ravi and I took it there; at least, I went with him to Firenze, and he paid my way back to Pisa for me; and you'll remember, *reverendis-*

simo, I've not been to Sta. Maria since. Nursing the young English woman was my last work there; and your reverence saw that I was well paid for it, too."

"I think you are right, Carola. You have a wonderful memory; and yet I believe it would not serve you so far as to tell how that child looked, or if it had any mark on its body?"

"Eh? Think not?" cried Carola, triumphantly. "Why now, it did have a mark—a black mole—on the inside of the right arm at the elbow-joint. *Davvero!* I said to myself, it is well this is a boy, not a girl to be wearing bare arms and being discomfited with a black mark that will one day show as big as my finger-nail. Such a spot on the arm would not please a girl, Signore; but as for boys, why, they don't mind such trifles. Yet, girl or boy, all is one, for beauty and display don't go far at the Innocenti among foundlings. As to looks, *reverendissimo*, all babes look alike."

"Truly you *have* a great memory, Carola. I shall have to burden it with the recollection that to-day I gave you two francs, half of one being for your poor neighbor."

And so Padre Innocenza, who had obtained the information he came for, handed the old wood-collector the money he named, then rode away, followed by the blessings of Carola.

The Padre felt that he had obtained knowledge which would enable him to pursue inquiries at the Hospital *degli Innocenti*, and the next week he set out for Florence, ostensibly to see his Bishop, but really to visit that great establishment for foundlings, which, when the land was under purely Romish régime, is said to have received six thousand infants every year from Tuscany alone!

Although Padre Innocenza's secret heart had thrown off allegiance to Rome; although his enlightened mind rejected her tenets, he had not come to the point where he dared openly renounce her, and with that duplicity which seems ineradicably fixed in a heart trained as his had been, his first visit in Florence was one of outward cordiality and respect to the Bishop. The chief part of his interview was with the Bishop's secretary. Innocenza briefly stated that his people were docile, attentive at church; that he was thoroughly catechising the children; for

the rest nothing was doing; there were not enough candidates for confirmation to make an episcopal visitation needful; many of the youth wandered to foreign lands as minstrels. Then Innocenza saw the Bishop, kissed his hand, got a benediction, and went away less at ease than ever.

His second visit was to the Innocenti, on the great Piazza Annunziata. That a priest should come making inquiries for a foundling was no new thing; and indeed he was in a much better position to get information than a layman would have been. The nuns in charge examined their books, searched their memories, questioned the oldest nurses. If a child is left at this hospital with the slightest token for its identification—as a name, initials, a jewel, even a ribbon or a peculiar garment—this is specially recorded; when the child is farmed out for nursing, or is given for adoption, or is apprenticed, this clue is associated with it on the records, so that it may in future be traced. But any physical marks of children, whose identity it is evidently desired to lose, are never heeded, unless they are so singular as to attract the notice of some nurse,

and accidentally to remain in her mind associated with the farther development of the foundling's fortunes. Such a reminiscence was all that Padre Innocenza could hope for, and he was assured that there was almost no possibility of such a trace as he mentioned being followed. However, the authorities of the house put down a name (fictitious) which he gave them, and promised to make inquiries. He on his part agreed to return after a few months to learn if they had made any progress toward the discovery of the lost infant.

It was nightfall when he left the Innocenti, and, having taken his supper in a *trattoria*, the Padre was about to seek his lodgings when he found himself in a throng of people all pressing toward one point. Idly following with the multitude, the Padre was drawn with them into a great hall, poorly lighted, but densely crowded, where some one had already begun an oration from a broad platform. The speaker was cast in a herculean mould; a magnificent head set on the shoulders of a giant; a voice of prodigious compass, yet capable of pouring forth the sweet, many-vowelled Tuscan in all its sweet-

est melody; the daring of the soldier, the fire of the true orator, the winning plausibility of a successful priest united in this man. By all these he stirred the hearts of his hearers to ecstasies of enthusiasm. They wept, they groaned, they shouted, they started to their feet. This was Alessandro Gavazzi, making to his countrymen a mingled harangue on religion and politics—uplifting *mio Vittorio Emmanuelo*, and preparing afar off the irrevocable downfall of *il papa*.

The impressible soul of Padre Innocenza responded to every sentence of Gavazzi as a harp responds to every sweep of some maestro's hand. Gavazzi, on that night, struck off Innocenza's political bonds and set him in the ranks of that increasing majority of the nation which was moving with mighty momentum toward the deliverance of the state from priestcraft, and to the liberation of Rome.

All night the echoes of the orator's voice resounded in the Padre's ears. He had meant to leave the city next day, but he could not go; held by some fascination, he clung to Florence, desiring only to see again the man who had so enthralled him. On the second day after, as he

was wandering in the Boboli Gardens, he suddenly met Gavazzi under the shadow of *Gian Bologna's* statue of Plenty. The two fell into conversation, and, wandering away upon a wooded height above the city, Gavazzi the teacher and Innocenza the priest, the soldier-monk—himself delivered—Gavazzi awoke a new manhood in Innocenza, and set him free of an external subservience to a church which his soul served no longer. Innocenza would now go back to his home, and teach his people what he had learned. When the hour came that the attention of the Popish Church was directed to them, they would not make a pretension of serving her.

The ancient poet tells us, the hour a man is made a slave, "observant fate takes half the man away." More than half the man had been taken from the priests of Rome, their servitude being the heavier burden, and directed primarily against the mind. Padre Innocenza had to that hour heard none calling him to a new manhood, to the enjoyment of a hitherto unknown freedom of thought and act.

The third day after, Innocenza was at the

depot, about to enter the train for Pisa, when Gavazzi passed him. The Italian leader turned, and, grasping the hand of his new acquaintance, said, cheerily:

“How now, *amico!*”

“*Miserabile!*” replied Padre Innocenza.

A look of trouble came into the kind, bold face: the train was about to start; Innocenza's foot was on the step.

“Stay! Talk to the Vaudois if you have opportunity; they are the best comforters that I know for a mind distressed.”

Padre Innocenza marvelled, but he did not doubt the word of the man who had captivated all his heart. He began to consider where he should find a Vaudois. Providence sent one to him. Nanni Conti found the lonely parish of Sta. Maria Maggiore among the hills, and, calling from house to house, sold or gave tracts and hymns, wondering much that here, instead of curses, contumely, stoning, he found a people prepared of the Lord. According to his practice, he sought for the priest. The ragged factotum directed the stranger to the chapel, and here Nanni found the Padre pacing up and

down the aisles. After a few words as to the place, the priest said:

“I have thought that perhaps Noah’s dove fluttered many times around the ark before the patriarch put out his hand and took her in; so my soul comes to this house of God, hoping here in some way at length to enter into peace.”

“Howbeit,” replied Nanni Conti, “the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands. In every lowly and contrite heart he is content to dwell, and where he is, there is peace.”

“Tell me, are you a Vaudois?” asked Padre Innocenza.

“Yes, I am,” replied Nanni. “Do you know what a Vaudois is?”

“He is the man I am looking for,” replied Innocenza, and led his guest into the sacristy.

But all Nanni Conti’s ministration could not bring consolation to this perturbed spirit. The evangelist gave the priest some further light, some gleams of comfort, and felt assured that God was dealing with his soul, but left Innocenza still crying, “I am the man that hath seen affliction!”

It was now March of 1863, and Nanni Conti was bound to the Palazzo Borgosoia on a happy errand—nothing else than his marriage to Assunta.

While Nanni was preaching in the sacristy to Padre Innocenza, Assunta was sewing at her wedding dress, and Honor Maxwell, in the salon, was opening a letter bearing an American postmark. It was from Mrs. Bruce, who had been at her home in Philadelphia for six months. Honor was always pleased to read her letters to Uncle Francini; the genial, simple old gentleman listened with interest to news of the actual world, of which, withdrawn into his dreams of art, he seemed hardly to form a portion. The changes of life came to him something as a pleasing story would come to a recluse—just excitement enough to refresh, just pathos enough to stir pleasantly, just mirth enough not to weary, and a fixed assurance that all would be right at the last chapter. Thus Uncle Francini looked on life, and in this mood he now listened, holding Michael on his knee, his own snowy beard and locks mingling with the boy's black curls, his calm, pale,

peaceful face contrasting with the high color, life and excitement playing over every feature of his waif from Carnival.

So we hear Honor reading thus from Mrs. Bruce's letter: "I left poor Judith Forano with deep regret. She has singular capacities for suffering—one of those natures to whom life is all high tragedy. I fear she will soon lose her mother, who is very feeble. I bought one of our Bibles for her, and put it in a sandal-wood box, and with it a diamond ring—an odd mixture, you say? I gave her the parcel sealed, saying, 'Dear Judith, if great sorrow comes to you again, think of me and open this my parting gift.' Now I put the book up in this way in order to captivate her fastidious taste; and I put the ring with it, that when she opened it she might see that I did not merely give her what I liked, and what cost me little, but I gave her a jewel, and with it what I thought better than jewels. I hope, in some hour of grief, my note and my ring will disarm her wrath when she sees 'the book of the Nazarene,' and my remembered friendship will conquer her scruples, and she may find that which only can calm such

a tempest-tossed heart as hers—the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

“Now, Honor,” said Uncle Francini, “I consider that act of Mrs. Bruce as one link in the chain of God’s mercy that is to bind that poor woman’s heart to him. When such things are done with a true desire to do God service they are deeds inspired by heaven, and some day will be blessed; these are acts which shall not return void, but shall accomplish the thing that God pleases.”

“I trust so,” replied Honor. “I wish the poor mother might have found her child.”

“Its loss can be ruled of God to gain. Evidently she is one to have earthly idols, so God has set the child away, and will so set away her other idols, one by one, until she can see but him alone; so that good end will be worth all the present loss.”

Uncle Francini did not often say so many words without something about art, or artists, or the divine Michael Angelo. He was a simple, old-fashioned man, almost of one idea, and now he came back, not at all to Honor’s surprise, to his favorite theme.

“I am thinking of a picture, Honor—THE VAUDOIS WEDDING, and I shall paint just that gloomy little chapel room, and these hard-worked, honest people gathered; and Assunta, so bright and gay in her mountain dress; and Nanni Conti, so fair-haired and pale; and you and the Polwarths, strangers, looking on; and this handsome boy contrasted with the gray, wrinkled old uncle in a corner. It will be a very pretty picture, my girl—that is, for these days when the old masters are gone.”

In fact Assunta's marriage in the Vaudois chapel made just such a picture as Uncle Francini suggested, and after the marriage Miss Maxwell provided a supper for the bride's friends in the court of the Palazzo Borgosoia. It was St. Joseph's day, warm and bright, and the evening was almost as warm and bright as the day.

While the bride's party went off in high spirits to their supper, Dr. Polwarth returned home and found Padre Innocenza waiting for him in his study. With very little preliminary conversation Innocenza told the Doctor the whole story of Judith Forano and her child, so far as he

knew it. He avowed that he had sent the child to the Innocenti, unnamed, and that he had drugged the mother and sent her with some nuns to a convent. He gave, also, his reason, namely, that he desired to secure the Forano property to his church, and so to advance his own interest with his superiors.

“Now,” he said, “what can I do? The woman has freed herself. I am trying hopelessly to find the child, with no clue at all but a little mark on its body. I don’t know where the mother is.”

“I do,” said Dr. Polwarth. “I can give you her father’s address in London”—and so told the astonished priest what he had heard, through Honor Maxwell and Mrs. Bruce, of Judith.

“I don’t see as that will help me if I cannot find and restore her her child,” said the Padre. “As for telling the Marchese, it would be possibly dangerous to him, for he is old and feeble, and the excitement might kill him, while he would not be so likely to discover the child as I am. This act has become a nightmare to me; I am pursued by a vision of Nicole making me promise to protect his wife and child. I broke

my promise to the dead. I would devote my whole life to finding that child if I only might succeed. Then, every day I dread to hear that the Marchese is dead, and that the priest at the Assumption has wrung the estate out of his dying hand, and got the Marchesa to retire to a convent. Thus I shall be compelled to see myself feeding a church which I have now learned to reject. There is no man in all the world but yourself to whom I dared open my heart, and I felt as if my unshared secret would drive me mad."

"I think you should tell the Marchese that possibly his heir is living, and at least it would prevent his leaving his property to the church, as you fear," said the Doctor.

The priest shook his head.

"His death might be hastened. Besides how many priests, monks, and nuns would at once be busy to secrete the child if it were living, to effectually prevent his finding it—to testify its death? I know better than to set the whole church working against me. Ah me! little did I think when I took such means to prevent the child's ever being found that I was the one doomed to seek for it most bitterly."

Now, in telling his story, Padre Innocenza had, with the secretiveness characteristic of a priest, never mentioned the kind of mark whereby he sought the child, nor the name of Gulio Ravi. He also exacted a promise of silence from Dr. Polwarth, lest the Marchese should hear the story prematurely.

And now Assunta and Nanni have gone to their home in Barletta, and are living beside old Ser. Conti, in the house of the widow Mariana. The church in Barletta has by this time grown to twenty. Nanni is to spend half his time in Barletta working in this church, and the other half of his time traveling as a colporteur, going once in a year to Firenze. The little church in Barletta is bound in the closest amity among its members, and is as a light shining in a dark place. The neighbors are becoming accustomed to the *Evangelici*. The Fari family, with wondrous caution, come secretly to the meetings, talk secretly with Ser. Conti and Ser. Jacopo, and attend diligently to all things prescribed in their own religion; thus "they feared the Lord and served their own gods." Among the members of this Vaudois church on the Adriatic is Jo-

seph, second son of Ser. Jacopo, a lad who begins to talk of being sent up to the Valleys to the Vaudois school, and afterwards the Theological Seminary at Florence, to become in time a preacher of the truth; for the present he works at his father's bench, and makes diligent use of all his opportunities.

The Villa Anteta is still the summer home of Uncle Francini. He finds the air, the scenery and the society of the Marchese exactly suited to him. No one was happier in this arrangement of Uncle Francini's time in summer than the Marchesa, as it brought Honor to cheer her for four months of her year; the meetings in the morning at the Pavilion were sunny spots in the Marchesa's life.

"And so," said the Marchesa to Honor, "your maid has married a Vaudois, and become Vaudois, too. Who would have thought it! Our Padre here had nearly persuaded her to be a nun when she was but fifteen. Such girls in convents seem to me a perversion of nature. I look on convents as places for widows, the old, the heart-broken penitents. As for Assunta, I saw she was carried away, so I reasoned with her,

and sent her to town, asking a friend to place her with some lady who would watch over her. She went to you—and is become a Vaudois; but she seems to me a good girl, and sincere, and I'd rather see her a Vaudois, married and happy, than shut up in a convent, and repenting her vow. I don't believe that all Vaudois are shut into hell; in truth, Signorina, if a Jew, or a Vaudois, or a heretic of any sort, serves God and loves his fellow-men, he seems to me likely to get to heaven—even more likely than some wicked Catholics who serve only themselves and prey on their fellow-men. My common sense tells me that merely being a Catholic will not take one to heaven unless his soul is in harmony with heaven."

"Then, Marchesa, you do not think that I, as a heretic, am surely doomed to perdition?" asked Honor, with a smile in her eyes.

"Oh, Signorina *cara!* how can you! Did you not tell me that Ser. Jesus dwells with you? do I not *see* that it is so? and will Ser. Jesus dwell with you in this world and abandon you in the next? No, Signorina; Ser. Jesus is more faithful to his friends."

“And is that presence of Christ your own ground of hope, Marchesa?”

“Ah, Signorina, I have not so much of that as you have; but I do my duty in my church, and I love my fellow-creatures, and I hope by all these three things to get to heaven.”

“Dear friend, it is by Jesus only that we enter into life.”

“Then— But we will not argue; I have no argument; I only judge by my common sense. If by Jesus only we enter, no man has power to shut the gate on any soul; and there is one point where my church is wrong. That reminds me of a thing in my church which I hate—the Inquisition, Signorina. I know that was none of God’s ways. Does God want service forced by torture? When I remember that, I almost hate my church; but let me consider that this is but part of the evil we ever find mixed with good. My grapes and my olives have both good and bad among them. But,” added the generous Marchesa, flushing, “the Inquisition I repudiate; that was a thing to gratify the greed and malice of wicked men.”

“Believe me, Marchesa, my heart never

charged you with approving of it," said Honor, gently.

"Signorina, when I look at your sort of church, in history, in experience, I see in you only two crimes: the not worshipping of Mary and a disbelief in the Catholic Church; but there are crimes of opinion which God must find it easy to forgive, when he considers how ignorant is humanity; I see in you nothing to hate, nothing to shudder at; but you must see in us several horrible things, as the Inquisition, and the lives of the saints. Believe me, Signorina *carissima*, I detest the lives of the saints, and esteem them a collection of lies; and if they are not lies, but true, then so much the worse, I say—saints' doings and temptations are not fit for people to hear about."

"I am quite sure you admire nothing of the kind; but there is a little book of true histories of some of God's saints, especially the Apostles; I am sure you would like it, Signora," and Honor drew from her pocket the Acts of the Apostles printed in Italian. The Marchesa took it, looked at it, then a horrible suspicion crossed her soul.

“I’m afraid this is part of the Bible, Signorina.”

“That is true,” replied Miss Maxwell.

The Marchesa dropped the book in her lap, saying:

“Signorina, it is hardly fair for you to tempt me with any of the writings of Moses, for you know I am not so learned as to divide the good from the evil.”

“Believe me, Signora, this is not written by Moses, but long after Moses was dead it was written by Luke, the good evangelist.”

“Again a danger, Signorina. Evangelists, evangelicals, these all are dangerous to me—a Forano cannot be a turncoat.”

“Understand me, Marchesa—I mean by St. Luke the companion of St. Paul; surely you have heard of him?”

“Oh, truly—you mean the one who painted the portrait of the blessed Virgin; he did it in the chapel of Sta. Maria, at Rome. I paid five francs to get a good look at that picture when I was in the Eternal City. Well, if your book was truly written by St. Luke, perhaps I might read it. But tell me, does it belong to the Bible?”

“Yes, certainly it does, Marchesa—to the New Testament.”

“On the whole, I won’t meddle with it. If there is any good in it you may tell it to me.”

“I cannot understand how that would improve it, Signora.”

“Plain enough. *Ecco, cara!* if I want a drink, and have only water which I fear may be mixed with impurities, I put it in a filter, and the water that comes to me out of that is good. So, there may be good and evil in this book; but I know that if it comes to me through your mind I will get only what is good, and be refreshed instead of injured.”

Poor Honor was so distressed at her mind being looked upon as a medium which should add purity to the word of God that for several days she avoided all conversation with the Marchesa on religious subjects. Indeed, the Marchesa feared that she had herself gone too far on dangerous themes, and so cautiously confined her observations to purely secular questions.

CHAPTER VIII.

A DAUGHTER OF ISRAEL.

“And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?”

IN the same spring of 1863 when Honor received the letter of Mrs. Bruce, Judith Forano suffered the bereavement which her friend had anticipated—she lost her mother. Her sorrow was of that intense type which characterized all her feelings and actions, but indeed she was left very lonely and desolate. Judith's sisters were all married and in homes of their own; her second brother was in India. She remained in her luxurious but sorrowful home with her father, her eldest brother Samuel and her twin-brother Simeon. Her long absence and her misfortunes had cut Judith off from her early companions, and now that her mother was gone she passed her days in entire

loneliness. Still she did not feel utterly deserted, for her father and Simeon loved her tenderly, and she looked forward to the evenings spent with them as to her sole consolation. For her each day dragged heavily by. Sometimes she sat for hours at her piano playing solemn and minor music, every strain of which was a dirge over her departed; she would lie in a darkened room with her eyes closed recalling the faces of Nicole, of her mother, and of her child; and sometimes half a day would pass in such dangerous reverie; books gave no pleasure to her—she had never been a student: the fervor of poetry seemed tame to her passionate soul, and in fiction the griefs and dangers of all heroines were to her but poor parodies of the intensity of life; in her heart and history there had been a pathos and a pain beside which the most highly-wrought tale paled to inanity. A letter from Mrs. Bruce, the only woman, except her mother, who had ever befriended her, occasionally cheered a day, and these letters poor Judith treasured like a lover. She would ponder over their kindly words and her replies, as she sat long mornings striving to busy herself with fancy-work of wonderful and

elaborate variety, the knowledge of which she had brought from her convent, as a sailor may bring a shell or leaf, as the memento of some desolate island where he has suffered shipwreck.

But the unhappy Judith had not yet touched sorrow's deepest depth. The summer of 1864 saw her once more in the Valley of the Shadow of Death. Malignant fever, a scourge of London—a disease which rises at the spell of bad drainage and a water supply insufficient to so enormous a metropolis—enters unabashed even the most gorgeous West End home and carries away his spoils. So, scorning merely to make prey of the apple woman at the corner, of the sweeper at the crossing, of the beggar lurking in a foul alley under shadow of Westminster, the fever came into the Lyons mansion. Judith felt that she would have welcomed the fatal touch upon herself; she thought nothing could be worse than this world of loss. Samuel Lyons might have been taken and the world have been little poorer. But instead, the victims were David Lyons—truly a liberal, loyal, genial gentleman—and the gracious young man Simeon, his

youngest son. In the great drawing-room, ten times more desolate than ever now, stood two coffins; the rabbis sat keeping watch over the father and son; the hearses and the funeral coaches of the two moved away from the door together.

There were days for Judith of a wild grief which bordered on insanity; then weeks of prostration and confirmed melancholy which defy any description, and as yet she hardly realized all the misfortunes of her position.

The rule of the house of Lyons had descended to Samuel, a Hebrew of the Hebrews in bigotry and duplicity. All nations have their individuals, who may stand as types of the worst possibilities of their race, and such a bitter, selfish, obstinate man was Samuel Lyons. He had always abhorred his sister's marriage to Nicole, so much that he would never mention her name of Forano; he had opposed his father's desire to search for the lost child, because he "wanted no Nazarene blood" in a Hebrew house; his sister's past he would have dead and buried, and he looked on her as half an outcast, deeply tainted by her convent life. This man was now

sole arbiter of Judith's fortunes, for David Lyons had made his will when Judith was supposed to be dead, and when her sisters had received their dowers. With a father's partiality he had been blind to Samuel's faults—regarding him indeed as notably religious—and he cheerfully left Judith in his hands, requesting him ever to provide for her tenderly, and if she chose to marry again, to give her a suitable portion. Nor was Samuel unwilling to do this, if his sister should prove completely subservient to his wishes. He had neither love nor sympathy to put out at interest, but there was her home and clothing ready for her so long as she obeyed him, and a dowry if he had the selection of her husband.

One of the first movements of Samuel after he came into possession was to order the servants no longer to say "Madame Forano" but "Madame Judith;" the second was to take charge of the mails of the family, and to drop every letter from Mrs. Bruce into the fire.

Judith missed these letters sorely when her broken heart awoke to any thought of what went on around her. She wrote to Mrs. Bruce, but her letter got no further than Samuel's fire;

and as days still passed without word from her friend she even spoke her sorrow and disappointment to Samuel.

“There is no faith in a Nazarene,” said Samuel Lyons.

Mourning thus over her friend's silence, Judith bethought herself of her parting present. The parcel was yet sealed. “I can never be more unhappy than now,” said Judith, and so she opened the packet. An exclamation of anger broke from her as she unclosed the velvet-bound Bible and saw the words, “The New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,” and she flung the book across the room. The sandal-wood box was not yet empty; a letter had lain under the Bible, and a small morocco case lurked in one corner. The case contained the diamond ring; the letter was so full of wisdom and love, of consolation—for it was addressed to her in the hour of sorrow, when she would open the box—that Judith's heart was touched. She took up the despised book, wiped it, and laid it in the box on her dressing-table. The ring was not one to wear with her deep mourning garb, but she fashioned

a little bag of black velvet, put letter and jewel together, and hung them about her neck, inside her dress, by a chain made of her mother's hair. This bag became a sort of reliquary to the sad enthusiast. She put in it presently a knot wrought of the hair of her father and brother, and a little note written her by Nicole, and which she had found preserved among her mother's keepsakes.

As Mrs. Bruce had hoped and prayed, familiarity with the sight of the Bible disarmed by degrees Judith's superstition, memories of her friend's goodness overcame her scruples; in her most miserable condition, unable to engage her attention with any occupation, all her future desolated, the blackness of utter night falling over the graves of her beloved, sitting hour after hour without a soul to speak to her, Judith, in sheer despair, one day opened the Bible, carefully avoiding the latter portion. The first verses on which her eye fell were: "His foundation *is* in the holy mountains. The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob." Lured by this, she sat down to examine the volume, and, coming to the book of Esther, read

it through; she then read Ezra and Nehemiah. She marveled much to find these Scriptures quite correct, and her national history thus printed and preserved by those "Nazarenes," those "Gentiles," whom she supposed to be the hereditary foes of her faith.

The following day she read in the Psalms, and from them much comfort poured into her wounded heart. She then concluded to turn to the beginning of the book and ascertain if the Pentateuch were properly transcribed. She had now some subject for thought beside her own woes. Her mind began to dwell upon the wonderful history of her race. The beauty of the patriarchal character grew upon her apprehension. The guiding and glory of Jehovah deeply interested her. All that she had known before seemed to come to her with peculiar force and charm.

After a time Judith began to reason with herself that if these Scriptures contradicted the "Nazarene Testament," they would hardly be so boldly bound up with it. The Bible was a reference Bible, and Mrs. Bruce's note and her own acuteness made her ready in the use of it.

She set herself to read the New Testament and compare it with the Old.

Light poured into her mind; she was no longer "slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken." She now resolved to go to a "Nazarene church," and for several Sabbaths she did so, receiving great consolation. For some weeks she thus attended Sabbath services without molestation. Samuel Lyons, as he could not keep open his house of merchandise on the Sabbath, spent most of the morning in bed, considering his accounts and business letters of importance. When he found that his sister was absent from the house, he supposed that she had gone for a walk or a drive in Hyde Park, and was rather pleased than otherwise.

At last, however, his suspicions became awakened; he and Judith were so little in sympathy, he was so cold and forbidding, that she had said nothing of her new views, but her Sabbath disappearance, and especially one evening about church time, struck him, and he bluffly demanded where she had been.

Now Judith was no coward; besides, it had

not entered her mind that any one would dare interfere with the religious views of a woman of her age, a widow, and an Englishwoman on English soil. She replied that she had been to hear Dr. Cummings preach.

“What!” thundered Samuel; “that crazy, infidel Nazarene?”

“He is not crazy, nor is he an infidel,” retorted Judith, “and so far as I know he preaches the truth.”

“So ho,” screamed her brother, in a fury, “you are one of those who believe his lies, that the world is coming to an end, and we sons of Judah not yet back in the Holy City?”

“He does not say so,” replied Judith; “he believes that we shall first be restored, according to the word of the Lord by the mouth of the prophets. But it was not of this that I have been hearing him preach, but about Christ.”

“Vile wretch,” hissed Samuel, “do you call the crucified malefactor Messiah?”

“Yes,” said Judith, drawing herself up and speaking with magnificent energy. “Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ!”

“Oh, traitor,” cried her brother, seizing her violently by the arm, “do you not know that Messiah is to be king and conqueror, not a crucified blasphemer?”

But Judith shook off his grasp and replied:

“Oh, slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken; ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?”

“A curse upon you,” said Samuel, “constant disgrace of our house and of our nation. How often have you heard this vile doctrine?”

“I have heard this preacher often and gladly,” replied Judith.

“And he has led you to reject and despise our sacred Scriptures!”

“No; but my understanding has been opened to understand those very Scriptures, and I see how it is written, and ‘thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day.’”

Samuel replied by ordering her out of his sight. The next day she found herself locked into her bed-room, and no one came near her until afternoon, when Samuel brought her a

small tray of bread, water and fruit. He closed the door, and, standing against it, told her that she should not leave that room and the adjoining dressing-room until he sent for some rabbis and his uncle to reason with her. Then, "if she returned to obedience, all would be well."

Judith asserted her right to freedom, and challenged the legality of his keeping her thus imprisoned, declaring that nothing which should be said or done could alter her opinion. In the midst of her words Samuel went out and locked the door behind him.

On the second day after the rabbis and the uncle came, and for six hours they and Samuel argued with Judith, exhorted her, threatened her. She only replied to them when she had an apt quotation from Scripture. Finding her immovable, they united in pronouncing the most terrible curses upon her. Judith was exhausted by fasting and excitement. She rose and left the dressing-room, intending also to leave the house, but she found the front door locked and the key withdrawn. As she turned to seek exit by the basement, her brother seized

her roughly to pull her toward the upper staircase, and she fell fainting to the floor.

When she recovered her senses, she found herself removed to a suite of rooms which had evidently been prepared as a prison for her. They were at the back of the house, a bedroom, dressing-room and bath-room, a door having just been made between the two latter. Here a few clothes had been placed in a bureau, but her purse, jewels, and all similar treasures were missing. Her work-box, piano and embroidery materials, with a few volumes approved by the rabbis, had been provided for her; and here, with no look-out but the bleak walls of some high buildings, she seemed destined to pass an indefinite period. Her convent experiences had made Judith wary; no one suspected the bag of mementoes hanging about her neck; nor was she robbed of her Bible, for, fearing that, she carried the book continually in a pocket which she had made in her petticoat. Indeed, no one suspected her of this possession.

But Judith was not now so miserable as she had been in a time when she had had the freedom of the whole house. She now had a well-

spring of consolation and strength; her soul rested in God, her Saviour. It was by this time winter; the days were short, dark and cold; she saw no one but the upper housemaid, a middle-aged woman who brought her her meals, nor could Judith break past this woman and escape as she so came, for Samuel had provided for her entrance by two sets of doors, which should be locked behind her. Indeed, Judith was a close prisoner, but she was a prisoner of hope, and she abode in a stronghold of faith. Two months of this bondage wore away; Samuel came once or twice to demand if she had changed her mind, also to conclude his visit with a threat and a curse.

At last he came in, more angry than usual, declaring that if her obstinacy held out two months longer he should regard her as incurably insane; should call in two physicians to certify thereto, and get out a commission of lunacy against her.

Judith knew that this was no idle threat; her brother was capable of performing it, and English law made it feasible; the unspeakable horrors of a lunatic asylum rose up before her.

When he had left her her fortitude gave way, and bowing her face on her hands she burst into sobs and tears. Thus she was found by the housemaid, a Jewess who had lived several years in the family, and knew her painful history. This woman disliked Samuel Lyons, and increasingly pitied his sister. That night, under pretense of writing to her cousin, the maid wrote a letter to Judith, unfolding a plan of escape. She dared not speak much to the prisoner lest she might be overheard, but she gave her the letter the next day when they were alone, as she was setting in order the rooms occupied by Judith. Judith read the letter several times, considered the plan, saw that almost nothing could be more hopeless than her present case, and signified her acceptance of the proposal by nodding; the maid pointed to the grate, and Judith dropped the letter into the fire.

The housemaid's first act was to take an impression in wax of the key of Judith's room, and get a similar key made, for Samuel Lyons each night saw that his sister was locked up, and carried the key of her room to his own apartment. To be sure, she might be ill in the

night or the house might take fire, but she ought to consider those things herself, he thought, and avoid the danger by obedience.

The kind servant next quarreled with the housekeeper, gave warning to leave in a month's time, received her recommendation from Samuel and secured another place. Judith had neither money, hat, nor shawl, but the maid provided the hat, and Judith demanded a shawl or coat from her brother, complaining that she was often cold when her fire got low. Thus she obtained a shawl and the hat was hidden in the spring mattress of her bed. The plan was that the maid should leave in the afternoon of the set day, taking some articles of Judith's clothing in her own luggage. She would go to a decent lodging, of which she gave Judith the address, and about daylight the next morning Judith would open her door with the key which the maid had obtained for her, steal out of the house when its inmates were in heavy morning sleep, and yet at an hour when, with a bag in her hand like a traveler, she might pass unchallenged through the streets. The housemaid had carefully oiled the hinges and fastenings of the front

door, and encouraged Judith to rely on escaping safely.

While Judith was thus as close a prisoner as she had been in an Italian Convent, she had narrowly escaped seeing a former persecutor. One noon Padre Innocenza rang the bell of the Lyons' mansion. By some singular fortune Samuel Lyons himself met the Padre on the door step. He said that here was a foreigner, and an ecclesiastic, some reminiscence of Judith's life in Italy, which it was his will should be forever forgotten; he told the Padre that Madame Forano no longer lived there, and that he did not know where she might be found. He also gave notice in the house that neither admission nor information should ever be accorded to the Padre, or a similar guest.

The year 1865 had but just opened when Judith Forano effected her escape from the clutches of her brother Samuel. The plan of the maid worked admirably. Judith left the house, carrying a leathern bag, holding her dressing-case and work-box, found a cab coming from an early train, and was driven to the house indicated by her maid. That same day she

sold the ring which Mrs. Bruce had given, and obtained for it twenty pounds. The maid secured her passage in a steamer sailing next day directly from London to New York; her few possessions were packed in a small trunk, and when the steamer began to move down the Thames, Judith Forano was once more a fugitive, seeking safety on the waters. Now she had no father's welcome, no mother's love to anticipate; she was going to throw herself once more on the protection of Mrs. Bruce, trusting that her long silent friend was yet living and faithful, and would aid her in obtaining a support by teaching music and Italian.

On the steamer Judith found an American family who treated her with courtesy, and as they were going to Philadelphia, she traveled in their company from New York. This was most providential, for she failed to find Mrs. Bruce at her former address; her money was nearly gone, she did not know how to seek her friend, and so turned to these new acquaintances for advice. They not only insisted upon her remaining with them, but within a few days found Mrs. Bruce, and, besides, three pupils in Italian. Judith was

warmly welcomed by her former protectress, who established her as a member of her own family. Thus we see our poor wanderer once more safe, and now with a sure foundation for hope and peace.

Reviewing the events of our story until this February of 1865, our attention is especially caught by Padre Innocenza standing at David Lyons' door, and in very broken English demanding *Má dame Forano*. We left the Padre in 1863, busy in his parish among the hills. Nanni Conti had then a wife and a church on the shore of the Adriatic, and the Marchesa and Honor were spending a pleasant summer near the Forano vineyards. We must review then these two years over which Judith Forano's troubles and happy deliverance have carried us.

After that St. Joseph's eve when Padre Innocenza had taken Dr. Polwarth as his confidant he had two main objects in life—to find the child which he had lost through the Innocenti and to train his people in religious and political freedom. The Padre was diligent in the pursuit of either aim; again and again did he seek some distant town or some mountain hamlet to ex-

amine some child suggested to him by the managers of the Innocenti; and yet the Padre never found a child in the least likely to be the one he had sought to lose; moreover he was greatly afraid of fixing on some wrong child and giving the Marchese Forano a spurious heir. Influenced by this fear, he at last ceased to search for the lost one. In teaching his congregation the Padre succeeded better, but he could not give them richer knowledge than he had himself. He had not reached Luther's height "of justification by faith;" his instructions about the Madonna and the Saints wavered very much; they were not to be worshipped, but to be revered, and God was honored in honoring his notable servants; a church without a confessional never dawned on Padre Innocenza's mind; it had helped him to unburden his heart to Dr. Polwarth, and ignorant people needed more of such help in a more fixed form; he had no idea that his flock could walk straight to heaven, after Christ the leader, without having Padre Innocenza to catechise them about all their crooks and stumbles on the road. As to the Eucharist, the Padre could not see in it a memorial sacrament; he

could not dissever it from the idea of *sacrifice*; if *sacrifice* then there must be a bodily presence; and so the priest hovered over a *real presence* that was not exactly what his teachers had taught him, not exactly what Luther held, not what Protestants held, a purely spiritual presence—it was, on the whole, a presence *a la* Padre Innocenza, and nobody understood it, least of all himself! Indeed, we have in this man an Italian and less famous Pere Hyacinthe!

Yet with all these hindrances and drawbacks the Padre was really making progress, and his people were making progress. The parish of Sta. Maria Maggiore breathed a purer air. A new loyalty, honesty, activity awoke in these peasant souls; the darkness of their minds passed; the truths, especially the historical and biographical facts of the Bible, were not hidden from them. Some of Nanni Conti's hymns and tracts were scattered among those who could read, and, best of all, the Padre taught a school wherein the children made wondrous advance, for the priest was a zealous teacher, and Italian children have remarkably sharp wits.

Although this parish was perched high among

the hills, and heretofore nobody had taken a particle of interest in its comings and goings, at last a rumor of the "new doings," "new doctrines" there, spread abroad, and drifted to the ears of the *duomo* priests in Leghorn, Pisa, Lucca and Firenze. These magnates considered the direful reports for a time, sent a spy or two, perhaps, to ask questions, and now a *cordon* of evidence was drawn about the active priest, and the end of the chain was laid in the hand of his diocesan at Firenze. The Bishop prepared to draw matters a little tighter around the Padre. First came a letter with some general cautions against "too much preaching," "too much teaching," "permitting private judgment," "making stirs," and so forth, and so forth.

The Padre's answer was far from satisfactory. It suggested that his flock had souls and that he had duties; his people's souls must be enlightened, he must perform his duties; it also respectfully hinted that the Padre felt his responsibility to an Authority higher than any mortal.

It was not long before the Bishop, by his secretary, responded to this evil document by addressing a long reprimand to Padre Innocenza,

and demanding categorically if he had done, said, taught, thought certain heresies reported against him. The Padre felt the net closing about him, but his courage rose. He replied so clearly to his superior that he received a summons at once to repair to Florence for an investigation of his affairs.

Padre Innocenza received this letter on a Friday. He understood his position. He was held as a priest of Rome; he would by Rome be prohibited preaching; the church, burial ground, and priest's house at Sta. Maria were church property; he could be ejected, the doors closed, a new priest sent in his room. All his labors for these people ended; then suddenly the great love which had grown in his heart for these his nurslings in the faith surged over his soul, and the poor Padre, foreseeing his bereavement, wept bitterly. However, he must act, not weep. He sent word among all his people that he had an especial need to see them on the Sabbath, and that not one must be missing. Accordingly, on Sunday the chapel was crowded, old and young, men, women, and babes filling every seat, and standing in every

aisle and corner to hear what Padre Innocenza had to say. The Padre reviewed what had formerly been taught and done in that parish, and the course he had latterly adopted; he explained to them what he understood as the errors of Rome, and the injuries that the Papal Church had inflicted on the minds, hearts, and liberties of the Italian people. He then told them that he was summoned to answer in Florence, but that he had no fears for himself, especially under the present government; still he felt sure that he would not be allowed to return to the church of his love, the Bishop would close its doors against him, and if he should strive to force himself back it would occasion persecutions, quarrels, lawsuits, and perhaps deeds of violence. He therefore desired his people to consider well if they believed his recent teachings, that they should bind themselves together to obtain good instruction, and not only to hold fast the truth which they had received, but to go on in grace and knowledge.

At this point the impressible Italians burst into such a storm of lamentations and bewailings, tears, sobs, protestations, that the Padre could

not continue his address, but was obliged to leave his pulpit. The people pressed about him, kissing his hands and his clothes, entreating his blessing. Some desired him to remain among them and defy the Bishop; but the Padre felt that such a course would be inexpedient—he must go to Firenze and speak for himself.

Presently a very large, elderly man—one acknowledged as a leader in the Parish—mounted on a bench, and in a loud voice stilled his conferees. He then addressed to the priest a series of questions concerning his differences with the Papal Church.

“We desire to know where you stand, father.”

The Padre replied succinctly to each demand.

“You may then, finally, O Padre, be called an Evangelical?”

“Yes, I may,” replied the priest.

“Tell us, Padre, were you an Evangelical in those days when you taught us nothing, and only cared to receive the dues from us?”

“No, *mio amico*, I was then a good priest of Rome.”

“You remember, Padre, you preached us, one happy morning, a sermon about how God made

the world—we may call it your first real sermon to us, though since then we have to bless you for many sermons—were you *then* an Evangelical?”

“I think that then I was beginning to be one.”

“And since then you have taught us many things; you have been our friend and father; you have taught our children; there has been a progression in your teachings—is it because there has also been a progression in your Evangelism?”

“That is it, my friend. I have gone on more and more in the doctrine of the Evangelicals, and have tried to lead you with me.”

“Then, Padre—I speak for myself and for all here—we are for the Evangelicè: that suits us: it makes us *men*; it regards our minds and seeks our happiness as well as the church does. *Davvero!* we will have here no one but an Evangelical!”

To this all the congregation agreed with cries and shouts.

The Padre had told his people that early the next day he should set off for Florence, and

should probably never see them as a congregation again. The assembly broke up late in the day. Padre Innocenza was so absorbed in grief that he did not notice the business which seemed to be transacted among the people; small coins were collected, and the women gave gold beads off the chains which the young peasants delight to wear, or the pendants of their ear-rings.

Early the next morning the priest opened the door of his beloved home to set out on his journey. He found twelve of the leading peasants of his parish standing near it.

“You have come early to bid me farewell, *amici!*”

“No, Signore; we have come to accompany you.”

“*Amici*, it is not possible; it will cost you much to go and come,” remonstrated the priest, considering their poverty.

“But we have money—it has been contributed by all the people. We go in their name to protect you.”

“But I do not need protection; I am quite safe, *amici!*”

“*Cospetto!*” said the chief spokesman, “we

are not so clear about that. Priests have gone to 'answer,' and have never been heard of after. Possibly Tuscany has not outgrown her old ways. We have heard of torture—eh, also of inquisition, and bonfires on the Piazza del Duomo! No, no, Padre; you may be safe enough, but we don't exactly *feel* it. We go with you; we walk with you into the presence of Ser. Bishop; we come out of that presence with you. We say, 'Ser. Bishop, possibly it is law for you to remove our Padre, to send us another Padre; the church may be yours; we *contadini* know little; we only know if you remove this Evangelical you must look sharp to send us another Evangelical or he won't fit, Ser. Bishop, he won't fit!"

With this goodly retinue did Padre Innocenza go to Firenze. The sturdy *contadini* refused to allow their priest to enter the Bishop's presence without them, and their refusals were so loud-mouthed at the gate of the Episcopal Palace, that the Bishop feared a tumult, for Italians are easily betrayed into what they call "revolutions of the street." The men of "Sta. Maria Maggiore of the hills" were therefore admitted to the

palace court, and as this did not satisfy, they came also with their priest into the audience-hall, where the Bishop and several minor dignitaries were prepared to sit in judgment on his case. The court, thus improvised, did not hold a long sitting. The Bishop was judge, and the other ecclesiastics were all opposing counsel who pleaded against the prisoner. There was no need of witnesses against the accused, for he was to be condemned out of his own mouth. There was no question that he was a dangerous renegade, a heretic, an Evangelical. The twelve *contadini* were a self-constituted jury which the court did not recognize. The judge charged this jury, however, that the culprit was heinously guilty. The jury unanimously bellowed that the charge was not proven. The judge, however, took the decision into his own hands, pronounced Padre Innocenza "guilty," and sentenced him never to preach more, also to leave his parish immediately. At this decree the ecclesiastical court loudly applauded, but the *contadini* jury shouted that the finding of the judge was false and vile. After this deliverance of their views, the twelve men surrounded Padre

Innocenza with a living wall, set their faces toward the door, and conquering all opposition, bore him triumphantly into the street, thence to a *trattoria* where they all feasted on macaroni.

The next day the Padre Innocenza and his party returned home, but the Bishop had been beforehand with them: he had availed himself of that "evil of the age," the electric telegraph, and the Padre found his church locked, and an opponent in possession of his parsonage.

There remained nothing for the ousted priest to do but to depart. Now, there is no man so poor and helpless as an Italian priest of ordinary attainments when he breaks with his church. He has had no private means; his living has been meagre. Cardinals and bishops have seen to it that he has had but the barest pittance for support; he has no treasures, no library, no wardrobe; he goes out of his church stripped of all possessions. This was Innocenza's case, and but for the sturdy interference of his parishioners he would not have been permitted to enter his late home to take the few trifles which belonged to him. The "twelve," however, forced a way for him into the house, and Padre Innocenza

gathered up his effects. Here is the entire list of the belongings of this man :

An old leather portmanteau, three shirts, the clothes he wore and an ancient cloth cloak, two little books bought from Nanni Conti, eight pairs of socks, gifts from the old women of his flock, his psalter, missal and breviary, two silk handkerchiefs and a pair of gloves. The Padre was not burdened with baggage! Misfortunes had pursued him, for his horse had died a month before. He had nothing to sell, and but twenty-seven francs—about twenty-two shillings and six pence, or five and a half dollars—in his pocket. He lodged that night with one of his friends, and preached to an assembly of nearly all his people in the open air, while the new priest sent from Pisa glowered out of the parsonage window.

The next morning Innocenza set out to see Dr. Polwarth. A priest thus leaving his church has no means of support ; he knows nothing of any kind of labor ; nine-tenths of the population everywhere are against him ; if he is not marvellously enlightened, keen of mind, quick of attainment, and deeply spiritual—a *De Sanctis*

in fact—he cannot become a pastor or teacher in the Vaudois Church, where trained men are needed and possessed. He has no one to support him; he must leave his country to earn his bread—and how will he earn it? To a man like Innocenza there was nothing open but teaching Italian, and he must therefore go where some one desired to learn Italian. Thus dolefully circumstanced he appeared once more in the study of Dr. Polwarth. The Doctor had dealt with such cases before; he knew that the ex-priest must go to England, but how to get him there? The journey was expensive; who could provide means?

The Doctor was a wise man; he always made his wife his counsellor. He had ever reaped the benefit of so doing, and he reaped it again in this case. The Doctor told his tale, and explained concerning the trouble, the danger, the expense, who would provide; but Mrs. Polwarth sweetly cut him short, saying:

“It is as plain as possible, my dear. The man must go with Mr. Tompkins in his yacht. The yacht is lying in the bay now; you have only to lay the case before Tompkins. There is room

plenty, food plenty. Mr. Tompkins will be glad of the company." Then, as she was a woman who always honestly referred benefits to their source, Mrs. Polwarth added: "It seems to me that the Lord has sent this yacht here for this very emergency. There might have been no yacht, or a yacht with a wild, ungenerous captain; but here is Mr. Tompkins, a true gentleman."

The Tompkins yacht! We have reached a theme beyond our pen. It was the fastest yacht, the handsomest, the sharpest built, the trimmest-rigged, the tallest-masted, largest-sailed, finest-furnished, best-manned yacht afloat. (We have all this on the authority of Tompkins.)

To this yacht did Dr. Polwarth repair by means of a small boat, and speedily the ruddy countenance of Tompkins appeared, rising out of the cabin staircase like a new sun. Mr. Tompkins' first move was to pay the Doctor's boatman and dismiss him; his next to force the Doctor into the cabin, where a goodly dinner had just been laid on the table. So well did the Doctor prosper that before the third course had been dispatched it had been agreed that Padre

Innocenza should go to England with the Tompkins, and that the small boat of the yacht should bring him off at night.

Dr. Polwarth by mail commended him to a London pastor, and gave him several letters of introduction to merchants at the capital who might be in want of an Italian correspondent. Thus did our poverty-struck Padre Innocenza, his goods, briefly catalogued, and all his expectations vague, with his whole fortune tied up in one pocket-handkerchief, go forth an exile.

The first part of his experiences were not unpleasant. The weather and the accommodations were everything that could be wished, the owner was exceedingly kind to the Padre, and a good sailor. Mr. Tompkins taught the priest English and he in return taught Tompkins a better style of Italian than he had been using; the priest proved the better scholar. So agreeable did the Padre make himself to his host, that when they parted at Portsmouth, Tompkins felt deeply bereft, and very nearly proposed to establish the fugitive as yacht chaplain. In lieu of this he gave him a note to a former butler of his, who let lodgings of a neat and cheap

variety. He also instructed him about cabs and fares, bought his ticket to London, and slipped ten pounds into his hand as a parting gift. The Padre was thus provided with a decent home, some one to help out his stammering speech and guide his ignorance, and ten pounds to keep the wolf at bay until he was able to earn something.

The pastor to whom Dr. Polwarth had written gave Innocenza advice and two pupils; the business men threw some Italian correspondence in his way. But Padre Innocenza had another subject on his mind besides self-support: he had become possessed with a desire to see Judith Forano, confess his crimes against her, tell what he had done with her child, and ask her if her mother heart could devise anything to rescue the lost one and restore it to its rights. Pursuing this plan Padre Innocenza, who had obtained Judith's address from Dr. Polwarth, went to her home, and was dismissed as we have shown.

Padre Innocenza was one of those natures rendered more tenacious by rebuff; difficulties, instead of daunting, inspired him. As soon as he knew that Judith Forano was out of his reach his whole mind was absorbed in finding

her. He wrote to Dr. Polwarth; the Doctor applied to Honor Maxwell. Honor, some little time after, had a letter from Mrs. Bruce, stating that Judith had come to her. Slowly this news traveled around to Padre Innocenza, in London. The Padre had but just provided maintenance for himself in London; he was not possessed of means to pay for his passage to America, but go he must; a letter would not satisfy him: he must see Judith Forano. There is a certain kind of pride dwelling in Americans and English of which Italians are destitute. As he could do no better, Padre Innocenza accomplished his set purpose by engaging as a waiter on a steamer bound for New York. We are told that he performed his duties well. His possessions were much the same as when he left Italy. He received letters to several merchants and one or two ministers, and thus furnished for whatever might befall him, off went Padre Innocenza in search of Judith Forano.

CHAPTER IX.

LEADING THE BLIND.

‘What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?’

“Lord, that I might receive my sight.”

WE have seen that Honor Maxwell was extremely cautious in her conversations with the Marchesa on the subject of religion, not because she desired to conceal her own views, nor because she was indifferent to the spiritual well-being of her friend, but because she feared to awaken in the good lady's mind an antagonism to truth and close her heart to instruction. Honor's was the “slow hastening” of wisdom.

Finding that the Marchesa had an absolute horror of the Bible, Honor concluded to take her some books which presented Bible truths in a clear and attractive form. Before going to the Villa Anteta, in the summer of 1864, she purchased a copy of “Lucille,” by Monod, an

Italian translation issued from the Waldensian press; she also applied to Dr. Polwarth for an Italian copy of "The Blood of Jesus."

"They are scarce," said the Doctor, "but I think I can find you one. Mrs. Polwarth, where is the blue volume called 'The Blood of Jesus?'"

"I gave it to the Vaudois pastor," said Mrs. Polwarth.

"I think we have a black copy."

Inquiry being made for this, Miss Polwarth was found to have lent it to a Signora, who had declined to return it.

"There was a red copy," said Mrs. Polwarth.

But the red copy had been sent on a mission to an Italian soldier.

"Ah! the extra gift copy!" cried the Doctor.

"Why, my dear," said his wife, "do you not remember that when the court spent a month here I sent that as a gift to one of the ladies of the Princess Margarita, hoping that it might do some good in that circle."

The Doctor thought long; he and his wife and his books were always at work.

"I have it," he said; "at my new depository

on the Corso, on the top shelf, there is a copy in paper covers; you can go and ask for that."

Yes; by this time the Doctor had even been able to open a depository for Evangelical books, and his wife had started three schools. When we remember these things, we may, with all true Tuscans, honor Vittorio Emmanuelo!

Miss Maxwell carried her two books to the country, and before long lent the book called "The Blood of Jesus" to Signora Forano. Several days after she asked her:

"And how do you like the book, Signora *mia*?"

"Why, *carissima*, it is not so very good. I can't understand it. And there's that dream in the first part: my common sense tells me that we must put no reliance on dreams."

"But, Signora, that is only in the introduction. How did you like the book itself?"

"I can't understand it. So our priests tell us about the blood in the holy mass, and unbloody sacrifice, and all that. I understand none of it."

"Yet this book and the theory of the mass do

not seem to me at all alike: one contradicts reason, the other enlightens reason."

"Ah? Well, *mia cara*, you Americans understand everything!"

Greatly distressed that the book from which she had hoped so much, had accomplished so little, Honor remained silent.

That evening she reflected that to this thirsty soul she had presented the wine of life in a merely human vessel; and this vessel, good in her eyes, had burdened and offended the Marchesa. Would it not be better to give the precious draught of life in the cup of the Master's own making?

So she waited for another day, and on such a day, when she and the Marchesa were walking in the vineyard, the Marchesa said, looking around on all the lovely scene:

"Ah, Signorina! how charming this world would be without sin!"

"Marchesa," said Honor, quickly, "I have a word for you. The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin."

"*Ecco*," said the Marchesa, "it seems to me that I have heard or thought something like that; do say it once more."

Honor quietly and hopefully repeated the verse.

"There now," said the Marchesa, drawing a deep breath, "and it is not your own prayers, so full of sin, nor yet *plenaria indulgenza*, is it?"

"Only the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son."

"Does it entirely, think you?"

"Cleanseth, and to be clean before God, must be clean indeed."

"Oh, that is what we want! And leaves nothing for penances, nothing for purgatory?" urged Madame Forano.

"From all sin, Signora."

"I don't think, *mia cara*, that you could or would deceive me."

"Assuredly not; and God has said this himself."

"And God cannot lie. Here, then, Signorina, is a wonderful saying. I take hold of it with real satisfaction. These are words not like other words—they come, *mia cara*, like sunshine to the heart."

Honor went home to tell Uncle Francini what had passed. She rejoiced as one finding great

spoil. She looked on her dear Marchesa as taken out of the miry clay and the horrible pit. But Honor's hopes outran facts. The next time she saw her friend, the cautious old lady had had leisure to consider, and dreading nothing so much as being what she called a turn-coat, she was more reserved on the subject of religion than ever before.

Soon after, on a bright morning, the Marchesa came early to the Villa Anteta, and asked Honor to make an excursion on the hills with her to engage a new servant.

"And why have you discharged Baptista?" asked Honor, as they rode slowly between the rose hedges and olive orchards.

"On account of *plenaria indulgenza*," replied the Marchesa.

"Why, I don't understand you," said Honor.

"This is the case, Signorina: I say my prayers, as a poor sinner should. I go to church, kneel in my place, and ask God for what I want. I don't believe a word of that lie set over the door—'Plenaria Indulgenza.' It is against my common sense that a few words said to God in a certain time or place would get us leave from

him to do what he says we must not do. God don't change his mind like that, I'm sure. When God says do not steal, my saying ten more prayers will not make stealing harmless in me. Now, Baptista always went to a *plenaria indulgenza* chapel, for all it is twice as far as our chapel; and the more she went to church, the more our wine and our oil disappeared. So yesterday the Marchese went into the kitchen, and he said: 'Baptista, have you *plenaria indulgenza*?' She said: 'si, Signore.' So he went on, quite calm: 'Then, pray, Baptista, where do all our bottles go?' '*Davvero*,' said she; 'I know nothing about your bottles, Signore.' 'The truth is,' said my husband, 'for every bottle that comes to our table one goes off with you, Baptista. Now, all I want to ask is, if you have *plenaria indulgenza*, and you *should* want to take off our oil and wine, do you not feel free to do it under the indulgence? Can you not get indulgence, *expecting* to take off my bottles?' 'Oh! as to that, Signore,' says Baptista, 'I could if I chose; but that is not saying that I ever *do* carry off your oil and wine, *sicora!*' 'It is enough, Baptista,' said he. 'Depart; *plenaria*

indulgenza has ever been very expensive to masters.' And so, to end my story, *mia cara*, I go to look for another kitchen-maid who does not deal in *plenaria indulgenza*. We are not rich enough to lose much, Signorina; and it is a double injury when a person can rob you and have no prickings of conscience."

Several days after this expedition, Gulio Ravi lost his favorite neck-handkerchief, and vowed a picture to the shrine of the Virgin, on the cross-ways, if he might find it. He did find it within a few hours, for Master Michael had taken it from a post in the vineyard, and used it as a collar to lead home his big dog. Uncle Francini, beholding the spoil, had ordered the boy to carry it back, with a peace-offering of half a franc. When Gulio thus recovered his property, he began to consider that he had been too hasty in vowing, for he would have received the handkerchief without heavenly help; besides, he began to feel that it was hardly worth the price of a picture. Being bound by his vow, for he held this form of speech in great awe, Gulio set himself to redeem it at the least possible cost, and eventually purchased a hideous little wood-

cut of the temptation of St. Anthony, for which he gave three *centessimi*, or half a cent. This he nailed up on the inside of the shrine. Here it met the eyes of the Marchesa and Honor, who had brought their embroidery to the Pavilion to enjoy the morning air. The Marchesa regarded the votive gift with scorn. "What a hideous thing!" she cried, taking it from the wall, and tearing it up. "What folly is this talk of the temptations of the saints! They needn't tell me such stuff; nor yet that the blessed Ser. Jesus was tempted. That Satan could tempt Christ is against all common sense, and I told the Padre so. Why, God could not be tempted by Satan any more than by that block of wood. No, I said to the Padre, you may keep these things for ignorant people, if it is not against your conscience to tell them, but don't tell me of them. Why, down at the *duomo* I heard a priest say that Satan was a fallen angel! Do I believe that? No; of course an angel couldn't fall. I told the Padre so."

"And what did he say to these contradictions?" asked Honor.

"*Mia cara*, what could he say? I had the

best of it. I always hold to my common sense; he merely smiled, and said it was quite immaterial. But I told him no matter of faith was immaterial, and moreover, that I knew who the devil was. I have made up my mind, Signorina, Cain was the devil."

"And who tempts men to sin, Signora?" asked Honor.

"The devil, to be sure."

"But Cain was a man: who tempted him? There must have been a devil back of him. And who tempted Eve? Not Cain, for Cain was not then born."

"*Davvero!* I see, I see. Cain could not have been the devil—who then was it? *Somebody*, surely. Not an angel who fell, for angels cannot fall; if one fell, why not all of them? Probably God, when he made everything, made a devil too—and yet that is not reasonable, for God is good, and can God create evil?"

Alas! poor Marchesa, she had fallen on a knotty theme, the genesis of sin! Honor pitied the poor brain bewildered by its own queries, stumbling upon Adamic sin and temptation. She spoke soothingly: "Dear Marchesa, perhaps

it is our duty to let this question pass, as one which does not concern us, as it does not affect the salvation of our souls. We do not know who the Tempter is, or whence he came, only let us eschew him and all his works. Let us look at a blessed object, Christ the Friend of sinners, who never casts out any who come to him, who died for us, that we might inherit everlasting life."

"Yes," said the Marchesa, seriously, "that is the good news: that is what I think. Of course I don't speak of going to hell: oh, no; I think few get there but the very bad. Between doing the best we can, and penances and purgatory if anything is left over, we are very likely to get clear. For my part I know, whatever any one may say, that God would think a great many times before he sent an honest, religious woman like me to the evil place, to keep company with such an one as the devil," and the Signora returned to her embroidery with exceeding content.

"Oh, Uncle Francini," cried Honor, when she returned to her house, "she is just as far back as ever! She is so blind, the dear, kind creature,

she disbelieves every true thing the priest tells her, and everything I tell her, and her common sense leads her wrong as often as right."

"Courage, *figlia mia*," cried the good uncle, "is it not written, 'I will bring the blind by a way *that* they know not;' that the 'eyes of the blind shall be opened and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped?' 'Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind;' but Christ has caused very many that were blind to see."

In the midst of her disappointment Honor remembered her copy of "Lucille," so she waited for a favorable opportunity and handed it to the Marchesa, saying:

"It is a little story of a lady who, like yourself, feared to read the Bible; and it tells of conversations on that subject—will you not read it?"

"Is it true, Signorina?"

"Quite true, I understand."

The Marchesa took the book, but returned it in a few days, saying that it "bewildered her," she "could not comprehend it. It told of things as they were years ago perhaps."

“You know my church has changed very much of late, Signorina.”

“Has it? I thought it was an unchangeable church, always the same.”

“Oh, by no means. It has changed, evidently. Why, years ago it had the inquisition, and burned people. I don't believe in any kind of persecution, imprisonment, fines—any punishment for opinion's sake. Let men answer to God for opinion.”

“But, Marchesa, it is only a few years since the Count Guicciardini was exiled, Cechetti was imprisoned, and the Madai were sent to the galleys—all for conscience sake.”

“Dear Signorina, I am sorry you have been misinformed. My priest told me all about it. These people were not dealt with on account of opinion, or of Bible-reading, but under the guise of religious conference, and so on, they were exciting rebellion against the Grand Duke's government, and for *that* they were punished; but it was kept quiet, lest sedition should spread. And the proof of that is that the rebellion did spread until the Grand Duke was driven out, and the king came in, in 1860.”

Honor maintaining a silence which was not very acquiescent, the Marchesa continued:

“If I had lived in days of persecution, I think I should have joined the Evangelicals, for it is ever my nature to side with the weak. Besides, if my church so feared inquiry and opposition I should say to her: ‘Only darkness dreads light; only iniquity fears searching out.’ But see, my church is fitted to this advanced and liberal age: she gives religious freedom and asks it. Are not the Evangelici now free in all Piedmont and Tuscany?”

“But I attributed that to the Liberal Government, Signora.”

“Oh, no, to the church. Under the Grand Duke the church was not permitted by the state to be liberal, and give religious freedom; she obeyed Austrian ways. Under this government she can be liberal, and so she is. Yes, my church is very different from what she was two or three hundred years ago.”

“Are you *sure*, Signora—sure that no more persecutions will break out? sure that no priests will lead them on?”

“Signorina, you nearly make me angry. *I*

am sure—yes, I promise you on my word as a Forano—that if ever, in my time, my church, her people or her priests take violence and sword to use against *opinion*, become persecutors, light more fires for martyrs, I, the Marchesa Forano, from that hour will become an Evangelical.”

Dear, impulsive Marchesa, she thought she was very safe in making *that* promise in 1864, and Honor Maxwell thought that the day of her change lay very far away; nor did she desire it to hasten, if it must rise baptized in blood.

Nothing had so amazed the Marchesa as the news that Padre Innocenza had been driven from his parish by the Bishop and had declared himself an Evangelical. The word traveled to the Forano Villa. Gulio Ravi brought the tale to the Marchese. Said the old gentleman:

“If it was written that the man should break his vow and be a renegade to his church, I would that it had pleased God that it had happened before my poor Nicole died. If Padre Innocenza had been then an Evangelical, he would not have helped conceal the marriage, nor would he deny its validity; then we might

have looked after them, and possibly have preserved the babe."

"Let me go to Sta. Maria and get the true story about the Padre," suggested Gulio, secretly hoping, but wildly, to get some word that might release him from the cruel bondage of his oath.

Therefore Gulio went to Sta. Maria in the hills, but of course heard nothing that concerned himself; however he returned full of news.

"All the parish has become Evangelici. Not one will go hear the new Padre. He said mass in an empty church, and in the midst the boy who assisted him—who had assisted Padre Innocenza formerly—changed his mind and ran away. The next time the boy would not put on his surplice and come, until the Padre gave him a thrashing: then he went; and that evening down comes his father and gives him a thrashing for going, and so drags him off by the collar. The new Padre brought a boy from Pisa. At last the Bishop sent another Padre, thinking he would be better received. What do these people do but march up in a body to the chapel, roaring: 'Are you an Evangelical?' So the Padre said 'No,' and cursed all Evangelicals. 'WE ARE

EVANGELICI!' bellowed these people, and away they went; and one of them climbed a wall, and, sitting on the top, read a little book aloud, a book sold to him by that disastrous Nanni Conti, whose mission it is to disturb the content of honest souls."

Although we have this story from Gulio Ravi, we find that it is nearly true, the facts at Sta. Maria Maggiore of the hills having surpassed even the highest efforts of that ingenious young man's imagination.

The fact that he was bound by an oath to an avowed heretic ate into Gulio's soul like a canker. Must he see the Marchese lonely and heirless because he had made an oath to a renegade? Afraid to decide for himself, he went to his master.

"Signore, if I make an oath to a man, and that man turns heretic, am I not at liberty to break my oath?" he demanded.

"His change of mind can make no difference in your obligations," said the unsuspecting Marchese.

On another occasion Gulio made a second charge.

“Does a priest lose his powers and abilities by turning Evangelical, as Padre Innocenza did?”

“I don’t see that he loses anything but his parish,” said the Marchese, tranquilly: “that and his position in his first church.”

“*Sicora!*” mumbled Gulio to himself; “then the old Padre is as able to curse and torment and ruin me as ever.”

That very evening Nanni Conti, on his way to Firenze, passed by the Villa Forano, and Gulio chanced to see him. He resolved to take Nanni’s opinion, so he asked:

“Are oaths binding?”

“To be sure they are,” replied Nanni.

“But suppose you make an oath to do or keep something, or give or sell, or marry—any oath—and after wish you had not?”

“God says,” replied Nanni, solemnly, “that it is better not to vow than to vow and not pay.”

“Oh, it’s all over with me,” groaned Gulio to himself. “My poor master, I must see you die unsatisfied!”

Then, in hours of mad imaginations, Gulio

wondered if an oath were binding after its exactor were dead. If not, he would get a dispensation, search the world over, and murder that renegade Padre, and so be free. Gulio's soul swelled within him at the thought. Jolly Gulio, he would not have murdered his greatest enemy. Still he *thought* he would make way with the Padre. But would he be a gainer? He asked the Marchese:

"Signore, if I make an oath to a man who dies, then when he is dead am I free?"

"An oath for his lifetime, or for always?" asked the Marchese.

"For always," faltered Gulio.

"Then keep it always, you foolish fellow; you torment me continually about oaths. Make no more, make no more, Gulio."

"I won't; I swear—"

"There you are again!" said the Marchese.

"Tell me yet, Signore: have you heard that people have the power to haunt you after they are dead?"

"I have heard it, Gulio."

"And is it true, think you? Suppose you had killed a man?"

“Horrible supposition!” exclaimed the gentle Marchese. “Yes, Gulio, then I think he *would* haunt me.”

“Alas! I am lost!” moaned Gulio.

“What, what, Gulio! Have you killed any one?”

“No; I had only made up my mind to—if it would pay, Signore.”

CHAPTER X.

LEAVING ALL FOR CHRIST.

“They lanced his flesh with knives; after that they stoned him with stones; then pricked him with their swords; and last of all they burned him to ashes at the stake. Thus came Faithful to his end.”

IF, in the autumn of 1865, we desired to visit Barletta, we might have Nanni Conti for a fellow-traveller; for in all the mellow glory of an Italian October we find him journeying through Southern Tuscany, turning aside by Ortobello and climbing the hills—as he has done many a time since he and Sandro passed that same way—to visit the patriarch and his wife in the lonely mountain *casetta*. As Nanni surmounted the last ascent, and the road lay level before him as it wound through the wood, he saw the old dame Marie standing in her doorway, and the huge form of her aged husband moving along the clearing, followed as

usual by his dog and two goats. The old mother at once began waving a welcome, but the man stood as one transfixed with pained surprise; and not until Nanni was near enough to take his hand did the cotter look in the Evangelist's face. He replied to Nanni's cheery greeting by a question, asked eagerly:

“Saw you no one between us, my son?”

“I saw none but yourself, Monna Marie, and these brutes.”

“I saw some one. The Capuchin friar Benedetto. He was nearer you than ever before, yet he did not touch you.”

“You have often warned me against the friar, father,” said Nanni, as he entered the cottage; “and I frequently meet him in the streets of Bartetta. Hitherto I have had nothing from him but maledictions, and I trust in God's mercy to get no worse at the man's hand. As for the curses, my father, you know the Arabians say, ‘Curses, like chickens, come home to roost.’”

“Do not despise warning, my son, even from me. I myself do not know the meaning of my visions, nor whence they come.”

“I do not despise them. I believe these im-

pressions of yours are the result of your long anxieties, dangers, loneliness, and your care for me and my friends. Yet I think God often warns and guards his children by very simple means. Your words have made me careful not to disturb the friar in any needless manner. I have thought that there might be a danger hanging over the children of our families—that the friar might capture some of them, as in the Mortara case, and we not be able to regain possession, which would be heart-rending. As all Ser. Jacopo's sons, and the child of my sister Mariana, were baptised in the Roman Church, they might plead that as a claim on them. We have therefore been careful to watch the little ones, to warn them, to see to it that they do not wander far from our own doors, and that they are housed before nightfall. God keep them; they are very gracious children. Joseph is doing well in his school up in the valleys, I hear."

"And how is the nice *bambino* Sandro?" asked Monna Marie.

"Hardly a *bambino* at nineteen," said Nanni, smiling. "He is a noble youth, is Sandro: honest, cheery, busy, godly. He does half the

work of the shop, and is moreover a great help to us in the church and school. The boy has a notably fine voice, and he teaches the young people to sing well the psalms and hymns, and he leads our singing in service."

"God give him grace to witness a good confession," said the old man, shaking his head mournfully.

"God does so give him grace: he witnesses for Jesus each day of his life, following the footsteps of his master," said Nanni.

"I meant such confession as the martyrs witnessed," said the old man.

Monna Marie began to weep. Nanni replied:

"He who gives grace for each day's living will also give grace for dying; and if God calls his servants to him through any peculiarly bitter death, he gives them abounding grace to meet that demand. Has he not said, 'My grace is *sufficient* for thee?'"

With the next morning Nanni was up early to be on his way; at the first railroad station he intended to pursue his journey by cars. The patriarch was anxious that he should remain with him for a day or two to visit some families scattered among the hills.

“I cannot,” said Nanni; “I have been absent from my work over a fortnight. Besides, my father was very feeble when I left home; nor was my wife well. I am told that a colporteur is coming from Florence to visit this district within a few weeks; you will see him, and take him to these families; meanwhile this is the work the Lord has laid upon you in your old age; to teach and comfort this scattered flock.”

“May the blessed Ser. Jesus go with you, my son,” said the aged man, taking Nanni’s hand and looking wistfully at him. “I cannot tell if I shall see your face again—this side the city that hath foundations.”

As for Monna Marie, she folded the young Evangelist in a motherly embrace, weeping as if she parted from him beside a grave. The shade cast on his spirits by this melancholy farewell soon passed from Nanni’s mind. He was naturally of a hopeful, courageous temper, and he had a strong trust in God, an assurance that however he led his people it would ever be in a right way.

Aside from the old man’s forebodings, and the thought of his father’s failing strength,

Nanni had but little to make him sad. He had this year been finally stationed at Barletta, to spend all his time there in taking charge of the church and school. This church now numbered thirty-five members, and there were thirty children in the school. Nanni and Assunta lived in the house with his sister Mariana Sandro; and another of Ser. Jacopo's numerous boys occupying an upper room. These families abode in the greatest harmony together; they labored industriously each day, and had usually enough for their simple wants. As Nanni looked forward to reaching this happy home after his two weeks' absence at Florence his heart bounded with joy, and he fervently thanked the God who had so greatly blessed him.

And yet we must not suppose that Nanni had met with no opposition in his field of labor, that the little church had had only sunshine in its course; it had grown by the storm as well as by the sun. Thirty-five converts to Evangelism in one town were never made without stirring the wrath of Rome. A Vaudois church, its school, its settled pastor, its regular gatherings, had not failed to excite deepest enmity. The Evangel-

ists, on their part, had been very wary; they had never boasted, made no public demonstration, pursued their way with the utmost quietness. A middle-aged couple with two children, neighbors of Ser. Conti, having joined the Evangelicals, the upper room of their house was used on Sabbath as a church, on week-days as a school-room. Each pupil provided his own chair; a few planed boards were procured, and these, stretched between chairs, furnished seats sufficient for Sunday services. During the week these same boards, lifted on tressels, were desks for the children. Nanni had painted on the wall several texts, and a square for a blackboard for his pupils. During service the windows were kept shut, and the singing and preaching were in a low key. The Vaudois establishment at Florence had given this church some Bibles, school books, and psalm books; the people paid for the schooling of their children a very small sum weekly, and gave Nanni, their pastor, what they could in money or food; beyond this they received a small sum from the churches in the valleys. Yet in spite of all this quiet and humility the Evangelicals were a marked people.

So much petty persecution did they suffer from their Romish neighbors that they by degrees left their former abodes and collected in the street which held their church and pastor. This became known as the "Evangelical quarter."

Anxiety for the safety of their young children, who might be spirited away, was a main reason for this massing of the Evangelical forces. It had at first been difficult to get house-room, for as soon as a man joined the Vaudois he was ejected by his landlord, and found other owners of property unwilling to receive him whom THE CHURCH had cursed. Providentially the owner of three or four humble tenements near Ser. Jacopo's abode became a convert, and his houses were rented to his brethren. Care of the property, regular pay and high prices combined to induce two or three Romanist landlords, less hostile than many of their townspeople, to let dwellings to the outcast Vaudois.

But when thus housed near together and about their church, the troubles of this congregation were not ended. The men who had had regular employment were dismissed as heretics by their masters, and could only get chance work.

Hardly any one but poor Evangelicals patronized the shop of Ser. Jacopo; the Barletta people had rather buy poor leather and work than trade with a "turn-coat." So the Vaudois who had been a tailor lost his custom; and the green-grocer had only his poverty-struck brothers to deal at his shop; and the *facchino*, or coal-seller, lost half his customers. These people had always been poor; hardly one of them had had savings, and now that their daily gains were diminished, they were sorely pressed for even the very necessaries of life.

And what was true at Barletta in 1865 is true to-day of the "Evangelicals"—the converts from Romanism—in very many Italian towns. These people who gathered each Sabbath to hear the truth from the lips of Nanni Conti had literally left all to follow Christ. Their relatives and friends who were Romanists, abandoned them; they were cursed and sometimes pelted in the streets; they were poorly fed, clad and warmed, and there was little prospect of their circumstances soon improving.

Still they were resolute; not one looked back from the plow; they were a united and faithful

band, and so exemplary in their daily conduct, such orderly citizens, and so graciously forgiving of injuries, that they were already beginning to live down the opposition of their fellow-citizens, and Nanni Conti hoped the day might come when Evangelicals could rent homes, obtain work, sell their wares, and go in and out in peace as well as any of their neighbors.

When, in this October, Nanni had reached Barletta, and was hurrying to his home in the "Evangelical quarter," he was suddenly stopped by the Capuchin friar, Benedetto, who had never before spoken directly to him.

"Tell me, villain heretic," said the friar, "is it true that Joseph, the second son of Ser. Jacopo the *calzolajo*, has gone up into Piedmont to learn to be a Vaudois priest?"

"It is true," said Nanni, briefly and quietly.

The Capuchin planted himself with his back against a sunny wall, and, clenching his fists, poured forth such a horrible stream of blasphemy and malediction that Nanni hurried along at the top of his speed to get out of hearing of it. The pain which filled his heart at this man's hatred and wickedness, reviving as it did

the warnings of his aged friend among the hills, shadowed Nanni's face when he entered his home and received the warm greetings of his wife and sister. He then went into the next house to see Ser. Jacopo's family and his old parents. His father was evidently failing fast; but the old man's eye was bright and his hope firm; that anchor which had been the stay of his last days on earth held now that he was entering the swellings of Jordan.

Returning to his own house, Nanni told Assunta that he had a small parcel sent her by Miss Maxwell. Assunta opened it eagerly, and found some pretty garments and an envelope. In this letter, to her unbounded astonishment, she found not only a friendly letter, but one hundred francs. Honor Maxwell had guessed the poverty which surrounded the little struggling church at Barletta, and she knew Assunta would find ample use for her gift. She, however, strictly charged her to keep enough of the money for her own need, and Nanni insisted that this should be so.

"It is such a sum!" cried Assunta. "Well, Nanni, thirty francs will be all I can use; and I

will give Monna Lisa twenty; she has many cares now, with our feeble parents. Then, you know, the rent of our church must be paid, or the poor Banchetti will be in a desperate state, they are so badly off now. And what a comfort it will be to pay the rent at once, without feeling that our poor neighbors are really going without bread to raise the money."

"Yes," said Nanni, "we will pay the rent immediately."

"Then there are two or three sick ones—we must give them a little help; and a franc or two each to the other mothers who are in great need. We will divide it as well as we can, Nanni. I am sure it comes from God, just when we need it most."

Indeed this small sum of an hundred francs shed light and comfort over all the church at Barletta.

As the year closed Nanni found more fruit of his labors—an old man, his wife, and an unmarried daughter joined the Evangelical Church, in the face of much opposition and in the prospect of entering into the deepest poverty on account of their religion.

As the last day of 1865 faded to its close, two angels came to the home of the Contis—the Angels of Life and Death. These visitants parted on the thresholds of the Vaudois homes. The Angel of Life entered Nanni's door, and the Evangelist welcomed his first-born—a daughter. The Angel of Death paused in the upper room of Ser. Jacopo's dwelling, and, standing by the bedside of the aged Ser. Conti, spoke in his ear:

“I am come to tell thee that thy Master hath need of thee.”

The old man turned to his children, saying:

“How wonderful it is that I go now joyfully into the presence of God, when for nearly all my life long I had no hope for good things after death, when I knew not that Christ could take the sting of death away. In my very old age the Jesus to whose glory I had all my life been blind, opened my eyes to see his mercy, and now I go to be in his presence forever.” He then gave each of his children and grandchildren his blessing, sent also a blessing to Assunta and the little one next door, said to his wife, “We part but for a very short time,” and so “fell on sleep.”

During these years from 1860 a burial-ground had been opened by the city of Barletta a little distance from the town, and *all* the citizens were taxed for its purchase and support. There had been no deaths among the Vaudois until this of Ser. Conti, and now came the question whether the Evangelicals, whose undoubted right to pay cemetery taxes was recognized, would be granted a right to bury their dead in a spot which they helped maintain. The priests in charge of the cemetery warned Ser. Jacopo that his father could not be buried in the graveyard.

“What must I do with my dead?” asked the *calzolajo*.

“Pitch him into the sea, if you choose,” said the priest.

Ser. Jacopo and Nanni now went to the Prefect and asked if they had not a right to use the Communal Cemetery. The Prefect admitted this right. He was a stranger, almost, in the town; a man of liberal views, who had secretly admired the decency and diligence of the little Protestant community. Armed with his authority Ser. Jacopo and his neighbors put old

Ser. Conti's body in a coffin, laid it on a bier, covered it with a large black shawl—for they were too poor to buy other drapery, and the Romish undertaker would have nothing to do with them—and so set out, Nanni walking before his father's corpse and the little grandchildren trooping after, to give their dead Christian burial.

About half way to the cemetery they were overtaken by a messenger from the municipality. The right, said the messenger, of the Evangelicals to bury in communal ground was unquestioned by the Prefect, but the priestly party had collected their adherents, and were now prepared to defend the burial-place from what they called sacrilege. The Prefect did not feel strong enough to combat this party. The Evangelicals, as the weaker side, must yield; therefore he forbade them to go into the cemetery, but commanded them to make Ser. Conti's grave in a waste piece of land under the north wall of the communal ground, which land the Prefect gave his word to have immediately enclosed and prepared as a burial-spot for Evangelicals.

Greatly grieved, the band of mourners obeyed

this order. They stood about the bier while some of their number dug a grave. During this time Nanni preached comforting words to his few hearers. While the simple burial service was going on, the party who *guarded* the cemetery yelled, hooted, and threw stones. When Sandro pressed a bit of board into the head and foot of the mound thrown up over his grandfather's body, and the Evangelicals turned to go home, the voice of the Capuchin friar Benedetto rose high from the opposing mob:

“We'll save you burying any more!”

That night the acre in which Ser. Conti was buried was plowed and re-plowed with two yoke of oxen.

Notwithstanding these persecutions, the next Sabbath, two brothers named Monti joined the Evangelical Church, bringing their number up to forty.

On Monday morning—the first Monday in 1866—Friar Benedetto set off for Rome, and was not again seen in Barletta for some time.

After the disturbance about her husband's burial old Monna Conti took to her bed, which

she never again left, but lay there slowly dying of sorrow, privation, and old age. Her children nursed her with the tenderest love, and each day as the old woman drew nearer her end her faith brightened, and her appreciation of spiritual truths became more and more clear.

Quietly pursuing their own work; kind, as they had opportunity, to all around them; training diligently their children, and bearing bravely their extreme poverty, the church at Barletta pursued its way during the remainder of the winter. Nanni's child was baptized according to the Vaudois rite, in February.

The Fari family, who had been among the first hearers of the Evangel in Barletta, still kept aloof from public meetings, or from any open expression of sympathy with the Protestant Church. Secretly they were very friendly to many of the *Evangelici*; Monna Fari was particularly fond of Assunta, and in private this family showed the Vaudois many favors. Their visits, however, were by night; and when Nanni would urge Ser. Fari to examine the Scriptures, and then honestly follow the teachings of the Holy Book, the wily Italian would reply:

“I don’t mind telling *you* that I’m sure you’re right, for you will not betray me; but it is not safe to belong to you; poverty, loss, and maybe worse would befall us.”

Carnival passed as usual in Barletta, and Lent came. On the first day of Lent Friar Benedetto, the Capuchin, reappeared, and in his company two priests from Rome. The three began a visitation from house to house among the Romanists, and within two days the effects of their presence began to be seen. Several of the more bigoted Romanist women became loud in their denunciation of the “Protestanti,” shook their fists as they met them on the streets, and prophesied that soon Holy Church would be avenged of her adversaries.

The two foremost priests of Barletta also on Sabbath preached against the “heretici,” strictly prohibiting their people from having any dealings with them, from speaking to them, showing or receiving kindness, or in any way countenancing an abominable schism against the Holy See.

The Evangelicals hearing the mutterings of this storm, resolved to weather it, as they had many storms before, by patience and humility.

They remained as much as possible within doors, kept their children off the streets, did not appear at their windows, and in every way tried to banish themselves from the angry eyes of their enemies. It was announced that the two priests from Rome were Padre Postiglione and Padre Trentadue,* who had come from the Holy Father to preach a *Novena* during the first part of Lent, for the express purpose of "putting down Protestantism." While visitation preparatory to this *Novena* was in progress Nanni received a letter from a village at a little distance to the north, a few miles inland from the Adriatic coast. The people of this village stated that they had no priest: that they were deeply anxious to hear the Evangel as it was preached at Barletta, and begging him to come to them for at least a fortnight, that they might "hear something comforting about Ser. Jesus." This letter was so sincere and pathetic, it gave such a picture of a people hungering for the bread of life, that Nanni was fain to go. He laid the matter before several members of his congregation, and they advised him to go, accompanied

* We give the real names of these two.

by one of the two Monti brothers, the last additions to the Barletta church.

The commotion was so increasing in Barletta that it was suggested that a two-weeks closing of church and school might be advisable; some of the parents feared their children might be mobbed or stolen on their way to their lessons. While Nanni was absent, the children could be kept in their homes, and prayer-meetings could be conducted from house to house. By the time Nanni returned, the priests from Rome would have concluded their mission, the townspeople would have returned to tranquillity, and public services could be safely resumed.

Yielding to these counsels, and to a great desire to preach the Gospel to these strangers who seemed prepared by God to receive it gladly, Nanni and young Monti bade their friends farewell, and, having been earnestly commended to God's keeping, left Barletta on their mission.

Going out of the city Nanni met himself coming in. A wraith! a wraith! say some. No, not a wraith, but the new Sub-Prefect of Barletta, who bore so close a likeness to Nanni that they

might have been twin brothers. They each recognized this resemblance, and laughed as they passed on their way.

“Who was that?” asked the Sub-Prefect of a *polizia* lounging near, pointing after Nanni as he spoke.

The *polizia* shrugged his shoulders.

“A heretic priest.”

“Ho, indeed! *Davvero!* I can take his place and nobody know!”

Was the Sub-Prefect also among the prophets?

“You’d be far safer in your own place, *sicora, illustrissimo!*” said the *polizia*, with another shrug.

The *Novena* had now fairly begun. Padres Postiglione and Trentadue preached with a frantic energy which drew crowds into the churches. They proclaimed that they had unlimited indulgences and heaven set open for all who heard and heeded them; that the Admirable Mother herself had sent them to her beloved town of Barletta, once so pious, now led away by heretics, who were reopening the seven wounds in her sacred heart, and trebly multiply-

ing the swords that pierced her immaculate bosom. Mary had never been so cruelly despised, rejected and maltreated as now at Barletta, and she mourned in heaven, seated in glory by her Son, over the defection of Barletta; her woe had cast a shade over the celestial courts, and stilled to sighs the angelic chorus.*

Thus they set forth the deplorable evil and sorrow of heresy. It remained, then, to suggest the remedy. They recalled the history and old authority of the church, and her mighty vindication of her power in days gone by. The knife and the cautery were for virulent ulcers. The *Evangelici* were society's ulcers—where was the knife and the fire to destroy them? Who discovered gunpowder? a holy friar. And why did the saints permit him to make this amazing discovery? because gunpowder was ordained as another remedy against heresy; guns and cannon were part of the church's arming against an evil world.

“Pave your way to heaven with the bodies of Mary's foes!” cried Padre Postiglione.

* We give the substance of these harangues, as taken from the Tuscan papers of that date.

“Thunder at the eternal gate with the guns which cut off the rebels against the church!” shouted Padre Trentadue.

By such fierce exhortations these two men stirred the maddest passions of the superstitious, hasty, unlettered citizens of Barletta. On the second day preceding St. Joseph’s Day the “sermons” were answered by loud cries, “*Viva il Papa!*” “Death to heretics!” “*Viva Madonna!*”

All the city was in a ferment. News of the excitement reached the Prefect, who was, like all other Italian men of any education, “too busy” to attend parish church. He sent word to the Padres that he desired them to moderate their tone and not excite the populace too much even on holy themes; the municipality desired quiet, and only so much religion as was consistent with quiet. He also notified the *polizia* that if any tumult threatened they must keep the peace. The police at once made their arrangements to look very closely after the suburbs, where no further tumult than that occasioned by children, goats and cats was to be expected.

In the darkness of the second day before St.

Joseph's, Ser. Fari found his way to the house of Ser. Jacopo. The *calzolajo*, his wife and seven sons, Mariana and her daughter, and Assunta and her babe, were gathered in the shop of Ser. Jacopo, which was also the usual evening sitting-room of the family.

"I have come to warn you to be careful," said Ser. Fari. "There was terrible preaching against you at the *duomo* to-day. I wish you were all out of town. Cannot you go away?"

"How could we? We have neither money, friends, nor place of refuge," replied Ser. Jacopo. "Besides, the old mother is quite bedridden. We have no place but this: we must abide here."

"I shall not go to the *duomo* to-morrow, or the next day," said Ser. Fari. "My family and I will keep St. Joseph's Day at home. But I am greatly troubled for you. I don't know what the people mean. They may mean nothing but to relieve their minds by violent words; but they have desperate men to head them, and they might do anything. Keep within doors."

After Ser. Fari was gone, the Vaudois family sat in silence for a long time, pondering what

measures against them their infuriated neighbors would be likely to take. At last Assunta said:

“I feel sure what they will do: they will steal our children, to make them go back to the old faith. They always have stolen Vaudois children. Oh! worse than death, to think of our daughters trained up for nuns, our sons made friars; to think that they shall be taught to hate their parents' faith and persecute their parents' church!”

At these words Mariana clasped her daughter to her breast and burst into loud weeping. Monna Lisa caught up her youngest son, now entering on his seventh year, and kissed him passionately, exclaiming:

“Oh! *mi bambino! mi bambino!*”

Ser. Jacopo looked on the sorrowful scene as overwhelmed with grief as any of them. Then he rose, and, extending his hands, said:

“Our help *is* in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.’ We will ‘trust in the Lord forever: for in the Lord JEHOVAH *is* everlasting strength.’ Beloved, beneath are the ‘everlasting arms;’ let us fall upon them, and they

can lift us into perfect safety, even unto heaven itself. Let us pray."

Then, as that group of terrified and helpless ones fell on their knees, Ser. Jacopo began to pray as he was taught of God. All the fears of these people centered in the children of their families, and for these the pious *calzolaio* made intercession. Having ended his prayer, he stood for some while in a reverie, his head bent on his breast; then he looked up cheerfully and said:

"I believe I have gotten an answer from God; this verse is impressed on my mind: 'I will save thy children.' *Amici!* let us take this in humble faith, rest on it as God's pledge to us, and I doubt not he will be as good as his word."

"Well," said Monna Lisa, after a few moments' time, in which their horizon seemed to have cleared a little, "God saves by means; and the way he often answers prayer is to teach his people what means to use. Don't you say so, Assunta? That is the way it was in the Bible stories. And now I have put in my mind a place where we can speedily hide our children, if it seems needful. You know there is a deep black recess in our cellar behind the great arch.

No one knows of that place, and it is not easy to find. I propose to go at once with some of the boys, show them the way there, and prepare the place for them if they must be hidden. We could put there some candles and a little food, and they could fly there on the first necessity of escape. I have not been there since I was a child, and no one knows of the place."

"Oh, Lisa, that is a good thought," said her sister Mariana.

"It may be, indeed," said Ser. Jacopo. "At least Lisa, Sandro and I, and Forano, will go down with you and see this place."

Monna Lisa took an oil lamp and a broom, and, followed by her husband, started down the damp and mouldy stone staircase of the cellar; looking back, she said:

"Step lightly over this rubbish cast here, that it may not seem to have been disturbed."

They heeded this wise injunction, and Lisa led them across the chill cellar. Spiders, rats, lizards, cobwebs, mould, held riot there. She stooped, and, crowding behind the arch, stood upright in a recess some seven feet high, nine long and four wide. The floor was earth, and the walls were of stone, brick and cement.

“Terrible place,” said Forano, shuddering.

“We could never be found here, at least,” said Sandro.

“It may be God’s refuge for you, my poor sons,” said Lisa, weeping.

“We can prepare it,” said Ser. Jacopo; “but I pray we may not need it.”

“I shall at once sweep these walls and the floor thoroughly to get off the mould and vermin. You, Sandro, may go and bring a pot of burning *brache*, a couple of fumes, and a *faschie*, and we will light them on the floor to burn up any poison air. Bring also a little wooden box, that is in the shop corner, and two candles.”

Sandro departed on his errand, Ser. Jacopo held the light, and Monna Lisa began her sweeping. When she had cleansed the place of about half a bushel of mould, cobwebs and damp earth, Sandro returned with his fuel. The fumes are round, chocolate-colored cakes, an inch thick, and about three inches in diameter. They are made of the small roots and refuse about olive trees, ground and prepared with sawdust, and pressed together. They are used rather to keep fire than to burn readily. Having

set the box containing the candles on a great block of stone across the farther end of the recess, Sandro poured out the burning *brache*, broke the fumes and laid them upon it, and scattered the twigs of the *fascina* over all. The twigs broke into a blaze, revealing the walls of the little prison.

Forano carried the sweepings to a distant corner of the cellar, and Lisa said:

“We will now put here some provisions—a flask of oil and a flask of wine, and on the stairway I will keep constantly a large loaf which could be brought here at any minute; also a candle, a candlestick and a box of matches. We will also fold the big sheepskin, and leave it in the stairway to be brought down. Remember, my boys, if you are obliged to fly here, you will take with you the sheepskin and the loaf, make no breath of noise, and do not light your candles oftener than is really needful. It may be a number of hours before your father and I would dare come to you; but in no case come out till we have called for you.”

“Of course,” said Sandro, “as I am grown up, I am in no more danger than you and father,

and I would stay with you; but Forano had better come down to care for the little ones, and Bepina can take care of Aunt Assunta's baby."

Bepina was Widow Mariana's child, ten years of age. Monna Lisa having made her preparations her mind was somewhat relieved thereby, and the family retired, but for a wakeful and anxious night.

The next day was remarkably bright and warm. The golden sunshine seemed to rebuke fears.

The Protestants kept within doors, listening for every sound; but no ill befell them. At the Cathedral the Roman priests, disregarding the request of the Prefect, preached more furiously than ever. This was the eve of St. Joseph's Day, and the third anniversary of Assunta's marriage.

On the morning of this day Ser. Jacopo and Sandro, accompanied by Ser. Banchetti, in whose upper room the services were held, went to the Prefect, resolved to state to him their fears and ask if the Evangelists were in any danger; also to entreat his good offices. The Prefect and Sub-Prefect received them kindly, but laughed

at their fears. The Prefect declared he could keep order, if the Vaudois were discreet and did not provoke attack; Italians would not injure Italians; a few black looks, hard words, and a severe letting alone was the worst they need expect.

“And you are such orderly citizens, such kind neighbors, that that will wear off after a time,” said the Prefect.

“Your priest might be mobbed if he were here and showed himself on the street,” said the Sub-Prefect. “He was wise to go away; it may have saved him a black eye and some rotten eggs. But do you all pursue your work and say nothing; the *Novena* will end to-morrow; the strange priests will depart; Barletta will take the sober second thought, and all will be well.”

“We fear most for our children, Ser. Prefect, lest they be stolen from us and we are not able to recover them,” said Ser. Jacopo.

“Never fear; no one wants your children. The world is full of children, and they are only valuable to their own parents.”

“But we remember young Montara, and others,” said Sandro.

“Tutt, tutt. If any one takes one of your children I promise you I’ll see to having it brought back. You are not Jews, like the Montara, but Italians—*sicora!*”

St. Joseph’s Day dawned in matchless beauty. The Papists crowded to the Cathedral; the stall keepers made *fritata*, the legitimate dainty of the occasion, at every corner. The Prefect had reassured the hearts of the *Evangelici*; they were confident in their own good intentions and in the magistrate’s promised protection.

The house of Ser. Jacopo stood on the Via degli Angeli, and faced a street running into this called the Via Maria. The Via degli Angeli ended, a few rods from Ser. Jacopo’s house, in a small public square, paved with stone, having an iron flagstaff in the centre, surmounted by an iron Virgin. This square was called the Piazza della Virgine.

The fears of the *Evangelici* had so subsided that in their own houses they pursued their customary avocations, taking care to keep their younger children within doors.

While the services were proceeding in the Cathedral the streets were quiet, and Sandro seized

the opportunity to go to a butcher's stall for a bone to make broth for his grandmother, who was unusually feeble; while Assunta ventured to go and visit a member of the church, who was lying very ill in a house at the extremity of the Via degli Angeli. None of the dying one's family could read, and so Assunta hid her Testament in her bosom, took her babe in her arms, and went for a few moments to read to and pray with the sufferer.

But already, at the *duomo*, the priests had inflamed the multitude to madness, crying to them to do deeds worthy of St. Joseph and his day, to avenge the blessed Madonna, to defend the cause of Holy Church and win heaven for themselves.

"Fire and sword; cudgels, stones, fire *ought* to be the meed of heretics. Shame on you cowards, renegades, heretics! you are all *Evan-gelici!*" bellowed Padre Postiglione, leaning from his pulpit, purple with fury.

"Let us go to rescue Mary!" yelled Padre Trentadue, snatching up a crozier.

"Let us purge our city!" shouted the senior priest of the *duomo*.

The frenzied multitude started up with loud cries, and, headed by four priests (two of Barletta and two of Rome), Benedetto the friar, and a number of *women*, rushed into the streets howling for blood. The *duomo* was far from the Protestant quarter and near the Prefecture. The Prefect, in dismay, gathered a few policemen and ordered them out, while the Sub-Prefect ran to bring more. The first fury of the rioters, therefore, turned on the officers of the municipality, whom the stranger priests denounced as foreigners and heretics. The mob fell on the police and killed one of them; the others fled, and the crowd burst open the gates of the Prefecture, and in fifteen minutes had completely sacked it. The Prefect hid in a tool-house in his garden and so escaped.

The insurgents now darted about the streets looking for Protestants, and in the chief Corso found *Ser. Bianchetti*, who leased the room for the church; him they dispatched with cudgels, and, dragging his dead body with them, started to go to the Protestant quarter and slay every man there. As they pressed on, mad with rage, to put this threat into execution, they en-

countered the new Sub-Prefect running to the Prefecture a little in advance of some half-dozen police whom he had rallied. Mistaking him for Nanni Conti, the mob roared "Down with the Vaudois priest!" and falling upon him with clubs, fists and knives had nearly murdered him, when the police whom he had summoned formed a square, charged into the throng, and carried the insensible Sub-Prefect off the field of battle.

But the news of the murder of Ser. Banchetti flew before the rioters, who had now full possession of the city. The Sub-Prefect was laid, almost dying, in the dismantled Prefecture. The Prefect had no police to aid him, and one of the municipal officers mounted a fleet horse to ride to the nearest telegraph station and send for troops; also to beg the next town for policemen.

Now the word of Banchetti's death reached the Via degli Angeli; his wife, followed by her two children, dashed into the street, shrieking for her husband. Mariana, the widow, fled into Ser. Jacopo's with Bettina, crying:

"Fly! fly! we shall all be murdered! Banchetti is dead, and they come for us!"

“Send the children to the cellar,” cried Monna Lisa.

“Let us save our poor mother,” cried Ser. Jacopo, darting up-stairs. Monna Lisa followed him, to rescue the bed-ridden parent, and Mariana drove the six younger sons of Ser. Jacopo and her own Bepina into the cellar, thrusting into their hands the bread, the candlestick, and the sheepskin.

“Silence—haste!” said Mariana.

Forano went first, with great speed, and Marchese, carrying his youngest brother, brought up the rear. Mariana was about to follow them when she thought of Assunta and her babe. The courageous woman resolved to go into the street to seek for her nephew Sandro and her sister-in-law. She closed the door of safety against herself and turned to the threshold.

Meanwhile Ser. Jacopo had wrapped a blanket about the old mother and taken her by the shoulders, while Lisa seized her feet, to carry her to the cellar. As they started Ser. Jacopo heard a cry that rent his soul—the voice of his first-born, in mortal agony. He thrust his head from the window. The mob were coming up

the Via Maria roaring like wild beasts, and the advance had seized Sandro, who was flying home to warn his parents. The lad was in the hands of several foes, who were attacking him with long knives, and already the blood flowed over his garments.

“Carry down the mother—I go to save my son!” cried Ser. Jacopo, throwing the old woman into Lisa’s arms and leaping down the stairs.

Did he save his son? Already the young martyr had reached the bosom of his God; and as Ser. Jacopo strove to clasp his boy in his arms, the knives, red with Sandro’s blood, sought his father’s heart.

Monna Banchetti, crying after her husband, was killed by a blow with a cudgel.

The murderers of Sandro were outdone by their nearest successors, who dashed into the shop of the *calzolajo*, caught the old dame from her daughter’s arms, as she reached the foot of the stairs, and flung the helpless creature far into the street over the heads of the mob. Lisa, with a wild cry, darted back up the stairs, but a ruffian was after her, caught her by the hair,

fired a bullet through her head, and cast her corpse out of the window.

Every house of the Evangelicals was sacked; and then, led by the priests, the maddened rioters dragged their victims, dead, dying and living, to the Piazza della Virgine.

“Burn them! Burn them!” was the cry.

Meanwhile another tragedy was being enacted. Before the destroyers reached Via degli Angeli, Assunta left her sick friend and set out for home. She hastened her steps, hearing terrible noises, and had almost reached Ser. Jacopo's house when, as she crossed a narrow street, an offshoot from the main mob, numbering about a dozen men and women, came upon her from behind, just as the great body of the murderers entered Via degli Angeli by way of Via Maria.

“Kill the Vaudois priest's harlot!” cried a woman.

Assunta set out to run, but a man plunged a stiletto between her shoulders, and she fell forward on the curbstone without a cry. Her enemies pushed on over her prostrate form, hastening to join the mob; but Assunta was not

unseen. A son of Ser. Fari had gone that day to fetch one of those loads of brush, dead vines, weeds, leaves and withered branches used by Italian bakers in heating their ovens. He was driving homeward on a street parallel with Via degli Angeli, when, as he passed a crossing, he saw Assunta fall, murdered, at the crossing, a few paces below. He was a strong lad of twenty. He darted from his cart, ran and dragged the breathless woman from the pavement, flung her on his load of brush, covered her with his cloak, and set forward toward his father's dwelling at a rapid pace. The neighborhood of Ser. Fari's house seemed quite deserted. Young Fari drove into the empty court, and then, going to the kitchen door, saw his mother, father and sister sitting as in dread and expectation.

"Mother!" he cried.

"*Che, che*, son," said his father in a low voice. "Silence! We fear greatly this is an evil day."

"Mother, I have Assunta Conti and her babe, dead or dying, in my cart!"

The Faris rose with a groan. Ser. Fari and his wife went out, lifted the body of Assunta,

who yet clasped her babe firmly to her breast, and carried her to an upper room. There was an ominous red stain on the load of brush. Laying their charge on a bed, Monna Fari unclasped Assunta's arms from the little one. The child was dead, its head had been crushed on the curbstone. The Fari daughter received with many tears the limp little form. The babe smiled as in a tranquil sleep.

"She lives," said Monna Fari, feeling Assunta's heart.

"She will die," said Ser. Fari; and he shed a tear.

The two then set themselves to doing all in their power for the poor victim. In darkness and silence they made her bed neat, undressed her, bound up the wound in oil, gave her restoratives, bathed her white face. She made no sign of consciousness, breathed feebly, and that was all. Each soft, tremulous breath seemed likely to be her last. On a shelf in the corner the little babe was laid, covered with a white towel, its hands folded, and the head turned on one side to hide the wound of which it perished.

We turn again to the Piazza della Virgine. The mob bound young Monti, wounded but living, to the iron staff in the centre; there, too, they fastened Ser. Jacopo, who breathed, and dead Ser. Banchetti, and his dead wife; old Monna Conti's corpse, and Lisa's were fastened here also; Sandro, dead; widow Mariana, wounded with knives and insensible, and one other of the Evangelicals dead, and one wounded but conscious. Around these ten, dead and living, they piled the clothes, and furniture, and oil from the houses which they had gutted, and added all the books and seats from the chapel. This was the funeral pyre, the martyr fire, built by Rome in Barletta, beside the Adriatic, on St. Joseph's Day of 1866; it was built in the afternoon; four priests, a friar, several women and children and an infuriated throng of men stood around as the torch was applied. The flames raged at once, responding to those mad hearts thirsting for kindred blood. The smoke and flames mounted high; there was a shout from young Monti: "Christ! I come." The crowd heard another say: "Lord, receive my soul," and some thought that Ser. Jacopo

raised his head and lifted his hand toward heaven. Did the murderers falter then? No, they were insane; they shouted and sang; pelted the burning martyrs with paving stones, and danced around that latest *auto-da-fe* until the last red gleam ceased to flash across the Adriatic, the last wreath of smoke curled up around the iron Virgin, and she again became invisible to her iron-hearted worshippers, the bodies and the household goods had fallen to ashes, and not a heretic remained in the devastated Via degli Angeli.

Then with the evening mist rising from the sea, rose a chill over the city of Barletta, a strange chill of the heart; as the night fell, a sudden blackness of horror, remorse, anguish, fell upon their spirits, which had so lately been in a mad delirium, determined on destruction and death. The mob melted away, none knew how—each man feared his neighbor. Via degli Angeli was a ruin; the prefecture was destroyed; the police had vanished; not a bell rang for vespers; the leaders and the led of that terrible day hid themselves. Night and pale starlight reigned. Certain of the dispersed Evangelicals returned to Via degli Angeli and searched for

any of their number who might have been left there, dead or wounded. They found one corpse—a man. They brought a bier, wrapped the dead one in his cloak, laid his head on a pillow, put a Bible in one lifeless hand, and placed the other with cold finger pointing to the sky, and so carried him to the Piazza della Virgine, and set the bier down on the yet warm ashes of his brethren's death-fire, and left him there, bearing witness of violence, a martyr, dead yet speaking, pleading his cause between heaven and earth.

So that night all Barletta, aggressors and aggrieved, sat down in the Valley of the Shadow of Death. The Adriatic, which had buried in its bosom so many confessors of faith, felt yet on its bright waters the flush of that *auto-da-fe*, and moaned softly in the darkness. The fair city that had been that day scathed and blasted by the lightning of man's cruel wrath against his fellow-man feared the coming morning. The municipality was helpless, the police had taken flight, yet every street was silent and deserted. There was not one abroad, save that Vaudois on his bier, like a last, lifeless sentinel, keeping a city of the dead.

Those in Barletta on whose garments and hands rested brothers' blood were already wondering if Holy Church could wash away so foul a stain. On the fields outside the city several Vaudois families were camped, destitute, and most of them wounded, some with limbs broken from being thrown out of windows. The sick woman with whom Assunta had that morning prayed had died of terror; in an empty cabin a widow, whose child had been killed, had taken refuge, and was now sitting amid her dead and living children.

Such was the night of St. Joseph's Day in Barletta in 1866. Ah, well to look away from this desolate earth to heaven. "But glorious it was to see how the upper region was filled with horses and chariots, with trumpeters and pipers, with singers and players on stringed instruments, to welcome the martyrs as they went up and followed one another in at the beautiful gate of the city."*

* For full particulars of the Barletta Massacre see Moore's Appendix to Cassel, Petter & Co.'s edition of "Fox's Book of Martyrs," 1872, page 718; also Florentine papers for March and April, 1866.

CHAPTER XI.

THE REMNANT.

“But He who overrules all things, having the power of their rage in His own hand, so wrought it about, that Christian for that time escaped them, and went his way.”

THE news of the massacre at Barletta sped over Italy. The names of the victims were not yet given, but word went out that many had died for conscience sake. The story reached Honor Maxwell in the Palazzo Borgosoia, and Joseph, son of Jacopo, in the Vaudois valley school, and first Nanni Conti and his comrade, who were preaching in the country hamlet.

Meanwhile, on the early morning after the slaughter, the streets about the dismantled prefecture echoed to the tread of men marching in due order. Soldiers and police had come, and were dispersed through the city. Emboldened by these the Prefect gathered in the fugitives

who were scattered through the fields, and, emptying one ward of a public hospital, had the wounded cared for, and set two of the Evangelicals to nurse them.

Still no hand touched that accusing corpse on the Piazza della Virgine. By evening four hundred soldiers were in the city, and the Prefect made proclamation for the Evangelicals to come freely forward and bury their dead. There were three biers to carry—the man, the woman who had died of terror, the murdered child, were to share the same funeral, and there were not Evangelicals enough unharmed to carry their dead.

A number of the townspeople who had not shared in the outbreak now came, clad in mourning, and offered their services as pall-bearers. At sunset a long and solemn train carried the three coffins out of the city, a melancholy band of eight protestants walking at their head. Thus three victims were buried.

That night arrests began to be made, and by the next evening four priests, Friar Benedetto, seven women, and others, to the number of seventy-five, were lodged in prison as promoters and chief actors in the riot.

On this evening of the second day after the massacre Nanni Conti, wan, haggard, breathless, entered Barletta. As soon as the news of the tumult reached his out-of-the-way place of labor he had made all speed to return, to meet—he knew not what. Not knowing the state of the city, and not daring to question any one, he pressed on to the Via degli Angeli. The street was deserted; windows were broken, shutters and doors torn from their hinges; marks of blood yet on the walls and pavements; every Evangelical home empty, destroyed; the few Papist homes closely shut, for very shame, and for fear of the *polizia*.

Around and in the home of Ser. Jacopo—regarded as the prime fountain of heresy—the strife had raged most hotly. Nanni, staggering like one drunken, could hardly gain the abandoned threshold. What a picture of utter desolation met his eye! Bare and broken walls; not a particle of property left therein; stains of blood on the floor. A cold sweat broke over the agonized Evangelist; he crawled up-stairs, expecting perhaps to stumble over the corpse of one of his beloved. The upper rooms were

as desolate as that below, and the great red stain from Monna Lisa's death-wound told its horrible story. Gone—the mother who had blessed him, the brother and sisters who had loved him, the wife who had been dearer than all the world, the babe who had filled his cup of happiness to the brim. He found his way in a blind misery to the room below, and falling on his knees, cried:

“Oh! my mother! my wife! my child! Oh! Jacopo, my brother!”

“Signore Nanni,” said a voice near him.

It was the voice of young Fari, who had all day been watching for his return. Nanni stretched out his hand.

“Where are they? Where are they?”

“Signore, don't ask me. Our hearts are broken. We weep rivers over this destruction: Come, Signore—your wife is in my mother's arms. Come quickly; there is no time to lose.”

Nanni struggled to his feet.

“My wife!—living?”

“Oh, Ser. Nanni!” groaned the lad; “she has been dying these two days, and my mother

says her soul cannot part in peace from her body until you are there. My unhappy eyes saw your wife murdered!"

A cold shock of horror restored to Nanni the strength of excitement. He sprang forward, and, grasping Fari's arm, hurried toward the home that sheltered his dying wife.

Assunta had neither moved nor shown sign of consciousness since she was carried into Ser. Fari's. Nanni found her lying white and insensible, Signora Fari bathing her brow, fanning her, and forcing drops of wine between her lips, endeavoring to retain life.

"Oh, Ser. Nanni!" said this good Samaritan, "how I have tried to keep her breath until you could see her!"

Nanni knelt by the bed and took his wife's chilly hands. A perfect peace had settled on her thin face. The bright eyes which had charmed him at Ser. Jacopo's shop door were closed; the roses of the mountain maid had fled; the voice that had filled his soul with music in the pavilion of the crossways was silent; that ear which had hitherto heard him gladly, seemed deaf to his cry:

“Assunta, *carissima!*”

But that agonized cry penetrated at last the heavy brain and called back consciousness. Lying at the gate of death, Assunta opened her eyes and softly spoke her husband's name. The sight of his face, his kiss, seemed to give her new strength. She gently stroked his cheek, and then asked for her babe. No one answered. A shadow fell over her dying face; a sudden agony rose in her eyes.

“Did the priest steal my child?”

“Show it to her,” sobbed Nanni.

Monna Fari took the pillow on which lay the dead child and held it before the dying mother. Assunta gave a loving and satisfied smile.

“God is good,” she said. “He has not parted me from my child. Be of good courage, Nanni. Work for the Lord here—meet us there!” She spoke with many a pause; then rested for a time. Then she asked:

“Are our friends dead?”

“Dead!” wailed Monna Fari.

Assunta summoned all her strength.

“Nanni, live for Ser. Jacopo's children. They are—in the cellar: save them.”

Her face grew whiter; her eyelids fell: another martyr swelled the great accusing throng that pleads (how long?) above.

After the first hour of his lonely anguish Nanni recalled his wife's last words. He obtained from Monna Fari what information she had about the massacre. She knew the names of the ten burned on the Piazza.

"And where are my sister's six sons? and where is Bepina?" asked Nanni.

"Not one of them has been seen since that terrible morning."

Nanni's eyes now fell on two children crouching in a corner.

"Who are those?" he asked.

"Ser. Banchetti's children. Poor orphans. When their parents were murdered these two were mixed in the crowd and so escaped. They found their way to me in the afternoon of that day. Unhappy ones! they are not yet over their fright."

Nanni took the two children in his arms, and in loving tones comforted them, telling of the safe home into which their parents had entered, and in so speaking gathered some comfort himself.

Ser. Fari now brought him a cup of black coffee and some bread. Having by this regained a little strength, after a fast of twenty-four hours, Nanni said:

“I would like, Ser. Fari, to pray by my dead wife before I go out to look for my sister’s sons.”

“Pray with us all, Ser. Nanni,” said Fari, who had grown wondrous bold since the first public step which compassion had compelled him to take.

Nanni, kneeling in that little room, with the four Faris and the Banchetti orphans bowed about him, and his wife and babe lying lifeless before him, poured out his soul in a prayer which brought him strength from heaven. He rose from his knees calm and brave.

Ser. Fari now offered to go for Assunta’s coffin, and for permission from the Prefect to bury the body.

Meanwhile Monna Fari and her daughter made the young mother ready for her last rest; and Nanni, accompanied by his recent comrade, Monti—who, having learned his only brother’s fate, had now come weeping to sympathize with

his bereaved pastor—set out to search for Ser. Jacopo's children.

Mindful of Assunta's last words Nanni provided himself with a light, and having reached the deserted house went into the cellar. The place was chill, empty, silent. Nanni looked here and there and saw no place of hiding, for he had never been to the recess. Sure that they were not there he turned, and was half-way up the stair-case when something impelled him to cry:

“Forano! Marchese! little Bepina!—where are you?”

“Uncle Nanni!” cried the voice of Forano, faint and muffled.

Nanni and his companion turned back.

“Children, where are you? Come to me—come to your Uncle Nanni!”

“In a moment,” shouted the voice of Marchese.

And while Nanni waited at the foot of the stairs, uncertain where to turn, in the recess Forano lit the remains of his two candles, and, giving one to Marchese, led the little band out of their hiding-place, Marchese bringing up the

rear. The seven children, faint and haggard, stood before their uncle in the uncertain light of their candles.

“Father and mother have been so long coming,” sobbed the youngest.

“We heard you in the cellar and thought it was robbers,” said Bepina.

“Oh, it has been so hard to obey mother and wait so long,” said Marchese.

And Forano added :

“I was just telling the children that I *must* go up and see how things were when you came into the cellar.”

Thus spoke the children, almost together ; and still Nanni, holding his flickering lamp, stood silent before the new made orphans.

“Uncle,” said Forano, “I know that something terrible has happened. Are my parents dead?”

Without a reply Nanni led the band to the deserted shop. There was not a chair or bench for them. The empty room told its own tale. The pale children, looked about aghast and began to weep, Bepina and her two youngest cousins calling loudly for their mothers.

With much difficulty did Nanni quiet these

unhappy ones. Gently he told them that God had called their parents, their eldest brother, their Aunt Assunta, and her baby to a better world. Only to Forano and Marchese, and that at a later day, did he fully tell, as he had heard it from eye-witnesses, the sad story of the *Barletta Massacre*.

The children were very faint from hunger, but the plundered home afforded them no food. Nanni gave them all a drink of cold water, took the youngest child in his arms, Monti carried Bepina, and the boys followed, and so, in the twilight, they returned to the house of Ser. Fari.

Such speed had been made that Assunta, with her babe in her arms, was already placed in her humble coffin. As the children, awed and tearful, stood about the body of their aunt, with the Banchetti orphans among them, Monna Fari hastened to prepare them food. Ser. Fari stated that he had been to the Prefect, who had declared his intention of coming to the house during the evening, and who desired that the burial should take place at dawn, he having already dispatched a man to dig a grave.

After the children had eaten, Nanni asked

how they had spent the three days and two nights while they had been prisoners in the cellar.

“When Aunt Mariana hurried us down,” said Forano, “she and our parents were to come too. We ran on with what things we had, keeping very silent. We crawled in the dark behind the archway, and then I struck a light. We entered the recess, and I put our bread in the box, and spread out the sheepskin for our grandmother. We heard the door shut, then no sound but a low roaring, and a sharp crack once or twice. Presently I put out the light, and we waited a long while, and the little ones cried. So then Marchese and I prayed softly with them, to comfort them, and we seated them all on the sheepskin, but Marchese and I sat on the box. Still we waited, and sometimes we repeated texts. After a great while—it must have been night—I lit the candle and gave the children some bread and olive oil, and after much more waiting I think we all fell asleep. I should have gone out to search, only my mother had so often bade me surely wait until she called, fearing our hiding-place might be betrayed. When all our bread, oil and wine were gone, we were very

thirsty and hungry, and so cold. The little ones moaned all the time, and we could hardly breathe. I was telling them that I must leave them in hiding while I crawled out, when we heard noises in the cellar, and then your voice."

After this narrative Monna Fari led the exhausted children into another room and put them to bed. Soon after the Prefect came. He spoke kindly to Nanni, commended Ser. Fari for his humanity, expressed again and again his deep grief at "this disaster," and then inquired about the arrangements for the burial next day. He desired that the ceremony might be very quiet and brief, and performed at daybreak. His eye then fell on the two Banchetti children, who crouched together by the window, and he asked who they were.

"The orphans of Ser. Banchetti and his wife, who were killed."

"Terrible! we must do something for them. Alone, destitute—*davvero!* what can I do!" he exclaimed; then pondered. "There is an Evangelical Orphanage in Firenze; I will pay their fare there if you know of any one to accompany them."

“I will do so,” said young Monti, boldly. “I am going to the valleys to study to be a preacher of that faith for which my brother has died.”

The Prefect looked at him thoughtfully; then said, as if in a muse :

“Talk of stamping out the *Evangelici!* The more you kill them the more they grow; ten live ones for every one dead. Our church thrives by having everything its own way; your church thrives in spite of everything.” After a pause he added: “Make haste to be gone—go to-morrow. I will send you the money from the Prefecture to-night, enough to pay for the children.”

“And I will make them ready to go,” added Monna Fari.

“We shall, then, be gone by midday, *illustrissimo,*” said Monti.

The sun was just above the horizon next day when the few Evangelicals who could be collected to attend to burying their pastor’s wife returned from the grave. The next thing to be done was to prepare the Banchetti children for departure. They were hatless, their shoes were

ragged, and their check pinafores were soiled. Monna Fari proceeded to wash and iron the pinafores and to dress the children. Nanni and Forano used their utmost skill in mending the shoes. Monna Fari's daughter went among some well-inclined neighbors and secured two hats and two little shawls; also a basket of luncheon. Thus, all working, the mournful little travelers were made ready to set out by noon, assured that Monti would take them where kind care, good instruction and a peaceful future awaited them.

The three travelers having departed, Nanni set himself to seeking out his scattered flock and collecting the records of the massacre. The Evangelical church had numbered forty members and some fifteen young children—a number of the elder children having publicly united with the church.

The carnage of St. Joseph's Day left the church thus: ten had been burned on the piazza; three adults had been buried since; eight members of the church were in the hospital; Monti, Joseph and Forano were accounted for; two children were dead, victims of the riot;

two were gone to Firenze; Bepina and the five younger sons of Ser. Jacopo were with the Faris; the remaining five children of the church were with their parents, while the sixteen adults who remained unharmed were plundered of every particle of food, clothing and furniture which they possessed. One of the families left had some property in two or three small houses, and were able by means of this to re-establish themselves. The Municipality gave money to a family who had come from Pisa to return to their old home and friends, while one or two of the richer townspeople had taken into their service and protection a few others of the destitute *Evangelici*. The church which had thrived so well and borne witness so nobly was completely destroyed for the present.

The Prefect told Nanni that it would be well for him to leave the city soon, and that the Municipality would not speedily admit the rehabilitation of the Vaudois church.

Meanwhile Nanni had six impoverished, homeless orphans to provide for. Evidently he must return with them to Tuscany, where Miss Maxwell, Dr. Polwarth and the Marchese Forano

might befriend them. But Nanni was almost penniless; the children were hatless, and without enough outer clothing; the Faris had already exhausted their ability to give; the Evangelicals were beggars, and the Municipality had come to the limit of its generosity, and were considering that they had eight invalid heretics to support indefinitely in hospital. Charity slowly provided the needful clothing. The Prefect gave Nanni five francs, and Nanni had a few francs more, given him among the hills. The fare of an adult and six children traveling in public conveyances for such a long journey would amount to a much larger sum than Nanni Conti possessed. He concluded, therefore, to provide what food they could conveniently carry, and set out, expecting to walk part of the way, get chance rides from kind country people whose carts might be going their road, and to take the cars as much as their means would allow. The weather was fine, and the roads were in excellent order, while the children were all well and vigorous.

Thus finally, a week after the massacre, Nanni Conti and the orphans left Barletta, Nanni and

the three elder boys carrying small hampers of provisions strapped to their shoulders, and the younger children only required to get on as well as they could at a quiet pace. Eager to escape as quickly as possible from the territory where they had the most foes, Nanni expended what money he had for railway traveling before he reached Tuscany, preferring to walk through Umbria and Tuscany. At Terni he unexpectedly came upon Joseph, son of Ser. Jacopo, who, unable to endure his anxieties, had left his school in Piedmont and was hastening toward Barletta to seek for his family. The poor children were by this time much wearied, but meeting with Joseph refreshed them. The lad had been commended by his teachers to some Evangelical families at Terni, who kindly received all the wanderers for several days. A little money collected by these kind but very poor friends again furnished means for public conveyance until they entered Tuscany.

Nanni knew one retired home where his weary charge could again rest and refresh themselves; once more he climbed the Tuscan hills to the home of the aged exile from

Firenze. The patriarch and his wife had heard a rumor of the massacre, and each day had, from their heights, been looking for the coming of the remnant that had escaped. The eagle eye of the mountaineer descried the pilgrim band from afar, and he hastened to meet them. Here again the fugitives rested for several days. The old mother was a kindly nurse; the aged father told them much of his only interview with Sandro, the martyr youth, and much of his own early days when Tuscany was in deepest bondage, and of those later years when a resurrection of faith had begun in Italy, and when at last the evangel had obtained some freedom to visit the people.

Again Nanni and his little company set forth. The good Monna had filled the hampers with her best provisions; the children were refreshed by mountain air, and comforted by the hope of reaching the old home which some of them remembered. On they walked courageously, by wood, stream, hill, valley; the lovely spring-time breathed its consolations into their souls. At last they struck the coast, and Elba and other fair isles lay before them in beauty on the placid sea.

But with every advancing step, fresh floods of anguish rolled over Nanni's heart. Memory was busy, replacing Assunta in the pleasant scenes where first he met her; busy restoring the dear lost Sandro, busy recalling the once hospitable and joyous home of Ser. Jacopo. These emotions he must restrain for the sake of his companions.

The journey ended at Palazzo Borgosoia. It was a rainy, chilly evening; the streets were dimly lighted; all the exiles were wet, faint, weary. The great gate of the Palazzo opened to them. They stood in the court asking for Signorina Maxwell. In a moment Honor, with Michael bounding at her side, came down the great stairway; she started as the forlorn group met her eye. At sight of her, Nanni's fortitude gave way; here was the friend of his lost ones; with a loud wail he flung his arms above his head, crying: "Signora, compassionate us: we are the escaped of the massacre of Barletta!"

CHAPTER XII.

FRIENDS IN NEED.

“No tear relieved the burden of her heart:
Stunned with the heavy woe, she felt like one
Half-wakened from a midnight dream of blood.”

ON the morning of the day when Nanni and the orphan children reached the Palazzo Borgosoia, the Marchesa Forano had dispatched that trusty (?) messenger, Gulio Ravi, on an errand to Honor Maxwell. Gulio was the bearer of a letter. The Marchesa had received a paper from Florence, of date March 27, 1866, and in this paper had read a full account of the tragedy at Barletta, only the names of the victims were wanting.

The good woman was terribly distressed by this doleful news; she could hardly bring herself to credit it, and as it was now the middle of April, she thought Miss Maxwell must have had direct intelligence from Barletta, and could

tell her the exact truth about what had occurred; also if her humble friends Assunta and Ser. Jacopo's family had been in anywise injured.

Therefore, when Nanni and his company had been cared for, when the exhausted children had gone to their beds, and while Gulio and the family servants crowded, breathless with interest and horror, at the door of the room where Uncle Francini was receiving a circumstantial account of the massacre from the lips of poor Nanni, Honor replied to the Marchesa's letter, telling how many, and who, had met martyr deaths, and describing the forlorn band which had just found shelter in the Palazzo Borgosoia.

No one was more impressed by Nanni Conti's story than Gulio Ravi. Life had seemed for the most part a pleasant jest, an eat-drink-and-be-merry time, to this airy young man. He had his hours of gloom, when he saw his Marchese pining, and felt bound by his vow to withhold comfort from him, but generally Gulio was gay, and his carnival lasted ten months of every year at the very least. But here he found a

young man of his own age, and from his own class, who had had the religious experiences, done the Christian work, met the terrible losses, and reached the wonderful resignation and depth of heavenly consolation possessed by this Nanni Conti. Such a life set beside his own trifling, idling, self-serving, and folly, awed Gulio Ravi. Wherein lay that infinite difference between himself and Nanni? What was that mighty secret which had wrought in the Evangelist a character so different from that of Gulio? Gulio's kindly heart deeply compassionated Nanni's sorrows; he shed tears for him, he offered him all the money which he had with him, and when Nanni declined it Gulio secretly slipped it into Nanni's coat pocket. The two shared the same room that night, and Gulio asked Nanni many questions, passing gradually from mere events to questions about that religion which Nanni taught and lived, and for which Ser. Jacopo and so many others had been ready to die.

By dawn next day Gulio was on his way back to the Villa Forano. He carried Honor's letter, and rode with all speed, his heart burning with

honest indignation over the wrongs that had been inflicted on his old friends, weeping plentifully when he thought of the death of Assunta. Thus, overflowing with the sad story which he had to tell, Gulio, dusty and weary, dashed into the courtyard of the Villa Forano.

It was not in Gulio's nature to act quietly, to make the least of what he had to tell; he must make himself prominent, and draw attention, if not as an actor in a scene, at least as a tragic narrator, and, to say the truth, at this present occasion he had rather be made the narrator. He therefore leaped from his sweating horse, ran into the house, waving Miss Maxwell's letter over his head, beating his breast, weeping, and crying: "Oh, *illustrissimo*, it is all too true. Prepare yourselves for worse than the worst. Alas, all our friends are murdered: they are burned to death. Assunta is gone; her babe is in heaven. Ser. Jacopo, his wife, his mother, his son have all been burned in one fire! O Marchesa, I have seen with my eyes, I have heard with my ears, I have had the orphans in my arms; my heart has died within me!"

Pouring forth such a torrent of speech to

more deeply impress his master and mistress, and the train of servants who had followed his excited entrance to the salon, Gulio managed to give the letter to the Marchesa, and as she read it, he graphically described in word and act, with all his Italian hyperbole and passion, the murder of Sandro and Assunta—the sacking of houses, the ruin of Barletta.

Nor did Gulio lack the reward he sought, nor fail to receive great satisfaction from his recital. The Marchese wrung his hands and groaned; one of the maids, a particular friend of Assunta, fell into hysterics; the men wept; all the women shrieked. The Marchesa alone was silent, reading her letter. As soon as she had reached the signature the Marchesa rose. “Calm yourselves, at least for a few moments,” she said, authoritatively, to her servants. “Go, my good Gulio, and refresh yourself. Cæsare, prepare the coach to take us to the city. Nina, make up my satchel for the night. Marchese, we go at once to Signorina Maxwell; all these poor orphans are in her house, and the unhappy Nanni also.”

The Marchese always approved the counsels

of his wife ; it was hers to plan, hers to execute. The ancient coach, worn, dusty, the Forano arms almost obliterated, was dragged into the courtyard ; two stout horses, used indifferently for the plow, the cart, or the coach, were harnessed, and Cæsare, who was coachman on occasion, but ordinarily gardener, stable-boy and field-hand, invested himself with a suit of faded, threadbare, Forano livery, of antique cut. There was no delay ; all were too much excited to be dilatory. Cæsare, on his part, burned to reach the city, and see for himself the children who had so narrowly escaped slaughter.

The Marchese and his wife meanwhile put on their seldom-used state garments. Not for years had the worthy couple made so long a journey as this. When the Marchesa had donned the velvet gown and cloak and the state bonnet, which usually appeared in use only on Easter Sunday, the festivals of the Virgin, and one or two other grand anniversaries, she looked a dame of consequence indeed. The Marchese acquired additional stately grace from his best cloak and patent-leather boots, and gloves of purple kid embroidered in gold, over the wrists

of which fell long lace ruffles, in fashion of the olden time—a time which the Marchese, theoretically, much esteemed. When the great gate had been set open, travelers and coachman were in their places. Cæsare, by a liberal use of the whip, communicated something of his own impatience to his horses, and away rumbled the old coach toward the distant town. That evening, when Uncle Francini had gathered his household for prayers, a furious ringing of the bell summoned the porter from the worshipping circle; the coach-gate presently opened with a crash, and by the time that the family had risen from their knees the tall figure of the old Marchese appeared behind his wife at the door of the salon.

“Dear Marchesa,” said Honor, greeting her friend, “this is a great and unexpected favor.”

“It is proper,” replied the Marchesa, “it is fit that I should come; all the fugitives in your house are my country people, of my own poor friends, of those born on the Forano estate; it is fit that I should come to help you provide for them.”

“We were waiting to hear from you before

we made any arrangements for them," said Honor, establishing her friends near the blazing wood fire, grateful after an evening journey; and ringing for supper.

"*Davvero*, Signorina," said the Marchesa, nervously, "I cannot eat until you let me speak my sympathies to Nanni Conti and see those desolate children."

"They are all in the room below," said Honor; "Nanni had prayers with them early in the evening, lest they should grow sleepy. Still they have not yet gone to bed; their troubles and their journey have excited them, and they do not sleep well."

"Let us go and speak with them at once," said the Marchese.

Honor led the way, and in a lower room they found Nanni, reclining wearily in an arm-chair, with his nephews and niece gathered about him. Michael also was in the group. He had begged hard to sit up, and his buoyant spirits and his constant stream of amusing conversation seemed so to beguile the thoughts of the unhappy orphans that Honor allowed him to be constantly with them. The jolly Michael, with his exuber-

ant health, afforded a startling contrast to the pale, anxious, grieved faces of his less fortunate companions. He raised a jubilant shout at sight of the Marchesa, and ran to embrace her. On her part she grew very pale as she caressed him, and, even while she was speaking to the others, frequently and with a sigh turned her eyes upon him.

When the Marchesa had relieved her mind by shaking hands with each of the exiles, and after speaking consolation to each in her own quaint, hearty fashion, she returned to the salon, while Honor ordered all the juveniles to bed.

During supper-time the Marchesa seemed much pre-occupied; after the meal was over she said, softly, to Honor:

“Strange as you may think it, my mind is this moment less absorbed in the troubles and future of these poor wanderers than in my own past. When Michael ran to meet me to-night he was almost the living image of my dear Nicole. Just so did Nicole run to meet me when I returned from a trip to Pisa, or the baths of Lucca. That same smile, that same bounding health. Very much such complexion

and features—but our Nicole's eyes were blue. Ah me, Signorina, *mia*, that dear Nicole should die so young, and our home be left desolate.”

The following morning Dr. and Mrs. Polwarth came to the Palazzo Borgosoia, and with the Foranos, Uncle Francini and Honor, met Nanni in the salon to plan for the future of eight destitute and homeless children.

Uncle Francini had already given Joseph money to return to his school in the Valleys, and he intended to set out as soon as he had learned what should be the fate of his brothers.

“Marchese,” said Nanni, “is now thirteen. He is a very bright lad, fond of study, and devout. He desires to be an evangelist. I think I had better send him with his brother to the Valleys, where I will be able to support him myself; for I shall resume my work as an evangelist, and it costs me a mere trifle for my own support. I can use nearly all my earnings for Marchese, until he can take care of himself.”

“I spoke with the boy Forano this morning,” said the Marchese, “and I find that he wants to

be a vine-dresser. He likes the country, the care of olives and grapes. He seems to have an especial claim on me from his name, and if he likes to go home with me, my care and my house are ready for him; he shall be made a good vineyard keeper."

"As for the little Bepina," said Honor, "she is a tidy, gentle child, and I will take her in charge and bring her up as my maid. I think she will be useful and happy with me."

"Well," said Uncle Francini, with a smile, "that fourth lad of eleven must fall to me. I found the youngster in my studio this morning, entranced before one of my pictures, and trying to scrawl a copy of it on the tiles of the floor. I asked him if he liked pictures, and would be pleased to grind colors, and prepare canvas, and live in a studio, and he said that he would. How do we know but the fellow may be a genius? Even if he is not, he can learn to make a support for himself as artist's assistant."

"The youngest child can go in my infant school," said Mrs. Polwarth, "and I will be responsible for its support, in the house of the Vaudois pastor."

But yet two children remained unprovided for. "We might find liberal foreigners who would support them in orphanages in England or America," suggested Honor.

"By no means," cried Uncle Francini; "never let us drain Italy of one drop of honest evangelical blood. These children are part of the stamina, bone and sinew needed for our Italy's regeneration. Every protestant Italian, every patriotic, liberal heart is of priceless worth; do not let us be party to depriving Italy of one loyal son, of one patriotic thought; she needs them all. These are children whom it pleased God should be born Italians; they will not then properly fulfill their destiny by being turned into mongrel English or Americans."

"The boys have suffered in the cause of Italian freedom," said Nanni, rising, catching the glow of the old artist's enthusiasm. "This massacre at Barletta is a part of the price we must pay for the possession of religious liberty. They who suffer much, and give much, love much. Let them live to benefit their countrymen and to return great good for this evil."

Honor turned to her friends with a smile.

“Mrs. Polwarth, put these boys in your schools and get them a home with some of the Vaudois people. God will send the means to provide for them. Jewels are not worth so much as souls, as good brains, as patriots. If we cannot get money for these little fellows in any other way, I have a few jewels which will bring enough to keep them for two years or more, and they shall have them.”

Now there was at Forano a square silver box. It was of small size and light weight, but in it were gems of price, antiquities to make a collector faint with envy. There were onyx rings of such curious beauty as had never been equalled, and there were two signet rings which had lain for centuries in the tomb of Charlemagne. The Marchese and the Marchesa looked at each other. “Citizens, patriots, are worth more than gems,” said the Marchesa. “We are the last of our house; if we sell these jewels they will go to strangers; if we die we leave them to strangers. Alas, they have been in the family of Forano for many, many generations—but let us sacrifice them, rather than that these Italian children, victims of our church and

of our countrymen, should be left destitute," said the Marchese; yet it was evident that his heart was torn by the sacrifice. Such people as the Marchese cling strangely and pathetically to their heirlooms and their lineage.

"Well done!" cried Uncle Francini: "but let us sacrifice nothing at present. I'll advertise in London and New York my last vineyard picture as for sale for the benefit of the orphans of Barletta, with portraits in it of the three younger. That will bring us some generous purchaser. I like to sell my pictures; but, Honor *figlia*, your jewels are gifts, and very few and simple. As for the Forano heirlooms, Marchese, let them last your day."

Thus these good people vied with each other in the riches of their liberality, the only riches which they possessed. The only reason that Mrs. Polwarth did not add her offer to sacrifice something with the rest was that she had already given up everything which she could give, to get money to start her schools—blessed schools—where she was preparing christian patriots for Italy.

Thus at last all the orphans were provided

for, and that evening Nanni Conti set off for the valleys with Joseph and Marchese; the Foranos made ready to return to their villa with their namesake; Mrs. Polwarth lodged the three younger lads in their new home, and little Bepina was left to the tender care of Honor Maxwell.

As all these preparations had taken much time, it became too late for the Marchese to go home that night, though the old gentleman deplored the delay, having a secret feeling that ruin would fall on Villa Forano if he were long absent. After the evening meal Honor and the Marchesa were sitting alone, when the old lady said gravely:

“Signorina, you have not yet demanded the fulfillment of my promise?”

“What promise, Marchesa?” asked Honor.

“Did I not say to you that if my church turned persecutor, if she proved that she had not grown better than in those cruel years when she shed rivers of blood, I would abandon her?”

“But, Marchesa, you perhaps may not consider this the act of your church; it may not have been official.”

“I said,” persisted Madame Forano, “if my church, her priests, or her people showed themselves persecuting and cruel : if they took again fire or sword to press their claim, I would thenceforth abandon her.”

“Very likely, *cara amica*, you do not feel it right to be held bound to leave your church, because of the outbreak of a mob of the people, of a distant city,” said Honor, cautiously.

“I am a woman of my word,” said the Marchesa, with dignity. “I deal in no subterfuge. What do I see? I see the priests of my church, priests trained at the very feet of *il papa*, exciting people to murder ; I see citizens endeavoring to *destroy* Protestants—not to win them over to the Catholic Church by showing good lives, by gentle words, by honesty, by any common-sense method, but by cruelties which should be unheard of, even as used against wild beasts. I see, Signorina, the Catholic Church, the *duomo* itself, used as a place to urge people to these horrible excesses ; I see my own priests leading on the murderers and applying the torch ; I see my fellow church-members dancing about the dying agonies of those who had never injured them ; and I hear

priests and people saying that this is a Catholic way, a right way, the only way to exterminate heresy, and that the Catholic Church is just as bound to exterminate heresy, as she was when Fra Savonarola and Fra Antonio Paleario were butchered. Oh, Signorina, is this the word? is this the deed of a true church? Alas! I see that my church is rotten at the very heart. She is not to be regenerated; her brain is gone; her heart is gone; she is a foul corpse fit only to be buried. No, Signorina, a dozen years ago I was a hearty, undoubting, blind Catholic. Three years ago I was a less hearty Catholic, holding to my church in some doubt, my eyes opened to some of her errors; my love grieved for her. A year ago I was a Catholic because I *would* be one and dreaded to be a turncoat; I held on to my church, distrusting her, yet striving to believe in her. To-night all is gone, I have let loose my hold on her, I am no Catholic: then I suppose I am an Evangelical."

"But, Marchesa, it is not well that you should be an Evangelical for such reasons as these; it is not well to come into my church simply because you have left your own. Your eyes are

open to the error of your church, you therefore leave her. Let your eyes be open to the truth in my church, before you receive her."

"This is common sense, *carissima*. But where shall I see the truth of your church? Already I have beheld it in the lives of her children: where else can I look?"

"Where I have often told you to go for instruction, dear Marchesa: to the Word of God. Go to the Bible. You cannot be a true Evangelical unless you read and obey that holy book. The Bible is our guide book, our book of doctrine, our rule of faith. If you want to know the belief of Protestants, read the Bible."

"Certainly, I will read it, Signorina. Will you kindly give me one? I ask the gift I have often refused. I only feared to read the Scriptures, lest they should divide me from my old church; because I feared I should find it impossible to read them, and not be a turncoat—a thousand pardons, *mia cara*—I mean a convert. I see now it was settled that in spite of all, I should be an Evangelical. The Foranos must change their creed. Give me then a Bible, and I shall study it every day."

CHAPTER XIII.

REPAIRING A WRONG.

“Thou thoughtest that I was altogether *such an one* as thyself.”

WE give one last glance at Barletta. Let us see how reprisals were made for the massacre of St. Joseph's Day. Some ten days after the outbreak, the authorities of the church in the city of Rome sent to demand Padres Postiglione and Trentadue, on the plea that no ecclesiastic could be tried before a civil tribunal, and that they must answer for their alleged crimes before the authorities of their church.

The two priests were at once sent to Rome. They went in calm confidence. The *authorities* could not bring themselves to be severe upon the little excesses of devotion. Padres Postiglione and Trentadue had both precept and precedent on their side. We are at a loss to see how a papal court *could* condemn these men for what

they had done; they had canon law, papal statute law, and ancient practice to plead in their defence. If an infallible pope, speaking through his cardinals and bishops, pronounced these men *guilty*, in so doing a long succession of popes and cardinals must be pronounced *guilty*; also, it is wrong to heap obloquy on the dead; it is wrong to condemn men who have not transgressed law; it is wrong to blame men for following the example of their superiors, of canonized saints.

Padre Postiglione was pronounced—not guilty. Padre Trentadue was pronounced—not guilty. Padres Postiglione and Trentadue returned to their dwellings. No sooner had these two been successfully disposed of, than the bishop of whose diocese Barletta formed a part made a requisition on the municipality for Friar Benedetto and the two cathedral priests, that they might be tried at his bar, he being their only legal judge. The municipality called a coach, put the three ecclesiastics therein, mounted a policeman on the box by the driver, and sent them to the Episcopal palace. The policeman resigned the culprits to the bishop. The bishop

reasoned with them—perhaps not of “righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come,” but doubtless on very excellent themes. Then Friar Benedetto was restored to his monastery, where he lived as before, save that for a year or two he did not circulate so freely as formerly through the streets of Barletta.

The senior priest of the Cathedral said mass in his place, the next month; the people then loudly demanded their junior priest, “they must not be debarred the privileges of religion”—and so the junior priest came back. The seven women arrested answered before the magistrate of Barletta after five weeks’ imprisonment. The verdict was *not proven*, and the women went home. Within two months every individual arrested returned without fine or any punishment to their former abodes and occupations.

The Sub-Prefect recovered from his wounds, but he and the Prefect were dismissed from office, because they “had not shown themselves able to maintain order.” In other words, they had accorded to the Protestants some of the rights of citizenship, and had objected to their being murdered.

The mob, however, had accomplished its object. I write on the thirteenth anniversary of this massacre, and the Protestant Church has not yet been reorganized in Barletta.

When we look upon earthly justice and affairs from a human standpoint, our view is confined and narrow. If we could regard them as they are beheld by the eye of God, we would find them to reach out further and wider. The year 1866 had not reached its prime when Padre Postiglione was called to his account in the Court of Heaven, where, although he might have had as his advocate the "accuser of our brethren, which accused them before our God, day and night;" the plea for his defense, which was all-effective when uttered by human lips in human ears, before a human court, would sound strangely base and illogical in the court supernatural, for "Guilty" would be the sentence of the great Judge.

Through the summer night an unseen messenger sped to the city of Tiber, passed in unchallenged, and entered a house on the Via di Ara Coeli, and there, in the sleeping ear of Padre Postiglione, uttered the sentence of *death*. No

time of shrift was given. Padre Postiglione leaped to his feet, flung up his arms with a shriek that echoed through the house, fell forward with a look of horror frozen upon his face forever; and the viewless executioner hastened forth, leaving only a cold lump of clay that once had been Padre Postiglione. Thus his path ended in a night that had no morning.

We now turn gladly to another path, that of the just, which shines more and more in exceeding brightness toward the perfect day.

As the bountiful summer grows to its maturity, Uncle Francini and his household are at the Villa Anteta, and the vineyards and rose-gardens echo to the shouts of Michael heading the sports of little Bepina, and the boy Jacopo, to whom the gentle old artist allows much leisure from the work of grinding paints, scraping palettes, and preparing canvas.

The last "Vineyard picture" has been duly advertised, and is already promised to a liberal patron, and Uncle Francini is better than his word, for not only does he paint in the three younger boys of Ser. Jacopo, each rioting like a young Bacchus among the ruddy vines, but he

has painted the quaint figure of Bepina in the mountain costume of her Aunt Assunta, carrying a tray of grapes on her head, beneath which looks out a pretty face with a tearful pathos underlying its smiles.

But while the summer has ripened grape and grain, a seed sown during these several seasons by Honor Maxwell in the Marchesa's heart has been bringing forth fruit. When the Bible, and that Vaudois youth Forano entered the Villa Forano, light began to spread. The Marchesa and her husband began to read the Scriptures; the common sense of the Signora, and the keener intellectual perception of the Marchese, were applied to the letter of the word, and by degrees they received a hungering and thirsting for spiritual gifts, and then they began to be filled.

Nor was the lad Forano without his mission to his benefactors; as they questioned him, he gave them many of the teachings which he had received at home, while his upright conduct gave weight to his words.

To Gulio Ravi the Vaudois boy was especially a teacher. After some months, lying, which had

been as daily bread, began to leave a bitter taste in Gulio's mouth. His superstition also relaxed a little, and he had often strong inclinations toward going to his master and confessing the truth about Ser. Nicole's child. Pride, however, hindered Gulio; fear also, for he was an arrant coward. The Marchese would upbraid and dismiss him. So Gulio still held his peace, but meant some time to do better. He traded as largely in good intentions as in lies.

The Marchese and his wife, having withdrawn from their former church, attended no more at the Chapel of the Assumption, and, following the example of their superiors, with their usual docility, the servants also ceased to attend the customary services.

The restiveness against priestly domination was spreading more and more in Italy, and the people on the Forano estate and in the vicinity were withdrawing themselves from all practice of religion. The Marchesa said to her husband:

“These country people will soon have no religion whatever. They are quarreling with the old doctrine, while they know no other; they

reject the priest, but seek no better teacher; they are ignorant, they cannot read, they are no better than when they were zealous Catholics, and they are likely to be neither good christians nor good citizens."

"Perhaps they had better have a school," said the Marchese.

"They are too ignorant to know that they need a school. Let us begin by teaching them their wants, then they will crave a supply. Let us send for Nanni Conti to come here for a few weeks and evangelize them."

"*Mia amica*, you are a woman of extraordinary common sense," said the Marchese. "Let us write for Nanni."

Nanni Conti, being written to, came to Forano with his books, his roadside talks, his from-house-to-house teachings; to be at this place, opened afresh the recent wounds in his heart; but Nanni's charity for souls could "endure all things."

Nanni's presence and teachings brought to Gulio Ravi an increase of remorse. Of late he had put the affair about the lost child out of his mind, because the Marchese had

ceased to mention his grief about it, and Gulio thought it a good plan "to let well enough alone."

Nanni, however, was continually speaking words about the "book of account," the "judging according to the deeds done in the body," the demand God makes for righteousness; and these words were each as a dart sent into Gulio's soul.

Finally the anxious Gulio concluded that he would go to the "Chapel of Sta. Maria Maggiore of the hills" and ascertain if any one knew the whereabouts of Padre Innocenza. If he could only find the priest, and persuade him to accede to the breaking of the vow he had made—if, in fact, he could make the Padre shoulder all the responsibility of the past, and make clear to the Marchese the whole story, leaving Gulio Ravi in the position of an honest fellow who had done his best, all circumstances considered—then the whole plot should be laid bare and the Marchese made happy. Filled with these singularly generous and self-sacrificing plans, Gulio rode off one morning, pleading "affairs." His "affairs" were supposed to lead him to Pisa;

they ended in taking him to Sta. Maria Maggiore.

Gulio rode to the priest's cottage. The garden was gay; the windows were clean; the place was well cared for; but the door was locked, and no one was within.

At last, in response to Gulio's knocks and calls, the former factotum of Padre Innocenza, a lean boy, whose few rags had long ago been only half large enough for him, and who now showed neck, arms and legs stretching far beyond the frayed edges of his garments, came lounging from the shady side of a wall, where he had been taking a *siesta* of half a day.

"Where is the Padre?" demanded Gulio.

"We haven't any Padre," said the boy, sulkily; "we don't get on well with Padres."

"Where, then, is Padre Innocenza?"

"*Altro*—we wish you could tell us. We have never set eyes on his blessed countenance since the Bishop ejected him."

"And have you no one in his place?"

"*Ecco!*" growled the boy. "If the Bishop has the right to eject our padre, we have a right to eject his padres. We are all willing to have a

padre—if we can have the one we want. We all are ready to pay our dues—if we can pay them to the right man. We are all good Catholics—if we are only let have an evangelical priest. *Sicora*. I believe these bishops do not know how to agree with us Liberal Italians.”

“But the house looks well taken care of,” said Gulio.

“*Davvero*, I take care of that. Padre Innocenza may return some day. I am the deputy of the people of Sta. Maria Maggiore, to keep the place in order for our old padre.”

Gulio could not avoid laughing in the face of this magniloquent deputy and ragged Liberal Italian. He, however, atoned for the laugh by giving the boy two francs, requesting him to obtain therewith a dinner, which they two should partake together in the garden.

While the dinner was preparing, Gulio strolled to the church, and as the door was open he went in. The place was silent, cold, covered with dust; the holy water was yet kept in the basin; an old woman was praying in a corner; the old woman told Gulio that a priest came from Pisa or Leghorn now and then and said mass, and

that these priests when sent for buried the dead and baptized the children. As Gulio stood on the church steps, a man who had known him in Ser. Nicole's time passed by, and with some difficulty recognized him. He confirmed the boy's story of their ignorance of Innocenza's whereabouts, and their desire for his return. He said also, "that the people would not abide other teachings than those which the Padre had given during the last years of his stay among them; that many of the people left their children unbaptized, buried their dead without aid of a priest, and went to Pisa or Lucca to get married; he thought if an Evangelist came among them he would be well received; they wanted books and papers, and to be treated like Liberal Italians; they did not care for priests who secretly cursed Vittorio Emmanuelo and his government."

On the following day Gulio returned to his home, and as may be supposed, he was not long in detailing all that he had heard at Sta. Maria, without mentioning that he himself had been seeking Padre Innocenza. Nanni Conti at once recalled the field of some of his former labors

and the reception which he had met with from both priest and people. His heart warmed to these shepherdless sheep, and in the beginning of autumn he finished his work at Forano, and declared his intention of laboring in Padre Innocenza's forsaken field. The Marchese endeavored to dissuade him, thinking that the attention of the clergy being especially turned to this parish, they would resent the interference of an Evangelical, and Nanni might add to the number of the martyrs of his family.

But Nanni was ready if need be both "to be bound or to die;" besides, as he told the Marchese, where the people are liberal in their feelings, supporters of the present government, and friendly to Evangelicals, such scenes as that at Barletta cannot be enacted among them; persecution obtains where the priests have a bigoted people to excite to madness by their exhortations.

At Forano, Nanni's path had been greatly smoothed by the adherence of the Foranos and the family at Villa Anteta, with the corresponding sentiments of the servants of the two houses. The priest of the Chapel of the Assumption had

endeavored to interfere, and once took Nanni soundly to task, at the Pavilion, for denying the efficacy of good works, and declaring that men were to be saved only by grace. "It is a blasphemous doctrine," he cried. "How dare you preach that all the good works of this notable lady, the Marchesa Forano, are not capable of placing her in heaven; and that she must be saved purely by free grace like a common sinner?" The Marchesa here declared that she accepted this doctrine, felt that she *was* a great sinner, and looked only to be saved by the free mercy of God.

"*Cospetto, Signora,*" said the priest, giving his shoulders a mighty shrug, "if you are willing on your part to be considered a poor sinner, it is not likely that I shall fight your battles. You have never been a very good pupil of mine, always dragging in your common sense, *sicora!*" This priest was growing old and fat; he had always been lazy; he concluded to mumble his masses and get his dues, holding the Chapel of the Assumption valiantly, and letting the stupid congregation take their own way. Thus Nanni Conti was able to labor for some time with good

success at Forano, and then set off for a month's sojourn at Santa Maria Maggiore. His month's work grew into three, and at the beginning of winter he returned to Florence.

We saw Padre Innocenza in the fall of 1865, following Judith Forano to the New World. Having at New York received his humble wages for his services as waiter on the steamer, he at once repaired to Philadelphia, and sought out the address Dr. Polwarth had given him.

Mrs. Bruce's house was closed; the neighbors did not know where the family had gone; in fact, the servants, to whom the Padre applied for information, did not half understand his broken speech, and found "I don't know" the most convenient form of reply to his queries. The poor man was at his last penny, and felt that he had failed in the mission which he had set himself. He next sought the few gentlemen to whom he had letters of introduction, and endeavored to obtain work through their means. He was received with kindness, but exiles were numerous, demand for masters in Italian was small; the gentlemen were pressed with business and applications. Two or three pupils were

obtained; the despairing stranger found sympathy and shelter among some poor countrymen of his who lived as image-makers, musicians, and small manufacturers. Food was dear, clothes were dear, the cold weather told on the Italian. By Christmas the unhappy Padre Innocenza was in great misery.

At this hour of distress he was discovered by a member of the Young Men's Christian Commission. The story of exile, of poverty, of bitter disappointment, was poured into a sympathizing ear. This friend in need found Innocenza lying in a garret, ill of pneumonia; he took him to a hospital, where he was cured; he provided him with warm clothing; he hired for him a modest but well-warmed room; when he was able to leave the hospital, he obtained work for him; he took him to church, and brought a good pastor to visit him, and thus once more the Padre had a happy issue out of his troubles.

Health and comfort having returned, Innocenza began anew his search for Judith Forano: the spring of 1867 came and still he had not discovered her. He wrote again to Dr. Polwarth, but his letter never reached its destina-

tion. In May of this year he was suddenly called upon to take charge for a few weeks of Italian classes in a fashionable school, the Italian teacher being ill. The Padre taught with much acceptance for a month, when one morning the principal of the school told him that the teacher was able to resume her labors. As Padre Innocenza had given great satisfaction in the school the principal proposed to have the teacher listen to his method of conducting the classes that day, that they might give him as strong a recommendation as possible to another school. The Padre had been teaching some fifteen minutes when the door of the class-room opened opposite him, and a lady stepped quietly to an adjacent desk. Their eyes met, and recognition was mutual. Padre Innocenza had found Judith Forano. He gave a half exclamation, and dropped his book, partly recovered himself as he picked it up, but his voice faltered sadly as he read the next line of *Paradiso*. Judith trembled, until the desk on which she leaned shook; a young lady kindly handed her a glass of water, saying: "You have come back before you are able, Madame Forano." Then the class went

on as before, and these two, between whom lay such an infinite wrong: Judith, whose future was in Padre Innocenza's keeping; Innocenza, to whom Judith only could afford the peace of forgiveness, sat out the slow hours, while class after class were reading, parsing, blundering, drawing, and passably succeeding, with the lessons of the day.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE RESULT OF THE OATHS.

THE bell rang for the dismissal of the pupils; Innocenza rose and bowed as the girls passed in a long file before his desk. The door closed behind them. He bent his head and stood like a culprit before Judith Forano. "You robbed me of my child!" burst out Judith. "God knows, Madame Forano, I have repented with an agony of sorrow; I would buy you back that child with my life." "Your mercy comes too late," said Judith, resting her head on the desk and weeping violently.

Just here the principal of the school walked into the room and stood amazed, looking at his two teachers.

Padre Innocenza was equal to the occasion. "Madame Forano and I have met before," he said, in a subdued tone, "in days of joy, when

her husband lived—in days of sorrow, when he died and left her very desolate.”

Judith started to her feet; was Innocenza admitting her marriage? What had wrought this change?

The penitent priest interpreted her rising as a sign that she was about to fly from his abhorred presence. He placed himself before her, saying, in Italian: “Signora Forano, behold in me a deeply sorrowful man, only anxious to repair his evil deeds. Give me your address, I pray you. I have many things to say.”

Judith gave the required address and hastened away; at the sight of the destroyer of her peace, her old excitement and passion had rushed upon her; every tone of his voice occasioned a new thrill of agony. As she meditated in private on her varied fortunes, her feelings softened: she beheld the guiding hand of God bringing good for her out of evil, and ever delivering her in her hour of extremity: the storm of passion died away, patience and forgiving charity succeeded, and with these better feelings she met Padre Innocenza when he came to visit her.

The ex-priest told her frankly how he had

robbed her of her child, and how Gulio Ravi had been his agent in taking the child to the Innocenti.

“I saw Gulio Ravi as I left Italy,” said Judith, “and he told me my child lived. My father wrote to the British Consul, and Gulio told him the child was dead and buried in a convent.”

“The poor fellow said so because *I* had said so, and he feared to contradict me; I, unhappy that I am, had used my priestly office to bind the ignorant youth by a horrible oath.”

Innocenza soon convinced Judith that the one ardent wish of his heart was to restore her child to her; not only was the continued misery wrought for her by his crime a daily burden on his heart, but he desired to get back the heir of the Foranos, lest the Romish Church should receive the estate.

“I cannot find this child,” said Innocenza; “I have sought for months. But I have clung to the thought that you, his mother, if you knew that he lived, and were once more in Italy, could by some quick woman’s thought, or mighty instinct, discover him.”

“If you were in Italy searching, if Guilo Ravi

and the Foranos aided, if I were there, if we advertised and offered rewards, we might succeed," said Judith, nervously.

"But I have always feared to do anything of the kind, lest some child be thrust upon me which was not the true heir. I have only the age, date, and that one mark by which I could even hope to identify the right child. Oh, how a man's sins rise up and pursue him as avengers of blood! How easy is it in an hour to do that which we forever after vainly strive and weep to undo."

To Judith and the Padre but one plan of action seemed open—they must return to Italy and seek for the lost child. They were both nearly equally without means, but Padre Innocenza declared himself ready to return, as he had come from England, in the capacity of waiter. He would go to England, thence to Italy, on any ship which would accept his services in lieu of passage money. Arrived at some Mediterranean port of Italy, he would walk to any place where Judith would meet him, and together they would go to Villa Forano.

Mrs. Bruce had by this time returned from

spending a long time in Florida with an invalid sister. When Judith told her of Innocenza's visit and story, Mrs. Bruce declared that Madame Forano should not go to Italy alone, but that she would accompany her, and they would begin their search by finding Miss Maxwell, who could introduce them to the Marchesa Forano.

The truth was Mrs. Bruce doubted Padre Innocenza's sincerity, and did not intend to trust him until she heard of his conversion from other lips than his own.

The Padre humbly accepted suspicion as part of the penalty of past misdoing. His plan of crossing the sea as a ship's servant did not need to be carried out; his friend of the Christian Commission obtained him an engagement with a wealthy family about to visit Europe, to whose sons he could act as tutor in French, Latin and Italian. With this family he would proceed to Florence, and there join Mrs. Bruce and Judith when they summoned him.

In the latter part of September, 1867, three visitors knocked at the gate of the Palazzo Borgosoia. They were Mrs. Bruce, Judith Forano and Padre Innocenza.

The porter was, however, the only present inhabitant of the Palazzo; he informed the strangers that Signore Francini's family were yet at the Villa Anteta.

"That lies next to Villa Forano," said Mrs. Bruce. "Courage, then, we will set out for Villa Anteta early in the morning."

Padre Innocenza was so busy engaging a carriage, and impressing on the driver the necessity of punctuality, that he had no time to call that evening on Dr. Polwarth. He felt also as if he could see no one, could do nothing until he had made his confession of wrong doing to the Marchese. Now that Padre Innocenza, after so long struggles, had begun to unravel the web of his past transgressions, he desired to make thorough and speedy work of it.

Dawn found our eager travelers ready for a start, much more ready than the driver whom they had engaged, and when Innocenza succeeded in bringing him to the hotel door, he appeared with a truly deplorable pair of horses, vowing them to be the most magnificent span in all Italy. Behind these horses the carriage containing eager hearts, whose excited wishes outran

the wind, was slowly dragged out of the Porta Mare. Such a day's travel Mrs. Bruce had never experienced; the driver found it needful to delay at every *albergo* for refreshments; the horses merely crawled along the road, and stopped continually to rest. Thus the sun was near its setting when they climbed the last hill, upon the brow of which lay the vineyards of Forano and the rose gardens of Anteta.

The impatience of Judith had now passed all limit; she could not endure the slow motion of the carriage, and sprang from it to walk up the hill. Padre Innocenza shared these feelings of unrest, and moreover desired to relieve the horses of as much of their burden as possible; he therefore alighted and walked slowly behind Judith.

The ascent was steep, the day had been fatiguing; the setting sun shone hotly across the brow of the hill, where Judith would rejoin Mrs. Bruce: the green gate of a vineyard stood open, within were delicious shades cast by the trees and vines which overhung the entrance. Judith stepped within to escape the heat, and Padre Innocenza followed her example, and stood looking over her shoulder.

As they waited thus, a vine-dresser with a hook in his hand came from the shadows on the left, and turned bright, handsome, untrusty face toward the gate.

As his eyes met those of the two trespassers their gay light faded, and a sudden pallor overspread his countenance; his lips echoed the cry which Judith Forano gave, as she sprang toward him screaming, "Gulio! Gulio Ravi! what has become of my child?"

"It is dead," mumbled Gulio's white lips, as he looked in dread at Innocenza, who had closely followed Judith.

"How do you know he is dead? When did he die?" demanded Judith.

"The Padre knows everything," said Gulio, waving his hand.

"Answer me," said Innocenza, sternly. "Have you seen or heard of that child, since you took it to the Innocenti?"

"No," faltered Gulio, trembling greatly.

"You took my child, my tiny babe to the Innocenti, Gulio Ravi, you wicked, false wretch!" cried Judith in a fury. "Oh, what a villain you are! Did I not take you beside my Nicole's

dead body, and make you take his hand, and swear a solemn oath that you would protect our child to the last drop of your blood; that you would do all that you could do, to see that the child was honored and cared for and established as a Forano should be. That if I died, you would protect him! And then—then—you robbed me of my babe; you sent the last Forano to a foundling asylum—oh, you treacherous villain!”

Now as Judith had begun to speak, the Marchese Forano, walking among his vines, had heard a raised, excited voice, and coming forward, saw a very handsome, very angry woman, upbraiding Gulio Ravi, who looked the picture of terror, while behind the two stood a man in half clerical garb. The Marchese drew near, and stood unnoticed by the excited group. Thus, leaning between two vine props, and trembling as he heard Judith's words, was the Marchese, a fourth in this party. As Gulio, pale and bowed, did not reply to Judith's storm of speech, she continued: “Answer me! Is that the way you keep a solemn oath?” “Hear me, hear me,” explained Gulio: “I had also made an

oath to my priest—to Padre Innocenza—Padre, you remember?” “*Davvero*, I wish I could blot out the remembrance; I did bind you with a fearful oath, Gulio. Your sin is on my most unhappy head. You kept your oath—the child is lost! Oh, if I could undo the past, break that oath, restore that child.” Then the Padre unconsciously returned in his pain to the fashion of old times, beating his breast and crying, “My fault, my fault, my most grievous fault!”

But at the priest’s cry a change passed over Gulio. Color came to his face, light to his eyes, he straightened himself, he cried out, “Padre Innocenza, do you regret that oath? do you desire to have it broken? do you seek to find the lost child of Forano?”

“Do I not?” cried Innocenza; “have I not? did I not come to you seeking the child long ago?”

“No, *illustrissimo*, asking your pardon, you came to know if I had kept the oath. You never hinted that you wished it broken.”

“Too late, too late,” moaned Innocenza. “I would buy back the boy with my life, but my day of grace is past!”

At these words Gulio Ravi clapped his hands above his head, and executed three prodigious leaps in the air. Then he demanded with a shout: "Do you give me back my oath?"

"Too late, too late; fool that I was to ask it; fool that you were to take it!"

Judith stood sobbing.

"Do you give me back my oath? Yes or no, give it back!" yelled Gulio, leaping as in a frenzy.

"Give it back! a thousand times, yes; but what good?"

"*Illustrissimo!*" said the facile Gulio, becoming eloquent, dignified, virtuous, beneficent, all in an instant; "hear me; hear Gulio Ravi, who should be prime counsellor to Vittorio Emmanuelo, that the prosperity of Italy might be finally secured. Hear the man who never breaks an oath; hear the man who can keep at once two contrary oaths. Signora Forano, I vowed to protect and honor your child; I have kept my oath. The word of Gulio Ravi is steel that cannot be broken. Padre, you made me vow that I would carry off that child, that his mother and the Foranos should hear of him no

more; that he should never know his parentage. You bade me secure this by taking him to the Innocenti; the oath covered the concealing, but it did not include the Innocenti; the Innocenti was a precept to me. Padre, like a Christian, I kept the oath, but I did not keep the precept. I kept my word also to the Signora. Hear the word of Gulio Ravi. I reasoned that all a young babe can appreciate, be he king or peasant, is enough food, play, clothes and sleep. As soon as I left the old Monna at Firenze, I took the babe out of the city by another train to an old aunt of mine, who lived among the Chestnut Hills alone, and was deaf and dumb. She was a clean, kind creature, and I gave the child to her with some of the Signora's money. I trust Gulio Ravi is not a thief! Among the hills the boy lived five years, with my aunt, and grew so well in size and beauty, that he looked like one of the old gods playing in the woods."

Now through the rain of Judith's tears broke the splendid light of hope.

"After five years I remembered my two oaths, and I said the boy must now be put amidst money, friends, luxury, as becomes his family;

also the boy must yet be lost to his relatives and his name. I bought him a gay suit, and in Carnival time I took him with all secrecy, and left him in the house of some rich and liberal foreigners."

"My child is lost," shrieked Judith.

"Hear Gulio Ravi," cried the orator of the occasion. "These foreigners live in Italy. They received the boy as their son. I had heard of them from a friend of mine who lived in their service. I chose them for their character, and because if I were caught spying in their house, I might cover it as a Carnival visit to my friend, the young woman. The boy has then had all the consideration and comfort which I swore to you, Signora. The boy has been hidden as I swore to you, *illustrissimo*, and if you had not given me back my oath, the secret should have found its grave in the heart of Gulio, the Oath-Keeper!"

While all this had been passing, Mrs. Bruce, wondering what had become of her companions, had got as far as the Pavilion of the Shrine, where she spied Honor and Michael. Hastily embracing her friend, Mrs. Bruce declared her

anxiety because Judith had disappeared with the priest.

“They must have gone into the vineyard,” said Michael, “that is the only gateway near here. I will fly and look for them.”

Flushed with eagerness, he bounded along the road, darted into the open gate of the vineyard, and came within sight of the group there just as Judith demanded of the perfidious “Oath-Keeper,”

“Where, where is my son?”

“Here, here!” bellowed Gulio, leaping into the air, and then pouncing upon Michael and dragging him forward; “Signora, embrace your son! Padre, the boy is found!” His eye caught that of the Marchese, until now unseen behind the others. “Marchese, receive the heir of Forano!” he shouted, inexpressibly glad that now the worst was over, and that he had not to confess hereafter to the Marchese personally.

“My son?” said Judith, taking the boy’s hand in doubt. She remembered a fair little infant; and here was a rollicking brunette boy of nearly thirteen!

“My heir?” said the Marchese; “this is Miss Maxwell’s adopted son.”

“And with Miss Maxwell I left him, because of Assunta, through whom I had heard that she was rich and gracious,” said Gulio.

“Stop!” cried the Padre. “If this is the true child, he has a mole on his arm, inside the elbow joint;” and he hastily stripped the lad’s arm.

“Behold the mole!” cried Gulio, as if it were something which he himself had arranged for the present crisis.

“My Nicole had such a mark,” said Judith, clasping the boy to her bosom and kissing him passionately.

“It is a true Forano mark,” said the Marchese, striving to share possession of the lad. “My old age is not childless!”

“He is the true boy,” said Gulio. “I, Gulio Ravi, swear it—I, who have seen him every year of his life; I, Gulio, the Oath-Keeper!”

Gulio had been hastily considering whether he should appear as a penitent for his lies, or carry it bravely as the master of ceremonies on this auspicious occasion. He quickly chose the

latter role, and prepared to conduct himself as a hero of virtue and a benefactor. He therefore darted to the house for the Marchesa, and very nearly threw the good lady into a fit by suddenly announcing to her that Ser. Nicole's boy had been found by him, Gulio Ravi! and that the boy, his mother, and his former enemy, Padre Innocenza, were now in the vineyard.

He next ran toward the Villa Anteta, but on his way found Mrs. Bruce and Honor Maxwell in great perplexity at the loss of Judith, and to them he cried out to come to Madame Forano, who had obtained from her faithful old servant her son, safe and sound; while both mother and child were receiving the blessings of the Marchese. As the ladies hurried with him to the vineyard, he stunned Honor by casually remarking that the lost and found son was no other than her own boy, Michael!

The sun has set behind the vineyards of Villa Forano, but all the estate seems glowing with the light of joy that floods the hearts of its owners. The mother has received her long lost child. Padre Innocenza finds the great wrong

remedied; Forano has an heir, and the benign old Marchese and Marchesa rejoice over Michael and his mother. Even Gulio's offenses are overlooked, and, although they have caused so much bitter sorrow, it is all obliterated by the present happiness. Gulio himself fully resolves to walk uprightly and eschew guile; for he sees that if he had spoken truth but once any time during the last seven years, all these troubles might have been ended long ago.

Gulio also bethought himself of his last visit to Santa Maria Maggiore of the hills, and he so moved Padre Innocenza's heart, by narrating what had then occurred, that the Padre went thither without delay, and was so enthusiastically welcomed by his former people that he could not again leave them: the people claimed the church and would have it—and the result was that Padre Innocenza remained among them, preaching the gospel, he being more than beloved by his flock.

Judith made her home at Villa Forano, with her son. The joy of seeing the long-distressed widow happy, softened to Honor the grief occasioned by the loss of her boy; besides she

could see him often; and perhaps the fact that she was about to be married to a famous sculptor, who would set up his studio in the Palazzo Borgosoia, along with Uncle Francini, had something to do with her resignation.

In 1870 Judith Forano's brother in India died; and as he had always resented the manner in which Samuel Lyons had treated their unprotected sister, he left her his whole property, which, wisely applied, was quite sufficient to restore the falling fortunes of Forano.

The Marchese built a little evangelical chapel beside the Pavilion, and employed Uncle Francini to paint out the Virgin's picture at the shrine, and put in its place a picture of the Italian Liberties, wherein the face of Italia was a portrait of Honor Maxwell.

In 1870 the world was wide-awake; the gates of the city of Rome shut, and the troops of Vittorio Emmanuelo sweeping across the Campagna, to conquer for the land, its rightful capital. This is the cause of religious liberty, of political freedom, of education, of great future good for Italy so long unhappy. In this army march Joseph, Forano, Marchese, the sons of

the martyr Jacopo. Nanni Conti hears where his nephews have gone, and he lays by his pack of books, shoulders a musket and marches over the hills to join the army, and stand by these boys, and with them to do his part for Italy.

The army lies before the city, little harmed by the fire from the papal garrison, whose guns do not share the infallibility of *il papa*.

And here in the rear of the army, in a little cart laden with delicacies for the sick, whom do we see but those two indomitable refugees from the Tuscan Hills, the hoary patriarch and his wife, Monna Marie! As he said, the patriarch shall preach the Gospel in Rome.

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The Italian army entered the capital in triumph. With them entered a free Gospel and free education. The reign of the Evangel had fairly begun in Italy.

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The wounded of both parties were gathered into hospitals, and there the kind hearts and tender hands of the Evangelicals went to minister and to pray.

So went Joseph, son of Jacopo.

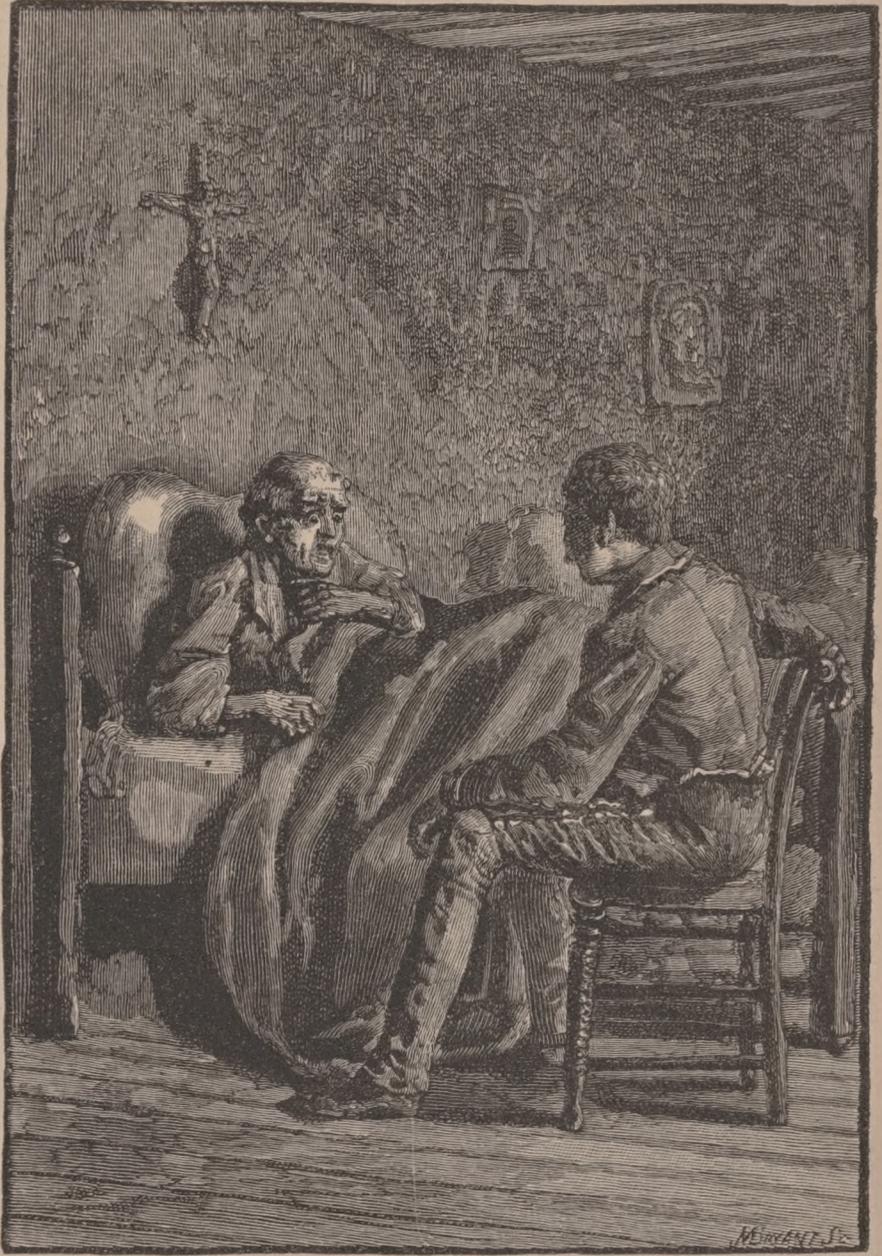
It was evening; the lamp-light fell dimly on a bed where lay a wounded priest. Joseph stood looking sadly at him. "He is not dangerously wounded," said a surgeon passing by. The words awoke the injured man from his uneasy slumber; he looked at Joseph, dashed his hands across his eyes; looked again, with an awful horror rising in his face; bounded up, with a shriek, and fell back; he had ruptured an artery dangerously near his wound, and the life-blood poured forth.

Joseph sprang to help him. "Save me!" cried the priest in his dying agony; "save me from that spectre; it is Jacopo, whom we burned at Barletta!"

Joseph staggered back; his singular likeness to his father had sealed the death-warrant of Padre Trentadue.

THE END.

The Oath-Keeper of Forano.



“Save me!” cried the priest in his dying agony; “save me from that spectre; it is Jacopo, whom we burned at Barletta!”

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