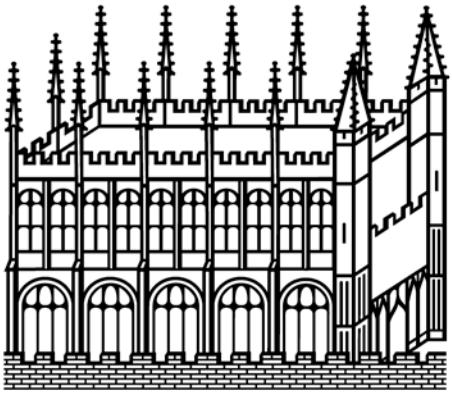


Bodleian Libraries

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

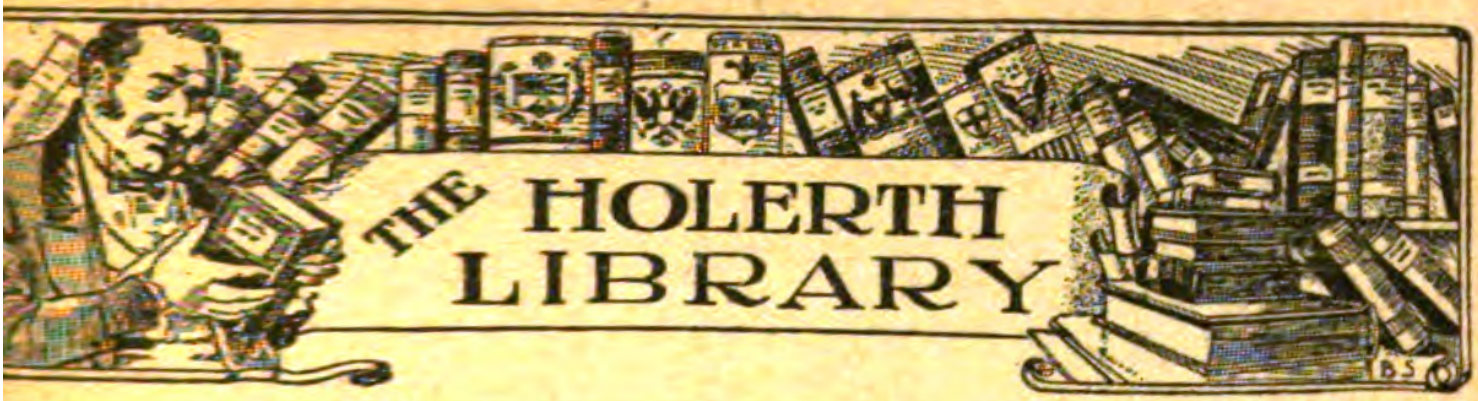
This book is part of the collection held by the Bodleian Libraries and scanned by Google, Inc. for the Google Books Library Project.

For more information see:

http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/dbooks

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 2.0 UK: England & Wales (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) licence.

U1 S



MRS. CRAIK.

THE SCULPTOR OF BRUGES AND OTHER STORIES.

3963 f. 17

THE HOLERTH LIBRARY.

RECENTLY PUBLISHED.

40. CARLYLE, Chartism.*)
41. TROLLOPE, The O'Conors of Castle Conor; Aaron Trow.*)
42. LONGFELLOW, Selected Poems.*)
43. GEORGE ELIOT, The Lifted Veil.
44/45. TENNYSON, Enoch Arden and Other Poems.*)
46. MRS. CRAIK, The Sculptor of Bruges and Other Stories.*)
47. COLLINS, The Yellow Tiger and Other Tales.
48. COLLINS, The Biter Bit; The Black Cottage.
49. TOM TAYLOR, Nine Points of the Law.
50/51. JOHN RUFFINI, The Paragreens on a Visit to Paris.*)

PREVIOUS VOLUMES.

1. THACKERAY, Cartouche and Other Stories.
2. MRS. GASKELL, The Grey Woman; The Squire's Story.*)
3. GOLDSMITH, She Stoops to Conquer.*)
4. WASHINGTON IRVING, Rip van Winkle and Other Stories.
5. MACAULAY, Machiavelli; Lord Holland.*)
6. BYRON, Cain.
7. LORD LYTTON, Narrative Lyrics; Milton.
8. E. A. POE, The Masque of Red Death and Other Tales.*)
9. HAWTHORNE, Dr. Heidegger's Experiment.
10. CHARLES DICKENS, Hunted Down and Other Tales.*)

*) The books marked with an asterisk are suitable for school use.

MRS. CRAIK.

THE SCULPTOR OF BRUGES AND OTHER STORIES.

THE HOLERTH PRESS,
46, FLEET St.,
LONDON,
E. C. 4.


BODLEIAN LIBRARY
AUG
1924
OXFORD

CONTENTS.

THE SCULPTOR OF BRUGES . . . . . PAGE 3
CLEOMENES THE GREEK . . . . . „ 17
ANTONIO MELIDORI . . . . . „ 48
THE STORY OF ELISABETTA SIRANI . . . . . „ 70

THE SCULPTOR OF BRUGES.

ABOUT the middle of the sixteenth century, there was not an artist in the Netherlands whose fame had spread wider than that of Messer Andrea, the sculptor of Bruges. His father had come from Italy and settled in Flanders, where he lived and struggled, an ardent and enthusiastic man, whose genius cast just sufficient light to show him his own defects. This love of the beautiful was the sole inheritance he left his son. But Andrea's northern birth and education had, to a certain degree, qualified his Italian descent, so that to his father's impulsive nature he added a steady perseverance, without which all the genius in the world is but as a meteor of a moment.

The branch of design that Andrea followed was wood-carving, in which, by his wonderful skill, he surpassed all his contemporaries. In our day, it is impossible, from the few relics that remain, to know the perfection to which our ancestors of the middle ages carried this art; which attained even to the dignity of sculpture, when Gothic saints and Madonnas looked down from their niches in cathedrals: though the names of the unknown artists who carved these lovely heads and graceful draperies were forgotten, even before the frail material in which they worked had lost its first freshness.

The sculptor of Bruges was one of these now-forgotten artists; and yet an artist he was, in the highest sense of the word. He lived and moved among beautiful forms;

they influenced his character and refined his mind, yet did not make him unfit for association with the world. Riches and honour came with his fame, until he stood high in the regard of his fellow citizens; and the son of the poor Italian student was at last deemed worthy to wed one who had long been the object of an almost hopeless love, a daughter of one of the highest families in Bruges. This union could not but be a happy one; and Andrea and his wife slowly advanced towards middle age, feeling that their present bliss had not belied the promise of their youth. Still, there were a few bitter drops in their cup: the husband and wife saw several of their children drop off one by one, until all that remained were two boys and a daughter—the lovely little Gertrude, who was her father's darling. Nevertheless, these three were sufficient to make the sculptor's home cheerful, and the lost brothers and sisters were hardly missed.

At the time when our story begins, Andrea had finished his latest work;—a group of angels, carved in wood, to adorn the church of Bruges. The burghers crowded to gaze upon and admire the work of their fellow citizen, of whom they were so justly proud. It was indeed a fine specimen of the ancient Gothic carving, such as one meets with sometimes even now in old churches, where the hand of innovation has not reached. Three angels formed the group, one kneeling with up-raised eyes and folded hands, while the other's extended arms were lifted upwards in rapturous adoration; and the third, looking down on the worshippers below, pointed towards heaven. It won universal praise. The artist stood apart, in pleasure not unmingled with honest pride, when many a hand shook his own in friendly congratulation, and many an eye, made humbler by rank and distance, looked at him admiringly.

In all the pleased assembly there was but one dissentient voice, and that was from a brother artist and rival of Andrea. Melchior Kunst was one of those dark and unquiet spirits who seem to cast a shadow wherever they go.

He was a man of great talent, yet no one loved him. They could hardly tell why—yet so it was. Even now, all instinctively made way for him, and Melchior strode on until he stood opposite the group. He folded his brows, and looked at it fixedly from under his dark brows. Then he addressed the artist, who stood at a little distance.

"Doubtless you think this very fine, Messer Andrea?"

"It is not what *I* think of it, but the judgment which the world puts on my work, that is of consequence," answered Andrea, calmly.

"The composition is well imitated, certainly."

"Imitated. It is my own."

"Indeed!" said Melchior, with a quiet sneer sitting on his lips—the handsomest feature of his very handsome face. "Indeed! And so you never go into another studio, and copy figures, attitude, and design, as you have here copied from me?"

"It is not true," said Andrea, with difficulty restraining his passion.

"I tell you it is," cried his opponent. "Look, gentlemen! brother artists, look! this group is mine—my own design; and here I execute my will upon what is my own!" He drew a hatchet from under his cloak, and before the wonderstricken spectators could interfere, he severed one of the upraised hands of the nearest figure.

Andrea was stung to the quick by this mutilation of his work; all his Italian blood was roused within him: he rushed upon Kunst with the fury of a tiger at bay. Those around interfered, but it was needless; for Andrea's well-constituted mind had already got the better of his momentary rage, and he stood, pale, but self-possessed, gazing alternately at his adversary and at his own despoiled work.

"Melchior Kunst," said he at last, "you think you have done me a great injury; and so you have, but not an irreparable one. I will not revenge myself now, but you will be repaid some time."

A loud laugh from Kunst made the sculptor once more clench his hands, while the bright red mounted to his brow, but he said no more; and after Melchior's departure he too left the hall with some friends, who were stricken dumb by this untoward quarrel.

It was late in the evening when Andrea returned towards his own home. He walked slowly along by the side of the dark and gloomy canal, which the setting light of the young moon only made more solemn and fearful. Thick ivy-hung walls, even in the daytime, cast a heavy shadow on the water; and now it looked like some dark abyss, which no man could fathom. Here and there some pale solitary ray of moonlight pierced through the branches of the acacias that overhung the opposite side, seeming like a bright arrow flashing through the darkness.

Andrea's heart was very heavy. His triumph had ended in pain; disappointment not only at the injury done to his work, but at the unjust accusation of Melchior Kunst. Andrea knew how ready are the suspicions of the world when once aroused; and he fancied that already cold and doubtful eyes examined his group with less favour than heretofore. And besides, the sudden ebullition of anger to which he had been goaded left an exhaustion, both bodily and mental; as is usually the case with men of Andrea's gentle and not easily-roused temperament.

The sculptor walked on quickly amidst the gathering darkness, for the moon had now set. He fancied now and then that he heard stealthy footsteps at a distance behind him; and perhaps this made him unconsciously urge his pace. Andrea was no coward, but it was a lonely place by the waterside, and he was unarmed. Still, as the footsteps approached no nearer, he reproached himself for yielding to the delusion of an imagination heated by the events of the day. All at once he heard distinctly a plunge in the water of some heavy body. His first idea was, that some unfortunate had thus ended his life and his miseries; but the sound was so distant, that he was uncertain. He

retraced his steps; hut there was nothing to justify his previous thought. The canal flowed on, silent and dark as before: not a struggle, not a groan, not a cry rose up from its gloomy depths. It could have been only a heavy stone, which had fallen from the old dilapidated wall into the waters beneath. Andrea felt sure of this, and went on his way until he reached his home—a home where, since he left, danger and anxiety had entered.

Three days after this, two armed officers of justice made their appearance in the dwelling of the sculptor of Bruges. They came to take prisoner the master of the house, accused of the crime of murder! From the day of the contest in the hall, Melchior Kunst had never been seen, until that morning, when his lifeless body had floated up from the bed of the canal into the very market-place. Then one of the horror-stricken bystanders remembered that on the same night of their quarrel Messer Andrea had been seen to pass by the way that led along the canal, and that not long after Melchior Kunst also followed. Another man, who lived near, had heard a plunge in the water, but thought it was only his own dog, who often at night swam across the canal. A third also had met Messer Andrea beside the canal, but had seen no other person. This was sufficient evidence to convict the unfortunate artist.

The officers found their prisoner alone. He was sitting with his head buried in his hands, and hardly moved at their entrance. One of them laid his hand on the sculptor's shoulder, and claimed him as a prisoner.

Andrea looked up with a face so listless, so vacant, so deadly pale, that the officer started, and unconsciously let go his hold.

"A prisoner!" said Andrea, without making an effort to move. "What have I done? Who accuses me?"

The officer was a man of kindly nature, who had known Messer Andrea in former times. He gently and respectfully explained his errand; but had to repeat it several

times before Andrea comprehended them. It seemed that some heavy cloud darkened his faculties. At last he understood the whole.

"So they accuse me of being a murderer—an assassin?" said he, rising, while a shiver ran through his frame. Then, addressing the first officer, "You were a good man once—follow me!" The other hesitated. "You need not fear," continued Andrea; "I am unarmed — I have no thought of escaping from justice."

The man followed his prisoner until they came to a darkened room: it was the chamber of death. On the bed lay the pale and shrouded form of a woman. Very beautiful she must have been, and her beauty had scarcely passed its maturity. No long illness had taken away the roundness of health from her face, so that even in death she looked lovely as a marble statue. The long, dark lashes rested on her cheek, and a few locks of jet black hair, escaping from the fillet that bound her head, gave a life-like air to her repose. By her side lay an infant—a flower of an hour — whose little soul had come into it at sunrise, and departed at sunset. They were the wife and child of Andrea.

The sculptor pointed to the dead. "Look there," he said, "and say if I am likely to have revenged any trifling insult – if I am likely to have been a murderer!" His voice grew hoarse; he stretched his arms towards the body of his wife, and then fell to the earth in strong convulsions.

During nearly the whole time that elapsed between his apprehension and trial, Andrea was dead to the consciousness of his misery. A low fever enfeebled all his senses, and reduced his outward form to the appearance of an old man. His friends—for he had still many—took both his sons to their charge. It was well that they did, for the father seemed to have lost all remembrance even of their existence. When they visited him, he took not the least notice of them; so the children were at last wisely sent far away from the scene of disgrace and suffering. But

with Gertrude the father would not part. She was a fair little creature, the image of her mother in feature and expression, but her complexion resembled her father. Her eyes were of that deep brown-gray which is seldom seen beyond childhood—so dark, that a careless observer would call them black. Gertrude's hair was of that colour which the old masters often gave to heads of Christ and of the Virgin—which the uninitiated might call red, but which painters know to be the most beautiful of all tints. It gave to sweet Gertrude the appearance of an angel.

The first evidence that Andrea showed of returning consciousness, was in recognising his little daughter, and calling her by her name. It was her mother's also; and perhaps that, aided by the strong resemblance, was a comfort to the widowed father. He began to talk coherently, first with Gertrude and then with others who came to see him; and by degrees his mind and body gathered strength, so that he was able to think of his defence against the terrible crime laid to his charge. This was a momentous thing, for the proofs were all against him, and Andrea could bring no evidence in his own favour, save his own explanation of what had happened on his way homewards on that fatal day, and the irreproachable character he had borne all his life.

At last the sculptor of Bruges was brought from prison to the judgment-hall. He seemed to himself like one risen from the grave, and so he likewise appeared to those about him. Andrea had been a strong, powerful, noble-looking man, but now all his flesh had shrunk away, and his height only made him appear more shadowy. Dark circles were round his eyes, and his face bore an unvaried sallow hue. Nevertheless, his mien was firm and composed; no one could look at him, and for a moment doubt his innocence. Andrea's little daughter stood by his side; one might have likened her to a flower growing close beside a tomb. Gertrude had become accustomed to the change in her father's looks, and the shocked and anxious gaze of all

around struck her with alarm. She crept closer to him, never taking her eyes from his face.

The trial proceeded. All was against Andrea: even the words he had uttered before Melchior left the hall, were brought in judgment against him: they had sounded like a threat. None who had known Andrea doubted in their own hearts that he was a guiltless man, but the circumstantial evidence was too strong to be legally contradicted. The accused was found guilty; and Andrea – the gentle upright man, who had never lifted a hand against a fellow-creature, save in that one evil hour when he was driven to passion by Melchior Kunst—was removed from the hall of justice with the stain of murder on his name.

The execution of the sentence was deferred for a short space, for the sake of the hitherto unsullied character of the criminal. In those days the hand of law was often tampered with, and never was it with greater show of justice than in this instance. Andrea's many friends interposed on his behalf. They succeeded in obtaining only a suspension of the sentence for a few months, that some chance might elicit the truth which so many doubted. But in the interim the sculptor was ordered to execute some work of art to adorn the Palais de Justice at Bruges, where he had been tried. For this purpose he was brought from his cell, and confined in the hall which had witnessed his trial.

It was a large, gloomy-looking chamber, so dimly lighted from without, that even at mid-day the dark shadows in the corners of the room looked like night. An immense hearth, on which lay a few faggots, was the only cheerful object, but even that light and warmth did not reach beyond the immediate vicinity of the fire. There was no furniture in the room, save one small table in the centre, a bench, and a straw couch in the gloomiest corner. It was a place in which one would instinctively shrink from looking behind, and where one's own footsteps would sound hollow and full of dread, as if something fearful were following

after. Andrea and his daughter heard the heavy door close, and they were alone in the hall. The little girl led her father to the bench beside the hearth, and then sat down at his feet, holding his hands fast in hers. She dared not look anywhere but at the bright fire and at her father's face; even the shadows that the flames cast on the ceiling made her start sometimes. Gertrude had been accustomed to the prison, for she had never left her father except when taken home at night, to return next morning —but this place seemed gloomier still than the dungeon.

Andrea had no hope. His life had been free from any very heavy sorrows, and the first that came, so fearful as they were, quite overwhelmed him. His sole desire now was to employ the short remnant of his life in executing some memorial of his talents to leave behind him, that when time had removed the shadow from his fame, his children might have no reason to blush for their father. He returned again to his long-cherished occupation. For a while this gave him sensations almost amounting to pleasure. His step became lighter, and his countenance lost somewhat of its settled melancholy. He almost forgot his sorrows, his blighted name, his impending doom, in the exercise of his beloved art. He would cease from his work, look at the beautiful figure which had risen to life under his hand, and murmur to himself, "What man will say that the hand of an assassin has done this?—that the brain which conceived this dream of beauty could plan a murder?"

And by degrees the influence of his art in some measure soothed the mind of the sorrow-stricken man. His desolate prison became cheerful with the graceful forms which it contained, and Gertrude moved among the whole like a beautiful spirit. If ever the sculptor clung to hope and life, it was when he looked at his darling child, and at the more imperishable offspring of his genius.

At last Andrea's work drew nigh to a close: the wood-sculpture was finished. Then it was that the enthusiasm which had sustained him faded away, and the artist's soul

sank within him. He gave the last touches to his beautiful work—he knew he could do no more—and then went and sat down in a stupor of grief and despair. Gertrude clung round him, but he did not speak to her or embrace her.

"Father, dear father, are you weary? You are not angry with your little girl?" and the child stood on tiptoe, trying to remove the hands which covered his face.

Andrea seemed hardly conscious of her presence. He did not move, but kept repeating every now and then in a low tone, "I have done my work—I have no hope—now let me die."

The terrified child, who had all along been kept in ignorance of her father's doom, began to weep, but her tears were unregarded. An hour after, the magistrates of Bruges entered. They came to view the finished work of the artist. High as Andrea's reputation had been, they did not expect so beautiful a group as that which now met their eyes. Its subject was "eternal justice"—not the woman with bound eyes and balanced scales—but an open-eyed angel, all-beholding, and equally requiting all. They looked upon it in silence, and then turned to the artist, who, wan and haggard, stood behind his judges. One of them, an old man, was melted even to tears. Forgetting the dignity of office, the magistrate took hold of the criminal's hand and led him to a seat.

"You must not stand, Messer Andrea; you are not yet strong," said he, compassionately. "Sit and rest, while we examine your beautiful work."

The sculptor obeyed without a word: he was passive as a child. Little Gertrude, who had shrunk away at the sight of strangers, came and stood silently behind her father, taking fast hold of his garments. The two magistrates inspected the sculpture, and could not restrain their admiration. The eye of the unfortunate artist brightened for a moment at their warm praise, but immediately his face returned to its accustomed melancholy.

"It is all in vain," he answered; "you cannot make men forget the past—you cannot remove the blot from the name of my children—you cannot give to their father his forfeit life."

The magistrates looked at one another, and the elder one spoke.

"There is hope still, Messer Andrea; have you courage to hear it?"

The artist started up. "Tell me only that I am proved innocent, and I will thank God and die."

"We do not promise quite so much," said one of the judges, wishing to temper Andrea's violent excitement.

"Yet take heart! Many strange things have been discovered to-day," continued the aged man whose kindness had first moved Andrea. "Be calm now; ere long we may send you good news: nay," and the good man could no longer hide his hopeful tidings, "it is not impossible that you may be free to-morrow."

The magistrates departed, leaving the poor prisoner with a wildly-throbbing heart, which he vainly endeavoured to still. All that day he sat with Gertrude in his arms, kissing her, fondling her, at times almost weeping over her. To all the questions of the wondering child he only answered, "To-morrow, love; we may be free to-morrow."

And when the attendants came to remove Gertrude for the night, he unclasped her arms from round his neck, with the promise that he too would go away with her to-morrow.

"Go away to-morrow!" cried the happy child. "Will you, too, leave this gloomy place to-morrow, and return no more?"

"God forbid I should return! No, my child, never more," answered the father, with a shudder.

"And shall we go out together? shall we go to our own home?" pursued Gertrude.

"Yes, dear child," said Andrea, as he kissed her once more, and set her on the ground from his arms, that were

too weak for even so light a burden. "Yes, my Gertrude, I shall indeed go home to-morrow."

He had spoken truth.

Soon after daybreak next morning some officers entered the hall, bearing a release for the prisoner. A stranger—an Italian woman—who had once passed through Bruges, and lately returned thither, deposed to having received a letter from Melchior Kunst, dated on the fatal day, stating his determined intention of self-murder at the time and place where he was discovered to have met his end.

Further than this was never known. Andrea was innocent! His fellow-citizens rejoiced as one man—for Messer Andrea was proved innocent.

They found him in the prison, leaning on the table, his head resting on his arms, and his upturned face raised towards his beautiful work. But as they drew nearer, they saw that his countenance was meaningless, and that no life shone in his fixed and open eyes. The sculptor of Bruges was dead—his heart had broken with joy.*

* The leading incidents of this story are strictly true. The works of Andrea may still be seen in the Palais de Justice at Bruges.

CLEOMENES THE GREEK.

A TALE OF THE PERSECUTION UNDER DIOCLETIAN.

EVENING was darkening over the city which may well be called "eternal;" the city which has been mother, mistress, or tyrant of Europe, from the day when the blood of its twin founder was poured out upon the walls he had despised, through ages of kingdoms, commonwealths, empires, hierarchies, down to our own days. Rome it is — the same Rome, the mother of the world — but oh! how changed!

The date of our story is neither in the ancient days of republican glory, nor in the modern times of papal dignity. We now speak of the City of Seven Hills as she was in the waning days of her splendour, when the Augustan age had passed away, and left her like a woman whose magnificent beauty is fading fast, and who seeks by meretricious adornments to hide that too evident decay, lest men should see that her glory and loveliness are fleeting together. Yet amidst all the internal wreck which had been caused by centuries of dissension between rapacious senates, savage generals, and tyrannical or licentious emperors, the Eternal City still looked most beautiful. The politic sway of Diocletian had restored outward tranquillity; and, save the persecuted Christians, all the subject citizens of Rome enjoyed prosperity.

We must carry our readers to the inner court of a Roman dwelling, such as the resurrection of the lava-buried

cities has exposed to curious modern eyes. It was open to the clear evening sky, towards which the fountain in its centre rose to a height of many feet, giving forth a constant and thrilling melody of waters. On three sides of the court extended the domestic apartments, the fourth was bounded by a flight of marble steps, which led into a garden, from whence came perfumes of many southern flowers, where the orange shone like gold amidst its leaves, and the olives were laden with rich fruit. Birds sang in the trees, until one by one they ceased, and the nightingale was left alone to mingle her strains with the continual murmuring of the fountain.

When the dusky clouds had gathered half over the sky, and evening was insensibly melting into night, a young girl came from the house, and stood alone beside the fountain. She looked anxiously towards the west, where the evening star was already bright. Her clearly defined and yet delicate features bespoke the Roman virgin; her costume, entirely of white, was such as maidens of patrician birth alone were entitled to wear; and as her veil fell from her finely-turned head, it exposed her hair knotted up behind with golden bodkins. She looked once more at the sky, then walked quickly to the door from whence she had entered, and said, in a clear but whispering tone, "Father, the star is nigh setting—it is time."

As she spoke, a man came forth, of years which showed that she who called him father must have been the child of his old age; his gray head was bare, and his erect and somewhat gaunt figure was wrapped in a toga of dark colour and homely texture. After him came two females, one bearing a lamp, whose light fell strongly on her person. She was in the prime of womanhood; every feature of her face, every glance of her proud eye, every movement of her stately form, spoke majestic and dazzling beauty. The other female seemed a Roman matron of declining years. The attire of both formed a strong contrast to the maiden who had stood by the fountain, whose garments of pure

white were entirely without ornament, while theirs were many-coloured, and the arms and neck of the younger lady glittered with jewels.

The matron went timidly up to him who was apparently her husband, and said, "Irenæus, wilt thou then go, when thou knowest the danger to thee and the child?"

He turned from her, and took hold of his daughter's hand: "Come, Mæsa."

Once more the wife appealed: "Irenæus, if there be danger, tell me the whole. Thy gods are not mine, but I am still thy wife, and the mother of thy child. Mæsa, tell me where thou art going with thy father?"

The young girl's lips moved, but a sign from Irenæus stayed her speech. The mother began to weep; and the stern old man seemed softened by her tears, for he went towards her and said kindly, "Domitilla mine, thou hast been ever faithful—I would trust the wife of my bosom, even though she is a worshipper of idols; but—" and he glanced toward the young female who bore the lamp.

The latter saw his look, and, casting down the light, threw both her arms into the air with wild energy, crying, "Dost thou then suspect me, O father? Is it I whom thou doubtest would betray thee,—I whom thou hast brought up these eighteen years with love and care, even as though I had been a child of thine own blood? And have I not loved thee as such, ever since the day when the weeping Greek slave followed thee from the market to be cherished in thy childless home. O father, father? thou hast sorely misjudged Stratonice!"

Her tones and gestures sank from indignation into low complaining; she bowed her head, absorbed in wounded feeling.

"I do thee no wrong, Stratonice," said Irenæus, calmly; "but in these troublous times, which set household against household, and parent against child, it behoves us to guard well a secret on which the life, not of one but of many, depends. It is enough for thee and Domitilla to know that

I and Mæsa go this night to the solemn assembly of our brethren. Where, I must not and will not reveal. Come, my daughter."

Mæsa, who had all this time stood silent by her father's side, kissed the hand of her mother, with the distant respect which was ever inculcated on the Roman youth, and with a gentle "Farewell, Stratonice!" she followed Irenæus as he passed down the marble steps. When the last glimmer of Mæsa's white veil disappeared among the orange trees, Domitilla and her adopted daughter returned to the house.

They passed through many apartments, whose richness showed that it was the dwelling of opulence. The gorgeous fabrics of the east, which commerce and victory had brought to Rome, were lavished on every side: the tesselated floors and the painted walls bore witness that taste had gone hand-in-hand with luxury. Only this one circumstance was remarkable, that in all the adornments there was no representation of the human figure; no groups of dancing nymphs were delineated in the compartments of the walls; there were no statues of divinities, considered partly as domestic adornments, partly as objects of worship, with which the Romans in the decline of their empire loved to ornament their dwellings. Save for this peculiarity, the house of Irenæus was a fit abode for a man of rank and wealth, in the times when the simplicity of ancient Rome had been succeeded by the magnificence of the emperors.

Stratonice and Domitilla came at last to their own portion of the dwelling. Here no restriction was imposed on the adornments, and here were all the outward emblems of the worship of the gods of Rome. The small statues of the household divinities occupied their accustomed shrine, before which lay incense and garlands of flowers. From the walls looked the images of the Huntress Queen and the God of Day; Juno, the worshipped of the Roman matrons, was there pictured, and all the lesser deities of Greece and Rome. Everything that was beautiful, everything that contri-

buted to art, religion, or female luxury, was here combined. Stratonice and her mother reclined on one of the purple couches that occupied the centre of the room, and remained long in silence, each engrossed with her own meditations. But at length Domitilla said, as if giving unconscious utterance to the train of her thoughts, "Would that Cleomenes were here! he might tell us somewhat that would allay our fears about them. Will he come, thinkest thou, Stratonice?"

The Greek maiden stooped over her embroidery, but even then she could not hide the deep flush which that name brought to her cheek, and the trembling of her voice, as she answered, "I know not, mother: wherefore should I?"

Domitilla bent over her, and kissed her brow. "Thou canst not deceive me, child of my heart; as dear to me as my own Mæsa—nay, more, for she has left her mother's faith for another new and strange. My Stratonice, I know how well thou lovest this young Greek."

"And need I blush for it, mother?" said the girl, drawing up her noble stature to its full height, while her features gleamed with enthusiasm. "Is he not noble, brave, and worthy: has he not been the light of my eyes, my guide to all that was good and beautiful, these many years? Dit I not love him when I was a child, because he spoke the tongue of my fathers, and talked to me of Greece? And need I feel shame that this love has strengthened until it has become part of my being; since, in loving Cleomenes, I love all that can ennoble man? Oh, mother, need I blush for this?"

"May Juno grant that he may love thee as thou lovest him!" said the mother, softly: but the words had reached to the ears of Stratonice; and her excitement passed away into dejection; her frame seemed shrinking from its proud dignity into debasement and despair.

"I said not that he loved thee not," added Domitilla, "but only—"

"Only that, perchance, not for me do his footsteps haunt the dwelling of Irenæus; that it is on the sweet

young face of Mæsa that his eyes rest. Is not this what thou wouldst tell me, mother?" said Stratonice, mournfully.

"I said not so, my child," answered Domitilla. "Why should he not love thee? Thou art a fit mate for him—the same in country, in religion: while Mæsa—"

"But she is younger and fairer than I. Hush! answer not—it is true; whatsoever he loves best *must* be the most beautiful. And yet I loved him when she was a mere child, and he, too, loved me then—or I believed so. Oh, delight of my soul! why hast thou left me?"

The mother calmed her strong excitement, until Stratonice knelt at her feet, and leaned upon her bosom, trembling like an infant, but composed.

"Even if it be as thou sayest," said the serene voice of the wife of Irenæus, "there may still be peace for thee. Thy secret is known only to thine own heart and to thy mother's: neither will betray thee, Stratonice. Even should Cleomenes love thee not, should he wed Mæsa—"

"I should die."

"Not so; death comes not so easily, even after anguish deep as this. Thou art young, my daughter; thou knowest not how much we can bear and live;—I *have* known." There was a tremulousness in the matron's tone which made Stratonice lift up her eyes inquiringly.

Domitilla continued, "Twenty years have I been the wife of Irenæus, honoured, regarded; in many things most happy: yet thinkest thou that my husband was the love of my youth, Stratonice? I once loved even as thou; even in my age, with my gray hairs and my withered bloom, I remember him—his sweet and loving eyes—his voice low and musical, which I hear in my heart this hour. He did love me once I know it; there could be no falsehood in those eyes and those tones: but his love changed, as love will do sometimes, and perhaps she whom he next sought knew how to enchain him better than I."

"But the gods punished her for that wickedness," impetuously cried the maiden.

"Hush! Stratonice. Thou, at least, oughtest not to say such words against her, for she was the mother of Cleomenes."

"False father, false son!" muttered Stratonice; and then throwing herself on the bosom of Domitilla, the frame of the proud and beautiful maiden shook with an agony of tears.

"Thou dost not know yet that he loves thy sister, or that she loves him," said the mother, soothingly.

"She could not but love him if he wooed her."

Domitilla smiled sadly. "All maidens think thus. But come, my child, we will talk no more of this; the gods may make my Stratonice happy yet."

The mother and daughter spoke no more, but lay on the couch in silence, while the flickering lamps showed the grace of an attitude which custom and the indolence of their clime taught the Roman women. The light fell full on Stratonice, exhibiting every curve of her exquisitely modelled form, the delicate hands, the rounded arms, the white-sandalled feet; but she lay in utter abandonment of soul, and heeded not the beauty which had failed to win Cleomenes.

It was not long before he of whom her heart was full stood before Stratonice. One look at the young Greek, and who would marvel at the girl's love? It was not that he bore in his face and form the beauty of that land whose men were heroes—whose heroes were gods; but it was an inexpressible charm in his look—in his tone, so different from all other men. A stranger, gazing on Cleomenes, or listening to his words, would have felt that he was in the presence of one who had received that spark of immortal fire—genius.

Domitilla received Cleomenes with a kindly greeting. She had ever loved him; for though he bore his mother's face, he spoke with his father's voice; and woman ever remembers the tones of her first love. Stratonice gave him her white, cold hand: her cheek changed not, and her voice was firm, as she said, "Thou art welcome, Cleomenes."

How little he knew that she who looked thus calm would have laid her life down at his feet, that he might say one tender word as of old; how that the lips which uttered that cold greeting, would have cried, "Let me die —let me die content, since thou lovest me, O Cleomenes!"

But Cleomenes knew not this; his glance wandered carelessly over her magnificent beauty, for he saw it not with the eyes of love—love which makes the meanest form appear divine! He spoke courteously, friendly, to both ladies, and then looked eagerly round for a third— who was not there.

"I met not Irenæus as I entered, noble lady Domitilla," he said, using the respectful *domina*, the favourite title of the patrician women of Rome. "And thy daughter is not with thee, I see. Are both well?"

A shade of anxiety passed over the matron's face.

"As an old and tried friend, thou knowest all the secrets of our household, Cleomenes. Therefore I dare tell thee that my husband and child are gone to their nightly worship."

"At this hour, an old man and a girl to be unprotected in the streets of Rome!" cried Cleomenes. "Lady, it was madness! The city is full of revelling in honour of the victory of Gallienus, and the very name of Christian is a mock and a byeword. They will be discovered."

"The gods forbid!" shrieked the mother; but Stratonice did not utter a sound.

"And Mæsa wore the white garments of her vow, while all the Roman women flaunt in crimson and gold! It will betray at once that she is a Christian," muttered the young man, turning deadly pale; but he saw the mother's agonized and imploring look, and said no more, except to ask the place where Irenæus and his daughter had gone.

"I know not: he would not say!" moaned Domitilla. "Alas! it is a fearful thing to be wedded to a Christian!"

"Do not say so," Cleomenes answered, for her words struck like ice into his own conscious heart. "But I cannot

stay here: I must go in search of them. Be comforted, lady; I will die rather than any harm should come to Mæsa." And in a moment he was gone.

Stratonice followed him with her eyes, and then turned them on Domitilla, who, amidst all her maternal grief, was struck with their expression of utter despair.

"Mother," the girl said, in accents terribly calm, "canst thou doubt whom Cleomenes loves *now?*"

II.*

IN one of the most secret windings of the catacombs which extended under the capital—another city of the dead beneath that of the living—was gathered a little band of worshippers, the persecuted Christians of Rome. Among them were all ranks, all ages, from the noble patrician lady, who would not so much as have ventured her jewelled sandal across the common street, down to the blind and aged beggar, who existed, rather than could be said to live. Young and old, patrician and plebeian, rich and poor, mingled their voices in the psalm, knelt together, and broke the mystic bread of universal love and brotherly union. Around them lay the bones of the departed—a mute warning that all must one day become equal in the same poor dust. In the dead of night from that gloomy house of tombs rose up the voice of prayer and of thanksgiving. Many lifted their voices from beside the very niches that hid their dead kindred from their sight, knowing not but that ere morning they themselves might find a grave in the same sepulchre. How earnest, how solemn must have been worship such as this!

* It is with a pleasant remembrance that the author acknowledges having taken the idea of this scene, and perhaps unconsciously of the whole story, from Mr. F. R. Pickersgill's picture of "Christian Worship in the Catacombs."

Among the assemblage were Irenæus and his daughter. When the service of the Sabbath vespers had been concluded, the priest, an aged man, who looked as though he had received his holy message from the very lips of the Apostles, stood forth. His words were few and simple; there was no eloquence on his lips; he spoke like an earnest man to earnest hearers, unto whom every syllable was a question of life or death. Afterwards others addressed their brethren; among the rest Irenæus. Finally, the rites of the church—which could only be thus secretly administered —were performed. Babes, whose fathers had confessed their faith through fire and sword and the jaws of wild beasts, were brought by their widowed mothers to be sealed in the same holy communion. The aged, the sick, to whom this night might be their last open confession of faith, received the prayers and consolations of religion; and then there came the strangest rite of all in that gloomy temple —a marriage.

The bride was young and gentle-looking; the husband a tall and sturdy Roman, hard-handed, rough-visaged, and yet not devoid of the soft expression given by sincere piety and tender human love. It was strange to hear those vows given and received at such a time and in such a place; to see love triumphing over danger, persecution, and death. When the rite was ended, the priest addressed the newly-wedded pair.

"My children, there are those amongst us who might say I did evil in this holy solemnization—that at all times, and especially in this season of trouble, ye would serve God best asunder. But I say not so—I dare not. Be blessed, and keep your holy vow until death—how far or how near that death may be, God knoweth. Rufinus, thy father, who gained the martyr's crown when thou wert yet a child, lies beneath thy feet; break not the vow made over his sacred dust. And thou, Metella, who art one with thy husband in all things—above all, in the same holy faith—be thankful that in life and in eternity ye will never be

parted. Alas! for those amongst us who are bound to unbelievers by the hallowed tie of marriage, which is yet too sacred to be loosed; but woe unto those who, being free, willingly unite themselves to idolaters! Pain, affliction, and remorse, shall be their portion in this life, and eternal wrath hereafter!"

"Amen — amen!" cried the deep voice of Irenæus, breaking the awe-struck silence which followed the preacher's vehement words. Mæsa hid her face in her veil, and as she knelt, her frame bent down almost to the earth, a visible shudder passed over her. But no one heeded: all were too much absorbed in their own feelings. After a solemn blessing the bridegroom took his bride, and all knelt down for the parting prayer.

Suddenly the watchers, who stood at a little distance guarding the descent to the tomb, saw a shadow gliding along the damp wall. Lower and lower, nearer and nearer, came the dreadful spectre, enough to strike superstitious terror in that place of death. But the Christians had no fear, save of the living. One of the watchers, a blind man, remarkable for quickness of hearing, started from his seat, and said, in a hurried whisper —

"My brethren, death is upon us. I hear footsteps, and the clank of arms."

In another moment the soldiers of Diocletian had burst on the yet-kneeling worshippers, and the low murmur of prayer was succeeded by shrieks, groans, and curses. All was confusion and despair. Some died in the struggle with the soldiers, few by their weapons; for it was the will of the persecutors that the Christians should perish not in a hand-to-hand fight, but by the tortures of slow martyrdom. The torches were nearly all extinguished in the strife: and death seemed to many more fearful, since it came in darkness. Some, seeing in the gloom their only hope of safety, and knowing the windings of the catacombs, stole through the very midst of the assailants towards the entrance. Among these were the bridegroom and bride.

Irenæus neither strove to fight or escape: he stood where he had knelt, unnoticed by the soldiers, his figure being hidden by the darkness; his daughter, paralyzed and insensible with terror, lying like an infant in his powerful arms. At last a touch, too gentle to be that of an enemy, and yet firm, was laid on his shoulder, and a whisper reached his ear.

"Irenæus, if thou wouldst be saved, come!"

At this instant a Roman soldier advanced to seize him; but the same voice, in a loud and commanding tone, which roused even Mæsa from her stupor, and caused her to utter a cry, said,—

"These are my prisoners—release them!"

The soldier muttered some apology, and departed.

"Give me thy burden, Irenæus, and come," added the first speaker, and then even Irenæus recognised the voice of Cleomenes the Greek.

He took Mæsa from her father's arms, and led both, as seeming captives, to the foot of the staircase. Hardly had they reached it, when a struggle was heard above, a woman's shriek, and a fall. Immediately, at their very feet, lay the bruised and mangled forms of two unfortunates who had been cast down the winding staircase. Even in the last struggle and fall their arms had not untwined from round each other. Irenæus looked upon the dead bodies; they were Rufinus and Metella, the bridegroom and the bride.

Past the struggling, the captives, the dead, Cleomenes and Irenaeus went—the Greek still bearing Mæsa, as if she were his prisoner—through long passages, where they had to grope their uncertain way, sometimes displacing the ghastly inhabitants of that city of the dead; on, through all that was fearful and horrible, to the blessed upper air. It was just daybreak when they emerged from the catacombs. The city was still in darkness, save that the faint light of dawn rested on the Palatine Hill. The cool morning air restored consciousness to Mæsa, and Cleomenes relinquished

his burden, but still supported her feeble steps; the old man following. Thus, almost without a word, they passed through the deserted city, in which the revels of the night had at last ceased, but still had left traces in the broken boughs and wine-drenched garlands which strewed the streets. Here and there, they passed by a few sleeping revellers, who lay in the open air in helpless stupor. Save these, the only occupants of the highway seemed the terminal statues of the Roman divinities, which were placed in the corners of streets, hung with the now withered wreaths with which they had been adorned. Such sights always made the stern zealot, Irenæus, turn away his eyes, and draw his garments closer about him, lest he should be polluted by a passing touch of the hated idol.

They quitted the city, came through the cool and lovely valley of Egeria to the Ostian road, and soon approached the dwelling of Irenæus. There the old man paused, took his daughter from her young protector, and said—

"We must now part, Cleomenes. I know not if I ought to thank thee for saving my own poor life—a life I would gladly exchange for the glory of a martyr's death; but I am a father, and I do thank thee for preserving this child! Farewell, Cleomenes! Thou art not one of us. May the true God one day guide thee to better things!"

Irenæus lifted up his eyes in silent devotion; while Mæsa laid her hand on that of Cleomenes, and said gently—

"My father speaks coldly; but his gratitude is as warm as mine. And I shall ever remember all that Cleomenes risked to save the life of Mæsa."

"Because that life is ten thousand times more precious than his own to Cleomenes," answered the Greek, in a low tone which made the girl shrink from his eye, and take her hand from the warm clasp of his, with a hurried farewell. But after he was gone, she looked after him long and fixedly, and a tear gathered in her soft eyes. Her father turned, and saw it.

"Mæsa," he said, and the stern severity of his tone struck her with terror, "the daughter of Irenæus must waste no tears upon an idolater. Remember the words which this night followed the union of those who, though now dead, are most happy. Thou heardest the curse—beware!"

And Irenæus led his daughter onward, and entered his own house.

III.

AFTER the fatal night which had witnessed the discovery of their secret worship, many of the Christians of Rome sealed their faith with their blood. Such was the thirst for the glory of martyrdom that prevailed among the primitive converts, that some voluntarily devoted themselves to death by an open confession of their faith, or by offering sacrilege to the shrines of the deities. The luxurious inhabitants of Rome cared not whether it was their Christian fellow-citizens, or the barbarian captives of Gallienus, who made sport for them at the arena, so that they had no lack of their brutal amusements. Sometimes the flame of persecution waxed fainter for a while, and then some new cause lit it up afresh, and thousands perished.

Amidst all these horrors, the house of Irenæus went unscathed. The known piety of his wife Domitilla to the gods of Rome—her noble birth, and his own, protected him, if not from the taint of suspicion, at least from its fatal consequences. Sometimes, in his fiery zeal, Irenæus would have sought that persecution from which he seemed secure, had not his love for the child who shared his religion prevented the outbreak of such wild devoteeism.

From the time of that dread night in the catacombs, a shadow seemed to come over the young girl's spirit. The presence of Cleomenes always brought to her a strange agitation. At his sight her colour would come and go, her lips tremble, and her eyes fill with tears. Her mother thought and said how that it was no marvel the child should

shudder at aught that reminded her of that horrible scene; but Stratonice watched Mæsa's every look with doubt and suspicion. Her father, too, rarely suffered her out of his presence; and, though Cleomenes haunted both openly and secretly the abode which contained her he loved, he found no chance ever to utter more than those few words, which, though a torture, and, as she deemed, a heinous sin, yet rung in Mæsa's ears evermore, and were drunk in by her like sweet but deadly poison.

It was rarely that the daughter of Irenæus quitted her home; and now, in her failing health and harassed mind, she only sought to be alone. At the close of day she sometimes walked with Stratonice among the orange-trees of the garden, until the hour approached when Cleomenes was wont to come. Then the elder sister would depart to enjoy the happiness of being near him whom she so passionately loved; while Maesa strove to turn her thoughts from such vain and sinful dreams to the duties and aspirations of her religion. But, even amidst her evening prayer, and her vesper hymn, often came the vision of Cleomenes, and she would weep that such sweet memories could be a crime.

One evening, Stratonice, wearied of waiting for the so-longed-for step, cast aside her embroidery, and again went out into the orange-garden. She did not seek her sister; her own soul was too full of pain and jealousy. It was torture to be near that fair and innocent girl, to look upon the face that Cleomenes loved, to see that beauty and sweetness which she knew so precious to him. At times, by a strange revulsion of feeling, Stratonice would feel how impossible it was to hate aught that *he* loved, and would almost terrify her sister by sudden and passionate caresses. But then again came that horrible jealousy which gnawed into her very heart, and Stratonice would have fled anywhere to avoid the sight of Mæsa.

She hurried into the darkest and gloomiest shades; she would have shut out the very stars from her sight. Thus

she came unconsciously to a spot fraught with many memories. It was a little mossy nook, from which welled forth a spring of water no larger than a silver thread which a naiad's hand had drawn through the green grass. There many a time, in their early youth, had she and Cleomenes sat together, and he had taught the orphan the tongue of her fatherland, talked to her of their beloved Corinth, of Athens the glorious, of the old warriors and sages; recited the sounding verses of Homer, and the thrilling lyrics of Sappho, until the enthusiastic maiden could have become a heroine to fight by the side of him who spoke, or could have died joyfully, had it been for the love of Cleomenes. Here, too, in the terror of a wound from one of those dangerous snakes which are not uncommon in Italian woods, the girl had once flung her arms round the neck of her young lover, and been soothed by him with tender words —ay, with kisses.

As Stratonice thought of all this, memory became agony; she would have fled away, but that she heard a low murmur of voices near the spring, and saw the flutter of a white robe. She came nearer—despair made her step firm and noiseless—she looked through the trees. There, in the clear starlight, she saw Mæsa's drooping form, and beside her, bending over her with unutterable fondness, stood Cleomenes. His arms were wreathed round her, her hands were clasped in both his, and even though Mæsa wept, she did not take them away.

Stratonice could have shrieked, but that a suffocating weight oppressed her—it passed away, and she seemed frozen into marble. Yet to her ears every word that Cleomenes said came terribly distinct, and she felt forced to listen.

"I have told thee all, my best beloved," he said, with an accent of inexpressible sweetness and tenderness, "and thou scornest me not. Oh, Mæsa! thou must—thou dost love me."

"I dare not, Cleomenes—I dare not," faintly answered the girl. "It would be a sin against my father—and more,

against my God! I dare not love thee—I cannot. Take away thine arms, and let me go."

He freed her in a moment, and stood leaning against a tree; he looked at her for a while with an expression so mournful—so despairing—that it went to her very heart.

"I have deceived myself—thou lovest me not," he said at last. "I will go away and die."

"Thou shalt not go," cried Mæsa, passionately—"thou shalt not go; for I love thee—I do love thee, my Cleomenes!"

And Stratonice, from her hiding-place, witnessed the first embrace of confessed and mutual love between her sister and the beloved of her own heart—her idol for years. She clasped her hands over her brow till they felt like bands of iron, then pressed them together until the red drops seemed ready to ooze from the slender fingers; and without a word or cry, she sank down, still conscious, but utterly powerless on the grass.

In that moment every womanly feeling, every loving and kindly emotion, fled from the bosom of Stratonice. No wounded pride for slighted love—no bleeding vanity—no girlish sorrow over withered hopes, brought relieving tears to her eyes. They were burning; but she could not weep. Desperation—wild hatred—maddening revenge, came like serpents hissing around her, and all whispered one and the same word. Could any but the countless starry eyes have beheld her then, as she stood, most terrible in her magnificent beauty, they would have likened her to the glorious but fallen archangel who defied the Eternal.

IV.

THE Furies which tortured the crime-stained son of Agamemnon, were not more terrible than the thoughts which now crowded on the soul of Stratonice. First, they were wild, desperate—too horrible to have any real form—then they shaped themselves into a stern determination, which

grew firmer and firmer the more it lingered in her heart. All feelings of gratitude for years of tender care—all sisterly and filial emotions—were swallowed up in the whirlpool of frenzied love. During the long and fearful hours of night the long-suppressed passions of her clime rose up and rioted uncontrolled, and all resolved themselves into the one certainty that, in whatever way, Cleomenes must be parted from Mæsa.

At the dawn of day, long ere the indolent and luxurious Roman ladies had unclosed their eyes, Stratonice disguised herself in the attire of one of her slaves, and went forth to betray those for whom she would once have died. As the morning breeze passed her by, laying its cool kiss on her hair and brow, and the faint twitter of the waking birds was heard from the wood of Egeria—whose very name brought images of holiness and peace—the contrast to her own tumultuous passions struck forcibly on the throbbing heart of Stratonice; the horrible phantoms fled away before the calm reality of light and day, and a vague feeling of remorse and pity for the innocence she was about to betray stole over her. But then came the agonising memory of Cleomenes and his love—and the girl pressed her hands wildly to her heart as if to drive thence every feeling but that all-engrossing one which led her on to the deed.

Again and again she kept repeating to herself that it would not bring death to that sweet child; for the patrician Christians, if only suspected, were now generally allowed time, after the first warning, to flee from the threatened persecution. Thus Mæsa would be parted from her lover without the sin of murder. With these words, Stratonice moved rapidly forward, and ere the madness which goaded her had passed away, she had denounced Mæsa, the daughter of Irenaeus, as a concealed Christian.

Flying from the house of the prætor with the speed of one who is pursued by a spectre, the Greek girl reached her home. Fear lest she should be suspected, a vague

apprehension as to the result of her deed, and a lingering remorse which grew stronger and stronger now that it was utterly in vain, oppressed her by turns. With the swiftness of an antelope she gained the secret entrance of the garden, and soon reached the house in safety and undiscovered. There, in her own chamber, Stratonice felt all her strength depart; she cast away the thick mantle which had disguised her, and threw herself on the floor, laying her burning brow on the marble to give relief to its throbbings, and trembling at every sound.

Then, by a sudden impulse, she passed to the chamber next her own, which was her sister's. Mæsa lay in a slumber which might once have been disturbed, for the dark eyelashes were still heavy with tears. But it was all calmness now, and a sweet happy smile wandered round the child-like mouth. Broken words came at times from the lips of the dreaming girl. Stratonice bent down to listen, and distinguished that name which lay ever like a silent melody in her own heart—the name of Cleomenes!

She rushed from the couch, and, casting her arms with frenzied exultation in the air, while her disordered tresses and flashing eyes gave her the appearance of a Mænad or a Pythoness, Stratonice thanked the gods who had strengthened her for the deed she had done.

That night, when Irenæus, under the influence of gentle and domestic feelings to which the austere zealot gave way, had gathered his wife and daughters round him—that night the awful warning came. A message from the prætor intimated that the daughter of Irenæus would be required to prove her faith, by worshipping publicly the gods of Rome.

For a moment the young maiden trembled under the terrible blow; she uttered a shriek, and threw herself into her father's arms.

"Hush! I am with thee," murmured Irenæus. Then turning to the bearer of the secret summons, he said, firmly, though drops of agony stood on the father's brow, "Thou

seest she neither confesses nor denies the charge until the appointed time. Go!"

By degrees firmness and strength came to the young Christian maiden; she stood upright, and folded her small hands on her bosom, saying—

"Father, doubt me not: I have no fear now."

Domitilla flung herself at the feet of her husband.

"Oh! Irenæus, save thyself and her—there is time. Fly, I beseech thee, this night—this very hour."

Irenæus looked at his daughter; she returned the gaze with eyes in which shone resolution equal to his own, and put her hand in his.

"Mother," she said, in low and serene tones, "the daughter of Irenæus may not fly. I am weak, but the holy faith I follow will make me strong. I will cling to it and acknowledge it even unto death."

A glow of rapturous exultation lighted up the face of Irenæus.

"Domitilla, Stratonice—worshippers of false gods," he cried, "see what it is to be a Christian. My child," continued the old man, "do as thou wilt; I forbid thee not—I glory in thee. Rather than that thou shouldst deny thy faith, I would see thee die a martyr's death. Fear not, Mæsa, my beloved, for such a death is most blessed. Let us go and pray that thou mayest have strength to meet it."

And without another word he led his daughter away.

Thus did the early fathers of the faith show a resolution so heroic and so constant, that martyrdom was esteemed a glory—a thing to be desired rather than dreaded. And thus did their devotion to their holy religion triumph over every other human feeling, making the timorous firm, and the feeble strong; giving to delicate woman the courage of manhood, and endowing manhood with a heroism and endurance almost superhuman. In our days we can sit by our peaceful firesides and read how the early Christians died—nay, more, joyfully surrendered their best beloved to death without a tear; and it seems like an idle tradition—

an amusing and incredible tale. May the fearful realities of such times never come nearer to us than now!

V.

THE Forum of Rome was appointed as the place of assembly where, week by week, the suspected or acknowledged Christians were accused and condemned. It was a noble and spacious hall, adorned with all the magnificence of the time. The days had gone by when the rulers of republican Rome, severe in their simplicity, sent forth their judgments from beside the warrior's tent and the farmer's plough. Even the sway of Diocletian, who gave no countenance to luxury, failed to restrict the unbounded love of splendour which was the destruction of Rome. How would the ghosts of those stern old Romans have looked with disgust and contempt on their ancient Forum thronged with statues, not of heroes, but of crime-laden and effeminate emperors, whom they would have deemed too abject to wield a woman's distaff—too vile to crawl under the loathed garments of a slave!

On the gorgeous seats which occupied the place of the ancient rostra, reclined the judges—men whose splendid garments and careless attitudes made them seem more like guests at a feast, than senators whose fiat was to be that of life or death. Before them stood the Christians, a band as various in age, sex, and station, as that which had met at the catacombs. One by one they were called upon to answer the accusation—or deny their faith by casting incense on the altar of Janus, whose temple was within the precincts of the Forum. One by one did those simple and faithful followers of the apostles go to their trial and their doom; some pouring forth anathemas on the idol and its worshippers, thereby attaining more quickly the longed-for death; others, in calm endurance, uttering no words of anger or reproach, but meekly and silently meeting their doom.

"Mæsa, daughter of Irenæus, stand forth!" cried the cold, stern voice of Galerius, the second in the empire, a harsh and merciless judge.

The young maiden glided from her father's side, and stood before the tribunal still covered with her veil. The judge motioned her to take it off, and the pale sweet face of the daughter of Irenæus was revealed to his rude eyes.

"Poor child! thou art young to die thus," said a compassionate voice; it came from him who sat next to Galerius, a man of middle age, whose mild features and fair hair contrasted strongly with the dark-looking, cruel-eyed judge.

"Thou wert always soft-hearted, Constantius Chlorus," answered Galerius, with a sneer. "But the will of the Emperor must be done, nevertheless. Fair damsel, I would not be harsh; the altar is near thee, throw on it but a few grains of incense, and thou art free. Surely the task is easy."

But Mæsa stood immovable.

"Give her the censer!" cried Galerius. "Come, maiden, wilt thou do this?"

"I will not," came from the girl's lips in a tone most sweet, and yet most firm. "I am a Christian."

One deep sigh, as of agonized suspense, was heard from the midst of the Christian band, and from the multitude beyond rose a half suppressed shriek—they came from the father and mother of the doomed Mæsa.

"Fool!" said the judge. "Who taught thee to believe such madness?"

"I did," cried Irenæus, stepping forth beside Mæsa. "I am the Christian father of this Christian child. I was Irenæus, the soldier of Probus, the victor of the Sarmatians, the honoured of the senate; now I am a martyr for the faith of Jesus Christ, ready to die with this my devoted and dutiful child."

The gentle countenance of Constantius was full of pain.

"Noble Irenæus," he said, "we will not listen to thee —our ears are deaf. Go away to thy house; let one suffice for the sacrifice."

But Galerius, full of savage pleasure, ordered his guards to lead the new criminal to the altar of incense. To the surprise of all, Irenæus walked unresistingly thither, and stood before the statue of Janus. Then he cried with a loud voice—

"Cursed idol! worshipped blindly by the votaries of a cursed faith, thus does the servant of the one true God execute vengeance upon thee!"

And with a blow from that aged but once-powerful arm, which had crushed the enemies of Rome like so many grasshoppers, Irenæus dashed the statue from its pedestal. It fell, broken in a thousand pieces, on the temple floor.

A cry of horror, of revenge, of exultation, burst from the Romans and the Christians. All was confusion in the assembly; and Irenæus would have been torn in pieces by the indignant multitude, had not Galerius commanded the guards to secure and protect him. Thus the old man was borne away, and Mæsa stood in the midst of the Forum, alone and unprotected.

Not unprotected; for suddenly a young man leaped from the crowd, and stood by the maiden's side. It was Cleomenes. Even in that dread time a gleam of joy came over Mæsa's countenance at the faithfulness of him she loved; but in a moment she whispered mournfully—

"Cleomenes, why art thou here?—must I bring death on thee, too?"

He did not answer her, but turned to the younger of the judges.

"O Constantius! I appeal to thee for the sake of this young maiden. How can she be guilty, even if she have been compelled to conform to her father's faith? Noble Chlorus, thou hast known me from my youth: here I pray thee to grant me this maiden's life. Romans," he cried, turning to the multitude, "let the daughter of the condemned Irenæus be forgotten in the wife of Cleomenes the Greek."

At this name a cry of pleasure rose up from the crowd. "He is a good man; let him take the girl. Long live Cleo-

menes the Greek!" were severally heard from the changeable populace.

"Let her cast the incense—but one grain—and she is free," said the judges.

Cleomenes led Mæsa to the shrine; he placed the censer in her hand; he stood before her with his sweet, loving, and beseeching eyes. The daughter of Irenæus looked at him, pressed his hands to her lips and bosom, then let them go, and said—

"For thee—for thee, most faithful and beloved one, I would renounce all on earth; but I cannot deny my God!"

She dropped the censer on the ground, folded her hands calmly on her breast, and said once more,—

"I am a Christian. Let me die with my father."

VI.

AND where, amidst all this, was the betrayer, the woman whose love was worse than hate—the unsuspected guilty one, whose self-tortures were ten thousand times fiercer than a martyr's flame—where was Stratonice?

Wandering about like an unquiet spirit—in the desolate home—in the crowded Forum—in the prison, where the condemned ones awaited a slow-coming death, to grace the next festival of the Roman murderers—beside the father, who, though firm in his own enthusiastic faith, yet cursed the unknown wretch who had betrayed his child—by the frantic mother, who upbraided her adopted daughter for that ill-fated love which seemed now about to be made fortunate by the coming death of her own innocent child—by the lover, whose passionate devotion, no longer concealed, was as an ever-pointed dagger in that jealous heart. Thus lived Stratonice!

Most terrible was it to bear within her the burning fire of an evil conscience—to meet kind looks and words

from those she had so deeply injured, trembling every hour lest some unforeseen chance should reveal the truth, and lay the curse of the bereaved on the double murderess. But worse than all, to be a daily witness of the strong and despairing love—the almost adoring reverence with which Cleomenes watched Mæsa, while she herself, who had perilled her soul to gain that love, was utterly forgotten. In the prospect of coming death the stern bar of severance between Pagan and Christian was removed; and, though Irenæus oftentimes reproved his daughter for the indulgence of feelings which he considered unworthy of a Christian, and unfitting one who was about to enter on the glories of martyrdom, yet he did not forbid the young Greek's coming daily to the prison. The known adherence of Cleomenes to his own religion, his high character, and the esteem in which he was held by Constantius Chlorus, procured him this favour, and enabled him in many things to alleviate the condition of the captives during the weary time that, with a refinement of cruelty, was frequently suffered to elapse between the condemnation and death of the Christians.

And thus, within those gloomy walls, the young lovers met. This bitter sorrow—this impending fate—but drew their hearts nearer together. A holy calmness took the place of maidenly timidity in the bosom of Mæsa: it was surely not sin to love Cleomenes now. Hour after hour she suffered him to sit at her feet, and look into her eyes, until the past seemed all blotted out, and the horrible future grew dim in the distance, as though it could not be that such love would be swallowed up in death.

Now and then Mæsa spoke to him of her faith, of the blessed hopes which sustained her; and, though Cleomenes answered not, it seemed to her as if she must go on, that, perchance, when her lips were silent for ever, some once-uttered words might come back to his memory, and the wise and noble Greek philosopher might be guided on that heavenly road by the simple teaching of an unlearned girl

whose love was her only wisdom. Amidst such thoughts death seemed less like an eternal parting between the two, who, though so different in all else, were yet firmly united in the one mysterious bond of love.

At times they talked as if there had been no sorrow in the world—no cloud hanging over them; they spoke of old days of peace and happines, and Mæsa played with the birds and flowers which her lover took care to bring to the prison: listened to their warblings as she placed them in the small beam of sunshine that crept through the interstices of the massive walls; sometimes, in childlike forgetfulness of trouble, giving vent to her own low musical laugh. How strange it sounded in such a scene!

Then a mournful look would stray over her face, and she would sigh to leave the beautiful world, made still more beautiful by love, until Cleomenes would snatch her to his bosom—even her father did not say him nay at such a time—and declare with wild energy that no power should take her from him—that his heart's beloved should not die!

All this the tortured eyes of Stratonice beheld, and she knew that her sin was all in vain, for that nought but death could separate love from love.

At last, through the astonished city spread the news of the abdication of Diocletian, and the appointment of Galerius to the sole power of the Western Empire. Fearful, indeed, was this intelligence to the Christians of Rome, for they knew that the rejoicings on account of the new emperor were the signal for the death of their condemned brethren; and, hardest to bear of all, was the suspense in which the prisoners were kept, each one knowing not the day or hour when he might be led to the place of crucifixion, or to the circus, to make sport for the high-born men and fair women of Rome with his dying agonies, in the struggle with wild beasts.

It was from the lips of his wife that Irenæus first heard the tidings of his coming fate. Distracted with terror, Domitilla rushed through the streets of Rome to the prison

where her husband and child lay. Ever and anon the shouts from the Colosseum rose upon the air, telling that the sports were already begun. She entered the prison: even its terrible stillness was a blessing after those death-laden acclamations.

Mæsa sat at her father's feet; on her lap the parchment which contained the precious words of comfort—a treasure so zealously guarded by the early Christians, that torture itself often failed to extort from them the place where it was concealed. The young girl looked so content, so calm, so full of life, youth, and loveliness, that at the sight a wild shriek burst from the mother, and she fell senseless on the floor. Irenæus, with a gentleness unusual to him, raised his wife in his arms, and looked inquiringly at Stratonice, who followed.

"Father," she said, slowly and distinctly, though her lips were pale as death, and her wild eyes glared with a strange light—"father, the games at the circus have begun."

"Is it even so?" answered Irenæus; "then the time has come. Mæsa, my beloved, dost thou hear?"

She had buried her face in the white veil which she wore, but, at his voice, she leaped up and clung round her father's neck, not weeping, but as pale and cold as a marble statue.

"Is death still so terrible to thee, poor child?" said Irenæus, softly. "Nay, fear not, Mæsa; thy father's God and thine will give thee strength when it comes. Have any of my brethren yet suffered, Stratonice?" he continued, with entire composure.

"I met them leading Leontius, and Balbus with his wife Placina; and from the arena was carried the white-haired priest who stood beside thee at the Forum—at least his—"

Stratonice could not finish the sentence, for a convulsive shudder came over her. But not a muscle quivered in the grave countenance of the aged Christian.

"They delay till the last before they send for Irenæus the centurion," he said, with a fearless smile; "they think

these aged limbs will furnish fine sport for the Hyrcanian tigers, but I fear not, Stratonice. Take thy mother," he added, in softened tones; "she will soon have none but thee."

But Stratonice dashed herself on the floor at his feet, and cried, in tones that rang through the prison with the shrillness of remorse and despair—

"Father—father, kill me with thy curses, but speak not so gently. I—only I—have done this. I have betrayed my sister—I have murdered thee. Oh! Irenæus—I dare not call thee father—spurn me—slay me—let me die at thy feet."

Irenæus took his robe from her grasp, and turned from her as from a noisome reptile. But Mæsa looked on her sister, and in that look there was neither anger nor disgust, but sorrow and compassion. And truly, it was pitiful to see that proud head bowed to the very dust—that long beautiful hair torn and scattered in fragments with the vehemence of her agony.

"Stratonice," said Mæsa, "I ever loved thee—I never did thee evil, my sister. Why hast thou done this?"

"Because thou didst take from me the joy of my heart—my only blessing in this world; because that cruel beauty of thine stole Cleomenes from me. And I loved him—ay, ten thousand times more than thou! Thou, who wouldst not throw a grain of incense to save thyself and bless him, while I have sacrificed father, mother, sister—yea, my own soul, for the love of Cleomenes! Whose love is greatest, thine or mine?"

Mæsa sank trembling from the vehement words and gestures, which roused Domitilla from her swoon. But the enfeebled mind of the wife of Irenæus could not clearly comprehend what was passing; she drew her child to her arms, and sat patiently smoothing Mæsa's soft hair, and looking in her face, in a state of dreamy unconsciousness which was indeed bliss.

Meanwhile the stern voice of Irenæus addressed the prostrate Stratonice—

"Woman! rise up."

The haughty spirit of the Greek girl was subdued at his tone; she rose and stood before him, humbly and silently as a child.

"Had I been of like faith to thee, wretched one," said Irenæus, "I should have cursed thee: but the Christians do not so. It ill becomes one who is passing into the presence of the All-merciful to return evil for evil. Therefore, thine own conscience be thy sole torment!"

At this moment, even through the dense walls of the dungeon, penetrated the shouts of the multitude. When the sound fell on the ears of Stratonice, it seemed to rouse her almost to frenzy.

"Oh father—sister—pardon!" she shrieked. "Leave me not with your blood upon my head! Pardon—pardon!"

"I do pardon thee, poor unfortunate," answered Irenæus. "The deed has given to her and to me a glorious crown, while thou thyself hast lost all."

Mæsa bent over her sister, and laid on her brow the kiss of peace.

"I too pardon thee, Stratonice," she said. "I shall soon pain thee no longer; his love was very sweet to me," and the young girl's voice trembled; "but when I have gone away there will be none to part thee from Cleomenes."

"And now trouble us no more—thou whom I have so long called daughter," said Irenæus. "Leave us to prepare for the death thou hast caused."

He drew Mæsa from her; Stratonice shrunk away, and crouched down in the farthest corner of the dark cell. Irenæus and his daughter sat together, and awaited in silence and calmness the fatal summons.

Louder and louder grew the shouts of the multitude—it seemed as if they came nearer aud nearer, until they reached the prison itself. Suddenly the doors were flung open, and, at the threshold, stood, not the officer who bore

the signal of death, but the noble and beloved form of Cleomenes the Greek, his countenance gleaming with joy, his bright hair flung back, his right hand waving aloft a parchment.

It was the celebrated Edict of Galerius; the Christians were saved.

By a sudden determination of policy, rather than an impulse of mercy, the new Emperor had issued a general pardon to his Christian subjects, with permission to exercise their religion in peace.

Wildly from that murky cell rose up the cry of joy and deliverance—the prayer of thanksgiving. The wife clung to her husband—all difference of faith forgotten; tears—even tears—bedewed the iron cheeks of Irenæus as he clasped his daughter to his bosom, and knew that the shadow of death no longer gathered over them, while Cleomenes knelt beside Mæsa, kissing her hands, her garments, with delirious joy.

And there in the darkness—afar from all—crouched Stratonice, not daring to approach their happiness—glaring upon them with starting eyes and burning brain, one moment wild with rapture at their deliverance and her own freedom from the sin of murder, and then stung to madness by the loving words and joyful looks which Cleomenes lavished on his Mæsa.

At last Irenæus turned to the young Greek, and the tenderness of the happy father became merged in the sternness of the Christian zealot. He drew Mæsa from her lover, and said—

"The blessings of those whom thou hast once saved, and to whom thou hast this day been a joyful messenger of deliverance, be upon thee, Cleomenes! but thou must leave us now for ever. I dare not brave the wrath of the Christians' God by giving my daughter to an idolater."

From her dark hiding-place, Stratonice started to her feet, and her eyes were fixed on the countenance of him she loved so madly. But no struggle of disappointed hope

darkened the face of the young Greek. Cleomenes knelt before Irenæus, and took his hand, saying—

"Father—even so! Give me my heart's beloved; for Mæsa's God is mine—I have become a Christian."

A cry so wild—so despairing—that it might have been the shriek of a parting soul, burst from the lips of Stratonice, and, ere the lover could embrace his betrothed, she stood between them.

"Mæsa," she said, in a hoarse whisper, "hadst thou died this day I would have died too. Thou art saved—thou art happy—therefore, also, I will die." She drew a short Greek dagger from her robe, and plunged it into her bosom.

Life parted—not suddenly but lingeringly. Stratonice lay with her head pillowed on the breast of her adopted mother; with ebbing life all frenzy passed away. Only still her dim eyes wandered to the face of Cleomenes, with mournful tenderness.

"Forgive me," she murmured: "thou art happy, Cleomenes, and I die; forgive me for my love's sake."

Mæsa bent over the dying girl, and laid a crucifix on her bosom; but the feeble hand of Stratonice cast it aside with scorn. She lifted herself up with wonderful energy, raised her arms in the air, and cried—

"Gods of Greece—gods of my country—I have lived faithful to your forsaken shrines, and faithful I will die. Life has been a torture to me; may I find peace in the land of the dead! Spirits of my fathers, receive the soul of Stratonice!"

She fell back; and the beautiful form was only clay.

ANTONIO MELIDORI.

A PASSAGE FROM THE HISTORY OF THE GREEK REVOLUTION.

I.

OF all the islands and shores of the Mediterranean—the regions where gods and heroes once trod—whence sprang the lovely and poetical myths of Greek theogony—where the world's childhood grew into fresh, powerful, glowing youth—there is no spot where the spirit of ancient Greece lingers as in the island of Candia. The woody valleys of Crete, where Jove was nursed of old, are changed only in name. The mountain Psiloriti, with the olive-groves at its feet, the oak-woods down its sloping sides, is yet the same Ida where the Corybantes are fabled to have lulled the babe-Thunderer to sleep with their songs. And even the very people seem unchanged. The mountaineers of Candia are in appearance as noble as the warriors whom Idomeneus led from the same hills to the siege of Troy. The young Sphakiotes have universally the classic Greek head, with its low, broad brow, its curved lips, and exquisitely-modelled chin; such as Phidias has made immortal. They have the same free step and bearing; and their primitive mountain life, while it has caused them to retain the Greek form, has kept alive in them much of the ancient Greek spirit. The Sphakiotes are bold, determined, and generous-hearted; they despise luxury; and a certain natural chivalry

shows them to be worthy descendants of the men of old who made their land the queen of nations.

It was at the time when Greece began to move, giant-like, in her slumbers, and the Turkish yoke was already about to fall like green withes before her strong hands. The old spirit was awaking throughout the land; the names of Ipsilanti and Marco Bozzaris were whispered far and wide, and men began to look at one another—Turks and Greeks—with threatening and suspicious eyes. As yet, the dawning of this new power had not been visible in Candia. The Sphakiotes lived at peace in their mountains. The olives were gathered, the vines were pressed, and the sound of the distant war came more like a murmur heard in dreams than a waking reality. Now and then a few of the youngest and most daring of the Sphakiotes might be seen talking earnestly together, and anxiously seeking for news from the mainland, where the strife was going on. But the flames of Tripolizza and Corinth did not reach to the peaceful shores of Candia.

Near the top of Mount Psiloriti a young girl stood laden with a basket of olives. She carried it on her head, and the attitude gave to her figure all the free and unrestrained grace of ancient sculpture. Her face, too, was purely Greek, modelled after the form which approaches nearest to our conceptions of ideal beauty. The Sphakiote girl might have stood for one of the olive-bearing priestesses in the processions of Ceres. As she waited, her eyes rested on the summit of the hill, following the motions of a young mountaineer who came leaping down. It was the old tale, as old as the time of Helen of Troy. Foolish, shy maiden, who would not move a step to hasten that so-longed-for meeting, but stood there with her beaming eyes, her brightened cheek, waiting for her lover!

"Antonio! Antonio!" she murmured, long before he could hear her; and her stature dilated, and a look of pride mingled with her gladness, as she watched him descend the mountain-side, as active and graceful as a young deer.

The admiration of personal beauty seems inherent in the Greek nature. In ancient times it was a positive worship; and the most perfect in form of both youths and maidens had crowns and honours bestowed on them, even as the poets and warriors. In other lands this feeling might be degraded into materialism or sensuality, but with the imaginative Greeks it was the worship of the ideal—the image of a dim and indistinct divinity, which to their minds could only be shadowed forth and embodied in the most perfect human loveliness. They united the two ideas of the good and the beautiful, believing one could not exist without the other. And even now this old worship lingers in the land, which has truly been described by the poet as a body whence the spirit is departed. There are no people more beautiful, or more susceptible in their perceptions of external beauty, than the modern Greeks.

Thus while the young Sphakiote watched her lover, her heart thrilled with pride that the noblest of the mountain youths was her own.

"Philota! dear Philota!" sounded the pleasant voice of Antonio; and he stood beside her. A classic eye, to see them, would have thought of Paris and Enone on the Trojan mountain which bore the same name as this Cretan hill—"Many-fountained Ida."

"I have waited for thee long, Antonio," murmured the girl.

"Forgive me, Philota. I lay dreaming on the hill-top, and forgot thee—no, not forgot; that I could never do; but my thoughts were busy. Come, let me take the olive-basket, and we will go to the place which made my thoughts wander."

A sigh, so faint as to be almost inaudible, moved Philota's lips. Alas! he thought of many things—she of him only. It was the difference that always is, between man's love and woman's.

They ascended the mountain, and stood on its summit hand in hand. The whole island was before them, like a picture; it lay at their feet sleeping in loveliness.

"How beautiful—how calm it is!" whispered Philota. "Oh, Antonio, if we could live for ever in this peaceful happiness, thou and I!"

A restless movement in her lover made the girl look in his face: it was clouded. "The holy saints forbid!" he muttered between his teeth. She did not hear him; it was well she did not, for the words would have pierced her heart like a thorn. And yet he loved her better than all things on earth, except ambition.

"Thou dost not enjoy this scene as I do, Antonio. Something has troubled thee to-day. Tell me what it is!"

Antonio turned away before those soft, loving eyes: there was something in his heart which he could not lay open at once to their gaze. "How keenly thou readest my face, Philota!" He laughed, or tried to laugh.

"Then there is something?"

"I had not meant to tell thee; but I must. My dearest, it is not worth that anxious look of thine. It is only that I have been to-day on the mountain with Rousso and Anagnosti, and they told me that the war is coming nearer —even to our shores."

"Antonio! and thine eyes brighten—thy frame dilates with joy, whilst I—I only shudder."

"Ah, there will be no more idle staying at home!" the young man continued, as if he had not heard her. "No more gathering honey, treading olives, keeping goats, while one's arm is strong—strong to fight. Look, Philota, far down in the bay there is a flash; they are already trying the guns with which our new Governor has armed the harbour. Listen! the noble Governor Affendouli is already forming troops in the mountains, and Rousso and Anagnosti have joined them. Rousso will be made Captain of Sphakia. Dost hear, Philota?"

She stood, no longer sustained by his entwining arm, which, in the energy of his declamation, Antonio had removed: her head was bent, her eyes fixed on the sea; there was in them a mournful meaning, but he saw it not. With-

out waiting for her answer, the young Sphakiote continued; "Rousso was so proud with his new arms—the poor mean boy whom I taught to use a gun!—yet how he sneered at mine with its rusty lock! And he is to be captain of a band, and will become a hero, whilst I—"

Philota turned slowly round, and her pale face met her lover's, which was flushed with anger and excitement. "Dost thou wish to go too? Antonio, was this what thou hadst to tell me?"

He had all along been preparing himself to reveal to her this his desire, yet when she guessed it of her own accord, and his scarcely-formed thoughts were uttered plainly by her, he could not answer a word, but played confusedly with the silver chain of his belt.

"Antonio, I have seen thou hast not been happy of late. There is more in thy heart than I can satisfy. I am only a poor weak girl, and thou a noble man, full of great thoughts and aspirings. Hush! do not say nay. It was ever so. Thy love is all to me; but thou needest something beyond mine. What is it?"

He looked at her in surprise; for her voice, though sad, was calm, and there was no anger in its tone. "Philota, I love thee—none but thee. I swear it! This fool Rousso has taunted me: he said I chose to live idly in the mountains when all our Sphakiotes were going to fight against the Turks. I would have proved him a liar—I would have joined the Governor at once—but for—"

"But for Philota: is it not so? I love thee; but my love should be a garland of flowers to adorn thee, not an iron chain to fetter thee," said the girl, using the metaphorical language of her clime. "Antonio, thou shalt go."

There was a deep silence between them. At last the young man broke it. "Hast thou thought of all that must follow this, Philota? Thou wouldst be left alone, and there could be no bridal feast after the olive harvest. Antonio Melidori is not so m an as to wed a bride and leave her Philota, thou art nobler than I; I will not go."

Philota threw her arms about his neck. The heroism of a Greek maiden lay deep in her soul; but it was yet sleeping. She was still a girl—a timid girl. She wept tears of joy when her lover said his mind had changed, and he would not go to the wars.

"It would have killed me to part with thee, Antonio, even though I told thee to go. Ay, and I would never have prayed thee otherwise had it been against thy will. But war is so terrible a thing. Thou seest only its glory; I think of its miseries. I fancy thee pursued, wounded—slain; and then I would die too."

"Foolish girl," whispered the lover, whilst his fingers played tenderly with the shower of black hair that lay on his shoulder; "thou forgettest all the honour that would have been thine when I came back a general. Think how our maidens envy the fortune of the wife of Ipsilanti—how glorious is the destiny of the wives of the heroes in the Morea."

"I have heard of only one, who saw husband and son slain; and then fought in their room—the lady Bobolina. Had I been she, I would rather have lain down and died with them."

Melidori's eyes were fixed on the bay. "There it flashes again: it is the signal to gather the troops. Anagnosti said so. Why must I stay behind like a coward?"

He muttered these words indistinctly; but they fell on the girl's ear like a funeral knell. She saw the chafing of the proud and ambitious spirit; she knew that she held no longer the first place in Antonio's heart—that a stronger power than love had sprung up there, and ruled triumphant. The knowledge broke her girlish dream for ever.

Philota looked at her lover as he stood, almost unconscious of her presence; his fingers clenched tightly on the silver-mounted pistol, which every Greek carries in his belt; his beautiful lips compressed, until their rosy curves became almost white. His thoughts were far away from her; and Philota saw it. One moment her hand was pressed on her

heart; her lips opened, as if to give vent to the terrible cry of anguish that wrung her soul; but it came not. The struggle passed, and her resolution was taken.

"Antonio!" She laid her hand on his arm, and he started as if it had been the touch of death instead of her soft warm fingers. "Antonio, I too have changed my mind. Thou shalt not stay at home, but go and fight for Greece with the rest, and come back covered with the glory thou desirest so much!"

The young Sphakiote's countenance became radiant with joy. "Thou sayest this from thy heart, Philota?"

"I do."

"And thou art happy—quite happy?"

"Yes; if it makes thee so."

"True woman's heart! Self-denying heroism of love, your strength is more than the strength of armies!

II.

A few days more, and Philota was alone. There was no hand to aid her in her daily journey up the mountain, or to relieve her of the olive-basket which she carried to the honey-gatherers. Antonio Melidori was gone to the wars. In that stirring time, when every day the sound of battle grew nearer, and every heart learned to beat with the fierce excitement of war, Philota alone was calm: no enthusiasm brightened her cheek when she saw her lover depart—the noblest of the band of young Sphakiotes which he led with him to the Governor Affendouli. Even the cry of patriotism was to her an empty sound. Her imagination was never dazzled by that watch-word, which is too often only another name for ambition.

It was strange that at such a crisis, and in such a land, this one Greek maiden should have thought thus. But in her childhood she had been brought up by her mother's brother, a priest in the Greek church—that church which so long held fast the peaceful doctrines and pure worship of

the primitive Christians. Then it was that Philota learned to look upon war as odious; and as her clear and earnest mind matured into womanhood, all the tinsel of fame fell off from the idol, and left it in its own naked hideousness. The fair image of glory which blinded the eyes of Antonio, was to Philota nothing but a loathsome skeleton.

Month after month the girl followed her lowly occupation on Mount Psiloriti, while her lover fought under the banners of Affendouli. Tidings reached her of his bravery, and his high favour with the general. "I am a captain now," Antonio sent word; "higher than Rousso." When she heard it, Philota smiled; but it was a faint, sad smile, for she feared the stain of a gnawing ambition was already creeping over him. "Antonio—my Antonio!" she wept in secret—"I can love thee, I can pray for thee; why is it that I alone dare not glory in thee now?"

Before the autumn waned, Melidori came home. Again Philota and he walked together along the woody slopes of Ida; but there was a change. Antonio talked now not of her or of his love, but of conflicts which he had sustained, of honours he had won—won through the midst of horrors of which the relation made the gentle girl shudder. He looked at them as merely common things, laughed gaily at her cowardice, and said how brave a soldier's wife ought to be. Alas! even that dear name brought no bright smile to Philota's lips; and as she leaned against her lover, the steel-covered breast of the soldier of fortune seemed cold and repulsive compared to the shepherd's garment of old. Philota felt it was an omen.

They came to the place whence the whole island could be seen. "Look, Philota; there lies my band in that little dell; do you not see their flags flying above the trees? There is one banner that I bore myself—how torn and blood-stained it is! Oh, that was a glorious victory of ours!"

Philota sighed heavily.

"What! art thou not glad? I thought thou wouldst be so proud of my fortune—even of me;" and a shade of vexation darkened the young soldier's cheek.

The girl looked up in his face. "I am proud of Antonio Melidori; more than of the Captain of Affendouli."

"Well, well—as thou wilt.—Women are so fanciful," added he to himself.

"I see thou carest little for my honours, Philota," he continued. "Perhaps thou wouldst rather I had remained a poor drivelling peasant on the mountains? I thought all girls took pride in their lovers' glory; but it seems not so with thee."

"Nay—nay: dost thou remember the day when there was an olive-feast?—when, one after the other, our young men arose and sang songs that the impulse of the moment produced? Thou, too, didst pour out thy heart in a chant so glorious, so beautiful—it was of the old times which are dimly remembered in our traditions—that old men wept, and young men's eyes flashed, and a shout of applause greeted thee that echoed to the mountain-top. Did I not glory in thee then, my Antonio?"

"It was a poor triumph; a puling song, fit for girls only," answered Melidori, scornfully. "Deeds, noble deeds, alone can make the man."

"Well, then, dost thou remember that stormy night when the old Armenian ascended the mountain, and there was no one to follow him in the darkness and fearful tempest—no one but thee; how thou didst save him, and bring him back to the village, and wouldst not take one piastre from the rich man's proffered gold? Who was so proud of thee then as thine own Philota?"

"But all others said I was mad; and if I had perished on the mountain, where would have been my glory? Who would have remembered the name of the poor shepherd-boy?"

"God!" said Philota, solemnly. "The glory of this one deed is worth all thy warlike renown."

He looked at her, and saw how her stature dilated, and her countenance shone with a brightness almost saint-like. He understood her not, and yet was he struck mute by her earnestness. There was in that meek woman—she was no longer a girl now—who had lived all her life on the mountains, a nobleness of soul that silenced even the bold chief, whose name was regarded as a tower of strength by his soldiers, and honoured by the general himself.

"Come, we will talk no more of this, dear Philota," said Melidori, gently, almost humbly. "Let us descend the mountain."

The following day Antonio departed; for the Turks had attacked Sphakia, and the war had entered the island itself. The next tidings that reached Philota were, that her lover had been wounded, though slightly. He had been left in a cottage on the outskirts of the town, his band having fled; single-handed he cut his way through the Turks, and escaped with a trifling wound.

"The cowards!" he wrote to Philota, "that there should be cowards even in my band: that they should leave their leader to be slaughtered in cold blood! It was one man's doing; I suspect who; but I will be revenged one day. Yes; when I have conquered, and the enemy is driven from Candia, then I will be revenged."

Philota sank, crushed to the earth with pain. Revenge, not love, was then the goal of his hopes now! Moreover, she guessed better than Antonio the insidious tongue which had whispered revolt to Melidori's troop. It was Rousso's: Rousso, who had tempted him to the war—Rousso, over whom he had risen in command—Rousso, who had wooed, and been scorned by Antonio's betrothed. The quick-sighted girl at once comprehended the whole, and she trembled for her lover.

The history of the Greek revolution in Candia records the glory of Antonio Melidori; how he became a mountain chieftain, whose deeds emulated the fame of the ancient warriors of Greece; how mothers prayed that their children

might be like him; how maidens delighted to praise his beauty of person, his many acts of generosity, his unequalled bravery; how there was not a child in the island who was not taught to lisp the name of Melidori.

And all this while, far among the mountains, to whose fastnesses many of the Sphakiotes were compelled to retreat, throbbed the poor heart to whom this burst of glory had only brought desolation—the only heart that truly loved the young chieftain whose fame was on all lips. There, alone, almost forgotten, yet never forgetting, lived Philota.

III.

IT is not our purpose to chronicle the outward career of Antonio Melidori as history records it, and as the world beheld it. The world is growing wiser now, and is no longer haunted by the phantom of military glory, a monster at which its own creator shudders. Yet if there could be a cause for which men might justly fight, it was surely that of Grecian liberty. In Candia, the Sphakiotes were battling not so much for renown, as for the preservation of their lives and freedom. Men fought for their own homes, and by their very hearths; and what began in the ambition of a few, was now a struggle of life and death with all. Wise men have said that war must be, that from the foundation of the world liberty has only been bought with blood; yet it is indeed terrible. The world has passed through its childhood of innocence, when kings were shepherds, and rulers held the plough; its youth of strife, when men fought not through meditated revenge, but in haste of blood; its middle age of stratagem, cunning, and ambitious warfare, when thousands were sacrificed to the caprice of one. Soon will come its peaceful and majestic age, when wisdom shall be the only true strength, and men shall rule not by animal force, but by the might of all-powerful mind. May that glorious time hasten fast—fast!

Gradually—so gradually, that Antonio scarcely felt it—the ties became loosed between him and Philota. The commander, the patriot, had no room in his heart for love. Whenever a brief space of repose enabled the lovers to meet, his thoughts were all of advancement, honours, successful conflicts: there was no talk of the bridal feast that was to come after the olive-harvest; and when some of the maiden's early companions jested with her, and others envied her the glorious destiny that would await Melidori's bride as soon as the war was over, Philota only smiled mournfully, for she knew that day would never come.

At last the war grew so near, that many of the mountaineers took refuge in the town of Sphakia. There, day by day, Philota could see her betrothed sallying forth with his band. What a gulf there was between the successful chieftain and the humble peasant girl who plied her needle for bread, watching over him from a distance, with unknown and unacknowledged love! Not one of Antonio's friends would have dreamed that these two had once plighted their vows to each other in the quiet woods of Ida. Yet still he gathered honours every day, and amidst all the warfare he seemed to bear a charmed life. Who knows but that it was because the shield of woman's prayers was ever over him!—the orisons of one whose love had grown so dim, so shadowy, so hopeless, that its only utterance had become a prayer—nay, even less a prayer than a mournful dirge.

At the close of a night-skirmish with the Turks, the cry was raised that the captain Melidori was missing. The band reentered Sphakia in lamentation. Rousso was at their head, and his countenance had an expression of evil triumph. The women, who soon gathered in the streets, eyed him with dislike and indignation; for Antonio, with his manly beauty and generous spirit, was their idol.

"Melidori is slain—the noble Antonio is slain! It is an evil day for us," they lamented aloud.

"He is not slain; he has deserted to the enemy. I saw him steal off from the field with mine own eyes," said a

voice: it was that of Rousso. "Twice during the skirmish I watched him creep among the Turkish outposts. Melidori has deserted."

"Melidori is here!" cried a deep sonorous voice, which caused the soldiers to give a universal shout: and Antonio appeared. He held aloft in his arms a little Turkish child.

"Soldiers! he who says I deserted deserves to be hanged on the nearest tree. I lingered behind to save this poor innocent, whose mother I saw murdered in her tent."

"It is true, then, Sphakiotes, how well your captain loves the Turks, since you see he risks a battle to save one of their children," sneered some one in the crowd. The voice seemed feigned, and in the darkness of the early morning its owner was unrecognized.

Melidori drew up his lofty stature proudly. "Sphakiotes, it is a lie! which could come only from the wretch who murdered this babe's mother—the cowardly woman-slayer. I scorn to answer it."

The easily-moved crowd broke out into acclamations, the women especially. When they ceased, Antonio said, "A soldier is scarcely a fit guardian for infancy. Is there none among the wives, mothers, or kind-hearted maidens of Sphakia who will take this poor babe?"

"Spear the puling brat of an infidel!" cried the same malicious voice from the midst. "How dares the captain ask any Sphakiote woman to nurse a viper until its fangs are grown?"

Melidori's countenance glowed with rage; the more so, as governed by the insidious voice, all the crowd seemed to shrink away, eyeing the young soldier and his burden with distrust.

"Many a Greek babe has fallen under the scimitar of a Turk!" "The child of murderers should not live!" were mutterings that reached the ear of Antonio. The obstinacy and pride of his temper were roused, and even more than his natural generosity, they urged him to withstand the popular cry.

"Sphakiotes, I defy you all! This young Turk shall not perish. I will rear it as my own. If I fall, it shall be brought up as a Greek, and taught to avenge me, as none of these coward brethren of mine would do. Now, women of Sphakia, is there none among you who will take charge of the adopted child of Antonio Melidori?"

"I will!" answered a low voice, and a woman stepped forth from the crowd.

The young commander gave the child into her extended arms. As he looked in her face, he started.

"Philota—thou here?" he whispered, hurriedly. "I thought thou wert still in the mountains?"

"There was no longer safety there."

"Why didst thou not tell me? How livest thou? This peasant's dress—"

"Is most fitted for me. I live by the labour of my hands. Was it meet that a poor peasant girl should claim as her betrothed the commander of Sphakia?"

"Philota—generous Philota! But these people must not hear thee. Take the babe. I will meet thee; stay—let it be dusk, under the city wall."

Oh, thou faithful woman! was it come to this?

Philota hushed the wailing babe on her bosom, and said aloud in a calm distinct voice, "Noble Captain Melidori, I am a Sphakiote maiden; I have no husband, nor ever shall have; therefore I will devote myself to this babe, and bring it up as the adopted of the greatest of our Greek heroes. People of Sphakia, you are all witnesses of this vow."

The crowd of women closed round her as Philota departed with her charge. When she was gone, a deep sigh of relief burst from Melidori. Rousso came up to him, and said gaily, "Thou art lucky, Antonio, in finding so ready a nurse for thy young adopted." Melidori's cheek reddened. "Some old damsel who wants a plaything, I suppose?"

"He has not seen her, thank Heaven—he has not seen her," muttered Antonio. "Very likely," he answered aloud.

"Well, we soldiers have our whims. I will make this young Turk fight against his own people yet. Come, Rousso, the general awaits us."

At dusk, Melidori wrapped himself in the cloak of one of his men, and went to the place of meeting. Philota was already there.

"This is kind—like thyself, my dearest," he said, pressing her in his arms; but the embrace and the words seemed more from duty than feeling. Philota suffered both in silence, and then she drew herself away, and stood beside him.

"What hast thou to say to me, Antonio?" she uttered, not harshly, but in a tone of calmness that went to the heart of him whose warm love had yet not quite departed.

"Why art thou so cold; am I not thy betrothed, Philota?"

"Dost thou wish me to call thee so now? I thought that dream was over, and by thy desire."

"I never said so."

"No; but it was in thy heart. All is changed with us; we can never be again as in those happy days on Mount Psiloriti. Thou art a great man; thou canst not wed a poor maiden like me. I do not ask it. My love only burdens thee; therefore we will speak of it no more. Antonio, I would give my life for thee; shall I not, then, gladly relinquish this hope for thy glory's sake? I know thou didst love me once. I shall see thy fame, and I shall be content."

Melidori listened to her first in astonishment, then in shame. "Philota," he said, hoarsely, "I am not worthy to kiss thy feet, and yet I dare not say nay to thy words. I am more wretched than thou; forgive me."

It might have been that a lingering hope had fluttered in the girl's heart, but as Antonio spoke, it was stilled for ever. She leaned against the wall, pale, breathless, speechless.

The young soldier went on: "Thou dost not know what a life I lead—how full of danger and anxious thought: it would be death to thee to share it."

The vain excuse unsealed Philota's lips. "Not so; be not deceived, Antonio. It is not for myself that I speak. God and my own heart know what I would have been to thee; how I would have shared thy fortune; have followed thee, if it must be, through seas of blood; have strengthened thee; have suffered no woman's tear to unnerve thy arms; have striven to make myself worthy to mount step by step with thee, that in thy coming glory no man might say Antonio Melidori blushed for his wife. This is what might have been: it is too late. Let us part while thou yet lovest me a little."

"And thou—and thou—"

"I will live at peace in my humility, knowing that love for no other maiden stole thine from me. Be content; I feel thou hast never been thus faithless."

No, no, no!" groaned the young soldier, burying his face in his hands. "Thou judgest me kindly—and justly. I never loved woman save thee; I never shall."

"Then I do not grieve," said the girl, as she bent over him in holy pity, and took his burning hands in hers "I forgive thee; thou hast done me no wrong. I will rear this child: it will love me; and I can call it by thy name, and teach it how noble was that act of thine which saved it from death. Believe me, I shall be very happy, my Antonio." Loving was the falsehood that came from those trembling lips—a falsehood more holy than truth.

"Be it so, Philota," said Melidori. "I am too unworthy even to bless thee; but thou wilt be blest."

"And thou too, I pray the Virgin! And now that we are friends—only friends—but tried and true ones, I must tell thee what tidings I have heard. Rousso is thine enemy; how made such is partly known to thee, wholly so to me. Rememberest thou how, when he and his band pillaged an old man's house, thou didst compel him to restore the spoil?

From that time he has vowed thy death. It was his feigned voice that goaded the people against thee this morning. And afterwards, when threading my way through the town, I heard two men whispering thy name, and one said, 'His tomb is open.' Now, Antonio, beware. I am too lowly to be heeded; I will watch: it may be that the dove can warn the eagle from the snare."

"And thine own safety—thy life?"

"Is thine, and spent for thee. It is best so. And now hearken—thy name is shouted below. We must part here."

She gave him her hand.

"We had not used to part thus, Philota. Let me feel that I *have been* thy betrothed: let me kiss thee once more —it is the last time."

Philota fell upon his neck, and their lips met. It was less the kiss of love than of death; the last token between those who sever for eternity. Then she drew herself from those beloved arms, and fled.

IV.

THE career of Melidori seemed a succession of triumphs. Every scheme contrived by the designing malice of Rousso failed. It was as though a good angel ever watched over Antonio. Affendouli, the Cretan Governor, whose dearest friend and counsellor the young Sphakiote was, told him so. Melidori answered in a tone half bitter, half solemn, "I know it: I believe it!" He spoke the truth.

No one but Affendouli knew how deep was the cause of suspicion which made Antonio shrink from his former companion Rousso, until a coldness very like positive enmity grew up between them. The Governor himself saw through various manœuvres which Rousso had practised to turn his own favour from Melidori, and dispossess the latter of the command: but at last there seemed to come a change, and Rousso, after a long absence, sent to Sphakia a message of peace, declaring the resolution of both himself and his

brother-in-law Anagnosti to end all petty feuds, and serve under Melidori. Affendouli gladly accepted this overture, for he saw the evil that private animosities did to the one great cause. Rousso had invited Melidori to a solemn feast of unity, in which they might end all differences, and Affendouli urged him to go.

"We must have peace among ourselves. All private feelings should be sacrificed to public good. Thou wilt go, Melidori," entreated the old man; and Antonio consented.

Richly mounted, and attended by a few of his own band, the Sphakiote commander set out to the place where Rousso and his handful of followers had bivouacked. Ere the cavalcade was out of sight of Sphakia, a peasant woman came to the young captain's abode, and asked to see him.

"There is the dust-cloud his horses leave behind," was the answer. "Go after him; it is only three leagues: you mountaineers are swift-footed. You will reach him by the time he has done feasting with Captain Rousso"

The woman clasped her hands above her head with a terrible cry, and fell to the ground.

All the lavishness and revelry of a soldier's banquet signalized the feast of Rousso and Anagnosti; wine flowed in streams, and riotous music and laughter went up from the tents towards the still stars overhead. Melidori gave himself up to the enjoyment of the moment in perfect faith.

"A gay life is a soldier's!" Anagnosti cried. "Melidori, this is better than the olden olive-feasts on Mount Psiloriti."

A shadow came over the young captain's face—Rousso noticed it.

"Perhaps Antonio regrets having left that quiet, easy life on the mountains for such a one as this?" he said, with a smile that bordered on a sneer. On Rousso's face it was almost impossible to distinguish between the two.

Melidori was not easily provoked. "No, no," answered he, gaily; "I would be the last to regret those old times —all very well in their way; but glory—patriotism—"

"Both fine sounding words; though some who fight, fight for other things more substantial."

"I do not understand you," said Melidori, rather coldly.

"Oh, we all know the honours that await our young commander when the war is over: plenty of spoil—riches—a bride, for Affendouli's daughter is fair, and her father generous. But, perchance, there is some trifling impediment to that. A long time ago, on the mountains, people talked of a little damsel named Philota."

"Rousso," said Antonio, hurriedly, "this Cyprus wine is delicious. I pledge thee."

"With all my heart! And, as I was saying, there was to have been a wedding with the olive-feast."

"Ha—ha—ha!" laughed Melidori. "Thy thoughts run on fair damsels and wedding-feasts instead of warfare. Let us talk of something more soldier-like."

"Presently; when I have drunk to thy health and that of Affendouli's daughter."

"Not united with mine," said Antonio, gravely. "I honour, but love not the lady, and do not choose jesting."

"Then there is some truth in the tale about the little Sphakiote girl after all? Antonio, may be thou art a happy man; for I saw the other day, near thy house, a pretty face that put me strongly in mind of one I knew on Psiloriti. Is it so?"

Melidori's lips quivered with passion, but he restrained himself. "Rousso," he whispered, hoarsely, "speak as thou wilt in private—not here."

"What! conscience-stricken? Is Philota – —"

"Utter that name again with thy cowardly tongue and— —"

Rousso rose up from the table, and drew his short dagger. "Wilt thou fight? Then so will I." In a moment Melidori saw through the intent of all the torturing words which had come from that wily tongue. His anger cooled at once; he resolved to thwart the purpose of his enemy. "None shall say that Antonio Melidori came to a friendly

banquet, and there fought with his host," he answered, calmly. "Soldiers, and you my fellow-guests, bear witness that for this reason, and this only, I will not fight. What would our enemies say of this petty brawling over cups? It is unworthy of Greeks. I will end it."

So saying, Antonio gave the signal of departure to his suite, and prepared to mount his horse. Anagnosti followed him.

"Noble captain," he said, obsequiously, "do not let this feast of unity end in division. Rousso is so hasty; but he repents him now. I pray you return, and let all these differences be reconciled."

Melidori answered courteously and frankly, as was his nature. "There is none who would rejoice in peace more than I; it was for this only that I came hither."

"Then let us seal our peace by a brotherly embrace," said Rousso, coming forward. His eyes flashed; Antonio thought it was with wine; and his step was unsteady. The young Sphakiote felt an unaccountable repugnance; but he thought of Affendouli, and the earnest entreaties of the good old man that all private enmity might be forgotten for the sake of Greece.

"Be it so," answered Antonio, extending his arms. Rousso did the same. There was a moment of stillness, and the assassin's dagger was plunged into that noble and generous breast.

A cry, the terrible death-cry, burst forth; it was answered by another from without— a woman's; and Philota fell on her knees beside Antonio!

She had followed him, league after league, with a speed and strength almost superhuman; so that, as she passed desolate houses and solitary travellers, they thought it was a spirit. And now she had come too late.

In the confusion the murderer and his accomplice fled. Antonio's few soldiers carried their dying leader from the tent, and no one opposed them. There, on the roadside, beneath the peaceful stars, the young commander breathed

his life away. It was not a sad ending, for his pillow was the breast of the faithful woman whose love had been the joy and brightness of his youth. Clouds had come over that brightness, but death swept them all away. From his few vague words, Philota knew that his thoughts were not of war, nor of the false glory which had dazzled him, but of that old peaceful time when love was all in all. In the wanderings of his brain, the dying soldier fancied himself again on Mount Psiloriti, and murmured of Philota, of the olive-feast, and the bridal.

"We will stay here," he whispered. "I had a dream: it haunts me yet; but it is over. We will never leave our own mountain, Philota; never, never!" His head sunk on her shoulder; the dream of which he spoke—the troubled dream of life—*was* over, for eternity.

The Governor Affendouli lamented with the sincerity of a worthy heart over his lost friend. He would have honoured the dead by magnificent obsequies, and with that intent he called together his officers and the chief men of Sphakia; but in the midst of the assembly a woman appeared, and claimed the body of Antonio Melidori. The Governor questioned her right, since he knew that Antonio had no surviving kindred.

"It cannot humble the dead," the woman murmured; and then said aloud, "Antonio Melidori was my plighted husband: here is the betrothal ring. Give me his body, that I may bury him in the peaceful mountains where he was born. He would not rest with your guns booming over his grave. You possessed him, soul and body, in life; he is now mine only. Give me my husband, and let me go."

"Poor wretch!" murmured the compassionate Governor, as he looked on the wild gestures and frenzied air of the Sphakiote woman. "O Greece, thy liberty is dearly bought!"

On the summit of Mount Ida, on the very spot where the whole island lies stretched below, there is a cross of white stone, with the name—"Antonio Melidori." The soldier rests where no murmur of battle can ever reach his grave.

The island is at peace; there is no warfare now. The mountaineers have their honey-gatherings, their olive-harvests, their vine-feasts; and no one remembers the dark days of old. For a time, many a Sphakiote soldier came to say his prayers beside the white cross, and talk of the young patriot who had died for his country's sake; but as war-time ceased, this far shrine was forgotten; and now it is rarely visited, except by two, who live together on the mountain-side—a woman of middle-age, and a youth, a neophyte in the Greek church. He calls her mother; and she is indeed a mother to him, though not his own. These two are the only pilgrims who pray by the tomb of the victorious commander whose name once rang through Candia like a trumpet sound. It has died away now, as all such glory dies, and will ever die. Love only can survive the grave.

THE STORY OF ELISABETTA SIRANI.

"ELISABETTA *mia*, I have lost pencils—colours; come, child, and aid me to look for them. What! thou art idling away all the day in that corner, instead of taking care of thy little sisters. Hark! there is Barbara crying, and *la bambino* Anna too; and the pencils are lost: and Il Signor Montenegro is waiting for the picture. I shall never finish it."

The speaker—Giovanni Andrea Sirani, one of the second-rate artists of Bologna—hurriedly tossed about brushes, palette, and oils, making the studio all confusion; then loudly called on Elisabetta for assistance. She came forward from the sunny nook in the window, where she had been hidden, and addressing her angry father in a voice remarkable for its soothing and sweet tones, put into his hands the pencils he required, arranged his palette, and stood behind him while he again continued his work.

Elisabetta was a girl of about twelve years, tall and well-formed, though still childlike in proportions, and too angular to be graceful. But her face was too striking to be passed unnoticed even by a stranger. Not through its beauty, for the features were irregular, and the long and rather aquiline nose would have given a character too masculine to the countenance, had it not been for the exquisitely sweet expression of the mouth, and the dimpled chin. Again, too, the harshness given by the strongly marked eyebrows was softened by the dreamy languor of the dark eyes and drooping eyelids. In short, the whole face

of Elisabetta Sirani showed a combination of masculine powers and womanly sweetness, united with that flexibility of feature and ever-changing expression, which almost always denote great sensitiveness of mind.

Signor Andrea, relieved from his disquietudes, worked at his picture, now and then calling on his young daughter to inspect his progress, and listening to her remarks and comments, which, though given with the simplicity and timidity of a child, showed an understanding that justified the consideration with which she was treated by her father. Sometimes the hasty and nervous temperament of the artist was excited to anger by the noise of the children within; he would hurriedly dismiss his eldest daughter to restore quiet, and as quickly call for her again, declaring he could not paint unless she was beside him, to grind his colours and prepare his pencils. He did not add, that she was quite as useful in giving him various unsuspected, but most successful hints, even in the picture itself.

After an hour or two spent in this manner, the *tête-à-tête* of the artist and his daughter was broken by the entrance of a man in a clerical dress, but attired with all the taste and sumptuousness which was prevalent in the leading cities of Italy, and especially Bologna, at the close of the seventeenth century. Andrea Sirani received his visitor with mingled cordiality and respect.

"I am glad Il Signor Conte Malvasia is come: I should not have been satisfied to send my picture away without his opinion on its merits."

"You are very obliging, Messer Sirani," said the ecclesiastic; "but I have usually only one opinion regarding your beautiful pictures, and this appears equal to any." He sat down on the painting-chair which Elisabetta had placed for him opposite the picture; and after patting her cheek with a friendly and affectionate expression, which dyed it with a blush of pleasure, he turned his whole attention to the work before him.

"I see you love the soft and melting shadows and mellow lights of our Guido, the pride of Bologna," said the Conte Malvasia. "And you do not work in the gloom which some of our stern foreign brethren delight in: you let the sun visit your painting-room; save for this warm crimson curtain, which must cast such a pleasant glow on everything here, though it rather darkens the picture now." He drew back the heavy folds, and discovered the little nook where Elisabetta had sat. It was strewed with pencils and sketches of all kinds: Malvasia picked up one of the scattered papers.

"Is this beautiful Madonna one of your studies, friend Andrea? Why, your first sketches are absolutely as good as your finished paintings."

The artist looked at it, and turned away with a discontented air—

"Oh, monsignor, it is only one of the child's drawings. Elisabetta, I think you might be better employed than this. Go to your mother, child."

"Stay one moment, Elisabetta," said Conte Malvasia, drawing towards him the reluctant, blushing, and almost tearful child. "Did you really draw and design this?"

"Yes, monsignor," said Elisabetta.

"Messer Andrea," continued the Conte, "why do you not teach your daughter to be a painter like yourself? Would you not like to be a great artist, *figlia mia?*" added he.

Elisabetta did not speak, but her eyes lighted up, and her lips quivered with emotion. Andrea said roughly, "No woman can ever be a painter."

"How can you say so, Andrea? Have you forgotten Lavinia Fontana, and Antonia Pinelli, and our own Properzia?"

"Do not bring Madame de Rossi forward as an example for my child. Besides, Elisabetta does not wish to be a painter."

Elisabetta went timidly up to her father, and laid her hands, still folded in entreaty, on his arm—

"Dear father, I do wish it! I long for it. Oh, teach me to paint like you."

The painter, jealous as he seemed of his art, was moved, and consented. From that time he suffered his daughter to pursue her studies openly, though the aid and direction which she received from him were very little. Andrea Sirani seemed displeased that a young girl should gain almost intuitively what it had taken him long years to acquire. He did not see the difference between natural genius and powers which were almost entirely the result of cultivation.

Elisabetta Sirani—and we are not describing an ideal character, but one who really existed, whose name is still honoured among the Bolognese school—Elisabetta Sirani, as her childhood passed away, devoted herself more and more to her beloved art. She perceived that her father felt an ill-concealed aversion to seeing her at her easel; and, besides, he had been so much accustomed to her assistance in the minor duties of the studio, that he could not bear to see her occupied in anything but attending upon him. Therefore she rose by the dawn of day, and painted and studied with unwearied perseverance, until the hour when Andrea required her presence in the studio. Then she patiently relinquished the occupation which she loved so well, and turned her attention to her father, to the domestic concerns of the house, or to the acquirement of music, a study which was her greatest delight next to the one in which her genius lay. To the world she was still the simple Elisabetta, daughter of the painter Sirani, distinguished by no outward signs from her young sisters Barbara and Anna, or from her companions among the Bolognese maidens. No one knew what her hidden talents were, save her father—who shut his eyes upon them as much as possible—and her unfailing friend, the Conte Malvasia.

At last, when Elisabetta had reached her sixteenth year, there came a change. A slow and painful disease stole over the unfortunate Andrea Sirani, crippling all his joints,

so that day by day the exercise of his art grew more difficult, until at length it became almost impossible for him to wield the pencil. In vain did Elisabetta chafe the poor numbed hands with her soft fingers: they would work no more; and life itself seemed riven from the despairing artist, thus deprived of the power to embody his conceptions.

"It is all in vain, Elisabetta," cried Sirani one day when the brush had fallen from his crippled fingers, which could no longer guide it—"it is all in vain; I shall never paint more!"

He looked at his powerless and disfigured hands, and tears rolled down the cheeks of the strong man. No wonder that the gentle Elisabetta wept too, and threw her arms around her father's neck, in vain attempts at consolation.

"Do not give me hope, my child," he answered, mournfully; "I know this disease is incurable. I am no more an artist. Holy mother of mercy! how shall I find bread for my children?"

Elisabetta's cheek flushed, her eyes sparkled, words rose to her lips; but she stopped, thinking of the pain they would give to her helpless father. At last she said timidly, "Father, you know I have been your pupil these four years; in that time, I think—I hope - I have learned enough to gain something by my paintings. Will you let me try?"

Andrea shook his head. "Impossible! a girl not nineteen, and I have been a painter these twenty years. But it is long since I have seen thy work, child," he added in some confusion; "bring it hither."

Elisabetta, deeply joyful that her woman's tact had thus effected what she thought would be a discovery both difficult and painful, quickly placed before her father a Madonna so perfect that the artist at once saw the genius of his neglected daughter. It was in vain to nourish jealousy; for, alas! there could be no rivalry between them now. He kissed Elisabetta's brow, and prayed the Virgin, whose sweet face she had depicted so well, to bless his good and talented child.

Elisabetta became a painter. When only nineteen, her first exhibited picture made her the wonder and pride of her native city. It was a religious subject, such as the gentle and pious girl loved delineating – the saints of her Church, St. Ignatius and St. Francis Xavier. The purchaser was the Marchese Spada; and the sum Elisabetta thus gained was large enough to bring a thrill of proud delight to her heart, with the consciousness that the future was her own. Her little sisters laughed and shouted at the sight of the purse of gold; her young companion, Ginevra Cantofoli, whispered in her ear how many personal adornments it would purchase; but Elisabetta went straight to her father's chamber, and laid the first fruits of her talents and industry on the bed where the suffering artist was now confined.

"My father," she said in meek and blushing humility, "*we* have gained thus much by my picture: see!"

"Thou sayest *we*, Elisabetta!" answered Sirani. "Why not 'I'? This money is all thine."

"Not so, dear father," said the young girl: "all I have learned in painting I owe to thee. I am only thy *hand* to work in thy stead, until it shall please the blessed Madonna to restore thee. Therefore this shall be devoted, like all thy other earnings, good and kind father, to the general benefit of the family."

Two large tears stole through the closed eyes of the poor artist; but he said nothing. Perhaps Elisabetta's loving deceit, aided by the natural vanity of mankind, made him actually believe that his daughter's unselfish gifts were but a due requital for his instruction in art. But he made no opposition, and her future earnings were all appropriated to the domestic wants of the family. Night and day did the young Bolognese toil at her easel. Yet it was a labour of love; for she had that earnest devotion and enthusiasm for art which constitutes the true riches and reward of genius, entirely independent of worldly success. But this latter did not fail Elisabetta. A woman, lovely even among the beau-

tiful of Italy, she attracted the attention of the connoisseurs of her native city, who saw with surprise a young maiden of twenty execute with facility works equal to many of the most renowned artists of the day. Her quickness of hand was extraordinary; her slight fingers seemed merely to play with the pencil, and the painting grew under them almost by magic. The number of pictures which yearly came from her easel was astonishing; but Elisabetta had that strongest spur of all to diligence—she was working for the daily bread of those most dear to her, and who could only trust to her for support.

Looking back through the lapse of centuries on the life of this young and gifted creature, one marvels first at the wonderful steadiness of purpose which supported her at the commencement of her arduous career; and then at the sweet womanly nature which made her still humble, unsophisticated, and undazzled by the success with which that career was crowned. The noble and talented of the land crowded to her studio; churches far and wide were adorned with her pictures; kings and queens sent her letters of compliment on her works; and yet the young artist, in her own quiet home, was ever the same simple Elisabetta—tending her decrepit father, who was sometimes for whole months confined to his bed, aiding her mother in all domestic cares and occupations, instructing her sisters, and brightening the whole house with her cheerful and blithe spirit.

According to the usual custom of the Italian painters, Andrea Sirani had formed a school of young artists, who profited by his instructions, and imitated his style. Among these was the favourite companion of Elisabetta, Ginevra Cantofoli. From earliest girlhood there had been a friendly rivalry between the two—at first amicable; and then, as Elisabetta's success increased, becoming gradually more serious, though it was not apparent. Every new triumph of the daughter of Sirani gave a pang to the heart of Ginevra, until at last the wild passions of the South were all roused in her bosom, and a jealous rivalry took the

place of her old love for her childhood's friend. Every sweet and kindly word of Elisabetta's but embittered this feeling, which became the stronger for concealment. When, in the sincerity of her friendship, Elisabetta praised and encouraged her young rival, and at times assisted Ginevra in her pictures by the touches of her own superior hand, no feeling save of envy and dislike entered the heart of the proud and desperate Italian. Even her beauty—and Ginevra was very beautiful—she counted as nothing compared with that of Elisabetta.

But all unconscious of this, the artist's daughter went on her way—her loving and quiet spirit untroubled by any of those violent passions which distracted Ginevra—pursuing her art with unwearied diligence. She rarely joined in the amusements of the ladies of Bologna; her sole recreation was her favourite science of music. Often in the delicious Italian evenings Elisabetta would take her harp, the instrument in which she excelled, and for hours together draw from it the sweetest sounds, giving up her whole soul to music.

One night she was thus occupied, when Conte Malvasia entered unobserved. He went up to the couch where Andrea Sirani, whose sufferings were a little abated, lay watching the sunset, and occasionally turning his eyes to where Elisabetta sat, bending over her harp. Her form had lost its angularity in the roundness of womanhood; her hair was knotted behind in thick plaits, after the fashion of the times, save that a few silken curls rested on her white throat, which the stiff and tight-fitting dress of the day could scarcely hide. The expression of her eyes and mouth was as sweet as ever, and as she sang, her whole face was lighted up with irresistible beauty.

"Look at her," whispered the proud father to Malvasia: "tell me, is not my Elisabetta the fairest maiden, as well as the greatest painter, in all Bologna?"

The good old ecclesiastic smiled, and assented. "She looks as happy as if she had a presentiment of the good news I bring," he answered.

"About the holy fathers of Certosa?" eagerly asked Sirani. "What! have they determined—and for Elisabetta?"

"Yes," laconically said the Conte.

"Elisabetta—Elisabettina mia," cried the delighted Andrea, who had long since forgotten his jealousy in fatherly love and pride, "you are successful; the good padri of Certosa have chosen you to paint their altar-piece!"

Elisabetta darted forward with unconstrained delight. She kissed the hands of Malvasia, and thanked him over and over again.

"But, my dear child," said the benevolent Conte, "you are only at the commencement of the journey, and you seem as joyful as if the goal were attained. Do you know what is the chosen subject of the picture? A grand and difficult one—the Baptism of our Lord. Have you any idea of the manner in which you will treat it, Elisabetta?"

"I will show you, Signor Conte." She took a sheet of paper, laid it on her knee, and, with a brush dipped in Indian ink, began to dash in the first sketch of her composition with wonderful rapidity and power.

"Will this please you, monsignor?" timidly said Elisabetta at last, holding up the design of the picture, which was afterwards the pride of the monastery of Certosa, and the work on which the fame of Elisabetta Sirani chiefly rests.

Ere the father and Conte Malvasia could find words for their delight, Ginevra Cantofoli entered. There was a heavy sadness over her mouth, and a wild look in her eyes, which spoke of some inward trouble. Elisabetta, in her unconscious delight, threw her arms round her friend's neck, and told her of her happiness; but Ginevra recoiled as from the touch of a serpent.

"Then it is you who have taken from me my heart's desire?" she said, bitterly. "I sought to paint this altar-piece; but the padri, like all the world, thought me your inferior. I suppose I shall live and die so, Elisabetta?" she added, attempting a forced smile.

"Why did you not tell me of your plan, Ginevra?" said Elisabetta gently.

"Because I resolved for once to think and act for myself: I have failed; now let us forget it," answered the other.

But Ginevra did not forget it; and year after year that added to Elisabetta's fame, only buried the poison deeper in the heart of her rival.

At last, added to all other jealousies, came the one excited by love. From the city of Parma, where he had been completing his studies in art, came Battista Zani, once the pupil of Sirani, and now the betrothed of Ginevra Cantofoli. Young, enthusiastic, rich in all that could win a maiden's love, no wonder was it that Battista was almost idolized by the girl he had chosen to be his wife one day. And when, like all who came within the circle of her presence, he yielded to the magic influence of Elisabetta Sirani, and felt and expressed towards her a regard and reverence almost approaching to worship, Ginevra's very heart was rent asunder with jealousy. Sometimes, in his simplicity and utter unconsciousness of evil, Battista talked to his betrothed of Elisabetta, of her saint-like beauty - upon which he delighted to look with that admiration of all things pure and lovely which was so deep in his artist soul—of her unworldliness, her genius; and all this was to Ginevra the most exquisite torture. Then, too, in the frank admiration and friendly interest which Elisabetta showed towards the young painter, whose talents gave promise of such wondrous fruits, Ginevra saw nothing but the preference of love, for she could not imagine the possibility of any maiden's beholding her own Battista without loving him. And truly with many this suspicion would not have been far wrong; but it was not so with Elisabetta Sirani.

After a time spent in his native Bologna, the artist determined to go to Rome.

"Would that I too were going to Rome—beautiful Rome!" said Elisabetta, when Battista came to bid adieu. "How pleasant to see all its wonders—to behold the glorious

Capella Sistina of which we have so often dreamed, Battista! I would that I were going also!"

"Then why not, Madonna Elisabetta?" cried the young painter, eagerly. "It would be so happy to see Rome with thee!"

Elisabetta smiled quietly. "Thou forgettest my father, my home. How could I leave all these, good Battista, even to go to Rome?"

"Then I will think of thee always, Madonna. In my memory, in my prayers, thou shalt visit Rome."

"Be it so, kind Battista," smilingly answered Elisabetta, as she gave him her hand, which he kissed with reverence, and departed with Ginevra.

"Is she not an angel, this Madonna Sirani, to speak so kindly to a poor artist like me?" he said to his betrothed. "But ere I see her again I may be more worthy of her goodness. Dost thou not think so, Ginevra mia?"

"Yes," answered Ginevra, in a low and changed voice, while a horrible determination made her hands clench and her eyes flash fire. But Battista saw it not; he was wholly absorbed in those delicious dreams of coming glory, which too often fade like a morning cloud.

"La Signora Elisabetta desires her spiced draught," said the old nurse, coming from the painting-room one day. "Get it ready for her quickly, Benedetta."

Benedetta, a young country girl whom Elisabetta had educated, and who loved her mistress with passionate tenderness, went speedily about her task.

"Thou art putting too much cinnamon, silly child," said the old woman.

"It is not cinnamon, good mother; it is another spice that I bought the other day. The woman who sold it said it would do Madonna good, and that I must give it to her every day. And truly she was right, for I never saw the signora's eyes look so bright as yesterday."

So the young girl carried the cup to her mistress, and watched her with affectionate looks while seh drank her

favourite beverage of sugar, cinnamon, and water. How little did either know that this day it was a draught of deadly poison!

An unaccountable illness seized upon the doomed Elisabetta. It was little dreaded by those who best loved her; but she herself felt an utter languor—a strange overpowering sensation, which gave her a foreshadowing of the coming death. When Ginevra, whom her summons had brought, stood beside her, Elisabetta spoke to her early friend with an affectionate seriousness, beyond her wont, of the beloved art they both followed—of Ginevra's future life—of her lover.

A look at once full of hatred and despairing grief came over Ginevra's face; but Elisabetta went on—"I always loved thee, Ginevra, and thy Battista too; and if I recover—"

"Thou wilt die; thou art dying now," said Ginevra, in a low and hissing whisper. "Thou hast been my bane through life, my rival in all things; last of all, in Battista's love. I have poisoned thee."

A shudder convulsed Elisabetta's frame, but she did not shriek: awe, not terror, possessed her, as she heard of her certain doom. Her lips moved long in a silent prayer; then she looked calmly at Ginevra, who stood beside her like a statue of stone, and said, "Thou art deceived; I never loved any man; my life was devoted to God and to divine art. Thy Battista wooed me not, Ginevra; he never loved but thee."

In utter abandonment of remorse, the murderess sued for pardon at her victim's feet. "Denounce me! Thy death will be slow: let me die before thee, as an atonement."

"Not so," faintly answered Elisabetta; "the secret be between thee and me. Let not my father know that his child died by poison. The holy saints forgive thee as I do. Ginevra, live and be happy with thy betrothed."

"It is too late," shrieked Ginevra; "Battista is dead!"

It was indeed so. Battista Zani died at Rome, soon after his arrival, leaving behind him only the memory of the genius which had promised so much, and which perished in its early blossoming. His name, chronicled by Malvasia, is all that remains to posterity of Battista Zani.

Elisabetta Sirani died by this mysterious and horrible death in her twenty-sixth year. Many surmises arose as to the fatal cause, some approaching near the fact, others wild and contradictory. Amidst the pomp of splendid obsequies, the maiden artist was laid in the tomb of Guido Reni. The orator Picinardi poured forth a torrent of eloquent lamentation over the beloved dead; solemn music sounded through the church of St. Domenico; and the whole city mourned over the pride of Bologna.

But while poets wrote her elegy, and sculptors adorned her costly monument, the memory of Elisabetta remained, like that of a departed saint, in her father's house; at first sorrowful, afterwards bringing only holy and solemn thoughts. They spoke of her genius; of her humility, which scorned not all the lowly but sweet offices of home; of her beauty, made still lovelier by the calm dignity with which, knowing she was fair, she gloried not in it; and of her pure and holy mind, which, though not too proud for earth, ever turned heavenwards, as if there was its true home. And thus, like the continual perfume of virtue and of holiness, which death cannot take away, lingered on earth the memory of Elisabetta Sirani.

Andrea Sirani survived his eldest daughter many years. His two other children, Barbara and Anna, also became artists; and there is still extant a graceful sonnet of Picinardi, addressed to Barbara Sirani, who had painted from memory the portrait of the lost Elisabetta.

Of Ginevra Cantofoli, all that need be said is, that she lived and she died.

"Printed In Austria"

THE HOLERTH LIBRARY.

11. THACKERAY, The Tremendous Adventures of Major Gahagan.*)
12. CHARLES LEVER, Paul Gosslett's Confessions.
13. E. A. POE, The Black Cat and Other Tales.*)
14. SHERIDAN, The School for Scandal.
15. SHELLEY, Prometheus Unbound.
16. MACAULAY, Bertrand Barère.*)
17/18. HAWTHORNE, Tanglewood Tales.*)
19. R. H. BARHAM, The Ingoldsby Legends.*)
20. ROBERT BROWNING, Pippa passes; Romances.
21. CHARLES DICKENS, The Cricket on the Hearth.*)
22/23. QUINCEY, On Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts.
24. THACKERAY, A Legend of the Rhine.*)
25. CHARLES DICKENS, The Chimes.*)
26/27. GOLDSMITH, The Citizen of the World.
28. ALEXANDER POPE, The Rape of the Lock; An Essay on Man.
29. DOUGLAS JERROLD, Bubbles of the Day.
30. E. A. POE, King Pest and Other Tales.*)
31/32/33. E. A. POE, The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket.*)
34/35. JOHN STUART MILL, On Liberty.*)
36. RICHARD STEELE, The Conscious Lovers.
37/38. WALTER SCOTT, The Black Dwarf.*)
39. MARIA EDGEWORTH, Almeria.

*) The books marked with an asterisk are suitable for school use.