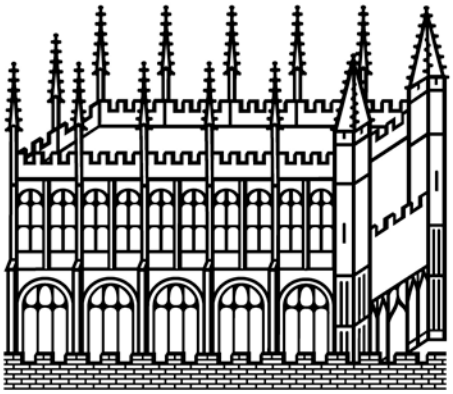

THE BEAUTY OF AMALFI.

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An Italian Tale.

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THE BEAUTY OF AMALFI.

CLOSE behind the town of Amalfi, of ancient fame, so situate that its rugged head glistens in the first smile of morning, and purples in the last glance of the departing orb of day, lies a high and steep hill. Thick plantations of pine trees, the growth of many years, cumber the soil where once the flower-plot bloomed; and where man used to sit, the small beasts of the forest now wander with fearless step.

I loved to resort to this hill, especially during the summer heats, when the wood was green, and the grasshoppers chirped joyously in the thick brakes, on account of the coolness of the air there, and the delicious view which its midway height commands. From my seat in the shade, I could watch the advance of the sea-breeze as it sped from afar, crisping on its

line of way the glassy surface of the main, and feel its coolness as, after swiftly skimming the sultry plain below, it wandered, lingeringly, till lost in the depths of the rustling pine-forest. Then, presently, would come the Zephyr of the land, contrasting with the salt freshness of its brother of the sea, warm and blowing with aromatic breath, laden with the fragrance of the garden, and the sweet perfume of the wild myrtles that shed their blue berries upon the stony hills.

My eyes were never tired with dwelling upon the beautiful panorama that lay beneath and around me; and the habit, instead of engendering satiety, served only to supply fresh enjoyments, that ended in becoming a daily want.

Far as the eye can reach, towards the right, rises the classic promontory of the virgin goddess, overhanging the deep blue sea that slumbers, childlike, in its stony bed; and dimly seen beyond it, the upper outlines of romantic Capri stand out as an azure mist-cloud floating against the sunny sky. Nearer, the ridge of rock that divides the Gulf of Salerno from the neighbouring bay sweeps, with gradual rises and falls, towards the clear foreground, where the white-washed houses of Amalfi, crescent-

shaped, cluster over the yellow sands. You remark the islets of the Sirens, masses of brown stone, like specks upon the surface of the turquoise, and Positano, romantically perched upon its narrow ledge. Far away towards the left stretches an expanse of the liveliest green —the plain between the mountains and the sea — traversed by the thin waters of Sele, upon whose banks the fat sedge and the luxuriant briar have supplanted the roses of mysterious Pæstum. And bounding the prospect lies a range of low hills, so distant, that at midday earth and air and sea seem blended together in one and the same mass. But as the sun, sinking towards the watery horizon, paints every feature of the landscape with the brightest and clearest hues, the dim forms grow distinct, and the distant cape appears as a reflection of the Sorrentine headland.

My favourite place on the hill-side was a little crag, jutting out from its rounded shoulder, where an abrupt fall in the slope below allowed an open prospect of the Mediterranean and the enchanting shores that border it. By the crumbling heaps of masonry that lay scattered about, and the presence of aloes, cypresses, and other trees which are seen more often in the vicinity

of the cottage than in the forest, I could judge that the place had not always been desolate, and a rough but solid cross of pine branches, planted a few yards above, and away from the crag, served to confirm the impression.

But in that region of ruins, where cities and towns lie buried in the dust, and the deep sea rolls over palace and earthly paradise, and the thousand vestiges of departed splendour, who cares to inquire about the poor remains of a peasant's cot? and where every foot of land is rich in the memories of deathless deeds, who applies himself to tracing out the obscure tale of some boor's or bandit's vulgar crime? So month after month had fleeted away before I thought of making any inquiries about those who in past days had gazed upon the same splendid prospect which attracted me to the spot. When, however, a certain languid curiosity that suggested a few chance questions to the peasants of that country still remained ungratified—receiving, for all answer, "But, sir, what do I know?"—the feeling became stronger, and I began to push my research with ardour. At last, having met with a priest of Airola—a man deeply read in the local legends of the olden time—I obtained from

him a brief outline—sketched somewhat carelessly and superciliously, as if the matter were unworthy of his attention—which, by references to others, I filled up with the necessary details. The reason of my committing them to paper was, perhaps, the contrast between the homely ideas with which imagination supplied me when sitting, thoughtfully, upon the crag, and the reality of the tale of its ruins. I expected the common story of everyday horrors; I, therefore, was agreeably disappointed in finding an unusual tenderness and sadness in the Legend of the Beauty of Amalfi.

Which tenderness and sadness if thou acknowledgest not, reader, is thy fault as well as mine—the fault of thy hardness to feel, as well as of my incapacity to describe.

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It was seldom that cultivator and fisherman, an antagonistic race in these regions, were on terms of friendship like Mariano, the last tenant of the ruined cottage upon the hill-side, and Pietro, the sturdy old sailor of Amalfi; and as they had married wives that were blood relations, people wondered and wondered about their intimacy, and continually whispered, When will they fall out? Despite of which, they were

seen together for some time, more or less, every day during the best part of twenty years, straightly united in sorrow, sickness, poverty, and even want. It was a strange kind of friendship that subsisted between these two men. Each seemed happy in looking upon the other's face, contented to pass hours almost without uttering a sentence, or in enjoying the after-dinner sleep under each other's roofs, although the very nature of the occupations prevented their being very amusing companions. Still, such was their enjoyment; and, as happens when the tie which connects two persons of the same sex has vitality in it, the very blood in their veins seemed to have been transfused. Pietro learned to prune an olive-tree, as if he had been born to it; and Mariano could ply an oar, and was often seen mending a net with a master-hand. These, and many other such small things, people marked curiously, having at that time nothing better, and, indeed, very little else to think of.

As the husbands chose to be intimate friends, their wives, who, being cousins, were naturally not on the best of terms, of course quarrelled on every occasion. They stood firmly upon all possible points of village ceremony; they

never spoke but ill of each other; and they persuaded themselves that they hated each other cordially; although, if truth be spoken, they were no more capable of deep hate than of deep love. Repeated failures in casting discord between their goodmen gave a kind of chronic sharpness to the edge of the dames' tempers, and no wonder! They had failed in the end and object of their lives, they were disappointed, and therefore discontented women. Signally, too, they had failed, though they never missed taking opportunity by the forelock.

When Mariano's father-in-law died, leaving to his daughter Angiolina and her husband a house, a few fields, and an oil-mill, Gioconda, Pietro's spouse, redoubled, in jealousy of her rival's increased importance, her wonted efforts to breed bad blood: and therein she did not succeed. On the other hand, it so happened that Pietro some years afterwards became master of a little fishing-smack, and its furniture; on which conjuncture Dame Angiolina bitterly remarked, that Fate ever favoured her enemies, lamented her inability to face Dame Gioconda's look of triumph, and humbled herself and her condition much more than was necessary to provoke Mariano's spirit, but to

no purpose. Some such case of war recurred regularly every six months, but though the case came and went, somehow or other the war followed not in its wake. Angiolina and Gioconda were not doomed, they said, to be happy. *They said*, little knowing what they said. Had this quarrel, for which they had pined and plotted for year after year, broken out and raged and settled down, as they desired it might, into an inveterate feud, they would, most probably, have wished, and sought, and laboured as heartily to make matters up between the partners of their homes.

O my enemy!—man or woman—had I but the power to accommodate thee in thy desire, the moment it is felt, how swift, how sure, and how terrible my vengeance upon thy devoted head!

Once and once only the efforts of the two women had well nigh been crowned with success. After nearly ten years of married life, Heaven heard Angiolina's prayer, that she might not be childless in her husband's house, and the Lord blessed her with a daughter—the most beautiful babe, every one declared, ever seen. Gioconda mourned over her mishap, beginning from the "reception-day" ceremony,

which she attended, with her whole heart, and weeks elapsed before she could temper the bitters of her sorrow with the sweet thought, that after all it was but a girl, a kind of household misfortune: might she not be made happy by the favour of her saint with the sight of a boy? Her rival's good fortune turned her ideas to the possibility of the event, and Hope bade her look forward to it anxiously. Her impatience in no wise hurried the occurrence upon which she set such store, but within six months Fortune favoured her so far as to supply her with a son whom she might, after a way, call her own.

All that concerned the little stranger was shrouded in mystery—most inviting to curiosity's vulgar meddling mind. On the evening of one day, Pietro was childless; the morning of the next found him a parent: such a child, too! His like had never been seen by the fishermen of Amalfi. Angiolina, though she affected indifference, was in despair. And Gioconda looked so happy, one might almost have believed that she was really the mother of the boy.

The small world talked scandal, and listened delightedly, and rejoined with interest, as is its

wont when it finds a fit and proper subject, for a while. But Mariano held his peace, for he had never kept a secret from his friend, and although twitted every day with Pietro's reserve by the wife of his bosom, he never doubted but that in due time all confidence would be shewn him as he deserved. So when the time appeared not, and the few advances which his full heart allowed him to make were not received in the way he expected, a grave look settled upon his countenance, and he inclined his ear to Angiolina's words seriously—more than he had ever done before. Fortunately for the friends, Dame Gioconda perceived this, and feeling that she would now hurt her rival much more by preventing than by helping an estrangement between the good men, she hastened to mar the success of her scheme.

Pietro, urged by his wife, about whose hidden intentions he puzzled hopelessly for a day or two, entered upon the matter of the foundling with Mariano, and frankly excused his unusual secresy on the plea of the solemn oath of the Madonna, at the same time shewing him some pieces of gold, and a mark on the boy's right breast, which, as soon as seen, convinced his neighbour that the subject was of a delicate

and dangerous nature. To allay suspicions of the darkest description, the child had been christened Salvatore—the Saviour—it being a positive fact that no being of evil can bear that blessed name. For the rest, Pietro cared little about what men said, having ample reason to believe that at some future time they would all envy his good fortune.

That day the friends parted friends, and the storm which appeared to threaten the fabric of their union dispersed quietly enough. It was followed by good results, such crises being often as useful to the moral as to the material world. Perhaps also the presence of a novelty had something to do with the pleasant consequences that ensued; however that may be, it is certain that Gioconda and Angiolina began to weary of their continual and useless quarrels, and to sink from an active into a passive state of disagreement. Neither of the dames inquired of herself the reason of the change, for the word reflection bore a hidden meaning to both their minds. Their knowledge was limited to the fact that they were happier than many a past year had seen them.

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For a long time had Angiolina and Gioconda

ceased to regard their husbands in any other light than as fellow-toilers and fellow-travellers, with whom chance, or Providence, or something or other, had thrown them together on the way of life. The recollections of their brief girlhood lived but as the memory of a flower in decay: the hopes and fears, in which these toil-worn men once bore so large a share, lay dead and buried under the dull heap of daily cares, and routine life, and domestic labours. The allotted path had become to them a cheerless and a barren one, and they plodded on drearily till they could strike off into another. Thus it was that the sweet smiles and the winning caresses of the two infants made other beings of them, awakening their dormant affections, and supplying them with an object in life.

When Dame Angiolina clasped her girl child to her bosom, she forgot, in the transports of a mother, that the boast of an Italian woman was not hers. Nor would Gioconda have exchanged her lot with that of her former rival. It had flaws to be sure, but her predominant passion—if you could so call it—was pride; and her heart beat high when she looked upon the noble boy who depended upon her alone,

under the Virgin, for the tenderest cares of maternal love.

Before a year had elapsed, it was settled that the infant should be left during the day-time in Gioconda's cottage on the beach. Her duties as a fisherman's wife, busied her in the interior of her dwelling, whilst Angiolina, at certain seasons of the year, could find but short time to spend at home. Her husband's farm, though not large, required their joint labours during the greater part of the day: sometimes from sunrise to sunset she was employed either in planting Indian corn, in pruning or training the vines, or, as the time might be, in gathering their festoons of pale or purple fruit. She was cook, too, as well as labourer, and the oil-mill was not a thing to be trusted to the mercies of hirelings.

Scant care, even in Gioconda's cottage, was bestowed upon Lucia and Salvatore. When the little ones had escaped from a confinement of mummy-like swaddling clothes which required one or both of them constantly to be carried about in arms, they were left to wail or to slumber alternately, as the fit seized them, in a cradle sufficiently large to hold the two. Sometimes their cries became loud and pierc-

ing enough to distract the dame from her work. Then she would bestir herself to relieve the pangs of hunger from which they were suffering with a sop of coarse wheaten bread, steeped in fresh olive-oil. After which she would return to her labours, and her song of the Wicked Flea, satisfied with having administered the sovereign remedy against all the ills of infant life.

The good woman could not understand that the helpless, when lonely, are therefore unhappy; nor did she even fathom the reason why the screams of the children were less piercing or continuous throughout the day, when, in wet weather or on festivals, she sat by the side of the cradle rocking it with her foot, whilst her hands plied the knitting-needles, or soothing its irritable occupants with one of the drowsy nasal ditties especially devoted to the edification of early childhood in the South.

Angiolina now followed her husband's example, and took her afternoon sleep under Gioconda and Pietro's roof. After that time she saw her child no more until the evening, when she again repaired to her kinswoman's dwelling to fetch the precious burden home.

Then she allowed herself a few minutes gossiping, after which she recollected that Mariano's supper of Indian corn porridge, or chestnut meal, required to be prepared, and that a score of other household avocations called for her care before she could sit down to her nightly task of spinning and weaving. With a light step, notwithstanding her fatigue, she would hasten homewards, poising her infant in an erect position on her hip; and if ever she arrived late, it was all the child's fault: Lucia's face required to be looked at by every one that passed by on the road.

In consequence of this rude nurture, the children grew apace, gaining a strength and an intelligence unknown to those reared amid the manifold appliances of wealth. Their limbs acquired their due proportions, their faces shone with florid health, and all their movements gave indications of precocious vigour.

They soon emancipated themselves from the restraint of the cradle, and ere two years had rolled over their heads—at an age when the children of the rich are scarcely able to support themselves with the assistance of a nurse—they followed Dame Gioconda, hand-in-hand, and with tottering steps, as she plied her labours,

about the room. Presently they ventured to sit together under the shade of the wide-spreading vine, which canopied with green the door of the fisherman's dwelling, or they rolled about the little garden behind the house, or, bolder grown by trials, they managed to reach the sands of the sea, amusing themselves with various pastimes and gambols, and exchanging their first ideas in a language unintelligible to any one save themselves.

It is not to be wondered at, that no childish dissension ever arose between the little ones, for each was the sole source of happiness to the other. Their characters were peculiarly well adapted, and their infant loveliness never shone so conspicuously as when they were together.

Lucia, when she had passed the first years of infancy, shewed signs of a nature warm and ardent as her own clime, though its fire was tempered by the timidity natural to her sex. Rouse her, and the low square brow would be clouded over in a moment, and the thin nostrils dilate: the black pensive eyes would shine with sudden light, and the rounded cheek would mantle with a colour that came and went like a lightning flash. But another word, a word of kindness, and the storm had passed

away, dissolved in mingled smiles and tears. Hers was a noble nature, one to be managed by love, whilst the ignoble look only to fear.

Simple and affectionate withal as fair, she was the model of that southern peasant race, whose character is to us a riddle abounding in the strangest contradictions. At once soft and unbending, merry and light-hearted, yet full of the deepest pathos and fiery passion, vehement in the expression of joy and grief, intense, too, in the strength of those emotions, they seem to have borrowed their organization from the fine and subtle air that supports them. So the sea that washes their natal shores now lies in tranquil beauty, bearing upon its unruffled bosom the perfect reflection of lovely earth; then momentarily changing as the dark hour falls upon it, it exhibits a scene of fury and terror, doubly striking from the contrast that preceded it. We northerns of the dim grey sky, and cold cerulean main, gaze with wonder upon these startling vicissitudes.

Other ideas were suggested by Salvatore's classical features, and the look of fixed and firm resolve that controlled the uncertain energy of his race. The homely dress of a fisherman's son, the scarlet woollen cap, the coarse linen shirt

open at the neck, and confined at the waist by a crimson sash that supported the short dark-blue trousers, ill suited a form in whose lines vigour was already blended with the graces of childhood. By his side Lucia looked like a picture—as her country-people describe the perfection of beauty—with the little laced boddice, the showy kerchief, the full striped petticoat, of gay warm stuff, the sparkling hair bodkin, the coral necklace, and the pendent earrings of pure gold, which Angiolina's maternal vanity loved to see displayed on festal days. But all the gossips agreed that his was a figure which deserved to be equipped in satin or steel.

Nothing wound Lucia round Salvatore's heart so closely as her willingness to yield and to be protected by him: from his earliest infancy he manifested symptoms of a strong imperious will, and it shewed itself in the pleasure, somewhat premature, of subjecting to its influence all that would submit to him.

He delighted to shield his weaker companion from the occasional outburst of angry chiding which their mischievous pranks would provoke. The elders had indeed reason to scold, for Salvatore's was a restless disposition, and they having no experience of children, soon deter-

mined that he and his bride, as he called her, were the most troublesome little beings ever created. The quiet cottagers were struck with amazement when, after ample provocation, they administered to the boy a sufficiency of what they had ever been taught to consider the panacea for mental disorders in childhood. Briefly the rod was tried, but it broke against the high spirit of the urchin, and Pietro, who had most reluctantly attempted the experiment, being rather glad to see that it produced the worst consequences, told his wife, the adviser, that it should never be tried again. And she, though not a whit more sorry than her husband —for Salvatore's demeanour under discipline made her almost feel that she was his mother— after predicting an untimely and melancholy death to the young rebel, unless the remedy were frequently and firmly applied, took especial care never to venture upon the subject again.

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The last six years had not improved Gioconda and Angiolina, though the time had worked no change in their husbands.

The good women still loved their children, but not with the same love. The heart's most

precious production often loses much by being deprived of the exquisite gloss of novelty. By common natures the babe is loved with blind intensity: that is the high tide of their love; steadily, though imperceptibly, it ebbs through childhood and youth, when its object begins to speak, think, and act like a separate being, and manhood or womanhood sees it at its lowest mark.

The little boy and girl were still, indeed, the light of their parents' dwellings: but the parents' eyes had become accustomed to the light, and so, mortal like, they unlearned themselves to appreciate its blessings as they had done when it first appeared to gladden their eyes. At times, when oppressed by some passing care, or when angered by some act of childish wilfulness, black frowns would contort the countenances that once beamed with love, and angry words replace the passionate terms of endearment once so incessantly lavished.

Yet in spite of their occasional bursts of temper, the boy, even in his early years, gained and exercised an instinctive influence over his adopted parents. Most probably it arose partly from the inborn superiority of his nature, and partly from the indomitable energy

of a character that compelled everything weaker to bend before it.

Until the children reached their ninth year, all their sports were in common; but soon Salvatore's spirit of enterprise grew so fast, that Lucia began to shrink affrighted from accompanying him even in his evening excursions upon the rocky declivities that bordered upon each side of their native hill.

Motionless with terror, she would stand watching him as he climbed heights which to her appeared inaccessible, or as he leaped from crag to crag with all the agility, but without any of the precautions, adopted by the Alpine huntsman. Often, over-mastered by excess of fear, the little girl extended her arms to save him from the fall she thought inevitable, and the rocks around rang with her loud and piercing cries.

No voice but Lucia's could have arrested the truant's step. But with one glance at the slight bending form thrown out into clear relief by the sky beyond, leaving some favourite scheme nipped in the bud, Salvatore hastened back to his weeping companion, and kissing away the tears from her flushed cheeks, soothed and caressed her with a tenderness of

which few would have thought his impetuous nature capable.

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It is not easy to explain why, contrary to the custom of the lower classes in all countries, the children were so long exempted from the toils and cares that form the birthright, as it were, of the poor.

Pietro evidently felt a particular objection to teaching his son his own trade; and although he would himself assist Mariano in his labours, he never encouraged, whilst he did not forbid, the boy to do so. It may have been from the indulgence often shewn towards an only child, or, perhaps, from the example of her kinswoman's house, that Angiolina also dispensed with her girl's assistance for so long a time.

However, when Salvatore and Lucia entered their twelfth year, objections were raised by the elders of both families against their children continuing to lead a life of unblessed idleness. Angiolina in particular called aloud for her little daughter's aid in the performance of sundry household duties, now beginning to press heavily upon her. The good wife's thrifty habits had filled her home with plenty, and she could well afford, without inconve-

nience, the food and dress of a servant girl, who took the hardest work off her hands. But the second nature of a life was stronger with the dame than the love of ease: she bustled about as much as ever, and "keeping a dog," as the village wit irreverently remarked, she "barked herself as though she were the only guardian of the cottage." And this habit seemed to increase as her prime declined.

Age flits rapidly away upon the wings of Italy's balmy zephyrs, and each successive summer hastens the dimming of youth's bright noontide. Twelve years had imprinted indelible traces upon Dame Angiolina's face and form. Between her and the offspring of her mature womanhood, there seemed to yawn the wide gulf that separates blooming childhood from feeble and withered old age. Few of the strangers who now and then stood to admire the little girl's beauty and grace, could believe the startling assertion that the aged woman who led her by the hand was her mother.

With habits so idle and desultory as those in which Lucia had been reared, it was well for Angiolina that the child was naturally as anxious to oblige, as she was easy to be led away.

The little girl could not indeed realize the meaning of age or infirmity, but when her mother complained of both those sore trials, and protested her inability to endure the burden and heat of the day, she gave up without a murmur the delights of sweet idleness, as well as her companion's loved society. And concealing the bitter tears her self-denial caused to flow, she applied herself with a willing heart to mastering the difficulties of apprenticeship in her new walk of life—the manufacture of home-made night-caps, knitted hose, hanks of coarsely-spun wool, stockings, head-gear, and other such articles of domestic use. Every day her diligence grew under the praises which it won for itself. When her parents returned home from their sultry or wintry labours, they always found their smoking dinner of fish and green broth, or the festal luxury of macaroni and meat gravy, in readiness for them, and the neat-handed way in which it was prepared shewed evident signs of the daughter's care: the wine and oil flasks, too, were carefully stored up; the cupboard never lacked a plentiful provision of dried figs, spitted on long sticks; and the white cheese of goat's or buffalo's milk was always in prime condition. These

things, being highly important in cottage life, soon became known, and before long, the girl's name was favourably quoted as a model in the village.

No wide-spreading vine arched with green the doorway of Mariano's dwelling, for the cultivator—an exception to the general rule of his nation—was a strict utilitarian, after his own fashion, caring nothing for aught so unreal as beauty, and grudging the time and trouble spent in adornment of any kind. The little Lucia was often compelled by the weather to ply her needle or wheel in the interior of the dark smoky cottage. When weary of her solitary labours, her only recreation was to peep wistfully through the open casement, at the enchanting prospect only partially concealed by the masses of olive, orange, fig, ivy, and chestnut foliage, which clothes, as with a mantle, the fair forms of the landscape. Then the light exhilarating air would fan her cheeks, inviting her to enjoy the beauties she looked upon; but proof against such temptation, with a sigh and a look cast round the silent walls, Lucia would reseat herself, and heroically resume her lonely work.

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Meanwhile, Salvatore was very differently employed in becoming the very sprite of the place. As I have said, Pietro, for some unknown reason, refused to teach his adopted son the humble craft he himself exercised, turning a deaf ear to all his entreaties.

"You look tired to-day, father; let me go with you in the smack, and by the blessing of our saint, you will teach me to fill your nets with fish," the boy would urge again and again.

"No, my son, this work is not for thee," was the invariable reply; nor would any begging or questioning elicit a more explicit answer.

"Then let me learn to dig the ground, like my uncle Mariano, and you will see what figs and oranges, and grapes, my garden will bear."

"No, my son, presently thou must go study and make thyself a learned man: thou art not to be a fisherman or a cultivator."

Salvatore could by no means understand why he should be obliged to know more than his parents, and he frequently puzzled himself with the question, "Who, then, am I?" But as his turn was for action, not for thought, he made a few attempts to assist his uncle on the sly, as they say, and when the uncle, with

his peculiar hard-headedness, made the labour of love irksome to him, he broke from it, and gave himself up to his inclinations.

He became jealous of his honour, and claimed a superiority over the boys of his own age, which they were not so ready to admit as he was to assert. By strength of arm and purpose, however, he soon caused his authority to be generally recognised, even by those who were most celebrated for using a sling, or for threatening to use a knife; but it was not without many a severe struggle.

"Santo Sacramento!" would poor Gioconda exclaim, when the child of her adoption returned home all covered with dirt and bruises, "what manner of demon is this son?"

Yet Salvatore was liked as well as feared by his vassals, the boys, who, not daring to resist it, found his authority mild and pacific. They seemed happy to have him as their head: he, however, lost all pleasure in the pride of his position almost as soon as he attained it.

He then sought new excitement. He had persuaded one of the fishermen to teach him to swim, and giving himself up with enthusiasm to this new exercise, he sprang from heights, dived to depths, and struck out to a

distance which none of the half amphibious race to which he belonged would venture upon. He laughed when warned that in hot weather the shark sometimes visits those tepid seas, that the prickly fish often inflict incurable wounds, and that children have been spirited away by the mysterious beings of the deep. Two or three times the cry was raised that Salvatore had sunk with the cramp, and once his mother had hurried to the shore, in a state of the wildest grief, which lasted till the boy's exhausted limbs were stretched to rest upon the blood-hot sand.

When satiated with the perils of the deep, and rather discontented than otherwise, that he had no glorious adventure with fairy or even marine monster, the boy returned to his old occupation of scaling the rocks behind his native town.

Again he heard of bears and wolves, and wood-devils, but he never saw them. Danger and excitement indeed he found: he nearly broke his neck on one occasion, when plundering the contents of a hawk's nest, for the purpose of making a necklace for his sister, and once the crows almost killed him in their attempt to revenge themselves upon the wretch

who had cut short the career of many little crows yet unborn. But Lucia chided him, with tears in her eyes, for hardness of heart, as he offered her a batch of turtle-dove fledglings, the poor bereaved mother fluttering about the garden, and moaning as if her bosom would burst. He restored at once the nest to its own pine tree, and, conceiving a distaste for his late glory, he abandoned it the more willingly as his playmates found means to collect almost as many eggs as he did, and could boast of running the same risks, although in reality they had been much more discreet. He had also obtained from his father a kind of permission to join the next party that ventured up the hoary steeps to gather the snow harvest, and this made him in spirit almost a man.

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The lofty form of Sant' Angelo, the monarch of mountains in this region, rises behind the town of Castelamare, overlooking, on one hand, the Neapolitan Bay, on the other, the Gulf of Salerno. It is well provided with caverns, pits, and deep rifts, girt with shady trees, which form the fittest places for storing up the summer luxury, and being but a few miles distant

from the capital, the snow is removed from its recesses with little loss.

When the blue vault above is clear and sparkling, and the land-breeze blows sharp and strong, and whilst the sun shines warm upon plain and water, a halo of silver and golden cloud settles upon Sant' Angelo's majestic head; then the wise in such matters know that the last spring fall takes place. Anxious to secure as much of it as they can, all hands are in immediate requisition; they hasten to the mountain, wheeling along their implements, spades, rakes, iron-shod poles, and rush mats, toiling up the steep, precipitous roads with an alacrity which no other occupation would induce. Arrived at the spot, they separate into groups, some making balls of large size, others guiding them down the steeps, some depositing them in the pits, and others pressing the material with their feet, or covering it with leaves, fresh boughs, straw, and matting, to preserve it from the external air. Meanwhile, a universal jollity prevails: they sing, they jest, they become animated into displaying the strangest antics and buffoonery; they shout and laugh, as if snow never falls save on saturnalian days. And having amply stored their maga-

zines, they return home gladly, foretasting what pleasure the cool sparkling draught will afford when the languid body sinks in the still heat of the summer's night, or the poisonous breath of a sirocco day.

In the midst of these joyous snow gatherings, Salvatore would distinguish himself even amongst the veterans of the work. The first to arrive at the ground, he was the last to leave it; and, without neglecting the main chance, he could keep up a constant fire of ludicrous jests in his racy Neapolitan dialect, thus making himself the marked object throughout the day.

It was usually long after nightfall when the boy crept quietly into the room where Pietro and his spouse were sitting silently, muffled in their rough old cloaks, over the expiring embers in the earthen fire-pan; and he often went supperless to bed, fearing lest a word might cause his father to forbid him these pleasure trips for the future. The motion of the dim shadow, thrown by the flickering wick of the old three-cornered brass lamp upon the wall, would startle the old people from their reveries, which they resented either by a querulous, "Whence comest thou, thou evil one?" or by

a hopeless look at each other's countenances, followed by a number of ominous shakings and rollings of the head.

Pietro and Gioconda soon found something real to shake their heads at.

A "professor," as the charlatan calls himself in southern Italy, had visited the town of Amalfi; and by his imposing dress, his eloquence, and the miraculous drugs which he displayed for sale, had excited universal admiration. But this feeling had subsided when he ventured upon some perilous feats of sleight-o'-hand; and hanging round his throat a pair of real poisonous adders, who hissed, and gaped, and coiled over each other, in great apparent wrath, without, however, daring to touch the hand that seized their necks, or the mouth that opened to close upon their heads. The spectators shuddered at the sight, and invested the whole apparatus of the mountebank with a superstitious terror. His vipers' oil became a deadly poison, sufficient to destroy a host; his phials, containing scorpions, lizards, centipedes, and other such curiosities, were turned into prisons for devils; and the canvass screen upon which he displayed the choicest efforts of his imagination, in creating the most remarkable

monsters, now was proof positive of magical and necromantic powers. The end of which things was, that the poor professor was denounced to the Church, and compelled to fly the town.

Unfortunately for Salvatore, the charlatan, seeing his curiosity and boldness, had paid him especial attention, offering him, for nothing, a box of pills which conferred eternal youth upon the recipient. The object of the present was to obtain the lad's assistance in snaring a few of the large, bright-green snakes which bask in the sun upon the different alleys of the orchards. Salvatore, when asked, readily agreed to shew the man where lay the serpents' nests, from which he had sometimes abstracted a small white egg or two. He assisted him in the operation; and, unlike his fellows, who trembled at the idea of touching the most harmless snake, he followed the example of the experienced hand so boldly, and handled the captured animals so fearlessly, that the "professor" determined not to lose a pupil so apt. Salvatore's mind fell before potent temptations, amongst which the favour of the Grand Turk, and the friendship of the King of China, were perhaps the weakest. Indeed, he had already broached the subject in the presence of his

parents, to their horror and amazement, when the storm of wrath burst, as above detailed, upon the charlatan's head.

For many days afterwards, Lucia looked coldly upon her old companion. She had ever considered him as her idol: the whole earth did not contain one being to be compared with Salvatore.

When Gioconda and Angiolina's excitable tempers were roused by some truant prank of the lad's, the offended matrons, sorely tempted by the little girl's sweet, sorrowful countenance, would often break forth in scoldings and revilings for encouraging and abetting him in his nefarious practices. At such times, her sole defender was Salvatore; and she, without remembering that he was the cause of the anger that had threatened her, saw only the firmness which had warded it off.

Then the matrons, finding themselves constantly foiled in their natural attempts to wreak their small revenge upon some one, laid their wise heads together, and determined to prohibit the continuance of Salvatore's unrestrained intercourse with his little playmate.

The prohibition had its bad effects.

In the presence of Lucia, Salvatore's noble

and generous nature shone forth undimmed by any passing cloud, unless, indeed, his day-dreams of ambition be so called. Even at his early age he delighted to sit with her upon the shore, or in the cottage, discoursing eloquently, though grotesquely, about plans and prospects for the future, in which the probable and the impossible were strangely blended together. And at these times the girl would listen to him with an inexplicable feeling of apprehension, only interrupting him with an occasional exclamation of astonishment, or a perplexed question about the meaning of his words. In her absence, the lad varied his wild pleasures by intervals of dreamy repose, stretched upon some solitary rock, building aërial castles, or fondly nursing the youthful delusion of a certain futurity, in which happiness and brilliant destinies were mingled with a kind of unexplained love.

Then came the prohibition of the parents, for the fathers had fallen into the mothers' views. The light was withdrawn from Salvatore's mind, and only the dark side of the picture presented itself to view. On the other hand, the girl, who heard nothing but of the utter gracelessness of her old playmate—she was

forbidden to call him "bridegroom,"—although at first she resolutely rejected the doctrine of his unworthiness, presently felt her firm faith shaken by statements of facts; and she ended, as usual, by partially believing that which a few months before she would have resented as a private and personal injury.

That sage old saw, "there is no smoke without fire," has done more harm in its day than most of its harmful fellows. True about smoke and fire, it is untrue about the lies which man's tongue forges against the reputation of his fellows—untrue as any simile that ever opposed itself to sense. But when will mankind learn to discriminate between the real and the unreal, separated as they are in the moral world by a line that can elude the finest eye?

So, when Lucia heard the full details of Salvatore's crime — how he had openly consorted with a heathenish and Saracenic stranger, and had formed the design of abandoning his home, his parents, and his friends, to roam over the world with that wretch — she felt more irritated with him than usual. Little the girl knew how conspicuous a part her image played in the drama of life acting before the aspirant's

eyes. Yet she hoped, though she could not feel sure, that one word from her, by laying before him the present sorrows of a parting, would have melted away all the little stoicism with which the lad regarded them at a distance. For Angiolina, with the vigilant jealousy of an Italian mother, now watched her daughter's every action, and the young people never found the means of spending one half hour together, except on festal occasions, or at some village merry-making, where snow-water was drunk, and sorbets were eaten, and the tarantella was danced.

* * * * *

At length the hour came for formally placing Salvatore under the charge of Don Tommaso di Luca, the priestly pedagogue whose care it was to guide the footsteps of youth up the grievous ascent that leads to the fair plain of learning. Perhaps the time was hastened by the report that the lad had been seen in company with one of the great smugglers, a band of desperadoes which the tyranny of the government had created out of peaceful peasantry, and then tolerated either for their use or as a necessary nuisance—the safest kind of lawlessness that can subsist under despotic misrule. An

accident in early life had secured to Pietro the gratitude of an influential man amongst these contrabandists, and he had not failed to avail himself of it, returning at times such small favours as his calling enabled him to do. But as he had no wish to see his son initiated in the order, the very rumour filled him with fear lest the temptations offered by the wild rovers should prove too strong for Salvatore's obedience and affection. The lad's conduct in the affair of the charlatan had filled him with astonishment. What a heart it must be that could bear to leave parents and birthplace at the age of fourteen, and to cast itself upon the wide world in the company of heathens and magicians! So Pietro insisted upon accompanying his son every day to school—he had tried the experiment, by-the-bye, more than once before, but he had never kept up his effort long enough—and partly by arguments, partly by entreaties, the son was prevailed upon to be a regular pupil. He understood as little now, as when his father used to warn him "that presently he must go study, and make himself a learned man," what necessity there could be for him to read and write, when his parents could not. Besides, he thought it, if truth must be

spoken, somewhat derogatory to exchange the free life of a fisherman, breathing the pure air of heaven, for the purpose of spelling over dirty volumes in a dull, dim chamber, like a shaven monk.

The scene which presented itself in the interior of Don Tommaso di Luca's school-room —a dark, low-roofed building adjoining the principal church of Amalfi—was not one of the staidest description. An artist's eye would have rested with curiosity upon the picturesque varieties of form, costume, and attitude, observable amongst the mercurial multitude, perched upon a triple row of coarse wooden benches, and thrown out in strong relief by a background wall of the dingiest hue, on which daubs of ink and charcoal scrawlings lay so thickly spread, one almost doubted that the surface had been white-washed since the place had been devoted to its present purpose. The finely moulded limbs of the assembled urchins, contrasted by the colour as revealed by the scantiness of their linen clothes—the mobile countenances, lit up by flashing black eyes—and the native grace of posture and motion—all belonged peculiarly to that southern land where beauty seems to be the growth of the very soil.

Here sat the fisherman's or the smuggler's son, tall and dark, his limbs already bronzed by exposure to sun and air, side by side with the young scribe, whose delicate task had, even in boyhood, stamped its sign upon his brow. There was the peasant's child, broad-faced and horny-handed, next to a tiny friar in cowl and woollen gown reaching to his dimpled feet. The little father's arch look of mischief spoke more of earth than of heaven, and his long serge garment, the emblem of carnal mortification, was often converted into a receptacle for contraband dainties, which, during Don Tommaso's occasional absence, excited a tumult of unsanctified feelings amongst his brother pupils. The friar's parents had devoted him to the monastery of La Cava, and, though still too young for the duties of his vocation, offerings of sweetmeats and other delicacies were often made by the villagers to the child of Heaven: hence his ample store of creature comforts. Whilst the master was present, all the scholars sat demurely enough, poring over their torn and well-worn schoolbooks, or they droned out the lesson whilst the boy whose duty it was to recite it, filled the room with a loud meaningless voice. For Don Tommaso was by

no means sparing of the rod, and he was never known to pardon a squabble, a practical joke that led to bad consequences, or the detection of secret gambling in the form of *Morra*.

Salvatore, equally enthusiastic in all things, after overcoming the awkwardness of his new position as scholar, set himself right vigorously to his task. His natural powers were of a high order: the rude materials of poet, musician, and improvisatore lay uncultivated within his breast. Nor did the lad want the stimulus of an ambition that always struck at the noblest game. Whilst none of his neighbours would have aimed at aught loftier than the post of pedagogue or Canta Storia, he felt that he could be nothing, or the Tasso, the Marini, or the Salvator Rosa of Amalfi. His proud spirit swelled with emulation, and for a while he toiled and strove that no one should rise above him, determining that no danger should daunt, no difficulty overcome him.

Properly guided, the youth might eventually have attained eminence. But the tide of circumstances flowed strongly against him. Don Tommaso was what is commonly called a sensible man, with a limited judgment, and not an over-kind heart. The good priest, endowed

with no brilliant talents himself, was apt to look distrustfully or contemptuously at them in others, especially if the hapless possessor chanced to be of lowly origin. He felt, moreover, and he seldom failed to express, a vague kind of disapprobation for the excitable temperament, and the passionate longing for praise, that here and there belong to unknown genius. Mistaking both for the symptoms of a morbid, craving vanity, he deemed it advisable to repress them by withholding as much of their proper food—approval—as his sense of justice allowed him to do. The holy fire cannot burn in such damp mephitic air. Soon Salvatore's warm and sensitive heart, chilled by dull depressions, lost the ardour that cheered it on its arduous way. He began to weary of his studies—silly legends, Latin prayers, and the lowest elements of learning. Sympathy with them he had none, and, when he lacked inducement to pursue them, he gave up the task in despair, as a hopeless one. Still he sat in the school, sullenly resolved that none of his fellows should surpass him, so silent and so reserved that he would scarcely raise his head when the sudden noise of boisterous laughter, and a volley of shouts, announced that the

labours of the day were over. His master could not fail to notice the change in his best pupil's disposition, but as usual he attributed it to a wrong motive—ill-temper.

However deep the cause, the sadness of early youth is generally superficial. Once released from the confinement of the school-room, Salvatore's spirits rose to their usual pitch. Then he amused himself with wandering over his native hills, or half secretly he stole to Mariano's house to see if his little bride, as he still called her, was sitting there alone; or, hidden within hearing distance, he trolled forth the rustic love ditties of his native land, to the sound of any rude instrument which came to hand. To this latter occupation he had now transferred the whole of his energy, and, though his scraps of extempore poetry found more critics than admirers, the natural skill with which he handled the mandoline won him abundant applause.

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Salvatore, who was now fifteen, had grown out of the reckless mischievousness of his childhood, which had so sorely tried the tempers of his home. But neither his adopted parents nor his aunt and uncle — he had not yet

changed these names—could comprehend the waywardness of a character which seemed every day to grow more widely different from their own.

The worthy fisherman, in particular, used to seek numberless conversations with his friend upon the subject of the youth's unaccountable perversity. No great part of his or his wife's affection had, it is true, been withdrawn from the child of their adoption. They still dearly loved him with the strong force of habit and long association. But they found fault with him because his disposition prevented them from sinking into the repose or torpor which constitutes the chief mental enjoyment of advanced age. Their thoughts had become engrossed by themselves and each other, as they retired from the society of persons indifferent to them. They would have been satisfied to arise in the morning, to work leisurely through the day, sometimes with their own hands, but generally by proxy, to grumble through their spare hours, and to slumber through the night, without one thought to disturb or distract them. They delighted in the duties of their religion, one of the principal being to eat the meats especially devoted to each holy day—fat eels at Christmas, egg-bread

at Eastertide, and other such obligatory dishes. But they seldom approached the dread topic of death, and they spoke theoretically of the happiness to be enjoyed hereafter, inwardly hoping the while that such enjoyment might be deferred as long as possible.

The interminable discourses that took place between Pietro and Mariano served one good end, that of enabling them to vent their grievances without annoying their neighbours. As it might be supposed, they varied the subject by long digressions, that generally led them back to the beaten ground of their own youth. They loved to remind each other that they were cast in a different mould from the subject of their reprehension. They had been obedient and respectful to their parents, kind to their juniors, deferential to their elders, steady, hard-working, and industrious. In their time, people danced or sang only on occasions of great festivity, and only toiled the more next day for the pleasure of having displayed their best attire to attract the brightest eyes, or win the attention of the trimmest figure. Such had been the full extent of their gaiety. If they had enjoyed certain advantages, they would have risen high in the world: as it was, their filial piety,

and a host of other virtues—the good men praised themselves and each other, turn and turn, by the hour—had, by the blessing of the Virgin, given them prosperity and long life in the land. Then followed a dark detail of complaints which served to set off with additional lustre the moral luminousness of their own careers. And the conversation generally ended with winks and signs, and a few mysterious words, which denoted that there was an inexplicable reason for the difference between the so-called father and son.

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Salvatore sought more and more, as time flowed onwards, to forget, in excitement abroad, the little discomforts of his home. He was already celebrated as a musician amongst his friends, and soon, by their good advice and instruction, he became one of the best tarantella dancers in the district. You may be sure he lost no opportunity of exhibiting his new accomplishment, and the eagerness with which he sought occasions to do so was quickly remarked by his parents.

Pietro and Gioconda, though they had relished the dance in their day, could not bear to see their son, who was destined to the honours

of learning, spending his precious time in discussing the trivialities of the last festival, and in looking forward as if his life depended upon it to the next. They predicted that such habits would infallibly lead him to ruin, and when their remonstrances did not produce all the effect which they, unreasonably enough, expected from them, they applied for support to the priestly pedagogue.

Equally vain were Don Tommaso's reproofs, and his loud wonderings how it was that his pupil had so degraded himself as to affect a pursuit which the aspirant to letters should look upon as highly derogatory. For Salvatore's musical mania, there was some excuse. Harmony was the twin sister of poesy, and as such had been cultivated by the sages and the philosophers of the olden time. It had been claimed by the Church, and churchmen had made a severe study of it in the form of counterpoint. Certainly, said the priest, of late years it had greatly degenerated: instead of being founded on unalterable canons of mathematical precision, it was falling into a barbarous state of license, depending upon individual taste rather than the eternal rules of science. Still music was music; and he

would rather have heard the secular melodies of the vulgar than none at all. But this dancing!—had not the ancients justly designated it a servile art, and made them infamous that displayed themselves in such characters before the eyes of the public?

To this and other learned discourses, Salvatore listened with patience, and answered temperately, that he found pleasure in the pursuit, but that if his parents and his teacher thought proper, he would set due bounds to his predilections, and attend the dances periodically, not perpetually. Don Tommaso's blunt perception could not penetrate the hidden cause of such unusual docility on the part of his pupil. He remarked it, however, and tried to make use of it by exacting greater concessions from him. But he failed in this attempt. So, after meditating a little upon the folly and fickleness of youth, he dismissed the subject from his thoughts, in the hope that age, reason, and experience would prove the best physicians for such diseases of the idle brain.

In the mean while, to the surprise of her parents, Lucia began to feel as enthusiastic a fondness for her country's national dance as Salvatore, and the change was not less sudden

in the young girl than in her companion. A short time before, she never shewed any inclination to join the numerous groups of little cottagers who, with the azure sky above for their canopy, and the alleys of their parents' orchards for a parquet, footed it unwearyingly through the livelong summer, to the accompaniment of their own shrill songs, and sea-shells used as castanets. Whether this altered taste proceeded from a spirit of emulation, or from another and a stronger incentive, it is needless to consider. One thing is certain, namely, that Lucia's exertions were rewarded after a manner, by her becoming, in the space of a few months, the most graceful dancer in the village, and, perhaps, even in the town of Amalfi.

Both Salvatore and his "bride" looked forward in the gladdest anticipations to those particoloured days in the Papal calendar, of which the morning is appointed to be spent in devotional exercises, and the afternoon is given up to unrestrained hilarity.

Often the cup of enjoyment neared Lucia's lips and was suddenly dashed to the ground. Sometimes the appointed day dawned lovelily, but ended in rain and gloom; or, perhaps,

Angiolina was sick in body or in mind, and prohibited all but the devotional part of the festival to her disappointed daughter. And every young heart will feel that such deprivations inflicted as severe a pang as the miser's heart would know were his cherished hoards to be suddenly snatched away from him.

These occasional clouds, however, served to enhance, by contrast, the sunshine of happiness diffused in the young people's bosoms by Angiolina's uncertain consent. To Salvatore, the very character of the festival was changed by the presence of his childhood's companion. Without her, it was an idle pastime: with her, entire and intense enjoyment.

The morning of the fourth of May broke gloriously upon the world. It was the name-day of a beloved saint—Monaca; not the less beloved because her votaries unconsciously mingled the idea of sunny skies, clear nights, and long balmy days, with the yearly worship they paid to her holy memory.

On that day, more festive than the Sabbath, all the inhabitants of the valley, and the little villages on the hills behind Amalfi, would flock to the town to celebrate by prayers and revelry

the blessings obtained for them by the saint's unwearied intercession.

Amongst the crowds you might have distinguished Angiolina and Mariano with the beautiful Lucia between them; and a few paces before or behind—sometimes accompanying Pietro and Gioconda, but more often surrounded by a knot of friends—Salvatore, walking proudly erect, his eyes beaming with anticipated pleasure.

All the party, as well as the other villagers, were in holiday garb. The men had donned their brightest sashes, and whitest possible linen; the women had mingled together every colour in their warm woollen attire, and had interwoven their smooth glossy hair with gaily floating ribbons, or with chaplets of flowers gayer still.

Silence stole over the moving crowd as it approached the entrance of the church of Amalfi by roads strewn with green boughs and garlands. The hum of many voices was hushed to profound stillness as the interior of the sacred edifice quickly filled from the porch even up to the steps of the grand altar.

During the long service, the hearts of the worshippers swelled alternately with love, or

thrilled with awe, as they fixed their eyes on the Mater Dolorosa's shrine, or listened wondering and breathlessly to their pastor, as he vehemently enumerated the miracles wrought, and sufferings endured, by those bright spirits—the saints and martyrs of old. Lucia, in particular, could scarcely restrain her emotion on these occasions. Her bosom heaved, her bright eyes dimmed with tears, and throwing herself on her knees upon the marble pavement, she buried her face in her trembling hands. Nor was she alone in her enthusiasm, for many —especially the young girls—were sobbing around her for the same cause.

At such times, Salvatore's eye, too, would lose its expression of joy and eagerness: now his glance was fixed inquiringly upon the spiritual teacher, now bent thoughtfully downwards; and ever and anon it rested, in tender solicitude, upon the bending form of the weeping Lucia.

But a few minutes longer, and Don Tommaso concluded his oration with the Benedicite, and the Ite missa est.

After a short prayer, the congregation arose, and moved towards the curtained entrance, still silent and reverential, but with far less

solemnity of look, gait, and manner, than before their tribute of adoration had been, as they conceived, duly paid. And the change that took place in the mercurial crowd at the very threshold of the house of worship, was at least as strongly marked as the contrast between the dim lamp-lit atmosphere of the church, and the blaze of unclouded sunlight without its doors. The eagerness of pleasurable anticipation then banished in a moment every lingering trace of devout emotion. With eyes still swimming with forgotten tears, and the holy mark yet glistening, unthought of, upon their brows, all faces shone with hilarity, and the sole theme of each half-suppressed murmur was the enjoyment of the approaching festival. And, on this occasion, the place of worship was not yet cleared, before the younger, separating themselves from the elder portion of the crowd, bounded in couples to an open level space directly opposite, where mandolines, heavy castanets, and tambourines, rang a merry accompaniment to the wild song of the tarantella rising high and shrilly upon the soft still air.

Then fast and merrily the dance began.

Some amongst the bystanders collected into

groups, and commenced a loud and gesticulating conversation; others sat half-reclining upon the ground; a few joined in chorus with the song; whilst others, forming a double line, looked on critically, and descanted upon the merits of the various performers. Those who were parents, naturally enough, praised their own offspring, sometimes to the detriment of others, and indulged in reminiscences of the days that had been, as parents in all ages have been wont to do. Few dissentient voices, however, were mingled with the increasing murmur of applause that followed Lucia and Salvatore's rapid movements. Even at the close of the longest dance-day, when the other couples attracted little or no attention, the superior grace of the rustic beauty, and her young companion's manliness and agility, had power to rivet the eyes of the spectators.

The fervid imagination of the south forms an idol of earthly loveliness, by some indefinable process endowing the possessor with the merit due to the bestower. As if it were by her own agency that Lucia's sweet face had been cast in so fair a mould, and her figure formed with such perfect symmetry, many and fervent were

the blessings called down, on such occasions, upon her head: the more enthusiastic were ready to worship her; and there was not a dissentient voice to the proposal, that she should be christened the Angel, or Beauty of Amalfi. Mariano and Gioconda's hearts beat high within them, as, with feigned humility, they received the congratulations poured in from all sides upon them, the happy guardians of so priceless a jewel.

Salvatore also observed, but with more honest exultation, the effect of his partner's attractions, and perhaps listened with even more pleasure to the oft-repeated remark that he himself was a fitting pendant for so exquisite a "picture."

Altogether, the day promised to be one of unmingled happiness. The senior members of the assembly forgot either to quarrel with each other, or to find fault with their charges. And the exhilaration of the dancers' spirits rose, under such favourable conditions, to almost delirious joy.

As for Salvatore, to use the favourite expression of his countrymen, he "scarcely knew in which world he was." The mere sense of existence became to him a source of unspeak-

able delight. In the intoxication of his faculties, the boy wondered if the azure vault above had ever looked so bright, or the sea below so clear, or the earth so gay; whether all nature, in fine, had ever worn so enchanting an aspect.

The first dance continued till put an end to by the utter exhaustion of the performers: a few minutes' pause and then a second was commenced.

The young girls, when their hands were released, retreated to their mothers' sides, and most of the young men gathered themselves into an isolated group, or fell to the rear, where stood ministering spirits that supplied snow water, sorbets, and glazed cakes. But Salvatore, whose guardians were sitting close to Mariano and Gioconda, still remained near his partner. Half sitting, half lying on the ground, by her side, and listening to her artless conversation, the brief interval passed rapidly away.

When the tambourines again struck up, Lucia's hand was claimed by a certain Michele, the son of a neighbouring farmer, a young man whose skill in the complications of the tarantella was only inferior to that of Salva-

tore, and whose undisguised admiration of his partner was told in the plainest terms by his speaking eyes and expressive countenance.

Was Salvatore still under the influence of extreme fatigue that he made no attempt to renew his exertions, and that he continued sitting in a sullen attitude on the spot where Lucia had left him? And what caused the pang that had thrilled though his whole being as Michele exultingly led the girl away, and when it passed off, left effects sufficient to change the nature of everything he saw, or felt, or heard?

A grey, cold hue overspread each delicate tint around: in the short space of a moment, the bloom of life seemed to have faded from every object that met his eye; unheeded was the soft gale as it raised the curls from his cheek, and the glad music of the tambourines sounded like funereal dirges in his ear.

For some time since, Salvatore had felt the presence of a new, undefined, yet all-powerful element springing up within him. Of late, the lights and shades of existence had become hard and well defined to him; there was nothing intermediate in his sensations between complete happiness and utter dejection. He was ever

fluctuating between the one and the other extreme — unreasonably glad, or causelessly depressed. He felt this change within him, but he cared not to account for it to himself, much less to consult the opinion of another. But the sharpness of the pang he now experienced revealed to him the secret. Jealousy, like a talisman, threw open the closed chambers of his heart, and shewed there a figure which even his inexperienced eyes knew to be that of—Love.

In bitterness of spirit the discovery was made. With set features, frowning eyes, and hands involuntarily clenched, Salvatore followed the tale of primitive courtship told by the dance in which he had lately been a delighted performer. He watched with a yearning heart Lucia's light form, as, threading the mazes of the tarantella, she fled from her pursuing admirer. And when she retraced her steps to fan, by encouragement, the flame of expiring hope, it was as if an iron had entered his soul. Still, he looked on with a glance riveted upon the scene. At last, however, San Gennaro be praised! the second dance was concluded, amidst the vivas and acclamations of the spectators. Michele—, he

alone was now visible to his rival's eyes, all other forms were as misty shadows floating before his dimmed vision,—Michele dropped upon his wearied knees in token of moral as well as physical submission, and Lucia, clapping her hands, and with eyes sparkling triumph, sped swiftly round and round her vanquished admirer.

Short-lived triumph! In a moment, her glance lost its sparkle as, returned to where her parents were still sitting, her eyes fell upon Salvatore's pale, dejected face. Unheeding aught else, Lucia resumed her place beside her companion, and like the touch of soft cool fingers upon a fevered brow, her solicitude first stilled and then dispersed the storm that raged in Salvatore's bosom.

Nay, so potent were the spells of the enchantress Sympathy, that although the gentle girl's painful surprise at her companion's unaccountable coldness caused her, for some time after his recovery, to feel perplexed and saddened, the passing cloud left no shadow on Salvatore's mind. Again the halo of hope and happiness shone full on every created object; the grey cold hue passed away from Nature's smiling face; again the breeze was soft and

fragrant; and once more the tambourine sounded delicious music.

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Several other tarantellas were footed in rapid succession without either Lucia or Salvatore feeling any desire to join the dancers. Their hearts were full—full of the sweetness of a first reconciliation after the first brief coldness: thus seated close to each other, what thought had they to spare for the tiny world around them?

During an unusually long interval of repose, the attention of the pair was attracted by a sudden and startling chorus of exclamations, mostly expressing surprise not unmingled with fear. And it was with some difficulty, as soon as Lucia's eye fell upon the cause of the commotion, that she refrained from adding a "Holy Virgin," or a "Jesu save us," to the pious ejaculations of her friends.

A weird-like woman, advanced in years, whose high, thin features and long, dishevelled locks, partially grey, gave additional power of expression to eyes peculiarly dark, piercing, and wild, was standing in the middle of the Piazza. She rose in stature above every man in the crowd, and though a number of villagers

had gathered around her, so many of them, startled by her looks and gestures, had retired to a respectful distance, that the throng in her immediate vicinity was not dense enough to conceal her singular face and figure.

"The Zingara! the Zingara!" was now whispered by every one to his or her neighbour, and the silence of expectation succeeded to the expressions of astonishment excited by her unexpected appearance in the scene of festivity. Some hailed the woman as an old acquaintance, and their hearty greetings rapidly dispelled the superstitious awe that seemed to have fallen upon the more timid. Then gradually they ventured to thicken in groups around her, and cries of "the good fortune! the good fortune!" began to be audible on all sides. Curiosity had overpowered fear.

"Good fortune!" said the old Bohemian, sneeringly, to the nearest of her bystanders. "I bear it about with me, but are you ready to pay for it?"

"We are ready, beautiful woman," was now the general exclamation. But each one, before consulting the fortune, thought proper to make a definite bargain for himself.

Long the Zingara continued to pour forth

her prophecies, auguring miraculous draughts of fishes to those amongst her audience whose business was on the waters, abundant harvests to the tillers of the ground, wealthy brides to the young men, rich and noble bridegrooms to the maidens, and a numerous progeny to matrons of a maturer age. Sometimes she saw ominous breaks in the lines of life that spanned the niggard palm, and in the brow that frowned upon her, she read signs of a violent death. The prophetess filled up the gaps of her voluble discourse with complaints of her own unmerited poverty, exemplifying it by her worn and scanty attire, and directing dreadful anathemas against the twin mortal sins of incredulity and parsimony. Yet somehow or other the curious group seemed to awaken little or no interest in her. She often replied absently as well as mysteriously to their numerous questions, and with an occasional impatient gesture, her black piercing eyes rolled restlessly around as if seeking to rest upon some more attractive object.

The gipsy stopped suddenly in the very midst of a solemn promise of untold wealth to Dame Michela, the talebearer of the village, who was listening to her breathlessly,

and with dilated eyes. Her roving glance had fallen upon Salvatore's speaking countenance, and the lovely face of his companion.

In a moment the Zingara, cleaving the crowd with two or three strides, came and stood close to the pair, scanning their features as if she sought to pierce the veil that concealed their spirits from her view. After a few minutes scrutiny, she took Salvatore's hand unasked, and with her long bony fingers began to trace the lines drawn upon his palm.

"What dost thou here, thou who art like unto a young eagle amongst a bevy of sparrow-hawks? Can earth and gold thus mingle together? And doth no voice within thee whisper that thou art the pure gold, and these mere worms of earth? Now, bethink thee. When the Zingara returns from a distant land —and two winters shall have shed their snows on Sant' Angelo's head ere she returns—will she still find thee here?

"Yes,"—continued the woman, answering her own question, and nodding her head with a vacant look, as if she were really communing with the future—"yes, she will. Not here, and yet not far distant. At a festival on a high

mountain, we shall meet again; and strange, strange things shall the Zingara reveal unto thee. Now, she will say but little, only that this life is not for such as thee. Thy love for this pretty flower may chain thy spirit down to earth yet a while, but few summers will pass away ere the young eagle will seek his proper dwelling-place."

And casting a contemptuous look around her, the Zingara, whose promises had been rewarded by the villagers almost as soon as they were uttered, turned upon her heel, and strode quickly on till her gaunt figure was concealed from the gaping crowd by the projecting angle of a building at the extremity of the Piazza.

"What could she mean, Salvatore, the terrible old witch?" said Lucia, with a fluttering heart.

But Salvatore answered not: the words of the old woman had sunk deep into his soul.

* * * * *

Two years have rolled away since the occurrence of this scene. They have worked but little change in either the elder or the younger members of the two families. The parents, perhaps, may have become a shade less active,

and two or three shades more rigidly devotional. The young people, wrapped up in their love for each other, and indulging in gay, hopeful dreams of future happiness, have scarcely marked Time's ceaseless flight. They have now numbered seventeen summers — an age when woman's beauty is at its zenith in the south, and man's strength is not far from its highest development. And each successive year had added something to them both. Had time, however, impaired instead of increasing their choice gifts, the change would have effected no diminution in the affection of either, for their love flowed in a far deeper channel than the shallow course of mere admiration.

Long since Lucia's heart told her the same tale as Salvatore's did on that memorable saint's day. Ignorant of what is called life as though she had seen but seven instead of seventeen years, the girl never dreamed of concealing one thought or feeling; she was too simple for the refinements of delicacy, and the most sensitive modesty could find nothing to shrink from in the form of Love appearing in such a guise.

The lapse of these two years had effaced from every one's memory but Salvatore's the impres-

sion produced by the Zingara's prediction. Her words had struck too deep a root in the young man's mind—congenial soil for them—to be easily eradicated; and when others, even Lucia, forgot them, they were always uppermost in his thoughts. They had given birth to countless reveries, during which images of brave and glorious deeds chased each other in endless succession through the boundless realms of thought. And the result was, that the mere mention of the Zingara's name caused the dreamer's heart to palpitate with emotion: to see her once more, he would willingly have walked from Amalfi to far distant Calabria. He hugged to his soul, with especial gladness, that part of her prediction which told him that in two years time they should meet again. And as the old woman happened to say, that she would find him at a festival on a high mountain, Salvatore decided in his own mind that she meant no other than the approaching holiday of the Madonna dell' Arco.

As the time drew near, a feverish impatience seemed to take possession of all his faculties; and so bent was he to test the truth of the sybil's prediction, that he narrowly escaped arousing the suspicions of the whole family by

his overweening anxiety to bow before the shrine of the Madonna.

From a sort of counter-spirit, a great many reasons were alleged by the elders in favour of Salvatore and Lucia staying quietly at home on that particular occasion. The heat, said they, was overpowering; they themselves were too advanced in years, and far too frail in health, to be dragged to such unreasonable distances. It was now quite enough for them to attend the prayer-meetings in their native village.

Time, or temporary convenience, had erased from the old people's memory a certain article which had been carefully inserted in their marriage contracts, namely, that on no account, except sickness or some domestic calamity interfere, should either of the husbands neglect to escort their wives to our Lady of the Ark's annual festival. They had bidden farewell, one by one, to the once eagerly sought pleasures of their youth: the very name of such things was changed; they were now called follies, to be either interdicted, or at least to be inveighed against, when convenient, with undue acerbity.

None of the old people's arguments, how-

ever, on this occasion, had any effect upon Salvatore. He was determined to go, and when, on the evening preceding the festival, Angiolina complained of fever, and protested that Lucia should not stir one step without her, not even that severe disappointment could alter his determination. It was easy to see that a stronger incentive than mere amusement urged him onwards. The most exuberant spirits would have been lowered, and the sweetest anticipation curdled to disappointment by Lucia's sad face, Angiolina's fretful moans, and Pietro's and Mariano's exchanged glances of disapprobation. The forbidden fruit was robbed of its sweetness, and Salvatore, still resolute, but dissatisfied with himself and all around him, retired to forget his various annoyances in a few hours slumber.

He arose at the first sign of early dawn, threw on his clothes as quickly as he was able, and with only a crust of bread and a few copper coins in his pocket, slipped out of the house. Partly from the obscurity of the hour, and partly from his hurry to get clear of the cottage—for at every moment he expected to hear Pietro's or Gioconda's voice commanding him to return—he stumbled over something

lying on the ground outside the door, without being able, and without even stopping, to see what it was.

The boy was mistaken, as some hours afterwards he pictured to himself his guardians' angry looks when they found him really gone; and their direful predictions respecting the fate of the disobedient, in this world and that to come, almost rung in his ears.

Could his fancy's eye have beheld them as they really were, it would have presented the old man and his wife sitting upon a bench, the one holding in his hand a gold locket, and the other counting the contents of a bag of golden doubloons, both speechless with amazement and delight.

Entirely unconscious, however, of the real state of the case, he sped on as if some one pursued him; for several miles had yet to be trodden ere the distant shrine was reached.

The narrow road leading to the hill was crowded with buffalo carts, and other rude vehicles of different shapes, some of them proceeding at a headlong pace, and all so crammed with shouting and singing devotees, that it was a marvel they held together. There were portly priests bestriding the backs of diminu-

tive asses, at whose joint expense many a broad, venerable jest was duly levelled; and numbers of peasants and their wives were mounted on mules—a species of animal, in these regions, that never neglects to take advantage of any opportunity afforded by a sharp turn in the road, or by a projecting wall, to inflict some bodily injury upon either its own kind, or its rider's.

The ascent presently became too steep for any vehicle, and religious custom enjoined that all beasts of burden were to be left at the foot of the mountain, on the summit of which the shrine stands.

The toilsome ascent was to be performed on foot, in the manner of a pilgrimage, and the groans and sighs of the more aged devotees testified the hardness of the penance imposed upon them. They panted, and puffed, and wiped their streaming brows—for the sun was now high and hot in the heavens—calling the while on every saint in the calendar to help their tottering steps, and thinking yearningly of their cool cottages, and of the icy cold fountains under the leafy trees of their orchards. But at last the turfy slopes on the top of the mountain were reached by the weary throng.

A gay sight there met the eye. Far as the glance could reach, were groups to be seen either dancing or seated on the green sward, eating, drinking, and making merry, as if for the last time in their natural lives. A number of fires for culinary purposes gleamed through the foliage of the tufted holm oaks, and the demand for macaroni, fried meat, and sausages, was only to be equalled by the call for goat-skins of Avellino and Monteforte, and masses of sorbet, or jugs of snow-water.

The greatest number of dancers were assembled on the esplanade in front of the Madonna's shrine, where the ceaseless conversation of the bystanders, and the confused din of tambourines, castanets, zampogne, guitars, mandolines, and songs, was perfectly deafening.

After Salvatore had paid—at the same time as those who arrived with him—the indispensable visit to the shrine, he went and sat down on the soft grass amongst the trees, half determining to be merely a spectator of the daylight revel.

"Oh, my Lucia! why art thou not here?" was the young lover's first thought. Her absence grieved him, and at first he saw nothing save the sad look her face wore when last his

eyes rested upon it. But the contagion of the general joy, acting upon his excitable temperament, soon raised his spirits, if not to their usual pitch, at all events high enough to banish his momentary inclination to spend the remainder of the day in inactivity. The Zingara's promises, too, once more became vividly present to his memory. So he rose and left his shady resting-place, with the intention of seeking her, after dancing one tarantella and wreathing a wand with Avellino nuts as a present for Lucia.

The breezes blow freshly over the lofty peak of the Apennines, where the little domain of Avellino lies. Not the least graceful or picturesque part of the yearly festival, or the least refreshing to the eye, is the quantity of green wreaths and boughs bestudded with hazel nuts, the collection of which forms an important part of the day's worship. They are entwined in the dancers' hair, or waved gracefully in their hands whilst dancing, or twisted, intermingled with fruit, around poles to be carried as banners homewards.

Salvatore had just returned from a neighbouring copse, laden with the materials for a standard which was intended to surpass all

the others, when—as if the two intermediate years had been a dream—in the middle of the esplanade, before the shrine, surrounded as before by a crowd of listeners, appeared the well-remembered face and form of the old sybil.

With a cry of joy, Salvatore dropped his load of branches to the ground, and, with a beating heart, he proceeded to pierce the circle that invested the Zingara. He heard her dealing out the same promises, adapted as usual to the age and desires of those to whom they were uttered; and now grown quick enough to detect their falsehood, the youth wondered if she would remember either himself or the treasured words she had addressed to him.

Yes, the old woman recollected that dark expressive face. As before, she distinguished Salvatore with peculiar notice, but she irritated his curiosity by appointing him to meet her that evening on the road, at least if, she remarked with a curious smile, he could give up the pleasure of dancing his way home.

About sundown the groups of feasters arose, and the dancers ceased their sport for a while, to visit once more, ere they left the hill-top, its Madonna's church and shrine. This ortho-

dox rite being duly performed, they returned to the dancing portion of the day's ceremonies, and prepared to descend the mountain, jubilant as in duty bound.

The way was rough and steep, yet over all its length, except where a rock or a precipice broke the path, stretched a line of tarantellari, footing it unweariedly. With their shoes in their hands, the women adorned with rosaries of hazel nuts, and the men waving and rapping time with their knuckles upon little hand-buckets of white poplar wood, they sidled half walking through their performance, from the church on the summit to the very foot of the mountain. Thence, gathering in groups led by the standard-bearers, who carried erect a long wand terminating in a hoop which encircled the portrait of the Madonna, wreathed with foliage, flowers, and fruit, they walked solemnly as in procession to the places where they usually dispersed.

Salvatore, who had lost sight of the gipsy during the day, although he had resolved to keep her in view till sunset, descended the hill far more soberly and seriously than did his neighbours. He felt vaguely dissatisfied with the old woman's promise—the natural

result of expectations raised too high—and, remembering how he had heard her dupe the simple rustics that thronged round her, for a moment he almost made up his mind to walk quietly home without waiting to meet her.

On the way, however, he debated within himself till his resolution vanished. And though day was rapidly declining, he sat down upon the edge of a rock, and folding his arms over his bosom, he gazed at the darkening prospect before him. Then, to while away the time, which advanced too slowly for his impatience, he began to hum aloud his favourite airs. He was giving all proper intonation to the song—

"La luna sta in miezzo lo mare
Mamma mia! maritime tu!"

When a coarse voice, sounding close behind him, continued with the words,—

"Figgia mia! che t'aggio a dare?"

Recognising the accents, and starting as he heard the sneering tone, Salvatore turned sharply round and saw the Zingara standing within a pace of him.

"Yes," resumed the old woman,—

"Figgia mia! che t'aggio a dare?"

"This will be the question ere long, and then what will be the answer to it? When will Pietro, now rich and resolved to be richer, give his noble charge to the daughter of the poor labourer?"

Salvatore looked at her with astonishment. Her words were full of mysteries to him.

"Two years ago," said the gipsy, "I foretold that the eagle would still mate with the sparrow-hawks for a while, till the hour came and the spell be broken. That hour is now come, and that spell is about to break beneath the iron finger of destiny."

The youth could do nothing but express his curiosity by a string of eager questions.

"On the seventh day from this," replied the old woman, scarcely heeding his words, "we meet for the third and last time on an occasion decisive to thee. Where or how we meet I need not tell thee: the stars guide us, and their powerful influence who can escape? Till then, farewell!"

"Nay, mother!" exclaimed Salvatore, putting forth his hand to prevent the gipsy's going, "it is not right to leave me so. Either tell me nothing, or tell me all. How is Pietro my father rich? and who is his noble charge?"

"It is in vain to ask me now," said the Zingara, endeavouring to disengage her arm from the young man's eager grasp. "But listen," she continued, seeing that he was determined to hold her; "since thou wilt hear thy doom before its time, turn thy face upwards to the skies—thus! fix thine eye upon that clear bright speck, around which the others circle—there! Thou seest it?"

"I do," said Salvatore. "It is straight beyond those large stars which my father calls the Bears."

"So!" replied the old woman, "now tell me: to the right of that single star seest thou another? Fix thine eye well upon the place. It is a small star, but brilliant as a bit of silver, and none of those around are near to it."

The young man gazed long at the place, but he could see nothing. All about the pole was a dim haze, like a plain at night when the mist cloud floats over it.

"I see no star there, mother," at last said the gazer. A long loud wail broke from the Zingara's lips, and she spoke, as if in sorrow, in a strange tongue which Salvatore had never heard before.

"Quick, boy!" cried the old woman, "look

up once more; thy choice, thy choice! which is it to be—Love or Fame?"

A meteor was streaming through the northern sky. As it fell through the air its brightness eclipsed the thousand stars that studded its way, and when, arriving to all appearance upon earth, rocket like, the darkening air gleamed with borrowed light.

Salvatore looked up as he was directed to do; he heard the words Love and Fame—he hesitated—he reflected.

When the bright meteor disappeared in darkness, the Zingara turned her face from the skies, and bending her eyes upon the young man, asked him which he had chosen.

"Neither," he replied. "I was still thinking when the light vanished from before me."

Again the old woman cried aloud, and began to speak in her strange tongue. This time her accents sounded fearful in Salvatore's ears. Fancy was at work within him. He looked around almost convinced that he heard voices in the air answering the Zingara's call. And starting, he dropped her hand, as a bat flitting close by his head almost persuaded him that he could feel as well as see the speakers of the air.

When the delusion vanished, and he turned

round, the old woman had disappeared from his side.

* * * * *

Auri sacra fames quid non mortalia cogis
Pectora?

Alas, how true! would it be believed that a bag of yellow pieces, in one short hour, could have altered the whole tenor of Pietro's and Gioconda's thoughts?

They had said little about it—for such subjects were better, they thought, withheld from the ears of youth—but for many and many a year they had settled between themselves the union of Salvatore and Lucia. With Mariano and Angiolina they had talked it over and over again, till it almost appeared to them to have taken place. They arranged every preliminary to the fullest satisfaction of all save the parties chiefly concerned; they had foreseen all its probable and possible consequences; they had even christened their grandchildren.

That one event swept away the project as chaff before the blustering Sirocco.

For the first few years, the fisherman and his wife had wondered what was to be the fate of the child committed to their charge. Arguing from many things, especially from

the mysterious way in which he had appeared, they vaguely supposed that, some danger or difficulty removed, he would be openly claimed by his family. And though the thought of parting with him caused them sadness, still they saw much that would make them resigned to it. As, of course, he belonged to the nobles of Naples, his palace would not be completely beyond reach of their cottage; and they, his foster parents, might reckon upon substantial signs of gratitude as well as affection. With these genial ideas, they had reared the boy in idleness, objecting to his learning any servile trade, and insisting only upon the necessity of study; so that in future they might not be accused of having neglected their precious charge.

But as time wore on, and none appeared to claim the boy, their plans fell into another course. Still Pietro refused to teach his son to become a fisherman; for the old man, fearless about himself, dreaded the effects of the youth's recklessness to danger. Both he and his wife loved Lucia as a daughter; they had ever been accustoned to call her their Salvatore's bride; at first it was in jest, but presently the jest became earnest. Why

should they not seek to establish the young people, as soon as their ages permitted, in some secure, though humble, walk of life? Mariano would never refuse to give up part of his orchard, and either cottage would be large enough, at least for some years.

This last plan, being the more grateful of the two, was that which the old people of both families fixed upon to take place. So presumptuously does vain man ordain his hopes!

Then came the gold, whose demon overthrew in an instant the airy fabric of their day-dreams. Once more they felt the gnawings of ambition, and all the evils of the itching palm. *They*, I say; for the first word spoken by Gioconda to her husband, shewed her how fully he entered into all her views.

Perhaps a pang passed through their hearts even with the doubloons in view; and, perhaps, their consciences tingled with a secret sting. But he lent them strength to bear it in silence—that strong demon of gold.

It was not long before this change in the fisherman's plans shewed itself in an unmistakeable way. Salvatore was not scolded by his future parents for his disobedience in attending the festival, nor was he even asked what

had occurred during the day. And the youth remarked a strange manner in his father and mother—a mixture of the old familiarity with a deference to which he was not accustomed. But though, emboldened by their good humour, he questioned them about it, his curiosity remained unsatisfied for a time. That day his mother contented herself with binding a gold locket round his neck, conjuring him, at the same time, for the sake of the Madonna, never to part with it. Salvatore thought that it would become Lucia better than himself. He said so, too; but Gioconda was by no means of the same opinion: indeed, she exacted an oath from him, that he would not give it to the girl.

Two days passed without any circumstance of peculiar interest arising in either of the families. On the third, Mariano, feeling himself more than usually averse to labour, determined to indulge himself in a visit to his friend, and repaired to his cottage for the purpose of spending an hour or so in the twofold enjoyment of gossipping and idleness.

For some time, the fisherman and the cultivator sat beneath the vine outside the cottage door, exchanging their ideas and opinions on various trite subjects in a monotonous, droning,

nasal key, the intonation affected by their race whilst in a state of repose. They were alone, for Gioconda was paying an interminable visit to one of her neighbours, and Salvatore was never at home until late in the evening.

Ere long, the current of conversation ran towards a well-worn channel, and the favourite because unaccomplished scheme of the young people's union was reverted to by Mariano. In consequence of the change of theme, the low murmuring sound of both voices was soon heightened to almost a shrill scream, and the gestures of each speaker seemed as if intended to outvie those of the other in vehemence. There was an expression of anger, too, in the countenances of both men, especially in that of the cultivator. And no wonder. Even with his obtuse perceptions the good Mariano had detected an unusual constraint in Pietro's manner, and a marked absence of the warmth and eagerness with which he invariably expected the subject to be welcomed. His fatherly pride was wounded even more deeply than his friendship was hurt by this. To convince himself of the truth of his suspicions, he returned again and again to the topic, but as often Pietro, by some means or other, avoided it. Then Mari-

ano, vaguely irritated, accused his friend of a variety of offences, in which caprice and want of affection bore a prominent part. Pietro defended himself against Mariano's reproaches, but his defence was as incomprehensible as his behaviour had been. So Mariano, unconvinced and unoffended, sunk into silence, and ere long, without even a word at parting, arose and went homewards.

A day or two might have restored the friends of many years to their wonted state, at all events until the same subject of discussion arose between them. But Angiolina's pride and anger were both excited to an unusual degree, when her husband related to her what had passed between him and Pietro. She magnified each insult, and turned to the worst account every word which admitted of more than one interpretation. She taunted Mariano with want of spirit, with having meanly and passively submitted to one of the greatest outrages that could be offered to a father. She promised him that, if he would only follow her counsel, they would soon bring the other party to speedy and entire submission—that in a few days Pietro and Gioconda should not only make overtures of peace, but must have re-

course even to entreaties, in order to secure for their son the coveted hand of the Beauty of Amalfi.

"Is our child—our angel—to be thus slighted?" urged the mother, when Mariano, who had not a thorough confidence in his wife's judgment, appeared to hesitate. This argument was too strong for the father: assailed in one of his tenderest points, he at length consented to repair with his wife on the following morning to Pietro's cottage, and to require a full explanation of his conduct.

Angiolina's plan was put into execution, but its principal object unhappily failed. Pietro and Gioconda, in their turn, hurt and offended by their friends' angry demeanour, would offer no explanation, and would make no concessions. The scene of altercation that ensued between the parents shall be passed over. It is painful to dwell upon an instance that with the average of mankind a few hasty words suffice to rend asunder the ties which a whole life has only had time to weave.

* * * * *

The result of the quarrel between the parents was a firm resolve, taken by all parties, that the young people should see each other

no more in private, and as seldom as possible in public. They parted, as they met, in anger, and then lost not a moment in detailing the whole affair to the weeping Lucia, and to her indignant companion.

Their words were, of course, marked by the spirit of selfish resentment that animated them, and disregard for the feelings of those whose destiny was thus being tossed to and fro upon the restless waves of their angry passions. And it is almost needless to say that such injustice produced a natural result—the snapping of the cord of authority that had been too tightly drawn.

It was not so difficult for the old people, with their once warm affections cooled by time, and with their minds wrapped up in the realities of life, to exist without each other's society. But the young lovers! No one thought of their sufferings: of the long weary days to come, and the sleepless nights to be spent by them in sorrow and anxiety.

Two suns rose and set—interminable spaces they seemed to span!—without bringing with them any change; but scarcely had the third began to roll more rapidly towards the base of the azure dome, when Salvatore slipped out of

his father's cottage unobserved, for the purpose of disobeying a command that rendered life to him scarcely worth possessing.

He was sitting with Lucia upon her favourite seat, the crag jutting out from the shoulder of the hill at the extremity of Mariano's farm, repeating the sweet tale of past sorrow, and revolving a thousand schemes for effecting a reconciliation between the angry parents.

Until that moment, Salvatore had scarcely thought of his appointment with the Zingara. The misery of the last few hours had almost banished it from his mind. But in the serenity of recovered happiness it recurred to him that this was the seventh day, the day of the third and final meeting. It was still, however, early in the evening, and a host of plans for future meetings had to be discussed, and a number of conjectures had yet to be exchanged as to the unaccountable cause of their late sorrow.

With every sense tranced by their happiness, neither Salvatore nor Lucia heard the sound of footsteps, though an observer stood close beside them. At last the girl raised her eyes and started up with a scream: the young man, too, hastily withdrawing his arm from her waist,

rose upon his feet, and looked around. Over the tall, thickset hedge, where privets mingled with myrtle and pomegranate shrubs in fullest bloom, appeared a face, ashy pale, quivering with uncontrollable anger.

They were the features of Mariano, the father.

A few moments elapsed in deep silence; the young people stood motionless, the old man looked at them breathless with passion.

At length he broke through the privet hedge, and approaching his daughter, seized her arm.

"Disobedient girl!" cried the father, speaking in a hoarse and tremulous tone of voice, "dishonour of thy family! how darest thou expect that the Virgin will bless thee after such a deed?

"And thou, baseborn," he continued, turning fiercely round upon Salvatore, when he advanced as if to plead forgiveness for his companion, "how darest *thou* tempt to rebellion the daughter of a virtuous woman and an honest man. Thou art like those that have born and bred thee, disobedient to the laws of God as to those of man: thy childhood was an accursed one, thy boyhood a disgrace, and thy

youth——Now get thee gone! my child is not for such as thou art.

"Nay, no tears, no entreaties, girl!" said the old man, in a milder tone of voice, as his weeping daughter would have placed her hand upon his lips. "Come with me to thy mother, and remember, as thou fearest my curse, that thou hast met him here for the last time."

He then, still holding his daughter's arm with a strong hand, led her away, leaving Salvatore rooted to the spot.

Some devil seemed to have possessed the youth; his face was fearful to look upon: large blue veins started like cords from his forehead; his lips were pressed together till they formed but one blue line; whilst his nostrils dilated widely, and his eyes glared wildly, like a tiger's, from their sockets. The terrible word still rang in his ears.

He pressed his clenched hands firmly against his sides, as if he dreaded to release them one moment from their bondage. And still he stood there, rooted to the spot, and paralysed by passion, whilst his beloved Lucia was dragged away from him almost without seeing her.

For a while he stood so, till at last the mist

dispersed from before his eyes, and the voice ceased to buzz in his ears. He looked around like one aroused from a dreadful dream. And the realities about him dispelled the remaining dizziness of his brain.

Again he started, hearing familiar accents: they were those of the Zingara. His bosom expanded with a deep drawn sigh, and he mechanically obeyed her as she directed him to seat himself on the ground by her side.

"Listen, boy," began the old woman, after a few unimportant remarks which fell almost unheeded upon the young man's ear. "Listen, and arouse thyself; for I have that to tell thee which shall guide thee on the dark path thou art about to tread. Listen now to my tale."

The events of the last few hours had excited Salvatore's curiosity almost to a painful extent. The great desire of his soul was now, he fondly hoped, about to be gratified: the thought had power sufficient to banish all others for the moment from his mind.

"Well nigh a score of years has passed away," continued the sybil, "since the Zingara's tent tree was first planted upon these hills, and yet how well she remembers all she is about to tell thee!

"In those days there was a fisherman at Amalfi, upon whom Fortune had not looked with a favouring eye. He had two wishes: one for well doing in the world—the other, for a child to sit beside his hearth. Yet the longer he lived, the less he saw the means of attaining his object. Though poor, however, he was honest; and his disappointment did not prevent either his having friends or his enjoying the reputation of a good harmless man.

"One evening, as he returned home, disconsolately enough, from an unprofitable day spent upon the waters, he bethought him of paying a visit to a kinsman, before enduring the ill-humour of his wife. With this object he took his way towards the hills.

"But scarcely had he issued from the last lane of the town, when suddenly, as if by magic, he was thrown to the ground; a cloth was bound round his eyes, his mouth was gagged, and he felt himself carried off, he knew not where, by the strong arms of several men.

"Thus, in an agonizing state of suspense, he was borne along for some distance, till at last his capturers placed him upon his feet, and bidding him feel no fear, set him at liberty. His unveiled sight shewed him five or six

muffled figures, with slouched hats and black masks, concealing the upper parts of their faces.

"The fisherman, still in terror, then fell upon his knees before them, and begged hard for his life, for he was too much agitated to hear their promises that no harm should come to him. Whereupon the man who appeared to be the chief of the party raised him soothingly, and swore an oath that the adventure might, if he pleased, be the happiest that had ever befallen him.

"Then the mask bade the fisherman go home at once, and told him that at his door he should find a man child, to be entrusted to his care. On this subject his words were few: he insisted upon profound secresy as regarded the night's occurrence, and gave some directions for palming off a probable story upon the gossips of the neighbourhood. He said nothing about returning to claim the infant, but he warned the foster-father that an eye would be unceasingly upon him. And he ended with once more recommending the utmost discretion concerning the foundling; hinting, not unintelligibly, that the consequences of disregarding this advice would be deadly. Then, as an earnest of

his good will, he placed a few pieces in the man's hand, ordered his eyes to be bandaged once more, and forbidding him to remove the cloth for some minutes, departed with his attendants.

"You may be sure the fisherman lost no time in hurrying home. As the mask had told him, he found close by the door of his cottage a little cradle: he carried it in, where he and his wife saw a lovely boy three or four months old, sleeping heavily. Except its pearly skin and the sign of birth already stamped upon its little features, nothing appeared to distinguish the child from a peasant's offspring: its dress was of the coarsest description, and the basket was of common osier. For some time it continued to slumber. At last the fisherman's dame raised it from its resting-place and placed it upon her knees, which movement, baring its bosom, disclosed a reddish mark which apparently had just been placed upon the right breast. They were still looking at this—the wife in womanly curiosity, and the husband preparing to satisfy her as he had been ordered —when the babe opened his eyes and smiled upon them with so lovely a smile that their hearts melted towards him as if he had been

their own son. After kissing and fondling him for a while, the fisherman asked his dame's advice; and the first thing she counselled for better concealment was to destroy all the dress which the child had on, and to throw the basket upon the fire. In doing so there fell from its place in the cradle gear a purse of gold, heavy enough to verify the mask's assertion, that the night's adventure would be a most fortunate one to the poor man.

"I need not ask thee, youth," resumed the old woman, after a brief pause for breath, "if thou knowest who that child was?"

Salvatore, in reply, only nodded his head: his mind was engrossed by a multitude of thoughts.

"Nor need I tell thee," said the Zingara, noticing his gesture, "how the boy was brought up, or what has become of him. My business is with the future, not in the past. But before I open to thee the book of destiny, I will speak a few words about events that happened since we last met upon the mountain.

"On the morning of the festival day, as thy foster-father issued from his cottage, he found a bag lying close outside the door, exactly in the place where thy cradle once stood. And when

he opened it and shook it out upon the bench, there rolled from it a number of bright yellow pieces, reminding him of a joyful sight which, in bygone years, had met his eye. Amongst them was a locket tied to a black thread, which Gioconda readily understood was intended for none but thee. She bound it round thy neck, and when thou didst purpose to give the ornament to one worthier of it, she made thee swear never to part with it.

"And she did well. The hour to which I looked forward years ago is now at hand: the pretty flower that chained thy spirit to the earth must henceforth be left by thee to bloom its humble span of life away, and ——"

Here the Zingara broke off her prediction; for her listener's countenance, which turn by turn had changed with curiosity, impatience, and contempt, expressed, as he heard her last words, a violence of anger which argued no good to her prophecy.

"Nay, then, boy, I did not mean thee to desert thy bride for ever. But leave her for a time thou must, as thou thyself wilt be first to say. Now listen to the Zingara in patience once more.

"Thou hast heard from others what is doing

yonder," continued the sybil, throwing out her shrivelled right arm in the direction of Naples. "Men have at length arisen to rend the chain, and to tear the rod from the hands of the puny oppressor. The blast of the war trump has sounded, the gay banners are unfolded to the wind, and the brave are rushing to the fray.

"And where art thou, Salvatore, the while? where art thou, and what art thou doing?" said the old woman, holding the youth's hand to prevent him springing upon his feet: "spending thy days in twanging the guitar, and thy nights in planning how and where to press a girl's hand. Is this what thy parents, the noblest of the land, expect from their son? and is it thus thou hopest to emerge from thy present obscurity?—to prove thyself the worthy heir of their rank, their wealth, their honours? Canst thou ——"

"Tell me, mother," exclaimed the youth, "who, then, are my parents. Thou sayest they are the nobles of the land—where am I to find them? by what means am I to meet them?"

He paused breathless for the reply, which came not till after a delay which appeared intolerable to him.

"Who they are, the Zingara knows not; how to find them, she can tell thee!

"The stars smile upon thee to-night," continued the gipsy, in a sad tone of voice; "and, therefore, she who reads the destinies of man declares that thine hour is come. Let the morrow's sun as it rises see thee in the market-place of Naples. Bear nothing with thee but a staff, and wear only the dress of thine order. As the Captain-General of the people passes by thee, doff thy cap to him with thy right hand, and pass thy left across thy brow, and leave the rest to the guidance of the heavens, which may have in store for thee love and fame. But remember never to part with thy locket; it is by that sign that thy parents shall know thee."

Salvatore had jumped up as if in eagerness to begin his journey; but he presently recollected himself.

"And Lucia, mother; am I to leave her thus?—without farewell—without a word?"

"What farewell did her father bid thee? and what word was it he spake to thee?"

The young man ground his teeth.

"But my foster-parents, since they are such; but to me they have been more than parents ——?"

"The duty of conveying thy farewell to them is upon the Zingara; to-morrow they shall know upon what errand thou art gone."

Still Salvatore stood irresolute.

The old woman, who was sitting upon the ground with her hands clasped across her knees, looked steadily in his face for a few seconds. Then she slowly rose.

"It is now time that we part, boy! The sparrow-hawk, not the eagle, has mated with sparrow-hawks, and what appeared red gold is but a lump of yellow clay. For once the Zingara's cunning hath forsaken her."

"I am ready to go, mother," said the young man, scarcely hearing her words. "But for the love of God, forget not my parents —— and Lucia ——"

"Go, then, in the name of heaven!" cried the old sybil. And in a moment, Salvatore, springing wildly from the crag, had disappeared from her sight.

"Such is indeed the stuff which Tommaso Aniello hath need of in this hour," muttered the Zingara. "And yet, poor boy! poor boy! I have seen his cradle—shall I see his grave?" And a tear coursed down the old woman's wrinkled cheek.

* * * * *

Despotism—the first, and perhaps the best, as the most natural form of government acknowledged by mankind—was, at the time of which I am writing, fast working the ruin of Naples. Its Austro-Spanish lords, with their German phlegm and Castilian gloom, had established a system of degrading misrule, of tyranny and of rapacity, which human nature, even in its most degenerate state, can never patiently endure for a continuance.

The viceroys appointed to the hapless city drained her of her best blood, to be spilt lavishly in foreign lands, whilst they garrisoned her with their foreign and hostile hordes. They raised the revenues of the kingdom to nearly double their usual amount; and so mercilessly taxed every article of consumption, that the people fell into the extreme of misery. Still, the patient Neapolitans bore with the rapaciousness of their rulers; their fruits were still exempted from the gabelle: this food the earth bore in abundance, and with it the oppressed population continued well or ill to support themselves.

But presently appeared the edict of the Duke of Arcos laying an impost upon all fruits coming into the capital. Then the fire that smoul-

dered in every bosom broke forth with terrible fury. A bright spirit appeared, as always happens at such times, to guide the march of events, in the person of a beggared fisherman. Masaniello, issuing with his band of revellers from the Street of Sighs, upset the taxed fruit stalls in the market-place, shouting aloud that whilst God had sent the people of Naples abundance, the Spaniards snatched it from their mouths.

The course of that insurrection has been too often described to require detailed mention here. In a few hours the Viceroy, driven from his palace, was compelled to take refuge in the castle of Saint Elmo. There, surrounded by his Spanish and German guards, he sat down confused and terrified, leaving the city in the hands of a mob, commanded by a fisherman scarcely twenty-three years old. And gloriously did that captain of the people exercise the powers committed to him.

* * * * *

The bold measures which, long brewing, were appointed to be carried out on the day of our Lady of Carmel had been bruited abroad even to Amalfi. Before the event men spoke fearfully of the odds against them, of the difficulty of

contending with disciplined troops, and all the terrible penalties of treason. But to this cowardly state of feeling succeeded one of enthusiasm, amounting almost to frenzy, when they heard what had taken place on the memorable day of the revolt. Fame, as usual, magnified the success of the popular party, and hope bade the most timid believe.

Salvatore had obeyed the gipsy's directions to the letter. With a heart fiercely agitated by contending passions, he had walked the whole of that night, toiling over the rugged paths that skirted lofty Sant' Angelo, and hurrying breathlessly along the highroad leading from Castellamare to the capital. By downright fatigue of body, he strove to forget the distraction of his mind; and, besides, he attached a superstitious importance to seeing the sun rise from the market-place of Naples.

The sign communicated by the Zingara to the young man won for him a few minutes' conversation with the master-mind that controlled the course of events; and Masaniello, noting with his eagle-glance the spirit of his new follower, and prepossessed in his favour by the circumstance of a common birth-place, at once attached him to his person. The Captain, how-

ever, frowned when Salvatore, too eager to withhold anything till its proper time, poured into his ears the tale of his hopes.

"It is thy bleeding country that claims thy care at this moment. When her wounds are bound up, then it will be time to wander through the city in search of thy noble parents," said Masaniello, who had little respect for the class that was fated to betray him.

During the eventful week that followed the festival, Salvatore was ever by his leader's side, and he forgot himself in his admiration of the high intelligence and the wonderful capacity manifested by his brother fisherman. Masaniello's was indeed a character likely to impress the least enthusiastic. Firm, yet merciful withal; severe, at the same time inflexibly just; animated by no party-spirit; disinterested, therefore, as unambitious; he appeared created to rule his kind. All admired his beauty, his lofty stature, and noble air. All listened mute with rapture to his natural and nervous eloquence. And all were excited to courage by the dauntless bearing, which ever displayed itself most conspicuously at seasons of the greatest danger.

Salvatore accompanied his Captain when, at

the head of his 150,000 men, he demanded from the trembling Viceroy the abolition of the gabelles, and the restoration of the people to their ancient franchises. He sat with him during the day as, unarmed, from the open casement of his home, he issued the urgent orders of the hour, and he accompanied him at night to his mysterious council in the watch-tower of Carmine. In the morning, when the chief, escaping from the sultry confines of Naples, hurried to cool his burning brain beneath the familiar waves of the bay, he always chose his young compatriot to accompany him. And, finally, in the two pitched battles won by the fisherman's recruits from the Spanish and German veterans, Salvatore was wounded, and so distinguished himself amongst the distinguished that, contrary to the constitution of the company, he was permitted to enroll his name in the patriotic "Band of Death."

At length occurred the terrible event which, by parting for ever the aristocracy and the people, secured the defeat of the patriot movement and the triumph of tyranny. The Viceroy, beaten in the field, and foiled in the cabinet, determined to accomplish by crime

that which neither fraud nor force could win for him.

Naples abandoned itself to universal joy when it was known that the Duke of Arcos had at last consented to abolish the taxes, and to restore the royal charters. Thousands flocked from all parts of the city and country towards the Church of the Carmelites, at whose altar the Cardinal Filomarini was to read out the treaty of peace which would bring back confidence to the governors, and comfort to the governed. Great preparations had been made for the ceremony. Canopies were erected at the corners of the streets, and under them were hung portraits of the King; triumphal arches spanned the gently ascending street, which was strewed with flowers, the produce of a thousand gardens. The rich, the noble, and the beautiful, clad in festal gear, crowded the balconies of the palaces; and from every window were suspended carpets and hangings of the liveliest colours.

Hotly burned the sun; the bells rang loud in their turrets; and slowly the procession, announced by music and singing, moved over the flower-clothed pavement. Boys in snowy stoles swung silver censers before the host;

a bevy of fair girls followed them, bearing garlands and branches in their hands; and behind this avant-guard was a host of angels—young children with wings on their naked shoulders—singing hymns. In the middle rank of the procession advanced the Cardinal in his silver mantle, under a canopy of velvet and gold; on his right hand, with uncovered head, and face bent reverentially downwards, still dressed in the rude garb of his class, walked the noble form of Masaniello. Next to them came priests and monks of various orders, bearing lighted tapers, and in the rear moved an immense crowd of every sex, age, and condition, each person clad in his peculiar national costume, and all in full holiday attire.

At the door of the church the Cardinal and the Captain parted for some minutes—the former to prepare for the sacred functions he was about to perform, the latter to address a few words to the people upon the subject of the ceremony they were collected to witness. Masaniello lingered over his speech, which generally was brief and pithy, for his quick glance had detected, mingled in the crowd, men of unknown faces, and suspicious carriage; and he made use of the opportunity to collect round

him a few friends and companions, in whose judgment he had the greatest trust.

Oh, fatal ardour, and confidence of youth! Salvatore, whose opinion, the last consulted, cast the votes of the little council, saw nothing in those men but armed wanderers from the Abruzzi highlands, who came to witness the triumph of their nation's cause.

Still Masaniello, who had recognised among the crowd a well-known captain of bandits, hesitated to turn the angle of the silent cloisters, when Salvatore, springing from his side, placed the first foot upon the marble pavement. At that moment the loud voice of an arquebuss rang through the columns, and the youth fell apparently lifeless to the ground.

The word "Traitors!" had scarcely escaped Masaniello's lips, when the single shot was followed by a discharge of firearms. A fierce cry of "Masaniello is assasinated!" "Down with the bandits!" mingled with the shrieks of the wounded, and the shouts of the terrified people re-echoing through the church, was heard in the market-place. Then arose a chorus of savage yells: men, with knives flashing in their hands, rushed to avenge the murder of their chief; women screaming and execrating

with sharp, loud, volleyed voices, tore their hair, and ran to the church biting their fingers; the very children hastened to wet their little weapons with blood. The assassins were knived upon the steps of the altar, in the nave of the building, and in the cloisters: before a minute had elapsed, one hundred and fifty of the bandits fell victims to the frantic revenge of the multitude.

Masaniello, having calmly directed his wounded follower to be carried home, once more appeared to address the people; when, from the crowd arose the cry—"A miracle!—a miracle! all honour to our Lady of Carmine!"

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The Zingara's emotion, when Salvatore left her to set out upon his perilous expedition, was too short-lived to make her faithful to her promise. On her way from the crag where the meeting had taken place, to her tent, close by the village, the old woman was accosted by several peasants, who refused to let her pass until she had told them all their present circumstances, and their future destinies. It was late in the evening when she reached Amalfi;

her aged limbs were weary, and she felt more disposed to lay her down and take her rest than to visit Pietro's or Mariano's cottage. Early the next morning she was to leave the shores of Salerno and set out upon a long expedition in search of other recruits, but that was an additional reason for her requiring repose. "They will but know it a little later, and a few more tears will, perhaps, be shed," reasoned the old woman, with the selfishness of her age and occupation. So she departed without bestowing a thought upon the anxiety, the terror, and the grief she left behind her.

The evil influence cast by the demon, Temper, upon the elders of both households, was at once dispelled by the overpowering force of real affliction. The resentful memory of offences given or received vanished like a dream from their minds. Each turned in thought for support and consolation to the other, the moment that support and consolation were required. Pietro accused himself of having been the first to commence the quarrel by a want of consideration for his friend's feelings. And now he could not allow another sun to go down upon an estrangement in which, until the present moment, he had rather taken credit to

himself, as men will do when they are in the wrong.

After searching for some time, Pietro found Mariano working in his vineyard. In a moment the pruning knife dropped from the husbandman's hands, and before a word had been uttered, the friends were clasped in each other's arms; they were kissing with tears first one sunburnt cheek and then the other. A short explanation then followed, now readily understood, a few excuses received with indulgence, and at last a complete reconciliation.

In the mean time, a scene of the same description took place between Gioconda and Angiolina. The hearts of the whole party were lightened of at least half the insupportable load that weighed upon them. Enough, however, remained to bend their feeble spirits to the earth; for the child of their adoption—of their love—their pride: where could their tardy repentance find him? In vain they strove to silence the voice of the inward monitor. That voice *would* tell them that they had acted unkindly—harshly—towards him who, as a helpless babe, had been committed to their fostering care. Their remorse was mingled with a thousand distracting fears for the absent one's

safety. Thus, a tide of tenderness welled afresh from hearts which for years had been gradually hardening towards him. Recollections of his lovely infancy and innocent childhood crowded painfully upon their minds; they felt as if they would have departed in peace could they but have seen him and blessed him once more.

Mariano's self-reproaches, in particular, were as incessant as his inquiries and researches. He could not bear the sight of his daughter's uncontrollable grief, nor did he dare to deny to himself that his ebullition of rage had been the principal cause of Salvatore's disappearance.

A week passed away in ceaseless uncertainty, anxiety, and heaviness of spirit. But the day after it had ended, as Pietro was returning home for his noontide meal, an old acquaintance amongst the smugglers placed a folded paper with a smile in his trembling hands.

"A letter, a letter, wife!" exclaimed the old man, rushing into his cottage. "San Gennaro the holiest be praised! he cannot be dead, since he writes to his old father and mother. Who else but our boy would trouble himself to send a letter to thee or to me?"

The old couple, their eyes swimming with

tears, and scarcely able to support themselves for agitation, yet resolved to carry their prize to Mariano's house, that they who had shared their sorrow should likewise participate in their joy.

Of course not one of them could read, so they all determined to take the precious letter to the scribe, who plied his trade in the narrow lane behind the principal square of Amalfi.

That important personage was busily engaged when the party drew near his wooden table. A middle-aged, weather-beaten man was seated upon the three-legged stool under the awning of sail-cloth close to the letter-writer, leaning on both his elbows, and keeping his dark eyes intently fixed upon the old man's sagacious face as he read in a distinct, though monotonous tone of voice, a letter from an absent sailor son. Two or three peasant girls and one old woman stood by, and many exclamations of sympathy were uttered by the little group when an endearing appellation, a tale of danger, or a promise of speedy return, called forth an ejaculation of "Oh, my soul! The Madonna protect thee! and send thee back in safety to thy father's arms!" from the parent.

Almost breathless as Pietro and his companions were with impatience, the claims of the earliest comers had first to be satisfied. They listened, however, with interest to the letter from the young sailor—for there was a bond of union, arising from similarity of circumstances between them,—and they looked with envy at the delighted father, down whose rugged cheeks the tears of joy were coursing one another. He rose at length, and went away; and then the peasant girls advanced, each in her turn, to hear two or three missives from the most ordinary of sweethearts, couched in the high-flown and mechanical language of the profession. Right glad were Salvatore's and Lucia's parents when the customers, one by one, went away, and the letter was at last laid before the old scrivenor.

Pietro, as the father, took possession of the seat nearest to the writer. Lucia threw herself on her knees on the ground at his left hand; her lovely face—so earnest and tender it made one's heart melt to look at it—turned towards heaven in gratitude and hope. And the rest of the party stationed themselves exactly opposite the scribe. The old man adjusted his spectacles on his high thin nose,

mended a pen with a knife almost as big as a razor in case of an immediate answer being necessary, hummed twice or thrice, stroked his long white beard, and broke the seal of the precious missive with all due solemnity.

"There is something for thee, my pretty maiden!" premised the scrivano, as an enclosed billet fell out of the paper he held in his hand. "But listen first with holy patience to this one, and then thy turn will come."

Lucia seized her prize, and pressed it to her lips and heart. But she did not withdraw her eyes from the old man's face until her ears had drunk in every word of the letter, with which Salvatore had sought to calm his adopted parents' fears. He concealed from them there was any danger connected with his enterprise; merely assured them of his health and safety, and promised them to return home as quickly as he could. He did not tell them upon what errand he was gone, and he concluded by asking their blessing and their pardon for the many indiscretions of his youth.

Amidst tears, not wholly of sorrow, the old people granted aloud a forgiveness which poor Salvatore could not hear. Then came the note addressed to Lucia. She listened to it with a

heaving bosom, her face concealed with both her hands. Last of all there was the united answer to be written. It consisted of only a few sentences. But those few took a long time in dictating; for the periods had to be carefully counted on their fingers, and after they had been counted, they required to be written out afresh. None appeared affectionate enough or sufficiently easy of comprehension. At length, however, the affair was concluded to the satisfaction of all, and after giving his due to the scrivano, the two families, with light and happy hearts, wended their way homewards.

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And where was he to whom the letter was addressed? Lying helpless as a young child upon the bed of pain.

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Their state of recovered peace and serenity ill prepared the inhabitants of the two cottages for the doom impending over them. They revelled after the coming of the glad tidings in the most confident hopes of the wanderer's return. Every morning one had to recount that in a dream of the past night he or she had

clasped the lost son to a yearning bosom, and every evening they expected the vision to be realised.

But time went on, and tidings came not. Pietro, by dint of perpetually interrogating the smugglers, had found out from them what at first they had carefully concealed, namely, that his foster-son had taken a prominent and glorious part in the events which had agitated the capital.

The intelligence aroused the two families from the state of security into which they had been lulled by Salvatore's letter, and their grief now broke out afresh; they all thought more of the dangers to which he must be exposed than the glory of the enterprise in which he was engaged. The ray of hope and comfort faded —it was succeeded by a deeper gloom: and ere long anxiety and suspense again took full possession of their souls. Lucia became so miserable, so utterly wretched, that her parents turned away with aching hearts whenever they looked upon her altered face. Alternately excited and depressed, sleep almost entirely forsook her frame. During the hours of darkness an agony of fear seemed to overpower her faculties. Under its influence she was roused

to unnatural energy; but when the light and bustle of day succeeded to the oppressive stillness of night, an equally violent reaction took place. Then her eyes would fill with tears, her mind succumb to attacks of reverie, and she would start at the sudden opening of a door as if a sudden discharge of fire-arms had affrighted her.

The elders held many serious conferences as to the means of obtaining some decided information about the absent Salvatore. During one of them it was proposed that Pietro should go himself to Naples to seek his son. It would not be difficult, they concluded, to discover some traces of one who had taken a prominent part in the late glorious events; and, surely, when found, he could not resist his foster-father's entreaties and commands.

Pietro did not, however, at once carry out the proposed project. He still waited for a few days, in the hope of hearing some tidings that would prevent his departure. Every morning, noontide, and evening, he went down to the beach, for the purpose of gathering the latest news from the groups that were mending their nets, or embarking and disembarking upon the strand. Many of their reports were so exag-

gerated as scarcely to retain any traces of truth; for the fishermen of Amalfi were in the habit of building largely upon slender foundations of fact, laid by their brethren on the Molo at Naples, or by the smugglers who exercised their craft on the neighbouring coasts.

One morning, the old man was received by them with grave looks and frequent whispers. At first they would not answer his questions, but soon they yielded—what man ever could long resist the strange inclination to spread tidings of evil? They entered into the fullest details of the accident; they told the atrocious deed which had desecrated the house of God; they related how the wounded man had been carried to the captain's hovel; they even described the manner and mode of his death, from a report which had arisen merely in consequence of his precarious condition. The unhappy father—for father he would call himself—could scarcely comprehend the words that were spoken to him. Salvatore—his son—killed! It was impossible. The Lord could not thus causelessly have smitten him so terrible a blow. Without a word to his weeping family—the two families were now one, united by the strong bands of love and misfortune—

Pietro set out upon his journey. Much has often been said that is not true.

This one hope remained.

Scarcely, however, did the fisherman reach Naples when he was addressed by the smuggler who had, some days before, been the bearer of Salvatore's letter. His first words were to advise the old man not to waste his time there, but to go home, and to comfort his family, for he whom he sought was no more on earth.

Still, the unfortunate father's cup of misery was not full. After retracing his weary way homewards, he had yet to bear the sight of the care-worn, haggard faces that awaited him. He could not utter a word, even in reply, when Lucia—the first—bade him speak and say when Salvatore would return.

It was impossible to make the unhappy girl believe that the companion of her childhood was dead. He was her life, her all—without whom the world was a chaos, a thousand times more dreadful than all the horrors of the grave. Had she been able to accompany Pietro in his search, her spirit would have forgotten, in forced exertion, a portion of its intolerable burthen. But now, enfeebled by days and

nights of agonized uncertainty, perpetually reminded of one idea by the familiar scenes around her, and endowed with all the excitability peculiar to her race, in the struggle between horrible certainty and the incredulity of hope, her mind gave way.

On the evening of one day, Lucia retired, but not to rest. As the morrow dawned, she arose—a maniac. Nought of coherence in her words remained: only she felt assured, she said, that her lover had been shot—she had seen it in a vision.

* * * *

It was a dread night upon the waters. A moonless sky, covered with a dense veil of clouds, overhung the sea, catching here and there, from the ragged edge of yeasty foam that flashed over the deep dark pits whence the billows appeared to spring, a dim and lurid light, which shewed fragments of mist careering wildly, like unwieldy monsters, over the expanse of the lower firmament. The furious blasts of warm Sirocco came and went, growing on the ear as though they would deafen it with their howlings; and when they departed for a while, presently to return with increased violence, the

breakers and rollers tumbling heavily upon the rattling shingles, awoke crashing echoes amidst the caverned crags and rocky hills. Even where the cliffs rose highest and steepest, flakes of foam and showers of thick spray were hurled over their topmost brows; and the fruit trees, that grew luxuriantly upon the verge of the fertile land, were torn up by the roots, and dashed with shattered boughs to the ground.

Many a mother, and wife, and sister, slept not the length of that fearful night. They had dear ones out upon the waters: to them the roaring of the hurricane sounded as its wail over the work of destruction it had done. So, till long after midnight, lights might be seen moving in the fishermen's homes, whilst cries of terror, or entreaties for mercy, resounded from within. Some few had hurried down to the sands, where they stood, heedless of wind and rain, tearing their hair with wild gesticulations, and screaming aloud, as each furious blast ploughed with deeper furrows the rough bosom of the main.

Scarcely had Pietro and his dame applied themselves to the vain effort of sleeping, when the cottage door opened, suddenly as if the wind had forced it in, and a strange figure,

covered with a blanket, appeared, staggering like a drunken man, into the room. Almost before the old fisherman could rise to meet him, the unexpected visitor fell back upon a bench against the wall, and the covering slipping from his head, disclosed to the foster-father the features of his lost son.

They were the features—but how changed! Nothing but the idea of them remained. The outlines were pinched and sharpened, as if touched by the hard hand of famine, and each lineament was drawn till it had well nigh lost its former shape. The bright brown hue of health had disappeared; the brow was ghastly white, except where a sabre cut, but half healed, shewed upon it; and dripping masses of ebon hair hung in lank elf locks round cheeks now wan and sunken as those of a dying man; and the large black eyes, in which the spirit's fire used to sparkle, were dim and glassy—you had almost said, to look at them, that their life had departed to return no more.

"It is his wraith!—it is his wraith!—holy Virgin preserve us!" shrieked old Gioconda, as she saw the face, making horns at it with her fingers. "Approach him not, Pietro, man! he is dead!" And, half frantic with fear, she

seized her husband's arm with both hands as he sprang up from the bed.

"Peace, woman!" cried the old man, after a moment's hesitation. He could not doubt the evidence of his senses; so he disengaged himself roughly from his wife's grasp, saying,— "Seest thou not it is our son? Shut the door quickly! My boy, my poor boy, is it thus thou returnest to us? Yet blessed be the Virgin that thou are still in life!"

And so saying, Pietro ran up to the youth and folded him in his arms, with a yearning heart, kissing his pale forehead, and affectionately brushing away the wet hair from his cheeks. In the mean time, Gioconda, who had somewhat recovered from her fright, tottered towards her son, and, with tears and sobs, hung upon his shoulders, lavishing a hundred caresses, interrupted by frequent exclamations, and anxious questionings.

"Shut the door, dear mother," said Salvatore, in a voice as changed as were his features. "The wind blows through me. I am faint—faint. And the sbirri are on my track: tomorrow I die a shameful death."

Gioconda could do nothing when she heard these words, but shriek and wring her hands,

whilst her husband, leaning his son's back tenderly against the wall, went to the farther end of the room, to fetch him a draught of wine from one of the flasks that filled the cupboard.

Twice or thrice, though supported by his mother, the young man's head drooped towards his shoulder as if strength and sense were abandoning him. But he recovered himself with a last effort, and rose upright, though unsteadily, upon his feet.

"I must fly again, mother. But before I go, tell me about Lucia: where is she?"

"Lucia!" cried the mother, in her bewilderment. "Hast thou not heard? She is mad!"

At the word, a shriek left the young man's lips, and he fell heavily to the ground, motionless and lifeless.

"What hast thou done, woman? Thou hast killed our son! thou hast murdered him!" cried Pietro, pushing away his wife, who, with a fresh outburst of grief, was about to throw herself upon the youth's prostrate form. "Leave him to me. Make two jumps to the hill, and in God's name bid Mariano hasten here. Say nothing to the women. Heed not the storm—hurry! hurry! So may the Madonna have mercy upon thee for what thou hast done!"

Gioconda did mechanically as her husband told her to do. As soon as she left the cottage, he raised the youth tenderly, and placing him upon the bed, began to chafe the cold feet and clammy hands, to blow into the nostrils, and to knead the nerveless limbs, as often before, in the course of a stormy life, he had done to a drowned comrade. And he redoubled his efforts when he felt a faint breath upon his cheek, though his fingers trembled, and his heart beat loudly. He still hoped to save his son alive.

Mariano lost no time, despite the terrors of the weather, in repairing to his neighbour's cottage. Before dawn broke, as the storm had abated something of its violence, they carried Salvatore to a cave in the rocks upon the hill-top, close behind the town, taking especial care that no curious eye fell upon them. The youth had recovered from his fainting fit, but he was helpless as a young child, with hardship, hunger, and loss of blood, to which was added the shock caused by the dreadful intelligence suddenly communicated to him by his mother.

For nearly a fortnight Salvatore lay in the cave balancing between life and death. He was always attended by some one of the two

families—more than a single person seldom remaining with him, as the search for the ringleaders of the rebels was strict in the extreme, and the discovery of a harboured traitor would, at that time, have drawn down inevitable destruction upon the heads of all around him. The simple remedies, and the tender cares of his relatives, were not without producing their effect; but his nurses' ignorance of the healing art made them mistake for signs of returning health and strength the bright spots that lit up the sufferer's wasted cheeks, and the fire that once more burned in his hollow eyes.

Mariano had never alluded before Salvatore to the fatal cause of the disaster that had fallen upon his house, and he rarely spoke of his daughter's state except when the subject was forced upon him. Pietro was more communicative, and his wife, questioned on all occasions when she sat alone with her son, related to him, without omitting a single particular, the details of Lucia's accident.

These the young man heard at first with apathy, then with a feverish anxiety, which all the repeated consolations of his friends and their hopeful auguries of happiness still in store for him and his, were unable to allay. As he

felt himself growing stronger, the life of a hunted bandit weighed heavily upon his spirits: in his impatience he preferred even death to the wearing imprisonment he was undergoing. His mind filled with the gloomiest thoughts. He despaired, after the prominent part he had taken against the vindictive race that enslaved his native land, of being included in any amnesty which their policy might dictate, and the treacherous murder of the great chief taught him the small amount of reliance to be placed upon their wily show of clemency.

Had it not been for Lucia and his cherished hopes and aim of existence—still cherished silently and secretly, in spite of unsuccess: perhaps for that reason only the more lovingly—he would have given himself up into their hands. But Pietro found that one beloved word acted as a spell upon his son's fiery spirit. Even in his most irritable and peevish mood, when life seemed a burden to him, the world a blank, and mankind a band of enemies, the foster-father had only to pronouce the name of Lucia. More than once, as Salvatore, losing all control over himself, rose up to quit the cave, swearing that at every risk he would see her, and judge of her state for himself before

he died. Pietro's representations that the step would infallibly destroy them both, made him throw himself groaning upon his rude bed.

At length it came to be debated in the two families whether, as the young man so ardently longed for the sight of his mistress, it would not be better to bring her one evening to the cave among the rocks. Upon this subject the opinions of the relatives differed greatly. Mariano and Pietro agreed in thinking the step to be a dangerous one, that would expose them to a new risk, as a person out of her senses could not be answerable for her words: besides, they doubted that any good would come of it. And they thought it wiser to wait a few days, and to see whether the free pardon, of which every one was speaking, would or would not arrive. But they were opposed by their wives, who backed their own opinions with a warmth produced by the conviction that the young man could not recover while such a load lay upon his heart, and a firm hope that the sight of Salvatore would cause a favourable turn in the girl's distressing complaint.

When the husbands at last yielded to the importunities of their wives, there arose another knotty subject of consideration. It was pro-

bable that Lucia would fail to recognise her lover, especially as she was persuaded that he had been killed. They had tried again and again to convince her of her mistake, but with the wariness, the cunning, and the groundless suspiciousness of her disease, she had shewn a firm resolve not to trust their words, although, at times, she pretended to do so. Perhaps, however, the testimony of her eyes might force her to believe. Yet, as they looked at Salvatore, and strove to remember what he had been, and owned to themselves with fluttering hearts what he was, they sadly doubted of success. But the main difficulty lay in this;—how to ward off the blow which such a scene would deal to the young man. For in his ignorance of the complaint, he never seemed to think it possible that the sufferer could have forgotten him. And although he had been repeatedly told that she mourned him as dead, he never doubted that, seeing him alive, her mind would shake off its delusion. His friends were unable to convince him that this might possibly not happen.

After much debating, the wives resolved that Salvatore should be prepared for what might occur, and that as they had done all for the best

the issue of their endeavours should be confided to the tender care of the Madonna. And to enlist her sympathy in their cause, they applied themselves with sanguine spirits to sundry devotional acts which it were needless to describe.

As the moon rose beautifully over the distant hills, and poured her soft light through the azure air upon the sleeping waters of the gulf, and the purple shadows that clothed the objects of earth, Lucia, attended by her father and mother, walked towards the cave. They had allured her by some artful pretext from her favourite seat upon the hill-side, the spot consecrated by the memories of happier days, and with eager anxiety they hurried her steps, hoping fearfully for the good result of their scheme.

At the entrance of the cave they were met by Pietro, whose countenance also expressed unusual anxiety. The girl no sooner caught sight of him than she left her parents' side, and drawing near to him, took his hand in hers, looking fixedly in his face with tearless eyes. She marked his agitation, and mistook it for the effects of her one thought—the mourner's sorrow for the dead.

He led her into the cave.

At the farther end, upon a heap of canvass sacks, stuffed with straw and covered with a sailor's blanket, sat Salvatore, that day unusually weak and ill. A pine torch, fixed against the rock, and flaring in the cool night breeze, poured a stream of ruddy light through the cave, making his wan face and wasted figure appear doubly pale and emaciated. He had been perspiring profusely, but he insisted upon sitting up; so they had covered him to the neck with blankets, and had drawn his crimson woollen cap low down over his forehead. This, however, he presently threw off, as his brow burned with fever, and he shook back from his face the long black curls which annoyed him by hanging against his cheeks.

His mother, who was kneeling close by the side of his bed with a cup of water in her hand, arose as the girl entered the cave, and went hurriedly to meet her, saying, "There he is!"

"He? Who?" asked Lucia, gazing steadfastly, but hesitating for a moment to approach the bed.

"My son—thy lover—Salvatore: thine affianced husband!"

The maiden turned a look of scorn upon the

speaker so intense, so fierce, that she hid her face in her hands.

"THAT poor wretch Salvatore!" she exclaimed, after a short pause of silence. "Let me see if he also dares tell me such a lie!"

And she walked close up to the bed.

The young man bent his eyes upon her as she approached and stooped down to look him full in the face. He trembled violently with emotion; beads of sweat stood thick upon his brow; and his hands and arms moved convulsively beneath the blanket. He longed to throw them round her neck—to clasp her to his bosom—but there was a something in her glance which repelled him—something which he felt but could not understand. The fierce look of anger soon left her features, which fixed rigidly as a statue's; not a shadow of a frown appeared upon her broad clear brow, and her lips were motionless as if carved in marble. But still the strange expression settled in her eyes. If the dead could walk, and speak, and see, such would be their dark soulless glance.

"Lucia, Lucia!" cried the unhappy youth, at length, gazing at her with eyes full of scalding tears. And almost before the words left his lips he lost all self-command; he burst into

a broken sob, and threw himself with his face downwards upon the bed, writhing with the torture of the heart.

"That poor wretch Salvatore!" said the maiden, turning towards the others, and pointing disdainfully at her lover. "Did any of ye ever see Salvatore weeping like a woman? The bravest of the brave—the beautiful!—the—"

They drew near to her, scarcely knowing what to do. But she repulsed them angrily, and continued:—

"Ye are all in league against me! You would make me forget him—him that died that terrible death for my sake. Thou, my father, art his murderer, and wast thou not, O mother, a 'complice to the deed? And now ye would cheat my heart of its sorrow, telling me that he is alive, and palming off that poor creature upon me in the room of him I have lost for ever."

She paused for a moment, and her countenance fearfully changed.

"May my soul never know happiness if I forget him—so Holy Virgin lend me thine aid!

"I see him now in his last hour. He stands by his chief before the altar of God. He is calm; he expects no danger there. The

traitors are creeping through the cloisters. They level their weapons. Save him! Save him, good Lord! An instant, Salvatore, I come to defend thee!"

The paroxysm had reached its height: in her madness the unhappy girl flew at the by-standers, and would have torn or struck them, but they fled precipitately from the cave.

Then she hurried home, looking neither to the right nor to the left, but running as though she were on an urgent errand. Her father and mother followed her terror-stricken, leaving Pietro and Gioconda to console their son as they best could.

These crises were of rare occurrence, and as they seldom assumed a violent form, it was not judged necessary to put any restraint upon the sufferer's movements, or in any way to control her inclinations. Her parents left her to pass her days in wandering over the hill-side from place to place, and resting wherever the spot had any attraction for her: she came home when she pleased, and was allowed to converse freely with those of her companions who still clung to her. They were not many in number. The greater part of her friends avoided her; for though the insane are sacred in southern

countries, yet few there are that feel not awe and terror in their presence. The parents found it easier than they expected to explain away any chance word which she dropped when alluding, as she did at times, to the scene in the cave. Besides, in those troublous times, men's minds were too anxious and preoccupied with their own interests to store up and debate over the scraps of village gossip which usually engrossed their attention.

The favourable consequences of this skilful treatment—for skilful it was in nature's kindly art—soon became apparent in Lucia's case. Instead of sinking into hopeless idiocy or exalting itself to a state of dangerous mania, her mind, subjected to the slow, sure influence of time, partially recovered its original tone, suffering from little but the languor and melancholy, which might be expected to follow so terrible a prostration of its faculties. She shed tears more frequently when visiting the places she had loved; the marks of affection which her parents lavished upon her, became supportable and even welcome to her; and in her dreams she ceased to see her lover's form lying bleeding upon the earth, or descending as an angel from heaven to fill her spirit with sweet

poison. Possibly in consequence of hearing Salvatore's name so frequently pronounced in her presence without any of the sorrow or solemnity which usually accompany mention of the dead, she began to remember words relating to him, and to think more seriously of facts which in the earlier part of her illness she had set aside as mere fictions. And when, having missed from the cottage, as she did after a time, the familiar faces of Pietro and his wife, in answer to her inquiries she was told that they had left Amalfi, the fresh shock of the intelligence, and the curiosity which accompanied it, almost restored her to her former self.

Meanwhile the young man, finding the confinement of the cave no longer supportable, had resolved to leave it. It was proposed to him to take refuge in some part of the Highlands—the Great Rock of Italy, for instance—amongst whose fastnesses, protected by a brave and honourable race, he might remain in security till the cloud which hung over his fortunes had dispersed. But he would lend no ear to this plan. Though he avoided all mention of the hapless Lucia, he still clung fondly to the hope that she was not lost to him for ever. He loved the sweet face of his native land, where

heaven is bright, and earth is beautiful, and all it bears, save man only, is pure, and lovely, and good. His heart sank at the thought of sojourn in another country, amongst a people whose speech, manners, and life, were strange and comfortless to him. Besides, he still cherished the ambitious object which the words of the old woman had presented to his fancy—a presentiment that the gloom which veiled his birth would be dispelled, and that the sun of prosperity would emerge, to rain glad light upon the landscape of his future days.

Pietro attempted not to conceal from himself or his son, that his removal from the cave would almost inevitably disclose to strangers a secret which he had guarded with religious care, even from Don Tommaso the priest. But when he saw how irksome that mode of life was to the youth, and reflected upon its probable effect in retarding his cure—his form was wasting every day, and the cold breath of the mountains at eventide seemed to pierce through him—he resolved to risk the lesser, in order to ward off the greater, danger. He still had many friends amongst the great smugglers, and the word *pescatore,* though execrated at Naples by the fickle population—who looked on cold-bloodedly

whilst the partizans of Spain dragged through the streets of Naples, and threw into a ditch, the body of him whom a few days before they had almost worshipped—was still popular in the country. With friends amongst the smugglers, he could rely upon the assistance of stout hearts and strong arms, and thus he could the better front the risk of meeting with a traitor. And he had become in some degree habituated to a danger, the thought of which at first made his heart sink within him—custom makes us feel secure even in the midst of insecurity.

So one night, with the assistance of Mariano, the sturdy old fisherman supported his son down to the beach, where the dingy of his smack lay, and with willing arms they plied their clumsy heavy oars towards the landing-place at the foot of the Sorrentine ridge. His wife accompanied him. They were escorted by the well-armed contrabandists, driving their sure-footed mules, heavily laden with forbidden goods, up the flinty and precipitous paths that led from that side of the coast to the plain on the other; and the enthusiasm with which the young man was greeted by all his escort—their execrations of the tyrants, and their fierce oaths to defend him with limb and life against any attempt

upon him—served to raise the spirits of the old pair, who could not help feeling deeply dejected, as a wall of crag, jutting into the sea, shut out from their moistened eyes the haunts of their childhood, the homes of their youth, and, as they dearly hoped, the refuge and resting-place of their old age.

In those days, the villages of the Sorrentine fishermen were generally built over the harbours—strips of sand running into the steep tufo cliff where a deep narrow rift had been cut out, apparently by the mining action of the waters. But Pietro, wisely judging that these clusters of huts were dangerous, preferred a little cottage in the plain above the rocks, offered to him by his friend the corporal of the smugglers. It lay at the extremity of a large orchard, full of vines, olive, orange, and lemon trees, with clumps of tufted ilex and ragged elms which partially concealed it from view. And amongst many other advantages it almost hung over the edge of a deep narrow cleft or ravine, down whose precipitous side ran a rude flight of steps hewn in the limestone, leading to a large cavity hollowed out of the midway rock by unknown hands, probably the smugglers of a former generation. Below, the path be-

coming narrower and more dangerous descended to the sea, which thereabouts plashed against the tufo, wearing it into a hundred holes, which likewise could serve as a hiding-place in case of need. Pietro's friend, in his eagerness to oblige him, pressed the point so strongly, and was so well supported by the voices of his company, that the old fisherman accepted the offer with gratitude, and conveyed into the ruinous walls the little stock of furniture and necessaries, with which he had thought proper to encumber their journey. After doing every thing he could to improve the dilapidated state of his new abode, he sat down there with his wife and son, quietly waiting the events in store for him.

After a time, Mariano, who frequently stole a night from rest and walked over the mountains to visit his friends, brought such favourable tidings of Lucia that the hopes of all began to revive. Again it came to be debated whether it might not be better for both the lovers to meet. The young man, after a brief hesitation of fear, embraced the idea with ardour, for though he never spoke upon the subject of his health, he felt that every day was bringing him nearer and nearer to the grave. And as the

fathers on this occasion offered little or no opposition, the mothers arranged the meeting without much difficulty, though not without long debate.

The soft gleaming hue of dawn had melted away from the firmament, and in the exceeding splendour of daylight the stars had disappeared one by one, as vivid flashes streamed over the expanse of heaven.

Nature awoke from her profound repose, and a hum of gladness hailed the return of the hours of life.

Two figures were seen to thread the alleys which, parting the dripping masses of orange trees, led to the fisherman's cottage.

As Mariano drew near, he caught sight of the old couple, seated upon the wooden bench at the cottage-door, facing the olive grove. Their son was between them; but whilst the dame plied her distaff busily, and her husband, bending forward, propped his head on his hands, supported by his staff, the youth leaned feebly backwards against the wall. He was this time dressed in the garb of a fisherman—the white linen jacket, short trousers, red sash, and common cap—but Mariano's heart sank within him as he saw the figure attired once more in

the old familiar costume. He turned away to look at some indifferent object, for he could not bear the sight. But his daughter, trembling in every limb, and with a face pale as ashes, having recognised her lover, ran up to him, and fell upon her knees before him, throwing her arms round his neck.

The flush left Salvatore's cheek as he leaned forward, and strove to raise her from her knees.

His mother laid her distaff aside hurriedly, and as hastily Pietro arose from his seat, and stood up, looking at the pair with quivering features. He was not wont to weep, but now the tears flowed plentifully down the old man's furrowed face.

The girl rose, as she felt her lover endeavouring to raise her. After a minute or two she sat down upon the bench, still with one arm round his neck. With the other hand she pressed her brow forcibly; her thoughts were confused by what she saw.

"My Salvatore, my Salvatore! was it a dream, *then*, or is this the dream?"

And she looked wistfully in his face. Could a few short weeks have made him such a different being?

"Ah, no! it is no dream, thine eyes tell me

so," she resumed, when he returned her look, as if he would drink in from it the draught of life. "But what ails thee? Thy cheek is white as the snow on Mont Angelo; and thy features——"

Here she fell into an agony of grief.

"Listen, my heart, my idol!"—said Salvatore, who had clasped her to his bosom, and was endeavouring, by the fondest caresses, to restore her calmness.

—"I have suffered—how much, the Lord only knows! but by the mercy of the blessed Virgin, I am alive now, and well. At least, better," he added, for his heart ached when he said he was well.

The bitterness of one brief parting was upon his tongue: how terrible to look upon, at that moment, was the deep dark gulf which he felt was soon to yawn between them!

How the words of the old ballad sounded in his ears,—

> "We meet—but upon a crowded highway,
> Where go I? and, alas! where goest thou?"

It was not that he feared death. But thus—with a frame full of life, and with a heart full of hope—it was so hard to die!

At length Lucia managed to restrain her

tears, whose flow had somewhat cleared up the confusion of her brain. But still speechless with emotion, she signed to her lover to continue speaking.

"We must not tire him, girl: he is still weak, and thou seest his wounds are scarcely healed; although, as he says, he is better than when thou didst see him last," interposed Pietro.

"Then they did not deceive me," exclaimed the girl: "it was thyself, Salvatore, and no impostor in the cave! Poor heart, how thou must have suffered! And I, too, have suffered. They told me thou wast dead, and a cloud descended upon my life. I, also, have been ill, or dying—"

She paused, for vainly she attempted to remember the chain of events which connected the past with the present. Between the two was one great blank.

"But now I also am better: poor heart, how thou must have grieved when I treated thee as a deceiver! What madness could have possessed me? Thou forgivest me?"

He wound his wasted fingers round hers, and clasped her palm with the fondest pressure.

Lucia still sat upon the bench, though the chill dew was beginning to fall thick. She had so much to say, to ask, and to reply: but what it was, she could not recollect. Then she thought of inquiring what had happened since Salvatore had left them, but at the same moment, his father, again warning her of his weakness, closed her lips.

Presently, she arose to lead him into the cottage, and at the same time his mother offered him her assistance. Pietro followed, observing, with a deep sigh, the contrast between the two figures; how bent and worn was his son's form beside that of the girl!

A few days after this event, the promulgation of the Amnesty decree enabled the exiles to return to their native town. It stated especially, that the demands of justice having been satisfied by the summary and severe punishment of the traitors to their king and country, his Most Christian Majesty, Philip the Fourth, was pleased to extend the hand of clemency, and, of his royal love, to avert the merited chastisement that still hung over the heads of misguided men. This document, which allusions to the late political events protracted to considerable length, bore the signa-

ture of the Duke of Arcos, and was industriously circulated throughout the kingdom. And even those who had suffered from the wily and statesmanlike policy of the Viceroy were this time deceived by their hopes into a firm belief that he was about to try, by way of experiment, a course of upright and honourable dealing with a people whose power he had felt, and doubtless dreaded to feel again.

To hear Pietro and Gioconda speak in anticipation of their happy return home, one would have imagined that they had lingered for years in the barbarous lands beyond the Alps, at least: certainly no exile in Siberia or Cayenne ever contemplated the prospect of being restored to his hearth and home, with livelier transports of emotion. This feeling still lives among the Italian peasants, especially those of the southern districts, who find themselves as really and completely abroad in the next province, as they would in the nearest kingdom. But in those times it was at its height. Each town was hostile to its neighbour; each village had some claim to superiority over its rival; and each hamlet had some witty saying, or taunting scoff, wherewith to rouse the bile of those who dwelt within the distance of a bow-

shot. Thus it was that men found themselves bound, as it were, and imprisoned in their homes by the cordon of ignorance and prejudice which girt them round about. But are we justified in assuming mere ignorance and prejudice to be the cause of this southern peculiarity? That is to say, is it not rather an effect of their love of place, their attachment to familiar scenes, and the especial fondness for forms and objects, which gives them their minds, their belief, their enthusiasm?

A remnant of the prudence and caution which had distinguished the conduct of the old fisherman during the first six weeks after his son's return, the urgent advice of his friends the smugglers, and the opinion of his wife, who saw what the young man's wishes were, determined him, before he left the plain of Sorrento, to send Salvatore secretly to Mariano's house.

A few days after the youth's removal, the old couple abandoned without regret the ruined cottage which had sheltered them during their sojourn in the strange land, and after going through some common-place accidents, and experiencing many common-place emotions, they found themselves, with glad and thankful

hearts, once more within the four walls which surrounded a spot, to them the dearest under heaven.

For a time Salvatore remained in the cottage of his future father-in-law, happy as it was in his nature to be—the nature of a disappointed man. As his health improved, and his frame grew stronger, the dark thoughts that before brooded over his mind, came and went like the shadows of autumnal clouds: once more he felt grateful to God, and kindly disposed towards man. And although at times he could not suppress a sigh for the fair hopes which had vanished into air as he approached them, and a transient yearning of the heart for the high destinies to which he had fancied himself born, his mental eye dwelt with delight upon the happiness which he seemed to hold in his hand, and the glad prospect of his future days.

The light of a lovely evening had just fallen upon earth as Lucia and her lover sat together upon their favourite seat—the little crag jutting out from the shoulder of the hill which commands the prospect of the beautiful Gulf. The sun had sunk behind the distant Salernian hills, leaving day lingering in the upper heights, whilst broad purple shadows and silvery mists,

rising from the green plains, announced the approach of night in the regions below. Already the evening star glimmered in the far east; stillness began to reign over the busy scene of man's toils and troubles; and all the animate children of nature had disappeared from view, preparing for the season of repose.

Long they sat together, too happy to talk much. He held her hand, though his eyes were fixed, not upon her, but upon the charms of the view before them. The love that welled from his heart seemed to paint them with lovelier tints, and their delicate beauties caused the tide of feeling to flow fuller and stronger within his breast. She, too, sat happy with kindred emotion, returning the pressure of his palm; her fingers trembled as his trembled, when the soft whisperings of thought, like the breath of the night gale on the cords of the harp, awakened harmony within their souls. And their words were few, and ever followed by long fits of silence. They felt that speech was a thing too rude, and yet too artful, to express the poetry of nature which grew spontaneously in their minds.

There was no moonlight upon the waters that lay placidly sleeping in their distant bed,

but the sparkling of the stars shed lustre enough for the lovers to descry a party of fishermen, as they supposed, winding their way up the hill, whose turnings now concealed from sight, now partially revealed, their dusky and uncertain forms.

"Why shudderest thou, Salvatore? art thou cold, love? The dew is heavy, let us go in," said Lucia, preparing to rise.

Her voice sounded strange and hollow in her lover's ears, and she remarked a change in his as he replied—

"I am now too strong, my heart, to fear chill or dew. Yet a few moments here—but one glance more."

And his eyes ran over the view, marking every object as it lay, with the fond look of a child perusing the features of a parent for the last time—

When the loud tread of hurrying footsteps sounded close behind the pair. They started, and turned round, Lucia clinging instinctively to her lover. A heavy hand fell upon his shoulder.

"At last!" exclaimed the sbirro, exultingly, with a loud and grating voice. "At last! Seize him, comrades! Bear him away!"

The order was scarcely given before the bloodhounds of justice had fastened upon their prey so firmly, that, despite his violent efforts, he was thrown to the ground, their prisoner.

Lucia, who at the first onset of the sbirri was rudely thrust aside, stood for a moment rooted like a statue to the spot. But the sight of her lover's unavailing struggles restored her to herself: with a shriek, that sounded dreadful even in the ears of such hearers as those, she sprang up and ran to save him.

"Coward!—assassin!" cried Salvatore, half rising, by a violent effort, from the ground, as one of the sbirri lowered his weapon to strike the girl. That was his last act—those his last words. The writhing form and distorted features betrayed the agony within him, as the stream of life gushed from his mouth.

The hands that held him dropped from the dying man. He fell backwards, choking, and rolled over once or twice. The death throe was a short one. In a few moments his spirit had broken through the bonds that held it to its earthly abode.

She crept up to the body as the men of blood backed away from it. She knelt by it, and bowed her head over it, whilst her long tresses,

escaping from their confinement, covered the ashen features like a veil of black. She strained it to her bosom, as though she would warm it back to life. A frenzied energy was in her gestures. And when she raised her tearless eyes, and looked silently at the bystanders, there was none whose hard heart chilled not with a nameless awe.

After a few moments of irresolution, the chief of the party whispered in the ear of his neighbour, who passed the word on to him that stood nearest. Two men advanced towards the body, and a third seized the girl: her frantic violence, and the strength which madness lent her, summoned others to his assistance.

They carried off the corpse, leaving her upon the ground bruised and faint with exhaustion.

From that hour, Lucia was no more. Her parents found her in the morning kneeling upon the crag, with her arms encircling some shadowy object, over a spot where the thin earth and knots of matted grass bore stains of blood. And as they approached her, she rose fiercely from the place, and drove them away with execrations and blows.

* * * *

Time rolled on and brought with it no change. The darkest blow of Fate descended upon the unhappy girl. Her frequent and furious paroxysms of madness made her dangerous to all around her. At last a consent to part with her was forced from her family and friends. They removed her to a madhouse, where the chain and the scourge, and all the horrors which then abounded in those places of torment, soon closed her sad career.

Even the two desolate families rejoiced in their sorrow, to hear that her course of misery was ended for ever.

They placed a cross upon the spot where Salvatore died that awful, sudden death; and many a prayer, breathed from breaking hearts, was addressed to heaven for the welfare of his departed soul.

And still it stands, that cross, whilst the house in which the hapless lovers dwelt, has long since, crumbled into ruins, lain level with the soil, whilst wild shrubs have cumbered the neat garden, and barren pine-trees have supplanted the olive and the vine. Still it stands there, the transitory memorial of human sorrow and of human suffering. Men have forgotten the hands that reared it, and the cause

that gave it a place. They have other things to remember. What clod is there upon earth that bears not a portion of our dust? What foot of ground that has not been watered with our tears? With pangs and travail man comes into the world—grief and anguish journey with him on the way of life—and agony ushers in his departure from the passing scene. Each has for himself real grief and real pains, compared with which those of others are words that bear with them no meaning.

Such were my thoughts as I sat at the foot of the deserted cross, musing upon the things that have been. And remembering the saying of the poet concerning the empty vanity which man carries even to his tomb—

> "Oblivion overshades his haunt
> With dusky pinion, whilst his eye
> Fixes upon some shallow vaunt
> Of mortal immortality:
> Immortal beings, here then lies
> The latest of your vanities!"

I chastened myself with the reflection, that my labours, like those of others, are doomed to forgetfulness; and that what I would have made a monument of brass is but a frail memorial of quickly decaying wood.

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before the reader's eyes, and their voices sound in his ears. There is all that wonderful power which Fielding's pen possessed in tracing out the secret workings of the human heart, and in setting forth peculiarities and follies in caricatures of richest humour."—*John Bull.*

"'The School for Fathers' is at once highly amusing and deeply interesting—full of that genuine humour which is half pathos—and written with a freshness of feeling and raciness of style which entitle it to be called a tale in the *Vicar of Wakefield* school. It is a tale to amuse and instruct both old and young, and which we should wish to see in the hands of our sons and daughters."—*Britannia.*

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"Fresh, piquant, true, and perfectly charming; there is freshness in the scenes, freshness in the characters, freshness in the style. The types of old English life, both town and country, are before us; and the highest praise is due to the author for the dramatic consistency with which he preserves the integrity of his characters."—*Leader.*

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