THE BETROTHED

From the Italian of

ALESSANDRO MANZONI

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CHAPTER I.

That branch of the Lake of Como, which turns toward the south between

two unbroken chains of mountains, presenting to the eye a succession of

bays and gulfs, formed by their jutting and retiring ridges, suddenly

contracts itself between a headland to the right and an extended sloping

bank on the left, and assumes the flow and appearance of a river. The

bridge by which the two shores are here united, appears to render the

transformation more apparent, and marks the point at which the lake

ceases, and the Adda recommences, to resume, however, the name of \_Lake\_

where the again receding banks allow the water to expand itself anew

into bays and gulfs. The bank, formed by the deposit of three large

mountain streams, descends from the bases of two contiguous mountains,

the one called St. Martin, the other by a Lombard name, \_Resegone\_, from

its long line of summits, which in truth give it the appearance of a

saw; so that there is no one who would not at first sight, especially

viewing it in front, from the ramparts of Milan that face the north, at

once distinguish it in all that extensive range from other mountains of

less name and more ordinary form. The bank, for a considerable distance,

rises with a gentle and continual ascent, then breaks into hills and

hollows, rugged or level land, according to the formation of the

mountain rocks, and the action of the floods. Its extreme border,

intersected by the mountain torrents, is composed almost entirely of

sand and pebbles; the other parts of fields and vineyards, scattered

farms, country seats, and villages, with here and there a wood which

extends up the mountain side. Lecco, the largest of these villages, and

which gives its name to the district, is situated at no great distance

from the bridge, upon the margin of the lake; nay, often, at the rising

of the waters, is partly embosomed within the lake itself; a large town

at the present day, and likely soon to become a city. At the period of

our story, this village was also fortified, and consequently had the

honour to furnish quarters to a governor, and the advantage of

possessing a permanent garrison of Spanish soldiers, who gave lessons in

modesty to the wives and daughters of the neighbourhood, and toward the

close of summer never failed to scatter themselves through the

vineyards, in order to thin the grapes, and lighten for the rustics the

labours of the vintage. From village to village, from the heights down

to the margin of the lake, there are innumerable roads and paths: these

vary in their character; at times precipitous, at others level; now sunk

and buried between two ivy-clad walls, from whose depth you can behold

nothing but the sky, or some lofty mountain peak; then crossing high and

level tracts, around the edges of which they sometimes wind,

occasionally projecting beyond the face of the mountain, supported by

prominent masses resembling bastions, whence the eye wanders over the

most varied and delicious landscape. On the one side you behold the blue

lake, with its boundaries broken by various promontories and necks of

land, and reflecting the inverted images of the objects on its banks; on

the other, the Adda, which, flowing beneath the arches of the bridge,

expands into a small lake, then contracts again, and holds on its clear

serpentining course to the distant horizon: above, are the ponderous

masses of the shapeless rocks; beneath, the richly cultivated acclivity,

the fair landscape, the bridge; in front, the opposite shore of the

lake, and beyond this, the mountain, which bounds the view.

Towards evening, on the 7th day of November, 1628, Don Abbondio, curate

of one of the villages before alluded to (but of the name of which, nor

of the house and lineage of its curate, we are not informed), was

returning slowly towards his home, by one of these pathways. He was

repeating quietly his office; in the pauses of which he held his closed

breviary in his hand behind his back; and as he went, with his foot he

cast listlessly against the wall the stones that happened to impede his

path; at the same time giving admittance to the idle thoughts that

tempted the spirit, while the lips of the worthy man were mechanically

performing their function; then raising his head and gazing idly around

him, he fixed his eyes upon a mountain summit, where the rays of the

setting sun, breaking through the openings of an opposite ridge,

illumined its projecting masses, which appeared like large and variously

shaped spots of purple light. He then opened anew his breviary, and

recited another portion at an angle of the lane, after which angle the

road continued straight for perhaps seventy paces, and then branched

like the letter Y into two narrow paths; the right-hand one ascended

towards the mountain, and led to the parsonage (\_Cura\_); that on the

left descended the valley towards a torrent, and on this side the wall

rose out to the height of about two feet. The inner walls of the two

narrow paths, instead of meeting at the angle, ended in a little chapel,

upon which were depicted certain long, sinuous, pointed shapes, which,

in the intention of the artist, and to the eyes of the neighbouring

inhabitants, represented flames, and amidst these flames certain other

forms, not to be described, that were meant for souls in purgatory;

souls and flames of a brick colour, upon a ground of blackish grey, with

here and there a bare spot of plaster. The curate, having turned the

corner, directed, as was his wont, a look toward the little chapel, and

there beheld what he little expected, and would not have desired to see.

At the confluence, if we may so call it, of the two narrow lanes, there

were two men: one of them sitting astride the low wall; his companion

leaning against it, with his arms folded on his breast. The dress, the

bearing, and what the curate could distinguish of the countenance of

these men, left no doubt as to their profession. They wore upon their

heads a green network, which, falling on the left shoulder, ended in a

large tassel, from under which appeared upon the forehead an enormous

lock of hair. Their mustachios were long, and curled at the extremities;

the margin of their doublets confined by a belt of polished leather,

from which were suspended, by hooks, two pistols; a little powder-horn

hung like a locket on the breast; on the right-hand side of the wide and

ample breeches was a pocket, out of which projected the handle of a

knife, and on the other side they bore a long sword, of which the great

hollow hilt was formed of bright plates of brass, combined into a

cypher: by these characteristics they were, at a glance, recognised as

individuals of the class of bravoes.

This species, now entirely extinct, flourished greatly at that time in

Lombardy. For those who have no knowledge of it, the following are a few

authentic records, that may suffice to impart an idea of its principal

characteristics, of the vigorous efforts made to extirpate it, and of

its obstinate and rank vitality.

As early as the 8th of April, 1583, the most illustrious and most

excellent lord Don Charles of Arragon, Prince of Castelvetrano, Duke of

Terranova, Marquis of Avola, Count of Burgeto, High Admiral and High

Constable of Sicily, Governor of Milan, and Captain General of His

Catholic Majesty in Italy, "fully informed of the intolerable misery

which the city of Milan has endured, and still endures, by reason of

bravoes and vagabonds," publishes his decree against them, "declares and

designates all those comprehended in this proclamation to be regarded as

bravoes and vagabonds,----who, whether foreigners or natives, have no

calling, or, having one, do not follow it,----but, either with or

without wages, attach themselves to any knight, gentleman, officer, or

merchant,----to uphold or favour him, or in any manner to molest

others." All such he commands, within the space of six days, to leave

the country; threatens the refractory with the galleys, and grants to

all officers of justice the most ample and unlimited powers for the

execution of his commands. But, in the following year, on the 12th of

April, the said lord, having perceived "that this city still continues

to be filled with bravoes, who have again resumed their former mode of

life; their manners unchanged, and their number undiminished," puts

forth another edict still more energetic and remarkable, in which, among

other regulations, he directs "that any person whatsoever, whether of

this city or from abroad, who shall, by the testimony of two witnesses,

be shown to be regarded and commonly reputed as a bravo, even though no

criminal act shall have been proved against him, may, nevertheless, upon

the sole ground of his reputation, be condemned by the said judges to

the rack for examination; and although he make no confession of guilt,

he shall, notwithstanding, be sentenced to the galleys for the said term

of three years, solely for that he is regarded as, and called a bravo,

as above-mentioned;" and this "because His Excellency is resolved to

enforce obedience to his commands."

One would suppose that at the sound of such denunciations from so

powerful a source, all the bravoes must have disappeared for ever. But

testimony, of no less authority, obliges us to believe directly the

reverse. This testimony is the most illustrious and most excellent lord

Juan Fernandez de Velasco, Constable of Castile, High Chamberlain of His

Majesty, Duke of the city of Freas, Count of Haro and Castelnuovo, Lord

of the house of Velasco, and of that of the Seven Infanti of Lara,

Governor of the State of Milan, &c. On the 5th of June, 1593, he also,

fully informed "how great an injury to the common weal, and how

insulting to justice, is the existence of such a class of men," requires

them anew to quit the country within six days, repeating very nearly the

same threats and injunctions as his predecessor. On the 23d of May,

then, 1598, "having learnt, with no little displeasure, that the number

of bravoes and vagabonds is increasing daily in this state and city, and

that nothing is heard of them but wounds, murders, robberies, and every

other crime, to the commission of which these bravoes are encouraged by

the confidence that they will be sustained by their chiefs and

abettors," he prescribes again the same remedies, increasing the dose,

as is usual in obstinate disorders. "Let every one, then," he concludes,

"carefully beware that he do not, in any wise, contravene this edict;

since, in place of experiencing the mercy of His Excellency, he shall

prove his rigour and his wrath--he being resolved and determined that

this shall be a final and peremptory warning."

But this again did not suffice; and the illustrious and most excellent

lord, the Signor Don Pietro Enriquez de Acevedo, Count of Fuentes,

Captain and Governor of the State of Milan, "fully informed of the

wretched condition of this city and state, in consequence of the great

number of bravoes that abound therein, and resolved wholly to extirpate

them," publishes, on the 5th of December, 1600, a new decree, full of

the most rigorous provisions, and "with firm purpose that in all rigour,

and without hope of remission, they shall be wholly carried into

execution."

We are obliged, however, to conclude that he did not, in this matter,

exhibit the same zeal which he knew how to employ in contriving plots

and exciting enemies against his powerful foe, Henry IV., against whom

history attests that he succeeded in arming the Duke of Savoy, whom he

caused to lose more towns than one; and in engaging in a conspiracy the

Duke of Biron, whom he caused to lose his head. But as regards the

pestilent race of bravoes, it is very certain they continued to increase

until the 22d day of September, 1612; on which day the most illustrious

and most excellent lord Don Giovanni de Mendoza, Marchese de la

Hynojosa, gentleman, & c., Governor, & c., thought seriously of their

extirpation. He addressed to Pandolfo and Marco Tullio Malatesti,

printers of the Royal Chamber, the customary edict, corrected and

enlarged, that they might print it, to accomplish that end. But the

bravoes still survived, to experience, on the 24th December, 1618, still

more terrific denunciations from the most illustrious and most excellent

lord, Don Gomez Suarez de Figueroa, Duke of Feria, Governor, & c.; yet,

as they did not fall even under these blows, the most illustrious and

most excellent lord Gonzalo Fernandez de Cordova, under whose government

we are made acquainted with Don Abbondio, found himself obliged to

republish the usual proclamation against the bravoes, on the 5th day of

October, 1627, that is, a year, a month, and two days previous to the

commencement of our story.

Nor was this the last publication; but of those that follow, as of

matters not falling within the period of our history, we do not think it

proper to make mention. The only one of them to which we shall refer, is

that of the 13th day of February, 1632, in which the most illustrious

and most excellent lord, the Duke of Feria, for the second time

governor, informs us, "that the greatest and most heinous crimes are

perpetrated by those styled bravoes." This will suffice to prove that,

at the time of which we treat, the bravoes still existed.

It appeared evident to Don Abbondio that the two men above mentioned

were waiting for some one, and he was alarmed at the conviction that it

was for himself; for on his appearance, they exchanged a look, as if to

say, "'tis he." Rising from the wall, they both advanced to meet him. He

held his breviary open before him, as though he were employed in reading

it; but, nevertheless, cast a glance upward in order to espy their

movements. Seeing that they came directly toward him, he was beset by a

thousand different thoughts. He considered, in haste, whether between

the bravoes and himself there were any outlet from the road, and he

remembered there was none. He took a rapid survey of his conduct, to

discover if he had given offence to any powerful or revengeful man; but

in this matter, he was somewhat reassured by the consoling testimony of

his conscience. The bravoes draw near, and kept their eyes upon him. He

raised his hand to his collar, as if adjusting it, and at the same time

turned his head round, to see if any one were coming; he could discover

no one. He cast a glance across the low stone wall upon the fields; no

one! another on the road that lay before him; no one, except the

bravoes! What is to be done? Flight was impossible. Unable to avoid the

danger, he hastened to encounter it, and to put an end to the torments

of uncertainty. He quickened his pace, recited a stanza in a louder

tone, did his utmost to assume a composed and cheerful countenance, and

finding himself in front of the two gallants, stopped short. "Signor

Curate," said one of them, fixing his eyes upon him,--

"Your pleasure, sir," suddenly raising his eyes from his book, which he

continued to hold open before him.

"You intend," pursued the other, with the threatening and angry mien of

one who has detected an inferior in an attempt to commit some villany,

"you intend to-morrow to unite in marriage Renzo Tramaglino and Lucy

Mondella."

"That is," said Don Abbondio with a faltering voice, "that is to

say--you gentlemen, being men of the world, are very well aware how

these things are managed: the poor curate neither meddles nor

makes--they settle their affairs amongst themselves, and then--then,

they come to us, as if to redeem a pledge; and we--we are the servants

of the public."

"Mark now," said the bravo in a low voice, but in a tone of command,

"this marriage is not to take place, neither to-morrow, nor at any other

time."

"But, my good sirs," replied Don Abbondio, with the mild and gentle tone

of one who would persuade an impatient listener, "but, my good sirs,

deign to put yourselves in my situation. If the thing depended on

myself--you see plainly, that it does not in the least concern----"

"Hold there," said the bravo, interrupting him, "this matter is not to

be settled by prating. We neither know nor care to know any more about

it. A man once warned--you understand us."

"But, fair sirs, you are too just, too reasonable----"

"But," interrupted the other comrade, who had not before spoken, "but

this marriage is not to be performed, or (with an oath) he who performs

it will not repent of it, because he'll not have time" (with another

oath).

"Hush, hush," resumed the first orator, "the Signor Curate knows the

world, and we are gentlemen who have no wish to harm him if he conducts

himself with judgment. Signor Curate, the most illustrious Signor Don

Roderick, our patron, offers you his kind regards." As in the height of

a midnight storm a vivid flash casts a momentary dazzling glare around

and renders every object more fearful, so did this \_name\_ increase the

terror of Don Abbondio: as if by instinct, he bowed his head

submissively, and said--

"If it could but be suggested to me."

"Oh! suggested to \_you\_, who understand Latin!" exclaimed the bravo,

laughing; "it is for you to manage the matter. But, above all, be

careful not to say a word concerning the hint that has been given you

for your good; for if you do, ehem!--you understand--the consequences

would be the same as if you performed the marriage ceremony. But say,

what answer are we to carry in your name to the most illustrious Signor

Don Roderick?"

"My respects----"

"Speak more clearly, Signor Curate."

"That I am disposed, ever disposed, to obedience." And as he spoke the

words he was not very certain himself whether he gave a promise, or only

uttered an ordinary compliment. The bravoes took, or \_appeared\_ to take

them, in the more serious sense.

"'Tis very well; good night, Signor Curate," said one of them as he

retired, together with his companion. Don Abbondio, who a few minutes

before would have given one of his eyes to avoid the ruffians, was now

desirous to prolong the conversation.

"Gentlemen----" he began, as he shut his book. Without again noticing

him, however, they passed on, singing a loose song, of which we will not

transcribe the words. Poor Don Abbondio remained for a moment, as if

spell-bound, and then with heavy and lagging steps took the path which

led towards his home. The reader will better understand the state of his

mind, when he shall have learned something more of his disposition, and

of the condition of the times in which it was his lot to live.

Don Abbondio was not (as the reader may have perceived) endowed with the

courage of a lion. But from his earliest years he had been sensible that

the most embarrassing situation in those times was that of an animal,

furnished with neither tusks nor talons, at the same time having no wish

to be devoured. The arm of the law afforded no protection to a man of

quiet, inoffensive habits, who had no means of making himself feared.

Not that laws and penalties were wanting for the prevention of private

violence: the laws were most express; the offences enumerated, and

minutely particularised; the penalties sufficiently extravagant; and if

that were not enough, the legislator himself, and, a hundred others to

whom was committed the execution of the laws, had power to increase

them. The proceedings were studiously contrived to free the judge from

every thing that might prevent his passing sentence of condemnation; the

passages we have cited from proclamations against the bravoes, may be

taken as a faithful specimen of these decrees. Notwithstanding this, or,

it may be, in \_consequence\_ of this, these proclamations, reiterated and

reinforced from time to time, served only to proclaim in pompous

language the impotence of those who issued them; or, if they produced

any immediate effect, it was \_that\_ of adding to the vexations which the

peaceful and feeble suffered from the disturbers of society. Impunity

was organised and effected in so many ways as to render the

proclamations powerless. Such was the consequence of the sanctuaries and

asylums; and of the privileges of certain classes, partly acknowledged

by the legal power, partly tolerated in silence, or feebly opposed; but

which, in \_fact\_, were sustained and guarded by almost every individual

with interested activity and punctilious jealousy. Now this impunity,

threatened and assailed, but not destroyed, by these proclamations,

would naturally, at every new attack, employ fresh efforts and devices

to maintain itself. The proclamations were efficient, it is true, in

fettering and embarrassing the honest man, who had neither power in

himself nor protection from others; inasmuch as, in order to reach every

person, they subjected the movements of each private individual to the

arbitrary will of a thousand magistrates and executive officers. But he,

who before the commission of his crime had prepared himself a refuge in

some convent or palace where bailiffs never dared to enter; or who

simply wore a livery, which engaged in his defence the vanity or the

interest of a powerful family; such a one was free in his actions, and

could laugh to scorn every proclamation. Of those very persons whose

part it was to ensure the execution of these decrees, some belonged by

birth to the privileged class, others were its clients and dependants;

and as the latter as well as the former had, from education, from habit,

from imitation, embraced its maxims, they would be very careful not to

violate them. Had they however, been bold as heroes, obedient as monks,

and devoted as martyrs, they could never have accomplished the execution

of the laws, inferior as they were in number to \_those\_ with whom they

must engage, and with the frequent probability of being abandoned, or

even sacrificed, by him who, in a moment of theoretical abstraction,

might require them to act. But, in addition to this, their office would

be regarded as a base one in public opinion, and their name stamped with

reproach. It was therefore very natural that, instead of risking, nay,

throwing away, their lives in a fruitless attempt, they should sell

their inaction, or, rather, their connivance, to the powerful; or, at

least, exercise their authority only on those occasions when it might be

done with safety to themselves; that is, in oppressing the peaceable and

the defenceless.

The man who acts with violence, or who is constantly in fear of violence

from others, seeks companions and allies. Hence it happened that, during

these times, individuals displayed so strong a tendency to combine

themselves into classes, and to advance, as far as each one was able,

the power of that to which he belonged. The clergy was vigilant in the

defence and extension of its immunities; the nobility, of its

privileges; the military, of its exemptions; the merchants and artisans

were enrolled in companies and fraternities; the lawyers were united in

leagues, and even the physicians formed a corporation. Each of these

little oligarchies had its own appropriate power,--in each of them the

individual found the advantage of employing for himself, in proportion

to his influence and dexterity, the united force of numbers. The more

honest availed themselves of this advantage merely for their defence;

the crafty and the wicked profited by it to assure themselves of success

in their rogueries, and impunity from their results. The strength,

however, of these various combinations was far from being equal; and,

especially in the country, the wealthy and overbearing nobleman, with a

band of bravoes, and surrounded by peasants accustomed to regard

themselves as subjects and soldiers of their lord, exercised an

irresistible power, and set all laws at defiance.

Don Abbondio, neither noble, rich, nor valiant, had from early youth

found himself alone and unaided in such a state of society, like an

earthen vessel thrown amidst iron jars; he therefore readily obeyed his

parents, who wished him to become a priest. He did, to say the truth,

not regard the obligations and the noble ends of the ministry to which

he dedicated himself, but was only desirous to secure the means of

living, and to connect himself with a powerful and respected class. But

no class provided for the individual, or secured his safety, \_further\_

than to a certain point; none rendered it unnecessary for him to adopt

for himself a system of his own. The system of Don Abbondio consisted

chiefly in shunning all disputes; he maintained an unarmed neutrality in

all the contests that broke out around him;--between the clergy and the

civil power, between persons in office and nobles and magistrates,

bravoes and soldiers, down to the squabbles of the peasantry themselves,

terminated by the fist or the knife. By keeping aloof from the

overbearing, by affecting not to notice their acts of violence, by

bowing low and with the most profound respect to all whom he met, the

poor man had succeeded in passing over sixty years without encountering

any violent storms; not but that he also had some small portion of gall

in his composition; and this continual exercise of patience exacerbated

it to such a degree, that, if he had not had it in his power

occasionally to give it vent, his health must have suffered. But as

there were a few persons in the world connected with himself whom he

knew to be powerless, he could, from time to time, discharge on them his

long pent-up ill-humour. He was, moreover, a severe censor of those who

did not regulate their conduct by his example, provided he could censure

without danger. According to his creed, the poor fellow who had been

cudgelled had been a little imprudent; the murdered man had always been

turbulent; the man who maintained his right against the powerful, and

met with a broken head, must have been somewhat wrong; which is,

perhaps, true enough, for in all disputes the line can never be drawn

so finely as not to leave a little wrong on both sides. He especially

declaimed against those of his confraternity, who, at their own risk,

took part with the oppressed against a powerful oppressor. "This," he

said, "was to purchase trouble with ready money, to kick at snarling

dogs, and an intermeddling in profane things that lowered the dignity of

the sacred ministry." He had, in short, a favourite maxim, that an

honest man, who looked to himself and minded his own affairs, never met

with any rough encounters.

From all that has been said, we may imagine the effect the meeting just

described must have had upon the mind of poor Don Abbondio. Those fierce

countenances, the threats of a lord who was well known not to speak

idly, his plan of quiet life and patient endurance disconcerted in an

instant, a difficulty before him from which he saw no possibility of

extrication; all these thoughts rushed confusedly through his mind. "If

Renzo could be quietly dismissed with a refusal, all would be well; but

he will require reasons--and what can I say to him? he too has a head of

his own; a lamb, if not meddled with--but once attempt to cross him----

Oh!--and raving after that Lucy, as much enamoured as---- Young idiots!

who, for want of something else to do, fall in love, and must be

married, forsooth, thinking of nothing else, never concerning themselves

about the trouble they bring upon an honest man like me. Wretch that I

am! Why should those two scowling faces plant themselves exactly in my

path, and pick a quarrel with me? What have I to do in the matter? Is it

I that mean to wive? Why did they not rather go and speak---- Ah! truly,

that which is to the purpose always occurs to me after the right time:

if I had but thought of suggesting to them to go and bear their

message----" But here he was disturbed by the reflection, that to repent

of not having been the counsellor and abettor of evil, was too

iniquitous a thing; and he therefore turned the rancour of his thoughts

against the individual who had thus robbed him of his tranquillity. He

did not know Don Roderick, except by sight and by report; his sole

intercourse with him had been to touch chin to breast, and the ground

with the corner of his hat, the few times he had met him on the road.

He had, on more than one occasion, defended the reputation of that

Signor against those who, in an under-tone, with sighs and looks raised

to heaven, had execrated some one of his exploits. He had declared a

hundred times that he was a respectable cavalier. But at this moment he,

in his own heart, readily bestowed upon him all those titles to which he

would never lend an ear from another. Having, amidst the tumult of these

thoughts, reached the entrance of his house, which stood at the end of

the little glebe, he unlocked the door, entered, and carefully secured

it within. Anxious to find himself in society that he could trust, he

called aloud, "Perpetua, Perpetua," advancing towards the little parlour

where she was, doubtless, employed in preparing the table for his

supper. Perpetua was, as the reader must be aware, the housekeeper of

Don Abbondio; an affectionate and faithful domestic, who knew how to

obey or command as occasion served; to bear the grumbling and whims of

her master at times, and at others to make him bear with hers. These

were becoming every day more frequent; she had passed the age of forty

in a single state; the consequences, \_she\_ said, of having refused all

the offers that had been made her; her \_female friends\_ asserted that

she had never found any one willing to take her.

"Coming," said Perpetua, as she set in its usual place on the little

table the flask of Don Abbondio's favourite wine, and moved slowly

toward the parlour door: before she reached it he entered, with steps so

disordered, looks so clouded, and a countenance so changed, that an eye

less practised than that of Perpetua could have discovered at a glance

that something unusual had befallen him.

"Mercy on me! What is it ails my master?"

"Nothing, nothing," said Don Abbondio, as he sank upon his easy chair.

"How, nothing! Would you have me believe that, looking as you do? Some

dreadful accident has happened."

"Oh! for the love of Heaven! When I say nothing, it is either nothing,

or something I cannot tell."

"That you cannot tell, not even to me? Who will take care of your

health? Who will give you advice?"

"Oh! peace, peace! Do not make matters worse. Give me a glass of my

wine."

"And you will still pretend to me that nothing is the matter?" said

Perpetua, filling the glass, but retaining it in her hand, as if

unwilling to present it except as the reward of confidence.

"Give here, give here," said Don Abbondio, taking the glass with an

unsteady hand, and hastily swallowing its contents.

"Would you oblige me then to go about, asking here and there what it is

has happened to my master?" said Perpetua, standing upright before him,

with her hands on her sides, and looking him steadfastly in the face, as

if to extract the secret from his eyes.

"For the love of Heaven, do not worry me, do not kill me with your

pother; this is a matter that concerns--concerns my life."

"Your life!"

"My life."

"You know well, that, when you have frankly confided in me, I have

never----"

"Yes, forsooth, as when----"

Perpetua was sensible she had touched a false string; wherefore,

changing suddenly her note, "My dear master," said she, in a moving tone

of voice, "I have always had a dutiful regard for you, and if I now wish

to know this affair, it is from zeal, and a desire to assist you, to

give you advice, to relieve your mind."

The truth is, that Don Abbondio's desire to disburden himself of his

painful secret was as great as that of Perpetua to obtain a knowledge of

it; so that, after having repulsed, more and more feebly, her renewed

assaults; after having made her swear many times that she would not

breathe a syllable of it, he, with frequent pauses and exclamations,

related his miserable adventure. When it was necessary to pronounce the

dread name of him from whom the prohibition came, he required from

Perpetua another and more solemn oath: having uttered it, he threw

himself back on his seat with a heavy sigh, and, in a tone of command,

as well as supplication, exclaimed,--

"For the love of Heaven!"--

"Mercy upon me!" cried Perpetua, "what a wretch! what a tyrant! Does he

not fear God?"

"Will you be silent? or do you want to ruin me completely?"

"Oh! we are here alone, no one can hear us. But what will my poor master

do?"

"See there now," said Don Abbondio, in a peevish tone, "see the fine

advice you give me. To ask of me, what I'll do? what I'll do? as if you

were the one in difficulty, and it was for me to help you out!"

"Nay, I could give you my own poor opinion; but then--"

"But--but then, let us know it."

"My opinion would be, that, as every one says our archbishop is a saint,

a man of courage, and not to be frightened by an ugly phiz, and who will

take pleasure in upholding a curate against one of these tyrants; I

should say, and do say, that you had better write him a handsome letter,

to inform him as how----"

"Will you be silent! will you be silent! Is this advice to offer a poor

man? When I get a pistol bullet in my side--God preserve me!--will the

archbishop take it out?"

"Ah! pistol bullets are not given away like sugarplums; and it were

woful if those dogs should bite every time they bark. If a man knows how

to show his teeth, and make himself feared, they hold him in respect: we

should not have been brought to such a pass, if you had stood upon your

rights. Now, all come to us (by your good leave) to----"

"Will you be silent?"

"Certainly; but it is true though, that when the world sees one is

always ready, in every encounter, to lower----"

"Will you be silent? Is this a time for such idle talk?"

"Well, well, you'll think of it to-night; but in the meantime do not be

the first to harm yourself; to destroy your own health: eat a mouthful."

"I'll think of it," murmured Don Abbondio; "certainly I'll think of it.

I \_must\_ think of it;" and he arose, continuing--"No! I'll take nothing,

nothing; I've something else to do. But, that this should have fallen

upon me----"

"Swallow at least this other little drop," said Perpetua, as she poured

the wine. "You know it always restores your stomach."

"Oh! there wants other medicine than that, other medicine than that,

other medicine than that----"

So saying, he took the light, and muttering, "A pretty business this! To

an honest man like me! And to-morrow, what is to be done?" with other

like exclamations, he went towards his bedchamber. Having reached the

door, he stopped a moment, and before he quitted the room, exclaimed,

turning towards Perpetua, with his finger on his lips--"For the love of

Heaven, be silent!"

CHAPTER II.

It is related that the Prince of Condé slept soundly the night preceding

the battle of Rocroi; but then, he was greatly fatigued, and moreover

had made every arrangement for the morrow. It was not thus with Don

Abbondio; he only knew the morrow would be a day of trouble, and

consequently passed the night in anxious anticipation. He could not for

a moment think of disregarding the menaces of the bravoes, and

solemnising the marriage. To confide to Renzo the occurrence, and

consult with him as to the means--God forbid!--He remembered the warning

of the bravo, "not to say one word"--otherwise, \_ahem!\_ and this

dreadful \_ahem\_ of the bravo resounded in the ears of Don Abbondio; so

that he already repented of his communication to Perpetua. To fly was

impossible--and where \_could\_ he fly? At the thought, a thousand

obstacles presented themselves.--After long and painful deliberation, he

resolved to endeavour to gain time, by giving Renzo some fanciful

reasons for the postponement of the marriage. He recollected that in a

few days more the time would arrive, during which marriages were

prohibited. "And if I can keep this youngster at bay for a few days, I

shall then have two months before me; and in two months who can tell

what may happen?" He thought of various pretexts for his purpose; and

though they were rather flimsy, he persuaded himself that his authority

would give them weight, and that his experience would prevail over the

mind of an ignorant youth. "We will see," said he to himself: "he thinks

of his love, but I think of myself; I am, therefore, the party most

interested; I must call in all my cunning to assist me. I cannot help

it, young man, if you suffer; I must not be the victim." Having somewhat

composed his mind with this determination, he at length fell asleep. But

his dreams, alas! how horrible--bravoes, Don Roderick, Renzo, roads,

rocks, cries, bullets.

The arousing from sleep, after a recent misfortune, is a bitter moment;

the mind at first habitually recurs to its previous tranquillity, but is

soon depressed by the thought of the contrast that awaits it. When alive

to a sense of his situation, Don Abbondio recapitulated the plans of the

night, made a better disposal of them, and after having risen, awaited

with dread and impatience the moment of Renzo's arrival.

Lorenzo, or as he was called, Renzo, did not make him wait long; at an

early hour he presented himself before the curate with the joyful

readiness of one who was on this day to espouse her whom he loved. He

had been deprived of his parents in his youth, and now practised the

trade of a weaver of silk, which was, it might be said, hereditary in

his family. This trade had once been very lucrative; and although now on

the decline, a skilful workman might obtain from it a respectable

livelihood. The continual emigration of the tradesmen, attracted to the

neighbouring states by promises and privileges, left sufficient

employment for those who remained behind. Besides, Renzo possessed a

small farm, which he had cultivated himself when otherwise unoccupied;

so that, for one of his condition, he might be called wealthy: and

although the last harvest had been more deficient than the preceding

ones, and the evils of famine were beginning to be felt; yet, from the

moment he had given his heart to Lucy, he had been so economical as to

preserve a sufficiency of all necessaries, and to be in no danger of

wanting bread. He appeared before Don Abbondio gaily dressed, and with a

joyful countenance. The mysterious and perplexed manner of the curate

formed a singular contrast to that of the handsome young man.

"What is the matter now?" thought Renzo; but without waiting to answer

his own question, "Signor Curate," said he, "I am come to know at what

hour of the day it will be convenient for you that we should be at the

church?"

"Of what day do you speak?"

"How! of what day? do you not remember that this is the day appointed?"

"To-day?" replied Don Abbondio, as if he heard it for the first time,

"to-day? to-day? be patient, I cannot to-day----"

"You cannot to-day? why not?"

"In the first place I am not well----"

"I am sorry for it; but we shall not detain you long, and you will not

be much fatigued."

"But then--but then----"

"But then, what, sir?"

"There are difficulties."

"Difficulties! How can that be?"

"People should be in our situation, to know how many obstacles there are

to these matters; I am too yielding, I think only of removing

impediments, of rendering all things easy, and promoting the happiness

of others. To do this I neglect my duty, and am covered with reproaches

for it."

"In the name of Heaven, keep me not thus in suspense, but tell me at

once what is the matter?"

"Do you know how many formalities are required before the marriage can

be celebrated?"

"I must, indeed, know something of them," said Renzo, beginning to grow

angry, "since you have racked my brains with them abundantly these few

days back. But are not all things now ready? have you not done all there

was to do?"

"All, all, you expect; but be patient, I tell you. I have been a

blockhead to neglect my duty, that I might not cause pain to others;--we

poor curates--we are, as may be said, ever between a hawk and a buzzard.

I pity you, poor young man! I perceive your impatience, but my

superiors----Enough, I have reasons for what I say, but I cannot tell

all--we, however, are sure to suffer."

"But tell me what this other formality is, and I will perform it

immediately."

"Do you know how many obstacles stand in the way?"

"How can I know any thing of obstacles?"

"Error, conditio, votum, cognatis, crimen, cultus disparitas, vis,

ordo.... Si sit affinis...."

"Oh! for Heaven's sake--how should I understand all this Latin?"

"Be patient, dear Renzo; I am ready to do----all that depends on me.

I--I wish to see you satisfied--I wish you well---- And when I think

that you were so happy, that you wanted nothing when the whim entered

your head to be married----"

"What words are these, Signor?" interrupted Renzo, with a look of

astonishment and anger.

"I say, do be patient--I say, I wish to see you happy. In short--in

short, my dear child, I have not been in fault; I did not make the laws.

Before concluding a marriage, we are required to search closely that

there be no obstacles."

"Now, I beseech you, tell me at once what difficulty has occurred?"

"Be patient--these are not points to be cleared up in an instant. There

\_will\_ be nothing, I hope; but whether or not, we must search into the

matter. The passage is clear and explicit,--'antiquam matrimonium

denunciet----'"

"I'll not hear your Latin."

"But it is necessary to explain to you----"

"But why not do this before? Why tell me all was prepared? Why wait----"

"See there now! to reproach me with my kindness! I have hastened every

thing to serve you; but--but there has occurred----well, well, I

know----"

"And what do you wish that I should do?"

"Be patient for a few days. My dear child, a few days are not eternity;

be patient."

"For how long a time then?"

"We are coming to a good conclusion," thought Don Abbondio. "Come," said

he, gently, "in fifteen days I will endeavour----"

"Fifteen days! Oh! this is something new. To tell me now, on the very

day you yourself appointed for my marriage, that I must wait fifteen

days! Fifteen," resumed he, with a low and angry voice.

Don Abbondio interrupted him, earnestly seizing his hand, and with an

imploring tone beseeching him to be quiet. "Come, come, don't be angry;

for the love of Heaven! I'll see, I'll see if in a week----"

"And what shall I say to Lucy?" said Renzo, softening.

"That it has been a mistake of mine."

"And to the world?"

"Say also it is my fault; that through too great haste I have made some

great blunder: throw all the blame on me. Can I do more than this? Come

in a week."

"And then there will be no further difficulties?"

"When I say a thing----"

"Well, well, I will be quiet for a week; but be assured, I will be put

off with no further excuses:--for the present, I take my leave." So

saying, he departed, making a bow to Don Abbondio less profound than

usual, and giving him a look more expressive than respectful.

With a heavy heart he approached the house of his betrothed, his mind

dwelling on the strange conversation which had just taken place. The

cold and embarrassed reception of Don Abbondio, his constrained and

impatient air, his mysterious hints, all combined to convince him there

was still something he had not been willing to communicate. He stopped

for a moment, debating with himself whether he should not return and

compel him to be more frank; raising his eyes, however, he beheld

Perpetua entering a little garden a few steps distant from the house. He

called to her, quickened his pace, and detaining her at the gate,

endeavoured to enter into discourse with her.

"Good day, Perpetua; I expected to have received your congratulations

to-day."

"But it must be as God pleases, my poor Renzo."

"I want to ask a favour of you: the Signor Curate has offered reasons I

cannot comprehend; will you explain to me the true cause why he is

unable or unwilling to marry us to-day?"

"Oh! you think then that I know the secrets of my master."

"I was right in supposing there was a mystery," thought Renzo. "Come,

come, Perpetua," continued he, "we are friends; tell me what you

know,--help a poor young man."

"It is a bad thing to be born poor, my dear Renzo."

"That is true," replied he, still more confirmed in his

suspicions--"that is true; but it is not becoming in the clergy to

behave unjustly to the poor."

"Hear me, Renzo; I can tell you nothing, because--I know nothing. But I

can assure you my master would not wrong you or any one; and he is not

to blame."

"Who then is to blame?" asked Renzo, carelessly, but listening intently

for a reply.

"I have told you already I know nothing. But I may be allowed to speak

in defence of my master; poor man! if he has erred, it has been through

too great kindness. There are in this world men who are overpowerful,

knavish, and who fear not God."

"Overpowerful! knavish!" thought Renzo; "these cannot be his

superiors."--"Come," said he, with difficulty concealing his increasing

agitation, "come, tell me who it is."

"Ah! you would persuade me to speak, and I must not, because--I know

nothing. I will keep silence as faithfully as if I had promised to do

so. You might put me to the torture, and you could not draw any thing

from me. Adieu! it is lost time for both of us."

Thus saying, she re-entered the garden hastily, and shut the gate. Renzo

turned very softly, lest at the noise of his footsteps she might discern

the road he took: when fairly beyond her hearing, he quickened his

steps, and in a moment was at the door of Don Abbondio's house; he

entered, rushed towards the little parlour where he had left him, and

finding him still there, approached him with a bold and furious manner.

"Eh! eh! what has happened now?" said Don Abbondio.

"Who is this powerful personage?" said Renzo, with the air of one

resolved to obtain an explicit answer; "who is he that forbids me to

marry Lucy?"

"What! what! what!" stammered Don Abbondio, turning pale with surprise.

He arose from his chair, and made an effort to reach the door. But

Renzo, who expected this movement, was upon his guard; and locking the

door, he put the key in his pocket.

"Ah! will you speak now, Signor Curate? Every one knows the affair but

myself; and, by heavens! I'll know it too. Who is it, I say?"

"Renzo, Renzo, for the love of charity, take care what you do; think of

your soul."

"I must know it at once--this moment." So saying, he placed his hand on

his dagger, but perhaps without intending it.

"Mercy!" exclaimed Don Abbondio, in a stifled voice.

"I \_must\_ know it."

"Who has told you?"

"Come, no more excuses. Speak plainly and quickly."

"Do you mean to kill me?"

"I mean to know that which I have a right to know."

"But if I speak, I die. Must I not preserve my life?"

"Speak, then."

The manner of Renzo was so threatening and decided, that Don Abbondio

felt there was no possibility of disobeying him. "Promise me--swear,"

said he, "never to tell----"

"Tell me, tell me quickly his name, or----"

At this new adjuration, the poor curate, with the trembling look of a

man who feels the instrument of the dentist in his mouth, feebly

articulated, "Don----"

"Don?" replied Renzo, inclining his ear towards him, eager to hear the

rest. "Don?"

"Don Roderick!" muttered he hastily, trembling at the sound that escaped

his lips.

"Ah! dog!" shouted Renzo; "and how has he done it? what has he said to

you to----"

"What? what?" said Don Abbondio, in an almost contemptuous tone, already

gaining confidence by the sacrifice he had made. "I wish you were like

myself, you would then meddle with nothing, and certainly you would not

have had so many whims in your head." He, however, related in terrible

colours the ugly encounter; his anger, which had hitherto been subdued

by fear, displayed itself as he proceeded; and perceiving that Renzo,

between rage and astonishment, remained motionless, with his head bent

down, he continued in a lively manner, "You have made a pretty business

of it, indeed! You have rendered me a notable service. Thus to attack an

honest man, your curate, in his own house! in a sacred place! You have

done a fine thing, truly. To wrest from my mouth, that which I

concealed, from prudence, for your own good. And now that you know it,

what will you do? When I gave you good advice this morning, I had

judgment for you and me; but believe me, this is no jesting matter, no

question of right or wrong, but superior power. At all events, open the

door; give me the key."

"I may have been to blame," replied Renzo with a softened voice, but in

which might be perceived smothered anger towards his concealed enemy, "I

may have been to blame, but if you had been in my situation----" He

drew the key from his pocket, and advanced towards the door.

"Swear to me," said Don Abbondio with a serious and anxious face.

"I may have been to blame--forgive me," replied Renzo, moving to depart.

"Swear first," said Don Abbondio, holding him tremblingly by the arm.

"I may have been to blame," said Renzo, freeing himself from his grasp,

and immediately springing out of the room.

"Perpetua! Perpetua!" cried Don Abbondio, after having in vain called

back the fugitive. Perpetua did not answer. The poor man was so

overwhelmed by his innumerable difficulties, his increasing

perplexities, and so apprehensive of some fresh attack, that he

conceived the idea of securing to himself a safe retreat from them all,

by going to bed and giving out that he had a fever. His malady, indeed,

was not altogether imaginary; the terror of the past day, the anxious

watching of the night, the dread of the future, had combined to

produce really the effect. Weary and stupified, he slumbered in his

large chair, muttering occasionally in a feeble but passionate voice,

"Perpetua."--Perpetua arrived at last with a great cabbage under her

arm, and with as unconcerned a countenance as if nothing had happened.

We will spare the reader the reproaches, the accusations, and denials

that passed between them; it is sufficient that Don Abbondio ordered

Perpetua to bolt the door, not to put her foot outside, and if any one

knocked, to reply from the window that the curate was gone to bed with a

fever. He then slowly ascended the stairs and put himself really in bed,

where we will leave him.

Renzo, meanwhile, with hurried steps, and with a mind unsettled and

distracted as to the course he should pursue, approached his home. Those

who injure others are guilty, not only of the evils they commit, but

also of the effects produced by these evils on the characters of the

injured persons. Renzo was a quiet and peaceful youth, but now his

nature appeared changed, and his thoughts dwelt only on deeds of

violence. He would have run to the house of Don Roderick to assault him

there; but he remembered that it was a fortress, furnished with bravoes

within, and well guarded without; that only those known to be friends

and servants could enter without the minutest scrutiny; and that not

even a tradesman could be seen there without being examined from head to

foot; and he, above all, would be, alas! but too well known. He then

imagined himself placed behind a hedge, with his arquebuss in his hand,

waiting till Roderick should pass by alone; rejoicing internally at the

thought, he pictured to himself an approaching footstep; the villain

appears, he takes aim, fires, and he falls; he exults a moment over his

dying struggles, and then escapes for his life beyond the confines! And

Lucy? This name recalled his wiser and better thoughts: he remembered

the last instructions of his parents; he thought of God, the Holy

Virgin, and the Saints; and he tremblingly rejoiced that he had been

guilty of the deed only in imagination. But how many hopes, promises,

and anticipations did the idea of Lucy suggest? And this day so ardently

desired! How announce to her the dreadful news? And then, what plan to

pursue? How make her his own in spite of the power of this wicked lord?

And now a tormenting suspicion passed through his mind. Don Roderick

must have been instigated to this injury by a brutal passion for Lucy!

And she! He could not for a moment endure the maddening thought that she

had given him the slightest encouragement. But was she not informed of

his designs? Could he have conceived his infamous purpose, and have

advanced so far towards its completion, without her knowledge? And Lucy,

his own beloved, had never uttered a syllable to him concerning it!

These reflections prevailing in his mind, he passed by his own house,

which was situated in the centre of the village, and arrived at that of

Lucy, which was at the opposite extremity. It had a small court-yard in

front, which separated it from the road, and which was encircled by a

low wall. Entering the yard, Renzo heard a confused murmur of voices in

the upper chamber; he rightly supposed it to be the wedding company,

and he could not resolve to appear before them with such a countenance.

A little girl, who was standing at the door, ran towards him, crying

out, "The bridegroom! the bridegroom!" "Hush, Betsy, hush," said Renzo,

"come hither; go to Lucy, and whisper in her ear--but let no one hear

you--whisper in her ear, that I wish to speak with her in the lower

chamber, and that she must come at once." The little girl hastily

ascended the stairs, proud of having a secret commission to execute.

Lucy had just come forth, adorned from the hands of her mother, and

surrounded by her admiring friends. These were playfully endeavouring to

steal a look at the blooming bride; while she, with the timidity of

rustic modesty, attempted to conceal her blushing countenance with her

bending arm, from beneath which a smiling mouth nevertheless appeared.

Her black tresses, parted on her white forehead, were folded up in

multiplied circles on the back of her head, and fastened with pins of

silver, projecting on every side like the rays of the sun: this is still

the custom of the Milanese peasantry. Around her throat she had a

necklace of garnets, alternated with beads of gold filagree; she wore a

boddice embroidered in flowers, the sleeves tied with ribands; a short

petticoat of silk, with numerous minute plaits; crimson stockings, and

embroidered silk slippers. But beyond all these ornaments was the modest

and beautiful joy depicted on her countenance; a joy, however, troubled

by a slight shade of anxiety. The little Betsy intruded herself into the

circle, managed to approach Lucy, and communicated her message. "I shall

return in a moment," said Lucy to her friends, as she hastily quitted

the room. On perceiving the altered and unquiet appearance of Renzo,

"What is the matter?" said she, not without a presentiment of evil.

"Lucy," replied Renzo, "all is at a stand, and God knows whether we

shall ever be man and wife!"

"How!" said Lucy, alarmed. Renzo related briefly the history of the

morning; she listened with anguish: when he uttered the name of Don

Roderick, "Ah!" exclaimed she, blushing and trembling, "has it then come

to this?"

"Then you knew!" said Renzo.

"Too well," replied Lucy.

"What did you know?"

"Do not make me speak now, do not make me weep! I'll call my mother and

dismiss the company. We must be alone."

As she departed, Renzo whispered, "And you have never spoken of it to

me!"

"Ah, Renzo!" replied Lucy, turning for a moment to gaze at him.

He understood well what this action meant; it was as if she had said,

"Can you doubt me?"

Meanwhile the good Agnes (so the mother of Lucy was called) had

descended the stairs, to ascertain the cause of her daughter's

disappearance. She remained with Renzo; while Lucy returned to the

company, and, assuming all the composure she could, said to them, "The

Signor Curate is indisposed, and the wedding cannot take place to-day."

The ladies departed, and lost no time in relating amongst the gossips of

the neighbourhood all that had occurred, while they made particular

enquiries respecting the reality of Don Abbondio's sickness. The truth

of this cut short the conjectures which they had already begun to

intimate by brief and mysterious hints.

CHAPTER III.

Lucy entered the lower room as Renzo was sorrowfully informing Agnes of

that, to which she as sorrowfully listened. Both turned towards her from

whom they expected an explanation which could not but be painful; the

suspicions of both were, however, excited in the midst of their grief,

and the displeasure they felt towards Lucy differed only according to

their relative situation. Agnes, although anxious to hear her daughter

speak, could not avoid reproaching her--"To say nothing to thy mother!"

"Now, I will tell you all," said Lucy, wiping her eyes with her apron.

"Speak, speak!" cried at once her mother and her lover.

"Holy Virgin!" exclaimed Lucy, "that it should come to this!"--and with

a voice interrupted by tears, she related that a few days previously, as

she returned from weaving, and was loitering behind her companions, Don

Roderick came up with her, in company with another gentleman; that the

former sought to engage her in idle conversation; that she quickened her

pace, without lending him an ear, and rejoined her companions; in the

mean while she heard the other gentleman laugh, and Don Roderick say,

"I'll lay a wager with you." The day following, on their return, they

met them again, but Lucy kept in the midst of her companions, with her

head down; the other gentleman burst into laughter, and Don Roderick

said, "We will see, we will see." "Happily for me," continued Lucy,

"this day was the last of the weaving. I related the adventure

immediately----"

"To whom didst thou relate it?" asked Agnes quickly, indignant at the

idea of any one being preferred before her as a confidant.

"To Father Christopher, in confession, mamma," replied Lucy, in a tone

of apology. "I told him all, the last time you and I went to the church

of the convent; you may perhaps recollect my contrivances for delay on

that morning, until there should pass some villagers in whose company we

might go into the street; because I was so afraid----"

The indignation of Agnes subsided at once, at the mention of a name so

revered as Father Christopher's. "Thou didst well, my child," said she;

"but why not tell it also to thy mother?"

For this, Lucy had had two very good reasons; the one, a desire not to

disturb and frighten her mother with a circumstance she could not have

prevented; the other, the dread of placing a secret, which she wished to

be buried in her own bosom in danger of becoming known to all the

village: of these two reasons she only alleged the first.

"And could I," said she, turning to Renzo, in a gentle and reproachful

voice, "could I speak to you of this?--Alas! that you should know it

now!"

"And what did the Father say to you?" asked Agnes.

"He told me to endeavour to hasten my nuptials, and in the mean while to

keep myself within doors; to pray much to God; and he hoped that if Don

Roderick should not see me, he would cease to think of me. And it was

then," continued she, turning again towards Renzo, without, however,

raising her eyes, and blushing deeply, "it was then that I compelled

myself, at the risk of appearing very forward, to request you to

conclude the marriage before the appointed time. Who can tell what you

must have thought of me? But I did it for the best, and from advice--and

this morning I little thought----" She could articulate no longer, and

burst into a flood of tears.

"Ah! the scoundrel! the villain!" exclaimed Renzo, pacing the room in a

violent paroxysm of rage. He stopped suddenly before Lucy, regarded her

with a countenance agitated by various passions, and said, "This is the

last wicked deed this wretch will perform."

"Ah! no, Renzo, for the love of Heaven!" cried Lucy; "no, no, for the

love of Heaven! There is a God who watches over the oppressed; but do

you think he will protect us if we do evil?"

"No, no, for the love of Heaven!" repeated Agnes.

"Renzo," said Lucy, with a more resolved and tranquil air, "you have a

trade, and I know how to work: let us go away into some distant place,

that he may hear of us no more."

"Ah, Lucy! but we are not yet man and wife! If we were married, then,

indeed----" Lucy relapsed into tears, and all three remained silent; the

deep despondency of their countenances formed a mournful contrast to the

festive character of their dress.

"Hear me, my children; listen to me," said Agnes, after a few moments;

"I came into the world before you, and I know it a little better than

you do. The devil is not so frightful as they paint him. To us poor

people the skeins appear more entangled, because we do not know where

to look for the end; but sometimes advice from a learned man----I know

what I mean to say.--Do as I tell you, Renzo; go to Lecco; find the

Doctor \_Azzecca Garbugli\_[2]; relate to him----But you must not call him

by this name--it is a nick-name. Say to the doctor----what do they call

him? Oh dear! I can't think of his real name, every one calls him

\_Azzecca Garbugli\_. Well, well, find this tall, stiff, bald doctor, with

a red nose, and a face as red----"

[2] Seek quarrel.

"I know the man by sight," said Renzo.

"Well, very well," continued Agnes, "there's a man for you! I have seen

more than one troubled wretch who did not know which way to turn

himself; I have known him remain an hour with the Doctor \_Azzecca

Garbugli\_ (be careful you don't call him so), and go away laughing at

himself for his uneasiness. Take with you these fowls; I expected to

have wrung their necks, poor little things! for the banquet of to-night;

however, carry them to him, because one must never go empty-handed to

these gentlemen. Relate to him all that has happened, and he will tell

you at once that which would never enter our heads in a year."

Renzo and Lucy approved of this advice; Agnes, proud of having given it,

with great complacency took the poor fowls one by one from the coop,

tied their legs together as if she were making a nosegay, and consigned

them to his hands. After having exchanged words of hope, he departed,

avoiding the high road and crossing the fields, so as not to attract

notice. As he went along, he had leisure to dwell on his misfortunes,

and revolve in his mind his anticipated interview with the Doctor

\_Azzecca Garbugli\_. I leave the reader to imagine the condition of the

unfortunate fowls swinging by the legs with their heads downwards in the

hands of a man agitated by all the tumults of passion; and whose arm

moved more in accordance with the violence of his feelings, than with

sympathy for the unhappy animals whose heads became conscious of sundry

terrific shocks, which they resented by pecking at one another,--a

practice too frequent with companions in misfortune.

He arrived at the village, asked for the house of the doctor, which

being pointed out to him, he proceeded thither. On entering, he

experienced the timidity so common to the poor and illiterate at the

near approach to the learned and noble; he forgot all the speeches he

had prepared, but giving a glance at the fowls, he took courage. He

entered the kitchen, and demanded of the maid servant, "If he could

speak with the Signor Doctor?" As if accustomed to similar gifts, she

immediately took the fowls out of his hand, although Renzo drew them

back, wishing the doctor to know that it was he who brought them. The

doctor entered as the maid was saying, "Give here, and pass into the

study." Renzo bowed low to him; he replied with a kind "Come in, my

son," and led the way into an adjoining chamber. This was a large room,

on the three walls of which were distributed portraits of the twelve

Cæsars, while the fourth was covered with a large bookcase of old and

dusty books; in the middle stood a table laden with memorials, libels,

and proclamations, with three or four seats around; on one side of it

was a large arm-chair with a high and square back, terminated at each

corner by ornaments of wood in the fashion of horns; the nails which had

fallen out here and there from its leathern covering, left the corners

of it at liberty to roll themselves up in all directions. The doctor was

in his morning gown, that is, enveloped in a faded toga, which had

served him long since to appear in at Milan, on some great occasion. He

closed the door, and encouraged the young man with these words: "My son,

tell me your case."

"I wish to speak a word to you in confidence."

"Well, say on," replied the doctor, as he seated himself in the

arm-chair. Renzo stood before the table twirling his hat in his hand,

and began, "I wish to know from one as learned as yourself----"

"Tell me the affair just as it is," interrupted the doctor, "in as few

words as possible."

"You must pardon me, Signor Doctor; we poor people know not how to speak

to such as you are. I wish then to know----"

"Bless the people! they are all alike; instead of relating facts, they

ask questions; and that because their own opinions are already settled!"

"Excuse me, Signor Doctor. I wish, then, to know if there is a

punishment for threatening a curate, to prevent him from performing a

marriage ceremony?"

"I understand," said the doctor, who in truth had \_not\_ understood--"I

understand." And suddenly assuming an air of seriousness and importance,

"A serious case, my son--a case contemplated. You have done well to come

to me; it is a clear case, noticed in a hundred proclamations, and in

one, of the year just elapsed, by the actual governor. You shall see,

you shall see! Where can it be?" said he, plunging his hand amidst the

chaos of papers; "it must surely be here, as it is a decree of great

importance. Ah! here it is, here it is!" He unfolded it, looked at the

date, and with a serious face exclaimed, "Fifteenth of October, 1627.

Yes, yes, this is it; a new edict; these are those which cause

terror--Do you know how to read, my son?"

"A little, Signor Doctor."

"Well now, come behind me, and you will see for yourself."

Holding the proclamation extended before him, he began to read,

stammering rapidly over some passages, and pausing distinctly with great

expression on others, according to the necessity of the case.

"\_Although by the proclamation published by order of the Signor Duke di

Feria, on the 14th of December, 1620, and ratified by the most

illustrious, and most excellent lord, Signor Gonsalez Fernandez de

Cordova,\_ &c. &c.--\_had by extraordinary and rigorous remedies provided

against the oppressions, exactions, and other tyrannical acts committed

against the devoted vassals of His Majesty; the frequency of the

excesses, however,\_ &c. &c., \_has arrived at such a point that His

Excellency is under the necessity,\_ &c. &c.\_--wherefore, with the

concurrence of the Senate and Convention,\_ &c. &c.\_--has resolved to

publish the present decree." "And from the tyrannical acts which the

skill of many in the villages, as well as in the cities.\_"--"Do you

hear"--umph--"\_exact and oppress the weak in various ways, making

violent contracts of purchase, of rent,\_ &c."--"Where is it? Ah! here it

is, listen, listen,"--"\_who, whether matrimony follow or not\_."

"Ah! that's my case!" said Renzo.

"Listen, listen, here is more; now we will find the punishment."

Umph--"\_that they leave the place of their abode\_, &c. &c.--\_that if one

pays a debt he must not be molested\_." "All this has nothing to do with

us. Ah! here it is!" "\_the priest refusing to do that to which he is

obliged by his office\_,"--"Eh?"

"It appears the proclamation was made purposely for me."

"Ah! is it not so? listen, listen." "\_And other similar oppressions

which flow from the vassals, nobility, middle and lower classes.\_" "None

escape, they are all here--it is like the valley of Jehoshaphat. Hear

now the penalty." "\_For all these and other similar evil deeds, which

having been prohibited, it is nevertheless necessary to exact with

rigour\_, &c.--\_His Excellency, not annulling, orders and commands, that

whoever the offenders be, they shall be subjected to pecuniary and

corporal punishment--to banishment, the galleys, or to death\_," "a mere

trifle!" "\_at the will of His Excellency, or of the Senate. And from

this there is no escape\_, &c. &c." "And see here the signature,"

"\_Gonsalez Fernandez de Cordova\_;" "and lower down," "\_Platonas\_;" "and

here again"--"\_Videt Ferrar\_," "nothing is wanting." Whilst the doctor

was reading, Renzo had kept his eyes on the paper, seeking to ascertain

for himself its real meaning. The doctor, perceiving his new client more

attentive than dismayed, marvelled greatly. "He must be enrolled as one

of the bravoes," said he to himself; "Ah! ah!" exclaimed he, addressing

Renzo, "you have shaved off the long lock! Well, well, it was prudent;

but placing yourself in my hands, you need not have done so. The case is

a serious one--you can have no idea how much resolution is required to

conduct these matters wisely."

To understand this mistake of the doctor's, it should be known, that the

bravoes by profession used to wear a long lock of hair, which they

pulled over the face as a mask in enterprises that required prudence as

well as strength. The proclamation had not been silent with regard to

this custom.

"\_His Excellency commands, that whosoever shall wear hair of such a

length as to cover the forehead to the eyebrows, will incur the penalty

of a fine of three hundred crowns; in case of incapability of payment,

three years in the galleys for the first offence; and for the second, in

addition to the aforesaid, greater punishments still, at the will of His

Excellency.\_" The long lock had become a distinctive mark of the loose

and disorderly.

"Indeed, indeed," replied Renzo, "I have never worn a long lock in my

life."

"I can do nothing," replied the doctor, shaking his head, with a knowing

and rather impatient smile, "nothing, if you do not trust me. He who

utters falsehoods to the doctor is a fool who will tell the truth to the

judge. It is necessary to relate things plainly to the lawyer, but it

rests with us to render them more intricate. If you wish me to help you,

you must tell all from beginning to end, as to your confessor: you must

name the person who commissioned you to do the deed; doubtless he is a

person of consequence; and, considering this, I will go to his house to

perform an act of duty. I will not betray you at all, be assured; I will

tell him I come to implore his protection for a poor calumniated youth;

and we will together use the necessary means to finish the affair in a

satisfactory manner. You understand; in securing himself, he will

likewise secure you. If, however, the business has been all your own, I

will not withdraw my protection: I have extricated others from worse

difficulties; provided you have not offended a person of

\_consequence\_;--you understand--I engage to free you from all

embarrassment, with a little expense--you understand. As to the curate,

if he is a person of judgment, he will keep his own counsel; if he is a

fool, we will take care of him. One may escape clear out of every

trouble; but for this, a \_man\_, a \_man\_ is necessary. Your case is a

very, very serious one--the edict speaks plainly; and if the thing

rested between you and the law, to be candid, it would go hard with you.

If you wish to pass smoothly--money and obedience!"

Whilst the doctor poured forth this rhapsody, Renzo had been regarding

him with mute astonishment, as the countryman watches the juggler, whom

he sees cramming his mouth with handful after handful of tow; when, lo!

he beholds immediately drawn forth from the same mouth a never-ending

line of riband. When at last he perceived his meaning, he interrupted

him with, "Oh! Signor Doctor, how you have misunderstood me! the matter

is directly the reverse; I have threatened no one--not I--I never do

such things; ask my companions, all of them, and they will tell you I

never had any thing to do with the law. The injury is mine, and I have

come to you to know how I can obtain justice, and am well satisfied to

have seen this proclamation."

"The devil!" exclaimed the doctor, opening wide his eyes; "what a cock

and a bull story you have made! So it is; you are all alike: is it

possible you can't tell a plain fact?"

"But, Signor Doctor, you must pardon me, you have not given me time; now

I will tell you all. Know, then, that I was to have been married

to-day"--and here his voice trembled--"was to have been married to-day

to a young person to whom I have been some time betrothed; to-day was

the day fixed upon by the Signor Curate, and every thing was in

readiness. The Signor Curate began to make excuses--and--not to weary

you--I compelled him to tell me the cause; and he confessed that he had

been forbidden, on pain of death, to perform the ceremony. This powerful

Don Roderick----"

"Eh!" hastily interrupted the doctor, contracting his brow and wrinkling

his red nose, "away with you; what have I to do with these idle stories?

Tell them to your companions, and not to one of my condition. Begone; do

you think I have nothing to do but listen to tales of this sort----"

"I protest----"

"Begone, I say; what have I to do with your protestations? I wash my

hands from them!" and pacing the room, he rubbed his hands together, as

if really performing that act. "Hereafter learn when to speak; and do

not take a gentleman by surprise."

"But hear me, hear me," vainly repeated Renzo.

The doctor, still growling, pushed him towards the door, set it wide

open, called the maid, and said to her, "Return this man immediately

what he brought, I will have nothing to do with it." The woman had never

before been required to execute a similar order, but she did not

hesitate to obey; she took the fowls and gave them to Renzo with a

compassionate look, as if she had said, "You certainly have made some

very great blunder." Renzo wished to make apologies; but the doctor was

immovable. Confounded, therefore, and more enraged than ever, he took

back the fowls and departed, to render an account of the ill success of

his expedition.

At his departure, Agnes and Lucy had exchanged their nuptial robes for

their humble daily habits, and then, sorrowful and dejected, occupied

themselves in suggesting fresh projects. Agnes expected great results

from Renzo's visit to the doctor; Lucy thought that it would be well to

let Father Christopher know what had happened, as he was a man who would

not only advise, but assist whenever he could serve the unfortunate;

Agnes assented, but how was it to be accomplished? the convent was two

miles distant, and at this time \_they\_ certainly could neither of them

hazard a walk thither. Whilst they were weighing the difficulties, some

one knocked at the door, and they heard a low but distinct \_Deo

Gracias\_. Lucy, imagining who it was, hastened to open it; and, bowing

low, there entered a capuchin collector of contributions, with his

wallet swung over his left shoulder. "Oh! brother Galdino!" said Agnes.

"The Lord be with you," said the brother; "I come for your contribution

of nuts."

"Go, get the nuts for the fathers," said Agnes. Lucy obeyed; but before

she quitted the room, she gave her mother a kind and impressive look, as

much as to say, "Be secret."

The capuchin, looking significantly at Agnes, said, "And the wedding? It

was to have taken place to-day; what has happened?"

"The curate is sick, and we are obliged to defer it," replied the dame,

in haste; "but what success in the contributions?" continued she,

anxious to change the subject, which she would willingly have prolonged,

but for Lucy's earnest look.

"Very poor, good dame, very poor. This is all," said he, swinging the

wallet from his shoulder--"this is all; and for this I have been obliged

to knock at ten doors."

"But the year is a scarce one, brother Galdino, and when we have to

struggle for bread, our alms are necessarily small."

"If we wish abundance to return, my good dame, we must give alms. Do you

not know the miracle of the nuts, which happened many years ago in our

convent of Romagna?"

"No, in truth; tell me."

"Well you must know, then, that in this convent there was one of our

fathers who was a saint; he was called Father Macario. One winter's day,

passing by a field of one of our patrons,--a worthy man he was,--he saw

him standing near a large nut tree, and four peasants with their axes

raised to level it to the ground. 'What are you doing to the poor tree?'

demanded father Macario. 'Why, father, it is unfruitful, and I am about

to cut it down.' 'Do not do so, do not do so,' said the father; 'I tell

you that next year it will bear more nuts than leaves. The master

ordered the workmen to throw at once the earth on the roots which had

been already bared; and, calling after the Father Macario, said, 'Father

Macario, the half of the crop shall be for the convent.' The prediction

was noised about, and every one went to look at the tree. In fact, when

spring arrived, there were flowers in abundance, and afterwards nuts in

abundance! But there was a greater miracle yet, as you shall hear. The

owner, who, before the nut season, was called hence to enjoy the fruits

of his charity, left a son of a very different character from himself.

Now, at the time of harvest, the collector went to receive his appointed

portion; but the son affected entire ignorance, and presumptuously

replied, he never had understood that the capuchins knew how to make

nuts. Now guess what happened then. One day he had invited to dinner

some friends, and, making merry, he amused them with the story of the

nuts; they desired to visit his granary, to behold his abundance; he led

the way, advanced towards the corner where they had been placed,

looked--and what do you think he saw?--a heap of dry nut leaves! Was not

this a miracle? And the convent gained, instead of suffering loss; the

profusion of nuts bestowed upon it in consequence was so great, that one

of our patrons, compassionating the poor collector, gave him a mule to

assist in carrying them home. And so much oil was made, that it was

freely given to the poor; like the sea, which receives waters from every

part, and distributes abundantly to the rivers."

Lucy now reappeared with her apron so loaded with nuts, that she could

with difficulty support the burthen. Whilst Friar Galdino untied his

wallet to receive them, Agnes cast an astonished and displeased glance

at her for her prodigality; she returned it with a look which seemed to

say, "I will satisfy you." The friar was liberal of thanks, and,

replacing his wallet, was about to depart, when Lucy called him back. "I

wish you to do me a service," said she; "I wish you to say to Father

Christopher that I have a great desire to speak with him, and request

him to have the goodness to come hither immediately, as it is impossible

for me to go to the convent."

"Willingly; an hour shall not elapse before Father Christopher shall be

informed of your wish."

"I rely on you."

"Trust me," said he, "I will be faithful," and moved off, bending under

the increased weight of his wallet. We must not suppose, from the

readiness with which Lucy sent this request to Father Christopher, and

the equal readiness of Father Galdino to carry it, that the father was a

person of no consequence; on the contrary, he was a man of much

authority amongst his companions, and throughout all the neighbourhood.

To serve the feeble, and to be served by the powerful; to enter the

palace and the hut; to be at one time a subject of pastime, and at

another regarded with profound respect; to seek alms, and to bestow

them;--to all these vicissitudes a capuchin was well accustomed. The

name of \_Friar\_, at this period, was uttered with the greatest respect,

and with the most bitter contempt; of both of which sentiments, perhaps,

the capuchins were, more than any other order, the objects. They

possessed no property, wore a coarser habit than others, and made a more

open profession of humility; they therefore exposed themselves, in a

greater degree, to the veneration or the scorn which might result from

the various characters among men.

The Friar Galdino being gone, "Such a quantity of nuts!" exclaimed

Agnes, "and in a year of scarcity!"--"I beg pardon," replied Lucy; "but

if we had been as penurious as others in our charity, who can tell how

long the friar would have been in reaching home, or, amongst all the

gossipings, whether he would have remembered----"

"True, true, it was a good thought; and besides, charity always produces

good fruit," said Agnes, who, with all her defects, was a kind-hearted

woman, and would have sacrificed every thing she had in the world for

the sake of her child, in whom she had reposed all her happiness.

Renzo entered at this moment, with an angry and mortified countenance.

"Pretty advice you gave me!" said he to Agnes. "You sent me to a fine

man, indeed! to one truly who aids the distressed!" And he briefly

related his interview with the doctor. The dame, astonished at the

issue, endeavoured to prove that the advice was good, and that the

failure must have been owing to Renzo himself. Lucy interrupted the

debate, by informing him of her message to Father Christopher: he seized

with avidity the new hopes inspired by the expectation of assistance

from so holy a man. "But if the father," said he, "should not extricate

us from our difficulties, I will do it myself by some means or other."

Both mother and daughter implored him to be patient and prudent.

"To-morrow," said Lucy, "Father Christopher will certainly be here, and

he will no doubt suggest to us some plan of action which we ourselves

would not have thought of in a year."

"I hope so," said Renzo; "but if not, I will obtain redress, or find

another to do it for me; for surely there must be justice to be had in

the world."

Their mournful conversation might have continued much longer, but

approaching night warned him to depart.

"Good night!" said Lucy mournfully, to Renzo, who could hardly resolve

to go.

"Good night!" replied he, yet more sadly.

"Some saint will watch over us," said she. "Be patient and prudent." The

mother added some advice of the like nature. But the disappointed

bridegroom, with a tempest in his heart, left them, repeating the

strange proposition--"Surely, there's justice in the world." So true is

it that, under the influence of great misfortune, men no longer know

what they say.

CHAPTER IV.

The sun had not yet risen above the horizon, when Father Christopher

left the convent of Pescarenico, to go to the cottage where he was so

anxiously expected. Pescarenico is a small hamlet on the left bank of

the Adda, or, rather, of the Lake, a few steps below the bridge; a group

of houses, inhabited for the most part by fishermen, and adorned here

and there with nets spread out to dry. The convent was situated (the

building still subsists) at a short distance from them, half way between

Lecco and Bergamo.

The sky was clear and serene. As the sun rose behind the mountain, its

rays brightened the opposite summits, and thence rapidly spread

themselves over the declivities and valleys; a light autumn breeze

played through the leaves of the mulberry trees, and brought them to the

ground. The vineyards were still brilliant with leaves of various hues;

and the newly made nets appeared brown and distinct amid the fields of

stubble, which were white and shining with the dew. The scene was

beautiful; but the misery of the inhabitants formed a sad contrast to

it. At every moment you met pale and ragged beggars, some grown old in

the trade, others youthful, and induced to it from extreme necessity.

They passed quietly by Father Christopher, and although they had nothing

to hope from him, since a capuchin never touches money, they bowed low

in thanks for the alms they had received, or might hereafter receive at

the convent. The spectacle of the labourers scattered in the fields was

still more mournful; some were sowing thinly and sparingly their seed,

as if hazarding that which was too precious; others put the spade into

the earth with difficulty, and wearily turned up the clods. The pale and

sickly child was leading the meagre cattle to the pasture ground, and as

he went along plucked carefully the herbs found in his path, as food for

his family. This melancholy picture of human misery increased the

sadness of Father Christopher, who, when he left the convent, had been

filled with presentiments of evil.

But why did he feel so much for Lucy? And why, at the first notice, did

he hasten to her with as much solicitude as if he had been sent for by

the Father Provincial. And who was this Father Christopher? We must

endeavour to satisfy all these enquiries.

Father Christopher, of ----, was a man nearer sixty than fifty years of

age. His head was shaven, with the exception of the band of hair allowed

to grow round it like a crown, as was the custom of the capuchins; the

expression of his countenance was habitually that of deep humility,

although occasionally there passed over it flashes of pride and

inquietude, which were, however, succeeded by a deeper shade of

self-reproach and lowliness. His long grey beard gave more character to

the shape of the upper part of his head, on which habitual abstinence

had stamped a strong expression of gravity. His sunken eyes were for the

most part bent to the earth, but brightened at times with unexpected

vivacity, which he ever appeared to endeavour to repress. His name,

before entering the convent, had been Ludovico; he was the son of a

merchant of ----, who, having accumulated great wealth, had renounced

trade in the latter part of his life, and having resolved to live like a

gentleman, he studied every means to cause his former mode of life to

be forgotten by those around him. He could not, however, forget it

himself; the shop, the goods, the day-book, the yard measure, rose to

his memory, like the shade of Banquo to Macbeth, amidst the pomp of the

table and the smiles of his parasites; whose continual effort it was to

avoid any word which might appear to allude to the former condition of

the host. Ludovico was his only child: he caused him to be nobly

educated, as far as the laws and customs permitted him to do so; and

died, bequeathing him a splendid fortune. Ludovico had contracted the

habits and feelings of a gentleman, and the flatterers who had

surrounded him from infancy had accustomed him to the greatest deference

and respect. But he found the scene changed when he attempted to mingle

with the nobility of the city; and that in order to live in their

company he must school himself to patience and submission, and bear with

contumely on every occasion. This agreed neither with his education nor

his disposition. He retired from them in disgust, but unwillingly,

feeling that such should naturally have been his companions; he then

resolved to outdo them in pomp and magnificence, thereby increasing the

enmity with which they had already regarded him. His open and violent

nature soon engaged him in more serious contests: he sincerely abhorred

the extortions and injuries committed by those to whom he had opposed

himself; he therefore habitually took part with the weak against the

powerful, so that by degrees he had constituted himself the defender of

the oppressed, and the vindicator of their wrongs. The office was

onerous; and fruitful in evil thoughts, quarrels, and enmities against

himself. But, besides this external warfare, he perhaps suffered still

more from inward conflicts; for often, in order to compass his objects,

he was obliged to adopt measures of circumvention and violence, which

his conscience disapproved. He was under the painful necessity of

keeping in pay a band of ruffians for his own security, as well as to

aid him in his enterprises; and for these purposes he was necessarily

obliged to select the boldest, that is, the vilest, and to live with

vagabonds from a love of justice; so that, disgusted with the world and

its conflicts, he had many times seriously thought of entering some

monastery, and retiring from it for ever. Such intentions were more

strongly entertained on the failure of some of his enterprises, or the

perception of his own danger, or the annoyance of his vicious

associates, and would probably have still continued \_intentions\_, but

for one of the most serious and terrible events of his hazardous mode of

life.

He was walking one day through the streets of the city, accompanied by a

former shopman, who had been transformed by his father into a steward,

followed by two bravoes. The name of the shopman was Christopher; he was

a man about fifty years of age, devoted to the master whom he had tended

in infancy, and upon whose liberality he supported himself, his wife,

and a large family of children. Ludovico saw a gentleman approaching at

a distance, with whom he had never spoken in his life, but whom he hated

for his arrogance and pride, which hatred the other cordially returned.

He had in his train four bravoes; he advanced with a haughty step, and

an expression of insolence and disdain on his countenance. It was

Ludovico's right, being on the left side, to pass nearest the wall,

according to the custom of the day, and every one was tenacious of this

privilege. As they met they stopped face to face, like two figures on a

bass relief, neither of them being disposed to yield to the other. The

gentleman, eyeing Ludovico proudly and imperiously, said, with a

corresponding tone of voice, "Pass on the outside."

"Pass there yourself," replied Ludovico, "the street is mine."

"With persons of your condition the street is always mine."

"Yes, if your arrogance were a law to others."

The attendants of each stood still, with their hands on their daggers,

prepared for battle. The passers-by retreated to a distance to watch the

event.

"Pass on, vile mechanic, or I will teach you the civility due to a

gentleman."

"You lie; I am not vile."

"Ha! Do you give me the lie? If you were a gentleman I would soon settle

matters with my sword."

"You are a coward also, or you would not hesitate to support by deeds

the insolence of your words."

"Throw this rascal in the dirt," said the gentleman, turning to his

followers.

"Let us see who will dare to do so," said Ludovico, stepping back and

laying his hand on his sword.

"Rash man," cried the other, unsheathing his own, "I will break this in

pieces when it shall have been stained with your base blood."

They rushed violently on each other; the servants of both sprang to the

defence of their masters. The combat was unequal in numbers, and also

unequal from Ludovico's desire to defend himself rather than to wound

his enemy; whilst the latter intended nothing less than murder. Ludovico

was warding off the dagger of one of the bravoes, after having received

a slight scratch on the cheek, when his enemy thrust at him from behind;

Christopher, seeing his master's peril, went to his assistance; upon

this the anger of the enraged cavalier was turned against the shopman,

and he thrust him through the heart with his sword. Ludovico, as if

beside himself at the sight, buried his weapon in the breast of the

murderer, who fell almost at the same instant with the poor Christopher!

The attendants of the gentleman, beholding him on the ground, took to

flight; and Ludovico found himself alone, in the midst of a crowd, with

two bodies lying at his feet.

"What has happened? One--two--he has been thrust through the body. Who

is killed? A nobleman.--Holy Virgin! what destruction! who seeks,

finds.--A moment pays all.--What a wound!--It must have been a serious

affair!--And this unfortunate man!--Mercy! what a spectacle!--Save, save

him.--It will go hard with him also.--See how he is wounded--he is

covered with blood!--Escape, poor man, escape; do not let yourself be

taken." These words expressed the common suffrage, and with advice came

also assistance; the affair had taken place near a church of the

capuchins, an asylum impenetrable to the officers of justice. The

murderer, bleeding and stupified, was carried thither by the crowd; the

brotherhood received him from their hands with this recommendation, "He

is an honest man who has made a proud rascal cold; but he did it in his

own defence."

Ludovico had never before shed blood, and although in these times murder

was a thing so common that all ceased to wonder at it, yet the

impression which he received from the recollection of the dying (dying

through his instrumentality,) was new and indescribable; a revelation of

feelings hitherto unknown. The fall of his enemy, the alteration of

those features, passing in a moment from angry threatenings to the

solemn stillness of death; this was a spectacle which wrought an

instantaneous change in the soul of the murderer. Whilst they were

carrying him to the convent he had been insensible to what was passing;

returning to his senses, he found himself in a bed of the infirmary, in

the hands of a friar who was dressing his wounds. Another, whose

particular duty it was to administer comfort to the dying, had been

called to the scene of combat. He returned in a short time, and

approaching Ludovico's bed, said, "Console yourself; he has died in

peace, has forgiven you, and hoped for your forgiveness." At these words

the soul of Ludovico was filled with remorse and sorrow. "And the

other?" asked he anxiously.

"The other had expired before I arrived."

In the mean time the avenues and environs of the convent swarmed with

people; the officers of justice arrived, dispersed the crowd, and placed

themselves in ambush at a short distance from the gates, so that no one

could pass through them unobserved. A brother of the deceased and some

of his family appeared in full armour with a large attendance of

bravoes, and surrounded the place, watching with a threatening aspect

the bystanders, who did not dare say, he is safe, but they had it

written on their faces.

Scarcely had Ludovico recalled his scattered thoughts, when he asked for

a father confessor, prayed him to seek out the widow of Christopher, to

ask forgiveness in his name for having been (however involuntarily) the

cause of her affliction, and to assure her that he would take the care

of her family on himself. Reflecting further on his own situation, his

determination was made to become a friar. It seemed as if God himself

had willed it, by placing him in a convent at such a conjuncture. He

immediately sent for the superior of the monastery, and expressed to him

his intention. He replied to him, that he should be careful not to form

a resolution precipitately, but that, if he persisted, he would be

accepted. Ludovico then sent for a notary, and made a donation of all

his estate to the widow and family of Christopher.

The resolution of Ludovico happened opportunely for his hosts, who felt

themselves embarrassed concerning him. To send him from the monastery,

and thus expose him to justice and the vengeance of his enemies, was not

to be thought of a moment; it would be the same as a renunciation of

their privileges, a discrediting of the convent amongst the people; and

they would draw upon themselves the animadversion of all the capuchins

of the universe for this relinquishment of the rights of the order, this

defiance of the ecclesiastical authorities, who then considered

themselves the guardians of these rights. On the other hand, the family

of the deceased, rich, and powerful in adherents, were determined on

vengeance, and disposed to consider as enemies whoever should place

obstacles to its accomplishment. History declares, not that they grieved

much for the dead, or that a single tear was shed for him amongst his

whole race, but that they were urged on by scenting the blood of his

opponent. But Ludovico, by assuming the habit of a capuchin, removed all

difficulties: to a certain degree he made atonement; imposed on himself

penitence; confessed his fault; withdrew from the contest; he was, in

short, an enemy who laid down his arms. The relations of the deceased

could, if they pleased, believe and boast that he had become a friar

through despair and dread of their revenge. And at all events, to reduce

a man to dispossess himself of his wealth, to shave his head, to walk

bare-footed, to sleep on straw, and to live on alms, might appear a

punishment competent to the offence.

The superior presented himself before the brother of the deceased with

an air of humility; after a thousand protestations of respect for his

illustrious house, and of desire to comply with its wishes as far as was

practicable, he spoke of the repentance and resolution of Ludovico,

politely hoping that the family would grant their accordance; and then

insinuating, mildly and dexterously, that, agreeable or not agreeable,

the thing would take place. After some little vapouring, he agreed to it

on one condition; that the murderer of his brother should depart

immediately from the city. To this the capuchin assented, as if in

obedience to the wishes of the family, although it had been already so

determined. The affair was thus concluded to the satisfaction of the

illustrious house, of the capuchin brotherhood, of the popular feeling,

and, above all, of our generous penitent himself. Thus, at thirty years

of age, Ludovico bade farewell to the world; and having, according to

custom, to change his name, he took one which would continually recall

to him his crime,--thus he became \_Friar Christopher\_!

Hardly was the ceremony of assuming the habit completed, when the

superior informed him he must depart on the morrow to perform his

noviciate at ----, sixty miles' distance. The noviciate bowed

submissively. "Permit me, father," said he, "before I leave the scene of

my crime, to do all that rests with me now to repair the evil; permit me

to go to the house of the brother of him whom I have murdered, to

acknowledge my fault, and ask forgiveness; perhaps God will take away

his but too just resentment."

It appeared to the superior that such an act, besides being praiseworthy

in itself, would serve still more to reconcile the family to the

monastery. He therefore bore the request himself to the brother of the

murdered man; a proposal so unexpected was received with a mixture of

scorn and complacency. "Let him come to-morrow," said he, and appointed

the hour. The superior returned to Father Christopher with the desired

permission.

The gentleman reflected that the more solemn and public the apology was,

the more it would enhance his credit with the family and the world; he

made known in haste to the members of the family, that on the following

day they should assemble at his house to receive a common satisfaction.

At mid-day the palace swarmed with nobility of either sex; there was a

blending of veils, feathers, and jewels; a heavy motion of starched and

crisped bands; a confused entangling of embroidered trains. The

antechambers, the courts, and the street, were crowded with servants,

pages, and bravoes.

Father Christopher experienced a momentary agitation at beholding all

this preparation, but recovering himself, said, "It is well; the deed

was committed in public, the reparation should be public." Then, with

his eyes bent to the earth, and the father, his companion, at his elbow,

he crossed the court, amidst a crowd who eyed him with unceremonious

curiosity; he entered, ascended the stairs, and passing through another

crowd of lords, who made way for him at his approach, he advanced

towards the master of the mansion, who stood in the middle of the room

waiting to receive him, with downcast looks, grasping with one hand the

hilt of his sword, and with the other pressing the cape of his Spanish

cloak on his breast. The countenance and deportment of Father

Christopher made an immediate impression on the company; so that all

were convinced that he had not submitted to this humiliation from fear

of man. He threw himself on his knees before him whom he had most

injured, crossed his hands on his breast, and bending his head,

exclaimed, "I am the murderer of your brother! God knows, that to

restore him to life I would sacrifice my own; but as this cannot be, I

supplicate you to accept my useless and late apology, for the love of

God!"

All eyes were fixed in breathless and mute attention on the novice, and

on the person to whom he addressed himself; there was heard through the

crowd a murmur of pity and respect; the angry scorn of the nobleman

relaxed at this appeal, and bending towards the kneeling supplicant,

"Rise," said he, with a troubled voice. "The offence--the deed

truly--but the habit you wear--not only this--but on your own

account--rise, father!--my brother--I cannot deny it--was a cavalier--of

a hasty temper. Do not speak of it again. But, father, you must not

remain in this posture." And he took him by the arm to raise him. Father

Christopher, standing with his eyes still bent to the ground, continued,

"I may, then, hope that you have granted me your pardon. And if I obtain

it from you, from whom may I not expect it? Oh! if I could hear you

utter the word!"

"Pardon!" said the nobleman; "I pardon you with all my heart, and

all----" turning to the company----"All! all!" resounded at once through

the room.

The countenance of the father expanded with joy, under which, however,

was still visible an humble and profound compunction for the evil, which

the remission of men could not repair. The nobleman, entirely

vanquished, threw his arms around his neck, and the kiss of peace was

given and received.

Loud exclamations of applause burst from the company; and all crowded

eagerly around the father. In the meanwhile the servants entered,

bearing refreshments; the master of the mansion, again addressing Father

Christopher, said, "Father, afford me a proof of your friendship by

accepting some of these trifles."

"Such things are no longer for me," replied the father; "but if you will

allow me a loaf of bread, as a memorial of your charity and your

forgiveness, I shall be thankful." The bread was brought, and with an

air of humble gratitude he put it in his basket. He then took leave of

the company; disentangled himself with difficulty from the crowd in the

antechambers, who would have kissed the hem of his garment, and pursued

his way to the gate of the city, whence he commenced his pedestrian

journey towards the place of his noviciate.

It is not our design to write the history of his cloistral life; we will

only say, he executed faithfully the offices ordinarily assigned to him,

of preaching, and of comforting the dying; but beyond these, "the

oppressor's wrongs, the proud man's contumely," aroused in him a spirit

of resistance which humiliation and remorse had not been able entirely

to extinguish. His countenance was habitually mild and humble, but

occasionally there passed over it a shade of former impetuosity, which

was with difficulty restrained by the high and holy motives which now

predominated in his soul. His tone of voice was gentle as his

countenance; but in the cause of justice and truth, his language assumed

a character of solemnity and emphasis singularly impressive. One who

knew him well, and admired his virtues, could often perceive, by the

smothered utterance or the change of a single word, the inward conflict

between the natural impetus and the resolved will, which latter never

failed to gain the mastery.

If one unknown to him in the situation of Lucy had implored his

assistance, he would have granted it immediately; with how much more

solicitude, then, did he direct his steps to the cottage, knowing and

admiring her innocence, trembling for her danger, and experiencing a

lively indignation at the persecution of which she had become the

object. Besides, he had advised her to remain quiet, and not make known

the conduct of her persecutor, and he felt or feared that his advice

might have been productive of bad consequences. His anxiety for her

welfare, and his inadequate means to secure it, called up many painful

feelings, which the good often experience.

But while we have been relating his history, he arrived at the dwelling;

Agnes and her daughter advanced eagerly towards him, exclaiming in one

breath, "Oh! Father Christopher, you are welcome."

CHAPTER V.

Father Christopher perceived immediately, from the countenances of Lucy

and her mother, that some evil had occurred. "Is all well with you?"

said he. Lucy replied by a flood of tears. "Quiet yourself, poor child,"

continued he; "and do you," turning to Agnes, "tell me what is the

matter." Whilst the good dame proceeded with the melancholy relation, he

experienced a variety of painful emotions. The story being done, he

buried his face in his hands, and exclaimed, "Oh, blessed God! how

long?"--He then turned to Lucy; "Poor child! God has, indeed, visited

you," said he.

"You will not abandon us, father?" said Lucy, sobbing.

"Abandon you!" replied he. "How should I dare ask the protection

of Almighty God for myself, if I abandoned \_you\_! You, so

defenceless!--you, whom he has confided to me! Take courage! He will

assist you--His eye beholds you--He can even make use of a feeble

instrument like myself to confound a ----. Let us think what can be

done."

Thus saying, he grasped his beard and chin with his hand, as if to

concentrate more completely the powers of his mind. But the more clearly

he perceived the pressing nature of the case, the more uncertain and

dangerous appeared every mode of meeting it. To endeavour to make Don

Abbondio sensible of a failure in duty? This appeared hopeless; fear was

more powerful with him than either shame or duty. To inform the cardinal

archbishop, and invoke his authority? That would require time; and, in

the meanwhile, what was to be done? To resist Don Roderick? How?

Impossible! The affair being one of a private nature, he would not be

sustained by the brethren of his order: he would, perhaps, be raising a

storm against himself; and, what was worse, by a useless attempt render

the condition of Lucy more hopeless and deplorable. After many

reflections he came to the conclusion to go to Don Roderick himself, and

to endeavour by prayers and representations of the punishments of the

wicked in another state, to win him from his infamous purpose. At least

he might at the interview discover something of his intentions, and

determine his measures accordingly. At this moment Renzo, who, as the

reader will readily imagine, could not long be absent at so interesting

a crisis, appeared at the door of the room; the father raised his head

and bowed to him affectionately, and with a look of intense pity.

"Have they told you, father?" enquired he, with a troubled voice.

"Yes, my son; and on that account I am here."

"What do you say of the villain?"

"What do I say of \_him\_? I say to \_you\_, dear Renzo, that you must

confide in God, and He will not abandon you."

"Blessed words!" exclaimed the youth: "you are not one of those who

wrong the poor. But the curate and this doctor----"

"Do not torment yourself uselessly: I am but a poor friar; but I repeat

to you that which I have already said to Lucy and her mother--poor as I

am, I will never abandon you."

"Oh! you are not like the friends of the world--rascals--when I was in

prosperity, abundant in protestations; ready to shed their blood for me,

to sustain me against the devil! Had I an enemy, they would soon put it

out of his power to molest me! And now, to see them withdraw

themselves!" He was interrupted in his vituperations by the dark shade

which passed over the countenance of his auditor; he perceived the

blunder he had made, and attempting to remedy it, became perplexed and

confused. "I would say--I did not at all intend--that is, I meant to

say----"

"What did you mean to say? You have already begun to mar my undertaking.

It is well that thou art undeceived in time. What! thou didst seek

friends! and what friends! they could not have aided thee, had they been

willing. And thou didst not apply to the only friend who can and will

protect thee;--dost thou not know that God is the friend of all who

trust in Him? dost thou not know that to spread the talons does little

good to the weak? and even if----" at these words he grasped forcibly

Renzo's arm; his countenance, without losing his wonted authority,

displayed an affecting remorse; his eyes were fixed on the ground; and

his voice became slow and sepulchral: "and even if that little should be

gained, how terribly awful! Renzo, will you confide in me?--that I

should say in me! a worm of the dust! will you not confide in God?"

"Oh! yes!" replied Renzo; "He only is the Lord."

"Promise me, then, that you will not meet or provoke any one; that you

will suffer yourself to be guided by me."

"I promise," said Renzo.

Lucy drew a long breath, as if relieved from a weight, and Agnes was

loud in applauses.

"Listen, my children," resumed Father Christopher: "I will go myself

to-day to speak to this man: if God touches his heart through my words,

well; if not, \_He\_ will provide some other remedy. In the mean time keep

yourselves quiet and retired; this evening, or to-morrow at the latest,

you shall see me again." Having said this, he departed amidst thanks and

blessings.

He arrived at the convent in time to perform his daily duty in the

choir, dined, and then pursued his way towards the den of the wild beast

he had undertaken to tame.

The palace of Don Roderick stood by itself, on the summit of one of the

promontories that skirt the coast; it was three or four miles distant

from the village; at the foot of the promontory nearest the lake, there

was a cluster of decayed cottages inhabited by peasantry belonging to

Don Roderick. This was the little capital of his little kingdom. As you

cast a glance within their walls, you beheld suspended to them various

kinds of arms, with spades, mattocks, and pouches of powder, blended

promiscuously. The persons within appeared robust and strong, with a

daring and insulting expression of countenance, and wearing a long lock

of hair on the head, which was covered with net-work. The aged, that had

lost their teeth, seemed ready to show their gums at the slightest call:

masculine women, with sinewy arms, seemed disposed to use them with as

much indifference as their tongues; the very children exhibited the same

daring recklessness as the parent stock. Friar Christopher passed

through the hamlet, ascending a winding path which conducted him to the

little esplanade in the front of the castle. The door was shut, which

was a sign that the chief was dining and did not wish to be disturbed.

The few windows that looked on the road were small and decayed by time;

they were, however, secured by large iron bars; and the lowest of them

were more than ten feet from the ground. A profound silence reigned

within, and a traveller might have believed the mansion deserted, but

for the appearance of four animals, two alive and two dead, in front of

the castle. Two large vultures, with their wings expanded, were nailed

each at the posts of the gate; and two bravoes, extended at full length

on the benches on either side, were keeping guard until their master

should have finished his repast. The father stopped, as if willing also

to wait. "Father, father, come on," said one, "we do not make the

capuchins wait here; we are the friends of the convent; I have been

within its walls when the air on the outside of them was not very

wholesome for me; it was well the fathers did not refuse me admittance."

So saying, he gave two strokes with the knocker: at the sound, the howls

of mastiffs were heard from within; and in a few moments there appeared

an aged domestic. On seeing the father, he bowed reverently, quieted the

animals with his voice, introduced the guest into a narrow court, and

closed the gate. Then escorting him into a saloon, and regarding him

with an astonished and respectful look, said, "Is not this--the Father

Christopher of Pescarenico?"

"The same."

"And here!"

"As you see, good man."

"It must be to do good," continued he, murmuring between his teeth;

"good can be done every where." He then guided him through two or three

dark halls, and led the way to the banqueting room: here was heard a

confused noise of plates, and knives and forks, and discordant voices.

Whilst Father Christopher was urging the domestic to suffer him to

remain in some other apartment until the dinner should be finished, the

door opened. A certain Count Attilio, a cousin of the noble host, (of

whom we have already spoken, without giving his name,) was seated

opposite: when he saw the bald head and habit of the father, and

perceived his motion to withdraw, "Ho! father," cried he, "you sha'n't

escape us; reverend father, forward, forward!" Don Roderick seconded

somewhat unwillingly this boisterous command, as he felt some

presentiment of the object of his visit. "Come, father, come in," said

he. Seeing there was no retreating, Father Christopher advanced,

saluting the nobleman and his guests.

An honest man is generally fearless and undaunted in presence of the

wicked; nevertheless, the father, with the testimony of a good

conscience and a firm conviction of the justice of his cause, with a

mixture of horror and compassion for Don Roderick, felt a degree of

embarrassment in approaching him. He was seated at table, surrounded by

guests; on his right was Count Attilio, his colleague in libertinism,

who had come from Milan to visit him. To the left was seated, with

respectful submissiveness, tempered, however, with conscious security,

the \_podestà\_ of the place,--he whose duty it was, according to the

proclamation, to cause justice to be done to Renzo Tramaglino, and to

inflict the allotted penalty on Don Roderick. Nearly opposite to the

\_podestà\_ sat our learned Doctor \_Azzecca Garbugli\_, with his black cap

and his red nose; and over against him two obscure guests, of whom our

story says nothing beyond a general mention of their toad-eating

qualities.

"Give a seat to the father," said Don Roderick. A servant presented a

chair, and the good father apologised for having come at so inopportune

an hour. "I would speak with you alone on an affair of importance,"

added he, in a low tone, to Don Roderick.

"Very well, father, it shall be so," replied he; "but in the meanwhile

bring the father something to drink."

Father Christopher would have refused, but Don Roderick, raising his

voice above the tumult of the table, cried, "No, by Bacchus, you shall

not do me this wrong; a capuchin shall never leave this house without

having tasted my wine, nor an insolent creditor without having tasted

the wood of my forests." These words produced a universal laugh, and

interrupted for a moment the question which was hotly agitated between

the guests. A servant brought the wine, of which Father Christopher

partook, feeling the necessity of propitiating the host.

"The authority of Tasso is against you, respected Signor \_Podestà\_,"

resumed aloud the Count Attilio: "this great man was well acquainted

with the laws of knighthood, and he makes the messenger of Argantes,

before carrying the defiance of the Christian knights, ask permission

from the pious Bouillon."

"But that," replied vociferously the \_podestà\_, "that is poetical

licence merely: an ambassador is in his nature inviolable, by the law of

nations, \_jure gentium\_; and moreover, the ambassador, not having spoken

in his own name, but merely presented the challenge in writing----"

"But when will you comprehend that this ambassador was a daring fool,

who did not know the first----"

"With the good leave of our guests," interrupted Don Roderick, who did

not wish the argument to proceed farther, "we will refer it to the

Father Christopher, and submit to his decision."

"Agreed," said Count Attilio, amused at submitting a question of

knighthood to a capuchin; whilst the \_podestà\_ muttered between his

teeth, "Folly!"

"But, from what I have comprehended," said the father, "it is a subject

of which I have no knowledge."

"As usual, modest excuses from the father," said Don Roderick; "but we

will not accept them. Come, come, we know well that you came not into

the world with a cowl on your head; you know something of its ways.

Well, how stands the argument?"

"The facts are these," said the Count Attilio----

"Let me tell, who am neutral, cousin," resumed Don Roderick. "This is

the story: a Spanish knight sent a challenge to a Milanese knight; the

bearer, not finding him at home, presented it to his brother, who,

having read it, struck the bearer many blows. The question is----"

"It was well done; he was perfectly right," cried Count Attilio.

"There was no right about it," exclaimed the \_podestà\_. "To beat an

ambassador--a man whose person is sacred! Father, do \_you\_ think this

was an action becoming a knight?"

"Yes, sir; of a knight," cried the count, "I think I know what belongs

to a knight. Oh! if it had been an affair of fists, that would have

been quite another thing, but a cudgel soils no one's hands."

"I am not speaking of this, Sir Count; I am speaking of the \_laws\_ of

knighthood. But tell me, I pray you, if the messengers that the ancient

Romans sent to bear defiance to other nations, asked permission to

deliver the message; find, if you can, a writer who relates that such

messenger was ever cudgelled."

"What have the ancient Romans to do with us? a people well enough in

some things, but in others, far, far behind. But according to the laws

of modern knighthood, I maintain that a messenger, who dared place in

the hands of a knight a challenge without having previously asked

permission, is a rash fool who deserves to be cudgelled."

"But answer me this question----"

"No, no, no."

"But hear me. To strike an unarmed person is an act of treachery.

\_Atqui\_ the messenger \_de quo\_ was without arms. \_Ergo\_----"

"Gently, gently, Signor \_Podestà\_."

"How? gently."

"Gently, I tell you; I concede that under other circumstances this might

have been called an act of treachery, but to strike a low fellow! It

would have been a fine thing truly, to say to him, as you would to a

gentleman, Be on your guard! And you, Sir Doctor, instead of sitting

there grinning your approbation of my opinion, why do you not aid me to

convince this gentleman?"

"I," replied the doctor in confusion; "I enjoy this learned dispute, and

am thankful for the opportunity of listening to a war of wit so

agreeable. And moreover, I am not competent to give an opinion; his most

illustrious lordship has appointed a judge--the father."

"True," said Don Roderick; "but how can the judge speak when the

disputants will not keep silence?"

"I am dumb," said the Count Attilio. The \_podestà\_ made a sign that he

would be quiet.

"Well! father! at last!" said Don Roderick, with comic gravity.

"I have already said, that I do not comprehend----"

"No excuses! we must have your opinion."

"If it must be so," replied the father, "I should humbly think there was

no necessity for challenges, nor bearers, nor blows."

The guests looked in wonder at each other.

"Oh! how ridiculous!" said the Count Attilio. "Pardon me, father; but

this is exceedingly ridiculous. It is plain you know nothing of the

world."

"He?" said Don Roderick; "he knows as much of it as you do, cousin. Is

it not so, father?"

Father Christopher made no reply; but to himself he said, "submit

thyself to every insult for the sake of those for whom thou art here."

"It may be so," said the count; "but the father----how is the father

called?"

"Father Christopher," replied more than one.

"But, Father Christopher, your reverend worship, with your maxims you

would turn the world upside down--without challenges! without blows!

Farewell, the point of honour! Impunity to ruffians! Happily, the thing

is impossible."

"Stop, doctor," cried Don Roderick, wishing to divert the dispute from

the original antagonists. "You are a good man for an argument; what have

you to say to the father?"

"Indeed," replied the doctor, brandishing his fork in the air--"indeed I

cannot understand how the Father Christopher should not remember that

his judgment, though of just weight in the pulpit, is worth nothing--I

speak with great submission--on a question of knighthood. But perhaps he

has been merely jesting, to relieve himself from embarrassment."

The father not replying to this, Don Roderick made an effort to change

the subject.

"Apropos," said he, "I understand there is a report at Milan of an

accommodation."

There was at this time a contest regarding the succession to the dukedom

of Mantua, of which, at the death of Vincenzo Gonzaga, who died without

male issue, the Duke de Nevers, his nearest relation, had obtained

possession. Louis XIII., or rather the Cardinal de Richelieu, wished to

sustain him there; Philip IV., or rather the Count d'Olivares, commonly

called the Count Duke, opposed him. The dukedom was then a fief of the

empire, and the two parties employed intrigue and importunity at the

court of the Emperor Ferdinand II. The object of one was to obtain the

investiture of the new duke; of the other, the denial of his claim, and

also assistance to oblige him to relinquish it.

"I rather think," said the Count Attilio, "that the thing will be

arranged satisfactorily. I have reasons----"

"Do not believe it, count, do not believe it," added the \_podestà\_; "I

have an opportunity of knowing, because the Spanish keeper of the

castle, who is my friend, and who is the son of a dependant of the Count

Duke, is informed of every thing."

"I tell you I have discoursed on the subject daily at Milan; and I know

from good authority that the pope, exceedingly interested as he is for

peace, has made propositions----"

"That may be, the thing is in order; his Holiness does his duty; a pope

should always endeavour to make peace between Christian princes; but the

Count Duke has his own policy, and----"

"And, and, and, do you know, Signor \_Podestà\_, how much thought the

emperor now gives to it? Do you believe there is no place but Mantua in

the world! There are many things to provide for, signor, mind. Do you

know, for instance, how far the emperor can trust this Prince of

Valdistano, or di Vallistai, as they call him; and if----"

"His name, in the German language," interrupted the magistrate, "is

Wallenstein, as I have heard it uttered many times by the Spanish keeper

of the castle. But be of good courage----"

"Do you dare teach me," replied the count. Here Don Roderick whispered

to him to cease contradiction, as there would be no end to it. He

obeyed; and the \_podestà\_, like a vessel unimpeded by shoals, continued

with full sails the course of his eloquence. "Wallenstein gives me but

little anxiety; because the Count Duke has his eye every where; and if

Wallenstein carries matters with a high hand, he will soon set him

right. He has his eye every where, I say, and unlimited power; and if it

is his policy that the Signor Duke of Nevers should not take root in

Mantua, he will never flourish there, be assured. It makes me laugh to

see the Signor Cardinal de Richelieu contend with an Olivares. The Count

Duke, gentlemen," pursued he, with the wind still in his favour, and

much wondering at not meeting with opposition, "the Count Duke is an old

fox--speaking with due respect--who would make any one lose his track:

when he appears to go to the right, it would be safest to follow him to

the left: no one can boast of knowing his designs; they who are to

execute them, they who write the despatches, know nothing of them. I

speak from authority, for the keeper of the castle deigns to confide in

me. The Count Duke knows well enough how the pot boils in all the courts

in Europe; and these politicians have hardly laid a plan, but he begins

to frustrate it. That poor man, the Cardinal Richelieu, attempts and

dissembles, toils and strives; and what does it all produce? When he has

dug the mine, he finds a countermine already prepared by the Count

Duke----"

None can tell when the magistrate would have cast anchor, if Don

Roderick had not interrupted him. "Signor \_Podestà\_," said he, "and you,

gentlemen, a bumper to the Count Duke, and you shall then judge if the

wine is worthy of the personage." The \_podestà\_ bowed low in gratitude

for an honour he considered as paid to himself in part for his eloquent

harangue.

"May Don Gaspero Guzman, Count de Olivares, Duke of St. Lucar, live a

thousand years!" said he, raising his glass.

"May he live a thousand years!" exclaimed all the company.

"Help the father," said Don Roderick.

"Excuse me," replied he, "I could not----"

"How!" said Don Roderick; "will you not drink to the Count Duke? Would

you have us believe that you hold to the Navarre party?"

This was the contemptuous term applied to the French interest at the

time of Henry IV.

There was no reply to be made to this, and the father was obliged to

taste the wine. All the guests were loud in its praise, except the

doctor, who had kept silence. "Eh! doctor," asked Don Roderick, "what

think \_you\_ of it?"

"I think," replied the doctor, withdrawing his ruddy and shining nose

from the glass, "that this is the Olivares of wines: there is not a

liquor resembling it in all the twenty-two kingdoms of the king our

master, whom God protect! I maintain that the dinners of the most

illustrious Signor Don Roderick exceed the suppers of Heliogabalus, and

that scarcity is banished for ever from this palace, where reigns a

perpetual and splendid abundance."

"Well said! bravo! bravo!" exclaimed with one voice the guests; but the

word \_scarcity\_, which the doctor had accidentally uttered, suggested a

new and painful subject. All spoke at once:--"There is no famine," said

one, "it is the speculators who----"

"And the bakers, who conceal the grain. Hang them!"

"That is right; hang them, without mercy."

"Upon fair trial," cried the magistrate.

"What trial?" cried Attilio, more loudly; "summary justice, I say. Take

a few of them who are known to be the richest and most avaricious, and

hang them."

"Yes, hang them! hang them! and there will be grain scattered in

abundance."

Thus the party continued absorbing the wine, whose praises, mixed with

sentences of economical jurisprudence, formed the burthen of the

conversation; so that the loudest and most frequent words were, \_Nectar,

and hang 'em\_.

Don Roderick had, from time to time, during this confusion, looked at

the father: perceiving him calmly, but firmly, awaiting his leisure for

the interview which had been promised him, he relinquished the hope of

wearying him by its postponement. To send away a capuchin, without

giving him an audience, was not according to his policy; and since it

could not be avoided, he resolved to meet it at once: he rose from the

table, excused himself to his guests, and saying proudly, "At your

service, father," led the way to another room.

CHAPTER VI.

"In what can I serve you?" said Don Roderick, as soon as they entered

into the room. Such were his words, but his manner said plainly,

"Remember before whom thou standest, weigh well thy words, and be

expeditious."

There were no means more certain to impart courage to Father Christopher

than arrogance or pride. He had stood for a moment in some

embarrassment, passing through his fingers the beads of the rosary that

hung suspended from his girdle; but he soon "resumed new courage, and

revived," at the haughty air of Don Roderick. He had, however,

sufficient command over himself to reply with caution and humility. "I

come to supplicate you to perform an act of justice: some wicked persons

have, in the name of your lordship, frightened a poor curate, and have

endeavoured to prevent his fulfilling his duty towards an innocent and

unoffending couple. You can by a word confound their machinations, and

impart consolation to the afflicted. You can--and having it in your

power--conscience, honour----"

"Speak to me of conscience, when I ask your advice on the subject; and

as to my honour, know that I only am the guardian of it, and that

whoever dares to meddle with it is a rash man."

Friar Christopher, warned by these words that the intention of Don

Roderick was to turn the conversation into a dispute, so as to win him

from his original purpose, determined to bear whatever insult might be

offered him, and meekly replied, "It was certainly not my intention to

say any thing to displease you: correct me, reprove me; but deign to

listen to me. By the love of Heaven, by that God before whom we must all

appear, I charge thee, do not obstinately refuse to do justice to the

innocent and oppressed! Think that God watches over them, that their

imprecations are heard above, and----"

"Stop," interrupted Don Roderick, rudely. "The respect I bear to your

habit is great; but if any thing could make me forget it, it would be to

see it worn by one coming as a spy into my house."

These words spread an indignant glow over the face of the father; but

swallowing them as a bitter medicine, he resumed: "You do not believe

that I am such; you feel in your heart that I am here on no vile or

contemptible errand. Listen to me, Signor Don Roderick; and Heaven grant

that the day may never arrive, when you shall repent of not having

listened to me! Listen to me, and perform this deed of justice and

benevolence. Men will esteem you! God will esteem you! you have much in

your power, but----"

"Do you know," again interrupted Don Roderick with warmth, but with

something like remorse, "that when the whim takes me to hear a sermon, I

can go to church? But, perhaps," continued he, with a forced smile of

mockery, "you are putting regal dignity on me, and giving me a preacher

in my own palace."

"And to God princes are responsible for the reception of his messages;

to God you are responsible; he now sends into your palace a message by

one of his ministers, the most unworthy----"

"In short, father," said Don Roderick, preparing to go, "I do not

comprehend you: I suppose you have some affair of your own on hand; make

a confidant of whom you please; but use not the freedom of troubling a

gentleman any farther."

"Don Roderick, do not say \_No\_ to me; do not keep in anguish the heart

of an innocent child! a word from you would be sufficient."

"Well," said Don Roderick, "since you think I have so much in my power,

and since you are so much interested----"

"Yes!" said Father Christopher, anxiously regarding him.

"Well, advise her to come, and place herself under my protection; she

will want for nothing, and no one shall disturb her, as I am a

gentleman."

At such a proposal, the indignation of the friar, which had hitherto

been restrained with difficulty, loudly burst forth. All his prudence

and patience forsook him: "Your protection!" exclaimed he, stepping

back, and stretching forth both his hands towards Don Roderick, while he

sternly fixed his eyes upon him, "your protection! You have filled the

measure of your guilt by this wicked proposal, and I fear you no

longer."

"Dare you speak thus to me?"

"I dare; I fear you no longer; God has abandoned you, and you are no

longer an object of fear! Your protection! this innocent child is under

the protection of God; you have, by your infamous offer, increased my

assurance of her safety. Lucy, I say; see with what boldness I pronounce

her name before you; Lucy----"

"How! in this house----"

"I compassionate this house; the wrath of God is upon it! You have acted

in open defiance of the great God of heaven and earth; you have set at

naught his counsel; you have oppressed the innocent; you have trampled

on the rights of those whom you should have been the first to protect

and defend. The wrath of God is upon you! A day will come!"

"Villain!" said Don Roderick, who at first was confounded between rage

and astonishment; but when he heard the father thundering forth this

prediction, a mysterious and unaccountable dread took possession of his

soul. Hastily seizing his outstretched arm, and raising his voice in

order to drown the maledictions of the monk, he cried aloud, "Depart

from me, rash villain, cowled spy!"

These words instantly cooled the glowing enthusiasm of Father

Christopher. The ideas of insult and injury in his mind had long been

habitually associated with those of suffering and silence. His usual

habits resumed their sway, and he became calm; he awaited what farther

might be said, as, after the strength of the whirlwind has passed, an

aged tree naturally recomposes its branches, and receives the hail as

Heaven sends it.

"Villain! scoundrel! talk to your equals," said Don Roderick; "but thank

the habit you bear for saving you from the chastisement which is your

due. Begone this instant, and with unscathed limbs, or we shall see."

So saying, he pointed imperiously to an opposite door. The friar bowed

his head, and departed, leaving Don Roderick to measure with hasty and

agitated steps the field of battle.

When he had closed the door behind him, the father perceived a man

stealing softly away through another, and he recognised him as the aged

domestic who had been his guide to the presence of Don Roderick. Before

the birth of that nobleman, he had been in the service of his father,

who was a man of a very different character. At his death, the new

master expelled all the domestics, with the exception of this one, whom

he retained on account of two valuable qualifications; a high conception

of the dignity of the house, and a minute knowledge of the ceremonial

required to support that dignity. The poor old man had never dared even

to hint disapprobation of the daily proceedings at the castle before the

signor, but he would sometimes venture to allow an exclamation of grief

and disapproval to escape him before his fellow servants, who were

infinitely diverted by his simple honesty, and his warm love of the good

old times. His censures did not reach his master's ears unaccompanied by

a relation of the raillery bestowed upon them, so that he became an

object of general ridicule. On the days of formal entertainment,

therefore, the old man was a person of great importance.

Father Christopher bowed to him as he passed by him, and pursued his

way; but the old man approached him with a mysterious air, and made a

sign that he should follow him into a dark passage, where, speaking in

an under tone, he said, "Father! I have heard all, and I want to speak

to you."

"Speak at once, then, good man."

"Here! oh no! Woe be to us if the master suspect it! But I shall be able

to discover much, and I will endeavour to come to-morrow to the

convent."

"Is there any base plot?"

"There is something hatching, certainly; I have long suspected it; but

now I shall be on the look out, and I will come at the truth. These are

strange doings--I live in a house where----But I wish to save my soul."

"God bless you!" said the friar, placing his hands on his head, as he

bent reverently towards him; "God reward you! Do not forget then to come

to-morrow."

"I will not," replied the domestic; "but go, now, for the love of

Heaven, and do not betray me."

So saying, he looked cautiously on all sides, and led the way through

the passage into a large hall, which fronted the court-yard, and

pointing to the door, silently bade him "Farewell."

When once in the street, and freed from this den of depravity, the

father breathed more freely; he hastened down the hill, pale in

countenance, and agitated and distressed by the scene he had witnessed,

and in which he had taken so leading a part. But the unlooked-for

proffer of the servant came like a cordial. It seemed as if Heaven had

sent a visible sign of its protection--a clue to guide him in his

intricate undertaking--and in the very house where it was least likely

to be found. Occupied with these thoughts, he raised his eyes towards

the west, and beheld the sun declining behind the mountain, and felt

that he had but a few minutes in which to reach the monastery, without

violating the absolute law of the capuchins, that none of the

brotherhood should remain beyond the walls after sunset.

Meanwhile, in the cottage of Lucy there had been plans agitated of which

it is necessary to inform the reader. After the departure of the father,

they had continued some time in silence; Lucy, with a heavy heart,

prepared the dinner; Renzo, wavering and anxious, knew not how to

depart; Agnes was apparently absorbed with her reel, but she was really

maturing a thought, which she in a few moments thus declared:--

"Listen, my children. If you will have the necessary courage and

dexterity; if you will confide in your mother; I pledge myself to free

you from perplexity, sooner than Father Christopher could do, although

he is the best man in the world." Lucy looked at her mother with an

expression of astonishment rather than confidence, in a promise so

magnificent. "Courage! dexterity!" cried Renzo, "say, say, what can I

do?"

"Is it not true," said Agnes, "that if you were married, your chief

difficulty would be removed, and that for the rest we would easily find

a remedy!"

"Undoubtedly," said Renzo, "if we were married--The world is before us;

and at a short distance from this, in Bergamo, a silk weaver is received

with open arms. You know how often my cousin Bartolo has solicited me to

go there, and enter into business with him; how many times he has told

me that I should make a fortune, as he has done; and if I never listened

to his request, it was--because my heart was here. Once married, we

would all go together, and live happily far from the clutches of this

villain, far from the temptation to do a rash deed. Is it not so, Lucy?"

"Yes," said Lucy, "but how----"

"As I said," resumed Agnes, "courage and dexterity, and the thing is

easy."

"Easy!" exclaimed they, in wonder.

"Easy," replied Agnes, "if you are prudent. Hear me patiently, and I

will endeavour to make you comprehend my project. I have heard it said

by persons who knew, and moreover I have seen one instance of it myself,

that a curate's \_consent\_ is not necessary to render a marriage ceremony

lawful, provided you have his presence."

"How so?" asked Renzo.

"You shall hear. There must be two witnesses, nimble and cunning. You go

to the curate; the point is to catch him unexpectedly, that he may have

no time to escape. You say, 'Signor Curate, this is my wife;' Lucy says,

'Signor Curate, this is my husband;' you must speak so distinctly that

the curate and the witnesses hear you, and the marriage is as inviolable

as if the pope himself had celebrated it. When the words are once

uttered, the curate may fret, and fume, and scold; it will be of no use,

you are man and wife."

"Is it possible?" exclaimed Lucy.

"Do you think," said Agnes, "that the thirty years I was in the world

before you, I learned nothing? The thing is as I tell you."

The fact was truly such as Agnes represented it; marriages contracted

in this manner were at that time held valid. Such an expedient was,

however, not recurred to, but in cases of great necessity, and the

priests made use of every precaution to avoid this compulsive

co-operation.

"If it be true, Lucy!" said Renzo, regarding her attentively, with a

supplicating expression.

"\_If\_ it be true!" exclaimed Agnes. "Do you think I would say that which

is \_not\_ true? Well, well, get out of the difficulty as you can, I wash

my hands from it."

"Ah, no! do not abandon us!" said Renzo; "I mean not to suggest a doubt

of it. I place myself in your hands; I look to you as to a mother."

The momentary anger of Agnes vanished.

"But why, mamma," said Lucy, in her usual modest tone, "why did not

Father Christopher think of this?"

"Think you that it did not come into his mind?" replied Agnes; "but he

would not speak of it."

"Why?" exclaimed they, both at once.

"Why?--because, if you must know it, the friars do not approve of it."

"If it is not right," said Lucy, "we must not do it."

"What!" said Agnes, "do you think I would advise you to do that which is

not right? If, against the advice of your parents, you were going to

marry a rogue--but, on the contrary, I am rejoiced at your choice, and

he who \_causes\_ the disturbance is the only villain; and the curate----"

"It is as clear as the sun," said Renzo.

"It is not necessary to speak of it to Father Christopher," continued

Agnes. "Once over, what do you think he will say to you? 'Ah! daughter,

it was a great error; but it is done.' The friars must talk thus; but,

believe me, in his heart he will be well content."

Lucy made no reply to an argument which did not appear to her very

powerful; but Renzo, quite encouraged, said, "If it be thus, the thing

is done."

"Softly," said Agnes; "there is need of caution. We must procure the

witnesses; and find means to present ourselves to the curate

unexpectedly. He has been two days concealed in his house; we must make

him remain there. If he suspects your intention, he will be as cunning

as a cat, and flee as Satan from holy water."

Lucy here gained courage to offer her doubts of the propriety of such a

course. "Until now we have lived with candour and sincerity," said she;

"let us continue to do so; let us have faith in God, and God will aid

us. Father Christopher said so: let us listen to his advice."

"Be guided by those who know better than you do," said Agnes gravely.

"What need of advice? God tells us, 'Help thyself, and I will help

thee.' We will tell the father all about it, when it is over."

"Lucy," said Renzo, "will you fail me now? Have we not done all that we

could do, like good Christians? Had not the curate himself fixed the day

and the hour? And whose is the blame if we are now obliged to use a

little management? No, you will not fail me. I go at once to seek the

witnesses, and will return to tell you my success." So saying, he

hastily departed.

Disappointment sharpens the wit; and Renzo, who, in the straightforward

path he had hitherto travelled, had not been required to subtilise much,

now conceived a plan which would have done honour to a lawyer. He went

directly to the house of one Anthony, and found him in his kitchen,

employed in stirring a \_polenta\_ of wheat, which was on the fire, whilst

his mother, brother, and his wife, with three or four small children,

were seated at the table, eagerly intent on the earthen pan, and

awaiting the moment when it should be ready for their attack. But, on

this occasion, the pleasure was wanting which the sight of dinner

usually produces in the aspect of the labourer who has earned it by his

industry. The size of the \_polenta\_ was proportioned to the scantiness

of the times, and not to the number and appetite of the assailants: and

in casting a dissatisfied look on the common meal, each seemed to be

considering the extent of appetite likely to survive it. Whilst Renzo

was exchanging salutations with the family, Tony poured out the pudding

on the pewter trencher prepared for its reception, and it appeared like

a little moon within a large circumference of vapour. Nevertheless, the

wife of Tony said courteously to Renzo, "Will you be helped to

something?" This was a compliment that the peasants of Lombardy, however

poor, paid to those who were, from any accident, present at their meals.

"I thank you," replied Renzo; "I only came to say a few words to Tony;

and, Tony, not to disturb your family, we can go and dine at the inn,

and we shall then have an opportunity to converse." The proposal was as

agreeable as it was unexpected. Tony readily assented to it, and

departed with Renzo, leaving to his family his portion of the \_polenta\_.

They arrived at the inn, seated themselves at their ease in a perfect

solitude, since the penury of the times had driven away the daily

frequenters of the place. After having eaten, and emptied a bottle of

wine, Renzo, with an air of mystery, said to Tony, "If you will do me a

small service, I will do you a \_great\_ one."

"Speak, speak, command me," said Tony, filling his glass; "I will go

through fire to serve you."

"You are twenty-five livres in debt to the curate, for the rent of his

field, that you worked last year."

"Ah! Renzo, Renzo! why do you mention it to me now? You've spoiled your

kindness, and put to flight my good wishes."

"If I speak to you of your debt," said Renzo, "it is because I intend to

give you the means of paying it."

"Do you really?"

"Really; would this content you?"

"Content me! that it would, indeed; if it were only to be freed from

those infernal shakings of the head the curate makes me every time I

meet him. And then always, '\_Tony, remember; Tony, when shall we see

each other for this business?\_' When he preaches, he fixes his eyes on

me in such a manner, I am almost afraid he will speak to me from the

pulpit. I have wished the twenty-five livres to the devil a thousand

times: and I was obliged to pawn my wife's gold necklace, which might be

turned into so much \_polenta\_. But----"

"But, if you will do me a small favour, the twenty-five livres are

ready."

"Agreed."

"But," said Renzo, "you must be silent and talk to no one about it."

"Need you tell me that?" said Tony; "you know me."

"The curate has some foolish reason for putting off my marriage, and I

wish to hasten it. I am told that the parties going before him with two

witnesses, and the one saying, \_This is my wife\_, and the other, \_This

is my husband\_, that the marriage is lawful. Do you understand me?"

"You wish me to go as a witness?"

"Yes."

"And you will pay the twenty-five livres?"

"Yes."

"Done; I agree to it."

"But we must find another witness."

"I have found him already," said Tony. "My simpleton of a brother,

Jervase, will do whatever I tell him; but you will pay him with

something to drink?"

"And to eat," replied Renzo. "But will he be able?"

"I'll teach him; you know I was born with brains for both."

"To-morrow."

"Well."

"Towards evening."

"Very well."

"But be silent," said Renzo.

"Poh!" said Tony.

"But if thy wife should ask thee, as without doubt she will?"

"I am in debt to my wife for lies already; and for so much, that I don't

know if we shall ever balance the account. I will tell her some idle

story or other to set her heart at rest." With this good resolution he

departed, leaving Renzo to pursue his way back to the cottage. In the

meanwhile Agnes had in vain solicited Lucy's consent to the measure; she

could not resolve to act without the approbation of Father Christopher.

Renzo arrived, and triumphantly related his success. Lucy shook her

head, but the two enthusiasts minded her not. They were now determined

to pursue their plan, and by authority and entreaties induce her finally

to accede to it.

"It is well," said Agnes, "it is well, but you have not thought of every

thing."

"What have I not thought of?" replied Renzo.

"Perpetua! You have not thought of Perpetua. Do you believe that she

would suffer Tony and his brother to enter? How then is it probable she

would admit you and Lucy?"

"What shall we do?" said Renzo, pausing.

"I will tell you. I will go with you; I have a secret to tell her, which

will engage her so that she will not see you. I will take her aside, and

will touch such a chord--you shall see."

"Bless you!" exclaimed Renzo, "I have always said you were our best

support."

"But all this will do no good," said Agnes, "if we cannot persuade Lucy,

who obstinately persists that it is sinful."

Renzo made use of all his eloquence, but Lucy was not to be moved. "I

know not what to say to your arguments," replied she. "I perceive that

to do this, we shall degrade ourselves so far as to lie and deceive. Ah!

Renzo, let us not so abase ourselves! I would be your wife" (and a blush

diffused itself over her lovely countenance), "I would be your wife, but

in the fear of God--at the altar. Let us trust in Him who is able to

provide. Do you not think He will find a way to help us, far better than

all this deception? And why make a mystery of it to Father Christopher?"

The contest still continued, when a trampling of sandals announced

Father Christopher. Agnes had barely time to whisper in the ear of Lucy,

"Be careful to tell him nothing," when the friar entered.

CHAPTER VII.

"Peace be with you!" said the friar as he entered. "There is nothing

more to hope from man: so much the greater must be our confidence in

God; and I've already had a pledge of his protection." None of the three

entertained much hope from the visit of Father Christopher: for it would

have been not only an unusual, but an absolutely unheard-of fact, for a

nobleman to desist from his criminal designs at the mere prayer of his

defenceless victim. Still, the sad certainty was a painful stroke.

The women bent down their heads; but in the mind of Renzo anger

prevailed over disappointment. "I would know," cried he, gnashing his

teeth, and raising his voice as he had never done before in the presence

of Father Christopher, "I would know what reasons this dog has given,

that my wife should not \_be\_ my wife?"

"Poor Renzo!" said the father, with an accent of pity, and with a look

which greatly enforced moderation; "poor Renzo! if those who commit

injustice were always obliged to give a reason for it, things would not

be as they are!"

"He has said, then, the dog! that he will not, because he will not?"

"He has not even said \_so\_, poor Renzo! There would be something gained,

if he would make an open confession of his iniquity."

"But he has said something; \_what\_ has this firebrand of hell said?"

"I could not repeat his words. He flew into a passion at me for my

suspicions, and at the same time confirmed me in them: he insulted me,

and then called himself offended; threatened, and complained. Ask no

farther. He did not utter the name of Lucy, nor even pretend to know

you: he affected to intend nothing. In short, I heard enough to feel

that he is inexorable. But confidence in God! Poor children! be patient,

be submissive! And thou, Renzo! believe that I sympathise with all that

passes in thy heart.--But \_patience\_! It is a poor word, a bitter word

to those who want faith; but, Renzo, will you not let God work? Will you

not trust Him? Let Him work, Renzo; and, for your consolation, know that

I hold in my hand a clue, by which I hope to extricate you from your

distress. I cannot say more now. To-morrow I shall not be here; I shall

be all day at the convent employed for you. Renzo, if thou canst, come

there to me; but, if prevented by any accident, send some trusty

messenger, by whom I can make known to you the success of my endeavours.

Night approaches; I must return to the convent. Farewell! Faith and

courage!" So saying, he departed, and hastened by the most abrupt but

shortest road, to reach the convent in time, and escape the usual

reprimand; or, what was worse, the imposition of some penance, which

might disenable him, for the following day, from continuing his efforts

in favour of his protégés.

"Did you hear him speak of a clue which he holds to aid us?" said Lucy;

"it is best to trust in him; he is a man who does not make rash

promises."

"He ought to have spoken more clearly," said Agnes; "or at least have

taken me aside, and told me what it was."

"I'll put an end to the business; I'll put an end to it," said Renzo,

pacing furiously up and down the room.

"Oh! Renzo!" exclaimed Lucy.

"What do you mean?" said Agnes.

"What do I mean? I mean to say that he may have a hundred thousand

devils in his soul, but he is flesh and blood notwithstanding."

"No, no, for the love of Heaven!" said Lucy, but tears choked her voice.

"It is not a theme for jesting," said Agnes.

"For jesting?" cried Renzo, stopping before her, with his countenance

inflamed by anger; "for jesting! you will see if I am in jest."

"Oh! Renzo!" said Lucy, sobbing, "I have never seen you thus before!"

"Hush, hush!" said Agnes, "speak not in this manner. Do you not fear

the law, which is always to be had against the poor? And, besides, how

many arms would be raised at a word!"

"I fear nothing," said Renzo; "the villain is well protected, dog that

he is! but no matter. Patience and resolution! and the time will come.

Yes! justice shall be done! I will free the country! People will bless

me! Yes, yes."

The horror which Lucy felt at this explicit declaration of his purpose

inspired her with new resolution. With a tearful countenance, but

determined voice, she said to Renzo, "It can no longer be of any

consequence to you, that I should become yours; I promised myself to a

youth who had the fear of God in his heart; but a man who had

once----were you safe from the law, were you secure from vengeance, were

you the son of a king----"

"Well!" cried Renzo, in a voice of uncontrollable passion, "well! I

shall not have you, then; but neither shall he; of \_that\_ you may----"

"For pity's sake, do not talk thus; do not talk so fiercely!" said Lucy

imploringly.

"You to implore me!" said he, somewhat appeased. "You! who will do

nothing for \_me\_! What proof do you give me of your affection? Have I

not supplicated in vain? Have I been able to obtain----"

"Yes, yes," replied Lucy, hastily, "I will go to the curate's to-morrow;

now, if you wish it. Only be yourself again; I will go."

"Do you promise me?" said Renzo, softening immediately.

"I promise."

"Well, I am satisfied."

"God be praised!" said Agnes, much relieved.

"I have promised you," said Lucy, with an accent of timid reproach, "but

you have also promised me to refer it to Father Christopher."

"Ha! will you now draw back?" said Renzo.

"No, no," said Lucy, again alarmed, "no, no, I have promised, and will

perform. But you have compelled me to it by your own impetuosity. God

forbid that----"

"Why will you prognosticate evil, Lucy? God knows we wrong no person."

"Well, well," said Lucy, "I will hope for the best."

Renzo would have wished to prolong the conversation, in order to allot

to each their several parts for the morrow, but the night drew on, and

he reluctantly felt himself compelled to depart.

The night was passed, by all three, in that state of agitation and

trouble which always precedes an important enterprise whose issue is

uncertain. Renzo returned early in the morning, and Agnes and he busied

themselves in concerting the operations of the evening. Lucy was a mere

spectator; but although she disapproved these measures in her heart, she

still promised to do the best she could.

"Will you go to the convent, to speak to Father Christopher, as he

desired you last night?" said Agnes to Renzo.

"Oh! no," replied he, "the father would soon read in my countenance that

there was something on foot; and if he interrogated me, I should be

obliged to tell him. You had better send some one."

"I will send Menico."

"Yes, that will do," replied Renzo, as he hurried off to make farther

arrangements.

Agnes went to a neighbouring house to obtain Menico, a smart lad of

twelve years of age, who, by the way of cousins and sisters-in-law, was

a sort of nephew to the dame. She asked and obtained permission of his

parents to keep him all day "for a particular service." She took him

home, and after giving him breakfast, told him he must go to

Pescarenico, and show himself to Father Christopher, who would send him

back with a message.

"\_Father Christopher\_, you understand; that nice old man, with a white

beard; him they call the Saint."

"I know him, I know him!" said Menico: "he speaks so kindly to the

children, and often gives them pictures."

"Yes! that is he; and if, Menico, if he tells you to wait near the

convent until he has an answer ready, don't stray away; don't go to the

lake to throw stones in the water with the boys; nor to see them fish,

nor----"

"Poh! aunt, I am no longer a baby."

"Well, behave well, and when you return with the answer, I will give you

these new \_parpagliole\_."[3]

[3] A sort of coin.

During the remainder of this long morning, several strange things

occurred, calculated to infuse suspicion into the already troubled minds

of Lucy and her mother. A mendicant, but not in rags like others of his

kind, and with a dark and sinister countenance, narrowly observing every

object around him, entered to ask alms. A piece of bread was presented

to him, which he received with ill-dissembled indifference. Then, with a

mixture of impudence and hesitation, he made many enquiries, to which

Agnes endeavoured to return evasive replies. When about to depart, he

pretended to mistake the door, and went through the one that led to the

stairs. They called to him, "Stay, stay! where are you going, good man?

this way." He returned, excusing himself with an affectation of

humility, to which he felt it difficult to compose his hard and stern

features. After him, they saw pass, from time to time, other strange

people. One entered the house, under pretence of asking the road;

another stopped before the gate, and glanced furtively into the room, as

if to avoid suspicion. Agnes went often to the door of the house during

the remainder of the day, with an undefined dread of seeing some one

approach who might cause them alarm. These mysterious visitations,

however, ceased towards noon, but they had left an impression of

impending evil on their minds, which they felt it impossible altogether

to suppress.

To explain to the reader the true character of these suspicious

wanderers, we must recur to Don Roderick, whom we left alone, in the

hall of his palace, at the departure of Father Christopher. The more he

reflected on his interview with the friar, the more was he enraged and

ashamed, that he should have dared to come to him with the rebuke of

Nathan to David on his lips. He paced with hurried steps through the

apartment, and as he gazed at the portraits of his ancestors, warriors,

senators, and abbots, which hung against its walls, he felt his

indignation at the insult which had been offered him increase. A

base-born friar to speak thus to one of noble birth! He formed plans of

vengeance, and discarded them, without his being willing to acknowledge

it to himself. The prediction of the father again sounded in his ears,

and caused an unaccustomed perplexity. Restless and undetermined, he

rang the bell, and ordered a servant to excuse him to the company, and

to say to them, that urgent business prevented his seeing them again.

The servant returned with the intelligence that the guests had departed.

"And the Count Attilio?" asked Don Roderick.

"He has gone with the gentlemen, my lord."

"Well; six followers to accompany me; quickly. My sword, cloak, and hat.

Be quick."

The servant left the room, and returned in a few moments with a rich

sword, which his master girded on; he then threw the cloak around his

shoulders, and donned his hat with its waving plumes with an air of

proud defiance. He then passed into the street, followed by six armed

ruffians, taking the road to Lecco. The peasantry and tradesmen shrunk

from his approach; their profound and timid salutations received no

notice from him; indeed, he acknowledged but by a slight inclination of

the head those of the neighbouring gentry, whose rank, however, was

incontestably inferior to his own. Indeed, the only man whose

salutations he condescended to return upon an equal footing was the

Spanish governor. In order to get rid of his \_ennui\_, and banish the

idea of the monk and his imprecations, he entered the house of a

gentleman, where a party was met together, and was received with that

apparent cordiality which it is a necessary policy to manifest towards

the powerful who are held in fear. On his return at night to his palace,

he found Count Attilio seated at supper. Don Roderick, full of thought,

took a chair, but said little.

Scarcely was the table cleared, and the servants departed, when the

count, beginning to rally his dull companion, said, "Cousin, when will

you pay me my wager?"

"San Martin's day has not yet passed."

"Well, you will have to pay it; for all the saints in the calendar may

pass, before you----"

"We will see about that!" said Don Roderick.

"Cousin, you would play the politician, but you cannot deceive me; I am

so certain that I have won the wager, that I stand ready for another."

"Why!"

"Why? because the father--the father--in short, this friar has converted

you."

"One of your fine imaginations, truly!"

"Converted, cousin, converted, I tell you; I rejoice at it; it will be a

fine spectacle to see you penitent, with your eyes cast down! And how

flattering to the father! he don't catch such fish every day. Be

assured, he will bring you forward as an example to others; your actions

will be trumpeted from the pulpit!"

"Enough, enough!" interrupted Don Roderick, half annoyed, and half

disposed to laugh. "I will double the wager with you, if you please."

"The devil! perhaps \_you\_ have converted the father!"

"Do not speak of him; but as to the wager, San Martin will decide." The

curiosity of the count was aroused; he made many enquiries, which Don

Roderick evaded, referring him to the day of decision.

The following morning, when he awoke, Don Roderick was "himself again."

The various emotions that had agitated him after his interview with the

father, had now resolved themselves into the simple desire of revenge.

Hardly risen, he sent for Griso.--"Something serious," muttered the

servant to whom the order was given; as this \_Griso\_ was nothing less

than the leader of the \_bravoes\_ to whom was intrusted the most

dangerous and daring enterprises, who was the most trusted by the

master, and the most devoted to him, from gratitude and interest. This

man had been guilty of murder; he had fled from the pursuit of justice

to the palace of Don Roderick, who took him under his protection, and

thus sheltered him from the pursuit of the law. He, therefore, stood

pledged to the performance of any deed of villany that should be imposed

on him.

"Griso," said Don Roderick, "you must show your skill in this

emergency. Before to-morrow, this Lucy must be in this palace."

"It shall never be said that Griso failed to execute a command from his

illustrious protector."

"Take as many men as are necessary, and dispose of them as appears to

you best; only let the thing succeed. But be careful that no harm be

done to her."

"Signor, a little fright--we cannot do less."

"Fright--may be unavoidable. But touch not a hair of her head; and,

above all, treat her with the greatest respect. Do you hear?"

"Signor, I could not take a flower from the bush, and carry it to your

Highness, without touching it; but I will do only what is absolutely

necessary."

"Well; I trust thee. And--how wilt thou do it?"

"I was thinking, signor. It is fortunate that her cottage is at the

extremity of the village; we have need of some place of concealment; and

not far from her house there is that old uninhabited building in the

middle of the fields, that one--but, your Highness knows nothing of

these matters--which was burnt a few years ago, and, not having been

repaired, is now deserted, except by the witches, who keep all cowardly

rascals away from it; so that we may take safe possession."

"Well; what then?"

Here Griso went on to propose, and Don Roderick to approve, until they

had agreed upon the manner of conducting the enterprise to the desired

conclusion, without leaving a trace of the authors of it: and also upon

the manner of imposing silence, not only upon poor Agnes, but also upon

the more impatient and fiery Renzo.

"If this rash fellow fall in your way by chance," added Don Roderick,

"you had best give him, on his shoulders, something he will remember; so

that he will be more likely to obey the order to remain quiet, which he

will receive to-morrow. Do you hear?"

"Yes, yes, leave it to me," said Griso, as, with an air of importance,

he took his leave.

The morning was spent in reconnoitring,--the mendicant of whom we have

spoken was Griso; the others were the villains whom he employed, to

gain a more perfect knowledge of the scene of action. They returned to

the palace to arrange and mature the enterprise;--all these mysterious

movements were not effected without rousing the suspicions of the old

domestic, who, partly by listening, and partly by conjecture, came to

the knowledge of the concerted attempt of the evening. This knowledge

came a little too late, for already a body of ruffians were laying in

wait in the old house. However, the poor old man, although well aware of

the dangerous game he played, did not fail to perform his promise; he

left the palace on some slight pretence, and hurried to the convent.

Griso and his band left shortly after, and met at the old building,--the

former had previously left orders at the palace, that, at the approach

of night, there should be a litter brought thither,--he then despatched

three of the bravoes to the village inn; one to remain at its entrance

to observe the movements on the road, and to give notice when the

inhabitants should have retired to rest; the other two to occupy

themselves within as idlers, gaming and drinking. Griso, with the rest

of the troop, continued in ambush, on the watch.

All this was going forward, and the sun was about to set, when Renzo

entered the cottage, and said to Lucy and her mother, "Tony and Jervase

are ready; I am going with them to sup at the inn; at the sound of the

'Ave Maria,' we will come for you; take courage, Lucy, all depends on a

moment."

"Oh, yes," said Lucy, "courage;" with a voice that contradicted her

words.

When Renzo and his companions arrived at the inn, they found the door

blockaded by a sentinel, who, leaning on one side of it, with his arms

folded on his breast, occupied half its width; at the same time rolling

his eagle eyes first to the right and then to the left, displaying

alternately their blacks and their whites. A flat cap of crimson velvet,

placed sideways, covered the half of the \_long lock\_, which, parted on a

dark forehead, was fastened behind with a comb. He held in his hand a

club; his arms, properly speaking, were concealed beneath his garments.

When Renzo evinced a desire to enter, he looked at him fixedly without

moving; of this, the young man, wishing to decline all conversation,

took no notice, but, beckoning to his companions to follow his example,

slid between the figure and the door-post. Having gained an entrance, he

beheld the other two bravoes with a large mug between them, seated at

play; they stared at him with a look of enquiry, making signs to each

other, and then to their comrade at the door. This was not unobserved by

Renzo, and his mind was filled with a vague sentiment of suspicion and

alarm. The innkeeper came for his orders; which were, "a private room,

and supper for three."

"Who are those strangers?" asked he of the landlord, when he came in to

set the table.

"I do not know them," replied he.

"How! neither of them?"

"The first rule of our trade," said he, spreading the cloth, "is, not to

meddle with the affairs of others; and, what is wonderful, even our

women are not curious. It is enough for us that customers pay well; who

they are, or who they are not, matters nothing. And now, I will bring

you a dish of polpette, the like of which you have never eaten."

When he returned to the kitchen, and was employed in taking the polpette

from the fire, one of the bravoes approached, and said, in an under

tone, "Who are those men?"

"Good people of this village," replied the host, pouring the mince-meat

into a dish.

"Well; but what are their names? Who are they?" insisted he, in a rough

voice.

"One is called Renzo," replied the host; "esteemed a good youth, and an

excellent weaver of silk. The other is a peasant, whose name is Tony; a

jovial fellow,--it is a pity he has no more money, for he would spend it

all here. The other is a simpleton, who eats when they feed him. By your

leave----" So saying, he slipped past him, with the dish in his hand,

and carried it to the place of its destination.

"How do you know?" said Renzo, continuing the conversation from the

point at which it had been dropped, "how do you know that they are

honest men, when you are not acquainted with them?"

"From their actions, my good fellow; men are known by their actions. He

who drinks wine without criticising it; he who shows the face of the

king on the counter without prattling; he who does not quarrel with

other customers, and, if he has a blow or two to give, goes away from

the inn, so that the poor host need not suffer from it; \_he\_ is an

honest man. But what the devil makes you so inquisitive, when you are

engaged to be married, and should have other things in your head? And

with this mince-meat before you, which would make the dead revive?" So

saying, he returned to the kitchen.

The supper was not very agreeable; the two guests would have lingered

over the unusual luxury; but Renzo, preoccupied, and troubled and uneasy

at the singular appearance of the strangers, longed for the hour of

departure. He conversed in brief sentences, and in an under tone, so

that he might not be overheard by them.

"What an odd thing it is," blundered Jervase, "that Renzo wishes to be

married, and has needed----" Renzo looked sternly at him. "Keep silence,

you beast!" said Tony to him, accompanying the epithet with a cuff.

Jervase obeyed, and the remainder of the repast was consumed in silence.

Renzo observed a strict sobriety, in order to keep his companions under

some restraint. Supper being over, he paid the reckoning, and prepared

to depart: they were obliged to pass the three men again, and encounter

a repetition of their eager gaze. When a few steps distant from the inn,

Renzo, looking back, perceived that he was followed by the two whom he

had left seated in the kitchen. He stopped; observing this, they stopped

also, and retraced their steps.

If he had been near enough, he would have heard a few words of strange

import; "It would be a glorious thing," said one of the scoundrels,

"without reckoning the cash, if we could tell at the palace how we had

flattened their ribs,--without the direction, too, of Signor Griso."

"And spoil the whole work," added the other; "but see! he stops to look

at us! Oh! if it were only later! But let us turn back, not to create

suspicion. People are coming on all sides; let us wait till they go to

their rests."

Then was heard in the village the busy hum of the evening, which

precedes the solemn stillness of the night; then were seen women

returning from their daily labour, with their infants on their backs,

and leading by the hand the older children, to whom they were repeating

the evening prayers; men with their spades, and other instruments of

culture, thrown over their shoulders. At the opening of the cottage

doors, was discerned the bright light of the fires, kindled in order to

prepare their meagre suppers; in the street there were salutations given

and returned, brief and mournful observations on the poverty of the

harvest, and the scarcity of the year; and at intervals was heard the

measured strokes of the bell which announced the departure of the day.

When Renzo saw that the two men no longer followed him, he continued his

way, giving instructions, in a low voice, from time to time, to his two

companions. It was dark night when they arrived at the cottage of Lucy.

"Between the acting of a dreadful thing

And the first motion, all the interim is

Like a phantasma, or a hideous dream."

Lucy endured many hours the anguish of such a dream; and Agnes, even

Agnes, the author of the plot, was thoughtful and silent. But, in the

moment of action, new and various emotions pass swiftly through the

mind: at one instant, that which had appeared difficult becomes

perfectly easy; at another, obstacles present themselves which were

never before thought of, the imagination is filled with alarm, the limbs

refuse their office, and the heart fails at the promise it had given

with such security. At the gentle knock of Renzo, Lucy was seized with

such terror, that, at the moment, she resolved to suffer any thing, to

endure a separation from him for ever, rather than execute her

resolution; but when, with an assured and encouraging air, he said, "All

is ready; let us begone," she had neither heart nor time to suggest

difficulties. Agnes and Renzo placed her between them, and the

adventurous company set forward. Slowly and quietly they took the path

that led around the village,--it would have been nearer to pass directly

through it, to Don Abbondio's house, but their object was to avoid

observation. Upon reaching the house, the lovers remained concealed on

one side of it, Agnes a little in advance, so as to be prepared to speak

to Perpetua as soon as she should make her appearance. Tony, with

Jervase, who did nothing, but \_without\_ whom nothing could be done,

courageously knocked at the door.

"Who is there, at this hour?" cried a voice from the window, which they

recognised to be that of Perpetua. "No one is sick, that I know of. What

is the matter?"

"It is I," replied Tony, "with my brother; we want to speak with the

curate."

"Is this an hour for Christians?" replied Perpetua, briskly. "Come

to-morrow."

"Hear me; I will come, or not, as I choose; I have received I can't tell

how much money, and I have come to balance the small account that you

know of. I have here twenty-five fine new pieces; but if he cannot see

me,--well--I know how and where to spend them."

"Wait, wait. I will speak to you in a moment. But why come at this

hour?"

"If you can change the hour, I am willing; as for me, I am here, and, if

you don't want me to stay, I'll go away."

"No, no, wait a moment; I will give you an answer." So saying, she

closed the window. As soon as she disappeared, Agnes separated herself

from the lovers, saying to Lucy, in a low voice, "Courage, it is but a

moment." She then entered into conversation with Tony at the door, that

Perpetua, on opening it, might suppose she had been accidentally passing

by, and that Tony had detained her.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Carneades! who was he?" said Don Abbondio to himself, seated in his

large chair, with a book open before him. "Carneades! this name I have

either heard or read of; he must have been a man of study, a scholar of

antiquity; but who the devil \_was\_ he?" Now, it should be known, that it

was Don Abbondio's custom to read a little every day, and that a curate,

his neighbour, who had a small library, furnished him with books, one

after the other, as they came to hand. That with which he was at this

moment engaged, was a panegyric on St. Carlos, delivered many years

before in the cathedral of Milan. The saint was there compared for his

love of study to Archimedes; which comparison the poor curate well

understood, inasmuch as this did not require, from the various anecdotes

related of him, an erudition very extensive. But the author went on to

liken him also to Carneades, and here the poor reader was at fault. At

this moment, Perpetua announced the visit of Tony.

"At such an hour?" said Don Abbondio.

"What do you expect? They have no discretion. But if you do not shoot

the bird flying----"

"Who knows if I shall ever be able to do it?" continued he. "Let him

come in. But are you very sure that it is Tony?"

"The devil!" said Perpetua, as she descended, and, opening the door,

demanded, "Where are you?"

Tony appeared, in company with Agnes, who accosted Perpetua by name.

"Good evening, Agnes," said she; "whence come you at this hour?"

"I come from----," naming a neighbouring village. "And do you know," she

continued, "that I have been delayed on your account?"

"On my account!" exclaimed she; and turning to the two brothers, said,

"Go in, and I will follow you."

"Because," resumed Agnes, "a gossiping woman of the company said--would

you believe it?--obstinately persisted in saying, that you were never

engaged to Beppo Suolavecchia, nor to Anselmo Lunghigna, because they

would not have you. I maintained that you had refused them both----"

"Certainly I did. Oh! what a liar! oh! what a great liar! Who was it?"

"Don't ask me; I don't wish to make mischief."

"You must tell me; you must tell me. Oh! what a lie!"

"So it was; but you can't believe how sorry I felt not to know all the

story, that I might have confuted her."

"It is an infamous lie," said Perpetua. "As to Beppo, every one

knows----"

In front of Don Abbondio's house, there was a short and narrow lane,

between two old cottages, which opened at the farther end into the

fields. Agnes drew Perpetua thither, as if for the purpose of talking

with her more freely. When they were at a spot, from which they could

not see what passed before the curate's house, Agnes coughed loudly.

This was the concerted signal, which, being heard by Renzo, he, with

Lucy on his arm, crept quietly along the wall, approached the door,

opened it softly, and entered the passage, where the two brothers were

waiting their approach. They all ascended the stairs on tiptoe; the

brothers advanced towards the door of the chamber; the lovers remained

concealed on the landing.

"\_Deo gratias\_," said Tony, in a clear voice.

"Tony, eh? come in," replied the voice from within. Tony obeyed, opening

the door just enough to admit himself and brother, one at a time. The

rays of light, which shone unexpectedly through this opening on the

darkness by which Renzo and Lucy were protected, made the latter tremble

as if already discovered. The brothers entered, and Tony closed the

door; the lovers remained motionless without; the beating of poor Lucy's

heart might be heard in the stillness.

Don Abbondio was, as we have said, seated in his arm chair, wrapped in

a morning-gown, with an old cap on his head, in the fashion of a tiara,

which formed a sort of cornice around his face, and shaded it from the

dim light of a little lamp. Two thick curls which escaped from beneath

the cap, two thick eyebrows, two thick mustachios, a dense tuft along

his chin, all quite grey, and studding his sun-burnt and wrinkled

visage, might be compared to snowy bushes projecting from a rock by

moonlight.

"Ah! ah!" was his salutation, as he took off his spectacles and placed

them on his book.

"Does the curate think I have come at too late an hour?" said Tony,

bowing: Jervase awkwardly followed his example.

"Certainly, it is late; late on all accounts. Do you know that I am

ill?"

"Oh! I am sorry."

"Did you not hear that I was sick, and could not be seen? But why is

this boy with you?"

"For company, Signor Curate."

"Well; let us see."

"Here are twenty-five new pieces, with the image of St. Ambrose on

horseback," said Tony, drawing forth a little bundle from his pocket.

"Give here," said Don Abbondio; and taking the bundle, he opened it,

counted the money, and found it correct.

"Now, sir, you will give me the necklace of my Teela."

"Certainly," replied Don Abbondio; and going to an old press, he drew

forth the pledge, and carefully returned it.

"Now," said Tony, "you will please to put it in black and white?"

"Eh!" said Don Abbondio, "how suspicious the world has become! Do you

not trust me?"

"How! Sir. If I trust you! you do me wrong. But since my name is on your

book on the side of debtor----"

"Well, well," interrupted Don Abbondio; and seating himself at the

table, he began to write, repeating, with a loud voice, the words as

they came from his pen. In the meanwhile, Tony, and, at a sign from him,

Jervase, placed themselves before the table, in such a manner as to

deprive the writer of a view of the door; and, as if from heedlessness,

moved their feet about on the floor, as a signal to those without, and

also for the purpose of drowning the noise of their footsteps; of this

Don Abbondio, occupied in writing, took no notice. At the grating sounds

of the feet Renzo drew Lucy trembling into the room, and stood with her

behind the brothers. Don Abbondio, having finished writing, read it over

attentively, folded the paper, and reaching it to Tony, said, "Will you

be satisfied now?" Tony, on receiving it, retired on one side, Jervase

on the other, and, behold, in the midst, Renzo and Lucy! Don Abbondio,

affrighted, astonished, and enraged, took an immediate resolution; and

while Renzo was uttering the words, "Sir Curate, in the presence of

these witnesses, this is my wife," and the poor Lucy had begun, "And

this is----" he had snatched from the table the cloth which covered it,

throwing on the ground books, pen, ink, and paper, and in haste letting

fall the light, he threw it over and held it wrapped around the face of

Lucy, at the same time roaring out, "Perpetua! Perpetua! treachery!

help!" The wick, dying in the socket, sent a feeble and flickering light

over the figure of Lucy, who, entirely overcome, stood like a statue,

making no effort to free herself. The light died away, and left them in

darkness; Don Abbondio quitted the poor girl, and felt cautiously along

the wall for a door that led to an inner chamber; having found it, he

entered, and locked himself in, crying out, "Perpetua! treachery! help!

out of the house! out of the house!" All was confusion in the apartment

he had quitted; Renzo, groping in the dark to find the curate, had

followed the sound of his voice, and was knocking at the door of the

room, crying, "Open, open; don't make such an outcry;" Lucy calling to

Renzo, in a supplicating voice, "Let us go, let us go, for the love of

God!" Tony, creeping on all fours, and feeling along the floor for his

receipt, which had been dropped in the tumult; the poor Jervase, crying

and jumping, and endeavouring to find the door on the stairs, so as to

escape with whole bones.

In the midst of this turmoil, we cannot stop to make reflections; but

Renzo, causing disturbance at night in another person's house, and

holding the master of it besieged in an inner room, has all the

appearance of an oppressor; when in fact he was the oppressed. Don

Abbondio, assaulted in his own house, while he was tranquilly attending

to his affairs, appeared the victim; when, in fact, it was he who had

inflicted the injury. Thus goes the world, or rather, thus it went in

the seventeenth century.

The besieged, seeing that the enemy gave no signs of retreat, opened a

window which looked out upon the churchyard, and cried, "Help, help!"

The moon shone brightly--every object could be clearly discerned as in

the day; but a deep repose rested over all--there was no indication of a

living soul. Contiguous to the church, and on that side of it which

fronted the parsonage, was a small habitation in which slept the sexton.

Aroused by this strange outcry, he jumped from his bed, opened the small

window, with his eyelids glued together all the time, and cried, "What

is the matter?"

"Run, Ambrose, run! help! people in the house!" cried Don Abbondio. "I

come in a moment," replied he, drawing in his head; he closed his

curtain, and half stupid, and half affrighted, thought of an expedient

to bring more help than had been required of him, without risking his

own life in the contest, whatever it might be. He hastily took his

breeches from the bed, and putting them under his arm, like an opera

hat, ran to the belfry and pulled away lustily.

\_Ton, Ton, Ton\_; the peasant aroused, sat up in his bed; the boy,

sleeping in the hay-loft, listened eagerly, and sprang on his feet;

"What is the matter? What is it? Fire! Robbers!" Each woman entreated

her husband not to stir, but to leave it to others: such as were cowards

obeyed, whilst the inquisitive and courageous took their arms, and ran

towards the noise.

Long before this, however, the alarm had been given to other personages

of our story; the bravoes in one place; and Agnes and Perpetua in

another. It is necessary to relate briefly how the former had been

occupied, since we last took leave of them; those at the old house, and

those at the inn. The latter, when they ascertained that the

inhabitants of the village had retired to rest, and that the road was

clear, went to the cottage of Lucy, and found that a perfect stillness

reigned within. They then returned to the old house to give in their

report to Signor Griso. He immediately put on a slouched hat, with a

pilgrim's habit, and staff, saying, "Let us act as becometh soldiers;

cautious, quiet, and attentive to orders." Then leading the way, he,

with his company, arrived at the cottage, by a route different from that

taken by our poor cottagers. Griso kept the band a few steps off, went

forward alone to explore, and seeing all deserted and quiet on the

outside, he beckoned to two of them, ordered them to mount very

carefully and quietly the wall which enclosed the court-yard, and to

conceal themselves on the other side behind a thick fig-tree, which he

had observed in the morning. That being done, he knocked gently at the

door, with the intention to call himself a pilgrim, who had wandered

from his way, and request shelter until the morning. No answer; he

knocked again, louder; not a sound! He then called a third robber, made

him also descend into the yard, with orders to unfasten the bolt on the

inside, so that they might have free entrance. All was performed with

the utmost caution, and the most complete success. Griso then called the

rest, and made some of them conceal themselves by the side of those

behind the fig-tree; he then opened the door very softly, placed two

centinels on the inside of it, and advanced to the lower chamber. He

knocked; he waited--and well might wait; he raised the latch; no one

from within said, "Who is there?" Nothing could go on better. He then

called the robbers from the fig-tree, and with them entered the room

where he had in the morning so villanously received the loaf of bread.

He drew out his flint, tinder-box, and matches, and striking a light,

proceeded to the inner chamber; it was empty! He returned to the stairs,

and listened; solitude and silence! He left two to keep watch below, and

with the others carefully ascended the stairs, cursing in his heart the

creaking of the steps. He reached the summit, pushed softly open the

door of the first room, and listened if any one breathed or moved: no

one! He advanced, shading his face with the lamp, and perceived a bed;

it was made, and perfectly smooth, with the covering arranged in order

on the bolster! He shrugged his shoulders, and returning to the company,

made a sign to them, that he was going into the other room, and that

they should remain quietly behind,--he did so, and had the same success;

all deserted and quiet.

"What the devil's this?" said he aloud; "some traitorous dog has played

the spy!" They then searched with less ceremony the rest of the house,

putting every thing out of its place. Meanwhile those at the doorway

heard a light step approaching in the street,--they kept very quiet,

thinking it would pass on; but, behold! it stopped exactly in front of

the cottage! It was Menico, who had come in haste from the convent, to

warn Agnes and her daughter to escape from the house, and take refuge

\_there\_, because--the \_because\_ is already known. He was surprised to

find the door unbolted, and entering with a vague sentiment of alarm,

found himself seized by two ruffians, who said in a menacing tone,

"Hush! be quiet, or you die!" He uttered a cry, at which one struck him

a blow on the mouth, the other placed his hand on his sword to inspire

him with fear. The boy trembled like a leaf, and did not attempt to

stir; but all at once was heard the first sound of the bell, and

immediately after, a thundering peel burst forth. "The wicked are always

cowards," says a Milanese proverb; alarmed at the sound, the bravoes let

go in haste the arms of Menico, and fled away hastily to the old house,

to join the main body of their comrades. Menico, finding himself free,

also fled, by the way of the fields, towards the belfry, naturally

supposing he would find some one there. As to the other villains above

stairs, the terrible sound made the same impression on them; amazed and

perplexed, they hit one against the other, in striving to find the

nearest way to the door. Nevertheless, they were brave, and accustomed

to confront any known danger; but here was something unusual, an

undetermined peril, and they became panic-struck. It now required all

the superiority of Griso to keep them together, so that there should be

a retreat, and not a flight. He succeeded, however, in assembling them

in the middle of the court-yard. "Halt, halt," cried he, "pistols in

hand, knives ready, all in order, and then we will march. Cowards! for

shame! fall behind me, and keep together." Reduced to order, they

followed him in silence.

We will leave them, in order to give an account of Agnes and Perpetua,

whom we left at the end of the little lane, engaged in conversation.

Agnes had managed to draw the latter off to some distance, by dint of

appearing to give great heed to her story, which she urged on by an

occasional "Certainly; now I comprehend; that is plain; and then? and

he? and you?" In the midst of an important part of her narrative, the

deep silence of the night was broken by the cry of Don Abbondio for

"\_help!\_" "Mercy! what is the matter?" cried Perpetua, and prepared to

run.

"What is the matter? what is the matter?" cried Agnes, holding her by

the gown.

"Mercy! did you not hear?" replied she, struggling to get free.

"What is the matter? what is the matter?" repeated Agnes, holding her

firmly by the arm.

"Devil of a woman!" exclaimed Perpetua, still struggling. Then was heard

at a distance the light scream of Menico.

"Mercy!" cried Agnes also, and they both ran at full speed; the sound of

the bell, which now succeeded, spurred them on. Perpetua arrived first,

and, behold, at the door, Tony, Jervase, Renzo, and Lucy, who had found

the stairs, and, at the terrible sound of the bell, were flying to some

place of safety.

"What is the matter? What is the matter?" demanded Perpetua, out of

breath, of the brothers. They answered her with a violent push, and fled

away. "And you! what are you here for?" said she then to Renzo and Lucy.

They made no reply. She then ascended the stairs in haste, to seek her

master. The two lovers (still lovers) stood before Agnes, who, alarmed

and grieved, said, "Ah! you are here! How has it gone? Why did the bell

ring?"

"Home, home!" said Renzo, "before the people gather." But Menico now

appeared running to meet them. He was out of breath, and hardly able to

cry out, "Back! back! by the way of the convent. There is the devil at

the house," continued he, panting; "I saw him, I did; he was going to

kill me. The Father Christopher says you must come quickly.--I saw him,

I did.--I am glad I found you all here,--I will tell you all when we are

safe off."

Renzo, who was the most self-possessed of the party, thought it best to

follow his advice. "Let us follow him," said he, to the females. They

silently obeyed, and the little company moved on. They hastily crossed

the churchyard, passing through a private street, into the fields. They

were not many paces distant, before the people began to collect, each

one asking of his neighbour what was the matter, and no one being able

to answer the question. The first that arrived ran to the door of the

church: it was fastened. They then looked through a little window into

the belfry, and demanded the cause of the alarm. When Ambrose heard a

known voice, and knew, by the hum, that there was an assemblage of

people without, he hastily slipped on that part of his dress which he

had carried under his arm, and opened the church door.

"What is all this tumult? What is the matter? Where is it?"

"Where is it? Do you not know? Why, in the curate's house. Run, run."

They rushed in a crowd thither; looked,--listened. All was quiet. The

street door was fastened; not a window open; not a sound within.

"Who is within there? Holla! holla! Signor Curate, Signor Curate!"

Don Abbondio, who, as soon as he was relieved by the flight of the

invaders, had retired from the window, and closed it, was now

quarrelling with Perpetua for leaving him to bear the brunt of the

battle alone. When he heard himself called by name, by the people

outside, he repented of the rashness which had produced this undesired

result.

"What has happened? Who are they? Where are they? What have they done to

you?" cried a hundred voices at a time.

"There is no one here now; I am much obliged to you.--Return to your

houses."

"But who \_has\_ been here? Where have they gone? What has happened?"

"Bad people, bad people, who wander about in the night; but they have

all fled.--Return to your houses. I thank you for your kindness." So

saying, he retired and shut the window. There was a general murmur of

disappointment through the crowd. Some laughed, some swore, some

shrugged up their shoulders and went home; but at this moment a person

came running towards them, panting and breathless. He lived at the house

opposite to the cottage of Lucy, and had witnessed from the window the

alarm of the bravoes, when Griso endeavoured to collect them in the

court-yard. When he recovered breath, he cried, "What do you do here,

friends? The devil is not here, he is down at the house of Agnes

Mondella. Armed people are in it. It seems they wish to murder a

pilgrim; but who knows what the devil it is?"

"What! what! what!" And then began a tumultuous conversation. "Let us

go. How many are there? How many are we? Who are they?--The constable!

the constable!"

"I am here," replied the constable, from the midst of the crowd, "I am

here, but you must assist me; you must obey.--Quick;--where is the

sexton? To the bell, to the bell. Quick; some one run to Lecco to ask

for succour.--Come this way." The tumult was great, and as they were

about to depart for the cottage of Agnes, another messenger came flying,

and exclaimed, "Run, friends;--robbers who are carrying off a pilgrim.

They are already out of the village! On! on! this way."

In obedience to this command they moved in a mass, without waiting the

orders of their leader, towards the cottage of Lucy. While the army

advances, many of those at the head of the column, slacken their pace,

not unwilling to leave the post of honour to their more adventurous

friends in the rear. The confused multitude at length reach the scene of

action. The traces of recent invasion were manifest,--the door open, the

bolts loosened, but the invaders, where were they? They entered the

court, advanced into the house, and called loudly, "Agnes! Lucy!

Pilgrim! Where is the pilgrim! Did Stephano dream that he saw him? No,

no, Carlandrea saw him also. Hallo! Pilgrim! Agnes! Lucy! No reply! They

have killed them! they have killed them!" There was then a proposition

to follow the murderers, which would have been acceded to, had not a

voice from the crowd cried out, that Agnes and Lucy were in safety in

some house. Satisfied with this, they soon dispersed to their homes, to

relate to their wives that which had happened. The next day, however,

the constable being in his field, and, with his foot resting on his

spade, meditating on the mysteries of the past night, was accosted by

two men, much resembling, in their appearance, those whom Don Abbondio

had encountered a few days before. They very unceremoniously forbade him

to make a deposition of the events of the night before the magistrate,

and, if questioned by any of the gossips of the villagers, to maintain a

perfect silence on pain of death.

Our fugitives for a while continued their flight, rapidly and silently,

utterly overwhelmed by the fatigue of their flight, by their late

anxiety, by vexation and disappointment at their failure, and a confused

apprehension of some future danger. As the sound of the bell died away

on the ear, they slackened their pace. Agnes, gathering breath and

courage, first broke the silence, by asking Renzo what had been done at

the curate's? He related briefly his melancholy story. "And who," said

she to Menico, "was the devil in the house? What did you mean by that?"

The boy narrated that of which he had been an eye-witness, and which

imparted a mingled feeling of alarm and gratitude to the minds of his

auditors,--alarm at the obstinacy of Don Roderick in pursuing his

purpose, and gratitude that they had thus escaped his snares. They

caressed affectionately the boy who had been placed in so great danger

on their account: Renzo gave him a piece of money in addition to the

new coin already promised, and desired him to say nothing of the message

given him by Father Christopher. "Now, return home," said Agnes,

"because thy family will be anxious about thee: you have been a good

boy; go home, and pray the Lord that we may soon meet again." The boy

obeyed, and our travellers advanced in silence. Lucy kept close to her

mother, dexterously but gently declining the arm of her lover. She felt

abashed, even in the midst of all this confusion, at having been so long

and so familiarly alone with him, while expecting that a few moments

longer would have seen her his wife: but this dream had vanished, and

she felt most sensitively the apparent indelicacy of their situation.

They at length reached the open space before the church of the convent.

Renzo advanced towards the door, and pushed it gently. It opened, and

they beheld, by the light of the moon, which then fell upon his pallid

face and silvery beard, the form of Father Christopher, who was there in

anxious expectation of their arrival. "God be thanked!" said he, as they

entered. By his side stood a capuchin, whose office was that of sexton

to the church, whom he had persuaded to leave the door half open, and to

watch with him. He had been very unwilling to submit to this

inconvenient and dangerous condescension, which it required all the

authority of the holy father to overcome; but, perceiving who the

company were, he could endure no longer. Taking the father aside, he

whispered, to him, "But Father--Father--at night--in the church--with

women--shut--the rules--but Father!----" "Omnia munda mundis," replied

he, turning meekly to Friar Fazio, and forgetting that he did not

understand Latin. But this forgetfulness was exactly the most fortunate

thing in the world. If the father had produced arguments, Friar Fazio

would not have failed to oppose them; but these mysterious words, he

concluded, must contain a solution of all his doubts. He acquiesced,

saying, "Very well; you know more than I do."

Father Christopher then turned to our little company, who were standing

in suspense, by the light of a lamp which was flickering before the

altar. "Children," said he, "thank the Lord, who has preserved you from

great peril. Perhaps at this moment----" and he entered into an

explanation of the reasons which had induced him to send for them to the

convent, little suspecting that they knew more than he did, and

supposing that Menico had found them tranquil at their home, before the

arrival of the robbers. No one undeceived him, not even Lucy, although

suffering the keenest anguish at practising dissimulation with such a

man; but it was a night of confusion and duplicity.

"Now," continued he, "you perceive, my children, that this country is no

longer safe for you. It is your country, I know; you were born here; you

have wronged no one: but such is the will of God! It is a trial,

children, support it with patience, with faith, without murmuring; and

be assured, there will come a day, in which you will see the wisdom of

all that now befalls you. I have procured you a refuge for a season, and

I hope you will soon be able to return safely to your home; at all

events, God will provide, and I his minister will faithfully exert

myself to serve you, my poor persecuted children. You," continued he,

turning to the females, "can remain at ----. There you will be beyond

danger, and yet not far from home; go to our convent in that place, ask

for the superior, give him this letter, he will be to you another Friar

Christopher. And thou, my Renzo, thou must place thyself in safety from

the impetuosity of others, and your own. Carry this letter to Father

Bonaventura, of Lodi, in our convent at the eastern gate of Milan; he

will be to you a father, will advise you, and find you work, until you

can return to live here tranquilly. Now, go to the border of the lake,

near the mouth of the Bione" (a stream a short distance from the

convent); "you will see there a small boat fastened; you must say, 'A

boat;' you will be asked for whom, answer, 'Saint Francis.' The boatman

will receive you, will take you to the other side, where you will find a

carriage, which will conduct you to ----. If any one should ask how

Father Christopher came to have at his disposal such means of transport

by land and by water, he would show little knowledge of the power

possessed by a capuchin who held the reputation of a saint."

The charge of the houses remained to be thought of; the father received

the keys of them; Agnes, on consigning hers, thought with a sigh, that

there was no need of keys, the house was open, the devil had been there,

and it was doubtful if there remained any thing to be cared for.

"Before you go," said the father, "let us pray together to the Lord,

that he may be with you in this journey, and always, and above all, that

he may give you strength to submit cheerfully to that which he has

ordained." So saying, he knelt down; all did the same. Having prayed a

few moments in silence, he pronounced with a low but distinct voice the

following words: "We pray thee also for the wretched man who has brought

us to this state. We should be unworthy of thy mercy if we did not

earnestly solicit it for him: he has most need of it. We, in our sorrow,

have the consolation of trusting in thee; we can still offer thee our

supplications, with thankfulness. But he--he is an enemy to thee! Oh

wretched man! He dares to strive against thee: have pity on him, O Lord!

touch his heart, soften his rebellious will, and bestow on him all the

good we would desire for ourselves."

Rising hastily, he then said, "Away, my children, there is no time to

lose; God will go with you, his angel protect you: away." They kept

silence from emotion, and as they departed, the father added, "My heart

tells me we shall soon meet again." Without waiting for a reply, he

retired; the travellers pursued their way to the appointed spot, found

the boat, gave and received the watchword, and entered into it. The

boatmen made silently for the opposite shore: there was not a breath of

wind; the lake lay polished and smooth in the moonlight, agitated only

by the dipping of the oars, which quivered in its gleam. The waves

breaking on the sands of the shore, were heard deadly and slowly at a

distance, mingled with the rippling of the waters between the pillars of

the bridge.

The silent passengers cast a melancholy look behind at the mountains and

the landscape, illumined by the moon, and varied by multitudes of

shadows. They discerned villages, houses, cottages; the palace of Don

Roderick, raised above the huts that crowded the base of the promontory,

like a savage prowling in the dark over his slumbering prey. Lucy beheld

it, and shuddered; then cast a glance beyond the declivity, towards her

own little home, and beheld the top of the fig-tree which towered in the

court-yard; moved at the sight, she buried her face in her hands, and

wept in silence.

Farewell, ye mountains, source of waters! farewell to your varied

summits, familiar as the faces of friends! ye torrents, whose voices

have been heard from infancy! Farewell! how melancholy the destiny of

one, who, bred up amid your scenes, bids you farewell! If voluntarily

departing with the hope of future gain at this moment, the dream of

wealth loses its attraction, his resolution falters, and he would fain

remain with you, were it not for the hope of benefiting you by his

prosperity. The more he advances into the level country, the more his

view becomes wearied with its uniform extent; the air appears heavy and

lifeless: he proceeds sorrowfully and thoughtfully into the tumultuous

city; houses crowded against houses, street uniting with street, appears

to deprive him of the power to breathe; and in front of edifices admired

by strangers, he stops to recall, with restless desire, the image of the

field and the cottage which had long been the object of his wishes, and

which, on his return to his mountains, he will make his own, should he

acquire the wealth of which he is in pursuit.

But how much more sorrowful the moment of separation to him, who, having

never sent a transient wish beyond the mountains, feels that they

comprise the limit of his earthly hopes, and yet is driven from them by

an adverse fate; who is compelled to quit them to go into a foreign

land, with scarcely a hope of return! Then he breaks forth into mournful

exclamations. "Farewell native cottage! where, many a time and oft, I

have listened with eager ear, to distinguish, amidst the rumour of

footsteps, the well-known sound of those long expected and anxiously

desired. Farewell, ye scenes, where I had hoped to pass, tranquil and

content, the remnant of my days! Farewell, thou sanctuary of God, where

my soul has been filled with admiring thoughts of him, and my voice has

united with others to sing his praise! Farewell! He, whom I worshipped

within your walls, is not confined to temples made with hands; heaven is

his dwelling place, and the earth his footstool; he watches over his

children, and, if he chastises them, it is in love, to prepare them for

higher and holier enjoyments."

Of such a nature, if not precisely the same, were the reflections of

Lucy and her companions, as the bark carried them to the right bank of

the Adda.

CHAPTER IX.

The shock which the boat received, as it struck against the shore,

aroused Lucy from her reverie; they quitted the bark, and Renzo turned

to thank and reward the boatman. "I will take nothing--nothing," said

he: "we are placed on earth to aid one another." The carriage was ready,

the driver seated; its expected occupants took their places, and the

horses moved briskly on. Our travellers arrived then at Monza, which we

believe to have been the name of the place to which Father Christopher

had directed Renzo, a little after sunrise. The driver turned to an inn,

where he appeared to be well acquainted, and demanded for them a

separate room. He, as well as the boatman, refused the offered

recompence of Renzo; like the boatman, he had in view a reward, more

distant indeed, but more abundant; he withdrew his hand, and hastened to

look after his beast.

After an evening such as we have described, and a night passed in

painful thoughts both in regard to recent events and future

anticipations--disturbed, indeed, by the frequent joltings of their

incommodious vehicle,--our travellers felt a little rest in their

retired apartment at the inn highly necessary. They partook of a small

meal together, not more in proportion to the prevailing want, than to

their own slender appetites; and recurred with a sigh to the delightful

festivities, which, two days before, were to have accompanied their

happy union. Renzo would willingly have remained with his companions all

the day, to secure their lodging and perform other little offices. But

they strongly alleged the injunctions of Father Christopher, together

with the gossiping to which their continuing together would give rise,

so that he at length acquiesced. Lucy could not conceal her tears; Renzo

with difficulty restrained his; and, warmly pressing the hand of Agnes,

he pronounced with a voice almost choked, "Till we meet again."

The mother and daughter would have been in great perplexity, had it not

been for the kind driver, who had orders to conduct them to the convent,

which was at a little distance from the village. Upon their arrival

there, the guide requested the porter to call the superior: he appeared,

and the letter of Father Christopher was delivered to him. "Oh, from

Father Christopher!" said he, recognising the handwriting. His voice and

manner told evidently that he uttered the name of one whom he regarded

as a particular friend. During the perusal of the letter, he manifested

much surprise and indignation, and, raising his eyes, fixed them on Lucy

and her mother with an expression of pity and interest. When he had

finished reading, he remained for a moment thoughtful, and then

exclaimed, "There is no one but the signora; if the signora would take

upon herself this obligation----" and then addressing them, "My

friends," said he, "I will make the effort, and I hope to find you a

shelter, more than secure, more than honourable; so that God has

provided for you in the best manner. Will you come with me?"

The females bowed reverently in assent; the friar continued, "Come with

me, then, to the monastery of the signora. But keep yourselves a few

steps distant, because there are people who delight to speak evil of

others, and God knows how many fine stories might be told, if the

superior of the convent was seen walking with a beautiful young

woman--with women, I mean."

So saying, he went on before: Lucy blushed; the guide looked at Agnes,

who could not conceal a momentary smile; and they all three obeyed the

command of the friar, and followed him at a distance. "Who is the

signora?" said Agnes, addressing their conductor.

"The signora," replied he, "is not a nun; that is, not a nun like the

others. She is not the abbess, nor the prioress; for they say that \_she\_

is one of the youngest of them; but she is from Adam's rib, and her

ancestors were great people, who came from Spain; and they call her the

\_signora\_, to signify that she is a great lady,--every one calls her so,

because they say that in this monastery they have never had so noble a

person; and her relations down at Milan are very powerful, and in Monza

still more so; because her father is the first lord in the country; for

which reason she can do as she pleases in the convent,--and moreover

people abroad bear her a great respect, and if she undertakes a thing,

she makes it succeed; and if this good father induces her to take you

under her protection, you will be as safe as at the foot of the altar."

When the superior arrived at the gate of the town, which was defended at

that time by an old tower, and part of a dismantled castle, he stopped

and looked back to see if they followed him--then advanced towards the

monastery, and, remaining on the threshold, awaited their approach. The

guide then took his leave, not without many thanks from Agnes and her

daughter for his kindness and faithfulness. The superior led them to the

portress's chamber, and went alone to make the request of the signora.

After a few moments he re-appeared, and with a joyful countenance told

them that she would grant them an interview: on their way, he gave them

much advice concerning their deportment in her presence. "She is well

disposed towards you," said he, "and has the power to protect you. Be

humble, and respectful; reply with frankness to the questions she will

ask you, and when not questioned, be silent."

They passed through a lower chamber, and advanced towards the parlour.

Lucy, who had never been in a monastery before, looked around as she

entered it for the signora; but there was no one there; in a few

moments, however, she observed the friar approach a small window or

grating, behind which she beheld a nun standing. She appeared about

twenty-five years of age; her countenance at first sight produced an

impression of beauty, but of beauty prematurely faded. A black veil hung

in folds on either side of her face; below the veil a band of white

linen encircled a forehead of different, but not inferior whiteness;

another plaited band encompassed the face, and terminated under the chin

in a neck handkerchief, or cape, which, extending over the shoulders,

covered to the waist the folds of her black robe. But her forehead was

contracted from time to time, as if by some painful emotion; now, her

large black eye was fixed steadfastly on your face with an expression of

haughty curiosity, then hastily bent down as if to discover some hidden

thought; in certain moments an attentive observer would have deemed that

they solicited affection, sympathy, and pity; at others, he would have

received a transient revelation of hatred, matured by a cruel

disposition; when motionless and inattentive, some would have imagined

them to express haughty aversion, others would have suspected the

labouring of concealed thought, the effort to overcome some secret

feeling of her soul, which had more power over it than all surrounding

objects. Her cheeks were delicately formed, but extremely pale and thin;

her lips, hardly suffused with a feeble tinge of the rose, seemed to

soften into the pallid hue of the cheeks; their movements, like those of

her eyes, were sudden, animated, and full of expression and mystery. Her

loftiness of stature was not apparent, owing to an habitual stoop; as

well as to her rapid and irregular movements, little becoming a nun, or

even a lady. In her dress itself there was an appearance of studied

neglect, which announced a singular character; and from the band around

her temples was suffered to escape, through forgetfulness or contempt of

the rules which prohibited it, a curl of glossy black hair.

These things made no impression on the minds of Agnes and Lucy,

unaccustomed as they were to the sight of a nun; and to the superior it

was no novelty--he, as well as many others, had become familiarised to

her habit and manners.

She was, as we have said, standing near the grate, against which she

leaned languidly, to observe those who were approaching. "Reverend

mother, and most illustrious lady," said the superior, bending low,

"this is the poor young woman for whom I have solicited your protection,

and this is her mother."

Both mother and daughter bowed reverently. "It is fortunate that I have

it in my power," said she, turning to the father, "to do some little

service to our good friends the capuchin fathers. But tell me a little

more particularly, the situation of this young woman, that I may be

better prepared to act for her advantage."

Lucy blushed, and held down her head. "You must know, reverend mother,"

said Agnes--but the father interrupted her;--"This young person, most

illustrious lady," continued he, "has been recommended to me, as I have

told you, by one of my brethren. She has been obliged to depart secretly

from her native place, in order to escape heavy perils; and she has need

for some time of an asylum, where she can remain unknown, and where no

one will dare to molest her."

"What perils?" demanded the lady. "Pray, father, do not talk so

enigmatically: you know, we nuns like to hear stories minutely."

"They are perils," replied the father, "that should not be told to the

pure ears of the reverend mother."--"Oh, certainly," said the lady,

hastily, and slightly blushing. Was this the blush of modesty? He would

have doubted it, who should have observed the rapid expression of

disdain which accompanied it, or have compared it with that which from

time to time diffused itself over the cheek of Lucy.

"It is sufficient to say," resumed the friar, "that a powerful lord--it

is not all the rich and noble who make use of the gifts of God for the

promotion of his glory, as you do, most illustrious lady--a powerful

lord, after having persecuted for a long time this innocent creature

with wicked allurements, finding them unavailing, has had recourse to

open force, so that she has been obliged to fly from her home."

"Approach, young woman," said the signora. "I know that the father is

truth itself; but no one can be better informed than you with regard to

this affair. To you it belongs to tell us if this lord was an odious

persecutor." Lucy obeyed the first command, and approached the grating;

but the second, accompanied as it was with a certain malicious air of

doubt, brought a blush over her countenance, and a sense of painful

embarrassment, which she found it impossible to overcome.

"Lady----mother----reverend----" stammered she. Agnes now felt herself

authorised to come to her assistance. "Most illustrious lady," said she,

"I can bear testimony that my daughter hates this lord as the devil

hates holy water. I would call him the devil, were it not for your

reverend presence. The case is this: this poor maiden was promised to a

good and industrious youth; and if the curate had done his duty----"

"You are very ready to speak without being interrogated," interrupted

the lady, with an expression of anger on her countenance, which changed

it almost to deformity. "Silence; I have not to be informed that parents

have always an answer prepared in the name of their children."

Agnes drew back mortified, and the father guardian signified to Lucy by

a look, as well as by a movement of the head, that now was the time to

rouse her courage, and not leave her poor mother in the dilemma.

"Reverend lady," said she, "what my mother has told you is the truth. I

willingly engaged myself to the poor youth (and here she became covered

with blushes)---- Pardon me this boldness; but I would not have you

think ill of my mother. And as to this lord (God forgive him!) I would

rather die than fall into his hands. And if you do this deed of charity,

be certain, signora, none will pray for you more heartily than those

whom you have thus sheltered."

"I believe you," said the lady, with a softened voice; "but we will see

you alone. Not that I need farther explanation, nor other motives to

accede to the wishes of the father superior," added she, turning to him

with studied politeness. "Nay," continued she, "I have been thinking,

and this is what has occurred to me. The portress of the monastery has

bestowed in marriage, a few days since, her last daughter; these females

can occupy her room, and supply her place in the little services which

it was her office to perform."

The father would have expressed his thanks, but the lady interrupted

him. "There is no need of ceremony; in case of need, I would not

hesitate to ask assistance of the capuchin fathers. In short," continued

she, with a smile, in which appeared a degree of bitter irony, "are we

not brothers and sisters?"

So saying, she called a nun, her attendant (by a singular distinction

she had two assigned for her private service), and sent her to inform

the abbess; she then called the portress, and made with her and Agnes

the necessary arrangements. Then taking leave of the superior, she

dismissed Agnes to her room, but retained Lucy. The signora, who, in

presence of a capuchin, had studied her actions and her words, thought

no longer of putting a restraint on them before an inexperienced country

girl. Her discourse became by degrees so strange, that, in order to

account for it, we will relate the previous history of this unhappy and

misguided person.

She was the youngest daughter of the Prince \*\*\*, a great Milanese

nobleman, who was among the wealthiest of the city. The magnificent

ideas he entertained of his rank, made him suppose his wealth hardly

sufficient to support it properly; he therefore determined to preserve

his riches with the greatest care. How many children he had does not

clearly appear; it is only known that he had destined to the cloister

all the youngest of both sexes, in order to preserve his fortune for the

eldest son. The condition of the unhappy signora had been settled even

before her birth; it remained only to be decided whether she were to be

a monk or a nun. At her birth, the prince her father, wishing to give

her a name which could recall at every moment the idea of a cloister,

and which had been borne by a saint of a noble family, called her

Gertrude. Dolls, clothed like nuns, were the first toys that were put

into her hands; then pictures of nuns; and these gifts were accompanied

with many injunctions to be careful of them, for they were precious

things. When the prince or princess, or the young prince, who was the

only one of the children brought up at home, wished to praise the beauty

of the infant, they found no way of expressing their ideas, except in

exclamations of this sort, "What a mother abbess!" But no one ever said

directly to her, "Thou must be a nun;" such an intention, however, was

understood, and included in every conversation regarding her future

destiny. If, sometimes, the little Gertrude betrayed perversity and

impetuosity of temper, they would say to her, "Thou art but a child, and

these manners are not becoming: wait till thou art the mother abbess,

and then thou shalt command with a rod; thou shalt do whatever pleases

thee." At other times, reprehending her for the freedom and familiarity

of her manners, the prince would say, "Such should not be the deportment

of one like you; if you wish at some future day to have the respect of

all around you, learn now to have more gravity; remember that you will

be the first in the monastery, because noble blood bears sway every

where."

By such conversations as these the implicit idea was produced in the

mind of the child, that she was to be a nun. The manners of the prince

were habitually austere and repulsive; and, with respect to the

destination of the child, his resolution appeared fixed as fate. At six

years of age she was placed for her education in the monastery where we

find her: her father, being the most powerful noble in Monza, enjoyed

there great authority; and his daughter, consequently, would receive

those distinctions, with those allurements, which might lead her to

select it for her perpetual abode. The abbess and nuns, rejoicing at the

acquisition of such powerful friendship, received with great gratitude

the honour conferred in preference on them, and entered with avidity

into the views of the prince; Gertrude experienced all sorts of favours

and indulgences, and, child as she was, the respectful attention of the

nuns towards her was exercised with the same deference as if she had

been the abbess herself! Not that they were all pledged to draw the poor

child into the snare; many acted with simplicity, and through

tenderness, merely following the example of those around them; if the

suspicions of others were excited, they kept silence, so as not to cause

useless disturbance; some, indeed, more discriminating and

compassionate, pitied the poor child as being the object of artifices,

to the like of which they themselves had been the victims.

Things would have proceeded agreeably to the wishes of all concerned,

had Gertrude been the only child in the monastery; but this was not the

case; and there were some among her school companions who were destined

for the matrimonial state. The little Gertrude, filled with the idea of

her superiority, spoke proudly of her future destiny, expecting thereby

to excite their envy at her peculiar honours: with scorn and wonder she

perceived that their estimation of them was very different. To the

majestic but circumscribed and cold images of the power of an abbess,

they opposed the varied and bright pictures of husband, guests, cities,

tournaments, courts, dress, and equipage. New and strange emotions arose

in the mind of Gertrude: her vanity had been cultivated in order to make

the cloister desirable to her; and now, easily assimilating itself with

the ideas thus presented, she entered into them with all the ardour of

her soul. She replied, that no one could oblige her to take the veil,

without her own consent; that she could also marry, inhabit a palace,

and enjoy the world; that she could if she wished it; that she \_would\_

wish it, and \_did\_ wish it. The necessity of her own consent, hitherto

little considered, became henceforth the ruling thought of her mind; she

called it to her aid, at all times, when she desired to luxuriate in the

pleasing images of future felicity.

But her fancied enjoyment was impaired by the reflection, which at such

moments intruded itself, that her father had irrevocably decided her

destiny; and she shuddered at the recollection of his austere manners,

which impressed upon all around him the sentiments of a fatal necessity

as being necessarily conjoined with whatever he should command. Then

would she compare her condition to that of her more fortunate

companions; and envy soon grew into hatred. This would manifest itself

by a display of present superiority, and sometimes of ill-nature,

sarcasm, and spite; at other times her more amiable and gentle qualities

would obtain a transitory ascendency. Thus she passed the period

allotted for her education, in dreams of future bliss, mingled with the

dread of future misery. That which she anticipated most distinctly, was

external pomp and splendour; and her fancy would often luxuriate in

imaginary scenes of grandeur, constructed out of such materials as her

memory could faintly and confusedly furnish forth, and the descriptions

of her companions supply. There were moments when these brilliant

imaginings were disturbed by the idea of religion; but the religion

which had been inculcated to the poor girl did not proscribe pride, but,

on the contrary, sanctified it, and proposed it as a means of obtaining

terrestrial felicity. Thus despoiled of its essence, it was no longer

religion, but a phantom, which, assuming at times a power over her mind,

the unhappy girl was tormented with superstitious dread, and, filled

with a confused idea of duties, imagined her repugnance to the cloister

to be a crime, which could only be expiated by her voluntary dedication.

There was a law, that no young person could be accepted for the monastic

life, without being examined by an ecclesiastic, called the vicar of the

nuns, so that it should be made manifest that it was the result of her

free election; and this examination could not take place until a year

after she had presented her petition for admission, in writing, to the

vicar. The nuns, therefore, who were aware of the projects of her

father, undertook to draw from her such a petition; encountering her in

one of those moments, when she was assailed by her superstitious fears,

they suggested to her the propriety of such a course, and assured her,

nevertheless, that it was a mere formality (which was true), and would

be without efficacy, unless sanctioned by some after-act of her own. The

petition, however, had scarcely been sent to its destination, when

Gertrude repented of having written it; she then repented of this

repentance, passing months in incessant vicissitude of feeling. There

was another law, that, at this examination, a young person should not be

received, without having remained at least a month at her paternal home.

A year had nearly passed since the petition had been sent, and Gertrude

had been warned that she would soon be removed from the monastery, and

conducted to her father's house, to take the final steps towards the

consummation of that which they held certain. Not so the poor girl; her

mind was busied with plans of escape: in her perplexity, she unbosomed

herself to one of her companions, who counselled her to inform her

father by letter of the change in her views. The letter was written and

sent; Gertrude remained in great anxiety, expecting a reply, which never

came. A few days after, the abbess took her aside, and, with a mixed

expression of contempt and compassion, hinted to her the anger of the

prince, and the error she had committed; but that, if she conducted

herself well for the future, all would be forgotten. The poor girl

heard, and dared not ask farther explanation.

The day, so ardently desired and so greatly feared, came at last. The

anticipation of the trials that awaited her was forgotten in her

tumultuous joy at the sight of the open country, the city, and the

houses. She might well feel thus, after having been for eight years

enclosed within the walls of the monastery! She had previously arranged

with her new confidant the part she was to act. Oh! they will try to

force me, thought she: but I will persist, humbly and respectfully; the

point is, not to say \_Yes\_; and I will \_not\_ say it. Or, perhaps they

will endeavour to shake my purpose by kindness: but I will weep, I will

implore, I will excite their compassion, I will beseech them not to

sacrifice me. But none of her anticipations were verified: her parents

and family, with the usual artful policy in such cases, maintained a

perfect silence with regard to the subject of her meditations; they

regarded her with looks of contemptuous pity, and appeared to avoid all

conversation with her, as if she had rendered herself unworthy of it. A

mysterious anathema appeared to hang over her, and to keep at a distance

every member of the household. If, wearied with this proscription, she

endeavoured to enter into conversation, they made her understand

indirectly, that by obedience alone could she regain the affections of

the family. But this was precisely the condition to which she could not

assent: she therefore continued in her state of excommunication, which

unhappily appeared to be, at least partially, the consequence of her own

conduct.

Such a state of things formed a sad contrast to the radiant visions

which had occupied her imagination. Her confinement was as strict at

home as it had been in the monastery; and she, who had fancied she

should enjoy, at least for this brief period, the pleasures of the

world, found herself an exile from all society. At every announcement of

a visiter, she was compelled to retire with the elderly persons of the

family; and always dined apart whenever a guest was present. Even the

servants of the family appeared to concur with the designs of their

master, and to treat her with carelessness, ill concealed by an awkward

attempt at formality. There was one among them, however, who seemed to

feel towards her respect and compassion. This was a handsome page, who

equalled, in her imagination, the ideal images of loveliness she had so

often fondly cherished. There was soon apparent a change in her manner,

a love of reverie and abstraction, and she no longer appeared to covet

the favour of her family; some engrossing thought had taken possession

of her mind. To be brief, she was detected one day in folding a letter,

which it had been better she had not written, and which she was obliged

to relinquish to her female attendant, who carried it to the prince, her

father. He came immediately to her apartment with the letter in his

hand, and in few but terrible words told her, that for the present she

should be confined to her chamber, with the society only of the woman

who had made the discovery; and intimated for the future still darker

punishments. The page was dismissed, with an imperative command of

silence, and solemn threatenings of punishment should he presume to

violate it. Gertrude was then left alone, with her shame, her remorse,

and her terror; and the sole company of this woman, whom she hated, as

the witness of her fault, and the cause of her disgrace. The hatred was

cordially returned, inasmuch as the attendant found herself reduced to

the annoying duty of a jailer, and was made the guardian of a perilous

secret for life. The first confused tumult of her feelings having in

some measure subsided, she recalled to mind the dark intimations of her

father with regard to some future punishment: what could this be? It

most probably was a return to the monastery at Monza, not as the

signorina, but as a guilty wretch, who, loaded with shame, was to be

inclosed within its walls for ever! Now, indeed, her fancy no longer

dwelt on the bright visions with which it had been so often busied; they

were too much opposed to the sad reality of her present condition. Such

an act would repair all her errors, and change (could she doubt it) in

an instant her condition. The only castle in which Gertrude could

imagine a tranquil and honourable asylum, and which was not in the

\_air\_, was the monastery, in which she now resolved to place herself for

ever! Opposed to this resolution rose up the contemplations of many

years past: but times were changed, and to the depth in which Gertrude

had fallen, the condition of a nun, revered, obeyed, and feared, formed

a bright contrast. She was perpetually tormented also by her jailer,

who, to revenge herself for the confinement imposed on her, failed not

to taunt her for her misdemeanor, and to repeat the menaces of her

father; or whenever she seemed disposed to relent, and to show something

like pity, her tone of protection was still more intolerable. The

predominant desire of Gertrude was to escape from her clutches, and to

raise herself to a condition above her anger or her pity. At the end of

four or five long days, with her patience exhausted by the bitter

railings of her keeper, she sat herself down in a corner of the chamber,

and covering her face with her hands, wept in bitterness of soul. She

experienced an absolute craving for other faces and other sounds than

those of her tormentor; and a sudden joy imparted itself to her mind,

from the reflection, that it depended only on herself to be restored to

the good-will and attentions of the family. Mingled with this joy, came

repentance for her fault, and a desire to expiate it. She arose, went to

a small table, and taking a pen, wrote to her father, expressing her

penitence and her hope, imploring his pardon, and promising to do all

that might be required of her.

CHAPTER X.

There are moments in which the mind, particularly of the young, is so

disposed, that a little importunity suffices to obtain from it any thing

that has the appearance of virtuous sacrifice; as a flower scarcely

budded abandons itself on its fragile stem, ready to yield its sweets to

the first breeze which plays around it. These moments, which ought to be

regarded by others with timid respect, are exactly those of which

interested cunning makes use, to insnare the unguarded will.

On the perusal of this letter, the prince saw the way opened to the

furtherance of his views. He sent for Gertrude; she obeyed the command,

and, in his presence, threw herself at his feet, and had scarcely power

to exclaim, "Pardon!" He made a sign to her to rise, and in a grave

voice answered, that it was not enough merely to confess her fault, and

ask forgiveness, but that it was necessary to merit it. Gertrude asked

submissively, "what he would have her do?" To this the prince did not

reply directly, but spoke at length of the fault of Gertrude: the poor

girl shuddered as at the touch of a hand on a severe wound. He

continued, that even if he had entertained the project of settling her

in the world, she had herself placed an insuperable obstacle to it;

since he could never, as a gentleman of honour, permit her to marry,

after having given such a specimen of herself. The miserable listener

was completely humbled!

The prince, then, by degrees softened his voice and manner to say, that

for all faults there was a remedy, and that the remedy for hers was

clearly indicated; that she might perceive, in this fatal accident, a

warning that the world was too full of dangers for her----

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed Gertrude, overwhelmed with shame and remorse.

"Ah, you perceive it yourself!" resumed the prince. "Well, we will

speak no more of the past; all is forgotten. You have taken the only

honourable way that remains for you; and because you \_have\_ taken it

voluntarily, it rests with me to make it turn to your advantage, and to

make the merit of the sacrifice all your own." So saying, he rang the

bell, and said to the servant who appeared, "The princess and the prince

immediately." He continued to Gertrude, "I wish to make them the sharers

of my joy; I wish that they should begin at once to treat you as you

deserve. You have hitherto found me a severe judge; you shall now prove

that I am a loving father."

At these words Gertrude remained stupified; she thought of the "yes" she

had so precipitately suffered to escape from her lips, and would have

recalled it; but she did not dare; the satisfaction of the prince

appeared so entire, his condescension so conditional, that she could not

presume to utter a word to disturb it.

The princess and prince came into the room. On seeing Gertrude there,

they appeared full of doubt and surprise; but the prince, with a joyful

countenance, said to them, "Behold here the lost sheep! and let these be

the last words that shall recall painful recollections. Behold the

consolation of the family! Gertrude has no longer need of advice; she

has voluntarily chosen her own good. She has resolved, she has signified

to me that she has resolved----" She raised to him a look of

supplication, but he continued more plainly, "that she has resolved to

take the veil."

"Well done, well done," exclaimed they both, overwhelming her with

embraces, which Gertrude received with tears, which they chose to

interpret as tears of joy. Then the prince enlarged on the splendid

destiny of his daughter, on the distinction she would enjoy in the

monastery and in the country, as the representative of the family. Her

mother and her brother renewed their congratulations and praises.

Gertrude stood as if possessed by a dream.

It was then necessary to fix the day for the journey to Monza, for the

purpose of making the request of the abbess. "How rejoiced she will be!"

said the prince; "I am sure all the nuns will appreciate the honour

Gertrude does them. But why not go there to-day? Gertrude will

willingly take the air."

"Let us go, then," said the princess.

"I will order the carriage," said the young prince.

"But----" said Gertrude submissively.

"Softly, softly," said the prince, "let her decide; perhaps she does not

feel disposed to go to-day, and would rather wait until to-morrow. Say,

do you wish to go to-day or to-morrow?"

"To-morrow," said Gertrude, in a feeble voice, glad of a short reprieve.

"To-morrow," said the prince, solemnly; "she has decided to go

to-morrow. Meanwhile I will see the vicar of the nuns, to have him to

appoint a day for the examination." He did so, and the vicar named the

day after the next. In the interval Gertrude was not left a moment to

herself. She would have desired some repose for her mind after so many

contending emotions; to have reflected on the step she had already

taken, and what remained to be done--but the machine once in motion at

her direction, it was no longer in her power to arrest its progress;

occupations succeeded each other without interruption. The princess

herself assisted at her toilette, which was completed by her own maid.

This effected, dinner was announced, and poor Gertrude was made to pass

through the crowd of servants, who nodded their congratulations to each

other. She found at the table a few relations of the family, who had

been invited in haste to participate in the general joy. The young

bride--thus they called young persons about to enter the monastic

life--the young bride had enough to do to reply to the compliments which

were paid to her; she felt that each reply was a confirmation of her

destiny; but how act differently? After dinner came the hour of riding,

and Gertrude was placed in a carriage with her mother and two uncles,

who had been among the guests. They entered the street Marina, which

then crossed the space now occupied by the public gardens, and was the

public promenade, where the nobility refreshed themselves after the

fatigues of the day. The uncles conversed much with Gertrude, and one of

them in particular, who appeared to know every body, every carriage,

and every livery, had something to tell of signor such an one, and

signora such an one; but checking himself, he said to his niece, "Ah!

you little rogue! you turn your back upon all these follies; you are the

righteous person; you leave us worldlings far behind; you are going to

lead a happy life, and take yourself to paradise in a coach."

They returned home in the dusk of the evening, and the servants,

appearing with torches, announced to them that numerous visiters had

arrived. The report had spread, and a multitude of relations and friends

had come to offer their congratulations. The young bride was the idol,

the amusement, the victim of the evening. Finally, Gertrude was left

alone with the family. "At last," said the prince, "I have had the

consolation of seeing my daughter in society becoming her rank and

station. She has conducted herself admirably, and has evinced that there

will be no preventive to her obtaining the highest honours, and

supporting the dignity of the family." They supped hastily, so as to be

ready early in the morning.

At the request of Gertrude, her attendant, of whose insolence she

bitterly complained to her father, was removed, and another placed in

her stead. This was an old woman, who had been nurse to the young

prince, in whom was centred all her hopes and her pride. She was

overjoyed at the decision of Gertrude, who, as a climax to her trials,

was obliged to listen to her congratulations and praises. She talked of

her numerous aunts and relatives, who were so happy as nuns; of the many

visits she would doubtless receive. She further spoke of the young

prince, and the lady who was to be his wife, and the visit which they

would doubtless pay to Gertrude at the monastery, until, wearied out

with the conflicts of the day, the poor girl fell asleep. She was

aroused in the morning by the harsh voice of the old woman, "Up, up,

signora, young bride! it is day; the princess is up, and waiting for

you. The young prince is impatient. He is as brisk as a hare, the young

devil; he was so from an infant. But when he is ready, you must not make

him wait; he is the best temper in the world, but that always makes him

impatient and noisy. Poor fellow, we must pity him, it is the effect of

temperament; in such moments he has respect to no one but the head of

the household; however, one day he will be the head; may that day be far

off! Quick, quick, signorina! You should have been out of your nest

before this."

The idea of the young prince, risen and impatient, recalled the

scattered thoughts of Gertrude, and hastily she suffered herself to be

dressed, and descended to the saloon, where her parents and brother were

assembled. A cup of chocolate was brought her, and the carriage was

announced. Before their departure, the prince took his daughter aside,

and said to her, "Courage, Gertrude; yesterday you did well, to-day you

must excel yourself; the point is now to make a suitable appearance in

the country and in the monastery, where you are destined to hold the

first station. They expect you, and all eyes will be on you. Dignity and

ease. The abbess will ask you what is your request; it is a mere form,

but you must reply that you wish to be admitted to take the veil in this

monastery, where you have been educated, and treated so kindly; which is

the truth. Speak these words with a free unembarrassed air, so as not to

give occasion for scandal. These good mothers know nothing of the

unhappy occurrence; that must remain buried with the family. However, an

anxious countenance might excite suspicion; show whose is the blood in

your veins; be polite and modest; but remember also, that in this

country, out of the family, there is none your superior."

During their ride, the troubles and the trials of the world, and the

blessed life of the cloister, were the principal subjects of

conversation. As they approached the monastery, the crowd collected from

all parts; as the carriage stopped before the walls, the heart of

Gertrude beat more rapidly: they alighted amidst the concourse; all eyes

were fastened on her, and compelled her to study the movements of her

countenance; and, above all, those of her father, upon whom she could

not help fixing her regards, notwithstanding the fear he inspired. They

crossed the first court, entered the second, and here appeared the

interior cloister, wide open, and occupied by nuns. In front was the

abbess, surrounded by the most aged of the sisterhood; behind these the

others, raised promiscuously on tiptoe, and farther back the lay

sisters, standing on benches and overlooking the scene; whilst here and

there were seen, peeping between the cowls, some youthful faces, which

Gertrude recognised as those of her school companions. As she stood

fronting the abbess, the latter demanded, with grave solemnity, "What

she desired to have in this place, where nothing could be denied her?"

"I am here," began Gertrude; but, about to utter the words which were to

decide her destiny irrevocably, she felt her heart fail, and hesitating,

she fixed her eyes on the crowd before her. She beheld there the

well-known face of one of her companions, who regarded her with looks of

compassion and malice, as if to say, "They have caught the brave one."

This sight required all her courage, and she was about to give a reply

very different from that which was expected from her, when, glancing at

her father, she caught from his eye such an anxious and threatening

expression, that, overcome by terror, she proceeded, "I am here to ask

admittance into this monastery, where I have been instructed so kindly."

The abbess immediately expressed her regret, that the regulations were

such as to prohibit an immediate answer, which must be given by the

common suffrage of the sisterhood; but that Gertrude knew well the

sentiments they entertained towards her; and might judge what that

answer would be. In the mean time nothing prevented them from

manifesting their joy at her request. There was then heard a confused

murmur of congratulations and rejoicing.

Whilst the nuns were surrounding their new companion, and offering their

congratulations to all the party, the abbess expressed her wish to

address a few words to the prince at the parlour grating.

"Signor," said she, "in obedience to our rules--to fulfil a necessary

form--I must inform you--that whenever a young person desires to

assume--the superior, which I am, though unworthily, is obliged to make

known to the parents that if--they have forced the will of their

daughter, they will incur the pains of excommunication. You will

excuse----"

"Oh! yes, yes, reverend mother. Your exactitude is very praiseworthy,

very just. But you cannot doubt----"

"Oh! imagine, prince, if--but I merely speak by order; besides----"

"True--true, reverend mother."

After these few words, and a renewal of compliments and thanks, they

departed.

Gertrude was silent during their ride; overcome and occupied by

conflicting thoughts, ashamed of her own want of resolution, vexed with

others as well as herself, she was still meditating some way of escape,

but every time she looked at her father, she felt her destiny to be

irrevocable. After the various engagements of the day were over,--the

dinner, the visits, the drive, the \_conversazione\_, the supper,--the

prince brought another subject under discussion, which was the choice of

a godmother (so they called the lady who is selected as chaperone to the

young candidate in the interval between the request for admission, and

the putting on of the habit); the duty of this person was to visit, with

her charge, the churches, public palaces, the \_conversazioni\_, in short,

every thing of note in the city and its environs; so as to afford a peep

at that world they were about to quit for ever. "We must think of a

godmother," said the prince, "because to-morrow the vicar of the nuns

will be here for the examination, and soon after that, Gertrude will be

finally accepted. Now the choice shall come from Gertrude herself,

although contrary to usage; but she deserves to be made an exception,

and we may confidently trust to her judgment in the selection." And

then, turning to her, as if bestowing a singular favour, he continued,

"Any one of the ladies who were at the \_conversazione\_ this evening,

possesses the necessary qualifications for a godmother; any one of them

will consider it an honour; make your selection." Gertrude instantly

felt that the choice would be a renewal of consent; but the proposal was

made with such an air of condescension, that a refusal would have

appeared to spring from contempt or ingratitude. Thus she took another

step, and named a lady who had been forward in attentions to her during

the whole evening. "A perfectly wise choice," said the prince, who had

expected no less. The affair had all been previously arranged; this lady

had been so much with Gertrude at the \_conversazione\_, and had displayed

such kindness of manner, that it would have been an effort for her to

think of another. The attentions, however, of this lady were not without

their object: she had also for a long time contemplated making the young

prince her son; she, therefore, naturally interested herself in all that

concerned the family, and felt the deepest interest in her dear

Gertrude.

On the morrow, the imagination of Gertrude was occupied with the

expected examination, and with a vague hope of some opportunity to

retract. At an early hour she was sent for by the prince, who addressed

her in these words:--"Courage, my daughter; you have as yet conducted

yourself admirably; to-day you must crown the work. All that has been

done, has been done with your consent. If, in the meanwhile, you had any

doubts, any misgivings, you should have expressed them; but at the point

to which things have now arrived, it will no longer do to play the

child. The worthy man who is to come this morning, will put a hundred

questions to you, concerning your vocation; such as, whether you go

voluntarily, and the why and the wherefore. If you falter in your

replies, he will continue to urge you; this will produce pain to

yourself, but might become the source of a more serious evil. After all

the public demonstrations that we have made, the slightest hesitation on

your part might place my honour in danger, by conveying the idea that I

had taken a mere youthful whim for a confirmed resolution, and that I

had thus acted precipitately; in this case, I should feel myself under

the necessity, in order to preserve my character inviolate, to reveal

the true motive----" But, seeing the countenance of Gertrude all on

flame, and contracting itself like the leaves of a flower in the heat

which precedes a tempest, he stopped a moment, and then resumed, "Well,

well, all depends on yourself. I know you will not show yourself a

child; but recollect, you must reply with freedom, so as not to create

suspicion in the mind of this worthy man." He then suggested the

answers to be made to the probable questions that would be put, and

concluded with various remarks upon the happiness that awaited Gertrude

at the convent. At this moment the servant announced the arrival of the

vicar, and the prince was obliged to leave his daughter alone to receive

him.

The good man had come with a preconceived opinion that Gertrude went

voluntarily to the cloister, because the prince had told him so. It was

one of his maxims, however, to preserve himself unprejudiced, and to

depend only on the assertions of the candidates themselves. "Signorina,"

said he, "I come to play the part of the tempter; I come to suggest

doubts where you have affirmed certainties; I come to place before your

eyes difficulties, and ascertain if you have well considered them. You

will allow me to trouble you with some interrogatories?"

"Say on," replied Gertrude.

The good priest then began to interrogate her in the form prescribed.

"Do you feel in your heart a free spontaneous resolution to become a

nun? Have menaces, or allurements, or authority been made use of? Speak

without reserve to one whose duty it is to ascertain the true state of

your feelings, and to prevent violence being done to them."

The true reply to such a question presented itself suddenly to the mind

of Gertrude, with terrible reality. But to come to an explanation, to

say she was threatened, to relate the unfortunate story--from this her

spirit shrank, and she brought herself to the resolution of saying, "I

become a nun, freely, from inclination."

"How long have you had this intention?" asked the good priest.

"I have always had it," said Gertrude, finding it easier after the first

step to proceed in falsehood.

"But what is the principal motive which has induced you?"

The interrogator was not aware of the chord he touched; and Gertrude,

making a great effort to preserve the tranquillity of her countenance,

amid the tumult of her soul, replied. "The motive is, to serve God, and

to fly the perils of the world."

"Has there never been any disgust? any--excuse me--caprice? Often

trifling causes make impressions which we deem will be perpetual, but

the causes cease----"

"No, no," replied Gertrude, hastily; "the cause is that which I have

said."

The vicar, in order to execute his duty fully, persisted in his

enquiries, but Gertrude was determined to deceive him. She could not for

a moment think of rendering the good man acquainted with her weakness;

she knew, indeed, that he could prevent her being a nun, but that this

would be the extent of his authority and his protection. When he should

be gone, she would still be left alone, to endure fresh trials from her

father and the family. Finding, therefore, a uniform answer to all his

questions, he became somewhat wearied of putting them, and, concluding

that all was as it should be, with many prayers for her welfare, he took

his leave. As he crossed the hall he met the prince, and congratulated

him on the good dispositions of his daughter. This put an end to a very

painful state of suspense and anxiety on the part of the prince; who,

forgetting his usual gravity, ran to his daughter, and loaded her with

praises, caresses, and promises, and with a tenderness of affection in

great measure sincere: such is the inconsistency of the human heart.

Then ensued a round of spectacles and diversions, during which we cannot

attempt to describe minutely or in order the emotions to which the heart

of Gertrude was subjected. The perpetual change of objects, the freedom

enjoyed by this change, rendered more odious to her the idea of her

prison; still more pungent were the impressions she received in the

festivals and assemblies of the city. The pomp of the palaces, the

splendour of their furniture, the buzzing and festal clamour of the

\_conversazione\_, communicated to her such an intoxication, such an eager

desire for happiness, that she thought she could encounter all the

consequences of a recantation, or even suffer death, rather than return

to the cold shades of the cloister. But all such resolutions instantly

fled as her eyes rested on the austere countenance of the prince.

Meanwhile, the vicar of the nuns had made the necessary deposition, and

liberty was given to hold a chapter for the acceptation of Gertrude. The

chapter was held, and she was received! Wearied out with her long

conflicts, she requested immediate admittance, which was readily

granted. After a noviciate of twelve days, full of resolves and

counter-resolves, the moment arrived when she finally pronounced the

fatal "yes," which was to exclude her from the world for ever. But even

in the depths of the monastery she found no repose; she had not the

wisdom to make a virtue of necessity, but was continually and uselessly

recurring to the past. She could not call religion to her aid, for

religion had no share in the sacrifice she had made; and heavily and

bitterly she bore the yoke of bondage. She hated the nuns, because she

remembered their artifices, and regarded them in some measure as the

authors of her misfortune; she tyrannised over them with impunity,

because they dared not rebel against her authority, and incur the

resentment of the powerful lord, her father. Those nuns who were really

pious and harmless, she hated for their piety itself, as it seemed to

cast a tacit reproach on her weakness; and she suffered no occasion to

escape without railing at them as bigots and hypocrites. It might,

however, have mitigated her asperity towards them, had she known that

the black balls to oppose her entrance had been cast into the urn by

their sympathetic generosity. She found, however, one consolation, in

the unlimited power she possessed, in being courted and flattered, and

in hearing herself called the "signora." But what a consolation! Her

soul felt its insufficiency, but had not the courage nor the virtue to

seek happiness from the only source where it could be found. Thus she

lived many years, tyrannising over and feared by all around her, till an

occasion presented itself for a further developement of her habitual,

but secret feelings. Among other privileges which had been accorded to

her in the monastery, was that of having her apartments on a side of the

building little frequented by the other nuns. Opposite to this quarter

of the convent was a house, inhabited by a young man, a villain by

profession, one of those who, at this period, by their mutual

combinations were enabled to set at nought the public laws. His name was

Egidio. From his small window, which overlooked the court-yard, he had

often seen Gertrude wandering there from listlessness and melancholy.

Allured rather than intimidated by the danger and iniquity of the act,

he dared one day to speak to her. The wretched girl replied!

Then was experienced a new but not unmixed satisfaction; into the

painful void of her soul was infused a powerful stimulus, a fresh

principle of vitality: but this enjoyment resembled the restoring

beverage which the ingenious cruelty of the ancients presented to the

criminal, in order to strengthen him to sustain his martyrdom. A change

came also over her whole deportment; she was regular, tranquil,

endearing, and affable; in such a degree, that the sisters congratulated

themselves upon the circumstance, little imagining the true motive, and

that the alteration was none other than hypocrisy added to her other

defects. This outward improvement, however, did not last long; she soon

returned to her customary caprices, and, moreover, was heard to utter

bitter imprecations against the cloistral prison, in unusual and

unbecoming language. The sisters bore these vicissitudes as well as they

could, and attributed them to the light and capricious nature of the

signora. For some time it did not appear that the suspicions of any one

of them were excited; but one day the signora had been speaking with one

of the sisters, her attendant, and reviling her beyond measure for some

trifling matter: the sister suffered a while, and gnawed the bit in

silence; but finally, becoming impatient, declared that she was mistress

of a secret, and could advise the signora in her turn. From this time

forward her peace was lost. Not many days after, however, this very

sister was missing from her accustomed offices; they sought her in her

cell, and did not find her; they called, and she answered not; they

searched diligently in every place, but without success. And who knows

what conjectures might have arisen, if there had not been found a great

opening in the wall of the orchard, through which she had probably made

her escape. They sent messengers in various directions to pursue, and

restore her, but they never heard of her more! Perhaps they would not

have been so unfortunate in their search, if they had dug near the

garden wall! Finally, the nuns concluded that she must have gone to a

great distance, and because one of them happened to say, she has taken

refuge in Holland, "O yes," said they, "she has, without doubt, taken

refuge in Holland." The signora did not believe this, but she had

certain reasons for encouraging the opinion, and this she did not fail

to do. Thus the minds of the nuns became satisfied; but who can tell the

torments of the signora's soul? Who can tell how many times a day the

image of this sister came unbidden into her mind, and fastened itself

there with terrible tenacity? Who can tell how many times she desired to

behold the real and living person, for the company of this empty,

impassible, terrible shade? Who can tell with what delight she would

have heard the very words of the threat repeated in her mental ear,

rather than this continual and fantastic murmur of those very words,

sounding with a pertinacity of which no living voice could have been

capable.

It was about a year after this event, that we find Lucy at the

monastery, and under the protection of the signora. The reader may

remember, that after Agnes and the portress had left the room, the

signora and Lucy had entered into conversation alone; the former

continued her questions concerning Don Roderick, with a fearlessness

which filled the mind of Lucy with astonishment, little supposing that

the curiosity of the nuns ever exercised itself upon such subjects. The

opinions which were blended with these enquiries, were not less strange;

she laughed at the dread which Lucy expressed herself to have of Don

Roderick, asking her if he was not handsome; and surmising that Lucy

would have liked him very well, if it had not been for her preference of

Renzo. When again with her mother, the poor girl expressed her

astonishment at such observations from such a source, but Agnes, as more

experienced, solved the mystery. "Do not be surprised," said she; "when

you have known the world as I have, you will cease to wonder at any

thing. The nobility, some more, some less, some one way, some another,

have all a little oddity. We must let them talk, especially when we have

need of them; we must appear to listen to them seriously, as if they

were talking very wisely. Did you not hear how she interrupted me, as if

I had uttered some absurdity? I did not wonder at it; they are all so.

Notwithstanding that, Heaven be thanked, she seems to have taken a

liking to you, and is willing to protect us; and if we would retain her

favour, we must let her say that which it shall please her to say."

A desire to oblige the superior, the complacency experienced in

protecting, the thought of the good opinions which would be the result

of a protection thus piously extended, a certain inclination towards

Lucy, and also a degree of self-satisfaction in doing good to an

innocent creature, in succouring and consoling the oppressed, had really

disposed the signora to take to heart the fate of our poor fugitives.

The mother and daughter congratulated themselves on their safe and

honourable asylum. They would have wished to remain unknown to all; but

this, in a convent, was impossible; and one there was, besides, too far

interested in obtaining an account of one of the two, stimulated as his

passion had been by the opposition he had encountered. We will leave

them for the present in their safe retreat, and return to the palace of

Don Roderick, at the hour in which he was anxiously expecting the result

of his wicked and villanous enterprise.

CHAPTER XI.

As a pack of blood-hounds, after having in vain tracked the hare, return

desponding towards their master, with their ears down, and tails

hanging, so, in this night of confusion, returned the bravoes to the

palace of Don Roderick, who was pacing, in the dark, the floor of an

upper uninhabited chamber. Full of impatience and uncertainty as to the

issue of the expedition, and not without anxiety for the possible

consequences, his ear was attentive to every sound, and his eye to every

movement on the esplanade. This was the most daring piece of villany he

had ever undertaken; but he felt that the precautions he had used would

preserve him from suspicion. "And who will dare to come here, and ask if

she is not in this palace? Should this young fellow do so, he will be

well received, I promise him. Let the friar come! yea, let him come. If

the old woman presumes so far, she shall be sent to Bergamo. As for the

law, I do fear it not; the \_podestà\_ is neither a boy nor a fool! Pshaw!

there's nothing to fear. How will Attilio be surprised to-morrow

morning; he will find I am not a mere boaster. But if any difficulty

should arise, he'll assist--the honour of all my relatives will be

pledged." But these anxious thoughts subsided as he reverted to

Lucy.--"She will be frightened to find herself alone, surrounded only by

these rough visages: by Bacchus, the most human face here is my own, and

she will be obliged to have recourse to me--to entreaty." In the midst

of these calculations he heard a trampling of feet, approached the

window, and looking out exclaimed, "It is they! But the litter! the

devil! where is the litter? Three, five, eight, they are all there; but

where is the litter? The devil! Griso shall render me an account of

this." He then advanced to the head of the stairs to meet Griso. "Well,"

cried he, "Signor Bully, Signor Captain, Signor 'Leave it to me!'"

"It is hard," said Griso,--"it is hard to meet with reproach, when one

has hazarded one's life to perform his duty."

"How has it happened? Let us hear, let us hear," said he, as he advanced

towards the room, followed by Griso, who related, as clearly as he

could, the occurrences of the night.

"Thou hast done well," said Don Roderick; "thou hast done all that thou

couldst--but to think that this roof harbours a spy! If I discover him

I will settle matters for him; and I tell thee, Griso, I suspect the

information was given the day of the dinner."

"I have had the same suspicion," said Griso; "and if my master discovers

the scoundrel, he has only to trust him to me. He has made me pass a

troublesome night, and I wish to pay him for it. But there must be, I

think, some other cause, which we cannot at present fathom; to-morrow,

Signor, to-morrow we will see clear water."

"Have you been recognised by any one?"

Griso thought not; and after having given him many orders for the

morrow, and wishing to make amends for the impetuosity with which he had

at first greeted him, Don Roderick said, "Go to rest, poor Griso! you

must indeed require it. Labouring all day, and half the night, and then

to be received in this manner! Go to rest now; for we may yet be obliged

to put your friendship to a severer test. Good night."

The next morning Don Roderick sought the Count Attilio, who, receiving

him with a laugh, said, "San Martin!"

"I will pay the wager," said Don Roderick. "I thought indeed to have

surprised you this morning, and therefore have kept from you some

circumstances. I will now tell you all."

"The friar's hand is in this business," said his cousin, after having

heard him through: "this friar, with his playing at bo-peep, and giving

advice; I know him for a busybody and a rascal! And you did not confide

in me, and tell me what brought him here the other day to trifle with

you. If I had been in your place he should not have gone out as he came

in, of that be assured."

"What! would you wish me to incur the resentment of all the capuchins in

Italy?"

"In such a moment," said the count, "I should have forgotten there was

any other capuchin in the world than this daring rascal; but the means

are not wanting, within the pale of prudence, to take satisfaction even

of a capuchin. It is well for him that he has escaped the punishment

best suited to him; but I take him henceforth under my protection, and

will teach him how to speak to his superiors."

"Do not make matters worse."

"Trust me for once; I will serve you as a relation and a friend."

"What do you mean to do?"

"I don't know yet; but I will certainly pay the friar. Let me see--the

count my uncle, who is one of the secret council, will do the service;

dear uncle! How pleased I am when I can make him work for me, a

politician of his stamp! The day after to-morrow I will be at Milan, and

in some way or other the friar shall have his due."

Meanwhile breakfast was brought in, which however did not interrupt the

important discussion. Count Attilio interested himself in the cause from

his friendship for his cousin, and the honour of the name, according to

his notions of friendship and honour; yet he could hardly help laughing

every now and then at the ridiculous issue of the adventure. But Don

Roderick, who had calculated upon making a master-stroke, was vexed at

his signal failure, and agitated by various passions. "Fine stories will

be circulated," said he, "of last night's affair, but no matter; as to

justice, I defy it: it does not exist; and if it did, I should equally

defy it. Apropos, I have sent word this morning to the constable, to

make no deposition respecting the affair, and he will be sure to follow

my advice; but tattling always annoys me,--it is enough that \_you\_ have

it in your power to laugh at me."

"It is well you have given the constable his message," said the count;

"this great empty-headed, obstinate proser of a \_podestà\_ is however a

man who knows his duty, and we must be careful not to place him in

difficulty. If a fellow of a constable makes a deposition, the

\_podestà\_, however well intentioned, is obliged to----"

"But you," interrupted Don Roderick, with a little warmth,--"you spoil

my affairs, by contradicting him, and laughing at him on every occasion.

Why the devil can't you suffer a magistrate to be an obstinate beast,

while in other things that suit our convenience he is an honest man?"

"Do you know, cousin," said the count, regarding him with an expression

of affected surprise, "do you know that I begin to think you capable of

fear? You take the \_podestà\_ and myself to be in earnest."

"Well, well, have not you yourself said that we should be careful?"

"Certainly; and when the question is serious, I will show you I am not a

boy. Shall I tell you what I will do for you? I will go in person to

make the \_podestà\_ a visit; do you not think he will be pleased with the

honour? And I will let him talk by the half hour of the count duke, and

the Spanish keeper of the castle, and then I will throw in some remarks

about the signor count of the secret council, my uncle; you know what

effect this will have. Finally, he has more need of our protection, than

you have of his condescension. He knows this well enough, and I shall

leave him better disposed than I find him, that you may depend upon." So

saying, he took his departure, leaving Don Roderick alone to wait the

return of Griso, who had been, in obedience to his orders, reconnoitring

the ground, and ascertaining the state of the public mind with regard to

the events of the preceding night. He came at last, at the hour of

dinner, to give in his relation. The tumult of this night had been so

loud, and the disappearance of three persons from the village so

mysterious, that strict and indefatigable search would naturally be made

for them; and on the other hand, those who were possessed of partial

information on the subject were too numerous to preserve an entire

silence. Perpetua was assailed every where to tell what had caused her

master such a fright, and she, perceiving how she had been deceived by

Agnes, and feeling exasperated at her perfidy, had need of a little

self-restraint; not that she complained of the deception practised on

herself, of that she did not breathe a syllable; but the injury done to

her poor master could not pass in silence, and that such an injury

should have been attempted by such worthy people! Don Abbondio could

command and entreat her to be silent, and she could reply that there was

no necessity for inculcating a thing so obvious and proper, but certain

it is that the secret remained in the heart of the poor woman as new

wine in an old cask, which ferments and bubbles, and if it does not send

the bung into the air, works out in foam between the staves, and drops

here and there, so that one can drink it, and tell what sort of wine it

is. Jervase, who could scarcely believe that for once he knew a little

more than others, and who felt himself a man, since he had been an

accomplice in a criminal affair, was dying to communicate it. And Tony,

however alarmed at the thoughts of further enquiries and investigation,

was bursting, in spite of all his prudence, till he had told the whole

secret to his wife, who was not dumb. The one who spoke least was

Menico, because his parents, alarmed at his coming into collision with

Don Roderick, had kept him in the house for several days; they

themselves, however, without wishing to appear to know more than others,

insinuated that the fugitives had taken refuge at Pescarenico. This

report, then, became current among the villagers. But no one could

account for the attack of the bravoes: all agreed in suspecting Don

Roderick; but the rest was total obscurity. The presence of the three

bravoes at the inn was discussed, and the landlord was interrogated; but

his memory was, on this point, as defective as ever. His inn, he

concluded as usual, was just like a sea-port. Who was this pilgrim, seen

by Stefano and Carlandrea, and whom the robbers wished to murder, and

had carried off? For what purpose had he been at the cottage? Some said

it was a good spirit, come to the assistance of the inmates; others,

that it was the spirit of a wicked pilgrim, who came at night to join

such companions, and perform such deeds, as he had been accustomed to

while living; others, again, went so far as to conjecture that it was

one of these very robbers, clothed like a pilgrim; so that Griso, with

all his experience, would have been at a loss to discover who it was, if

he had expected to acquire this information from others. But, as the

reader knows, that which was perplexity to them, was perfect clearness

to Griso. He was enabled, therefore, from these various sources, to

obtain a sufficiently distinct account for the ear of Don Roderick. He

related the attempt upon Don Abbondio, which accounted for the

desertion of the cottage, without the necessity of imagining a spy in

the palace: he told of their flight, which might be accounted for by the

fear of the discovery of their trick upon Don Abbondio, or by the

intelligence that their cottage had been broken into, and that they had

probably gone together to Pescarenico. "Fled together!" cried Don

Roderick, hoarse with rage: "together! and this rascal friar! this friar

shall answer it! Griso, this night I must know where they are. I shall

have no peace; ascertain if they are at Pescarenico; quick; fly; four

crowns immediately, and my protection for ever! this rascal! this

friar!"

Griso was once more in the field; and on the evening of this very day

reported to his worthy master the desired intelligence, and by the

following means. The good man by whom the little party had been

conducted to Monza, returning with his carriage to Pescarenico at the

hour of vespers, chanced to meet, before he reached his home, a

particular friend, to whom he related, in great confidence, the good

work he had accomplished; so that Griso could, two hours after, inform

Don Roderick that Lucy and her mother had taken refuge in a convent of

Monza, and that Renzo had proceeded on his way to Milan. Don Roderick

felt his hopes revive at this separation; and having, during great part

of the night, revolved in his mind the measures for effecting his wicked

purpose, he aroused Griso early in the morning, and gave him the orders

he had premeditated.

"Signor?" said Griso, hesitating.

"Well, have I have not spoken clearly?"

"If you would send some other----"

"How?"

"Most illustrious signor, I am ready to sacrifice my life for my master,

and it is my duty to do so; but you, you would not desire me to place it

in peril?"

"Well?"

"Your illustrious lordship knows well these few murders that are laid to

my account, and----Here I am under the protection of your lordship, and

in Milan the livery of your lordship is known, but in Monza \_I\_ am

known. And, your lordship knows, I do not say it boastingly, he who

should deliver me up to justice would be well rewarded, a hundred good

crowns, and permission to liberate two banditti."

"What, the devil!" said Don Roderick, "you are like a vile cur, who has

scarce courage to rush at the legs of such as pass by the door; and, not

daring to leave the house, keeps himself within the protection of his

master."

"I think I have given proof, signor," said Griso.

"Well?"

"Well," resumed Griso, boldly, thus put on his mettle, "your lordship

must forget my hesitation; heart of a lion, legs of a hare, I am ready

to go."

"But you shall not go alone; take with you two of the best; \_Cut-face\_

and \_Aim-well\_, and go boldly, and show yourself to be still Griso. The

devil! people will be well content to let such faces as yours pass

without molestation! And as to the bailiffs of Monza, they must have

become weary of life to place it in such danger, for the chance of a

hundred crowns! But I do not believe that I am so far unknown there,

that the stamp of my service should pass for nothing."

Griso, having received ample and minute instructions, took his

departure, accompanied by the two bravoes; cursing in his heart the

whims of his master.

It now became the design of Don Roderick to contrive some way, by which

Renzo, separated as he was from Lucy, should be prevented from

attempting to return. He thought that the most certain means would be to

have him sent out of the state, but this required the sanction of the

law; he could, for example, give a colouring to the attempt at the

curate's house, and represent it as a seditious act, and through Doctor

Azzecca Garbugli give the \_podestà\_ to understand that it was his duty

to apprehend Renzo. But while he thought of the doctor as the man the

most suitable for this service, Renzo himself put an end to much further

deliberation on the subject by withdrawing himself.

Like the boy who drives his little Indian pigs to the fold, whose

obstinacy impels them divers ways, and thus obliges him first to apply

to one and then to another till he can succeed in penning them all, so

are we obliged to play the same game with the personages of our story.

Having secured Lucy, we ran to Don Roderick. Him we now quit to give an

account of Renzo.

After the mournful parting which we have related, he set out,

discouraged and disheartened, on his way to Milan. To bid farewell to

his home and his country, and what was more, to Lucy! to find himself

among strangers, not knowing where to rest his head, and all on account

of this villain! When these thoughts presented themselves to the mind of

Renzo, he was, for the moment, absorbed by rage and the desire of

revenge; but when he recollected the prayer that he had uttered with the

good friar in the convent of Pescarenico, his better feelings prevailed,

and he was enabled to acquire some degree of resignation to the

chastisements of which he stood so much in need. The road lay between

two high banks; it was muddy, stony, and furrowed by deep wheel tracks,

which, after a rain, became rivulets, overflowing the road, and

rendering it nearly impassable. In such places small raised footpaths

indicated that others had found a way by the fields. Renzo ascended one

of these paths to the high ground, whence he beheld, as if rising from a

desert, and not in the midst of a city, the noble structure of the

cathedral, and he forgot all his misfortunes in contemplating, even at a

distance, this eighth wonder of the world, of which he had heard so much

from his infancy. But looking back, he saw in the horizon the notched

ridge of mountains, and distinctly perceiving, among them, his own

\_Resegone\_, he gazed at it mournfully a while, and then with a beating

heart went on his way; steeples, towers, cupolas, and roofs soon

appeared: he descended into the road, and when he perceived that he was

very near the city, he accosted a traveller, with the civility which was

natural to him, "Will you be so good, sir----"

"What do you want, my good young man?"

"Will you be so good as to direct me by the shortest way to the convent

of the capuchins, where Father Bonaventura resides?"

He replied, very affably, "My good lad, there is more than one convent;

you must tell me more clearly what and whom you seek."

Renzo then took from his bosom the letter of Father Christopher, and

presented it to the gentleman, who, after having read it, returned it,

saying, "The eastern gate; you are fortunate, young man--the convent you

seek is but a short distance from this. Take this path to the left; it

is a by-way, and in a little while you will find yourself by the side of

a long and low building; that is the \_lazaretto\_; keep along the ditch

that encircles it, and you will soon be at the eastern gate. Enter, and

a few steps further on you will see before you an open square with fine

elm trees; the convent is there--you cannot mistake it. God be with

you!" And accompanying his last words with a kind wave of his hand, he

proceeded on his way. Renzo was astonished at the good manners of the

citizens to countrymen, not knowing that it was an extraordinary day, a

day in which cloaks humbled themselves to doublets. He followed the path

which had been pointed out to him, and arrived at the eastern entrance,

which consisted of two pilasters, with a roofing above to secure the

gates, and on one side was a small house for the toll-gatherer. The

openings of the rampart descended irregularly, and their surface was

filled with rubbish. The street of the suburb which led from this gate

was not unlike the one which now opens from the Tosa gate. A small ditch

ran in the midst of it, until within a few steps of the gate, and

divided it into two small crooked streets, covered with dust or mud,

according to the season. At the place where was, and is still, the

collection of houses called the Borghetto, the ditch empties itself into

a common sewer, and thence into another ditch which runs along the

walls. At this point was a column with a cross oh it, dedicated to \_San

Dionigi\_; to the right and left were gardens enclosed by hedges, and at

intervals, small houses inhabited for the most part by washerwomen.

Renzo passed through the gate, without being stopped by the

toll-gatherer, which appeared to him very remarkable, as he had heard

those few of his townsmen, who could boast of having been at Milan,

relate wonderful stories of the strict search and close enquiries to

which those were subjected who entered its gates. The street was

deserted, and if he had not heard the humming of a crowd at a distance,

he might have thought he was entering a city which had been abandoned by

its inhabitants. As he advanced, he saw on the pavement something

scattered here and there, which was as white as snow, but snow at this

season it could not be; he touched it, and found that it was flour.

"There must be a great plenty in Milan," said he, "if they thus throw

away the gifts of God. They give out that famine is every where; this

they do to keep poor people abroad quiet." But in a few moments he

arrived in front of the column, and saw on the steps of the pedestal

certain things scattered, which were not assuredly stones, and which, if

they had been on a baker's counter, he would not have hesitated to call

loaves of bread. But Renzo dared not so easily trust his eyes, because

truly this was not a place for bread. "Let us see what this is," said

he, and approaching the column, he took one in his hand; it was, indeed,

a very white loaf of bread, such as Renzo was accustomed to eat only on

festival days. "It is really bread!" said he, in wonder. "Do they

scatter it thus here? And in a year like this? And do they suffer it to

lie here, and not take the trouble to gather it? This must be a fine

place to live in!" After ten miles of travel, in the fresh air of the

morning, the sight of the bread awaked his appetite. "Shall I take it?"

said he again. "Poh! they have left it to the dogs; surely, a Christian

may take advantage of it; and if the owner should come, I can pay him at

any rate." So saying, he put in one pocket that which he had in his

hand, took a second, and put it in the other, and a third, which he

began to eat, and resumed his way, full of wonder at the strangeness of

the incident. As he moved on he saw people approaching from the interior

of the city; and his attention was drawn to those who appeared first; a

man, a woman, and a boy, each with a load which seemed beyond their

strength, and exhibiting each a grotesque appearance. Their clothes, or

rather their rags, powdered with meal, their faces the same, and

excessively heated; they walked, not only as if overcome by the weight,

but as if their limbs had been beaten and bruised. The man supported

with difficulty a great bag of flour, which having holes here and there,

scattered its contents at every unequal movement. But the figure of the

woman was still more remarkable: she had her petticoat turned up, filled

with as much flour as it could hold, and a little more; so that from

time to time it flew over the pavement. She was, indeed, a grotesque

picture, with her arms stretched out to encompass her burden, and

staggering under its weight, her bare legs were seen beneath it. The boy

held with both hands a basket full of bread on his head, but he was

detained behind his parents to pick up the loaves which were constantly

falling from it.

"If you let another fall, you ugly little dog----" said the mother, in a

rage.

"I don't let them fall; they fall of themselves. How can I help it?"

replied he.

"Eh! it's well for thee that my hands are full," resumed the woman.

"Come, come," said the man, "now that we have a little plenty, let us

enjoy it in peace."

Meanwhile there had arrived a company of strangers, and one of them

addressed the woman, "Where are we to go for bread?"--"On, on," replied

she, and added, muttering, "These rascal countrymen will sweep all the

shops and warehouses, and leave none for us."

"There is a share for every one, chatterer," said her husband; "plenty,

plenty."

From all that Renzo saw and heard, he gathered that there was an

insurrection in the city, and that each one provided for himself, in

proportion to his will and strength. Although we would desire to make

our poor mountaineer appear to the most advantage, historical truth

obliges us to say that his first sentiment was that of complacency. He

had so little to rejoice at, in the ordinary course of affairs, that he

congratulated himself on a change, of whatever nature it might be. And

for the rest, he, who was not a man superior to the age in which he

lived, held the common opinion that the scarcity of bread had been

caused by the speculators and bakers, and that any method would be

justifiable, of wresting from them the aliment which they cruelly denied

to the people. However, he determined to keep away from the tumult, and

congratulated himself on the good fortune of having for his friend a

capuchin, who would afford him shelter and good advice. Occupied with

such reflections, and noticing from time to time as more people came up

loaded with plunder, he proceeded to the convent.

The church and convent of the capuchins was situated in the centre of a

small square, shaded by elm trees; Renzo placed in his bosom his

remaining half loaf, and with his letter in his hand, approached the

gate and rung the bell. At a small grated window appeared the face of a

friar, porter to the convent, to ask "who was there?"

"One from the country, who brings a letter to Father Bonaventura, from

Father Christopher."

"Give here," said the friar, thrusting his hand through the grate.

"No, no," said Renzo, "I must give it into his own hands."

"He is not in the convent."

"Suffer me to enter and wait for him," replied Renzo.

"You had best wait in the church," said the friar; "perhaps that may be

of service to you. Into the convent you do not enter at present." So

saying, he hastily closed the window, leaving Renzo to receive the

repulse with the best grace he could. He was about to follow the advice

of the porter, when he was seized with the desire to give a glance at

the tumult. He crossed the square, and advanced towards the middle of

the city, where the disturbance was greatest. Whilst he is proceeding

thither, we will relate, as briefly as possible, the causes of this

commotion.

CHAPTER XII.

This was the second year of the scarcity; in the preceding one, the

provisions, remaining from past years, had supplied in some measure the

deficiency, and we find the population neither altogether satisfied, nor

yet starved; but certainly unprovided for in the year 1628, the period

of our story. Now this harvest, so anxiously desired, was still more

deficient than that of the past year, partly from the character of the

season itself (and that not only in the Milanese but also in the

surrounding country), and partly from the instrumentality of men. The

havoc of the war, of which we have before made mention, had so

devastated the state, that a greater number of farms than ordinary

remained uncultivated and deserted by the peasants, who, instead of

providing, by their labour, bread for their families, were obliged to

beg it from door to door. We say a greater number of farms than

ordinary, because the insupportable taxes, levied with a cupidity and

folly unequalled; the habitual conduct, even in time of peace, of the

standing troops (conduct which the mournful documents of the age compare

to that of an invading army), and other causes which we cannot

enumerate, had for some time slowly operated to produce these sad

effects in all the Milanese,--the particular circumstances of which we

now speak were, therefore, like the unexpected exasperation of a chronic

disease. Hardly had this harvest been gathered, when the supplies for

the army, and the waste which always accompanies them, caused an

excessive scarcity, and with it its painful but profitable concomitant,

a high price upon provisions; but this, attaining a certain point,

always creates in the mind of the multitude a suspicion that scarcity is

not in reality the cause of it. They forget that they had both feared

and predicted it: they imagine all at once that there must be grain

sufficient, and that the evil lies in an unwillingness to sell it for

consumption. Preposterous as these suppositions were, they were

governed by them, so that the speculators in grain, real or imaginary,

the farmers, the bakers, became the object of their universal dislike.

They could tell certainly where there were magazines overflowing with

grain, and could even enumerate the number of sacks: they spoke with

assurance of the immense quantity of corn which had been despatched to

other places, where probably the people were deluded with a similar

story, and made to believe that the grain raised among \_them\_ had been

sent to Milan! They implored from the magistrate those precautions,

which always appear equitable and simple to the populace. The

magistrates complied, and fixed the price on each commodity, threatening

punishment to such as should refuse to sell; notwithstanding this, the

evil continued to increase. This the people attributed to the feebleness

of the remedies, and loudly called for some of a more decided character;

unhappily they found a man that was willing to grant them all they

should ask.

In the absence of the Governor Don Gonzalo Fernandez de Cordova, who was

encamped beyond Casale, in Montferrat, the High Chancellor Antonio

Ferrer, also a Spaniard, supplied his place in Milan. He considered the

low price of bread to be in itself desirable, and vainly imagined that

an order from him would be sufficient to accomplish it. He fixed the

limit, therefore, at the price the bread would have had when corn was

thirty-three livres the bushel; whereas it was now as high as eighty.

Over the execution of these laws the people themselves watched, and were

determined to receive the benefit of them quickly. They assembled in

crowds before the bakers' houses to demand bread at the price fixed;

there was no remedy; the bakers were employed night and day in supplying

their wants, inasmuch as the people, having a confused idea that the

privilege would be transient, ceased not to besiege their houses, in

order to enjoy to the utmost their temporary good fortune. The

magistrates threatened punishment--the multitude murmured at every delay

of the bakers in furnishing them. These remonstrated incessantly against

the iniquitous and insupportable weight of the burden imposed on them;

but Antonio Ferrer replied, that they had possessed great advantages in

times past, and now owed the public some reparation. Finally, the

council of ten (a municipal magistracy composed of nobles, which lasted

until the ninety-seventh year of the century just elapsed,) informed the

governor of the state in which things were, hoping that he would find

some remedy. Don Gonzalo, immersed in the business of war, named a

council, upon whom he conferred authority to fix a reasonable price upon

bread, so that both parties should be satisfied. The deputies assembled,

and after much deliberation felt themselves compelled to augment the

price of it: the bakers breathed, but the people became furious.

The evening preceding the day on which Renzo arrived at Milan, the

streets swarmed with people, who, governed by one common feeling,

strangers or friends, had intuitively united themselves in companies

throughout the city. Every observation tended to increase their rage and

their resentment; various opinions were given, and many exclamations

uttered; here, one declaimed aloud to a circle of bystanders, who

applauded vehemently; there, another more cautious, but not less

dangerous, was whispering in the ear of a neighbour or two, that

something must and would be done: in short, there was an incessant and

discordant din from the medley of men, women, and children, which

composed the various assemblages. There was now only required an impetus

to set the machine in motion, and reduce words to deeds; and an

opportunity soon presented itself. At the break of day little boys were

seen issuing from the bakers' shops with baskets on their heads, loaded

with bread, which they were about to carry to their usual customers. The

appearance of one of these unlucky boys in an assembly of people was

like a squib thrown into a gunpowder mill. "Here is bread!" cried a

hundred voices at once. "Yes, for our tyrants, who swim in abundance,

and wish to make us die in hunger," said one, who drew near the boy, and

seizing the basket, cried out, "Let us see." The boy coloured, grew

pale, trembled, and would have entreated them to let him pass on, but

the words died on his lips; he then endeavoured to free himself from the

basket. "Down with the basket" was heard on all sides; it was seized by

many hands, and placed on the earth: they raised the napkin which

covered it, and a tepid fragrance diffused itself around. "We are

Christians also," said one; "and have a right to eat bread as well as

other people:" so saying, he took a loaf and bit it; the rest followed

his example; and it is unnecessary to add, that in a few moments the

contents of the basket had disappeared. Those who had not been able to

secure any for themselves were irritated at the sight of their

neighbours' gains, and animated by the facility of the enterprise, went

in search of other boys with baskets; as many, therefore, as they met

were stopped and plundered. Still the number who remained unsatisfied

was beyond comparison the greatest, and even the gainers were only

stimulated by their success to ampler enterprises; so that

simultaneously there was a shout from the crowd of "To the bake-house!

to the bake-house!"

In the street called the \_Corsia de' Servi\_ there was, and is still, a

bakery of the same name,--a name that signifies in Tuscan the \_Shop of

the Crutches\_, and in Milanese is composed of such barbarous words, that

it is impossible to discover their sound from any rule of the

language.[4] To this place the throng approached: the shopkeepers were

listening to the sad relation of the boys, who had but just escaped with

their lives, when they heard a distant murmur, and beheld the crowd

advancing.

[4] El prestin di scansc.

"Shut, shut! quick, quick!" some ran to ask aid from the sheriff; others

in haste closed the shop, and barricadoed and secured the doors from

within. The throng thickened in front, and cries of "Bread, bread! open,

open!" were heard from every quarter. The sheriff arrived with a troop

of halberdiers. "Make way, make way, friends! home, home! make way for

the sheriff," cried they. The people gave way a little, so that they

could draw themselves up in front of the door of the shop. "But,

friends," cried the sheriff from this place, "what do you do here? Home,

home! have you no fear of God? What will our lord the king say? We do

not wish you harm; but go home. There is no good to be gained here for

soul or body. Home, home!" The crowd, regardless of his expostulations,

pressed forward, themselves being urged on by increasing multitudes

behind. "Make them draw back, that I may recover breath," continued he

to the halberdiers, "but harm no one--we will endeavour to get into the

shop--make them keep back, and knock at the door."--"Back, back," cried

the halberdiers, presenting the but-ends of their arms; the throng

retreated a little; the sheriff knocked, crying to those within to open;

they obeyed, and he and his guard contrived to intrench themselves

within the house; then, appearing at a window above, "Friends," cried

he, "go home. A general pardon to whoever shall return immediately to

their houses."

"Bread, bread! open, open!" vociferated the crowd in reply.

"You shall have justice, friends; but return to your houses. You shall

have bread; but this is not the way to obtain it. Eh! what are you doing

below there? At the door of the house! hah! hah! Take care; it is a

criminal act. Eh! away with those tools! take down those hands! hah!

hah! You Milanese, who are famous throughout the world for your

benevolence, who have always been accounted good citi---- Ah! rascals!"

This rapid change of style was occasioned by a stone thrown by one of

these good citizens at the sheriff's head. "Rascals! rascals!" continued

he, closing the window in a rage. The confusion below increased; stones

were thrown at the doors and windows, and they had nearly opened a way

into the shop. Meanwhile the master and boys of the shop, who were at

the windows of the story above, with a supply of stones (obtained

probably from the court-yard), threatened to throw them upon the crowd

if they did not disperse. Perceiving their threats to be of no avail,

they commenced putting them in execution.

"Ah! villains! ah! rogues! Is this the bread you give to the poor?" was

screamed from below. Many were wounded, two were killed; the fury of the

multitude increased; the doors were broken open, and the torrent rushed

through all the passages. At this, those within took refuge under the

shop floor; the sheriff and the halberdiers hid themselves beneath the

tiles; others escaped by the skylights, and wandered upon the roofs like

cats.

The sight of their prey made the conquerors forget their designs of

sanguinary vengeance; some rushed to the chests, and plundered them of

bread; others hastened to force the locks of the counter, and took from

thence handfulls of money, which they pocketed, and then returned to

take more bread, if there should remain any. Others, again, entered the

interior magazines, and, throwing out part of the flour, reduced the

bags to a portable size; some attacked a kneading trough, and made a

booty of the dough; a few had made a prize of a bolting cloth, which

they raised in the air as in triumph, and, in addition to all, men,

women, and children were covered with a cloud of white powder.

While this shop was so ransacked, none of the others in the city

remained quiet, or free from danger. But at none had the people

assembled in such numbers as to be very daring; in some, the owners had

provided auxiliaries, and were on the defensive; in others, the owners

less strong in numbers, and more affrighted, endeavoured to compromise

matters; they distributed bread to those who crowded around their shops,

and thus got rid of them. And these did not depart so much because they

were content with the acquisition, as from fear of the halberdiers and

officers of justice, who were now scattered throughout the city, in

companies sufficient to keep these little bands of mutineers in

subjection. In the mean time the tumult and the crowd increased in front

of the unfortunate bakery, as the strength of the populace had here the

advantage. Things were in this situation, when Renzo, coming from the

eastern gate, approached, without knowing it, the scene of tumult.

Hurried along by the crowd, he endeavoured to extract from the confused

shouting of the throng some more positive information of the real state

of affairs.

"Now the infamous imposition of these rascals is discovered," said one;

"they said there was neither bread, flour, nor corn. Now we know things

just as they are, and they can no longer deceive us."

"I tell you that all this answers no purpose," said another; "it will

do no good unless justice be done to us. Bread will be cheap enough,

'tis true, but they will put poison in it to make the poor die like

flies. They have already said we are too numerous, I know they have; I

heard it from one of my acquaintances, who is a friend of a relation of

a scullion of one of the lords."

"Make way, make way, gentlemen, I beseech you; make way for a poor

father of a family who is carrying bread to five children!" This was

said by one who came staggering under the weight of a bag of flour.

"I," said another, in an under tone, to one of his companions, "I am

going away. I am a man of the world, and I know how these things go.

These clowns, who now make so much noise, will prove themselves cowards

to-morrow. I have already perceived some among the crowd who are taking

note of those who are present, and when all is over, they will make up

the account, and the guilty will pay the penalty."

"He who protects the bakers," cried a sonorous voice, which attracted

the attention of Renzo, "is the superintendent of provisions."

"They are all rogues," said a neighbour.

"Yes, but he is the chief," replied the one who had first spoken.

The superintendent of provisions, elected every year by the governor

from a list of seven nobles formed from the council of ten, was the

president of the court of provision, which, composed of twelve nobles,

had, with other duties, that of superintending the corn for the

citizens. Persons in such a station would naturally, in times of

starvation and ignorance, be considered as the authors of all the evil.

"Cheats!" exclaimed another; "can they do worse? They have had the

audacity to say that the high chancellor is a childish old man, and they

wish to take the government into their own hands. We ought to make a

great coop, and put them in, to feed upon dry peas and cockleweed, as

they would fain have us do."

While listening to such observations as the above, Renzo continued to

make his way through the crowd, and at last arrived in front of the

bakery. On viewing its dilapidated and ruinous state, after the assault

just sustained, "This cannot be a good deed," thought he: "if they treat

all the bake-houses in this manner, where will they make bread?"

From time to time, some were seen issuing from the house, loaded with

pieces of chests, or troughs, or a bench, basket, or some other relic of

the poor building, and crying, "Make way, make way!" passed through the

crowd. These were all carried in the same direction, and it appeared to

a place agreed upon. Renzo's curiosity being excited, he followed one

who carried a bundle of pieces of board and chips on his shoulder, and

found that he took the direction of the cathedral. On passing it, the

mountaineer could not avoid stopping a moment to gaze with admiring eyes

on the magnificent structure. He then quickened his steps to rejoin him

whom he had taken as a guide, and, keeping behind him, they drew near

the middle of the square. The crowd was here more dense, but they opened

a way for the carrier, and Renzo, skilfully introducing himself in the

void left by him, arrived with him in the very midst of the multitude.

Here there was an open space, in the centre of which was a bonfire, a

heap of embers, the remains of the tools mentioned above; surrounding it

was heard a clapping of hands and stamping of feet, the tumult of a

thousand cries of triumph and imprecation.

He of the boards threw them on the embers, and some, with pieces of

half-burnt shovel, stirred them until the flame ascended, upon which

their shouts were renewed louder than before. The flame sank again, and

the company, for want of more combustibles, began to be weary, when a

report spread, that at the Cordusio (a square or cross-way not far from

there) they were besieging a bakery: then was heard on all sides, "Let

us go, let us go;" and the crowd moved on. Renzo was drawn along with

the current, but in the mean while held counsel with himself, whether he

had not best withdraw from the fray, and return to the convent in search

of Father Bonaventura; but curiosity again prevailed, and he suffered

himself to be carried forward, with the determination, however, of

remaining a mere spectator of the scene.

The multitude passed through the short and narrow street of Pescheria,

and thence by the crooked arch to the square de' Mercanti. Here there

were very few, who, in passing before the niche that divides towards the

centre the terrace of the edifice then called the College of Doctors,

did not give a slight glance at the great statue contained in it of

Philip II., who even from the marble imposed respect, and who, with his

arm extended, appeared to be menacing the populace for their rebellion.

This niche is now empty, and from a singular circumstance. About one

hundred and sixty years after the events we are now relating, the head

of the statue was changed, the sceptre taken from its hand, and a dagger

substituted in its place, and beneath it was written \_Marcus Brutus\_.

Thus inserted it remained perhaps a couple of years, until one day, some

persons, who had no sympathies with Marcus Brutus, but rather an

aversion to him, threw a rope around the statue, pulled it down, and,

reducing it to a shapeless mass, dragged it, with many insulting

gestures, beyond the walls of the city. Who would have foretold this to

Andrea Biffi when he sculptured it?

From the square de' Mercanti, the clamorous troop at length arrived at

the Cordusio. Each one immediately looked towards the shop; but, instead

of the crowd of friends which they expected to find engaged on its

demolition, there were but a few, at a distance from the shop, which was

shut, and defended from the windows by armed people. They fell back, and

there was a murmur through the crowd of unwillingness to risk the hazard

of proceeding, when a voice was heard to cry aloud, "Near by is the

house of the superintendent of provision; let us do justice, and plunder

it." There was a universal acceptance of the proposal, and "To the

superintendent's! to the superintendent's!" was the only sound that

could be heard. The crowd moved with unanimous fury towards the street

where the house, named in such an evil moment, was situated.

CHAPTER XIII.

The unfortunate superintendent was at this moment painfully digesting

his miserable dinner, whilst awaiting anxiously the termination of this

hurricane; he was, however, far from suspecting that its greatest fury

was to be spent on himself. Some benevolent persons hastened forward to

inform him of his urgent peril. The servants, drawn to the door by the

uproar, beheld, in affright, the dense mass advancing. While they

listened to the friendly notice, the vanguard appeared; one hastily

informed his master; and while he, for a moment, deliberated upon

flight, another came to say there was no longer time for it; in hurry

and confusion they closed and barricadoed the windows and the doors. The

howling without increased; each corner of the house resounded with it;

and in the midst of the vast and mingled noise was heard, fearfully and

distinctly, the blows of stones upon the door. "The tyrant! the tyrant!

the causer of famine! we must have him, living or dead!"

The poor man wandered from room to room in a state of insupportable

alarm, commending himself to God, and beseeching his servants to be

firm, and to find for him some way of escape! He ascended to the highest

floor, and, from an opening between the garret and the roof, he looked

anxiously out upon the street, and beheld it filled with the enraged

populace; more appalled than ever, he withdrew to seek the most secure

and secret hiding-place. Here, concealed, he listened intently to

ascertain if at any time the importunate transport of passion should

weaken, if the tumult should in any degree subside; but his heart died

within him to hear the uproar continue with aggravated and savage

ferocity.

Renzo at this time found himself in the thickest of the confusion, not

now carried there by the press, but by his own inclination. At the first

proposal of blood-shedding, he felt his own curdle in his veins; as to

the plundering, he was not quite certain whether it was right or wrong;

but the idea of murder caused him unmixed horror. And although he was

greatly persuaded that the vicar was the primary cause of the famine,

the grand criminal, still, having, at the first movement of the crowd,

heard, by chance, some expressions which indicated a willingness to make

any effort to save him, he had suddenly determined to aid such a work,

and had therefore pressed near the door, which was assailed in a

thousand ways. Some were pounding the lock to break it in pieces; others

assisted with stakes, and chisels, and hammers; others, again, tore away

the plastering, and beat in pieces the wall, in order to effect a

breach. The rest, who were unable to get near the house, encouraged by

their shouts those who were at the work of destruction; though,

fortunately, through the eagerness with which they pressed forward, they

impeded its progress.

The magistrates, who were the first to have notice of the fray,

despatched a messenger to ask military aid of the commander of the

castle, which was then called, from the gate, Giovia; and he forthwith

detached a troop, which arrived when the house was encompassed with the

throng, and undergoing its tremendous assault; and was therefore obliged

to halt at a distance from it, and at the extremity of the crowd. The

officer who commanded it did not know what course to pursue; at the

order to disperse and make way, the people replied by a deep and

continued murmur, but no one moved. To fire on the crowd appeared not

only savage, but perilous, inasmuch as the most harmless might be

injured, and the most ferocious only irritated, and prepared for further

mischief; and moreover his instructions did not authorise it. To break

the crowd, and go forward with his band to the house, would have been

the best, if success could have been certain; but who could tell if the

soldiers could proceed united and in order? The irresolution of the

commander seemed to proceed from fear: the populace were unmoved by the

appearance of the soldiers, and continued their attacks on the house. At

a little distance there stood an ill-looking, half-starved old man, who,

contracting an angry countenance to a smile of diabolical complacency,

brandished above his hoary head a hammer, with which he said he meant to

nail the vicar to the posts of his door, alive as he was.

"Oh, shame! shame!" exclaimed Renzo. "Shame! would you take the

hangman's business out of his hand? to assassinate a Christian? How can

you expect God will give us bread, if we commit such iniquity? He will

send us his thunders, and not bread!"

"Ah! dog! ah! traitor to the country!" cried one who had heard these

words, turning to Renzo with the countenance of a demon. "It is a

servant of the vicar's disguised like a countryman; it is a spy!" A

hundred voices were heard exclaiming, "Who is it? where is he?"--"A

servant of the vicar's--a spy--the vicar himself, escaping in the

disguise of a peasant!"--"Where is he? where is he?"

Renzo would have shrunk into nothingness,--some of the more benevolent

contrived to help him to disappear through the crowd; but that which

preserved him most effectually was a cry of "Make way, here comes our

help, make way!" which attracted the attention of the throng.

This was a long scaling ladder, supported by a few persons who were

endeavouring to penetrate the living mass, and by which they meant to

gain entrance to the house. But, happily, this was not easy of

execution; the length of the machine precluded the possibility of its

being carried easily through such a multitude; it came, however, just in

time for Renzo, who profited by the confusion, and escaped to a

distance, with the intention of making his way, as soon as he could, to

the convent, in search of Father Bonaventura.

Suddenly a new movement began at one extremity, and diffused itself

through the crowd:--"Ferrer, Ferrer!" resounded from every side. Some

were surprised, some rejoiced, some were exasperated, some applauded,

some affirmed, some denied, some blessed, some cursed!

"Is he here? It is not true; it is not true. Yes, yes, long live Ferrer,

he who makes bread cheap.--No, no! He is here--here in a carriage! Why

does he come?--we don't want him.--Ferrer! long live Ferrer! the friend

of the poor! he comes to take the vicar prisoner.--No, no, we would

revenge \_ourselves\_, we would fight our own battles; back, back.--Yes,

yes, Ferrer! Let him come! to prison with the vicar!"

At the extremity of the crowd, on the side opposite to that where the

soldiers were, Antonio Ferrer, the high chancellor, was approaching in

his carriage, who, probably condemning himself as the cause of this

commotion, had come to avert at least its most terrific and irreparable

effects, to spend worthily a popularity unworthily acquired.

In popular tumults there are always some who, from heated passion, or

fanaticism, or wicked design, do what they can to push things to the

worst; proposing and promoting the most barbarous counsels, and

assisting to stir the fire whenever it appears to slacken. But, on the

other hand, there are always those who, perhaps with equal ardour, and

equal perseverance, employ their efforts for the production of contrary

effects; some led by friendship or partiality for the persons in danger,

others without other impulse than that of horror of bloodshed and

atrocity. The mass, then, is ever composed of a mixed assemblage, who,

by indefinite gradations, hold to one or the other extreme; prompt to

rage or compassion, to adoration or execration, according as the

occasion presents itself for the developement of either of these

sentiments: \_life\_ and \_death\_ are the words involuntarily uttered, and

with equal facility; and he who succeeds in persuading them that such an

one does not deserve to be quartered, has but little more to do, to

convince them that he ought to be carried in triumph.

While these various interests were contending for superiority in the

mob, before the house of the vicar, the appearance of Antonio Ferrer

gave instantly a great advantage to the humane, who were manifestly

yielding to the greater strength of the ferocious and blood-thirsty. The

man himself was acceptable to the multitude, from his having previously

favoured their cause, and from his heroic resistance to any arguments

against it. Those already favourably inclined towards him were now much

more affected by the courageous confidence of an old man, who, without

guards or retinue, came thus to confront an angry and stormy multitude.

The announcement that his purpose was to take the vicar prisoner,

produced at once a wonderful effect; and the fury against that unhappy

person, which would have been aggravated by any attempt at defiance, or

refusal of concession, now, with the promise of satisfaction, and, to

speak in the Milanese fashion, with this bone in the mouth, became in a

degree appeased, and gave place to other opposite sentiments, which

began to prevail over their minds.

The partisans of peace, having recovered breath, aided Ferrer in various

ways; those who were near him, while endeavouring by their own to

perpetuate the general applause, sought at the same time to keep off the

crowd, so as to open a passage for the carriage; others applauded and

repeated his words, or such as appeared appropriate to his undertaking

and his peril; imposed silence on the obstinately furious, or contrived

to turn against \_them\_ the anger of the fickle assembly. "Who is it that

will not say, Long live Ferrer? You don't wish bread to be cheap, then,

eh? They are rogues who are not willing to receive justice at the hands

of a Christian, and there are some among them who cry louder than the

rest, to allow the vicar to escape. To prison with the superintendent!

Long live Ferrer! Make way for Ferrer!" The numbers of those who spoke

in this manner increasing continually, the numbers of the opposite party

diminished in proportion; so that the former, from admonishing, had

recourse to blows, in order to silence those who were still disposed to

pursue the work of destruction. The menaces and threatenings of the

weaker party were of no longer avail; the cause of blood had ceased to

predominate, and in its place were heard only the cries of "Prison,

justice, Ferrer!" The rebellious spirits were finally silenced: the

remainder took possession of the door, in order to defend it from fresh

attacks, and also to prepare a passage for Ferrer; and some among them

called to those within (openings were not wanting) that succour had

arrived, and that the vicar must get ready "to go quickly--to

prison--hem! do you hear?"

"Is this the Ferrer who helps in making the proclamations?" asked our

Renzo of one of his new neighbours, remembering the \_vidit Ferrera\_ that

the doctor had shown him appended to the famous proclamation, and which

he had reiterated in his ears with so great a degree of pertinacity.

"The same, the high chancellor," replied he.

"He is a worthy man, is he not?"

"He is more than worthy; it is he who has lowered the price of bread,

against the wishes of others in power, and now he comes to carry the

vicar to prison, because he has not acted justly."

It is unnecessary to say, that Renzo's feelings were immediately

enlisted on the side of Ferrer. He was desirous to approach near him,

but the undertaking was no easy one; however, with the decision and

strength of a mountaineer, he continued to elbow himself through the

crowd, and finally reached the side of the carriage.

The carriage had already penetrated into the midst of the crowd, but was

here suddenly stopped by one of those obstructions, the unavoidable

consequence of a journey like this. The aged Ferrer presented, now at

one window of his carriage, now at the other, a countenance full of

humility, of sweetness, and benevolence; a countenance which he had

always kept in reserve for the day in which he should appear before Don

Philip IV.; but he was constrained to make use of it on this occasion.

He spoke; but the noise and buzzing of so many voices, and the shouts of

applause which they bestowed on him, allowed but little of his discourse

to be heard. He had recourse also to gestures; now placing his fingers

on his lips, to take from thence a kiss, which his enclosed hands

distributed to right and left, as if to render thanks for the favour

with which the public regarded him; then he extended them, waving them

slowly beyond the window as if to entreat a little space; and now again

lowering them politely, as if to request a little silence. When he had

succeeded in obtaining, in some measure, his last request, those who

were nearest to him heard and repeated his words:--"Bread, abundance. I

come to do justice; a little space, if you please." Then, as if stifled

and suffocated with the press, and the continual buzzing of so many

voices, he threw himself back in the carriage, and with difficulty

drawing a long breath, said to himself, "\_Por mi vida, que de

gente\_."[5]

[5]: Upon my life, what a multitude.

"Long live Ferrer; there is no occasion for fear; you are a brave man.

Bread! bread!"

"Yes, bread, bread," replied Ferrer, "in abundance! \_I\_ promise you, I

do," placing his hand on his heart. "Clear a passage for me," added he,

then, in the loudest voice he could command; "I come to carry him to

prison, to inflict on him a just punishment;" and he added, in a very

low tone, "\_Si esta culpable\_."[6] Then leaning forward to the coachman,

he said hastily, "\_Adelante, Pedro, si puedes\_."[7]

[6] If he is guilty.

[7] Go on, Pedro, if you can.

The coachman smiled also on the people with an affected politeness, as

if he were some great personage; and, with ineffable grace, he waved the

whip slowly from right to left, as if requesting his inconvenient

neighbours to retire a little on either side. "Be so kind, gentlemen,"

said he, "a little space, ever so little, just enough to let us pass."

Meanwhile the most active and officious employed themselves in preparing

the passage so politely requested. Some made the crowd retire from

before the horses with good words, placing their hands on their breast,

and pushing them gently, "There, there, a little space, gentlemen."

Others pursued the same plan at the sides of the carriage, so that it

might pass on without damage to those who surrounded it; which would

have subjected the popularity of Antonio Ferrer to great hazard. Renzo,

after having been occupied for a few moments in admiring the respectable

old man, a little disturbed by vexation, overwhelmed with fatigue, but

animated by solicitude, embellished, so to speak, by the hope of

wresting a fellow-creature from the pains of death,--Renzo, I say, threw

away all idea of retreat. He resolved to assist Ferrer in every way that

lay in his power, and not to abandon him until he had accomplished his

designs. He united with the others to free the way, and he was certainly

not one of the least active or industrious. A passage was opened. "Come

on, come on," said a number of them to the coachman, retiring in front

of the crowd to maintain the passage clear. "\_Adelante, presto, con

juicio\_[8]," said his master also to him, and the carriage moved

forward. In the midst of the salutes which he lavished promiscuously on

the public, Ferrer, with a smile of intelligence, bestowed particular

thanks upon those whom he beheld busily employed for him; more than one

of these smiles was directed to Renzo, who, in truth, deserved them

richly, serving the high chancellor on this day with more devoted zeal

than the most intrepid of his secretaries. The young mountaineer was

delighted with his condescension, and proud of the honour of having, as

he thought, formed a friendship with Antonio Ferrer.

[8] On, on, but be careful.

The carriage, once in motion, continued its way with more or less

slowness, and not without being frequently brought to a full stop. The

space to be traversed was short, but, with respect to the time it

occupied, it would have appeared interminable, even to one not governed

by the holy motive of Ferrer. The people thronged around the carriage,

to right and left, as dolphins around a vessel, hurried forward by a

tempest. The noise was more piercing and discordant than that of a

tempest itself. Ferrer continued to speak to the populace the whole

length of the way. "Yes, gentlemen, bread in abundance. I will conduct

him to prison; he shall be punished--\_si esta culpable\_.[9] Yes, yes, I

will order it so; bread shall be cheap. \_Asi es.\_ So it shall, I mean.

The king our master does not wish his faithful subjects to suffer from

hunger. \_Oh, oh! guardaos.\_[10] Take care that we do not hurt you,

gentlemen, \_Pedro, adelante, con juicio.\_[11] Abundance! abundance! a

little space, for the love of Heaven! Bread, bread! To prison! to

prison! What do you want?" demanded he of a man who had thrust himself

partly within the window to howl at him some advice, or petition, or

applause, no matter what; but he, without having heard the question, had

been drawn back by another, who saw him in danger of being crushed by

the wheel. Amidst all this clamour, Ferrer at last gained the house,

thanks to his kind auxiliaries.

[9] If he is guilty.

[10] Oh, oh! take care.

[11] On, Pedro, but be careful.

Those who had stationed themselves there had equally laboured to procure

the desired result, and had succeeded in dividing the crowd in two, and

keeping them back, so that between the door and the carriage there

should be an empty space, however small. Renzo, who in acting as a scout

and a guide had arrived with the carriage, was able to find a place,

whence he could, by making a rampart of his powerful shoulders, see

distinctly all that passed.

Ferrer breathed again on seeing the place free, and the door still shut,

or, to speak more correctly, not yet open. However, the hinges were

nearly torn from their fastenings, and the panels shivered in many

pieces; so that an opening was made, through which it could be seen that

what held it together was the bolt, which, however, was almost twisted

from its socket. Through this breach some one cried to those within to

open the door, another ran to let down the steps of the carriage, and

the old man descended from it, leaning on the arm of this benevolent

person.

The crowd pressed forward to behold him: curiosity and general attention

caused a moment's silence. Ferrer stopped an instant on the steps,

turned towards them, and putting his hand to his heart, said, "Bread and

justice." Clothed in his toga, with head erect, and step assured, he

continued to descend, amid the loud applause that rent the skies.

In the mean while the people of the house had opened the door, so as to

permit the entrance of so desired a guest; taking care, however, to

contract the opening to the space his body would occupy. "Quick, quick!"

said he, "open, so that I may enter; and you, brave men, keep back the

people, do not let them come behind me--for the love of Heaven! Open a

way for us, presently.--Eh! eh! gentlemen, one moment," said he to the

people of the house; "softly with this door; let me pass. Oh, my ribs,

take care of my ribs. Shut now--no, my gown, my gown!" It would have

remained caught within the door if Ferrer had not hastily withdrawn it.

The doors, closed in the best manner they could be, were nevertheless

supported with bars from within. On the outside, those who had

constituted themselves the bodyguard of Ferrer worked with their

shoulders, their arms, and their voice to keep the place empty, praying

from the bottom of their hearts that they would be expeditious.

"Quick, quick!" said Ferrer, as he reached the portico, to the servants

who surrounded him, crying, "May your excellency be rewarded! What

goodness! Great God, what goodness!"

"Quick, quick," repeated Ferrer, "where is this poor man?"

The superintendent descended the stairs half led, half carried by his

domestics, and pale as death. When he saw who had come to his

assistance, he sighed deeply, his pulse returned, and a slight colour

tinged his cheek. He hastened to meet Ferrer, saying, "I am in the hands

of God and your excellency; but how go hence? we are surrounded on all

sides by people who desire my death."

"\_Venga con migo usted\_[12], and take courage. My carriage is at the

door; quick, quick!" He took him by the hand, and, continuing to

encourage him, led him towards the door, saying in his heart, however,

\_Aqui esta el busilis! Dios nos valga!\_[13]

[12] Come with me.

[13] Now for the difficult point! God help us!

The door, opened; Ferrer appeared first; the superintendent followed,

shrinking with fear, and clinging to the protecting toga, as an infant

to the gown of its mother. Those who had maintained the space free

raised their hands and waved their hats; making in this manner a sort of

cloud to conceal the superintendent from the view of the people, and to

enable him to enter the carriage, and place himself out of sight. Ferrer

followed, and the carriage was closed. The people drew their own

conclusions as to what had taken place, and there arose, in consequence,

a mingled sound of applauses and imprecations.

The return of the carriage might seem to be even more difficult and

dangerous; but the willingness of the public to suffer the

superintendent to be carried to prison was sufficiently manifest; and

the friends of Ferrer had been busy in keeping the way open whilst he

was at the house, so that he could return with a little more speed than

he went. As it advanced, the crowd, ranged on either side, closed and

united their ranks behind it.

Ferrer, as soon as he was seated, whispered the superintendent to keep

himself concealed in the bottom of the carriage, and not to let himself

be seen, for the love of Heaven; there was, however, no need of this

advice. It was the policy of the high chancellor, on the contrary, to

attract as much of the attention of the populace as possible, and during

all this passage, as in the former, he harangued his changeable auditory

with a great quantity of sound, and very little sense; interrupting

himself continually to breathe into the ear of his invisible companion a

few hurried words of Spanish. "Yes, gentlemen, bread and justice. To the

castle, to prison under my care. Thanks, thanks, a thousand thanks! No,

no, he shall not escape! \_Por ablanderlos.\_[14] It is too just, we will

examine, we will see. I wish you well. A severe punishment. \_Esto lo

digo por su bien.\_[15] A just and moderate price, and punishment to

those who oppose it. Keep off a little, I pray you. Yes, yes; I am the

friend of the people. He shall be punished; it is true; he is a villain,

a rascal. \_Perdone usted.\_[16] He shall be punished, he shall be

punished--\_si esta culpable\_.[17] Yes, yes; we will make the bakers do

that which is just. Long live the king! long live the good Milanese, his

faithful subjects! \_Animo estamos ya quasi afuera.\_"[18]

[14] It is to coax them.

[15] I say that for your good.

[16] Pardon me.

[17] If he is guilty.

[18] Courage, we are almost out of danger.

They had, in fact, passed through the thickest of the throng, and were

rapidly advancing to a place of safety; and now Ferrer gave his lungs a

little repose, and looking forward, beheld the succours from Pisa, those

Spanish soldiers, who had at last rendered themselves of service, by

persuading some of the people to retire to their homes, and by keeping

the passage free for the final escape. Upon the arrival of the carriage,

they made room, and presented arms to the high chancellor, who bowed to

right and left; and to the officer who approached the nearest to salute

him he said, accompanying his words with a wave of his hand, "\_Beso à

usted las manos\_[19]," which the officer interpreted to signify, You

have given me much assistance!

[19] I kiss your hands.

He might have appropriately added, \_Cedant arma togæ\_; but the

imagination of Ferrer was not at this moment at liberty to occupy itself

with quotations, and, moreover, they would have been addressed to the

wind, as the officer did not understand Latin.

Pedro felt his accustomed courage revive at the sight of these files of

muskets, so respectfully raised; and recovering entirely from his

amazement, he urged on his horses, without deigning to take further

notice of the few, who were now harmless from their numbers.

"\_Levantese, levantese, estamos afueras\_[20]," said Ferrer to the

superintendent, who, re-assured by the cessation of the tumult, the

rapid motion of the carriage, and these words of encouragement, drew

himself from his corner, and overwhelmed his liberator with thanks. The

latter, after having condoled with him on account of his peril, and

rejoiced at his deliverance, exclaimed, "\_Ah! que dira de esto su

excelencia\_[21], who is already weary of this cursed Casale, because it

will not surrender? \_que dira el conde duque?\_[22] who trembles if a

leaf makes more noise than usual? \_Que dira el rey nuestro señor?\_[23]

who must necessarily be informed of so great a tumult? And is it at an

end? \_Dios lo sabe.\_"[24]--"Ah, as for me, I will have nothing more to

do with it," said the superintendent. "I wash my hands of it. I resign

my office into the hands of your excellency, and I will go and live in a

cavern on a mountain, as a hermit, far, very far from this savage

people."

[20] Rise, rise, we are beyond danger.

[21] What will his excellency say to this?

[22] What will the count duke say?

[23] What will the king our master say?

[24] God knows.

"\_Usted\_[25] will do that which is best \_por el servicio de su

majestad\_," replied the high chancellor, gravely.

[25] You--for his majesty's service.

"His majesty does not desire my death," replied the superintendent.

"Yes, yes, in a cavern, in a cavern far from these cruel people."

It is not known what became of this project, as, after conducting the

poor man in safety to his castle, our author makes no farther mention of

him.

CHAPTER XIV.

The crowd began to disperse; some went home to take care of their

families, some wandered off from the desire to breathe more freely,

after such a squeeze, and others sought their acquaintances, to chat

with them over the deeds of the day. The other end of the street was

also thinning, so that the detachment of Spanish soldiers could without

resistance advance near the superintendent's house. In front of it there

still remained, so to speak, the dregs of the commotion; a company of

the seditious, who, discontented with "so lame and impotent a

conclusion," of that which promised so much, muttered curses at the

disappointment, and united themselves in knots to consult with each

other on the possibility of yet attempting something; and, to afford

themselves proof that this was in their power, they attacked and pounded

the poor door, which had been propped up anew from within. At the

arrival of the troop, however, their valour diminished, and without

further consultation they dispersed, leaving the place free to the

soldiers, who took possession, in order to serve as a guard to the house

and road. But the streets and small squares of the vicinity were full of

little gatherings; where three or four individuals stopped, twenty were

soon added to them; there was a confused and constant babbling; one

narrated with emphasis the peculiar incidents of which he had been the

witness, another related his own feats, another rejoiced that the affair

had ended so happily, loaded Ferrer with praises, and predicted serious

consequences to the superintendent; to which another still replied,

that there was no danger of it, because wolves do not eat wolves;

others, in anger, muttered that they had been duped, and that they were

fools to allow themselves to be deceived in this manner.

Meanwhile the sun had set, and twilight threw the same indistinct hue

over every object. Many, fatigued with the day, and wearied with

conversing in the dark, returned to their houses. Our hero, after having

assisted the carriage as far as was necessary, rejoiced when he beheld

it in safety, and as soon as it was in his power left the crowd, so that

he might, once more, breathe freely. Hardly had he taken a few steps in

the open air, when he experienced a re-action after such excitement, and

began to feel the need of food and repose; he therefore looked upward on

either side, in search of a sign, which might hold out to him the

prospect of satisfying his wants, as it was too late to think of going

to the convent. Thus, walking with his eyes directed upward, he stumbled

on one of these groups, and his attention was attracted by hearing them

speak of designs and projects for the morrow; it appeared to him that

he, who had been such a labourer in the field, had a right to give his

opinion. Persuaded from all he had witnessed during the day, that, in

order to secure the success of an enterprise, it was only necessary to

gain the co-operation of the populace, "Gentlemen," cried he, in a tone

of exordium, "allow me to offer my humble opinion. My humble opinion is

this; it is not only in the matter of bread that iniquity is practised:

and since we have discovered to-day, that we have only to make ourselves

heard, to obtain justice, we must go on, until we obtain redress for all

their other knavish tricks--until we compel them to act like Christians.

Is it not true, gentlemen, that there is a band of tyrants who reverse

the tenth commandment; who commit injuries on the peaceful and the poor,

and in the end make it out that they act justly? And even when they have

committed a greater villany than usual, they carry their heads higher

then ever. There are some such even in Milan."

"Too many," said a voice.

"I say it, I do," resumed Renzo; "it has even reached our ears. And then

the thing speaks for itself. By way of illustration, let us suppose one

of those to whom I allude to have one foot in Milan, and the other

elsewhere; if he is a devil there, will he be an angel here? Tell me,

gentlemen, have you ever seen one of these people with a countenance

like Ferrer's? But what renders their practices more wicked, I assure

you that there are printed proclamations against them, in which their

evil deeds are clearly pointed out, and a punishment assigned to each,

and it is written, '\_Whoever he be, ignoble and plebeian\_, &c. &c.' But

go now to the doctors, scribes, and pharisees, and demand justice

according to the proclamation; they listen to you as the pope does to

rogues: it is enough to make an honest man turn rascal! It is evident,

that the king and those who govern would willingly punish the villains,

but they can do nothing, because there is a league among them. We must

break it up, then; we must go to-morrow to Ferrer, who is a good worthy

man; it was plain how delighted he was to-day to find himself among the

poor; how he tried to hear what was said to him, and how kindly he

answered them. We must go, then, to Ferrer, and inform him how things

are situated; and I, for my part, can tell him something that will

astonish him; I, who have seen with my own eyes a proclamation, with

ever so many coats of arms at the head of it, and which had been made by

three of the rulers; their names were printed at the bottom, and one of

these names was Ferrer; this I saw with my own eyes! Now this

proclamation was exactly suited to my case; so that I demanded justice

from the doctor, since it was the desire of these three lords, among

whom was Ferrer; but in the eyes of this very doctor, who had himself

shown me this fine proclamation, I appeared to be a madman. I am sure

that when this dear old man shall hear these doings, especially in the

country, he will not let the world go on in this manner, but will

quickly find some remedy. And then, they themselves, if they issue

proclamations, they should wish to see them obeyed; for it is an insult,

an epitaph, with their \_name\_, if counted for nothing. And if the

nobility will not lower their pretensions, and cease their evil doings,

we must compel them as we have done to-day. I do not say that he should

go in his carriage to take all the rascals to gaol--it would need Noah's

ark for that; he must give orders to those whose business it is, not

only at Milan but elsewhere, to put the proclamations in force, to enter

an action against such as have been guilty of those iniquities, and

where the edict says, 'Prison,' then prison; where it says, 'The

galleys,' the galleys; and to say to the various \_podestà\_ that they

must conduct themselves uprightly, or they shall be dismissed and others

put in their place, and then, as I say, we will be there also to lend a

helping hand, and to command the doctors to listen to the poor, and talk

reasonably. Am I not right, gentlemen?"

Renzo had spoken so vehemently, that he had attracted the attention of

the assembly, and, dropping by degrees all other discourse, they had all

become his listeners. A confused clamour of applause, a "bravo!

certainly! assuredly! he is right, it is but too true," followed his

harangue. Critics, however, were not wanting. "It is a pretty thing,

indeed," said one, "to listen to a mountaineer! they are all lawyers!"

and he turned on his heel.

"Now," muttered another, "every barefooted fellow will give his opinion,

and with this rage for meddling, we shall at last not have bread at a

low price, and that is all that disturbs us." Compliments, however, were

all that reached the ears of Renzo; they seized his hands, and

exclaimed,--

"We will see you again to-morrow."

"Where?"

"On the square of the cathedral."

"Yes, very well. And something shall be done, something shall be done."

"Which of these good gentlemen will show me an inn, where I may obtain

refreshment and repose for the night?" said Renzo.

"I am the one for your service, worthy youth," said one, who had

listened to the sermon very attentively, but had not yet opened his

mouth; "I know an inn, that will suit you exactly; I will recommend you

to the keeper, who is my friend, and moreover a very honest man."

"Near by?"

"Not very far off."

The assembly dissolved; and Renzo, after many shakes of the hand, from

persons unknown, followed his guide, adding many thanks for his

courtesy.

"It is nothing, it is nothing," said he; "one hand washes the other, and

both the face. We ought to oblige our neighbour." As they walked along,

he put many questions to Renzo, by way of discourse.

"It is not from curiosity, nor to meddle with your affairs, but you

appear to be fatigued. From what country do you come?"

"All the way from Lecco, all the way from Lecco."

"All the way from Lecco! Are you from Lecco?"

"From Lecco; that is to say, from the province."

"Poor youth! From what I have understood of your discourse, it appears

you have been hardly treated."

"Ah! my dear and worthy man, I have been obliged to use much skill in

speaking, not to make the public acquainted with my affairs; but--it is

enough that they will one day be known, and then---- But I see here a

sign, and, by my faith, I don't wish to go farther."

"No, no; come to the place I told you of, it is but a short distance

off. You will not be well accommodated here."

"Oh yes. I am not a gentleman accustomed to delicacies; any thing to

satisfy my hunger; and a little straw will answer my purpose: that which

I have most at heart is to find them both very soon, under Providence!"

And he entered a large gate, from which hung a sign of the \_Full Moon\_.

"Well, I will conduct you here, since you desire it," said the unknown;

and Renzo followed him.

"There is no necessity for troubling you longer," replied Renzo; "but,"

he added, "do me the favour to go in, and take a glass with me."

"I accept your obliging offer," said he; and preceding Renzo as being

more accustomed to the house, he entered a little court-yard,

approached a glass door, and opening it, advanced into the kitchen with

his companion.

It was lighted by two lamps suspended from the beam of the ceiling. Many

people, all busy, were seated on benches which surrounded a narrow

table, occupying almost all one side of the apartment; at intervals

napkins were spread, and dishes of meat; cards played, and dice thrown;

and bottles and wine-glasses amid them all. \_Berlinghe\_, \_reali\_, and

\_parpagliole\_[26], were also scattered in profusion over the table,

which, could they have spoken, would probably have said, "We were this

morning in a baker's counter, or in the pocket of some spectator of the

tumult, who, occupied with public affairs, neglected the care of private

affairs." The confusion was great; a boy ran to and fro busily engaged

in attending to the dinner and gaming tables; the host was seated on a

low bench under the mantle-tree of the chimney, apparently occupied in

tracing figures in the ashes with the tongs, but in reality deeply

attentive to all that passed around him. He raised his head at the sound

of the latch, and turned towards the new comers. When he saw the guide,

"Curse the fellow," said he to himself, "he must always be under my

feet, when I wish him at the devil!" Casting a rapid glance towards

Renzo, he continued, "I know you not; but if you come with such a

hunter, you are either a dog or a hare. When you shall have spoken a few

words, I shall know which of the two you are."

[26] Different coins.

Nothing of this mute soliloquy could be traced, however, in the

countenance of the host, who was motionless as a statue: his eyes were

small and without expression, his face fat and shining, and his short

and thick beard of a reddish hue.

"What are your orders, gentlemen?" said he.

"First, a good flagon of wine," said Renzo, "and then something to eat."

So saying, he threw himself on a bench at one end of the table, and

uttered a loud and sonorous \_Ah!\_ as if to say, "It is a good thing to

sit down after having been so long on one's feet." But recollecting the

table at which he had been seated the evening before with Agnes and

Lucy, he sighed deeply. The host brought the wine; his companion had

seated himself opposite to him; Renzo filled a glass for him, saying,

"To wet your lips," and another for himself, which he swallowed at a

draught.

"What can you give me to eat?" said he, addressing the host.

"A good piece of stewed meat," replied he.

"Well, sir, a good piece of stewed meat."

"You shall be served immediately," said the host, and calling to the

boy, "Serve this gentleman. But," resumed he, turning again to Renzo, "I

have no bread to-day."

"As for bread," said Renzo, in a loud voice, and laughing, "Providence

has provided that." And he drew forth the third and last loaf, picked up

under the cross of \_St. Dionigi\_, and holding it up, cried, "Here is the

bread of Providence!"

At this exclamation many of the company turned round, and seeing this

trophy in the air, one of them cried, "Bread for ever at a low price!"

"At a low price!" said Renzo; "\_gratis et amore\_."

"Better still, better still."

"But," added he, "I do not wish these gentlemen to think evil of me. I

have not stolen it--I found it on the ground; and if I could find the

owner, I am ready to pay him."

"Bravo, bravo!" cried they, laughing louder still, not imagining that he

was in earnest.

"They think that I jest, but it is really so," said Renzo to his guide,

and turning the bread in his hand; "see how they have formed it--you

would call it a cake, but they were so packed one on the other. If there

were any with the crust a little tender, one might know they were

fresh." Then devouring three or four mouthfulls of the bread, he washed

them down with another glass of wine, adding, "The bread will not go

down alone--my throat was never so dry--a glorious uproar we made!"

"Prepare a good bed for this young man," said the guide; "he is going to

pass the night here."

"Do you wish to sleep here?" said the host to Renzo, approaching the

table.

"Certainly; I shall be content with any bed, provided the sheets are

white; for although poor, I am accustomed to cleanliness."

"Oh, as to that----" said the host. So saying, he went to his counter,

which was in a corner of the kitchen, and returned, bringing in his hand

paper, pen, and ink.

"What does this mean?" swallowing a piece of the stew which had been

placed before him, and smiling with an air of surprise; "is that the

white sheet?"

The host, without replying, placed the paper on the table, and himself

in an attitude to write, and with the pen in his hand, leaning towards

Renzo, he said, "Do me the favour to tell me your name and country."

"What!" said Renzo, "what has this to do with the bed?"

"I do my duty," said the host, looking at the guide. "We are obliged to

give an exact account of all who lodge at our house. \_Name and surname,

and from what country they are; why they are here; if they have arms;

and how long they expect to remain in the city.\_ These are the very

words of the proclamation."

Before answering, Renzo emptied another glass; it was the third, but I

fear for the future we shall not find it possible to count them. "Ah,

ah!" exclaimed he, "you have the proclamation. Well, I pride myself on

being a doctor of laws, and I know what importance is attached to

proclamations."

"I speak in earnest," said the host, looking again at the mute companion

of Renzo; and returning to his desk, he drew from it a large sheet of

paper, which he unfolded before Renzo, as an exact copy of the

proclamation.

"Ah! there it is!" cried he, quickly emptying the contents of the glass

which he held in his hand. "Ah! there it is! the fine sheet! I rejoice

to see it. I know these arms; I know what this pagan head means with a

noose around its neck." (The proclamations of that time were headed by

the arms of the governor, and in those of Don Gonzalo Fernandez de

Cordova was seen a Moorish king, chained by the throat.) "This face

means, Command who can, and obey who will. When the Signor Don----shall

have been sent to the galleys--well, well, I know what I would say--I

have seen another leaf just like this. When he shall have so taken

measures that an honest young man can, without molestation, marry her to

whom he is betrothed, and by whom he is beloved, then I will tell my

name to this face, and will give him a kiss in the bargain. I may have

very good reasons for not telling my name; it's a fine thing, truly! And

if a robber, who might have under his command a band of villains,

because if he were alone----" He hesitated a moment, finishing the

phrase with a gesture, and then proceeded, "If a robber wished to know

who I was, in order to do me some evil turn, I ask you if that face

would move from the paper to help me. Am I obliged to tell my business?

Truly, this is something new. Suppose, for instance, that I have come to

Milan to confess--I would wish to do it to a capuchin father, and not to

the landlord of an inn."

The host kept silence, looking at the guide, who appeared not to notice

any thing that passed. Renzo, it grieves us to say, swallowed another

glass, and continued, "I will give you reasons enough to satisfy you, my

dear host; if those proclamations which speak favourably of good

Christians are worth nothing, those which speak unfavourably are worth

less than nothing. Take away, then, all these encumbrances, and bring in

exchange another flagon, because this one is broken." So saying, he

struck it lightly with his hand, adding, "Don't you hear how it is

cracked?"

The discourse of Renzo had again attracted the general attention of the

company, and when he concluded, there was a general murmur of applause.

"What must I do?" said the host, looking at the strange companion, who

was, however, no stranger to him.

"Yes, yes," cried many of the company, "this countryman is right; they

are vexatious impositions. New laws to-day! new laws to-day!"

The stranger took advantage of the noise to say to the host, in a tone

of reproach for his too abrupt demand, "Leave him to his own way a

little; do not raise a disturbance."

"I have done my duty," said the host aloud, "and secured myself,"

continued he, lowering his voice; "and that is all I care for." He

removed the pen, ink, and paper, and gave the empty flagon to the boy.

"Bring the same kind of wine," said Renzo, "for it suits my taste

exactly; and we will send it to sleep with the other, without asking its

name, surname, nor what is its business, nor whether it is going to

remain long in this city."

"Of the same kind," said the host to the boy, giving him the flagon, and

returning to his seat by the chimney. "He is no other than a hare,"

thought he, raking in the ashes. "And in what hands art thou fallen,

poor silly youth! If you will drown, drown; but the host of the \_Full

Moon\_ will not go halves with thy folly."

Renzo returned thanks to his guide, and to all those who had taken his

side. "Worthy friends," said he, "I know that honest people support each

other." Then striking the table, and placing himself in the attitude of

an orator, "Is it not an unheard of thing," cried he, "that those who

govern must always introduce paper, pen, and ink? Always the pen in

hand! Such a passion for the pen!"

"Eh! young and worthy stranger! would you know the reason?" said one of

the gamesters, laughing.

"Let us hear it," replied Renzo.

"The reason is, as these lords eat geese, they have so many quills, they

know not what to do with them."

"Oh, oh!" said Renzo, "you are a poet! You have poets here, then? I have

also a vein for poetry, and I sometimes make verses--but it is when

things go on well."

To comprehend this witticism of poor Renzo, it is necessary to be

informed, that in the eyes of the vulgar of Milan, and more particularly

in its environs, the name of poet did not signify, as among cultivated

people, a sublime genius, an inhabitant of Pindus, a pupil of the muses,

but a whimsicality and eccentricity in discourse and conduct, which had

more of singularity than sense; and an absurd wresting of words from

their legitimate signification.

"But I will tell the true reason," added Renzo, "it is because they

themselves hold the pen, and, therefore, they do not record their own

words; but let a poor man speak, they are very attentive, and in a

moment, \_there\_ it is, in black and white for some future occasion. They

are cunning, also; and when they want to perplex a poor youth, who does

not know how to read, but who has a little----I know well----" beating

his forehead with his hand, and pointing to it with his finger, to make

himself understood; "and when they perceive that he begins to comprehend

the difficulty, they throw into the conversation some Latin, to make him

lose the thread of their argument, to put him at his wits' end, to

confuse his brains. This custom must be broken up: to-day, every thing

has been done after the people's fashion, without paper, pen, and ink.

To-morrow, if they know how to conduct themselves, we shall do still

better, without hurting a hair of any one's head; all in the way of

justice."

In the mean while some of the company had engaged again in play, and

some in eating; some went away, others came in their place. The unknown

guide continued to remain; and without appearing to have any business to

detain him, lingered to talk a little more with Renzo, and resumed the

conversation about bread.

"If I had the control, I would order things better," said he.

"What would you do?" said Renzo, endeavouring to exhibit every

appearance of attention.

"What would I do? Every one should have bread--the poor as well as the

rich."

"Ah! that is right."

"See how I would do. I would fix a reasonable rate within the ability of

every one; then bread should be distributed according to the number of

mouths, because there are gluttons who seize all they can get for

themselves, and leave the poor still in want. We must then divide it.

And how shall we do this? Why in this way. Give a ticket to every family

in proportion to the mouths, to authorise them to get bread from the

bakers. For example: they give me a ticket expressed in this manner;

Ambrose Fusella, by trade a sword cutler, with a wife and four children,

all old enough to eat bread (mind that); he must be furnished with so

much bread at such a price. But the thing must be done in order, always

with regard to the number of mouths. For instance, they should give you

a ticket for--your name?"

"Lorenzo Tramaglino," said the young man, who, enchanted with the

project, did not reflect that it all depended on pen, ink, and paper;

and that the first point towards its success was to collect the names of

the persons to be served.

"Very well," said the unknown; "but have you a wife and children?"

"I ought to have--children, no--not yet--but a wife--if people had acted

as their duty required----"

"Ah, you are single! then have patience; they will only give you a

smaller portion."

"That is but just. But if soon, as I hope--by the help of God--enough;

suppose I have a wife."

"Then the ticket must be changed, and the portion increased, as I have

said, according to the mouths," replied the unknown, rising.

"That would be very good," cried Renzo, thumping the table with his

fist; "and why don't they make such a law?"

"How can I tell you? meanwhile I wish you a good night, as my wife and

children must have been expecting me this long while."

"Another drop, another drop," filling his glass, and endeavouring to

force him to sit down again; "another drop!"

But his friend contrived to disengage himself; and leaving Renzo,

pouring forth a torrent of entreaties and reproaches, he departed. Renzo

continued to talk until he was in the street, and then fell back on his

seat. He looked at the glass which he had filled to the brim; and seeing

the boy pass before the table, he beckoned to him, as if he had

something particular to communicate. He pointed to the glass, and with a

tone of solemnity said, "See there! I prepared it for that worthy man;

you see it is full, as it should be for a friend; but he would not have

it. Sometimes people have singular ideas; however, I have shown my good

will; but now, since the thing is done, it must not be lost." So saying,

he emptied it at one draught.

"I understand," said the boy, moving off.

"You understand too, do you? It is true, when the reasons are

sufficient----"

Here we have need of all our love of truth to induce us to pursue

faithfully our hero's history; at the same time this same impartiality

leads us to inform the reader, that this was his first error of a

similar character; and precisely because he was so unaccustomed to

merry-making did this prove so fatal. The few glasses of wine which he

swallowed so rapidly, contrary to his custom, partly to cool his throat,

and partly from an exaltation of spirits, which deprived him of the

power of reflection, went immediately to his head. Upon an habitual

drinker it would have produced no visible effect; our author observes

this, that "temperate and moderate habits have this advantage, that the

more a man practises them, the more he finds a departure from them to be

disagreeable and inconvenient; so that his fault itself serves as a

lesson to him for the future."

However this may be, when these first fumes had mounted to the brain of

Renzo, wine and words continued to flow without rule or reason. He felt

a great desire to speak, and for a while his words were arranged with

some degree of order, but by little and little he found it difficult to

form a connected sentence. The thoughts which presented themselves to

his mind were cloudy and indistinct, and his expressions, in

consequence, unconnected and obscure: to relieve his perplexity, by one

of those false instincts which, under similar circumstances, lead men to

the accomplishment of their own ruin, he had recourse to the flagon.

We will relate only a few of the words which he continued to ejaculate,

during the remainder of this miserable evening. "Ah! host, host,"

resumed he, following him with his eye around the table, or gazing at

him where he was not, and taking no notice of the noise of the company,

"host that thou art! I cannot swallow it--this request of name, surname,

and business. To a peaceable youth like me! you have not behaved well!

what satisfaction, what advantage, what pleasure--to put a poor youth on

paper? Am I not right--speak, gentlemen? Hosts should stand by good

fellows. Listen, listen, host, I wish to make a comparison for you--for

the reason----They laugh, do they? I am a little gay, I know; but the

reasons, I say, are just. Tell me, if you please, who is it that brings

custom to your house? Poor young men, is it not? Do these lords, they of

the proclamations, ever come here to wet their lips?"

"They are all water-drinkers," said one who sat near Renzo.

"They wish to keep possession of their understandings, so as to tell

lies skilfully," added another.

"Ah!" cried Renzo, "that is the poet who spoke. Then hear my reasons.

Answer me, host. Ferrer, who is the best of all of them, has he ever

been here to drink the health of any one, and to spend so much as a

farthing? And this dog of an assassin, this Don ----? I must be silent,

because I am too much in the humour for babbling. Ferrer, and Father

Crr----, I know, are two honest men. But there are few honest men. The

old are worse than the young; and the young--are much worse than the

old. I am glad there was no blood shed, these are things we must leave

to the hangman. Bread! Oh yes, for that I have had many a thrust, but I

have also given some. Make way! Abundance! \_vivat!\_ And Ferrer too--some

words in Latin,--\_Si es baraos trapolorum.\_ Cursed fault! \_vivat!\_

justice! bread! Ah, those are good words! We had need of them. When we

heard that cursed ton, ton, ton, and then again, ton, ton, ton, the

question was not of flight; but hold the signor curate to--I, I know

what I am thinking of."

At these words he hung down his head, and remained for a time as if

absorbed by some new imagination; then, sighing deeply, he raised it

again, and looked up with such a mournful and silly expression, as

excited the amusement of all around. In short, he became the

laughingstock of the whole company. Not that they were all perfectly

sober, but, to say truth, they were so in comparison with poor Renzo.

They provoked and angered him with silly questions, and with mock

civilities; sometimes he pretended to be offended, then, without

noticing them at all, spoke of other things; then replied, then

interrogated, and always wide of the mark. By good fortune, in his

folly, he seemed from instinct to avoid pronouncing the names of

persons; so that the one most deeply graven in his memory was not

uttered. We should have been sorry ourselves if this name, for which we

feel so much love and respect, had passed from mouth to mouth, and been

made a theme of jesting by these vulgar and degraded wretches.

CHAPTER XV.

The host, seeing that the game was about to be carried too far,

approached Renzo, and entreating the others to be quiet, endeavoured to

make him understand that he had best go to bed. But our mountaineer

could think of nothing but \_name\_, \_surname\_, and \_proclamations\_; yet

the words \_bed\_ and \_sleep\_, repeated frequently in his ear, made at

last some impression, and producing a sort of lucid interval, made him

feel that he really had need of both. The little sense that remained to

him enabled him to perceive that the greater part of the company had

departed; and with his hands resting on the table before him, he

endeavoured to stand on his feet; his efforts would have been, however,

unavailing, without the assistance of the host, who led him from between

the table and the bench, and taking a lantern in one hand, managed

partly to lead and partly to drag him to the stairs, and thence up the

narrow staircase to the room designed for him. At the sight of the bed,

he endeavoured to look kindly upon the host; but his eyes at one time

sparkled, at another disappeared, like two fireflies: he endeavoured to

stand erect, and stretched out his hand to pat the shoulder of his host

in testimony of his gratitude; but in this he failed: however he did

succeed in saying, "Worthy host, I see now that you are an honest man;

but I don't like your rage for \_name\_ and \_surname\_. Happily I am

also----"

The host, who did not expect to hear him utter one connected idea, and

who knew from experience how prone men in his situation were to sudden

changes of feeling, wishing to profit by this lucid interval, made

another attempt. "My dear fellow," said he, in a tone of persuasion, "I

have not intended to vex you, nor to pry into your affairs. What would

you have had me do? There is a law, and if we innkeepers do not obey it,

we shall be the first to be punished; therefore it is better to conform.

And after all, as regards yourself, what is it? A hard thing, indeed!

just to say two words. It is not for them, but to do me a favour. Now,

here, between ourselves, tell me your \_name\_, and then you shall go to

bed in peace."

"Ah, rascal! knave!" cried Renzo, "do you dare to bring up this cursed

\_name\_ and \_surname\_ and \_business\_ again?"

"Hush! you fool! and go to bed," said the host.

But Renzo continued to bellow, "I understand it, you belong to the

league. Wait, wait, till I settle matters for you;" and turning to the

door, he bellowed down the stairs, "Friends! the host is of the----"

"I spoke in jest," cried the host, pushing him towards the bed, "in

jest; did you not perceive I spoke in jest?"

"Ah, in jest; now you talk reasonably. Since you said it in jest--they

are just the thing to make a jest of----." And he fell on the bed.

"Undress yourself quickly," said the host; and adding his assistance to

his advice, the thought occurred to him, to ascertain if there were any

money in Renzo's pockets, as on the morrow it would fall into hands from

which an innkeeper would have but little chance of recovering it; he

therefore hazarded another attempt, saying to Renzo, "You are an honest

youth, are you not?"

"Yes, an honest youth," replied Renzo, still endeavouring to rid himself

of his clothes.

"Well, settle this little account with me now, because to-morrow I am

obliged to leave home on business."

"That's right," said Renzo "I am honest. But the money--we must find the

money----!"

"Here it is," said the host; and calling up all his patience and skill,

he succeeded in obtaining the reckoning.

"Lend me your hand to finish undressing, host," said Renzo; "I begin to

comprehend, do you see, that----I am very sleepy."

The host rendered him the desired service, and covering him with the

quilt, bade him "Good night."

The words were scarcely uttered before poor Renzo snored. The host

stopped to contemplate him a moment by the light of his lantern; "Mad

blockhead!" said he to the poor sleeper, "thou hast accomplished thy own

ruin! dunces, who want to travel over the world, without knowing where

the sun rises, to entangle themselves with affairs they know nothing of,

to their own injury and that of their neighbour!"

So saying, he left the apartment, having locked the door outside, and

calling to his wife, told her to take his place in the kitchen,

"Because," said he, "I must go out for a while, thanks to a stranger who

is here, unhappily for me;" he then briefly related the annoying

circumstance, adding, "And now keep an eye on all, and above all be

prudent. There is below a company of dissolute fellows, who, between

drink and their natural disposition, are very very free of speech.

Enough--if any of them should dare----"

"Oh! I am not a child! I know what I ought to do. It could never be

said----"

"Well, well. Be careful to make them pay. If they talk of the

superintendant of provision, the governor, Ferrer, and the council of

ten, and the gentry, and Spain and France, and other follies, pretend

not to hear them, because, if you contradict them, it may go ill with

you now, and if you argue with them, it may go ill with you hereafter;

and take care, when you hear any dangerous remarks, turn away your

head, and call out 'Coming, sir.' I will endeavour to return as soon as

possible."

So saying, he descended with her into the kitchen, put on his hat and

cloak, and taking a cudgel in his hand, departed. As he walked along the

road, he resumed the thread of his apostrophe to poor Renzo. "Headstrong

mountaineer!"--for that Renzo was such, had been manifest from his

pronunciation, countenance, and manners, although he vainly tried to

conceal it,--"on a day like this, when by dint of skill and prudence I

had kept my hands clean, you must come at the end of it to spoil all I

have done! Are there not inns enough in Milan, that you must come to

mine! at least, if you had been alone, I would have winked at it for

to-night, and made you understand matters to-morrow. But no; my

gentleman must come in company, and, to do the thing better, in company

with an informer."

At this moment he perceived a patrole of soldiers approaching; drawing

on one side to let them pass, and eyeing them askance, he continued,

"There go the fool-punishers. And thou, great booby, because thou saw'st

a few people making a little noise, thou must think the world was turned

upside down; and on this fine foundation thou hast ruined thyself and

would have ruined me; I have done all I could to save thee, now thou

must get thyself out of trouble. As if I wanted to know thy name from

curiosity! What was it to me whether it were Thaddeus or Bartholomew? I

have truly great satisfaction in taking a pen in my hand! I know well

enough that there are proclamations which are disregarded; just as if we

had need of a mountaineer to tell us that! And dost thou not know, thou

fool! what would be done to a poor innkeeper, who should be of thy

opinion (since upon them the proclamation bear hardest), and should not

inform himself of the name of any one who did him the favour to lodge at

his house. \_Under penalty of whoever of the above-said hosts, tavern

keepers, and others, of three hundred crowns\_,--behold three hundred

crowns hatched; and now to spend them well,--\_two thirds to be applied

to the royal chamber, and the other third to the accuser or informer.

And in case of inability, five years in the galleys, and greater

pecuniary and corporal punishments, at the discretion of his

Excellency.\_ Very much obliged for such favours, indeed!" He ended his

soliloquy, finding himself at his destined point, the palace of the

\_Capitano di Giustizia\_.

There, as in all the offices of the secretaries, there was a great deal

of business going on; on all sides, persons were employed in issuing

orders to ensure the peace of the following day, to take from rebellion

every pretext, to cool the audacity of those who were desirous of fresh

disorders, and to concentrate power in the hands of those accustomed to

exercise it. The number of the soldiers who protected the house of the

superintendant was increased; the ends of the streets were defended by

large pieces of timber thrown across them; the bakers were ordered to

bake bread without intermission; expresses were sent to all the

surrounding villages, with orders to send corn into the city; and at

every baker's some of the nobility were stationed, to watch over the

distribution, and to restrain the discontented by fair words and the

authority of their presence. But to give, as they said, a blow to the

hoop, and another to the cask, and increase the efficacy of their

caresses by a little awe, they took measures to seize some of the

seditious, and this was the principal duty of the \_Capitano di

Giustizia\_. His blood-hounds had been in the field since the

commencement of the tumult; and this self-styled Ambrose Fusella was a

police officer in disguise, who, having listened to the famous sermon of

Renzo, concluded him to be fair game. Finding that he had but newly

arrived from his village, he would have conducted him immediately to

prison, as the safest inn in the city; but in this, as we have seen, he

did not succeed. He could, however, carry to the police certain

information of his \_name\_, \_surname\_, and \_country\_, besides many other

conjectures; so that when the host arrived to tell what he knew of

Renzo, their knowledge was already more precise than his. He entered the

accustomed hall, and gave in his deposition, that a stranger had come to

lodge at his house, who would not tell his name.

"You have done your duty in giving us the information," said a notary,

laying down his pen; "but we know it already."

"That is very singular!" thought the host; "you must have a great deal

of cunning."

"And we know also," continued the notary, "this famous name."

"The devil! the name also. How do they know that?" thought the host

again.

"But," resumed the notary, with a serious air, "you do not tell all."

"What is there more to tell?"

"Ah! ah! we know well that this man carried to your house a quantity of

stolen bread--bread acquired by theft and sedition."

"A man comes with bread in his pocket; am I to know where he got it? if

it was on my death-bed, I can say, I only saw him have one loaf."

"Thus it is! you are always excusing and defending yourselves! If we

were to take your word for it, you are all honest people. How can you

prove that this bread was honestly acquired?"

"Why need I prove it? it is nothing to me. I am an innkeeper."

"You cannot, however, deny, that this, your customer, had the audacity

to complain of the proclamations, and make indecent jokes on the arms of

his Excellency."

"Pardon me, signor; how could he be my customer, when I never saw him

before? It was the devil, saving your presence, who sent him to my

house. If I had known him, there would have been no need of asking his

name, as your honour knows."

"However, in your inn, and in your presence, seditious and inflammatory

conversation has been held; your customers have been riotous, clamorous,

and complaining."

"How would your honour expect me to pay attention to the absurdities

uttered by a parcel of brawlers. I attend only to my own affairs, for I

am a poor man. And then your honour knows, that those who are lavish of

their tongue, are often lavish of their fists, especially when there are

many together."

"Yes, yes, they may have their way now; to-morrow--to-morrow, we will

see if the heat is dislodged from their brains. What do you think?"

"I don't know."

"That the mob will become masters in Milan?"

"Certainly!"

"You shall see, you shall see."

"I understand--I know the king will be always the king; but he who has

taken any thing will keep it. Naturally a poor father of a family has no

desire to give back; your honours have the power; that belongs to you."

"Have you still some people at your house?"

"A number."

"And this your customer, what is he about? Is he still labouring to

excite the people to sedition?"

"This stranger, your honour means; he is gone to sleep."

"Then you have a number? Well, be careful not to let them go away."

"Am I to play the constable?" thought the host, but said nothing.

"Return to your house, and be prudent," resumed the notary.

"I have always been prudent. Your honour can say that I have never made

any disturbance."

"Well, well; but do not think that justice has lost its power."

"I! Good heavens! I think nothing. I am an innkeeper."

"The same old tune. Have you nothing more to say?"

"What else would your honour have me say? Truth is one."

"Well; you have done enough for to-day: but to-morrow, we will see; you

must give more full information, and answer all questions that shall be

put to you."

"What information have I to give? I know nothing; I have hardly brains

enough to attend to my own affairs."

"Take care not to let him go away."

"I hope your honour will remember that I have done my duty. Your

honour's humble servant."

On the following morning, Renzo was still in a sound and deep sleep,

when he was suddenly roused by a shaking of the arms, and by a voice at

the foot of the bed, crying, "Lorenzo Tramaglino!" He sat up, and

rubbing his eyes, perceived a man clothed in black standing at the foot

of his bed, and two others, one on each side of the bolster. Between

surprise, sleep, and the fumes of the wine, he remained a moment

stupified, believing himself to be still dreaming.

"Ah! you have heard at last! Lorenzo Tramaglino," said the man in black,

the notary of the preceding evening. "Up, up; get up, and come with us."

"Lorenzo Tramaglino!" said Renzo Tramaglino. "What does this mean? What

do you want with me? Who has told you my name?"

"Few words, and get up quickly," said one of the men at his side,

seizing him by the arm.

"Oh! oh! what violence is this?" cried Renzo, drawing away his arm.

"Host! oh! host!"

"Shall we carry him off in his shirt?" said one of the officers; turning

to the notary.

"Did you hear what he said?" said he to Renzo; "we will do so, if you do

not rise quickly, and come with us!"

"Why?" demanded Renzo.

"You will hear that from the \_Capitano di Giustizia\_."

"I! I am an honest man; I have done nothing; I am astonished----"

"So much the better for you! so much the better for you! In two words

you will be dismissed, and then go about your affairs."

"Let me go now, then; there is no reason why I should go before the

\_capitano\_."

"Come, let us finish the business," said an officer.

"We shall be obliged to carry him off!" said the other.

"Lorenzo Tramaglino!" said the notary.

"How does your honour know my name?"

"Do your duty," said he to the men, who attempted to draw Renzo from the

bed.

"Oh! don't touch me! I can dress \_myself\_."

"Dress yourself, then, and get up," said the notary.

"I will," said Renzo, and he gathered his clothes, scattered here and

there on the bed, like the fragments of a shipwreck on the coast. Whilst

engaged in the act of dressing, he continued, "but I will not go to the

\_Capitano di Giustizia\_; I have nothing to do with him: since you put

this affront on me, I wish to be conducted to Ferrer; I am acquainted

with him; I know he is an honest man, and he is under obligations to

me."

"Yes, yes, my good fellow, you shall be conducted to Ferrer," replied

the notary.

In other circumstances he would have laughed heartily at the absurdity

of such a proposition, but he felt that this was not a moment for

merriment. On his way to the inn, he had perceived so many people

abroad, such a stirring--some collecting in small quantities, others

gathering in crowds--that he was not able to determine whether they were

the remnants of the old insurrection not entirely suppressed, or the

beginnings of a new one. And now, without appearing to do so, he

listened, and thought the buzzing increased. He felt haste to be of

importance; but he did not dare to take Renzo against his will, lest,

finding himself in the street, he might take advantage of public

sympathy, and endeavour to escape from his hands. He made a sign to his

officers to be patient, and not exasperate the youth; whilst he himself

sought to appease him with fair words.

Renzo meanwhile began to have a confused recollection of the events of

the preceding day, and to comprehend that the \_proclamations\_, \_name\_,

and \_surname\_, were the cause of all this trouble; but how the devil did

this man know his name? And what the devil had happened during the

night, that they should come to lay hands on one, who, the day before,

had such a voice in the assembly, which could not be yet dispersed,

because he also heard a growing murmur in the street. He perceived also

the agitation which the notary vainly endeavoured to conceal; therefore,

to feel his pulse, and clear up his own conjectures, as well as to gain

time, he said, "I comprehend the cause of all this, it is on account of

the \_name\_ and \_surname\_. Last night, 'tis true, I was a little merry;

these hosts have such treacherous wine and, you know, often when wine

passes through the channel of speech, it will have its say too. But if

that is all the difficulty, I am ready to give you every satisfaction.

Besides, you know my name already. Who the devil told it to you?"

"Bravo! my good fellow, bravo!" replied the notary in a tone of

encouragement. "I see you are in the right, and you must believe that I

am also. I am only following my trade. You are more tractable than

others. It is the easiest way to get out of the difficulty quickly. With

such an accommodating spirit, you will soon be set at liberty; but my

hands are tied, and I cannot release you now, although I would wish to

do so. Be of good courage, and come on boldly. When they see who you

are--and I will tell--Leave it to me--quick, quick, my good fellow!"

"Ah! you cannot! I understand," said Renzo. "Shall we pass by the square

of the cathedral?"

"Where you choose. We will go the shortest road, that you may be the

sooner at liberty," said he, inwardly cursing his stars at being unable

to follow up this mysterious demand of Renzo's, which might have been

made the subject of a hundred interrogatories. "Miserable that I am!"

thought he, "here is a fellow fallen into my hands, who likes no better

fun than to prate. Were there but a little time, he would confess all in

the way of friendly discourse, without the aid of rope. Ay! and without

perceiving it too. But that he should fall into my hands at such an

unlucky moment.--Well, it can't be helped," thought he, while turning

his head and listening to the noise without, "there is no remedy: this

will be a hotter day than yesterday!"

That which gave rise to this last thought was an extraordinary uproar in

the street, which tempted him to open the window and reconnoitre. There

was a concourse of citizens, who, at the order given them by the patrole

to separate, had resisted for a while, and then moved off, on all sides,

in evident discontent. It was a fatal sign to the eyes of the notary,

that the soldiers treated them with much politeness. He closed the

window, and remained for a moment undecided, whether he should conduct

the enterprise to an end, or, leaving Renzo in the care of the

bailiffs, go himself to the \_Capitano di Giustizia\_, and relate the

whole difficulty. "But," thought he, "he will tell me I am a poltroon, a

coward, and that it was my business to execute orders. We are at the

ball; we must dance, it seems. Cursed crowd! what a damned business!"

He, however addressed Renzo in a tone of kind entreaty, "Come, my worthy

fellow, do let us be off, and make haste."

Renzo, however, was not without his thoughts. He was almost dressed,

with the exception of his doublet, into the pockets of which he was

fumbling. "Oh!" said he, regarding the notary significantly, "Oh! I had

a letter, and some money here, once, sir!"

"When these formalities are over, all shall be faithfully restored to

you. Come, come, let us be off."

"No, no, no!" said Renzo, shaking his head, "that won't do: I must have

what belongs to me, sir. I will render an account of my actions, but I

must have what belongs to me."

"I will show you that I have confidence in you; here they are. And now

make haste," said the notary, drawing from his bosom the sequestered

goods, and consigning them, with something like a sigh, to Renzo, who

muttered between his teeth, as he put them in his pocket, "You have so

much to do with thieves, that you have learned the trade!"

"If I get you once safe out of the house, you shall pay this with

interest," thought the notary.

As Renzo was putting on his hat, the notary made a sign to the officers,

that one of them should go before, and the other follow the prisoner;

and as they passed through the kitchen, and whilst Renzo was saying,

"And this blessed host, where has he fled?" they seized, one his right

hand, the other the left, and skilfully slipped over his wrists,

hand-fetters, as they were called, which, according to the customs of

the times, consisted of a cord, a little longer than the usual size of

the fist, which had at the two ends two small pieces of wood. The cord

encircled the wrist of the patient; the captor held the pegs in his

hand, so that he could, by twisting them, tighten the cord at will, and

this enabled him, not only to secure the prisoner, but also to torment

him, if restless; and, to ensure this more effectually, the cord was

full of knots.

Renzo struggled and exclaimed, "What treachery is this? to an honest

man!" But the notary, who had fair words prepared for every occasion,

said, "Be patient, they only do their duty. What would you have? It is a

mere ceremony. We cannot treat people as we would wish. If we did not

obey orders, we should be worse off than you. Be patient."

As he spoke, the two operators twisted the pegs; Renzo plunged like a

skittish horse upon the bit, and cried, "Patience, indeed!"

"But, worthy young man," said the notary, "it is the only way to come

off well in these affairs. It is troublesome, I confess, but it will

soon be over; and since I see you so well disposed, I feel an

inclination to serve you, and will give you another piece of advice for

your good, which is, to pass on quietly, looking neither to right nor

left, so as to attract notice. If you do this, no one will pay any

attention to you, and you will preserve your honour. In one hour you

will be at liberty. There are so many other things to be done, that your

business will soon be despatched; and then I will tell them----. You

shall have your liberty, and no one will know you have been in the hands

of the law. And you," pursued he, addressing his followers in a tone of

severity, "do him no harm, because I take him under my protection. You

must do your duty, I know; but remember that this is a worthy and honest

youth, who in a little while will be at liberty, and who has a regard

for his honour. Let nothing appear but that you are three peaceable men,

walking together. You understand me!" and smoothing his brow, and

twisting his face into a gracious smile, he said to Renzo, "A little

prudence,--do as I tell you; do not look about; trust to one who has

your interest at heart! And now let us begone." And the convoy moved

forward.

But of all these fine speeches Renzo believed not a word. He understood

very well the fears that prevailed over the mind of the notary, and his

exhortations only served to confirm him in his purpose to escape; and to

this end to act directly contrary to the advice given him. No one must

conclude from this that the notary was an inexperienced knave. On the

contrary, he was master of his trade, but at the present moment his

spirits were agitated. At another time he would have ridiculed any one

for pursuing the measures he had now himself employed, but his agitation

had deprived him of his accustomed cunning and self-possession. We would

recommend, therefore, to all knaves by trade, to maintain on all

occasions their \_sang froid\_, or, what is better, never to place

themselves in difficult circumstances.

Renzo, then, hardly found himself in the street, when he began to look

around, and listen eagerly. There was not, however, an extraordinary

concourse of people; and although on the countenance of more than one

passer-by you could read an expression of discontent and sedition, yet

each one pursued his way in quietness.

"Prudence! prudence!" murmured the notary behind him. "Your honour,

young man, your honour."

But when Renzo heard three men, who were approaching, talk of a bakery,

of flour concealed, of justice, he began to make signs to them, and

cough in such a manner, as indicated any thing but a cold. They looked

attentively at the convoy, and stopped; others who had passed by, turned

back, and kept themselves a short distance off.

"Take care; be prudent, my good fellow; do not spoil all; your honour,

your reputation," said the notary in a low voice, but unheeded by Renzo.

The men again twisted the pegs.

"Ah! ah! ah!" cried the prisoner. At this cry the crowd thickened

around; they gathered from all parts of the street. The convoy was

stopped! "He is a wicked fellow," said the notary in a whisper to those

nearest him; "he is a thief taken in the fact. Draw back, and let

justice have its way." But Renzo perceived that the occasion was

favourable: he saw the officers pale and almost dead with fright. "If I

do not help myself now," thought he, "so much the worse for me;" and

raising his voice, he cried, "My friends; they are carrying me off,

because I cried, 'Bread! and justice!' yesterday. I have done nothing;

I am an honest man! Help me, do not abandon me, my friends."

He was answered by a light murmur, which soon changed to an unanimous

cry in his favour. The officers ordered, requested, and entreated those

nearest them to go off, and leave their passage free; but the crowd

continued to press around. The officers, at the sight of the danger,

left their prisoner, and endeavoured to lose themselves in the throng,

for the purpose of escaping without being observed; and the notary

desired heartily to do the same, but found it more difficult on account

of his black cloak. Pale as death, he endeavoured, by twisting his body

to work his way through the crowd. He studied to appear a stranger, who,

passing accidentally, had found himself in the crowd like a bit of straw

in the ice; and finding himself face to face with a man who looked at

him more intently and sternly than the rest, he composed his countenance

to a smile, and asked, "What is this confusion?"

"Oh! you ugly raven!" replied he. "A raven! a raven!" resounded from all

sides. To the cries they added threats, so that, finally, partly with

his own legs, partly with the elbows of others, he succeeded in

obtaining a release from the squabble.

CHAPTER XVI.

"Fly, fly, honest man! Here is a convent, there is a church; this way!

this way!" was shouted to Renzo from every side. The advice was not

necessary; from the moment that he conceived the hope of extricating

himself from the talons of the police, he had determined, if he

succeeded, to depart immediately, not only from the city, but the

dukedom. "Because," thought he, "however they may have procured it, they

have my name on their books; and with name and surname, they will take

me again if they choose to do so." As to an asylum, he was determined

not to have recourse to it, but in the last extremity. "Because,"

thought he, "if I can be a bird of the woods, I will not be a bird of

the cage." He then determined to seek his cousin Bartolo in the

territory of Bergamo, who had often urged him to establish himself

there; but to find the road was the difficulty! In a part of the city

entirely unknown to him, he did not know which gate led to Bergamo; nor

if he had known it, would he have been able to find it. He thought a

moment of asking directions from his liberators, but he had for some

time had strange suspicions with regard to the obliging sword-cutler,

father of four children; so that he did not dare openly declare his

design, lest, amidst the crowd, there might be another of the same

stamp. He determined therefore to hasten from this spot, and ask the way

when he should arrive at a place where there would be nothing to fear

from the curiosity or the character of others. He said to his

liberators, "Thanks, a thousand thanks! friends! may Heaven reward you!"

and quitting the crowd through a passage made for him, he ran down lanes

and narrow streets, without knowing whither.

When he thought himself sufficiently removed from the scene of peril, he

slackened his steps, and began to look around for some countenance which

might inspire him with confidence enough to make his enquiries. But the

enquiry would of itself be suspicious; time pressed; the police,

recovering from their fright, would, without doubt, pursue their

fugitive; the noise of his escape might have reached even there; and in

so great a multitude Renzo might pass many judgments in physiognomy

before he should find one which seemed favourable. After suffering many

to pass whose appearance was unpropitious, he at last summoned courage

to address a man, who seemed in such haste, that Renzo deemed he would

not hesitate to answer his questions, in order to get rid of him. "Will

you be so good, sir, as to tell me through which gate to go to Bergamo?"

"To Bergamo? through the eastern gate. Take this street to the left; you

will come to the square of the cathedral; then----"

"That is enough, sir; I know the way after that; God reward you!" And he

went on hastily by the way pointed out to him, and arrived at the square

of the cathedral. He crossed it, passed by the remains of the

extinguished bonfire, at which he had assisted the day before; the

bake-house of the Crutches half demolished, and still guarded by

soldiers; and finally, reaching the convent of the capuchins, and

looking at the door of the church, he said to himself, sighing, "The

friar gave me good advice yesterday, when he told me it would be best

for me to wait patiently in the church." He stopped a moment, and seeing

that many persons guarded the gate through which he had to pass, he felt

a repugnance to confront them; and hesitated whether it would not be his

wisest plan to seek this asylum and deliver his letter. But he soon

resumed courage, saying, "A bird of the woods as long as I can be. Who

knows me? Certainly the police cannot be waiting for me at all the

gates." He looked around, therefore, and perceiving that no one appeared

to notice him, and, whistling as he went, as if from carelessness, he

approached the gate. A company of custom-house officers, with a

reinforcement of Spanish soldiers, were stationed precisely at its

entrance, to keep out persons from abroad, who might be attracted, by

the noise of the tumult, to rush into the city; their attention was

therefore directed beyond the gate, and Renzo, taking advantage of this,

contrived, with a quiet and demure look, to pass through, as if he were

some peaceful traveller; but his heart beat violently. He pursued a path

on the right, to avoid the high road, and for some distance did not dare

to look behind him.

On! on! he passed hamlets and villages, without asking the name of them;

hoping that, whilst he was removing from Milan, he was approaching

Bergamo. He looked behind him from time to time, while pressing onwards,

and rubbing first one wrist, then the other, which bore the red marks

from the painful pressure of the manacles. His thoughts were a confused

medley of repentance, anxiety, and resentment; and he wearily retraced

the circumstances of the preceding night, to ascertain what had plunged

him into these difficulties, and above all, how they came to know his

name. His suspicions rested on the cutler, whose curiosity he well

remembered, and he had also a confused recollection that after his

departure he had continued to talk, but with whom, his memory did not

serve to inform him. The poor fellow was lost in these speculations; the

past was a chaos.

He then endeavoured to form some plan for the future; but all other

considerations were soon swallowed up in the necessity which he was

under of ascertaining the road; and to do this, he was obliged to

address himself to some one. He was reluctant to name Bergamo, lest it

might excite suspicion: why it should, he knew not; but his mind was a

prey to vague apprehensions of evil. However, he could not do otherwise;

and, as at Milan, he accosted the first passenger whose appearance

promised favourably.

"You are out of the road," replied the traveller; and directed him to a

path by which he might regain the high road. Renzo thanked him, and

followed the direction, with the intention, however, of keeping the high

road in sight, without exposing himself to hazard by travelling on it.

The project was more easily conceived than executed; in pursuing a

zigzag course, from right to left, and left to right, and endeavouring

still to keep the general direction of the way, he had probably

traversed twelve miles, when he was only six miles from Milan; and as to

Bergamo, it was a chance if he was not farther from it, than when he

began his journey. He reflected that this would never do, and he must

seek some other expedient; that which occurred to him, was to inform

himself of the name of some village near the frontier, which he would

reach by crossroads, and asking the way to that, be enabled to avoid the

mention of this dreaded Bergamo, which seemed to him so likely to cause

distrust and suspicion.

Whilst he was reflecting on the best method of pursuing this plan

without awakening conjectures, he saw a green branch hanging from the

door of a lonely cottage, some distance beyond a village; and as he had

for some time felt the need of refreshment, he thought he could now kill

two birds with one stone, and therefore entered the humble dwelling.

There was no one within, but an old woman, with her distaff by her

side, and spindle in her hand. He asked for a mouthful to eat; she

offered him some \_stracchino\_[27], and some wine. He accepted the food,

but refused the wine; of which he felt an intuitive horror since the

events of the preceding night. The old woman then began to assail her

guest with enquiries of his trade, his journey, and of the news from

Milan, of the disturbances of which she had heard some rumours. To her

question, "Where are you going?" he replied, "I am obliged to go to many

places, but if I find a moment of time, I should like to stop awhile at

the village on the road to Bergamo, near the frontier, but in the

territory of Milan--what do they call it?--There must be some village

there," thought he.

[27] A kind of soft cheese.

"Gorgonzola, you mean," replied the old woman.

"Gorgonzola," repeated Renzo, as if to fix it in his memory, "is it far

from here?"

"I don't know for certain; perhaps ten or twelve miles. If one of my

children were here, they could tell you."

"And do you think I could reach there by keeping on these pleasant

paths, without taking the high road, where there is so much dust? such a

quantity of dust! It is so long since we have had any rain!"

"I think you can. You can ask at the first village to the

right,"--naming it.

"Thank you," said Renzo, carrying off the remains of his bread, which

was much coarser than what he had lately eaten from the foot of the

Cross of St. Dionysius; and paying the bill, departed. He took the road

to the right, and with the name of Gorgonzola in his mouth, from village

to village, he succeeded in reaching it an hour before sunset.

He had on his way intended to halt here for some more substantial

refreshment; he felt also the need of sleep; but rather than indulge

himself in this, he would have dropped dead on the road. His design was

to inform himself, at the inn, of the distance from the Adda, to

contrive to obtain some direction to the cross paths which led to it,

and after having eaten, to go on his way. Born at the second source of

this river, he had often heard that at a certain point, and for some

distance, its waters marked the confines of the Milanese and Venetian

states. He had no precise idea of the spot where this boundary

commenced, but, at this time, the principal matter was to reach the

river. Provided he could not accomplish it by daylight, he decided to

travel as long as the darkness and his strength would permit, and then

to wait the approach of day in a field, among brambles, or any where,

where it should please God, an inn excepted. After advancing a few steps

in Gorgonzola, he saw a sign, and entering the house, asked the host for

a mouthful to eat, and a half-pint of wine, his horror of which had been

subdued by his excessive fatigue. "I pray you to be in haste," added he,

"for I must continue my journey immediately." And he said this, not only

because it was the truth, but from fear that the host, imagining he was

going to lodge there, might ask him his \_name\_, \_surname\_, and \_whence

he came\_, and \_what was his business\_!

The host replied that he should have what he requested, and Renzo seated

himself at the end of a bench near the door.

There were in the room some idle people of the neighbourhood, who, after

having discussed the great news from Milan of the preceding day,

wondered how affairs were going on; as the circumstances of the

rebellion had left their curiosity unsatisfied as to its termination; a

sedition neither suppressed nor successful; suspended rather than

terminated; an unfinished work; the end of an act rather than of a

drama. One of them detached himself from the company, and, approaching

the new-comer, asked him, "If he came from Milan?"

"I?" said Renzo, endeavouring to collect his thoughts for a reply.

"You; if the enquiry be lawful."

Renzo, contracting his mouth, made a sort of inarticulate sound, "Milan,

from what I hear--from what they say--is not a place where one would go

now, unless necessity required it."

"The tumult continues, then?" asked he, with eagerness.

"One must have been on the spot, to know if it were so," said Renzo.

"But do you not come from Milan?"

"I come from Liscate," replied the youth, who, in the mean while had

prepared his answer. He had, indeed, come from that place, as he had

passed through it. He had learned its name from a traveller who had

mentioned it, as the first village on his road to Gorgonzola.

"Oh!" said his interrogator, "I wish you had come from Milan. But

patience--and did you hear nothing from Milan at Liscate?"

"It is very possible that others knew something," replied our

mountaineer; "but I have heard nothing."

The inquisitive person rejoined his companions.

"How far is it from this to the Adda?" said Renzo to the host, in a low

careless tone, as he set before him something to eat.

"To the Adda? to cross the river?"

"That is--yes--to the Adda."

"Would you cross the bridge of Cassano, or the ferry of Canonica?"

"Where are they?--I ask simply from curiosity."

"Ah! I name them because they are the places chosen by honest people,

who are willing to give an account of themselves."

"That is right. And how far are they?"

"It must be about six miles."

"Six miles! I did not know that," said he. "But," resuming an air of

indifference, "if one wished to shorten the distance, are there not

other places, where one might cross?"

"Certainly," replied the host, looking at him with an expression of

malignant curiosity, which restrained Renzo from any further enquiry. He

drew the dish towards him, and looking at the decanter the host had put

on the table, said, "Is this wine pure?"

"As gold. Ask all the inhabitants of the village, and hereabouts. But

you can judge yourself." So saying, he joined the other customers.

"Curse the hosts!" said Renzo, in his heart. "The more I know of them,

the worse I find them."

He began to eat, listening at the same time to the conversation, to

learn what was thought, in this place, of the events in which he had

acted so principal a part; and also to discover if there were not some

honest man among the company, of whom a poor youth might ask his way

without fear of being compelled in return to tell his business.

"But," said one, "to-morrow, at the latest, we shall know something from

Milan."

"I am sorry I did not go to Milan this morning," said another.

"If you will go to-morrow, I will go with you," said two or three.

"That which I wish to know," replied the first speaker, "is, if these

gentlemen of Milan will think of poor people abroad, or if they will

only think of obtaining advantages for themselves. You know how they

are. The citizens are proud--they think only of themselves; the

villagers are treated as if they were not Christians."

"We have mouths also, to eat, and to give our reasons," said another in

a voice as timid as the remark was daring, "and since the thing has

begun----" But he did not think to finish his sentence.

"It is not only in Milan, that they conceal grain," said another, with a

mysterious air--when suddenly they heard approaching the trampling of a

horse. They ran to the door, and recognising the person who arrived,

they went out to receive him. It was a merchant of Milan, who, going

frequently to Bergamo on business, was accustomed to pass the night at

this inn, and as he had almost always found there the same company, he

had formed an acquaintance with all of them. They crowded around

him--one held the bridle, another the stirrup. "You are welcome."

"And I am glad to find you all here."

"Have you made a good journey?"

"Very good. And you all, how do you do?"

"Well, well. What news from Milan?"

"Ah! there is great news truly," said the merchant, dismounting, and

leaving his horse in the care of a boy. "But," continued he, entering

the house with the company, "perhaps you know by this time better than I

do."

"Truly, we know nothing."

"Is it possible?--Well, you will hear fine news, or rather bad news. Eh!

host! is my bed unoccupied? It is well. A glass of wine, and my usual

dish. Quick, quick! because I must go to bed early, in order to rise

early, as I must be at Bergamo to dinner. And you," pursued he, seating

himself at the table opposite to Renzo, who continued silent and

attentive, "you know nothing of the mischief of yesterday!"

"We heard about yesterday."

"I knew that you must have heard it, being here always on guard to watch

travellers."

"But to-day? What has been done to-day?"

"Ah! to-day! Then you know nothing of to-day?"

"Nothing at all. No one has passed."

"Then let me wet my lips, and I will tell you what has happened to-day."

He filled the glass, swallowed its contents, and continued: "To-day, my

dear friends, little was wanting to make the tumult worse than

yesterday. And I can hardly believe that I am here to tell you, for I

had nearly given up all thoughts of coming, that I might stay to guard

my shop."

"What was the matter, then?" said one of his auditors.

"What was the matter? I will tell you." And beginning to eat, he at the

same time pursued his relation; the company standing on his right and

left, listened with open mouths and ears. Renzo, without appearing to

hear him, was, in fact, the most attentive of all; and ate his last

mouthful very, very slowly. "This morning, then, those vagabonds who

made such a hurly-burly yesterday, met at the points agreed on, and

began to run from street to street, sending forth cries in order to

collect a crowd. You know it is with such people, as when one sweeps a

house; the more you sweep, the more dirt you have. When they thought

there were people enough, they approached the house of the

superintendant of provision, as if the atrocities they committed

yesterday were not enough, to a gentleman of his character. Oh! the

rascals! And the abuse they bestowed on him! All invention and

falsehood: he is a worthy punctual man; I can say it, for I know; and I

furnish him cloth for his liveries. They hurried then towards his

house--such a mob! such faces! They passed before my shop. Such

faces--the Jews of the \_Via Crucis\_ are nothing to them. And the

blasphemies they uttered! enough to make one stop one's ears, had it not

been for fear of observation. Their intention was to plunder, but----"

"But?" said they all.

"But they found the street barricadoed, and a company of musketeers on

guard. When they saw this ceremony--what would you have done?"

"Turn back."

"Certainly; and that is precisely what they did. But see if the devil

did not carry them there. When they came on the Cordusio, they saw the

baker that they had wanted to plunder the day before; and what do you

think they were doing at this baker's? They were distributing bread to

purchasers; the first gentlemen of the land were there, watching over

its distribution. The mob, instigated by the devil, rushed upon them

furiously, and, in the twinkling of an eye, gentlemen, bakers,

purchasers, bread, counters, benches, loaves, bags, flour, all

topsy-turvy."

"And the musketeers?"

"The musketeers had the vicar's house to guard. One can't sing and carry

the cross too. It was done in the twinkling of an eye, I say. Plunder,

plunder; every thing was carried off. And then they proposed the

amusement of yesterday, to burn what remained, in the square, and make a

bonfire. And immediately they began, the rascals! to drag every thing

out of the house, when one among them----Guess what fine proposal he

made!"

"What?"

"What! to gather every thing in the shop in a heap, and set fire to it

and the shop at the same time. No sooner said than done----"

"Did they set fire to it?"

"Wait a bit. An honest man in the neighbourhood had an inspiration from

Heaven. He ran into the house, ascended the stairs, took a crucifix, and

hung it in front of a window; took from the head of the bed two wax

candles which had been blessed, lit them, and placed them right and left

of the crucifix. The crowd looked up; there is a little fear of God yet,

in Milan, it must be confessed; the crowd retired--a few would have been

sacrilegious enough to set fire to paradise itself; but seeing the rest

not of their opinion, they were obliged to be quiet. Guess what happened

then! All the lords of the cathedral in procession, with the cross

elevated, and in pontifical robes; and my lord the arch-priest began to

preach on one side, and my lord the \_penitenziere\_ on the other, and

then others here and there: '\_But, honest people, what would you do? Is

this the example you set to your children? Return to your homes; you

shall have bread at a fair price; you can see, yourselves, the rate is

affixed at every corner!\_'"

"Was it true?"

"Can you doubt it? Do you think the lords of the cathedral would come in

their robes and declare falsehoods?"

"And what did the people do?"

"By little and little they dispersed; they ran to the corners of the

streets; the rate was there for those who knew how to read. Eight ounces

of bread for a penny!"

"What good fortune."

"The vine is fine, if its fruitfulness continues. Do you know how much

flour has been consumed since yesterday? As much as would supply the

dukedom two months."

"And have they made no good law for us country people?"

"What they have done at Milan is for the city alone. I know not what to

tell you; for you, it must be as God shall direct. The tumult has

entirely ceased for the present; I have not told you all yet. Here is

the best----"

"What! is there any thing more?"

"Yesterday evening, or this morning, they have arrested some of the

leaders, and they have been told that four will be hung. Hardly was this

known, when every one betook himself home by the shortest road, so as

not to be the fifth. Milan, when I left it, resembled a convent of

monks."

"But will they really hang them?"

"Undoubtedly, and very soon," replied the merchant.

"And what will the people do?"

"The people will go to see them," said the merchant. "They desired so

much to see a man hung, that the rascals were about to satisfy their

curiosity on the superintendent of provision. They will see instead,

four rogues, accompanied by capuchins and friars of the \_buona

morte\_[28]; well, they have richly deserved it. It is a providence, you

see; it was a necessary thing. They had begun to enter the shops, and

take what they wanted, without putting their hand to their purse. If

they had been suffered to go on their own way, after bread, it would

have been wine, and then something else--and I assure you, as an honest

man, keeping a shop, it was not a very agreeable idea."

[28] Good death. A confraternity which exists under

the same name in the south of France.

"Assuredly not," said one of his auditors.

"Assuredly not," repeated the others in chorus.

"And," continued the merchant, "it had been in preparation a long while.

There was a league, you know?"

"A league!"

"A league. Cabals instigated by the Navarrese, by that cardinal of

France, you know, who has a half-barbarous name, and who every day

offers some new affront to the crown of Spain. But he aims chiefly at

Milan, because he knows, the knave, that the strength of the king lies

there."

"Indeed!"

"Would you have a proof of it? Those who made the most noise were

strangers; people who were never seen before in Milan. I have forgotten,

after all, to tell you something I heard; one of these had been caught

in an inn----"

When this chord was touched, poor Renzo felt a cold shiver, and could

with difficulty conceal his agitation. No one however perceived it, and

the orator proceeded:--

"They do not yet know whence he came, by whom he was sent, nor what kind

of man he was; but he was certainly one of the leaders. Yesterday, in

the height of the tumult, he played the devil; then, not content with

that, he began to exhort, and propose a fine thing truly! to murder all

the lords! Rascal! how would poor people live, if the lords were killed?

He was taken, however, and they found on him an enormous packet of

letters, after which they were taking him to prison. But what do you

think? his companions, who were keeping watch round the inn, came in

great force, and delivered him. The rogue!"

"And what has become of him?"

"It is not known. He has escaped, or is concealed in Milan. These people

find lodging and concealment any where, although they have neither house

nor home of their own. The devil helps them; but they are sometimes

taken in the snare, when they least expect it. When the pear is ripe, it

must fall. It is well known that these letters are in the hands of

government, that they contain an account of the whole plot, that many

people are implicated, that they have turned the city upside down, and

would have done much worse. Some say the bakers are rogues, and so say

I: but they ought to be hanged at least in a legal manner. There

certainly is corn concealed; and the government ought to have spies and

find it out, and hang up all that keep it back in company with the

bakers; and if they don't, all the city ought to remonstrate again and

again, but never allow the villainous practice of entering shops and

warehouses for plunder."

The little that Renzo had eaten had become poison. It appeared like an

age before he dared rise to quit. He felt nailed to the spot. To have

moved from the inn and the village, in the midst of the conversation,

would have incurred suspicion. He determined to wait till the babbler

should cease to speak of him and apply to some other subject.

"And I," said one of the company, "who have some experience, know that a

tumult like this is no place for an honest man; therefore I have not

suffered my curiosity to conquer me, and have remained quietly at home."

"And did I move?" said another.

"And I," added a third, "if by any chance I had been at Milan, I would

have left my business unfinished, and returned home."

At this moment the host approached the corner of the table, to see how

the stranger came on. Renzo gathered courage to speak, asked for his

bill, settled it, and rapidly crossed the threshold, trusting himself to

the guardian care of a kind Providence.

CHAPTER XVII.

The discourse of the merchant had plunged our poor Renzo into

inexpressible agitation and alarm; there was no doubt that his adventure

was noised abroad--that people were in search of him? Who could tell how

many bailiffs were in pursuit of him? Who could tell what orders had

been given to watch at the villages, inns, and along the roads? True it

was, that two only of the officers were acquainted with his person, and

he didn't bear his name stamped on his forehead. Yet he had heard

strange stories of fugitives being discovered by their suspicious air,

or some unexpected mark; in short, he was alarmed at every shadow.

Although at the moment he quitted Gorgonzola, the bells struck the \_Ave

Maria\_, and the increasing darkness diminished his danger, he

unwillingly took the high road, with the intention, however, of entering

the first path which should appear to him to lead in the right

direction. He met some travellers, but, his imagination filled with

apprehensions, he dared not interrogate them. "The host called it six

miles," said he; "if, in travelling through by-paths, I make it eight or

ten, these good limbs will not fail me, I know. I am certainly not going

towards Milan, and must therefore be approaching the Adda. If I keep

on, sooner or later I must arrive there; the Adda has a voice

sufficiently loud to be heard at some distance, and when I hear it,

there will be no longer any need of direction. If there is a boat there,

I shall cross immediately; if not, I will wait until morning in a field,

upon the ground, like the sparrows, which will be far better than a

prison."

He saw a cross-road open to the left, and he pursued it: "\_I\_ play the

devil!" continued he, "\_I\_ assassinate the lords! A packet of letters!

My companions keeping watch! I would give something to meet this

merchant face to face, on the other side of the Adda; (Oh! when shall I

reach the beautiful stream?) I would ask him politely where he picked up

that fine story. Know, my good sir, that, devil as I am, it was I who

aided Ferrer, and like a good Christian saved your superintendent of

provisions from a rough joke that those ruffians, my friends, were about

to play on him. Ay, while you were keeping watch over your shop----and

that enormous packet of letters--in the hands of the government. See,

sir, here it is; a single letter, written by a worthy man, a monk; a

hair of whose beard is worth----but in future learn to speak with more

charity of your neighbours." However, after a while, these thoughts of

the poor traveller gave way to more urgent considerations of his present

difficulties; he no longer feared pursuit or discovery; but darkness,

solitude, and fatigue combined to distress him and retard his progress.

A chill north wind penetrated his light clothing, his wedding suit; and,

uncomfortable and disheartened, he wandered on, in hopes of finding some

place where he might obtain concealment and repose for the night.

He passed through villages, but did not dare ask shelter; the dogs

howled at his approach, and induced him to quicken his steps. At single

houses near the road-side his fatigue tempted him to knock for shelter;

but the apprehension of being saluted with the cry of "Help, thieves!

robbers!" banished the idea from his mind. Leaving the cultivated

country, he found himself in a plain, covered with fern and broom; and

thinking this a favourable symptom of the near vicinity of the river, he

followed the path across it. When he had advanced a few steps, he

listened, but in vain. The desolation of the place increased the

depression of his spirits. Strange forms and apparitions, the birth of

former tales and legends, began to haunt his imagination; and to drive

them away he began to chant the prayers for the dead. He passed through

a thicket of plum-trees and oaks, and found himself on the borders of a

wood; he conquered his repugnance to enter it, but as he proceeded into

its depths, every object excited his apprehensions. Strange forms

appeared beneath the bushes; and the shade of the trees, trembling on

his moon-lit path, with the crackling of the dead leaves between his

footsteps, inspired him with dread. He would have hastened through the

perilous passage, but his limbs refused their office; the wind blew cold

and sharp, and penetrating his weakened frame, almost subdued its small

remains of vigour. His senses, affected by undefined horrors, appeared

to be leaving him; aroused to his danger, he made a violent effort to

regain some degree of resolution, in order to return through the wood,

and seek shelter in the last village he had passed through, even if it

should be in an inn! As he stopped for a moment, before putting his

design in execution, the wind brought a new sound to his ear--the murmur

of running water. Intently listening, to ascertain if his senses did not

deceive him, he cried out, "It is the Adda!" His fatigue vanished, his

pulse returned, his blood flowed freely through his veins, his fears

disappeared; and guided by the friendly sound, he went forward. He soon

reached the extremity of the plain, and found himself on the edge of a

steep precipice, whence looking downward, he discovered, through the

bushes, the long-desired river, and, on the other side of it, villages

scattered here and there, with hills in the distance; and on the summit

of one of these a whitish spot, which in the dimness he took to be a

city; Bergamo certainly! He descended the declivity, and throwing aside

the bushes with his hands, looked beyond them, to spy if some friendly

bark were moving on the flood, or if he could not, by listening, hear

the sound of oars cleaving the water; but he saw, he heard nothing. If

it had been any stream less than the Adda, he would have attempted to

ford it, but this he well knew to be impracticable.

He was uncertain what plan to pursue: to lie down on the grass for the

next six hours, and wait until morning, exposed to the north wind and

the damps of the night; or to continue walking to and fro, to protect

himself from the cold, until the day should dawn: neither of these held

out much prospect of comfort. He suddenly recollected to have seen, in a

neighbouring part of the uncultivated heath, a \_cascinotto\_;--this was

the name given by the peasants of the Milanese to cabins covered with

straw, constructed with the trunks and branches of trees, and the

crevices filled with mud, where they were in the habit of placing the

crop, gathered during the day, until a more convenient opportunity for

removing it; they were therefore abandoned except at such seasons. Renzo

found his way thither, pushed open the door, and perceiving a bundle of

straw on the ground, thought that sleep, even in such a place, would be

very welcome. Before, however, throwing himself on the bed Providence

had provided for him, he kneeled, and returned thanks for the blessing,

and for all the assistance which had been this day afforded him, and

then implored forgiveness for the errors of the previous day; then

gathering the straw around him as some defence against the cold, he

closed his eyes to sleep; but sleep was not so soon to visit our poor

traveller. Confused images began to throng his fancy; the merchant, the

notary, the bailiffs, the cutler, the host, Ferrer, the superintendent,

the company at the inn, the crowds in the streets, assailed his

imagination by turns; then came the thought of Don Abbondio, Roderick,

Lucy, Agnes, and the good friar. He remembered the paternal counsels of

the latter, and reflected with shame and remorse on his neglect of them;

and what bitter retrospection did the image of Lucy produce! and Agnes!

poor Agnes! how ill had she been repaid for her motherly solicitude on

his behalf! an outcast from her home, solitary, uncertain of the future,

reaping misery from what seemed to promise the happiness of her

declining years! Poor Renzo! what a night didst thou pass! what an

apartment! what a bed for a matrimonial couch! tormented, too, with

apprehensions of the future! "I submit to the will of God," said he,

speaking aloud, "to the will of God! He does only that which is right; I

accept it all as a just chastisement for my sins. Lucy, however, is so

good! the Lord will not long afflict her with suffering."

In the mean time he despaired of obtaining any repose; the cold was

insupportable; his teeth chattered; he ardently wished for day, and

measured with impatience the slow progress of the hours; this he was

enabled to do, as he heard, every half hour, in the deep silence, the

heavy sound of some distant clock, probably that of Trezzo. When the

time arrived which he had fixed on for his departure, half benumbed with

exposure to the night air, he stretched his stiffened limbs, and opening

the door of the \_cascinotto\_, looked out, to ascertain if any one were

near, and finding all silent around, he resumed his journey along the

path he had quitted.

The sky announced a beautiful day; the setting moon shone pale in an

immense field of azure, which, towards the east, mingled itself lightly

with the rosy dawn. Near the horizon were scattered clouds of various

hues and forms; it was, in fact, the sky of Lombardy, beautiful,

brilliant, and calm. If Renzo had had a mind at ease, he would no doubt

have stopped to contemplate this splendid ushering in of day, so

different from that which he had been accustomed to witness amidst his

mountains; but his thoughts were otherwise occupied. He reached the brow

of the precipice where he had stood the preceding night, and looking

below, perceived, through the bushes, a fisherman's bark, which was

slowly stemming the current, near the shore. He descended the precipice,

and standing on the bank, made a sign to the fisherman to approach. He

intended to do this with a careless air, as if it were of little

importance, but in spite of himself, his manner was half supplicatory.

The fisherman, after having for a moment surveyed the course of the

water, as if to ascertain the practicability of reaching the shore,

directed the boat towards it; before it touched the bank, Renzo, who was

standing on the water's edge, awaiting its approach, seized the prow,

and jumped into it.

"Do me a service, and I will pay you for it," said he; "I wish to cross

to the other shore."

The fisherman having divined his object, had already turned his boat in

that direction. Renzo, perceiving another oar in the bottom of the bark,

stooped to take it.

"Softly, softly," said the fisherman. But seeing with what skill the

young man managed the oar, "Ah! ah!" added he, "you know the trade."

"A very little," replied Renzo, and he continued to row with a vigour

and skill beyond that of a mere amateur in the art. With all his

efforts, however, the bark moved slowly; the current, setting strong

against it, drove it continually from the line of its direction, and

impeded the rapidity of its course. New perplexities presented

themselves to the mind of Renzo; now that the Adda was almost passed, he

began to fear that it might not, at this place, serve for the boundary

between the states, and that, this obstacle surmounted, there would yet

be others remaining. He spoke to the fisherman, and pointing to the

white spot he had noticed the night before, and which was now much more

distinct, "Is that Bergamo?" said he.

"The city of Bergamo," replied the fisherman.

"And the other shore, does it belong to Bergamo?"

"It is the territory of St. Mark."

"Long live St. Mark!" cried Renzo. The fisherman made no reply.

The boat reached the shore, at last; Renzo thanked God in his heart, as

he stepped upon it; and turning to the fisherman took from his pocket a

\_berlinga\_ and gave it to him. The man took it in silence, and with a

significant look, placed his forefinger on his lip; and saying, "A good

journey to you," returned to his employment.

In order to account for the prompt and discreet civility of this man

towards a perfect stranger, we must inform the reader, that he was

accustomed to render similar favours to smugglers and outlaws, not so

much for the sake of the little gain which accrued to him thereby, as

not to create enemies among these classes of people. He rendered these

services, therefore, when he was sure of not being seen by the

custom-house officers, bailiffs, or spies. Thus he endeavoured to act

with an impartiality, which should give offence to neither party.

Renzo stopped a moment to contemplate the shore he had quitted, and

where he had suffered so much; "I am at last safely beyond it," was his

first thought; then the remembrance of those he had left behind rushed

over his mind, overwhelming it with regret and shame; for, with the calm

and virtuous image of Lucy, came the recollection of his extravagances

in Milan.

He shook off, however, these oppressive thoughts, and went on, taking

the direction of the whitish mass on the declivity of the mountain,

until he should meet some one who could direct him on his way. And now

with what a different and careless air he accosted travellers! he

hesitated no more, he pronounced boldly the name of the place where his

cousin lived, to ask the way to it; from the information given him by

the first traveller he met, he found that he had still nine miles to

travel.

His journey was not agreeable. Without referring to his own causes of

trouble, Renzo was affected every moment by the sight of painful and

distressing objects; so that he foresaw, that he should find in this

country the poverty he had left in his own. All along the way he was

assailed by mendicants,--mendicants of necessity, not of

choice,--peasants, mountaineers, tradesmen, whole families reduced to

poverty, and to the necessity of begging their bread. This sight,

besides the compassion it excited, made him naturally recur to his own

prospects.

"Who knows," thought he, mournfully, "if I shall find work to do?

perhaps things are not as they were in preceding years. Bartolo wishes

me well, I know; he is a good fellow; he has made money; he has invited

me many times to come to him; I am sure he will not abandon me. And then

Providence has aided me until now; and will continue to do so."

Meanwhile, the walk had sharpened his appetite; he could indeed have

well waited to the end of his journey, which was only two miles farther,

but he did not like to make his first appearance before his cousin as a

hungry beggar; he therefore drew all his wealth from his pocket, and

counting it on the palm of his hand, found that he had more than

sufficient to procure a slight repast; after paying for which, he would

still have a few pence remaining.

As he came out of the inn at which he had rested, to proceed on his

journey, he saw, lying near the door, two women: the one was elderly,

and the other more youthful, with an infant in her arms, which was in

vain seeking sustenance from its exhausted mother; both were of the

complexion of death: by them stood a man, whose countenance and limbs

gave signs of former vigour; now lost from long inanition. All three

stretched forth their hands, but spoke not--what prayer could be so

moving as their appearance. Renzo sighed; "There is a Providence," said

he, as he placed in the nearest hand the last remnant of his wealth.

The slight repast he had made, and the good deed he had performed (for

we are composed of body and soul), had equally tended to refresh and

invigorate him. If, to afford relief to these unhappy persons,

Providence had kept in reserve the last farthing of a fugitive stranger,

would he leave the wants of that stranger unsupplied? He looked with

renewed hope to the future; he pictured to himself the return of

abundant harvests, and in the mean time he had his cousin Bartolo and

his own industry to depend on, and moreover he had left at home a small

sum of money, the fruit of his economy, which he could send for, if

needed. "Then," said he, "plenty will eventually return, and trade will

be profitable again; the Milanese workmen will be in demand, and can set

a high price on their labour; I shall have more than enough to satisfy

my wants, and can lay by money, and can furnish my nice house, and then

write to Agnes and Lucy to come--and then--But why wait for this? We

should have been obliged to live, had we remained at home; we should

have been obliged to live during this winter, upon my little savings,

and we can do the same here. There are curates every where, and they can

come shortly. Oh! what joy will it be to walk together on this same

road; to go to the borders of the Adda, where I will point out to them

the place where I embarked, the woods through which I passed, the spot

where I stood watching for a boat."

He reached at last the village of his cousin; at its entrance, he saw a

very high house, with numerous windows, and perceived it to be a silk

manufactory; he entered, and amidst the noise of the water and

machinery loudly demanded, "if Bartolo Castagneri was within?"

"Signor Bartolo? there he is."

"Signor! that's a good sign," thought Renzo. He perceived his cousin,

and ran towards him, exclaiming, "I am come at last!" Bartolo made an

exclamation of surprise, and embraced him; he then took him into another

chamber, apart from the noise of the machinery and the notice of the

inquisitive, and said, "I am glad to see you, but you are a droll

fellow. I have invited you many times to come hither; you have always

refused, and now choose a most unfavourable moment."

"What shall I say to you? I have not now come of my own free will," said

Renzo; and he briefly, and with much emotion, related the mournful

story.

"That's another affair truly," said Bartolo. "Poor Renzo! you have

relied on me, and I will not abandon you. To say truth, workmen are not

in much demand at present; and it is with difficulty that those already

engaged are kept by their employers. But my master regards me, and he

has money; and besides, without boasting, we are equally dependent on

each other--he has the capital, and I the skill, such as it is! I am his

first workman, his \_factotum\_! Poor Lucy Mondella! I remember her as if

it was but yesterday that I last saw her! An excellent girl! always so

modest at church; and if you passed by her cottage--I see it now, the

little cottage beyond the village, with a large fig-tree against the

wall----"

"No, no," said Renzo, "do not speak of it."

"I meant to say, that if you passed it, you always heard the noise of

her reel. And Don Roderick! even before I left, showed symptoms of his

character; but now, it seems, he plays the devil outright, until God

shall put a bridle on his neck. Well, as I said, we suffer here also the

consequences of scarce harvests.--But, apropos, are you not hungry?"

"It is not long since I have eaten," said Renzo.

"And how are you off for money?" Renzo extended the palm of his hand and

shook his head. "No matter," said Bartolo: "I have plenty. Cheer up;

things will change for the better soon, and then you can repay me."

"I have a small sum at home, and I will send for it."

"Well, in the mean while, depend on me. God has given me wealth to spend

for others, and above all, for my relations and friends."

"I knew that you would befriend me," said Renzo, affectionately pressing

his cousin's hand.

"Well, what a fuss they have made at Milan," continued Bartolo; "the

people seem to me to be mad. The report has reached us, but I shall be

glad to know the particulars from you. I think we shall have enough to

talk about, shall we not? Here, however, things are conducted with more

judgment. The city purchased two thousand loads of corn from a merchant

of Venice; the corn comes from Turkey. Now, what do you think happened?

The governors of Verona and Brescia forbade the transit of the corn.

What did the people of Bergamo do then, do you think? They sent to

Venice a man that knew how to talk, I can tell you: he went to the doge,

and made a speech which they say deserves to be printed! Immediately an

order was sent to let the corn pass: the governors were obliged to obey.

The country, too, has been thought of. Another good man informed the

senate that the people here were famishing, and the senate granted us

four thousand bushels of millet, which makes very good bread. And then,

if there is no bread, you and I can eat meat; God has given me wealth I

tell you. Now I will conduct you to my patron. I have often spoken of

you to him; he will make you welcome. He is a native of Bergamo, a man

of an excellent disposition. 'Tis true, he did not expect you at this

time, but when he learns your story--And then he knows how to value

skilful workmen, because scarcity lasts but a little while, and business

must finally go on.--But I must hint to you one thing; do you know what

name they give to us Milanese in this country?"

"What name they give us?"

"They call us simpletons."[29]

[29] Baggiani.

"That is certainly not a very agreeable name."

"What matters it? Whoever is born in the territory of Milan, and would

gain his living in that of Bergamo, must put up with it. As to the

people here, they call a Milanese a simpleton as freely as they call a

gentleman \_sir\_."

"They say so, I suppose, to those who will suffer it."

"My good fellow, if you are not disposed to submit to be called

simpleton, till it becomes familiar to your taste, you must not expect

to live in Bergamo. You would always be obliged to carry your knife in

hand; and when you had killed three or four, you might be killed

yourself, and have to appear before the bar of God with three or four

murders to answer for?"

"And a Milanese who understands his trade?"

"It is all the same; he would still be a simpleton. Do you know how my

master expresses himself when he talks of me to his friends? \_Heaven has

sent me this simpleton to carry on my business. If it were not for this

simpleton I should never get on.\_ It is the custom."

"It is a silly custom, to say the least of it; and especially as it is

we who have brought the art hither, and who carry it on. Is it possible

that there is no remedy?"

"None. Time may accomplish it. The next generation may be different, but

at present we must submit. And after all, what is it?"

"Why, if there is no other evil----"

"Ah! now that you are convinced, all will be well. Let us go to my

master. Be of good courage."

In fact, the promises of Bartolo were realised, and all \_was\_ well. It

was truly a kind Providence; for we shall see how little dependence

Renzo could place on the treasure he had left at home,--the savings of

his labour.

CHAPTER XVIII.

On this same day, the 13th of November, there arrived a courier

extraordinary to the signor \_podestà\_ of Lecco. The courier brought an

express from the head of the police, containing an order to make every

possible search for a young man of the name of Lorenzo Tramaglino, silk

weaver, who, having escaped from the hands "\_of the illustrious head

above cited\_," had probably returned to the territory of Lecco. That, in

case of his discovery, he should be committed to prison, and an account

rendered to the police of his wicked practices, his ostensible means of

procuring subsistence, and his accomplices. And furthermore, that an

execution should be put into the house of the above-said Lorenzo

Tramaglino, and every thing taken from thence that might aid in throwing

light on his nefarious deeds.

The signor podestà, after ascertaining as well as he could, that Renzo

had not returned to the village, took with him the constable of the

place, and obeyed these injunctions, accompanied by a large escort of

notary, constable, and officers. The key of the house was not to be

found; the door was accordingly forced. The report of this transaction

spread around, and soon reached the ears of Father Christopher. The good

man was surprised and afflicted; and not being able to gain satisfactory

information with regard to Renzo, he wrote to the Father Bonaventura for

intelligence concerning him. In the mean while the relations and friends

of Renzo were summoned to give in their testimony, with regard to his

depravity of character. To bear the name of Tramaglino became a

disgrace; the village was all in commotion. By little and little, it was

understood that Renzo had escaped from the hands of justice, even in the

heart of Milan, and had disappeared: it was whispered that he had

committed some enormous crime, the nature of which remained unknown.

The more enormous, however, the less it was believed, for Renzo was

known by every body to be a worthy youth; the greatest number thought,

therefore, that it was a machination of Don Roderick to ruin his poor

rival. Thus it is true, that judging from inference, and without the

indispensable knowledge of facts, we often wrongfully suspect even the

wicked.

But we, who have the facts in our hands, can affirm, that if Don

Roderick had no share in creating these misfortunes, he rejoiced in them

as if they had been his own work; and made them a subject of merriment

with his friends, and above all with Count Attilio, who had been

deterred from prosecuting his intended journey to Milan by the account

received of the disturbances there: but this order from the police gave

him to understand that things had resumed their usual course. He then

determined to depart immediately, and, exhorting his cousin to persist

in his undertaking, and to surmount every obstacle, he promised to use

his efforts to rid him of the friar. Attilio had hardly taken his

departure, when Griso arrived, safe and sound, from Monza, and gave in

his report to his master of all he had been able to collect. He told him

that Lucy had been taken into the convent under the protection of the

signora; that she lived there as secluded as if she were a nun, never

putting her foot without the walls; that she assisted at the ceremonies

of the church behind a grated window; and that it was impossible to

obtain a view of her.

This relation put the devil into Roderick, or rather rendered the one

more uncontrollable that sojourned there already. So many favourable

circumstances concurring to forward his designs, inflamed the medley of

spleen, rage, and infamous desire, which he dignified by the name of

love. Renzo absent, expelled, banished, every measure against him became

lawful; his betrothed herself might be considered in some sort as the

property of a rebel. The only man who could and would take her under his

protection, the friar, would soon be deprived of the power to do so;

but, amidst so many unlooked-for facilities, one obstacle appeared to

render them unavailable. A monastery of Monza, even if there were no

\_signora\_ there, was an obstacle not to be surmounted even by Don

Roderick. He in vain wandered, in his imagination, around this asylum,

not being able to devise any means of violating it, either by force or

intrigue. He was upon the point of renouncing the enterprise, of going

to Milan, of mixing in its pleasures, and thus drowning all remembrance

of Lucy; but, in place of relief, would he not find there fresh food for

vexation? Attilio had certainly told the story, and every one would ask

him about the mountain girl! What reply would he be obliged to give? He

had been outwitted by a capuchin and a clown; and, moreover, when a

happy unexpected chance had rid him of the one, and a skilful friend

removed the other, then he, like a simpleton, abandoned the undertaking!

There was enough in this to prevent his ever lifting up his head in the

society of his equals; or else to compel him to go among them sword in

hand! And on the other hand, how could he return and remain in this

spot, where he would be tormented by the remembrance of his passion, and

the disgrace of its failure. How resolve? What do? Shall he go forward?

Shall he draw back? A means presented itself to his mind, by which his

enterprise might succeed. This was to call to his aid the assistance of

a man whose power could accomplish whatever he thought fit to undertake,

and for whom the difficulty of an enterprise would be only an additional

motive for engaging in it. But this project had nevertheless its

inconveniences and dangers, the consequences of which it was impossible

to calculate. No one could foresee the termination of an affair, when

they had once embarked in it with this man; a powerful auxiliary,

assuredly, but a guide not less absolute than dangerous. Such

reflections kept Don Roderick many days in a state of painful

irresolution: he received, in the meanwhile, a letter from his cousin,

informing him that the intrigue was prospering. After the lightning came

the thunder. One fine morning he heard that Father Christopher had left

the convent of Pescarenico! Such complete and prompt success, and the

letter of Attilio, who encouraged him by his advice and vexed him by his

jokes, inclined him to hazard every thing; and what above all confirmed

him in his intention, was the unexpected intelligence that Agnes had

returned to the village, and was at her own house! We will relate these

two events for the information of the reader.

Lucy and her mother had hardly entered their asylum, when the news of

the terrible insurrection at Milan spread through Monza, and even

penetrated the walls of the convent. The accounts were various and

contradictory.

The portress, who from necessity went much abroad, heard all the news,

and related them to her guests. "They have put several in prison," said

she; "some were taken before the bakers of the Crutches, others in front

of the house inhabited by the superintendant of provision----But listen

to this; there was one who escaped, who was from Lecco, or thereabouts.

I don't know his name, but I will ascertain it from some one; perhaps

you may know him."

This intelligence, joined to the circumstance that Renzo must have

arrived in Milan precisely on this fatal day, gave some uneasiness to

Lucy and her mother; judge what must have been their feelings, when the

portress came again to tell them, "He that fled to avoid hanging is from

your village, a silk weaver, one Tramaglino. Do you know him?"

Lucy was seated, busy at her work; it fell from her hands; she turned

pale, and her emotion must certainly have attracted the attention of the

portress, had she not been too eagerly engaged in delivering her report

to Agnes, who was standing by the door at some distance from the poor

girl. Agnes, notwithstanding she was much agitated, avoided any

exhibition of her feelings. She made an effort to reply, that in a small

village every one was known, but she could hardly believe this to be

true of Tramaglino, as he was a quiet worthy youth. She asked if it was

true that he had escaped, and if it was known where he was?

"Escaped, he certainly has, for every one knows it; but where, no one

knows. Perhaps they may take him again, perhaps he is in safety; but if

your peaceful youth falls into their hands----"

Here very fortunately the portress was called away; you may imagine the

feelings of Agnes and her daughter! The poor woman and the desolate Lucy

remained more than a day in cruel uncertainty, imagining the details and

the probable consequences of this unhappy event. Tormented with vain

hopes and anxious fears, their only relief was in each other's sympathy.

At length, a man arrived at the convent, and asked to see Agnes; he was

a fishmonger of Pescarenico, who was going, according to custom, to

Milan, to sell his fish; the good Christopher had desired him to stop at

the convent, to relate what he knew of the unhappy affair of Renzo to

Lucy and her mother, and exhort them, in his name, to have patience and

to confide in God. As for him, he should certainly not forget them, and

would seize every possible opportunity to aid them; in the meanwhile he

would not fail to send them news every week, by this or some other

means. All that the messenger could tell them further of Renzo was, that

it was considered certain that he had taken refuge in Bergamo. Such a

certainty was a great balm to the affliction of Lucy; her tears flowed

less bitterly, and she experienced some comfort in discoursing upon it

with her mother; and they united in heartfelt thanks to the Great Being

who had saved them from so many dangers.

Gertrude made Lucy often visit her in her private parlour, and conversed

much with her, finding a charm in the ingenuousness and sweetness of the

poor girl, and delighted with listening to expressions of gratitude from

her mouth. She changed insensibly the suspicions of Lucy with regard to

her into a sentiment of the deepest compassion, by relating to her, in

confidence, a part of her history, that part of it which she dared avow.

Lucy found in the relation reasons more than sufficient to explain what

had appeared strange in the manners of her benefactress. She was very

careful, however, not to return the confidence Gertrude placed in her,

by speaking of her new fears and misfortunes, lest she should thereby

extend the knowledge of Renzo's supposed crime and disgrace. She avoided

as much as possible replying to the repeated enquiries of the signora on

that part of her history, which preceded the promise of marriage; to

her modesty and innocence it appeared an impossible thing to converse

freely on such a subject. Gertrude was often tempted to quarrel with her

shyness, but how could she? Lucy was nevertheless so respectful, so

grateful, so trusting! Sometimes her shrinking and susceptible modesty

might displease her, from other motives; but all was lost in the

sweetness of the thought that to Lucy, if to no other human being, she

was doing good. And this was true; for besides the asylum she afforded

her, her conversation and endearments encouraged the timid mind of the

maiden; whose only other resource was constant employment. The nuns, at

her solicitation, furnished her with occupation; and, as from morning

till night she plied her needle, her reel, her beloved but now forsaken

reel, recurred to her memory, bringing with it a throng of painful

recollections.

The following week another message was received from Father Christopher,

confirming the flight of Renzo, but with regard to the extent or nature

of his misdemeanor, there was no further information. The friar had

hoped for satisfaction on this point from his brother at Milan, to whom

he had recommended him; but had received for answer that he had neither

seen the young man, nor received the letter; that some one from abroad

had been at the convent to ask for him, and not finding him there, had

gone away.

The third week there was no messenger, which not only deprived them of a

desired and expected consolation, but also produced a thousand uneasy

suspicions. Before this, Agnes had thought of taking a journey home, and

this disappointment confirmed her resolution. Lucy was unwilling to be

separated from her mother, but her anxiety to gain more satisfactory

intelligence of Renzo, and the security she felt in her sacred asylum,

reconciled her. It was therefore agreed between them, that Agnes should

wait on the road the following day for the return of the fishmonger from

Milan, and should ask the favour of a seat in his cart, in order to go

to her mountains. Upon seeing him approach, therefore, she asked him if

Father Christopher had not sent any message by him. The fishmonger had

been occupied the whole day before his departure in fishing, and had

received no message from the friar! She then preferred her request, and

having obtained a compliance with it, bade farewell to her daughter and

the signora, promising a speedy return.

The journey was without accident; early in the morning they arrived at

Pescarenico. Here Agnes took leave of her conductor, with many thanks

for the obligation he had conferred on her; and as she was before the

convent gates, she determined to speak with the good friar before she

proceeded homeward. She pulled the bell--the friar Galdino, whom we may

remember as the nut collector, appeared to answer it.

"Oh! good dame, what good wind brings you here?"

"I come to see Father Christopher!"

"Father Christopher? He is not here!"

"No? will it be long before he returns? Where is he gone?"

"To Rimini."

"To----?"

"To Rimini."

"Where is that?"

"Eh! eh! eh!" replied the friar, extending his arms, as if to indicate a

great distance.

"Miserable that I am! But why did he go so suddenly?"

"Because the father provincial would have it so."

"And why did they send away one who did so much good here? Oh! unhappy

me!"

"If our superiors were obliged to give reasons for what they do, where

would be our obedience, my good woman?"

"But this is such a loss!"

"Shall I tell you how it has happened? they have probably wanted a good

preacher at Rimini; (we have them in every place to be sure, but

sometimes a particular man is needed;) the father provincial of that

place has written to the father provincial of this, to know if there

were such a person in this convent; the father provincial returned for

answer, that there was none but Father Christopher who corresponded to

the description."

"Oh! unfortunate! When did he go?"

"The day before yesterday."

"Oh! if I had only come a few days sooner, as I wished to do! And do

they not know when he will return?"

"Why! my dear woman! the father provincial knows, if any one does; but

when one of our preachers has taken his flight, it is impossible to say

on what branch he will rest. They want him here; they want him there;

for we have convents in the four quarters of the world. Father

Christopher will make a great noise at Rimini, with his Lent sermon; the

fame of this great preacher will resound every where, and it is our duty

to give him up, because we live on the charity of others, and it is but

right we should serve all the world."

"Oh! misery! misery!" cried Agnes, weeping; "what shall I do without

this good man? He was a father to us; what a loss! what a loss!"

"Hear me, good woman--Father Christopher was truly a good man, but we

have others equally so; there is Father Antanasio, Father Girolamo,

Father Zaccaria! Father Zaccaria is a worthy man! And you must not

wonder, as some ignorant people do, at his shrill voice and his little

beard; I do not say that he is a preacher, because every one has his

talent; but to give advice, he is the man."

"Oh! holy patience!" cried Agnes, with a mixture of gratitude and

vexation one feels at an offer containing more good-will than

suitableness; "What is it to me what another man is, when he who is gone

knew our affairs, and had every thing prepared to help us!"

"Then you must have patience."

"I know that. Excuse the trouble I have given you."

"That is of no consequence, my good woman; I pity you; if you decide

upon asking advice of one of the fathers, you will find the convent

still in its place. But let me see you soon, when I collect the oil."

"God preserve you," said Agnes; and she proceeded homeward, confused

and disconcerted as a blind man who had lost his staff.

Having more information than Friar Galdino, we are enabled to relate the

truth of this affair. Attilio, immediately on his arrival at Milan,

performed his promise to Don Roderick, and visited his uncle of the

secret council; (this was a committee composed of thirteen members,

whose sanction was necessary to the proceedings of government; in case

of the absence or death of the governor, the council assumed temporarily

the control.) The count, one of the oldest members of the council,

enjoyed in it some authority, which he did not fail to make known on all

occasions. His language was ambiguous; his silence significant; he had

the art of flattering, without absolutely promising; of menacing,

without perhaps the power to perform; but these flatteries and menaces

produced in the minds of others an impression of his unlimited power,

which was the end and purpose of all his actions. Towards this point he

lately made a great stride on an extraordinary occasion. He had been

sent on an embassy to Madrid! And to hear him describe his reception

there! Among other honours, the count-duke had treated him with

particular attention, had admitted him to his confidence, so far as to

ask him in the presence of the whole court, \_if he were pleased with

Madrid\_? and to tell him on another occasion, at a window, that \_the

cathedral of Milan was the most magnificent church in the king's

dominions\_.

After having paid his duty to the count, and presented the compliments

of his cousin, Attilio, with a seriousness which he knew well how to

assume, said, "I believe it to be my duty to inform the signor, my

uncle, of an affair in which Roderick is concerned, and which requires

the interference of your lordship to avert the serious consequences

that----"

"Ah! one of his pranks, I suppose."

"In truth, I must say that the injury has not been committed by

Roderick, but he is exasperated, and none but my uncle can----"

"What is it? what is it?"

"There is in his neighbourhood a capuchin friar who sets himself in

array against my cousin, who hates him, and the matter stands thus----"

"How often have I told you both to let the friars manage their own

affairs? It is enough for those to whom it belongs--but you, you can

avoid having any thing to do with them----"

"Signor uncle, it is my duty to inform you that Roderick would have

avoided it, if it had been possible. It is the friar who has quarrelled

with him, and he has used every means----"

"What the devil can the friar have in common with my nephew?"

"First of all, he is known to be a quarrelsome fellow; he protects a

peasant girl of the village, and regards her with a benevolence, to say

the least of it, very suspicious."

"I comprehend," said his uncle; and a ray of malice passed over the

depth of dulness which nature had stamped on his countenance.

"For some time," continued Attilio, "the friar has suspected Roderick of

designs on this young girl----"

"\_He\_ has suspected, indeed! I know the signor Roderick too well myself,

not to need to be told that he is incorrigible in such matters!"

"That Roderick, signor uncle, may have had some trifling conversation

with this girl, I can very well believe; he is young, and, moreover, not

a capuchin,--but these are idle tales, not worth engaging your

attention. The serious part of the affair is, that the friar speaks of

Roderick as if he were a villain, and instigates all the country against

him----"

"And the other friars?"

"They do not meddle with it, because they know him to be hot-headed,

though they have great respect for Roderick; but then, on the other

hand, the friar passes for a saint with the villagers, and----"

"I imagine he does not know Roderick is my nephew."

"Does he not know it? it is that, precisely, which animates him to this

course of conduct."

"How? how?"

"He takes pleasure, and he tells it to every one, he takes the more

pleasure in vexing Roderick, because he has a protector as powerful as

your lordship; he laughs at the nobility, and at diplomatists, and

exults at the thought, that the girdle of Saint Francis can tie up all

the swords, and that----"

"Oh! the presumptuous man! what is his name?"

"Friar Christopher, of \*\*\*," said Attilio. The count drew his portfolio

towards him, and inscribed the name.

Meanwhile, Attilio proceeded: "He has always had this character; his

life is well known; he was a plebeian, and having some wealth, wished to

associate with gentlemen, and not being able to succeed, killed one of

them for rage; and to escape the gallows he assumed the habit of a

friar."

"Bravo! well done! we will see, we will see," said the count in a fume.

"Now," continued Attilio, "he is more enraged than ever, because he has

failed in a project he had much at heart. It is by this that your

lordship can see what kind of a man he is. He wished to have this girl

married, to remove her from the dangers of the world, you understand;

and he had found his man, a fellow whose name you have doubtless heard,

because I have understood that the secret council has been obliged to

take notice of the worthy youth."

"Who is he?"

"A silk weaver, Lorenzo Tramaglino, he who----"

"Lorenzo Tramaglino!" cried the count. "Well done, friar! Truly--now I

remember--he had a letter for a--it is a pity that--but no matter. And

pray, why did Don Roderick say nothing of all this? why did he suffer

things to go so far, before he acquainted one who has the power and the

will to support him?"

"I will tell you also the truth with respect to that: knowing the

multitude of cases which you have to perplex you, he has not been

willing to add to them; and, besides, since I must say it, he is beside

himself on account of the insults offered him by the friar, and would

wish to wreak summary justice on him himself, rather than obtain it from

prudence and the power of your lordship. I have tried to cool his

ardour, but finding it impossible, I thought it my duty to inform your

lordship, who, after all, is the prop and chief column of the house."

"You ought to have spoken sooner."

"That is true. But I hoped the affair would finish of itself, or that

the friar would regain his reason, or that he would leave the convent,

as often happens to these friars, who are sometimes here, sometimes

there; and then all would have been settled. But----"

"The arrangement of the business now rests with me."

"That is what I thought; I said to myself, the signor our uncle is the

only one who can save the honour of Don Roderick; he has a thousand

means that I know not of: I know that the father provincial has a great

respect for him, and if our uncle should think that the best thing for

this friar would be a change of air, he can in a few words----"

"Will your lordship leave the care of the business to him to whom it

appertains?" said the count, sharply.

"Ah! that is true," cried Attilio; "am I the man to give advice to your

lordship? But the regard I have for the honour of the family made me

speak. And I am afraid I have committed another folly," added he,

affecting a pensive air: "I am afraid I have injured Don Roderick in

your opinion; I should have no rest if you doubted Roderick's confidence

in you, and submission to your will. I hope the signor our uncle will

believe, that in this case, it is truly----"

"Well, well, you two will be always friends, until one of you become

prudent. Ever in fault, and relying on me to repair it! You give me more

trouble than all the affairs of state!" continued he, with an expression

of grave importance.

Attilio proffered a few more excuses, promises, and compliments, and

took his leave, with a parting injunction from his uncle \_to be

prudent\_!

CHAPTER XIX.

The signor count formed the resolution to make use of the father

provincial to cut the knot of these perplexities; whether he would have

thought of this, had it not been suggested by Attilio, it is impossible

to determine, inasmuch as he would never have acknowledged this to be

the case. It was important that one of his family, his nephew, should

not be obliged to yield in an open controversy; it was a point essential

to the reputation of his power, which he had so much at heart. The

satisfaction which his nephew might himself take of his adversary would

be a remedy worse than the disease. Should he order him to leave his

castle, when obedience would seem like flying from the field of battle?

Legal force could have no power over the capuchin; the clergy were

entirely exempt from secular jurisdiction. All that he could attempt

against such an adversary was to endeavour to have him removed and the

power to do this rested with the father provincial.

Now the count and the father provincial were old acquaintances; they saw

each other rarely, but always with great demonstrations of friendship,

and reiterated offers of service.

When all was matured in his mind, the count invited the father

provincial to a dinner, where he found a company of choice guests;

noblemen, who, by their deportment, their native boldness, and lordly

disdain, impressed those around them with the idea of their superiority

and power. There were also present some clients, who, attached to the

house by hereditary devotion, and the service of a life, sat at their

lord's table, in a spirit of implicit submission, "devouring his

discourse" and his dinner with unqualified and equal approbation.

At table, the count led the conversation to Madrid; he spoke of the

court, the count-duke, the ministers, the family of the governor; of the

bull-fights, which he could well describe, having seen them from a

distinguished place; of the escurial, of which he could speak in its

most minute details, because a page of the count-duke had conducted him

into every nook of it. For some time all the company were attentive to

him alone; then they divided into separate parties. He continued for a

while to relate a number of anecdotes, as in confidence, to the father

provincial, who was seated near him. But suddenly he gave a turn to the

conversation, and spoke of Cardinal Barberini, who was a capuchin, and

brother to the reigning pope, Urban VIII. As they left the table, the

count invited the father provincial to go with him into another

apartment.

The noble lord gave a seat to the reverend father, and taking one

himself, said, "Considering the friendship that exists between us, I

thought I was authorised to speak to your reverence of an affair equally

interesting to us both, and which had best be concluded between us

without going farther, which might--and I will tell you frankly what it

is, as I am certain we shall have the same opinion on the subject. Tell

me, in your convent of Pescarenico, is there not a Father Christopher of

\*\*\*?"

The father provincial bowed assent.

"I pray your reverence to tell me, frankly, as a friend,--this man--this

father--I have no personal acquaintance with him, 'tis true; I know many

fervent, prudent, humble capuchins, who are worth their weight in gold;

I have been the friend of the order from infancy; but in a numerous

family there is always some individual----And I have reason to think

that Friar Christopher is a man--a little fond of quarrelling--who has

not all the prudence he might have: I imagine he has caused your

reverence much anxiety."

"I perceive there is some intrigue," thought the father provincial; "it

is my fault; I knew that this holy man should have been sent from pulpit

to pulpit, and not have been suffered to remain six months in a convent

in the country.--Oh," said he, aloud, "I am truly sorry that your

excellency has conceived such an opinion of Father Christopher; for I

know that his conduct in the convent is exemplary, and that he is

esteemed by every body."

"I understand very well; your reverence ought----However, I would as a

friend inform you of a matter which it is necessary you should know.

This Father Christopher has taken under his protection a young man of

that country, one of whom your reverence must have heard; him who

recently escaped from the hands of justice, on the terrible day of San

Martin--Lorenzo Tramaglino!"

"I had not heard of this," said the father provincial; "but your

excellency knows that it is the duty of our order to seek those who have

gone astray, for the purpose of leading them back."

"That is true; but I thought it best to give you this information,

because, if ever his holiness--the intelligence of it may have been sent

to Rome."

"I am much obliged to your excellency for the information. However, I am

certain, that if the affair is enquired into, it will be found that

Father Christopher has had no connection with this man but for the

purpose of doing him good. I know the father well."

"Your reverence knows, then, better than I, what he was in the world,

and the pranks of his youth."

"It is the glory of our habit, signor count, that whatever a man may

have been in the world, once clothed with that, he is quite another

person; and since the Father Christopher has belonged to our order----"

"I believe it from the bottom of my heart, I believe it; but

sometimes--as the proverb says--The habit does not make the monk."

The proverb was not much to the purpose, but the count had cited it, in

place of another which occurred to him,--"The wolf may change his skin,

but he does not become a dog."

"I have certain information," pursued he.

"If your excellency knows positively that the father has committed a

fault (we are all liable to err), I wish you would inform me of it. I am

his superior--unworthily, 'tis true; but it is my duty to watch over,

and, if necessary, correct----"

"Besides the circumstance of his granting protection to the man I have

mentioned, this same Father Christopher has undertaken to contend--but

we can settle it together with my nephew, Don Roderick."

"Oh, I am sorry for that, I am sorry for that, truly."

"My nephew is young, rash, and not accustomed to provocation."

"It becomes my duty to obtain the best information on the subject. Your

excellency, with your experience of the world, knows better than I, that

we are all frail, liable to error--some one way, some another; and if

our Father Christopher has failed----"

"But these are things which had better be settled between ourselves; to

spread them abroad would only increase the evil. These trifles are often

the cause of numerous embarrassments and difficulties, which might have

been prevented by some decisive act in the commencement. That is now our

business; my nephew is young; the monk, from what I hear, has still the

spirit, the inclinations of a young man; but we, who are advanced in

years, (too true, is it not, reverend father?) must have prudence to act

for the young, and apply a remedy to their follies. Happily there is yet

time; we must remove the fire from the straw. An individual who does not

do well in one place may in another; your reverence might see to his

being removed, might find a suitable station for the friar at a

sufficient distance--all may be easily arranged--or rather, there's no

harm done."

The father provincial had expected this conclusion from the commencement

of the conversation. "I perceive," thought he, "where you would lead me;

when a poor friar gives one of you the least umbrage, the superior must

make him march, right or wrong."

When the count had finished, the provincial said aloud, "I understand

what the signor count would say; but before taking a step----"

"It is a step, and it is not a step, very reverend father: it is only a

natural event, such as might happen in the ordinary course of affairs;

and if we do not do it quickly, I foresee a deluge of disorders, a

mountain of grievances. If we do not put a stop to the affair between

ourselves, it is not possible it should remain a secret. And then it is

not only my nephew--you raise a wasp's nest, very reverend father. We

are a powerful house--we have adherents."

The father bowed in assent. The count proceeded. "You understand me;

they are all people who have blood in their veins, and who in the

world--count as something. They are proud of their honour; the affair

will become theirs, and then---- Even those who are the friends of

peace---- It would be a grief of heart to me to be obliged---- I, who

have always had such a friendship for the capuchins! The fathers, for

their ministry to be efficient, should be in harmony with all men--no

misunderstandings: besides, they have relations abroad--and these

affairs of punctilio extend, ramify---- I, too, have a certain dignity

to maintain---- His excellency----my noble colleagues---- It becomes a

party matter----"

"It is true," said the provincial, "that Father Christopher is a

preacher; I had already the intention--I have even been solicited to do

it--but under these circumstances, and just at this time, it might be

considered as a punishment; and to punish without being well

acquainted----"

"But it is not a punishment; it is a prudent precaution, an honest means

of preventing evils that might----I have explained myself."

"The signor count and myself understand each other very well; but the

facts being those which your excellency has adduced, it is impossible

but that they should in part be known through the country: there are

every where firebrands, or idle spirits, who find pleasure in the

contests of the monks and the nobility, and love to make malignant

observations. Each one has his own dignity to preserve; and I, in the

character of a superior, have an express duty--the honour of the

habit--it is not my own affair--it is a deposit which--and since the

signor your nephew is so irritated, as your excellency has said, he

might take it as a satisfaction offered to him, and--I do not say boast

of it, but----"

"You jest, reverend father, surely; my nephew is a cavalier of

consideration in the world, as he should be; but in his relations with

me, he is but a child, and will do neither more nor less than I

prescribe to him. And, moreover, he shall never know it. The thing is

done between ourselves; there is no necessity for rendering an account

to him. Let not that give you any uneasiness; I am accustomed to keep

silence on important subjects. As to the idle talk of others, what can

be said? It is a very common thing to see a friar leave one place to go

and preach at another."

"However, in order to prevent malicious observations, it would be

necessary, on this occasion, that the nephew of your excellency should

give some demonstration of friendship, of deference,--not for us, but

for the order."

"Certainly, certainly, that is but right; it is not necessary, however;

I know that the capuchins are highly esteemed by my nephew, as well as

by our whole family. But, in this case, something more signal is very

proper. Leave it to me, very reverend father: I will give such orders to

my nephew--that is to say, it shall be prudently suggested to him, that

he may not suspect what has passed between us, because we need not apply

a plaster where there is no wound. As to that which we have agreed on,

the sooner it is done the better; and if you had a place at some

distance--to remove every occasion----"

"They want a preacher at Rimini; and perhaps without this motive I

should have thought----"

"That is very opportune, very opportune. And when?"

"Since the thing is to be done, it shall be quickly."

"Certainly, certainly; better to-day than to-morrow. And," continued he,

rising, "if I or my adherents can render any service to the good father

capuchins----"

"We have often experienced the kindness of the house," said the father

provincial, also rising, and following his vanquisher to the door of the

apartment.

"We have extinguished a spark," said the count,--"a spark, very reverend

father, which might have excited a great conflagration. Between good

friends, things are easily arranged."

They then entered the next apartment, and mixed with the rest of the

company.

The count obtained his end: Friar Christopher was made to travel on foot

from Pescarenico to Rimini, as we shall see.

One evening a capuchin from Milan arrived at Pescarenico, with a packet

for the superior: it was an order for Father Christopher to repair to

Rimini for the purpose of preaching the Lent sermons. The letter

contained instructions to the superior, to insinuate to the friar, that

he should give up every attention to any business he might have on hand

in the country he must leave, and that he should not maintain any

correspondence there. The friar, who was the bearer of the order, was to

be the companion of his journey. The superior said nothing that night,

but in the morning he sent for Father Christopher, showed him the order,

and told him to take his basket, staff, and girdle, and with the friar,

whom he presented to him, commence his journey.

Imagine what a blow this was for our good father. Renzo, Lucy, Agnes,

passed rapidly over his mind, and he thought, "Great God! what will

these unfortunate people do, when I am no longer here?" but raising his

eyes to heaven, he placed his hope and confidence there. He crossed his

hands on his breast, and bowed his head in token of obedience; he then

went to his cell, took his basket, his staff, and his breviary, and

after having bid farewell to his brethren, and obtained the benediction

of his superior, took, with his companion, the route prescribed.

We have said that Don Roderick, more than ever determined on the

accomplishment of his infamous enterprise, had resolved to seek the

assistance of a powerful man. We cannot give his name, nor even hazard a

conjecture with regard to it; this is the more astonishing, inasmuch as

we find notices of this personage in several histories of the time. The

identity of the facts does not leave a doubt of the identity of the man;

but there is evidently an extreme care to avoid the mention of his name.

Francesco Rivola, in his life of the Cardinal Federigo Borromeo,

speaking of him, says, "He was a lord as powerful from his wealth as

illustrious from his birth," and nothing further. Giuseppe Ripamonti

makes farther mention of him, as a \_man\_, this \_man\_, a \_person\_, this

\_person\_. "I will relate," says he, "the case of a man, who, belonging

to the most powerful family in the city, chose the country for his

residence; and there, assuring himself of impunity by the force of

crime, he set at nought the law and the magistrates, the king and the

nobles. Placed on the extreme confines of the state, he led an

independent life; he offered an asylum to the outlaw; he was outlawed

himself, and then absolved from the sentence which had led----" We will

hereafter quote from this author other passages, which will confirm the

history we are about to relate.

To do that which was forbidden by the laws; to be the arbiter, the

supreme judge in the affairs of others, without other interest than a

thirst for power; to be feared by all, even by those who were the

objects of fear to all men; these had ever been the controlling

principles which actuated the conduct of this man. From his youth he had

been filled with impatient envy at the power and authority of others;

superior to the greater number in riches and retinue, and to all perhaps

in birth and audacity, he constrained them to renounce all competition

with him; he took some into his friendship, but was far from admitting

any equality between himself and them; his proud and disdainful spirit

could only be content with those who were willing to acknowledge their

inferiority, and to yield to him on all occasions. When, however, they

found themselves in any difficulty, they did not fail to solicit the aid

of so powerful an auxiliary; and a refusal from him would have been the

destruction of his reputation, and of the high station which he had

assumed. So that, for himself and others, he had performed such deeds

that not all his own power and that of his family could prevent his

banishment and outlawry; and he was obliged to leave the state. I

believe that it is to this circumstance Ripamonti alludes:--

"He was obliged to leave the country: but his audacity was unsubdued; he

went through the city on horseback, followed by a pack of hounds, and

with the sound of the trumpet; passing by the court of the palace, he

sent an abusive message to the governor by one of the guards."

In his absence he did not desist from his evil practices; he maintained

a correspondence with his friends, "who were united to him," says

Ripamonti, "in a secret league of atrocious deeds."

It appears that he even contracted new habits, of which the same

historian speaks with mysterious brevity. "Foreign princes had recourse

to him for important murders, and they even sent him reinforcements of

soldiers to act under his orders."

At last, whether the proclamation of his outlawry was withdrawn from

some powerful intercession, or that the audacity of the man outweighed

all authority, he resolved to return home; not exactly to Milan, but to

a castle on the frontier of the Bergamascan territory, which then

belonged to the Venetian state. "This house," says Ripamonti, "was a

focus of sanguinary mandates. The household was composed of such as had

been guilty of great crimes; the cooks, and the scullions even, were not

free from the stain of murder." Besides this notable household, he had

men resembling them, stationed in different places of the two states, on

the confines of which he lived.

All, however tyrannical themselves, had been obliged to choose between

the friendship or enmity of this tyrannical man, and it fared ill with

those who dared resist him. It was in vain to hope to preserve

neutrality or independence; his orders to do such or such a thing, or to

refrain, were arbitrary, and resistance was useless. Recourse was had to

him on all occasions, and by all sorts of people, good as well as bad,

for the arrangements of their difficulties; so that he occasionally

became the protector of the oppressed, who could not have obtained

redress in any other way, public or private. He was almost always the

minister of wickedness, revenge, and caprice; but the various ways in

which he had employed his power impressed upon all minds a great idea of

his capability to devise and perform his acts in defiance of every

obstruction, whether lawful or unlawful. The fame of ordinary tyrants

was confined to their own districts, and every district had its tyrant;

but the fame of this extraordinary man was spread throughout the

Milanese; his life was the subject of popular tales, and his name

carried with it something powerful and mysterious. Every tyrant was

suspected of alliance with him, every assassin of acting under his

orders; at every extraordinary crime, of the author of which they were

ignorant, the name of this man was uttered, whom, thanks to the

circumspection of our historians, we are obliged to call the Unknown.

The distance between his castle and that of Don Roderick was not more

than six miles. The latter had long felt the necessity of keeping on

good terms with such a neighbour, and had proffered his services, and

entitled himself to the same sort of friendship, as the rest; he was

however, careful to conceal the nature and strictness of the union

between them. Don Roderick liked to play the tyrant, but not openly;

tyranny was with him a means, not an end; he wished to live at ease in

the city, and enjoy the advantages, pleasures, and honours of civilised

life. To insure this, he was obliged to exhibit management, to testify a

great esteem for his relations, to cultivate the friendship of persons

in place, in order to sway the balance of justice for his own peculiar

purposes. Now, an intimacy with such a man would not have advanced his

interests in such points, and especially with his uncle; but a slight

acquaintance with him might be considered unavoidable under the

circumstances, and therefore in some degree excusable. One morning Don

Roderick, equipped for the chase, with an escort of retainers, among

whom was Griso, took the road to the castle of the Unknown.

CHAPTER XX.

The castle of the Unknown was situated above a narrow and shady valley,

on the summit of a cliff, which, belonging to a rugged chain of

mountains, was nevertheless separated from them by banks, caverns, and

precipices. It was only accessible on the side which overlooked the

valley. This was a declivity rather steep, but equal, and continued

towards the summit: it was occupied as pasture ground, and its lower

borders were cultivated, having habitations scattered here and there.

The bottom was a bed of stones, through which flowed, according to the

season, a small brook, or a large torrent, which served for a boundary

between the two territories. The opposite chain of mountains, which

formed, as it were, the other wall of the valley, was slightly

cultivated towards its base; the rest was composed of precipitous rocks

without verdure, and thrown together irregularly and wildly. The scene

altogether was one of savage grandeur.

From this castle, as the eagle from his eyrie, its lawless owner

overlooked his domain, and heard no human sound above him. He could

embrace at a view all the environs, the declivities, the abyss, the

practicable approaches. To the eyes of one viewing it from above, the

winding path which ascended towards the terrible habitation could be

perceived throughout its whole course, and from the windows and

loopholes, the signor could leisurely count the steps of the person

ascending, and examine him with the closest scrutiny. With the garrison

of bravoes which he kept at the castle he could defy an army, which he

would have crushed in the valley beneath, before an individual could

reach the summit. But none, except such as were friends with the master

of the castle, dared set foot even in the valley. Tragical stories were

related of some who had attempted the dangerous enterprise, but these

stories were already of times long past, and none of the young vassals

could remember to have encountered a human being in this place, except

under his lord's authority.

Don Roderick arrived in the middle of the valley, at the foot of the

cliff, at the commencement of the rugged and winding path; at this point

was a tavern, which might have been called a guard-house; an old sign,

with a rising sun painted on both sides, was suspended before the door;

but the people gave the place the more appropriate name of \_Malanotte\_.

At the noise of the approaching cavalcade a young boy, well furnished

with swords and pistols, appeared on the threshold of the door; and

casting a rapid glance at the party, informed three ruffians, who were

playing at cards within the house, of its approach. He who appeared to

be the chief among them arose, and recognising a friend of his master,

saluted him respectfully; Don Roderick returned the salutation with much

politeness, and asked if the signor was at the castle. The man replied

in the affirmative; and he, dismounting, threw his horse's bridle to

Aimwell, one of his retinue. Then, taking his musket from his shoulder,

he gave it to \_Montanarolo\_, as if to relieve himself from an useless

encumbrance, but in reality because he knew that on this cliff none were

permitted to bear arms. Drawing from his pocket some \_berlinghe\_, he

gave them to \_Tanabuso\_, saying, "Wait here till my return; and in the

mean time amuse yourselves with these honest people." Then presenting to

the chief of the band some crowns of gold for himself and his

companions, he ascended the path with Griso.

Another bravo belonging to the Unknown, who was on his way to the

castle, bore him company; thus sparing him the trouble of declaring his

name to whomsoever he should meet. When he arrived at the castle (Griso

was left at the gate) he was conducted through a long succession of dark

galleries, and various halls hung with muskets, sabres, and other

weapons of warfare; each of these halls was guarded by a bravo. After

having waited some time, he was admitted to the presence of the Unknown,

who advanced to meet him, replying to his salutation, and at the same

time, as was his custom, even with his oldest friends, eying him from

head to foot. He was tall in stature; and from the baldness of his head,

and the deep furrows of his countenance, appeared to be much older than

sixty, which was his real age; his countenance and movements, the

firmness of his features, and the fire which sparkled from his eyes,

indicated a vigour of body as well as of mind which would have been

remarkable even in a young man.

Don Roderick told him he had come for advice and assistance; that,

having embarked in a difficult enterprise, from which his honour did not

suffer him to withdraw, he had remembered the promises of one who never

promised in vain; and he then related his abominable intrigue. The

Unknown, who had already heard something of it, listened with much

attention to the recital, both because he naturally loved such

relations, and because Friar Christopher, that avowed enemy of tyrants,

was concerned in it. Don Roderick spoke of the difficulty of the

undertaking, the distance of the place, a monastery, the \_signora\_,--but

the Unknown, as if prompted by the demon in his heart, interrupted him,

saying, that he took the charge of the affair on himself. He wrote down

the name of the poor Lucy, and dismissed Don Roderick, saying, "In a

little while you will receive news from me."

The reader may remember the villain Egidio, who lived near the walls of

the monastery into which Lucy had been received; now, he was one of the

most intimate colleagues in crime of the Unknown; and this accounts for

the promptness with which this lord assumed the charge of the

undertaking. However, no sooner was he left alone than he repented of

his precipitation. He had for some time experienced, not remorse, but a

vague uneasiness on account of his crimes; at every new addition to

them, the remembrance of those he had previously committed pressed upon

his memory, if not upon his conscience, and loaded it with an

intolerable weight. An undefinable repugnance to the commission of

crime, such as he had experienced and subdued at the outset of his

career, returned with all its force to overwhelm his spirit. The

thoughts of the future contributed to render the past more painful. "To

grow old! to die! and then?" And the image of death, which he had so

often met undaunted, in face of an enemy, and which seemed to inflame

his courage and double his energy--this same image now, in the midnight

silence of his castle, quelled his spirit, and impressed him with an awe

which he in vain endeavoured to resist. Formerly, the frequent spectacle

of violence and murder, inspiring him with a ferocious emulation, had

served as a kind of authority against his conscience; now the confused

but terrible idea arose in his mind of individual responsibility at the

bar of God. The idea of having risen above the crowd of vulgar

criminals, and of having left them far behind, an idea which once

flattered his pride, now impressed him with a sentiment of fearful

solitude; and experiencing at certain moments of despondence the power

and presence of that God whose existence he had hitherto neither

admitted nor denied, having been wholly immersed in himself, his

accumulated crimes rose up, to justify the sentence which was about to

condemn him to eternal banishment from the divine presence. But this

uneasiness was not suffered to appear, either in his words or his

actions; he carefully concealed it under the appearance of more profound

and intense ferocity. Regretting the time when he was accustomed to

commit iniquity without remorse, without any other solicitude than for

its success, he made every effort to recall these habits and feelings;

to take pleasure in wickedness; and glory in his shame, in order to

convince himself that he was still the same man.

This accounts for the promptitude of his promise to Don Roderick: he

wished to deprive himself of the chance of hesitation; but, scarcely

alone, he felt his resolution fail, and thoughts arose in his mind which

almost tempted him to break his word, and expose his weakness to an

inferior accomplice. But with a violent effort he put an end to the

painful conflict. He sent for Nibbio[30], one of the most skilful and

resolute ministers of his atrocities, and of whom he had made use in his

correspondence with Egidio, and ordered him to mount his horse, to go to

Monza, to inform Egidio of the affair he had undertaken, and to require

his assistance for its accomplishment.

[30] Kite.

The messenger returned sooner than his master expected him with the

reply of Egidio; the enterprise was easy and safe; the Unknown had only

to send a carriage with two or three bravoes, well disguised; Egidio

took charge of the rest. The Unknown, whatever passed in his mind, gave

orders to Nibbio to arrange every thing, and to set out immediately on

the expedition.

If, to perform the horrible service which had been required of him,

Egidio had depended only on his ordinary means, he would not certainly

have sent back so explicit an answer. But in the asylum of the convent,

where every thing appeared as an obstacle, the villain had a means known

to himself alone; and that which would have been an insurmountable

difficulty to others was to him an instrument of success. We have

related how the unhappy signora once lent an ear to his discourse, and

the reader may have surmised that this was not the last time; it was

only the first step in the path of abomination and blood. The same voice

which then addressed her, become imperious through crime, now imposed on

her the sacrifice of the innocent girl who had been intrusted to her

care.

The proposition appeared frightful to Gertrude; to lose Lucy in any

manner would have seemed to her a misfortune, a punishment; and to

deprive herself of her with criminal perfidy, to add to her crimes by

dealing treacherously with the confiding girl, was to take away the only

gleam of virtuous enjoyment which had shone upon her mysterious and

wicked career. She tried every method to avoid obedience; every method,

except the only infallible one, that was in her power. Crime is a severe

and inflexible master, against whom we are strong only when we entirely

rebel. Gertrude could not resolve on that, and obeyed.

The day agreed on came; the hour approached; Gertrude, alone with Lucy,

bestowed on her more caresses than ordinary, which the poor girl

returned with increasing tenderness, as the lamb licks the hand of the

shepherd who entices it without the fold into the murderous power of the

butcher who there awaits it.

"I want you to do me a great favour; many are ready to obey me, but

there is none but yourself whom I can trust. I must speak immediately on

an affair of great importance, which I will relate to you some other

time, to the superior of the capuchins, who brought you hither, my dear

Lucy; but no one must know that I have sent for him. I rely on you to

carry a secret message----"

Lucy was astonished at such a request, and alleged her reasons for

declining to perform it; without her mother! without a companion! in a

solitary road! in a strange country! But Gertrude, instructed in an

infernal school, showed great astonishment and displeasure at her

refusal, after having been loaded with so many benefits; she affected to

treat her excuses as frivolous. "In open day! a short distance! a road

that Lucy had travelled a few days before!" She said so much, that the

poor girl, touched with gratitude and shame, enquired, "What was to be

done?"

"Go to the convent of the capuchins; ask for the superior, tell him to

come here immediately, but to let no one suspect that he comes at my

request."

"But what shall I say to the portress, who has never seen me go out, and

will ask me where I am going?"

"Endeavour to pass without being seen; and if you cannot, say you are

going to some church to perform your orisons."

A new difficulty for Lucy! to tell a falsehood! but the signora was so

offended at her refusal, and so ridiculed her for preferring a vain

scruple to her gratitude, that the unhappy girl, alarmed rather than

convinced, replied, "Well, I will go; may God be my guide and

protector."

Gertrude, from her grated window, followed her with anxious looks, and

when she saw her about to cross the threshold, overcome by irresistible

emotion, she cried, "Stop, Lucy."

Lucy returned to the window; but another idea, the one accustomed to

predominate, had resumed its sway over the mind of the unhappy Gertrude.

She affected dissatisfaction at the directions she had given; described

the road again to Lucy, and dismissed her: "Do exactly as I have told

you, and return quickly."

Lucy passed the door of the cloister unobserved, and proceeding on her

way with downcast eyes, found, with the aid of the directions given, and

her own recollections, the gate of the suburb; timid and trembling, she

continued on the high road, until she arrived at that which led to the

convent. This road was buried, like the bed of a river, between two high

banks, bordered with trees, whose branches united to form an arch above

it. On finding it entirely deserted, she felt her fears revive; she

hurried on, but gained courage from the sight of a travelling carriage

which had stopped a short distance before her; before the door of it,

which was open, there stood two travellers looking about, as if

uncertain of their way. As she approached, she heard one of them say,

"Here is a good girl, who will tell us the way." As she came on a line

with the carriage, this same man addressed her: "My good girl, can you

tell us the way to Monza?"

"You are going in the wrong direction," replied the poor girl; "Monza

lies there." As she turned to point it out, his companion (it was

Nibbio) seized her by the waist, and lifted her from the ground. Lucy

screamed from surprise and terror; the ruffian threw her into the

carriage; a third, who was seated in the bottom of it, seized her, and

compelled her to sit down before him; another put a handkerchief over

her mouth, and stifled her cries. Nibbio then entered the carriage, the

door was closed, and the horses set off on a gallop. He who had asked

her the perfidious question remained behind; he was an emissary of

Egidio, who had watched Lucy when she quitted the convent, and had

hastened by a shorter road to inform his colleagues, and wait for her at

the place agreed on.

But who can describe the terror and anguish of the unfortunate girl? Who

can tell what passed in her heart? Cruelly anxious to ascertain her

horrible situation, she wildly opened her eyes, but closed them again at

the sight of those frightful faces. She struggled in vain. The men held

her down in the bottom of the carriage: if she attempted to cry, they

drew the handkerchief tightly over her mouth. In the mean while, three

gruff voices, endeavouring to assume a tone of humanity, said to her,

"Be quiet, be quiet: do not be afraid; we do not wish to harm you."

After a while her struggles ceased, she languidly opened her eyes, and

the horrible faces before her appeared to blend themselves into one

monstrous image; her colour fled, and she fell lifeless into their arms.

"Courage, courage," said Nibbio; but Lucy was now beyond the reach of

his horrible voice.

"The devil! she appears to be dead," said one of them. "If she should

really be dead!"

"Poh!" said the other, "these fainting fits are common to women; they

don't die in this way."

"Hush," said Nibbio, "be attentive to your duty, and do not meddle with

other affairs. Keep your muskets ready, because this wood we are

entering is a nest for robbers. Don't keep them in your hands--the

devil! put them behind you. Do you not see that this girl is a tender

chicken, who faints at nothing? If she sees that you have arms, she may

die in reality. When she comes to her senses, be careful not to frighten

her. Touch her not, unless I tell you to do so. I can hold her. Keep

quiet, and let me talk to her."

Meanwhile the carriage entered the wood. Poor Lucy awoke as from a

profound and painful slumber. She opened her eyes, and her horrible

situation rushed with full force upon her mind. She struggled again in

vain, she attempted to scream, but Nibbio said to her, holding up the

handkerchief, "Be tranquil; it is the best thing you can do. We do not

wish to harm you; but if you do not keep silence, we must make you."

"Let me go. Who are you? Where are you taking me? Why am I here? Let me

go, let me go."

"I tell you, don't be frightened. You are not a child, and you ought to

know that we will not harm you. We might have murdered you before this,

if such had been our intention. Be quiet, then."

"No, no, let me go; I know you not."

"We know you well enough, however."

"Oh, holy Virgin! Let me go, for charity's sake. Who are you? Why have

you brought me here?"

"Because we have been ordered to do so."

"Who? who? who ordered you to do it?"

"Hush!" said Nibbio, in a severe tone. "Such questions must not be

answered."

Lucy attempted to throw herself from the door of the carriage, but

finding the effort vain, she had recourse again to entreaties, and with

her cheeks bathed in tears, and her voice broken by sobs, she continued,

"Oh, for the love of heaven, and the holy Virgin, let me go! What harm

have I done you? I am a poor creature, who have never injured you; I

forgive you all that you have done, and will pray to God for you. If you

have a daughter, a wife, or a mother, think what they would suffer in my

situation. Remember that we must all die, and that one day you will

hope that God will show mercy to you. Let me go, let me go; the Lord

will guide me on my way."

"We cannot."

"You cannot? Great God! why can you not? Where are you taking me?"

"We cannot; your supplications are useless. Do not be frightened; we

will not harm you. Be quiet; no one shall harm you."

More than ever alarmed to perceive that her words produced no effect,

Lucy turned to Him who holds in his powerful hand the hearts of men, and

can, if he sees fit, soften the most ferocious. She crossed her arms on

her breast, and prayed from the depth of her heart, fervently; then

again vainly implored to be set free: but we have not the heart to

relate more at length this painful journey, which lasted four hours, and

which was to be succeeded by many hours of still deeper anguish.

At the castle, the Unknown was waiting her arrival with extraordinary

solicitude and agitation of mind. Strange, that he who had coldly and

calmly disposed of so many lives, and had regarded as nothing the

torments he inflicted, should now feel an impression of remorse, almost

of terror, at the tyranny he exercised over an unknown girl, an humble

peasant! From a high window of his castle, he had for some time looked

down upon the valley beneath; at last he saw the carriage approaching

slowly at a distance, as if the horses were wearied with their rapid

journey. He perceived it, and felt his heart beat violently.

"Is she there?" thought he. "What trouble this girl gives me! I must

free myself from it." And he prepared himself to send one of his

ruffians to meet the carriage, and tell Nibbio to conduct the girl

immediately to the castle of Don Roderick; but an imperious \_No\_, which

made itself heard by his conscience, caused him to relinquish his

design. Tormented, however, by the necessity of ordering something to be

done, and insupportably weary of waiting the slow approach of the

carriage, he sent for an old woman who was attached to his service.

This woman had been born in the castle, and had passed her life in it.

She had been impressed from infancy with an opinion of the unlimited

power of its masters; and her principal maxim was implicit obedience

towards them. To the ideas of duty were united sentiments of respect,

fear, and servile devotion. When the Unknown became lord of the castle,

and began to make such horrible use of his power, she experienced a

degree of pain, and at the same time a more profound sentiment of

subjection. In time she became habituated to what was daily acting

before her: the powerful and unbridled will of such a lord she viewed as

an exercise of fated justice. When somewhat advanced in years, she had

espoused a servant of the house, who being sent on a hazardous

expedition, left his body on the high road, and his wife a widow in the

castle. The revenge that her lord took for his death imparted to her a

savage consolation, and increased her pride at being under his

protection. From that day she rarely set foot beyond the castle walls,

and by degrees there remained to her no other idea of human beings, than

that of those by whom she was daily surrounded. She was not employed in

any particular service, but each one gave her something to do as it

pleased him. She had sometimes clothes to mend, food to prepare, and

wounds to dress. Commands, reproaches, and thanks were equally mingled

with abusive raillery: she went by the appellation of the \_old woman\_,

and the tone with which the name was uttered varied according to the

circumstances and humour of the speaker. Disturbed in her idleness and

irritated in her self-love, which were her two ruling passions, she

returned these compliments with language in which Satan might have

recognised more of his own genius than in that of her persecutors.

"You see that carriage below there," said the Unknown.

"I do," said she.

"Have a litter prepared immediately, and let it carry you to

\_Malanotte\_. Quick, quick; you must arrive before the carriage; it

approaches with the slow step of death. In this carriage there is--there

ought to be--a young girl. If she is there, tell Nibbio from me, that he

must place her in the litter, and that he must come at once to me. You

will get into the litter with her; and when you arrive here, you must

take her to your room. If she asks you where you are leading her, whose

is this castle, be careful----"

"Oh, do not doubt me," said the old woman.

"But," pursued the Unknown, "comfort her, encourage her."

"What can I say to her?"

"What can you say to her? Comfort her, I tell you. Have you arrived at

this age, and know not how to administer consolation to the afflicted?

Have you never had any sorrow? Have you never been visited by fear? Do

you not know the language that consoles in such moments? Speak this

language to \_her\_ then; find it in the remembrance of your own

misfortunes. Go directly."

When she was gone, he remained some time at the window, gazing at the

approaching carriage; he then looked at the setting sun, and the

glorious display of clouds about the horizon. He soon withdrew, closed

the window, and kept pacing the apartment in a state of uneasy

excitement.

CHAPTER XXI.

The old woman hastened to obey, and gave orders, under authority of that

name which, by whomsoever pronounced, set the whole castle in motion, as

no one imagined that any one would dare to use it unauthorised. She

reached \_Malanotte\_ a little before the carriage: when it was near at

hand, she left the litter; and making a sign to the coachman to stop,

approached the window, and whispered in the ear of Nibbio the will of

her master.

Lucy, sensible that the motion of the carriage had ceased, shook off the

lethargy into which she had for some time been plunged, and in an agony

of terror looked around her. Nibbio had drawn himself back on the seat,

and the old woman, resting her chin on the window, said to Lucy, "Come,

my child; come, poor girl; come with me. I have orders to treat you

kindly, and to offer you every consolation."

At the sound of a female voice the unfortunate girl felt a momentary

relief, which was, however, succeeded by deeper terror as she looked at

the person from whom it proceeded. "Who are you?" said she, anxiously

fixing her eyes upon her.

"Come, come, poor girl," repeated the old woman.

Nibbio and his two companions, inferring the designs of their master

from the extraordinary deportment of the old woman, endeavoured to

persuade the poor girl to obey; but Lucy kept gazing at the wild and

savage solitude around, which left her no ray of hope. However, she

attempted to cry out; but seeing Nibbio give a look to the handkerchief,

she stopped, trembled, was seized, and then placed in the litter. The

old woman was placed beside her; and Nibbio left the two villains for

their escort, and hastened forward at the call of his master. Lucy,

aroused to momentary energy by the near approach of the deformed and

withered features of her companion, cried, "Where am I? Where are you

taking me?"

"To one who wishes you well; to a great--you are a lucky girl; be happy,

do not be afraid; be happy. He has told me to encourage you; you will

tell him that I have done so, will you not?"

"Who is this man? What is he? What does he want with me? I do not belong

to him. Tell me where I am. Let me go. Tell these men to let me go, to

take me to some church. Oh, you, who are a woman, in the name of the

holy Virgin, I entreat you."

This holy and tender name, so often pronounced with respect in her early

years, and for so long a time neglected and forgotten, produced on the

mind of the wretched woman, who had not heard it for so long a time, a

confused impression, like the remembrance of lights and shadows on the

mind of one blind from infancy.

Meanwhile the Unknown, standing at the door of the castle, looked below,

and saw the litter slowly ascending, and Nibbio walking a few steps in

advance of it. At the sight of his master, he hurried forward. "Come

here," said the signor to him, and led the way to an inner hall. "Well?"

said he, stopping.--"All has been done according to your wishes,"

replied Nibbio, bowing. "The order in time, the young girl in time, no

one near the place, a single cry, no one alarmed, the coachman diligent,

the horses swift; but----"

"But what?"

"But, to say truth, I would rather have received orders to plunge a

dagger in her heart at once, than to have been obliged to look at her,

and hear her entreaties."

"What is this? What is this? What do you mean?"

"I would say that during the whole journey--yes, during the whole

journey--she has excited my compassion."

"Compassion! What dost thou know of compassion? What \_is\_ compassion?"

"I have never understood what it is until to-day; it is something like

fear; if it takes possession of one, one is no longer a man."

"Let me hear, then, what she has done to excite your compassion?"

"Oh, most illustrious signor, she wept, implored, and looked so

piteously; then turned pale, pale as death; then wept, and prayed again,

and said such words----"

"I will not have this girl in the castle," thought the Unknown. "I was

wrong to embark in this business; but I have promised, I have promised:

when she is far away----" And looking imperiously at Nibbio, "Now," said

he, "put an end to your compassion; mount a horse, take with you two or

three companions, if you wish; go to the castle of Don Roderick, thou

knowest it. Tell him to send immediately, immediately--or otherwise----"

But another \_No\_, more imperious than the first, whose sound was heard

in the depth of his soul, prevented his proceeding. "\_No\_," said he in a

determined tone, as if expressing the command of this secret

voice,--"\_no\_; go to bed; and to-morrow morning you shall do what I

shall then order."

"This girl must have some demon who protects her," thought he, as he

remained alone, with his arms crossed on his breast, regarding the

fitful shadows cast by the rays of the moon on the floor, which darted

through the grating of the lofty windows. "She must have some demon or

an angel who protects her. Compassion in Nibbio! To-morrow morning,

to-morrow morning at the latest, she shall be sent away; she must submit

to her destiny, that is certain. And," continued he, with the tone of

one who gives a command to a wayward child, under the conviction that he

will not obey it, "we will think of it no more. This animal Don Roderick

must not come to torment me with thanks, for--I do not wish to hear her

spoken of. I have served him--because I promised to do so; and I

promised, because it was my destiny. But Don Roderick shall pay me with

usury. Let us see----"

And he endeavoured to imagine some difficult enterprise in which to

engage Don Roderick as a punishment; but his thoughts involuntarily

recurred to another subject. "Compassion in Nibbio! What has she done? I

must see her. No! Yes! I must see her."

He passed through several halls, and arriving at the apartment of the

old woman, knocked with his foot at the door.

"Who is there?"

"Open."

At the sound of this voice, the old woman quickly obeyed, and flung the

door wide open. The Unknown threw a glance around the chamber, and by

the light of the lantern, which stood on the table, saw Lucy on the

floor in one corner of it.

"Why did you place her there?" said he, with a frowning brow.

"She placed herself there," replied she, timidly. "I have done all I

could to encourage her; but she will not listen to me."

"Rise," said he to Lucy, who, at the noise of his step, and at the sound

of his voice, had been seized with new terror. She buried her face in

her hands, and remained silent and trembling before him.

"Rise; I will not harm you; I can befriend you," said the signor.

"Rise!" repeated he, in a voice of thunder, irritated at having spoken

in vain.

As if alarm had restored her exhausted strength, the unfortunate girl

fell on her knees, clasped her hands on her breast, as if before a

sacred image, then with her eyes fixed on the earth, exclaimed, "Here I

am, murder me if you will."

"I have already told you that I will not harm you," replied the Unknown,

in a more gentle tone, gazing at her agonised and altered features.

"Courage, courage," said the old woman. "He tells you himself that he

will not harm you."

"And why," resumed Lucy, in a voice in which indignation and despair

were mingled with alarm and dismay,--"why make me suffer the torments of

hell? What have I done to you?"

"Perhaps they have not treated you kindly? Speak!"

"Oh, kindly treated! They have brought me hither by treachery and force.

Why, why did they bring me? Why am I here? Where am I? I am a poor

creature. What have I done to you? In the name of God----"

"God! God! always God!" said the Unknown. "Those who are too weak to

defend themselves, always make use of the name of God, as if they knew

something concerning him! What! do you mean by this word to make me----"

and he left the sentence unfinished.

"Oh, signor, what could I mean, a poor girl like me, except that you

should have pity on me? God pardons so many deeds for one act of mercy!

Let me go; for pity, for charity, let me go. Do not make a poor creature

suffer thus! Oh, you, who have it in your power, tell them to let me go.

They brought me hither by force. Put me again in the carriage with this

woman, and let it carry me to my mother. O holy Virgin! My mother! my

mother! Perhaps she is not far from here--I thought I saw my mountains!

Why do you make me suffer? Carry me to a church; I will pray for you all

my life. Does it cost you so much to say one word? Oh, I see that you

are touched! Say but the word, say it. God pardons so many deeds for one

act of mercy."

"Oh, why is she not the daughter of one of the cowards who outlawed

me?" thought the Unknown. "I should then enjoy her sufferings; but

now----"

"Do not stifle so good an inspiration," pursued Lucy, on seeing

hesitation in the countenance of her persecutor. "If you do not grant me

mercy, the Lord will; he will send death to relieve me, and all will be

over. But you--one day, perhaps, you also--but no, no--I will pray the

Lord to preserve you from evil. What would it cost you to say one word?

If ever you experience these torments----"

"Well, well, take courage," said the Unknown, with a gentleness that

astonished the old woman. "Have I done you any harm? Have I menaced

you?"

"Oh, no. I see that you have a good heart, and that you pity a poor

creature. If you chose, you could alarm me more than any of them, you

could make me die with fear; and on the contrary, you have--you have

given me some consolation. God reward you! Accomplish the work you have

begun; save me, save me."

"To-morrow morning."

"Oh, save me now, now!"

"To-morrow morning I will see you again, I tell you. Be of good courage.

Rest yourself. You must need food; it shall be brought to you."

"No, no, I shall die if any one comes into this room, I shall die. Take

me away, God will reward you."

"A servant will bring you something to eat," said the Unknown; "and

you," continued he, turning to the old woman, "persuade her to eat, and

to repose on the bed. If she consents to have you sleep with her, well;

if not, you can sleep very well on the floor. Be kind to her, I say; and

take care that she makes no complaint of you."

He hastily quitted the room, before Lucy could renew her entreaties.

"Oh, miserable that I am! Shut, shut the door!" said Lucy, returning to

seat herself in her corner. "Oh, miserable that I am! Who shall I

implore now? Where am I? Tell me, tell me, for charity, who is this

signor? Who has been talking to me? who is he?"

"Who is he? Do you wish me to tell you? you must wait awhile first. You

are proud, because he protects you; provided you are satisfied, no

matter what becomes of me. Ask \_him\_ his name. If I should tell you, he

would not speak to me so gently as he did to you. I am an old woman, I

am an old woman," continued she, grumbling: but hearing the sobs of

Lucy, she remembered the threat of her master; and addressing her in a

less bitter tone, "Well! I have said no harm. Be cheerful. Do not ask me

what I cannot tell you, but have courage. How satisfied most people

would be, should he speak to them as he has spoken to you! Be cheerful!

Directly, you shall have something to eat; and from what he said, I know

it will be something good. And then, you must lie down, and you will

leave a little room for me," added she, with an accent of suppressed

rancour.

"I cannot eat; I cannot sleep. Leave me, approach me not. You will not

go away?"

"No, no," said the old woman, seating herself on a large arm-chair, and

regarding her with a mingled expression of alarm and rage. She looked at

the bed, and did not very well relish the idea of being banished from it

for the night, as it was very cold; but she hoped at least for a good

supper. Lucy felt neither cold nor hunger; she remained stupified with

grief and terror; her ideas became vague and confused as in the delirium

of a fever.

She shuddered at hearing a knock at the door. "Who is there?" cried she,

"who is there? Don't let any one come in."

"It is only Martha, bringing something to eat."

"Shut, shut the door!" cried Lucy.

"Certainly," replied the old woman. Taking a basket from the hands of

Martha, she placed it on the table, and closed the door. She invited

Lucy to taste the delicious food, bestowing on it profuse praises, and

on the wine too, which was such as the signor himself drank with his

friends; but seeing that they were useless she said, "It is your own

fault, you \_must\_ not forget to tell him that I asked you. I will eat,

however, and leave enough for you, if you should come to your senses."

When her supper was finished she approached Lucy again, and renewed her

solicitations.

"No, no, I wish nothing," replied she, in a faint and exhausted voice.

"Is the door shut?" she exclaimed, with momentary energy; "is it well

secured?"

The old woman approached the door, and showed her that it was firmly

bolted. "You see," said she, "it is well fastened. Are you satisfied

now?"

"Oh! satisfied! satisfied! in this place!" said Lucy, sinking into her

corner. "But God knows that I am here."

"Come to bed. What would you do there, lying like a dog? How silly to

refuse comforts when you can have them!"

"No, no, leave me to myself."

"Well, remember it is your own fault; if you wish to come to bed, you

can--I have left room enough for you; remember I have asked you very

often." Thus saying, she drew the clothes over her, and soon all was

profound silence.

Lucy remained motionless, with her face buried in her hands, which

rested on her knees; she was neither awake nor asleep, but in a dreamy

state of the imagination, painful, vague, and changeful. At first, she

recalled with something of self-possession the minutest circumstances of

this horrible day; then her reason for a moment forsook its throne,

vainly struggling against the phantoms conjured by uncertainty and

terror; at last, weary and exhausted, she sunk on the floor, in a state

approaching to, and resembling, sleep. But suddenly she awoke, as at an

internal call, and strove to recall her scattered senses, to know where

she was, and why she had been brought thither. She heard a noise, and

listened; it was the heavy breathing of the old woman, in a deep

slumber; she opened her eyes on the objects around her, which the

flickering of the lamp, now dying in its socket, rendered confused and

indistinct. But soon her recent impressions returned distinctly to her

mind, and the unfortunate girl recognised her prison; and with the

knowledge came associated all the terrors of this horrible day; and,

overcome anew by anxiety and terror, she wished earnestly for death.

She could only pray, and as the words fell from her trembling lips, she

felt her confidence revive. Suddenly a thought presented itself to her

mind; that her prayer would be more acceptable if united with an

offering of something dear to her; she remembered the object to which

she had clung for her happiness, and resolved to sacrifice it; then

clasping her hands over her chaplet, which hung upon her neck, and

raising her tearful eyes to heaven, she cried, "O most holy Virgin! thou

to whom I have so often prayed, and who hast so often consoled me--thou

who hast suffered so much sorrow, and art now so glorious--thou who hast

performed so many miracles for the afflicted--holy Virgin! succour me,

take me from this peril, mother of God! return me safely to my mother,

and I pledge myself to remain devoted to thy service; I renounce for

ever the unfortunate youth, and from this time devote myself to thee!"

After this consecration of herself, she felt her confidence and faith

increase; she remembered the "\_to-morrow morning\_" uttered by the

Unknown, and took it as a promise of safety. Her wearied senses yielded

to this new sentiment, and she slept profoundly and peacefully with the

name of her protectress on her lips.

But in this same castle was one who could not sleep: after having

quitted Lucy, and given orders for her supper, he had visited the posts

of his fortress; but her image remained stamped on his mind, her words

still resounded in his ears. He retired to his chamber, and threw

himself on his bed; but in the stillness around this same image of Lucy

in her desolation and anguish took possession still more absolutely of

his thoughts, and rendered sleep hopeless. "What new feelings are

these?" thought he. "Nibbio was right; but what is there in a woman's

tears to unman me thus? Did I never see a woman weep before? Ay, and how

often have I beheld their deepest agonies unmoved? But now----"

And here he recalled, without much difficulty, many an instance when

neither prayers nor tears were able to make him swerve from his

atrocious purposes; but instead of deriving augmented resolution, as he

had hoped, from the recollection, he experienced an emotion of alarm, of

consternation; so that even, as a relief from the torment of

retrospection, he thought of Lucy. "She lives still," said he, "she is

here; there is yet time. I have it in my power to say to her, Go in

peace! I can also ask her forgiveness. Forgiveness! I ask forgiveness of

a woman! Ah, if in that word existed the power to drive this demon from

my soul, I would say it; yes, I feel that I would say it. To what am I

reduced? I am no longer myself! Well, well! many a time have such

follies passed through my head; this will take its flight also."

And to procure the desired forgetfulness, he endeavoured to busy himself

with some new project; but in vain: all appeared changed! that which at

another time would have been a stimulus to action, had now lost its

charm; his imagination was overwhelmed with the insupportable weight of

remembered crimes. Even the idea of continuing to associate with those

whom he had employed as the instruments of his daring and licentious

will was revolting to his soul; and, disgusted and weary, he found

relief only in the thought that by the dawn of morning he would set at

liberty the unfortunate Lucy.

"I will save her; yes, I will save her. As soon as the day breaks, I

will fly to her, and say, Go, go in peace. But my promise! Ay, who is

Don Roderick that I should hold sacred a promise made to \_him\_?" With

the perplexity of a man to whom a superior addresses unexpectedly an

embarrassing question, the Unknown endeavoured to reply to this his own,

or, rather, that was whispered by this new principle, that had of a

sudden sprung up so awfully in his soul, to pass judgment upon him. He

wondered how he could have resolved to engage himself to inflict

suffering, without any motive of hatred or fear, on an unfortunate being

whom he did not know, only to render a service to this man. He could not

find any excuse for it; he could not even imagine how he had been led to

do it. The hasty determination had been the impulse of a mind obedient

to its habitual feelings, the consequence of a thousand previous deeds;

and from an examination of the motives which had led him to commit a

single deed, he was led to the retrospection of his whole life.

In looking back from year to year, from enterprise to enterprise, from

crime to crime, from blood to blood, each one of his actions appeared

abstracted from the feelings which had induced their perpetration, and

therefore exposed in all their horrible deformity, but which those

feelings had hitherto veiled from his view. They were all his own, he

was responsible for all; they comprised his life; the horror of this

thought filled him with despair; he grasped his pistol, and raised it to

his head--but at the moment in which he would have terminated his

miserable existence, his thoughts rushed onwards to the time that must

continue to flow on after his end. He thought of his disfigured corpse,

without sense or motion, in the power of the vilest men; the

astonishment and confusion which would take place in the castle, the

conversation it would excite in the neighbourhood and afar off, and,

more than all, the rejoicing of his enemies. The darkness and silence of

the night inspired him with other apprehensions still; it appeared to

him that he would not have hesitated to perform the deed in open day, in

the presence of others. "And, after all, what was it? but a moment, and

all would be over." And now another thought rose to his mind: "If that

other life, of which they tell, is an invention of priests, is a mere

fabrication, why should I die? Of what consequence is all that I have

done? It is a trifle--but if there should be another life!"

At such a doubt, he was filled with deeper despair, a despair from which

death appeared no refuge. The pistol dropped from his grasp--both hands

were applied to his aching head--and he trembled in every limb. Suddenly

the words he had heard a few hours before came to his memory, "God

pardons so many deeds for one act of mercy." They did not come to him

clothed in the humble tone of supplication, with which he had heard them

pronounced, but in one of authority which offered some gleam of hope. It

was a moment of relief: he brought to mind the figure of Lucy, when she

uttered them; and he regarded her, not as a suppliant, but as an angel

of consolation. He waited with anxiety the approach of day, that he

might hear from her mouth other words of hope and life. He imagined

himself conducting her to her mother, "And then, what shall I do

to-morrow? what shall I do for the rest of the day? what shall I do the

day after, and the next day? and the night? the night which will so soon

return? Oh, the night! let me not think of the night!" And, plunged in

the frightful void of the future, he sought in vain for some employment

of time, some method of living through the days and nights. Now he

thought of abandoning his castle, and flying to some distant country,

where he had never been heard of; but, could he fly from himself? Then

he felt a confused hope of recovering his former courage and habits; and

that he should regard these terrors of his soul but as a transient

delirium: now, he dreaded the approach of day, which should exhibit him

so miserably changed to his followers; then he longed for its light, as

if it would bring light also to his troubled thoughts. As the day broke,

a confused sound of merriment broke upon his ear. He listened; it was a

distant chiming of bells, and he could hear the echo of the mountains

repeat the harmony, and mingle itself with it. From another quarter,

still nearer, and then from another, similar sounds were heard. "What

means this?" said he. "For what are these rejoicings? What joyful event

has taken place?" He rose from his bed of thorns, and opened the window.

The mountains were still half veiled in darkness, the heavens appeared

enveloped in a heavy and vast cloud; but he distinguished, through the

faint dawn of the morning, crowds passing towards the opening on the

right of the castle, villagers in their holyday garments. "What are

those people doing? what has happened to cause all this joy?" And

calling a bravo, who slept in the adjoining room, he asked him the cause

of the commotion. The man replied that he was ignorant of it, but would

go immediately and enquire. His master remained at the window,

contemplating the moving spectacle, which increasing day rendered more

distinct every moment. He saw crowds passing in succession; men, women,

and children, as guided by one impulse, directing their steps in one

direction. They appeared animated by a common joy; and the bells, with

their united sound of merriment, seemed to be an echo of the general

hilarity. The Unknown looked on intently, and felt an eager curiosity to

know what could have communicated such happiness to such a multitude of

people.

CHAPTER XXII.

The bravo hastened back with the intelligence, that the Cardinal

Frederick Borromeo, Archbishop of Milan, had arrived the evening before

at \*\*\*, and was expected to pass the day there. The report of his

arrival being spread abroad, the people had been seized with a desire to

see him; and the bells were rung in testimony of the happiness his

presence conferred, and also to give wider notice of his arrival. The

Unknown, left alone, continued to look down into the valley--"For a man!

all crowding, all eager to see a man! And, nevertheless, each one of

them has some demon that torments him; but none, none, a demon like

mine; not one has passed such a night as I have. What is there in this

man to excite such joy? Some silver which he will scatter among

them.--But \_all\_ are not actuated by such a motive. Well, a few

words--Oh! if he had a few words of consolation for me! Yes--why should

I not go to him? Why not? I \_will\_ go. What better can I do? I will go

and speak to him; speak to him alone. What shall I say to him? Why, why,

that which----I will hear what he will say to me."

Having come to this vague determination, he threw over his shoulders a

military cloak, put his pistol and dagger in his girdle, and took from

the wall, where it hung, a carabine almost as famous as himself; thus

accoutred, he proceeded to Lucy's chamber, and leaving his carabine at

the door, he knocked and demanded admittance. The old woman hastened to

open the door; he entered, and looking around the room saw Lucy tranquil

and silent in the corner of it.

"Does she sleep?" asked he in a low voice. "Why did you suffer her to

sleep there? Were these my orders?"

"I did all I could; but she would neither eat nor come----"

"Let her sleep then in peace; be careful not to trouble her, and when

she wakes--Martha will be in the next chamber, and you must send her for

whatever she may want--when she wakes--tell her I----that the signor has

gone out for a little while, that he will return, and that--he will do

all that she wishes."

The old woman was astonished; "She must be some princess," thought she.

The Unknown departed, took his carabine, gave orders to Martha to be in

waiting, and to a bravo to guard the chamber, and not suffer any one to

approach; then leaving the castle, with rapid steps he descended into

the valley. The bravoes whom he met ascending the hill, stopped

respectfully at his approach, expecting and awaiting orders for some

expedition, and were astonished at his whole appearance, and the looks

with which he returned their salute.

When he reached the public road, his presence made a very different

impression; at his approach every one gave way, regarding him with looks

of suspicion and wonder; each individual whom he met, cast at him a

troubled look, bowed, and slackened his pace, in order to remain behind.

He arrived at the village in the midst of the throng; his name quickly

spread from mouth to mouth, and a passage was instantly made for him to

pass. He enquired of one near him where the cardinal was. "In the house

of the curate," replied the person, respectfully pointing to it. He went

to it, entered a small court where there were several priests, who

looked at him with astonishment and suspicion. He saw, opposite to him,

a door open, which led to a small hall, in which were also a great

collection of priests. He left his carabine in a corner of the court,

and entered the hall. He was received here, likewise, with doubting

looks, and whispers; and his name was repeated with infinite awe. He

accosted one of them, asking to be directed to the cardinal, as he

wished to speak with him.

"I am a stranger," replied the priest; and looking around upon the

assembly, he called the cross-bearer, who at the time was saying to one

near him, "He here!--the famous----What can have brought him here? Make

room!" At this call, which resounded in the general silence, he felt

himself compelled to advance. He bowed before the Unknown, raised his

eyes in uneasy curiosity to his face, and understanding his request, he

stammered out, "I do not know if his illustrious lordship--at this

time--is--can--however, I will go and see." And he went, against his

will, to carry the message to the cardinal.

At this period of our history we cannot do otherwise than rest a while,

as the traveller worn out and weary with a long journey through a

sterile and savage land, refreshes himself for a season under the shade

of a tree, near a fountain of living water. We are about to introduce a

person whose name and memory cause an emotion of respect and sympathy;

and this emotion is the more grateful from our previous contemplation of

wickedness and crime. We trust our readers will excuse our devoting a

few moments to this great and good man.

Frederick Borromeo, born in the year 1564, was one of those rare

characters who have employed a fine genius, the resources of great

wealth, the advantages of privileged rank, and unceasing industry, for

the discovery and practice of that which was for the good of mankind.

His life was like a stream, which, issuing limpid from its native rock,

moves on undefiled over various lands; and, clear and limpid still,

unites itself with the ocean. In the midst of the pomps and pleasures of

the world, he applied himself from his earliest youth to study and obey

the precepts of religion; and this application produced in his heart its

legitimate fruits. He took truth for the rule of his thoughts and

actions. He was taught by it not to look upon this life as a burthen to

the many, and a pleasure to the few; but as a scene of activity for all,

and of which all must render their account; and the chief aim of his

thoughts had ever been to render his life useful and holy.

In 1580, he declared his resolution to devote himself to the ministry of

the church, and he took the habit from the hands of his cousin Carlos,

whom the public voice, even to the present day, has uniformly

acknowledged as a saint.[31] He entered a short time after into the

college at Pavia, founded by that holy man, and which still bears the

name of the family. There, whilst applying himself with assiduity to the

occupations prescribed by its rules, he voluntarily imposed on himself,

in addition, the task of instructing the poor and ignorant in the

principles of the Christian religion, and of visiting, consoling, and

aiding the sick. He made use of the authority which was conceded to him

by all, to induce his companions to second him in these deeds of

benevolence; he steadily refused all worldly advantages, and led a life

of self-denial and devotion to the cause of religion and virtue. The

complaints of his kindred, who thought the dignity of the house degraded

by his plain and simple habits of life, were unavailing. He had another

conflict to sustain with the ecclesiastical authorities, who wished to

impel him forward to distinction, and make him appear as the prince of

the place. From all this, however, he carefully withdrew himself,

although at the time but a youth.

[31] Saint Charles Borromeo.

It would not have been astonishing that, during the life of his cousin

Carlos, Frederick should have imitated the example and followed the

counsel of so good a man; but it was surprising, that after his death no

one could perceive that Frederick, although only twenty years of age,

had lost his guardian and guide. The increasing splendour of his

talents, his piety, the support of many powerful cardinals, the

authority of his family, the name itself, to which Carlos had caused to

be associated an idea of sanctity and sacerdotal superiority, all

concurred to point him out as a proper subject for ecclesiastical

dignity. But he, persuaded in the depth of his soul of that which no

true Christian can deny, that a man has no real superiority over

others, but in devotion to their good, dreaded distinction, and sought

to avoid it. He did not wish to escape from the obligation to serve his

neighbour; his life was but one scene of such services; but he did not

esteem himself worthy of so high and responsible an office. Governed by

such feelings, in 1595, when Clement VIII. offered him the archbishopric

of Milan, he refused it without hesitation, but was finally obliged to

yield to the express command of the pope.

Such demonstrations are neither difficult nor rare; it is no greater

effort for hypocrisy to assume them, than for raillery to deride them.

But are they not also the natural expression of wise and virtuous

feeling? The life is the test of sincerity; and though all the

hypocrites in the world had assumed the expression of virtuous

sentiments, yet the sentiments themselves will always command our

respect and veneration, when their genuineness is evinced by a life of

disinterestedness and self-sacrifice.

Frederick, as archbishop, was careful to reserve for himself only that

which was barely necessary, of his time and his wealth: he said, as all

the world says, that the ecclesiastical revenues are the patrimony of

the poor; and we shall see how he put this maxim in practice. He caused

an estimate to be made of the sum necessary for his expenses, and for

those employed in his service: finding it to be 600 sequins, he ordered

that amount to be taken from his patrimonial revenues for the supply of

his table. He exercised such minute economy with regard to himself, that

he did not relinquish any article of dress until it was entirely worn

out; but he joined to these habits of extreme simplicity, an exquisite

neatness, which was remarkable in this age of luxury and uncleanliness.

He did more: in order that nothing should be lost from the fragments of

his frugal table, he assigned them to a hospital for the poor, and a

servant came every day to gather the remnants for that purpose. From the

attention which he paid to such minutiæ, we might form a contracted idea

of his mind, as being incapable of elevating itself to more extensive

designs, were it not for the Ambrosian library, which remains a monument

of his liberality and magnificence. To furnish it with books and

manuscripts, besides those which he had already collected, he sent eight

of the most skilful and learned men to make purchases of them in France,

Spain, Germany, Italy, Flanders, Greece, Lebanon, and Jerusalem. He

succeeded in collecting 30,000 printed volumes, and 14,000 manuscripts.

He joined to the library a college of doctors: these doctors were nine

in number, and supported by him as long as he lived; after his death,

the ordinary revenues not being sufficient for the expense, they were

reduced to two. Their duty consisted in the cultivation of the various

branches of human knowledge, theology, history, belles lettres,

ecclesiastical antiquities, and Oriental languages. Each one was obliged

to publish some work on the subject to which he had particularly applied

himself. He added to this a college, which he called \_Trilingue\_[32],

for the study of the Greek, Latin, and Italian languages; and a college

of pupils, who were instructed in these languages to become professors

in their turn. He united to these also a printing establishment for the

Oriental languages, for Hebrew, Chaldee, Arabic, Persian, and Armenian;

a gallery of pictures, and another of statues; and a school for the

three principal arts of design. For the latter, he was at no loss to

find professors; but this was not the case with regard to the Eastern

languages, which were at this time but little cultivated in Europe. In

the orders which he left for the government and regulations of the

library, we perceive a perpetual attention to utility, admirable in

itself, and much in advance of the ordinary ideas of his time. He

prescribed to the librarian the cultivation of a regular correspondence

with the learned men of Europe, to keep himself acquainted with the

state of science, and to procure every new and important work; he also

charged him to point out to young students the books necessary for them,

and, whether natives or foreigners, to afford them every possible

facility in making use of those of the library. There is a history of

the Ambrosian library by one Pierpaolo Bosca, who was librarian after

the death of Frederick, in which all the excellent regulations are

minutely detailed. Other libraries existed in Italy, but with little

benefit to the studious: the books were carefully concealed from view in

their cases, and inaccessible to all, except on rare occasions, and with

the utmost difficulty. A book might then be seen, but not studied. It is

useless to enquire what were the fruits of these establishments of

Borromeo, but we must admire the generosity, judgment, and benevolence

of the man who could undertake and execute such things, in the midst of

the ignorance, inertness, and general indifference which surrounded him.

And in attention to public, he was not unmindful of private benevolence;

indeed, his whole life was a perpetual almsgiving; on the occasion of

the famine of which our history has spoken, we may have to relate more

than one instance of his wisdom and generosity.

[32] Three languages.

The inexhaustible charity of the man shone as much in his private

charities, as in his splendid and magnificent public establishments

already recorded. On one occasion he saved a young lady from being

immured in a convent against her wish. Her selfish father pretended he

could not marry her suitably without a portion of 4000 crowns. The

bishop advanced the money.

Easy of access, he made it a principle to receive the poor who applied

to him, with kindness and affection. And on this point he was obliged to

dispute with the nobility, who wished to keep him to their standard of

action. One day, whilst visiting among the mountaineers, and instructing

some poor children, Frederick bestowed caresses on them. A nobleman who

was present, warned him to be careful, as the children were dirty and

disgusting. The good bishop, not without indignation, replied, "These

souls are committed to my care; these children may never see me again;

and are you not willing that I should embrace them?"

He, however, seldom felt indignation or anger: he was admired for a

placability, a sweetness of manner nearly imperturbable; which, however,

was not natural to him, but the effect of continual combat against a

quick and hasty disposition. If ever he appeared harsh, it was to those

subordinate pastors, whom he found guilty of avarice, or negligence, or

any other vice opposed to the spirit of their high calling. With regard

to his own interests or temporal glory, he exhibited no emotion, either

of joy or regret; admirable indeed, if his spirit was in reality not

affected by these emotions; but more admirable still, if viewed as the

result of continued and unremitted effort to subdue them. And amidst all

the important cares with which he was occupied, he did not neglect the

cultivation of his mind; he devoted himself to literature with so much

ardour, that he became one of the most learned men of his time.

We must not, however, conceal that he adopted with firm persuasion, and

maintained with constancy, certain opinions, which at this day would

appear singular and ill-founded; these, however, were the errors of his

time, and not his own.

Our readers may perhaps enquire, if so learned and studious a man has

left no monument of his labours and studies? His works, great and small,

Latin and Italian, printed as well as manuscript, amount to more than a

hundred; they are preserved with care in the library which he founded.

They are composed of moral treatises, sermons, historical dissertations,

sacred and profane antiquities, literature, the fine arts, &c.

And what is the reason that they are so little known, so little sought

for? We cannot enter into the causes of this phenomenon, as our

explanation might not be satisfactory to our readers. So that we had

better resume the course of our history, in relating facts concerning

this extraordinary man.

CHAPTER XXIII.

The Cardinal Frederick was engaged in study, as was his custom,

preparatory to the hour of divine service, when the cross-bearer

entered, with a disturbed and unquiet air.

"A strange visit,--strange indeed, most illustrious signor."

"From whom?" asked the cardinal.

"From the signor ----," replied the chaplain; pronouncing the name which

we are unable to repeat to our readers. "He is without, in person, and

asks admittance to the presence of your lordship."

"Indeed!" said the cardinal, closing his book and rising from his seat,

his countenance brightening; "let him come in, let him come in

immediately."

"But----," replied the chaplain, "does your lordship know who this man

is? It is the famous outlaw ----."

"And is it not a happy circumstance for a bishop, that such a man should

have come to seek him?"

"But----," insisted the chaplain, "we never dare speak of certain

things, because my lord says they are idle tales. However, in this case

it appears to be a duty----. Zeal makes enemies, my lord, and we know

that more than one ruffian has boasted that sooner or later----"

"And what have they done?"

"This man is an enterprising, desperate villain, who is in strict

correspondence with other villains, as desperate as himself, and who,

perhaps, have sent him----"

"Oh! what discipline is this!" said the cardinal, smiling; "the soldiers

exhort the general to cowardice!" Then, with a grave and pensive air, he

resumed, "Saint Carlo would not have deliberated a moment, whether he

should receive such a man; he would have gone to seek him. Let him enter

immediately; he has already waited too long."

The chaplain moved towards the door, saying in his heart, "There is no

remedy; these saints are always obstinate."

He opened the door, and reaching the hall, where he had left the

ecclesiastics, he beheld them collected together in one corner of the

room, and the Unknown standing alone in another. As he approached him,

he eyed him keenly to ascertain whether he had not arms concealed about

his person. "Truly, before introducing him, we might at least

propose----," but his resolution failed him. He spoke--"My lord expects

your lordship. Be kind enough to come with me." And he led the way into

the presence of Frederick, who came forward to meet the Unknown with a

pleased and serene countenance, making a sign to the chaplain to quit

the room.

The Unknown and the cardinal remained for some moments silent and

undecided; the former experienced at the same time a vague hope of

finding some relief to his internal torments, and also a degree of

irritation and shame at appearing in this place as a penitent, to

confess his sins, and implore pardon of a man. He could not speak;

indeed, he hardly wished to do so. However, as he raised his eyes to the

cardinal's face, he was seized with an irresistible sentiment of

respect, which increasing his confidence, and subduing his pride without

offending it, nevertheless kept him silent.

The person of Frederick was indeed fitted to inspire respect and love.

His figure was naturally majestic and noble, and was neither bent nor

wasted by years; his eye was grave and piercing, his brow serene and

pensive; his countenance still shone with the animation of youth,

notwithstanding the paleness of his face, and the visible traces it

presented of abstinence, meditation, and laborious exertion. All his

features indicated that he had once been more than ordinarily handsome;

the habit of solemn and benevolent thought, the internal peace of a long

life, love for mankind, and the influence of an ineffable hope, had

substituted for the beauty of youth, the more dignified and superior

beauty of an old age, to which the magnificent simplicity of the

\_purple\_ added an imposing and inexpressible charm. He kept his eyes for

a few moments fixed on the Unknown, as if to read his thoughts; and

imagining he perceived in his dark and troubled features something

corresponding to the hope he had conceived, "Oh!" cried he in an

animated voice, "what a welcome visit is this! and how I ought to thank

you for it, although it fills me with self-reproach."

"Reproach!" cried the Unknown, in astonishment; but he felt re-assured

by his manner, and the gentleness of his words, and he was glad that the

cardinal had broken the ice, and commenced the conversation.

"Certainly, it is a subject of self-reproach that I should have waited

till you came to me! How many times I might, and ought to have sought

\_you\_!"

"You! seek \_me\_! Do you know who I am? Have they told you my name?"

"Do you believe I could have felt this joy, which you may read in my

countenance--do you believe I could have felt it, at the sight of one

unknown to me? It is you who are the cause of it--you, whom it was my

duty to seek--you, for whom I have so wept and prayed--you, who are that

one of my children (and I love them all with the whole strength of my

affections)--that one, whom I would most have desired to see and

embrace, if I could have ever dared to indulge the hope of so doing. But

God alone can work miracles, and he supplies the weakness and tardiness

of his poor servants."

The Unknown was amazed at the kindness and warmth of this reception;

agitated and bewildered by such unlooked-for benevolence, he kept

silence.

"And," resumed Frederick, more affectionately, "you have some good news

for me; why do you hesitate to tell it me?"

"Good news! I! I have hell in my soul, and how can I bring \_you\_ good

news! Tell me, tell me, if you know, what good news could you expect

from such a one as I?"

"That God has touched your heart, and is drawing you to himself,"

replied the cardinal calmly.

"God! God! If I could see! If I could hear him! Where is God?"

"Do you ask me? you! And who more than yourself has felt his presence?

Do you not now feel him in your heart, disturbing, agitating you, not

leaving you a moment of repose, and at the same time drawing you towards

him, and imparting a hope of tranquillity and of consolation; of

consolation which shall be full and unlimited, as soon as you

acknowledge \_Him\_, confess your sins, and implore his mercy!"

"Oh! yes, yes; something indeed oppresses, something consumes me. But

God--if it be God, if it be He, of whom you speak, what can he do with

me?"

These words were uttered in a tone of despair; but Frederick calmly and

solemnly replied, "What can God do with you? Through you he can exhibit

his power and goodness. He would draw from you a glory, which none other

could render him; you, against whom, the cries of the world have been

for so long a time raised--you, whose deeds are detested----" (The

Unknown started at this unaccustomed language, but was astonished to

find that it excited no anger in his bosom, but rather communicated to

it a degree of alleviation.) "What glory," pursued Frederick, "will

accrue to God? A general cry of supplication has risen against you

before his throne; among your accusers, some no doubt have been

stimulated by jealousy of the power you have exercised; but more, by the

deplorable security of your own heart, which has endured until this day.

But, when \_you\_ yourself shall rise to condemn your life, and become

your own accuser, then, oh! then, God will be glorified! And you ask

what he can do with you? What am I, feeble mortal! that I should presume

to tell you what are his designs respecting you; what he will do with

this impetuous will, and imperturbable constancy, when he shall have

animated and warmed it with love, hope, and repentance? Who are you,

feeble mortal, that you should think yourself able to execute and

imagine greater things for the promotion of evil and vice, than God can

make you accomplish for that of good and virtue? What can God do with

you? Forgive you! save you! accomplish in you the work of redemption!

Are not these things worthy of him? Oh! speak. If I, an humble

creature--I, so miserable, and nevertheless so full of myself--I, such

as I am,--if I so rejoice at your salvation, that to assure it, I would

joyfully give (God is my witness) the few years that remain to me in

life, Oh! think! what must be the love of Him who inspires me with the

thought, and commands me to regard you with such devotion as this!"

The countenance and manner of Frederick breathed celestial purity and

love, in accordance with the vows which came from his mouth. The Unknown

felt the stormy emotions of his soul gradually calming under such

heavenly influence, and giving place to sentiments of deep and profound

interest. His eyes, which from infancy "had been unused to tears, became

swoln;" and burying his face in his hands, he wept the reply he could

not utter.

"Great and good God!" cried Frederick, raising his hands and eyes to

heaven, "what have I ever done--I, thy unprofitable servant--that thou

shouldst have invited me to this banquet of thy grace,--that thou

shouldst have thought me worthy of being thy instrument to the

accomplishment of such a miracle!" So saying, he extended his hand to

take that of the Unknown.

"No!" cried he; "no! Approach me not! Pollute not that innocent and

beneficent hand! You know not what deeds have been committed by the hand

you would place within your own!"

"Suffer," said Frederick, taking it with gentle violence,--"suffer me to

clasp this hand, which is about to repair so many wrongs, to scatter so

many blessings; which will comfort so many who are in affliction, which

will offer itself, peaceably and humbly, to so many enemies."

"It is too much," said the Unknown, sobbing aloud; "leave me, my lord!

good Frederick! leave me! Crowds eagerly await your presence, among whom

are pure and innocent souls, who have come from far to see and hear you,

and you remain here to converse----with whom?"

"We will leave the ninety and nine sheep," replied the cardinal; "they

are in safety on the mountain. I must now remain with the one which was

lost. These people are perhaps now more satisfied than if they had the

poor bishop with them; perhaps God, who has visited you with the riches

and wonders of his grace, may even now be filling their hearts with a

joy, of which they divine not the cause; perhaps they are united to us

without knowing it; perhaps the Holy Spirit animates their hearts with

the fervour of charity and benevolence; inspires them with a spirit of

prayer; with, on your account, a spirit of thanksgiving of which you are

the unknown object."

So saying, he passed his arm around the neck of the Unknown, who, after

resisting a moment, yielded, quite vanquished by this impulse of

kindness, and fell on the neck of the cardinal, in an agony of

repentance. His burning tears dropped on the stainless purple of

Frederick, and the pure hands of the bishop were clasped affectionately

around him, who had hitherto been only habituated to deeds of violence

and treachery.

The Unknown, after a long embrace, covering his face with his hands,

raised his head, exclaiming, "Oh! God! Thou who art truly great and

good! I know myself now; I comprehend what I am; my iniquities are all

before me; I abhor myself; but still--still I experience a consolation,

a joy--yes, a joy which I have never before known in all my horrible

life!"

"God accords to you this grace," said Frederick, "to attract you to his

service, to strengthen you to enter resolutely the new way he has opened

to you, where you have so much to undo, to repair, to weep for!"

"Miserable that I am!" cried he, "there is so much--so much--that I can

only weep over. But at least, there are some things but just undertaken,

that I can arrest--yes, there is at least one evil that I can repair."

He then briefly related, in the most energetic terms of self-execration,

the story of Lucy, with the sufferings and terrors of the unfortunate

girl; her entreaties, and the species of frenzy that her supplications

had excited in his soul; adding, that she was still in the castle.

"Ah! let us lose no time!" cried Frederick, moved with pity and

solicitude. "What happiness for you! You may behold in this, the pledge

of pardon! God makes you the instrument of safety to her, to whom you

were to have been the instrument of ruin. God has indeed blessed

you!--Do you know the native place of the unhappy girl?"

The Unknown named the village.

"It is not far from this," said the cardinal; "God be praised! And

probably----" so saying, he approached a table, and rang a little bell.

The chaplain entered, with an unquiet look; in amazement he beheld the

altered countenance of the Unknown, on which the traces of tears were

still visible; and glancing at that of the cardinal, he perceived,

through its wonted calmness, an expression of great satisfaction,

mingled with extraordinary solicitude. He was roused from the

astonishment which the contemplation excited, by a question of the

cardinal, if, among the curates in the hall, "there was one from \*\*\*?"

"There is, most illustrious lord," replied the chaplain.

"Bring him hither immediately," said Frederick, "and with him, the

curate of this parish."

The chaplain obeyed, and went to the hall where the priests were

assembled. All eyes were turned towards him. He cried aloud, "His most

illustrious and reverend lordship asks for the curate of this parish and

the curate of \*\*\*."

The former advanced immediately, and at the same time was heard, amidst

the crowd, a \_me?\_ uttered in a tone of surprise.

"Are you not the curate of \*\*\*?" said the chaplain.

"Certainly; but----"

"His most illustrious and reverend lordship asks for you."

"Me?" replied he, and Don Abbondio advanced from the crowd with an air

of amazement and anxiety. The chaplain led the way, and introduced them

both to the presence of the cardinal.

The cardinal let go the hand of the Unknown as they entered, and taking

the curate of the parish aside, related in few words the facts of the

story, asking him if he knew some kind female, who would be willing to

go to the castle in a litter, to remove Lucy thence; a devoted,

charitable woman, capable of acting with judgment in so novel an

expedition, and of exerting the best means to tranquillise the poor

girl, to whom deliverance itself, after such anguish and alarm, might

produce new and overwhelming apprehensions. After having reflected a

moment, the curate took upon himself the affair, and departed. The

cardinal then ordered the chaplain to have a litter prepared, and two

mules ready saddled. The chaplain quitted the room to obey his orders,

and the cardinal was left alone with Don Abbondio and the Unknown. The

former, who had kept himself aloof, regarding with eager curiosity the

faces of the Unknown and the cardinal, now came forward, saying, "I was

told that your illustrious lordship wished to see me; but I suppose it

was a mistake."

"There is no mistake;" replied Frederick, "I have both a novel and

agreeable commission to give you. One of your parishioners, whom you

have regarded as lost, Lucy Mondella, is found; she is near this, in the

house of my good friend here. I wish you to go with him, and a good

woman whom the curate of this parish will provide, and bring the poor

girl, who must be so dear to you, to this place."

Don Abbondio did his best to conceal the extreme alarm which such a

proposition caused him; and bowed profoundly, in sign of obedience,

first to the cardinal, and then to the Unknown, but with a piteous look,

which seemed to say, "I am in your hands; be merciful: \_parcere

subjectis\_."

The cardinal asked him of Lucy's relations.

"She has no near relation but her mother, with whom she lives," replied

Don Abbondio.

"Is \_she\_ at home?"

"Yes, my lord."

"Since," replied Frederick, "this poor child cannot yet go home, it

would be a great consolation for her to see her mother; if the curate of

this village does not return before I go to church, I beg you will

desire him to send some prudent person to bring the good woman hither."

"Perhaps I had better go myself," said Don Abbondio.

"No, no; I have other employment for you."

"Her mother," resumed Don Abbondio, "is a very sensitive woman, and it

will require a good deal of discretion to prepare her for the meeting."

"That is the reason that I have named some prudent person. You, however,

will be more useful elsewhere," replied the cardinal. He could have

added, had he not been deterred by a regard to the feelings of the

Unknown--"This poor child needs much to behold some person whom she

knows, after so many hours of alarm, and in such terrible uncertainty of

the future."

It appeared strange, however, that Don Abbondio should not have inferred

it from his manner, or that he should not have thought so himself; the

reluctance he evinced to comply with the request of the cardinal

appeared so out of place, that the latter imagined there must be some

secret cause for it. He looked at the curate attentively, and quickly

discovering the fears of the poor man at becoming the companion of this

formidable lord, or entering his abode, even for a few moments, he felt

an anxiety to dissipate these terrors; and in order to do this, and not

injure the feelings of his new friend by talking privately to Don

Abbondio in his presence, he addressed his conversation to the Unknown

himself, so that Don Abbondio might perceive by his answers, that he was

no longer a man to be feared.

"Do not believe," said he, "that I shall be satisfied with this visit

to-day. You will return, will you not, in company with this worthy

ecclesiastic?"

"\_Will\_ I return!" replied the Unknown: "Oh! if ever you should refuse

to see me, I would remain at your door as a beggar. I must talk to you,

I must hear you, I must see you, I cannot do without you!"

Frederick took his hand, and pressing it affectionately, said, "Do us

the favour, then, the curate of the village and myself, to dine with us;

I shall expect you. In the mean time, whilst you are gathering the first

fruits of repentance and compassion, I will go and offer supplications

and thanksgivings to God with the people."

Don Abbondio, at this exhibition of confidence and affection, was like a

timid child, who beholds a man caressing fearlessly a rough-looking

mastiff, renowned for his ferocity and strength. It is in vain that the

master assures him the dog is a good quiet beast: he looks at him,

neither contradicting nor assenting; he looks at the dog, and dares not

approach him, lest the good beast might show his teeth, if only from

habit; he dares not retreat, from fear of the imputation of cowardice;

but he heartily wishes himself safe "at home!"

The cardinal, as he was quitting the room, still holding the Unknown by

the hand, perceived that the curate remained behind, embarrassed and

motionless, and thinking that perhaps he was mortified at the little

attention that was paid to him, compared with that which was bestowed on

one so criminal, he turned towards him, stopped a moment, and with an

amiable smile said, "Signor Curate, you have always been with me in the

house of our Father; but this man \_perierat, et inventus est\_."

"Oh! how I rejoice at it!" said the curate, bowing to them both very

reverently.

The archbishop passed on, and entering the hall, the admirable pair

presented themselves to the eager gaze of the clergy who were there

assembled. They regarded with intense curiosity those two countenances,

on which were depicted different, but equally profound emotions. The

venerable features of Frederick breathed a grateful and humble joy; in

those of the Unknown might be traced an embarrassment blended with

satisfaction, an unusual modesty, a keen remorse, through which,

however, the lingerings of his severe and savage nature were apparent.

More than one of the spectators thought of that passage of Isaiah, "The

wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with

the kid." Behind them came Don Abbondio, whom no one noticed.

When they had reached the middle of the apartment, the servant of the

cardinal entered, to inform him that he had executed the orders of the

chaplain, that the litter was ready, and that they only waited for the

female whom the curate was to bring. The cardinal told him to inform Don

Abbondio when the curate should have arrived, and that afterwards all

would be subject to his orders and those of the Unknown, to whom he bade

an affectionate farewell, saying, "I shall expect you." Bowing to Don

Abbondio, he directed his steps, followed by the clergy in procession,

to the church.

Don Abbondio and the Unknown were left alone in the apartment; the

latter was absorbed in his own thoughts, impatient for the moment to

arrive when he should take \_his\_ Lucy from sorrow and prison; for she

was indeed \_his\_ Lucy, but in a sense very different from the preceding

night. His countenance expressed concentrated agitation, which to the

suspicious eye of Don Abbondio appeared something worse: he looked at

him with a desire to begin a friendly conversation. "But what can I say

to him?" thought he. "Shall I repeat to him that I rejoice? I rejoice!

at what? That having been a demon, he has formed the resolution to

become an honest man? A pretty salutation, indeed! Eh! eh! \_however\_ I

should arrange my words, my \_I rejoice\_ would signify nothing else! And

can one believe that he has become an honest man all in a moment!

Assertions prove nothing; it is so easy to make them! But, nevertheless,

I must go with him to the castle! Oh! who would have told me this, this

morning! Oh! if ever I am so happy as to get home again, Perpetua shall

answer for having urged me to come here! Oh! miserable that I am! I must

however say something to this man!" He had at least thought of something

to say,--"I never expected the pleasure of being in such respectable

company,"--and had opened his mouth to speak, when the servant entered

with the curate of the village, who informed them that the good woman

was in the litter awaiting them. Don Abbondio, approaching the servant,

said to him, "Give me a gentle beast, for, to say truth, I am not a

skilful horseman."

"Be quite easy," replied the valet, with a smile; "it is the mule of the

secretary, a grave man of letters."

"Well," replied Don Abbondio, and continued to himself, "Heaven preserve

me!"

The Unknown had advanced towards the door, but looking back, and seeing

Don Abbondio behind, he suddenly recollected himself, and bowing with a

polite and humble air, waited to let him pass before. This circumstance

re-assured the poor man a little; but he had scarcely reached the little

court, when he saw the Unknown resume his carbine, and fling it over his

shoulder, as if performing the military exercise.

"Oh! oh! oh!" thought Don Abbondio, "what does he want with this tool?

That is a strange ornament for a converted person! And if some whim

should enter his head! what would become of me! what would become of

me!"

If the Unknown had had the least suspicion of the thoughts that were

passing in the mind of his companion, he would have done his utmost to

inspire him with confidence; but he was far from such an imagination, as

Don Abbondio was very careful not to let his distrust appear.

They found the mules ready at the door: the Unknown mounted one which

was presented to him by a groom.

"Is she not vicious in the least?" asked Don Abbondio of the servant,

with his foot in the stirrup.

"Be quite easy, she is a lamb," replied he. Don Abbondio climbed to the

saddle, by the aid of the servant, and was at last safely mounted.

The litter, which was a few steps in advance, moved at a call from the

driver, and the convoy departed.

They had to pass before the church, which was crowded with people, and

through a small square, which was filled with villagers from abroad, who

had not been able to find a place within the walls of the church. The

report had already spread; and when they saw the carriage appear, and

beheld the man who a few hours before had been the object of terror and

execration, a confused murmur of applause rose from the crowd. They made

way to let him pass; at the same time each one endeavoured to obtain a

sight of him. When he arrived in front of the church, he took off his

hat, and bowed his head in reverence, amidst the tumultuous din of many

voices, which exclaiming "God bless you!" Don Abbondio took off his hat

also, bent his head, and commended himself to the protection of heaven;

and, hearing the voices of his brethren in the choir, he could not

restrain his tears.

But when they reached the open country, in the windings of the almost

deserted road, a darker veil came over his thoughts; there was nothing

that he could regard with confidence but the driver, who, belonging to

the establishment of the cardinal, must certainly be honest, and

moreover did not look like a coward. From time to time they passed

travellers crowding to see the cardinal. The sight of them was a

transient balm to Don Abbondio; but still he approached this formidable

valley, where they would meet none but the vassals of the Unknown! And

what vassals! He desired more than ever to enter into conversation with

his companion, to keep him in good humour; but, seeing him preoccupied,

he dared not attempt to interrupt his thoughts. He was then obliged to

hold colloquy with himself, of which we will transcribe a part for the

benefit of the reader.

"Is it not an astonishing thing that the saints, as well as the wicked,

have always quicksilver in their veins; and, not contented with making a

bustle themselves, they would make all mankind, if they could, join the

dance with them! Is there not a fatality in it, that the most

troublesome come to me,--to me who never meddled with any body; they

take me almost by the hair, and thrust me into their concerns! me! who

desire nothing, but to live tranquilly, if they will let me do so. This

mad knave Don Roderick. What was there wanting to make him the happiest

man in the world, but a little prudence? He is rich, young, respected,

courted; but happiness is a burthen to him, it seems; so that he must

seek trouble for himself and his neighbour. He must set up, forsooth,

for a molester of women,--the most silly, the most villanous, the most

insane conduct in the world. He might ride to paradise in a coach; and

he prefers to go halting to the devil's dwelling. And this man before

me," continued he, regarding him as if he feared he could hear his

thoughts, "and this man, after having, by his villanies, turned the

world upside down, now turns it upside down by his conversion--if he is

really converted! Meanwhile, it is I who am to put it to the test! Some

people always want to make a noise! Is it so difficult to act an honest

part, all one's life, as I have? Not at all! but they prefer to murder,

kill, and play the devil.--Oh! unhappy man that I am! they must always

be in a bustle, even in doing penance! just as if one could not repent

at home, in private, without so much noise,--without giving others so

much trouble.--And his illustrious lordship! to receive him all at once

with open arms; to call him his dear friend, his worthy friend; to

listen to his least words as if he had seen him work miracles, to give

him his public approbation to assist him in all his undertakings; I

should call this precipitation! And without any pledge or security, to

place a poor curate in his hands! A holy bishop--and he is such

assuredly--a holy bishop should regard his curates as the apple of his

eye. A little prudence, a little coolness, a little charity, are things

which, in my opinion, are not inconsistent with sanctity. And should

this be all hypocrisy? Who can tell the designs of such a man? To think

that I must accompany him into the castle? There must be some deviltry

in it! Am I not unhappy enough? Let me not think of it. But how has Lucy

fallen into the clutches of this man? It is a secret between him and my

lord the cardinal, and they don't deign to inform me concerning it: I

don't care to meddle with the affairs of others, but when one's life is

in danger one has a right to know something.--But poor Lucy--I shall be

satisfied if she escapes. Heaven knows what she has suffered. I pity

her, but she was born to be my ruin. And if this man is really

converted, what need has he of me? Oh! what a chaos! But Heaven owes me

its protection, since I did not get myself into the difficulty. If I

could only read in the countenance of this man what passes in his soul!

Look at him; now he looks like Saint Anthony in the desert, and now like

Holofernes himself."

In truth, the thoughts which agitated the Unknown passed over his

countenance, as in a stormy day the clouds fly over the face of the sun,

producing a succession of light and shade. His soul, calmed by the

gentle language of Frederick, felt elated at the hope of mercy, pardon,

and love; but then he sank again under the weight of the terrible past.

Agitated and uneasy, he retraced in his memory those iniquities which

were reparable, and considered what remedies would be the safest and

quickest. And this unfortunate girl! how much she has suffered! how much

he had caused her to suffer! At this thought his impatience to deliver

her increased, and he made a sign to the coachman to hasten.

They entered at last into the valley. In what a situation was now our

poor Don Abbondio! to find himself in this famous valley, of which he

had heard such black and horrible tales. These famous men, the flower

of the bravoes of Italy, these men without pity or fear, to see them in

flesh and blood,--to meet them at every step! They bowed, it is true,

respectfully, in the presence of their lord, but who knows what passed

in their hearts, and what wicked design against the poor priest might,

even then, be forming in their brains.

They reached \_Malanotte\_; bravoes were at the door, who bowed to the

Unknown, glancing with eager curiosity at his companion, and the litter.

If the departure of their master alone, at the break of day, had been

regarded as extraordinary, his return was considered not less so. Is it

a prize which he conducts? And how has he taken possession of it alone?

And what is this strange litter? And whose is this livery? They did not

stir, however; knowing, from the countenance of their master, that their

silence was what he desired.

They reached the castle; the bravoes who were on the esplanade and at

the door, retired on both sides to leave the passage free. The Unknown

made a sign to them not to go farther off. Spurring his mule, he passed

before the litter, and beckoning to Don Abbondio and the coachman to

follow him, he entered a first court, and thence a second: approaching a

small door, and with a gesture keeping back a bravo, who advanced to

hold his stirrup, he said, "Remain there yourself, and let none approach

nearer." He dismounted, and with the reins in his hand, drew near the

woman, who had withdrawn the curtains of the litter, saying to her in a

low voice, "Hasten to comfort her; and make her understand at once that

she is free, and with friends. God will reward you!" He then advanced to

the curate, and helping him to dismount, said, "Signor Curate, I will

not ask your forgiveness for the trouble you have taken on my account;

you suffer for one who will reward you well, and for this poor girl."

His countenance not less than his words restored the courage of Don

Abbondio; drawing a full breath, which had been long pent up in his

breast, he replied, "Your lordship jests, surely? But--but--" and

accepting the hand offered to him so courteously, he slid from the

saddle. The Unknown took the bridle, and gave both animals to the care

of the driver, ordering him to wait there until their return. Taking a

key from his pocket, he opened the little door, and followed by his two

companions, the curate and the female, ascended the stairs.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Lucy had just risen. She was endeavouring to collect her senses, to

separate the turbid visions of sleep from the remembrance of the sad

reality, which appeared to her a dismal dream, when the old woman, in a

voice which she meant to be humble and gentle, said to her, "Ah! you

have slept! You would have done better to go to bed; I told you so a

hundred times." Receiving no answer, she continued, "Eat a little; you

have need of something; if you do not, he will complain of me when he

returns."

"No, no, I wish to go to my mother. Your master promised me, he said,

\_to-morrow morning\_. Where is he?"

"He has gone away; but he left word that he would return soon, and do

all that you should desire."

"Did he say so? did he say so? Well; I wish to go to my mother, now,

now."

Suddenly they heard steps in the adjoining chamber, and a knock at the

door. The old woman demanded, "Who is there?"

"Open," replied the well-known voice.

The old woman drew the bolt, and holding the door open, the Unknown let

Don Abbondio and the good woman pass in; then closing the door, and

remaining outside himself, he sent away the old woman to a distant part

of the castle. The first appearance of other persons increased the

agitation of Lucy, to whom any change brought an accession of alarm. She

looked, and beholding a priest and a female, felt somewhat reassured;

she looked again! Can it be? Recognising Don Abbondio, her eyes remained

fixed as by the wand of an enchanter. The kind woman bent over her, and

with an affectionate and anxious countenance, said, "Alas! my poor

child! come, come with us."

"Who are you?" said Lucy,--but, without waiting her reply, she turned

again to Don Abbondio, exclaiming, "Is it you? Is it you indeed, Signor

Curate? Where are we? Oh! unhappy girl! I am no longer in my right

mind!"

"No, no, it is I, in truth; take courage. We have come to take you away.

I am indeed your curate, come for this purpose----"

As if restored to strength in an instant, Lucy stood up, and fixing her

eyes again on their faces, she said, "The Virgin has sent you, then!"

"I have no doubt of it," said the good lady.

"But is it true, that we may go away? Is it true indeed?" resumed Lucy,

lowering her voice to a timid and fearful tone. "And all these people,"

continued she, with her lips compressed, and trembling from alarm and

horror; "and this lord--this man--he promised me indeed."

"He is here also in person with us," said Don Abbondio. "He is without,

expecting us; let us go at once; we must not make such a man wait."

At this moment the Unknown appeared at the door. Lucy, who, a few

moments before, had desired earnestly to see him--nay, having no other

hope in the world, had desired to see none but him--now that she was so

unexpectedly in the presence of friends, was, for a moment, overcome

with terror. Shuddering with horror, she hid her face on the shoulder of

the good dame. Beholding the innocent girl, on whom the evening before

he had not had resolution to fix his eyes; beholding her countenance,

pale, and changed, from fasting and prolonged suffering, the Unknown

hesitated; but perceiving her impulse of terror, he cast down his eyes,

and, after a moment's silence, exclaimed, "It is true! forgive me!"

"He comes to save you; he is not the same man; he has become good. Do

you hear him ask your forgiveness?" whispered the dame in the ear of

Lucy.

"Could any one say more? Come, lift up your head; do not play the child.

We can go away now, immediately," said Don Abbondio.

Lucy raised her head, looked at the Unknown, and beholding his humble

and downcast expression, she was affected with a mingled feeling of

gratitude and pity: "Oh! my lord! may God reward you for your compassion

to an unfortunate girl!" cried she; "and may he recompense you a

hundred-fold for the consolation you afford me by these words!" So

saying, he advanced towards the door, and went out, followed by Lucy;

who, quite encouraged, was supported by the arm of the good lady, Don

Abbondio bringing up the rear. They descended the stairs, passed through

the courts, and reached the litter; into which, the Unknown with almost

timid politeness (a new thing for him!) assisted Lucy and her new

companion to enter. He then aided Don Abbondio to reseat himself in the

saddle. "Oh! what complaisance!" said the latter, moving much more

lightly than he had done on first mounting.

The convoy resumed their way; as soon as the Unknown was mounted, his

head was raised, and his countenance resumed its accustomed expression

of command and authority. The robbers whom they met on their road

discovered in it marks of strong thought and extraordinary solicitude;

but they did not, they could not, comprehend the cause. They knew

nothing as yet of the great change which had taken place in the soul of

the man, and certainly such a conjecture would not have entered into

their minds.

The good dame hastened to draw the curtains around the litter; pressing

the hands of Lucy affectionately, she endeavoured to encourage her by

words of piety, congratulation, and tenderness. Seeing, however, that

besides the exhaustion from so much suffering, the confusion and

obscurity of all that had happened prevented the poor girl from being

alive to the satisfaction of her deliverance; she said what she thought

would be most likely to restore her thoughts to their ordinary course.

She mentioned the village to which she belonged, and towards which they

were hastening.

"Yes, indeed!" said Lucy, remembering that this village was but a short

distance from her own. "Oh! holy Virgin! I render thee thanks. My

mother! my mother!"

"We will send for her immediately," said her friend, not knowing that it

had already been done.

"Yes, yes; God will reward you. And you,--who are you? How is it that

you have come here?"

"Our curate sent me, because this lord, whose heart God has touched,

(blessed be his holy name!) came to our village to see the cardinal

archbishop, who is visiting among us, the dear man of God! This lord has

repented of his horrible sins, and wishes to change his life; and he

told the cardinal that he had carried off an innocent girl, with the

connivance of another, whose name the curate did not mention to me."

Lucy raised her eyes to heaven.

"You know it, perhaps," continued the lady. "Well, the lord cardinal

thought, that a young girl being in the question, a female should be

found to accompany her; he told the curate to look for one, and the

curate kindly came to me----"

"Oh! may God reward you for your goodness!"

"And the curate desired me to encourage you, my poor child, to relieve

you from uneasiness at once, and to make you understand, how the Lord

has miraculously preserved you."

"Oh! miraculously indeed, through the intercession of the Virgin!"

"He told me to comfort you, to advise you to pardon him who has done you

this evil, to rejoice that God has shown compassion towards him, and

even to pray for him; for, besides its being a duty, you will derive

comfort from it to your own heart."

Lucy replied with a look which expressed assent as clearly as if she had

made use of words, and with a sweetness which words could not have

expressed.

"Worthy young woman!" resumed the friend. "And as your curate was also

in our village, the lord cardinal judged it best to send him with us,

thinking that he might be of some assistance. I had already heard that

he was a poor sort of a timid man; and on this occasion, he has been

wholly taken up with himself, like a hen with one chick."

"And he----he who is thus changed----who is he?"

"How! do you not know?" said the good dame, repeating his name.

"Oh! merciful heaven!" cried Lucy. For many times had she heard this

name repeated with horror, in more than one story, in which he had

appeared like the \_Ogre\_ of the fairy tale. At the idea of having been

in his terrible power, and of now being under his protection,--at the

thought of such peril, and such deliverance, in reflecting who this man

was that had appeared to her so ferocious, and then so humble and so

gentle, she was lost in astonishment, and could only exclaim, from time

to time, "Oh! merciful Heaven!"

"Yes, it is indeed a great mercy! it is a great happiness for half the

world in this neighbourhood, and afar off. When one thinks how many

people he kept in continual alarm; and now, as our curate says----But

you have only to look in his face to know that he is truly changed. And,

besides, by 'their works' ye shall know them."

We should not tell the truth, did we say that the good dame had no

curiosity to learn more of an affair in which she played so important a

part; but, to her praise it must be added, that, feeling a respectful

pity for Lucy, and estimating the weight and dignity of the charge

confided to her, she did not for a moment think of asking her an

indiscreet or idle question. All her discourse in their short journey

was composed of expressions of tenderness and interest for the poor

girl.

"It must be long since you have eaten any thing."

"I do not remember----It must indeed be some time."

"Poor child! you must need something to restore your strength."

"Yes," replied Lucy, in a faint voice.

"At my house, thanks be to God, we shall find something presently. Be of

good cheer, it is but a short distance off."

Lucy, wearied and exhausted by her various emotions, fell languidly to

the bottom of the litter, overcome by drowsiness; and her kind companion

left her to a short repose.

As to Don Abbondio, the descent from the castle did not cause him so

much fright as the ascent thither; but it was nevertheless not

agreeable. When his alarm had first ceased, he felt relieved from an

intolerable burthen; but he now began to torment himself in various

ways, and found materials for such an operation in the present as well

as in the future. His manner of travelling, to which he was not

accustomed, he found to be exceedingly unpleasant, especially in the

descent from the castle to the valley. The driver, obedient to a sign

from the Unknown, made his beasts set off at a quick pace; the two mules

kept up with the litter; and thus poor Don Abbondio, subjected to the

unusual bounding and rebounding, which was more perilous from the

steepness of the declivity they were descending, was obliged to hold

fast by the saddle in order to keep his seat, not daring to ask his

companions to abate somewhat of their speed. Moreover, if the road lay

on a height, along a ridge, the mule, according to the custom of these

animals, would obstinately keep on the outside, and place his feet

literally on the very edge of the precipice. "Thou also," said he in his

heart to the beast, "thou also hath this cursed desire to seek danger,

when there are so many other paths!" He tightened the rein on the other

side, but in vain; so that, although dying of vexation and fear, he

suffered himself, as was his custom, to be led by the will of another.

The bravoes no longer caused him much uneasiness now that he felt

confidence in their master. "But," thought he, nevertheless, "if the

news of this great conversion spreads, while we are yet here, who knows

how these people may take it? Who knows what might be the result?

Perhaps they might take it in their heads to think I had come as a

missionary! and then (heaven preserve me!) they would make me suffer

martyrdom!" But we have said enough of the terrors of Don Abbondio.

The company at last arrived at the extremity of the valley; the

countenance of the Unknown became more serene, and Don Abbondio

recovered in some degree his usual composure; but still his mind was

occupied with more distant evils. "What will this fool Don Roderick say?

To be exposed thus to scoffs and jests--how sorely will he feel it!

he'll certainly play the devil outright! Perhaps he will seek another

quarrel with me because I have been engaged in this cursed business!

Having had the heart to send those two demons to attack me in the road,

what he will do now, heaven knows. He cannot molest my lord the

cardinal, because he is obviously beyond his reach; he will be obliged

to champ the bit. However, the poison will be in his veins, and he will

need to discharge it somewhere. It is well known how these affairs end;

the blows always fall on the weakest. The cardinal will busy himself

with placing Lucy in safety; this other poor devil is beyond his reach,

but what is to become of me? And what will the cardinal do to defend me,

after having engaged me in the business? Can he hinder this atrocious

being from serving me a worse turn than before? And then he has so many

things to think of! he cannot pay attention to every body! They who do

good, do it in the gross, and enjoy their satisfaction without regarding

minute consequences: but your evil-doer is more diligent; he lingers

behind till he sees the last result, because of the fear that torments

him. Shall I say I have acted by my lord archbishop's command, and

against my own will? But it will seem that I favour villany! I--for the

pleasure it gives me! Heaven forbid! but enough--I'll tell Perpetua the

whole story, and leave her to circulate it--if indeed, his reverend

lordship should not take up the fancy to make the whole matter public,

and thrust me forward as a chief actor. However, I am determined on one

thing: I will take leave of my lord the cardinal as soon as we arrive

at the village, and go to my home. Lucy has no longer any need of me;

she is under good protection; and, after so many fatigues, I may claim

the right to take some repose.--But, should my lord be seized with the

desire to know all her story, and I be compelled to relate the affair of

the marriage! there would then be nothing wanting to complete my misery.

And if he should visit my parish! Oh! let come what will, I will not

torment myself beforehand! I have cares enough. For the present I shall

shut myself up at home. But I foresee too well that my last days must be

passed in trouble and vexation."

The little troop arrived before the services of the church were over;

and passing, as they had previously done, through the crowd, they

proceeded to the house of Lucy's companion.

Hardly had Don Abbondio alighted from his mule, when, making the most

profuse compliments to the Unknown, he begged him to apologise for him

to the cardinal, as he was obliged to return directly to his parish on

some urgent business. He then went in search of a staff that he had left

in the hall, and which he was accustomed to call his horse, and

proceeded homewards. The Unknown remained at the cardinal's house,

awaiting his return from the church.

The good dame hastened to procure Lucy some refreshment to recruit her

exhausted powers; she put some dry branches under a kettle which she

replaced over the fire, and in which swam a good fowl; after having

suffered it to boil a moment, she filled a plate with the soup, and

offered it to Lucy, congratulating herself that the affair had happened

on a day, when, as she said, "the cat was not on the hearth." "It is a

day of feasting for all the world," added she, "except for those

unfortunate creatures who can hardly obtain bread of vetches, and a

polenta of millet; they hope, however, to receive something from our

charitable cardinal. As for us, thank heaven, we are not in that

situation; between the trade of my husband and a small piece of land, we

manage to live comfortably. Eat, then, poor child, with a good appetite;

the fowl will be done presently, and you shall have something better."

She then set about making preparations for dinner for the family.

As Lucy's spirits and strength returned, the necessity of arranging her

dress occurred to her mind; she therefore tied up her long disordered

tresses, and adjusted the handkerchief about her neck; in doing this,

her fingers entwined themselves in the chaplet, which was there

suspended: she gazed at it with much emotion, and the recollection of

the vow she had made, this recollection which had been suspended by so

many painful sensations, now rose clearly and distinctly to her mind.

All the newly-awakened powers of her soul were again in a moment

subdued. And if she had not been prepared for this by a life of

innocence, resignation, and confidence, the consternation she

experienced would have terminated in despair. After the first tumult of

her thoughts had in some measure subsided, she exclaimed, "Oh! unhappy

girl! what have I done!"

But hardly had she pronounced the words, when she was terrified at

having done so; she recalled all the circumstances of her vow, her

intolerable anguish, without hope of human aid, the fervour of her

petition, the fulness of resolution with which the promise had been

made; and to repent of this promise, after having obtained the favour

she had implored, appeared to her sacrilegious ingratitude, perfidy

towards God and the Virgin. It seemed to her that such infidelity would

certainly draw upon her new and more terrible evils, and if these should

indeed be its consequences she could no longer hope for an answer to her

prayers; she therefore hastened to abjure her momentary regret, and

drawing the chaplet reverently from her neck, and holding it in her

trembling hand, she confirmed her vow; at the same time fervently

praying to God that he would grant her strength to fulfil it, and to

drive from her thoughts circumstances which might, if they did not move

her resolution, still increase but too much the severity of the

sacrifice. The absence of Renzo, without any probability of his return,

which had at first been so bitter, appeared now to her a design of

Providence, to make the two events conduce to the same end, and she

endeavoured to find in one a consolation for the other. She also

remembered that Providence would, to finish the work, find means to make

Renzo resigned, and cause him to forget----But scarcely had this idea

entered her mind, when a new terror overwhelmed her. Conscious that her

heart had still need of repentance, the unfortunate girl again had

recourse to prayer, and mental conflict; and at length arose, if the

expression may be allowed, like a victor wearied and wounded, having

disarmed his enemy.

Suddenly footsteps and joyous exclamations were heard; they proceeded

from the children of the family, who were returning from church. Two

little girls and a little boy ran into the room; stopping a moment to

eye the stranger, they then came to their mother, one asking the name of

their unknown guest, another wanting to relate the wonders they had

seen. The good dame replied to them all with "Be quiet; silence!" The

master of the house then entered with a calmer step; but with joy

diffused over his countenance. He was the tailor of the village and its

environs; a man who knew how to read, and who had even read, more than

once, the Legend of the Saints and the \_Reali di Francia\_; he was

regarded by the peasants as a man of knowledge, and when they lavished

their praises on him, he repelled them with much modesty, only saying

that he had indeed mistaken his vocation, and that, perhaps, if he had

studied---- Notwithstanding this little vanity he was the best natured

man in the world. He had been present when the curate requested his wife

to undertake her benevolent journey, and had not only given his

approbation, but would have added his own persuasions, if that had been

necessary; and now that the ceremonies of the church, and above all, the

sermon of the cardinal, had given an impetus to his amiable feelings, he

returned home with an ardent desire to know if the enterprise had

succeeded, and to see the poor innocent girl in safety.

"See here!" said his wife to him as he entered, pointing to Lucy, who

rose from her seat blushing, and stammering forth some apology. He

advanced towards her, and, with a friendly tone, cried, "You are

welcome! welcome! You bring the blessing of Heaven on this house! How

glad I am to see you here! I knew that you would arrive safely to a

haven, because I have never known the Lord commence a miracle without

accomplishing it; but I am well content to see you here. Poor child! It

is a great thing however to have been the subject of a miracle!"

We must not believe he was the only one who characterised the event by

this term, and that because he had read the legendary. Throughout the

village, and the surrounding country, it was spoken of in no other

terms, as long as its remembrance lasted; and to say truth, if we regard

its attendant circumstances, it would be difficult to find another name

for it.

He then approached his wife, who was employed in taking the kettle from

off the fire, and said in a low voice, "Has all gone well?"

"Very well. I will tell you another time."

"Well, well, at your leisure."

When the dinner was ready, the mistress of the house made Lucy sit down

with them at the table, and helping her to a wing of the chicken,

entreated her to eat. The husband began to dilate with much animation on

the events of the day; not without many interruptions from the children,

who stood round the table eating their dinner, and who had seen too many

extraordinary things to be satisfied with playing the part of mere

listeners. He described the solemn ceremonies, and then recurred to the

miraculous conversion; but that which had made the most impression on

his mind, and of which he spoke the oftenest, was the sermon of the

cardinal.

"To see him before the altar," said he, "a lord like him, to see him

before the altar, as a simple curate----"

"And that golden thing he had on his head," said one of the little

girls.

"Hush, be quiet. When one thinks, I say, that a lord like him, a man so

learned, who, as they say, has read all the books in the world, a thing

which no one else has done, not even in Milan; when one thinks that he

has adapted himself so to the comprehension of others, that every one

understood him----"

"I understood, I did," said the other little chatterer.

"Hush, be quiet. What did you understand, you?"

"I understood that he explained the Gospel, instead of the curate."

"Be quiet. I do not say that he was understood by those only who know

something, but even those who were the most stupid and ignorant, caught

the sense perfectly. You might go now, and ask them to repeat his

discourse; perhaps they might not remember a single word, but they would

have its whole meaning in their head. And how easy it was to perceive

that he alluded to this \_signor\_, although he never pronounced his name!

But one might have guessed it from the tears which flowed from his eyes.

And all the people wept----"

"That is true," cried the little boy. "But why did they all cry like

little children?"

"Be quiet. And there are, nevertheless, hard hearts in this country. He

has made us feel that although there is a scarcity, we must return

thanks to God, and be satisfied; be industrious; do what we can, and

then be content, because unhappiness does not consist at all in

suffering and poverty; unhappiness is the result of wicked actions.

These are not fine words merely; it is well known that he lives like a

poor man, that he takes the bread from his mouth to give to those that

are in need, when he might live an easier life than any one. Oh, then,

there is great satisfaction in hearing him speak. He is not like many

others, who say, 'Do as I say, and not as I do;' and besides, he has

made it very apparent, that those even who are not what they call

\_gentlemen\_, but who have more than is necessary, are bound to impart to

those who are in want."

And here he stopped, as if pained by some recollection; after a moment's

silence, he filled a plate with meat from the table, and adding a loaf

of bread to it, tied up the whole in a napkin. "Take that," said he to

the oldest of the children, and putting in her other hand a bottle of

wine, "carry that to the widow Martha, and tell her to feast with her

children. But be very careful what you say to her, don't seem to be

doing a charity, and don't say a word of it, should you meet any one;

and take care not to break any thing."

Lucy was touched, even to tears, and her soul was filled with a

tenderness that withdrew her from the contemplation of her own sorrows.

The conversation of this worthy man had already imparted a relief, that

a direct appeal to her feelings would have failed to procure. Her

spirit, yielding to the charm of the description of the august pomp of

the church, of the emotions of piety there excited, and partaking of the

enthusiasm of the narrator, forgot its woes, and, when obliged to recur

to them, felt itself strengthened. The thought even of the great

sacrifice she had imposed on herself, without having lost its

bitterness, had assumed the character of austere and solemn

tranquillity.

A few moments after, the curate of the village entered, saying that he

was sent by the cardinal for intelligence concerning Lucy, and also to

inform her that he desired to see her that day; then he thanked, in his

lordship's name, her kind hosts for their benevolence and hospitality.

All three, moved to tears, could not find words to reply to such a

message from such a person.

"Has your mother not yet arrived?" said the curate to Lucy.

"My mother!" cried she.

Learning that the good archbishop had sent for her mother, that it was

his own kind thought, her heart was overpowered, she raised her apron to

her eyes, and her tears continued to flow long after the departure of

the curate. As these tumultuous emotions, called forth by such

unexpected benevolence, gradually subsided, the poor girl remembered

that she had expressly solicited this very happiness of again beholding

her mother, as a condition to her vow. "\_Return me safely to my

mother.\_" These words recurred distinctly to her memory. She was

confirmed more than ever in her purpose to keep her vow, and repented

again bitterly of the regret which she had for a moment experienced.

Agnes, indeed, even whilst they were speaking of her, was very near; it

is easy to imagine the feelings of the poor woman at so unexpected an

invitation, at the intelligence, necessarily confused and incomplete, of

a peril which was passed, but of a frightful peril, of an obscure

adventure, of which the messenger knew not the circumstances, and could

give no explanation, and for which she could find no clue from previous

facts. "Ah, great God! ah, holy Virgin!" escaped from her lips, mingled

with useless questions, during the journey. On the road she met Don

Abbondio, who, by the aid of his staff, was travelling homewards.

Uttering an exclamation of surprise, Agnes made the driver stop. She

alighted, and with the curate withdrew into a grove of chestnuts, which

was on the side of the road. Don Abbondio informed her of all he had

seen and known: much obscurity still rested upon his statement, but at

least Agnes ascertained that Lucy was now in safety.

Don Abbondio then introduced another subject of conversation, and would

have given her ample instruction on the manner of conducting herself

with the archbishop, if he, as was probable, should wish to see her and

her daughter. He said it would not answer for her to speak of the

marriage; but Agnes, perceiving that he spoke only from his own

interest, was determined to promise nothing, because she said, "she had

other things to think of," and bidding him farewell, she proceeded on

her journey.

The carriage at last reached the house of the tailor, and the mother and

daughter were folded in each other's arms. The good wife, who was the

only witness of the scene, endeavoured to soothe and calm their

feelings; and then prudently left them alone, saying that she would go

and prepare a bed for them.

Their first tumultuous joy having in some measure subsided, Agnes

requested to hear the adventures of Lucy, who attempted to relate them;

but the reader knows that it was a history with which no one was

entirely acquainted, and to Lucy herself there was much that was

inexplicable, particularly the fatal coincidence of the carriage being

at that place precisely at the moment that Lucy had gone there by an

extraordinary chance. With regard to this, the mother and daughter lost

themselves in conjecture, without even approaching the real cause. As

to the principal author of this plot, however, they neither of them

doubted that it was Don Roderick.

"Ah, that firebrand!" cried Agnes; "but his hour will come. God will

reward him according to his works, and then he will know----"

"No, no, mother, no!" cried Lucy. "Do not wish harm to him! do not wish

it to any one! If you knew what it is to suffer! if you had experienced

it! No, no! rather let us pray to God and the Virgin for him, that God

would touch his heart as he has done that of the other lord, who was

worse than he, and who is now a saint."

The horror that Lucy felt in retracing events so painful and recent made

her hesitate more than once. More than once she said she had not the

heart to proceed, and, choked by her tears, she with difficulty went on

with her narrative. But she was embarrassed by a different sentiment at

a certain point of her recital, at the moment when she was about to

speak of her vow. She feared her mother would accuse her of imprudence

and precipitation; she feared that she would, as she had done in the

affair of the marriage, bring forward her broad rules of conscience, and

make them prevail; she feared that the poor woman would tell it to some

one in confidence, if it were only to gain light and advice, and thus

render it public. These reflections made Lucy experience insupportable

shame, and an inexplicable repugnance to speak on the subject. She

therefore passed over in silence this important circumstance,

determining in her heart to communicate it first to Father Christopher;

but how great was her sorrow at learning that he was no longer at the

convent, that he had been sent to a distant country, a country

called----

"And Renzo?" enquired Agnes.

"He is in safety, is he not?" said Lucy, hastily.

"It must be so, since every one says so. They say that he has certainly

gone to Bergamo, but no one knows the place exactly, and there has been

no intelligence from himself. He probably has not been able to find the

means of informing us."

"Oh, if he is in safety, God be thanked!" said Lucy, commencing another

subject of conversation, which was, however, interrupted by an

unexpected event--the arrival of the cardinal archbishop.

After having returned from the church, and having learnt from the

Unknown the arrival of Lucy, he had seated himself at table, placing the

Unknown on his right hand; the company was composed of a number of

priests, who gazed earnestly at the countenance of their once formidable

companion, so softened without weakness, so humbled without meanness,

and compared it with the horrible idea they had so long entertained of

him.

Dinner being over, the Unknown and the cardinal retired together. After

a long interview, the former departed for his castle, and the latter

sent for the curate of the parish, and requested him to conduct him to

the house where Lucy had received an asylum.

"Oh, my lord," replied the curate, "suffer me, suffer me. I will send

for the young girl and her mother, if she has arrived,--the hosts

themselves, if my lord desires it."

"I wish to go to them myself," replied Frederick.

"There is no necessity that you should inconvenience yourself; I will

send for them immediately," insisted the curate, who did not understand

that, by this visit, the cardinal wished to do honour to misfortune,

innocence, hospitality, and to his own ministry. But the superior

repeating his desire, the inferior bowed, and they proceeded on their

way.

When they appeared in the street, a crowd immediately collected around

them. The curate cried, "Come, come, back, keep off."--"But," said

Frederick, "suffer them," and he advanced, now raising his hands to

bless the people, now lowering them to embrace the children, who

obstructed his progress. They reached the house, and entered it, whilst

the crowd remained without. But amidst the throng was the tailor, who

had followed with others; his eyes fixed, and his mouth open, wondering

where the cardinal was going. When he beheld him entering his own house,

he bustled his way through the crowd, crying out, "Make room for those

who have a right to enter," and followed into the house.

Agnes and Lucy heard an increasing murmur in the street; and whilst they

were surmising the cause, the door opened, and, behold, the cardinal and

the curate!

"Is this she?" asked the former of the curate, and at a sign in the

affirmative he approached Lucy, who with her mother was standing,

motionless and mute with surprise and extreme diffidence: but the tones

of the voice, the countenance, and above all, the words of Frederick,

soon removed their embarrassment. "Poor young woman," said he, "God has

permitted you to be subjected to a great trial; but he has also made you

see that he watches over you, and has never forgotten you. He has saved

you, and in addition to that blessing, has made use of you to accomplish

a great work through you, to impart the wonders of his grace and mercy

to one man, and at the same time to comfort the hearts of many."

Here the mistress of the house entered the room with her husband:

perceiving their guests engaged in conversation, they respectfully

retired to a distant part of the apartment. The cardinal bowed to them

courteously, and continued the conversation with Lucy and her mother. He

mixed with the consolation he offered many enquiries, hoping to find

from their answers some way of rendering them still farther services

after their sufferings.

"It is a pity all the clergy were not like your lordship, and then they

would take the part of the poor, and not help to bring them into

difficulty for the sake of drawing themselves out of it," said Agnes,

encouraged by the familiar and affable manner of Frederick, and vexed

that Don Abbondio, after having sacrificed others to his own

selfishness, should dare to forbid her making the least complaint to one

so much above him, when by so fortunate a chance the occasion presented

itself.

"Say all that you think," said the cardinal; "speak freely."

"I would say, that if our curate had done his duty, things would not

have been as they are."

The cardinal begging her to explain herself more clearly, she found

some embarrassment in relating a history, in which she had at one time

played a part, which she felt very unwilling to communicate to such a

man. However, she got over the difficulty; she related the projected

marriage, the refusal of Don Abbondio, and the pretext he had offered

with respect to his \_superiors\_ (oh, Agnes!); and passing to the attempt

of Don Roderick, she told in what manner, being informed of it, they had

been able to escape. "But, indeed," added she in conclusion, "it was

escaping to fall into another snare. If the curate had told us sincerely

the difficulty, and had married my poor children, we would have left the

country immediately, and gone where no one would have known us, not even

the wind. Thus time was lost, and that which has happened, has

happened."

"The curate shall render me an account of this," said the cardinal.

"No, my lord, no," resumed Agnes. "I did not speak on that account, do

not reprove him; because what is done, is done; and it would answer no

purpose. He is a man of such a character, that if the thing were to do

over again, he would act precisely in the same way."

But Lucy, dissatisfied with this manner of telling the story, added, "We

have also been to blame; it is plain that it was the will of God the

thing should not succeed."

"How can you have been to blame, my poor child?" said Frederick.

Lucy, notwithstanding the winks of her mother, related in her turn the

history of the attempt made in the house of Don Abbondio, saying, as she

concluded, "We did wrong, and God has punished us."

"Accept from his hand the chastisement you have endured, and take

courage," said Frederick; "for who has a right to rejoice and hope, if

not those who have suffered, and who accuse themselves?"

He then asked where was the betrothed; and learning from Agnes (Lucy

stood silent with downcast eyes) the fact of his flight, he expressed

astonishment and displeasure, and asked the reason of it. Agnes told

what she knew of the story of Renzo.

"I have heard of him before," said the cardinal; "but how could a man,

who was engaged in affairs of this nature, be in treaty of marriage with

this young girl?"

"He was a worthy young man," said Lucy, blushing, but in a firm voice.

"He was a peaceable youth, too peaceable, perhaps," added Agnes; "your

lordship may ask any one if he was not, even the curate. Who knows what

intrigues and plots may have been going on at Milan? There needs little

to make poor people pass for rogues."

"That is but too true," said the cardinal; "I will enquire about him,

without doubt." He took a memorandum of the name of the young man,

adding that he expected to be at their village in a few days; that

during his sojourn there, Lucy could return home without fear, and in

the mean while he would procure her an asylum till all was arranged for

the best.

Turning to the master and mistress of the house, they came forward; he

renewed the thanks he had addressed to them by the mouth of the curate,

and asked them if they would be willing to keep the guests God had sent

them for a few days.

"Oh yes, my lord," replied the dame, with a manner which said more than

this timid reply; but her husband, quite animated by the presence of

such a man, by the desire to do himself honour on an occasion of such

importance, studied to make a fine answer. He wrinkled his forehead,

strained his eyes, and compressed his mouth, but nevertheless felt a

confusion of ideas, which prevented him from uttering a syllable. But

time pressed; the cardinal appeared to have interpreted his silence. The

poor man opened his mouth, and said, "Imagine----" Not a word more could

he say. His failure not only filled him with shame on that day, but ever

after, the unfortunate recollection intruded itself to mar the pleasure

of the great honour he had received. How many times, in thinking of this

circumstance, did a crowd of words come to his mind, every one of which

would have been better than "\_Imagine!\_" But the cavities of our brains

are full enough of thoughts when it is too late to employ them.

The cardinal departed, saying, "May the blessing of Heaven rest on this

house!"

That evening he asked the curate in what way it would be best to

indemnify the tailor, who could not be rich, for his hospitality. The

curate replied, that truly neither the profits of his trade, nor his

income from some little fields that the good tailor possessed, would at

this time have enabled him to be liberal to others; but from having

saved something the few years previous, he was one of the most easy in

circumstances in the district; that he could allow himself to exercise

some hospitality without inconvenience, and that he would do it with

pleasure; and that he was confident he would be hurt if money was

offered to him.

"He has probably," said the cardinal, "some demands on people who are

unable to pay."

"You may judge, my lord; the poor people pay with the overplus of the

harvest; this year there has been no overplus; on the contrary, every

one is behind in point even of necessities."

"Well, I take upon myself all these debts. You will do me the favour to

obtain from him the memoranda, and cancel them."

"It may be a very large sum."

"So much the better. And perhaps you have but too many who are more

miserable, having no debts, because they have no credit?"

"Oh yes! indeed too many! they do what they can; but how can they supply

their wants in these hard times?"

"Have them clothed at my expense; it is true that it seems to be robbery

to spend any thing this year, except for bread; but this is a particular

case."

We cannot finish our record of the history of this day without briefly

relating the conduct of the Unknown. Before his second return to the

castle, the report of his conversion had preceded him; it had spread

through the valley, and excited surprise, anxiety, and numerous

conjectures. As he approached the castle he made a sign to all the

\_bravoes\_ he met to follow him: filled with unusual apprehension, but

with their accustomed submission, they obeyed; their number increased

every moment. Reaching the castle, he entered the first court, and

there, resting on his saddle bow, in a voice of thunder he gave a loud

call, the wonted signal which all habitually obeyed. In a moment those

who were scattered about the castle hastened to join the troop collected

around their leader.

"Go and wait for me in the great hall," said he; as they departed, he

dismounted from his beast, and leading it himself to the stable, thence

approached the hall. The whispering which was heard among them ceased at

his appearance; retiring to one corner they left a large space around

him.

The Unknown raised his hand to enforce the silence that his presence

alone had already effected; then raising his head, which yet was above

that of any of his followers, he said, "Listen to me, all of you; and

let no one speak, unless I ask him a question. My friends, the way which

we have followed until to-day leads to hell. I do not wish to reproach

you, I could not effect the important change, inasmuch as I have been

your leader in our abominable career; I have been the most guilty of

all; but listen to what I am about to say.

"God in his mercy has called me to a change of life, and I have obeyed

his call. May this same God do as much for you! Know, then, and hold for

certain, that I would rather now die than undertake any thing against

his holy law. I recall all the iniquitous orders which I may have given

any one of you; you understand me. And farther, I order you to do

nothing which I have hitherto prescribed to you. Hold equally for

certain, that no one can hereafter commit evil under my protection, and

in my service. Those who will remain with me on these conditions, I

shall regard as children. I should be happy, in the day of famine, to

share with them the last mouthful that remained to me. To those who do

not wish to continue here, shall be paid what is due of their salaries,

and a further donative; they have liberty to depart, but they must never

return, unless they repent and intend to lead a new life, and under such

circumstances they shall be received with open arms. Think of it this

night; to-morrow morning I will receive your answer, and then I will

give you your orders. Now, every one to his post. May God, who has

shown compassion towards me, incline your hearts to repentance and good

dispositions."

He ceased, and all kept silence. Although strange and tumultuous

thoughts fermented in their minds, no indication of them was visible.

They had been habituated to listen to the voice of their lord, as to a

manifestation of absolute authority, to which it was necessary to yield

implicit obedience. His will proclaimed itself changed, but not

enfeebled: it did not therefore enter their minds, that because he was

converted they might become bold in his presence, or reply to him as

they would to another man. They regarded him as a saint, indeed, but a

saint sword in hand.

In addition to the fear with which he inspired them, they felt for him

(especially those who were born in his service, and these were the

greater number) the affection of vassals. Their admiration partook of

the nature of love, mingled with that respect which the most rebellious

and turbulent spirits feel for a superior, whom they have voluntarily

recognised as such. The sentiments he expressed were certainly hateful

to their ears, but they knew they were not false, neither were they

entirely strange to them. If their custom had been to make them subjects

of pleasantry, it was not from disbelief of their verity, but to drive

away, by jesting, the apprehensions the contemplation of them might

otherwise have excited. And now, there was none among them who did not

feel some compunction at beholding their power exerted over the

invincible courage of their master. Moreover, some of them had heard the

extraordinary intelligence beyond the valley, and had witnessed and

related the joy of the people, the new feeling with which the Unknown

was regarded by them, the veneration which had succeeded their former

hatred--their former terror. They beheld the man whom they had never

regarded without trembling, even when they themselves constituted, to a

great degree, his strength; they beheld him now, the wonder, the idol of

the multitude,--still elevated above all others, in a different manner,

no doubt, but in one not less imposing,--always above the world, always

the first. They were confounded, and each was doubtful of the course he

should pursue. One reflected hastily where he could find an asylum and

employment; another questioned with himself his power to accommodate

himself to the life of an honest man; another, moved by what he had

said, felt some inclination for it; and another still was willing to

promise any thing so as to be entitled to the share of a loaf, which had

been so cordially proffered, and which was so scarce in those days. No

one, however, broke the silence. The Unknown, at the conclusion of his

speech, waved his hand imperiously for them to retire: obedient as a

flock of sheep, they all quietly left the hall. He followed them, and

stopping in the centre of the court, saw them all branch off to their

different stations. He returned into the castle, visited the corridors,

halls, and every avenue, and, finding all quiet, he retired to

sleep,--yes, to sleep, for he was very sleepy. In spite of all the

urgent and intricate affairs in which he was involved, more than at any

former conjuncture, he was sleepy. Remorse had banished sleep the night

before; its voice, so far from being subdued, was still more

absolute--was louder--yet he was sleepy. The order of his household so

long established, the absolute devotion of his faithful followers, his

power and means of exercising it, its various ramifications, and the

objects on which it was employed, all tended to create uncertainty and

confusion in his mind,--still he was sleepy.

To his bed then he went, that bed which the night before had been a bed

of thorns; but first he knelt to pray. He sought, in the remotest corner

of his memory, the words of prayer taught him in his days of childhood.

They came one by one: an age of vice had not effaced them. And who shall

define the sentiments that pervaded his soul at this return to the

habits of happy innocence? He slept soundly.

CHAPTER XXV.

The next morning, in the village of Lucy, and throughout all the

territory of Lecco, nothing was talked of but herself, the Unknown, the

archbishop, and another person, who, although generally desirous to be

talked of, would willingly have been forgotten on this occasion,--we

mean Don Roderick.

Not that, previous to this period, the villagers had not conversed much

of his actions, in secret, to those in whom they had perfect confidence;

but now they could no longer contain themselves, nor surpress many

enquiries on the marvellous events in which two persons so famous had

played a part. In comparison of these two personages, Signor Don

Roderick appeared rather insignificant, and all agreed in rejoicing over

the ill success of his iniquitous designs; but these rejoicings were

still, in some measure, moderated by fears of the \_bravoes\_ by whom he

was surrounded.

A good portion of the public censure was bestowed on his friends and

courtiers. It did not spare the Signor \_Podestà\_, always deaf and dumb

and blind to the deeds of this tyrant, but these opinions were expressed

in an under-tone, because the \_Podestà\_ had his officers. Such regard

was not paid to Doctor \_Azzecca Garbugli\_, who had only his \_tricks\_ and

his \_verbiage\_ to employ for his defence; and as to the whole tribe of

sycophants, resembling him, they were so pointed at, and eyed askance,

that for some time they thought it most prudent to keep themselves

within doors.

Don Roderick, struck, as by a thunderbolt, with the unexpected

intelligence, so different from that which he had been anticipating from

day to day, kept himself shut up in his castle, alone with his bravoes,

devouring his rage for the space of two days, and on the third set off

for Milan. If there had only existed the murmurs of the people,

notwithstanding things had gone so far, he would perhaps have remained

expressly to brave them; but he felt himself compelled to quit the field

of contest, by the certain information that the cardinal was coming to

the village. The count, his uncle, who knew nothing of the story but

what Attilio had told him, would certainly require him to be one of the

first to visit the cardinal, in order to obtain in public the most

distinguished reception from him. The count would require it, because it

was an important opportunity for making known in what esteem the house

was held by his powerful eminence. To escape such a dilemma, Don

Roderick, having risen before the sun, threw himself into a carriage

with Griso, and, followed by the rest of the \_bravoes\_, retired like a

fugitive, like (if we may be permitted to elevate him by such a

comparison), like Catiline from Rome, foaming with rage, and threatening

a speedy return to accomplish his revenge.

Meanwhile the cardinal approached, visiting every day one of the

parishes situated in the territory of Lecco. On the day he was expected

in the village, great preparations were made for his reception. At the

entrance of the village, near the cottage of Agnes, a triumphal arch was

erected, constructed of wood, covered with moss and straw, and

ornamented with green boughs of birch and holly. The front of the church

was adorned with tapestry; from every window of the houses were

suspended quilts and sheets, intended for drapery; every thing, in

short, whether in good taste or bad, was displayed in honour of this

extraordinary occasion. At the hour of vespers (which was the hour

Frederick usually selected to arrive at the churches which he visited),

those who had not gone to church, the old men, women, and the youngest

of the children, went forth, in procession, to meet their expected

guest, headed by Don Abbondio. The poor curate was sad in the midst of

the public joy; the tumult bewildered him; the movement of so many

people, before and behind, disturbed him; and, moreover, he was

tormented by the secret apprehension that the women had tattled, and

that he should be obliged to render an account of his conduct to the

cardinal.

Frederick appeared at last, or rather the crowd appeared, in the midst

of which was his litter, and the retinue surrounding it. The persons who

followed Don Abbondio scattered and mingled themselves with the crowd,

notwithstanding all his remonstrances; and he, poor man, finding himself

deserted by them, went to the church, there to await the cardinal's

approach.

The cardinal advanced, bestowing benedictions with his hands, and

receiving them in return from the mouths of the people, who were with

difficulty kept back by his attendants. Being of the same village as

Lucy, these peasants were desirous of rendering to the archbishop

peculiar demonstrations of respect, but this was not practicable,

inasmuch as, wherever he went, he was received with every possible

honour. In the very commencement of his pontificate, at his first solemn

entrance into the cathedral, the concourse had been so great that his

life was in peril. Some gentlemen, who were near him, drew their swords

to keep back and alarm the crowd. Such was the rude violence of the

times, that even in the general disposition to do honour to their

archbishop, they were on the point of crushing him: and this defence

would not have been sufficient, if two priests, of great vigour and

presence of mind, had not raised him in their arms, and carried him from

the church door to the foot of the great altar. His very first entrance

into the church, therefore, might be recorded amidst his pastoral

labours and the dangers he had run.

Entering the church, the cardinal advanced to the altar, and after

having prayed some time, he addressed, as was his custom, some words to

the people, on his love for them, on his desire for their salvation, and

how they should dispose their minds for the duties of the morrow. He

then withdrew to the house of the curate, and among other questions

which he put to him, he interrogated him with regard to the character

and conduct of Renzo. Don Abbondio replied that he was rather choleric

and obstinate: but as the cardinal made more special and precise

enquiries, he was obliged to confess that he was an honest peaceable

youth, and even he himself could not comprehend how he had committed at

Milan the conduct which had been imputed to him.

"As to the young girl," continued the cardinal, "do you think she can

return now with safety to her house?"

"At present," replied Don Abbondio, "she can come and remain for a

while. I say, at present, but," added he with a sigh, "your illustrious

lordship should be always near at hand."

"God is always present," said the cardinal. "But I will use my efforts

to secure a place of safety for her."

Before dismissing Don Abbondio, he ordered him to send a litter, on the

following day, for Lucy and her mother.

Don Abbondio went away quite pleased that the cardinal had talked to him

of the young couple, without even alluding to his refusal to marry them.

"He knows nothing of it," said he; "Agnes has kept silence! wonderful!

She will see him again, 'tis true, but she shall have further

instructions from me, so she shall." He little thought, poor man, that

Frederick had only deferred the enquiry until he should have more

leisure to learn the reasons of his conduct.

But the solicitude of the good prelate for the disposal of Lucy had been

rendered useless, by a circumstance which we will relate.

The two females had as far as possible resumed, for the few days they

had to pass under the hospitable roof of the tailor, their usual manner

of life. As she had done at the monastery, Lucy, in a small chamber

apart, employed herself in sewing; and Agnes, keeping much at home,

remained for the most part with her daughter. Their conversations were

affectionate and sorrowful; both were prepared for a separation, since

the sheep could not dwell in the neighbourhood of the wolf. But how long

was this separation to continue? The future was dark and inexplicable,

but Agnes, notwithstanding, was full of agreeable anticipation. "After

all," said she, "if no irreparable misfortune has befallen Renzo, we

shall soon hear from him. If he has found employment, (and who can doubt

it?) and if he keeps the faith he has sworn to you, why cannot we go and

live with him?" Her daughter felt as much sorrow in listening to her

hopes, as difficulty in replying to them. She still kept her secret in

her heart; and although troubled at the idea of concealment with so good

a mother, she was nevertheless restrained by a thousand fears from

communicating it. Her plans were, indeed, very different from those of

her mother, or rather, she had none, having committed the future into

the hands of Providence; she therefore endeavoured to change the

subject, saying in general terms that her only hope was to be

permanently re-united to her mother.

"Do you know why you feel thus?" said Agnes; "you have suffered so much,

that it seems impossible to you that things can turn out happily. But

let God work; and if---- Let a ray of hope come--a single ray, and then

we shall see that you will think differently."

Lucy and her mother entertained a lively friendship for their kind

hosts, which was warmly reciprocated; and between whom can friendship

exist more in its purity, than between the benefactor and the recipients

of the benefit, when both have kind hearts! Agnes, especially, had long

gossips with the mistress of the house, and the tailor afforded them

much amusement by his tales and moral discourses; at dinner particularly

he had always something to relate of the sword of Roland, or of the

Fathers of the Thebaid.

At some miles' distance from the village there dwelt a certain Don

Ferrante, and Donna Prassede his wife; the latter was a woman of high

birth, somewhat advanced in age, and exceedingly inclined to do good;

which is surely the most praiseworthy employment one can be engaged on

in this world; but which, indulged in without judgment, may be rendered

hurtful, like all other good things. To do good, we must have correct

ideas of good in itself considered, and this can be acquired only by

control over our own hearts. Donna Prassede governed herself with her

ideas, as some do with their friends; she had very few, but to these she

was much attached. Among these few, were a number unfortunately a little

narrow and unreasonable, and they were not those she loved the least.

Thence it happened that she regarded things as good, which were not

really so, and that she used means which were calculated to promote the

very opposite of that which she intended; to this perversion of her

intellect may also be attributed the fact, that she esteemed all

measures to be lawful to her who was bent on the performance of duty. In

short, with good intentions, her moral perceptions were in no small

degree distorted. Hearing the wonderful story of Lucy, she was seized

with a desire to know her, and immediately sent her carriage for the

mother and daughter. Lucy, having no desire to go, requested the tailor

to find some excuse for her; if they had been \_common people\_, who

desired to make her acquaintance, the tailor would willingly have

rendered her the service, but, under such circumstances, refusal

appeared to him a species of insult. He uttered so many exclamations,

such as, that it was not customary--that it was a high family--that it

was out of the question to say \_No\_ to such people--that it might make

their fortune--and that, in addition to all this, Donna Prassede was a

saint,--that Lucy was finally obliged to yield, especially as Agnes

seconded the remonstrances and arguments of the tailor.

The high-born dame received them with many congratulations; she

questioned and advised them with an air of conscious superiority, which

was, however, tempered by so many soft and humble expressions, and

mingled with so much zeal and devotion, that Agnes and Lucy soon felt

themselves relieved from the painful restraint her mere presence had at

first imposed on them. In brief, Donna Prassede, learning that the

cardinal wished to procure an asylum for Lucy, and impelled by the

desire to second, and at the same time to anticipate, his good

intention, offered to take the young girl to her house, where there

would be no other service required of her than to direct the labours of

the needle or the spindle. She added, that she herself would inform the

cardinal of the arrangement.

Besides the obvious and ordinary benefit conferred by her invitation,

Donna Prassede proposed to herself another, which she deemed to be

peculiarly important; this was to school impatience, and to place in the

right path a young creature who had much need of guidance. The first

time she heard Lucy spoken of, she was immediately persuaded that in one

so young, who had betrothed herself to a robber, a criminal, a fugitive

from justice such as Renzo, there must be some corruption, some

concealed vice. "\_Tell me what company you keep, and I will tell you who

you are.\_" The visit of Lucy had confirmed her opinion; she appeared,

indeed, to be an artless girl, but who could tell the cause of her

downcast looks and timid replies? There was no great effort of mind

necessary to perceive that the maiden had opinions of her own. Her

blushes, sighs, and particularly her large and beautiful eyes, did not

please Donna Prassede at all. She regarded it as certain as if she had

been told it by having authority, that the misfortunes of Lucy were a

punishment from Heaven for her connection with that villain, and a

warning to withdraw herself from him entirely. That settled the

determination to lend her co-operation to further so desirable a work;

for as she frequently said to herself and others, "Was it not her

constant study to second the will of Heaven?" But, alas! she often fell

into the terrible mistake of taking for the will of Heaven, the vain

imaginings of her own brain. However, she was on the present occasion

very careful not to exhibit any of her proposed intentions. It was one

of her maxims, that the first rule to be observed in accomplishing a

good design, is to keep your motives to yourself.

Excepting the painful necessity of separation the offer appeared to both

mother and daughter very inviting, were it only on account of the short

distance from the castle to their village. Reading in each other's

countenance their mutual assent, they accepted with many thanks the

kindness of Donna Prassede, who renewing her kind promises, said she

would soon send them a letter to present to the cardinal. The two

females having departed, she requested Don Ferrante to write a letter,

who, being a literary and learned man, was employed as her secretary on

occasions of importance. In an affair of this sort, Don Ferrante did his

best, and he gave the original to his wife in order that she could copy

it; he warmly recommended to her an attention to the orthography, as

orthography was among the great number of things he had studied, and

among the small number over which he had control in his family. The

letter was forthwith copied and sent to the tailor's house. These events

occurred a few days before the cardinal had despatched a litter to bring

the mother and daughter to their abode.

Upon their arrival they went to the parsonage; orders having been left

for their immediate admittance to the presence of the cardinal. The

chaplain, who conducted them thither, gave them many instructions with

regard to the ceremony to be used with him, and the titles to be given

him; it was a continual torment to the poor man to behold the little

ceremony that reigned around the good archbishop in this respect. "This

results," he was accustomed to say, "from the excessive goodness of this

blessed man--from his great familiarity." And he added that he had "even

heard people address him with \_Yes, sir\_, and \_No, sir\_!"

At this moment, the cardinal was conversing with Don Abbondio on the

affairs of his parish; so that the latter had no opportunity to repeat

his instructions to the females; however, in passing by them as they

entered, he gave them a glance, to make them comprehend that he was well

satisfied with them, and that they should continue, like honest and

worthy women, to keep silence.

After the first reception, Agnes drew from her bosom the letter of Donna

Prassede, and gave it to the cardinal, saying, "It is from the Signora

Donna Prassede, who says that she knows your illustrious lordship well,

my lord, as naturally is the case with great people. When you have read,

you will see."

"It is well," said Frederick, after having read the letter, and

extracted its meaning from the trash of Don Ferrante's flowers of

rhetoric. He knew the family well enough to be certain that Lucy had

been invited into it with good intentions, and that she would be

sheltered from the snares and violence of her persecutor. As to his

opinion of Donna Prassede, we do not know it precisely; probably she was

not a person he would have chosen for Lucy's protectress; but it was not

his habit to undo things, apparently ordered by Providence, in order to

do them better.

"Submit, without regret, to this separation also, and to the suspense in

which you are left," said he. "Hope for the best, and confide in God!

and be persuaded, that all that He sends you, whether of joy or sorrow,

will be for your permanent good." Having received the benediction which

he bestowed on them, they took their leave.

Hardly had they reached the street, when they were surrounded by a swarm

of friends, who were expecting them, and who conducted them in triumph

to their house. Their female acquaintances congratulated them,

sympathised with them, and overwhelmed them with enquiries. Learning

that Lucy was to depart on the following morning, they broke forth in

exclamations of regret and disappointment. The men disputed with each

other the privilege of offering their services; each wished to remain

for the night to guard their cottage, which reminds us of a proverb;

"\_If you would have people willing to confer favours on you, be sure not

to need them.\_" This warmth of reception served a little to withdraw

Lucy from the painful recollections which crowded upon her mind, at the

sight of her loved home.

At the sound of the bell which announced the commencement of the

ceremonies, all moved towards the church. The ceremonies over, Don

Abbondio, who had hastened home to see every thing arranged for

breakfast, was told that the cardinal wished to speak with him. He

proceeded to the chamber of his illustrious guest, who accosted him as

he entered, with "Signor Curate, why did you not unite in marriage, Lucy

to her betrothed?"

"They have emptied the sack this morning," thought Don Abbondio, and he

stammered forth, "Your illustrious lordship has no doubt heard of all

the difficulties of that business. It has been such an intricate affair,

that it cannot even now be seen into clearly. Your illustrious lordship

knows that the young girl is here, only by a miracle; and that no one

can tell where the young man is."

"I ask if it is true, that, before these unhappy events, you refused to

celebrate the marriage on the day agreed upon? and why you did so?"

"Truly--if your illustrious lordship knew--what terrible orders I

received--" and he stopped, indicating by his manner, though

respectfully, that it would be imprudent in the cardinal to enquire

farther.

"But," said Frederick, in a tone of much more gravity than he was

accustomed to employ, "it is your bishop, who, from a sense of duty, and

for your own justification, would learn from you, why you have not done

that which, in the ordinary course of events, it was your strict duty to

do?"

"My lord," said Don Abbondio, "I do not mean to say,--but it appears to

me, that as these things are now without remedy, it is useless to stir

them up--However, however, I say, that I am sure your illustrious

lordship would not betray a poor curate, because, you see, my lord, your

illustrious lordship cannot be every where present, and I--I remain

here, exposed--However, if you order me, I will tell all."

"Speak; I ask for nothing but to find you free from blame."

Don Abbondio then related his melancholy story, suppressing the name of

the principal personage, and substituting in its place, "\_a great

lord\_,"--thus giving to prudence the little that was left him in such an

extremity.

"And you had no other motive?" asked the cardinal, after having heard

him through.

"Perhaps I have not clearly explained myself. It was under pain of death

that they ordered me not to perform the ceremony."

"And this reason appeared sufficient to prevent the fulfilment of a

rigorous duty?"

"I know my obligation is to do my duty, even to my greatest detriment;

but when life is at stake----"

"And when you presented yourself to the church," said Frederick, with

increased severity of manner, "to be admitted to the holy ministry, were

there any such reservations made? Were you told that the duties imposed

by the ministry were free from every obstacle, exempt from every peril?

Were you told that personal safety was to be the guide and limit of your

duty? Were you not told expressly the reverse of all this? Were you not

warned that you were sent as a lamb among wolves? Did you not even then

know that there were violent men in the world, who would oppose you in

the performance of your duty? He, whose example should be our guide, in

imitation of whom we call ourselves shepherds, when he came on earth to

accomplish the designs of his benevolence, did he pay regard to his own

safety? And if your object be to preserve your miserable existence, at

the expense of charity and duty, there was no necessity for your

receiving holy unction, and entering into the priesthood. The world

imparts this virtue, teaches this doctrine. What do I say? O shame! the

world itself rejects it. It has likewise its laws, which prescribe good,

and prohibit evil; it has also its gospel, a gospel of pride and hatred,

which will not admit the love of life to be offered as a plea for the

transgression of its laws. It commands, and is obeyed; but we, we

children and messengers of the promise! what would become of the church,

if your language was held by all your brethren? Where would she now be,

if she had originally come forth with such doctrines?"

Don Abbondio hung down his head; he felt under the weight of these

arguments as a chicken under the talons of a hawk, who holds him

suspended in an unknown region, in an atmosphere he had never before

breathed. Seeing that a reply was necessary, he said, more alarmed than

convinced,--

"My lord, I have done wrong; since we should pay no regard to life, I

have nothing more to say. But when one has to do with certain powerful

people, who will not listen to reason, I do not see what is to be gained

by carrying things with a high hand."

"And know you not that our gain is to suffer for the sake of justice? If

you are ignorant of this, what is it you preach? What do you teach? What

is the \_good news\_ which you proclaim to the poor? Who has required this

at your hand, to overcome force by force? Certainly you will not be

asked at the day of judgment, if you have vanquished the powerful, for

you have neither had the commission nor the means to do so. But, you

\_will\_ be asked, if you have employed the means which have been placed

in your power, to do that which was prescribed to you, even when man had

the temerity to forbid it."

"These saints are odd creatures," thought Don Abbondio; "extract the

essence of this discourse, and it will be found that he has more at

heart the love of two young people, than the life of a priest." He would

have been delighted to have had the conversation terminate here, but he

well perceived that such was not the intention of the cardinal, who

appeared to be waiting a reply, or apology, or something of the kind.

"I say, my lord," replied he, "that I have done wrong--We cannot give

ourselves courage."

"And why, then, I might say to you, have you undertaken a ministry which

imposes on you the task of warring with the passions of the world? But,

I will rather say, how is it that you have forgotten, that where courage

is necessary to fulfil the obligations of this holy vocation, the Most

High would assuredly impart it to you, were you earnestly to implore it?

Do you think the millions of martyrs had courage naturally? that they

had naturally a contempt for life, young Christians who had just begun

to taste its charms, children, mothers! All had courage, simply because

courage was necessary, and they trusted in God to impart it. Knowing

your own weakness, have you ever thought of preparing yourself for the

difficult situations in which you might be placed? Ah! if, during so

many years of pastoral care, you had loved your flock, (and how could

you refrain from loving them?) if you had reposed in them your

affections, your dearest cares, your greatest delights, you would not

have failed in courage: love is intrepid; if you had loved those who

were committed to your spiritual guardianship, those whom you call

children--if you had really loved them, when you beheld two of them

threatened at the same time with yourself. Ah! certainly, charity would

have made you tremble for them, as the weakness of the flesh made you

tremble for yourself. You would have humbled yourself before God for

the first risings of selfish terror; you would have considered it a

temptation, and have implored strength to resist it. But, you would have

eagerly listened to the holy and noble anxiety for the safety of others,

for the safety of your children; you would have been unable to find a

moment of repose; you would have been impelled, constrained to do all

that you could to avert the evil that threatened them. With what then

has this love, this anxiety, inspired you? What have you done for them?

How have you been engaged in their service?"

And he paused for a reply.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Don Abbondio uttered not a word. It must be confessed that we ourselves,

who have nothing to fear but the criticisms of our readers, feel a

degree of repugnance in thus urging the unfashionable precepts of

charity, courage, indefatigable solicitude for others, and unlimited

sacrifice of self. But the reflection that these things were said by a

man who practised what he preached, encourages us to proceed in our

relation.

"You do not answer," resumed the cardinal. "Ah! if you had followed the

dictates of charity and duty, whatever had been the result, you would

now have been at no loss for a reply. Behold, then, what you have done;

you having obeyed iniquity, regardless of the requirements of duty; you

have obeyed her promptly; she had only to show herself to you, and

signify her desire, and she found you ready at her call. But she would

have had recourse to artifice with one who was on his guard against her,

she would have avoided exciting his suspicion, she would have employed

concealment, that she might mature at leisure her projects of treachery

and violence; she has, on the contrary, boldly ordered you to infringe

your duty, and keep silence; you have obeyed, you have infringed it,

and you have kept silence. I ask you now, if you have done nothing more.

Tell me if it is true, that you have advanced false pretences for your

refusal, so as not to reveal the true motive----"

"They have told this also, the tattlers!" thought Don Abbondio, but as

he gave no indication of addressing himself to speech, the cardinal

pursued,--"Is it true, that you told these young people falsehoods to

keep them in ignorance and darkness?--I am compelled, then, to believe

it; it only remains for me to blush for you, and to hope that you will

weep with me. Behold where it has led you, (merciful God! and you

advanced it as a justification!) behold to what it has conducted you,

this solicitude for your life! It has led you----(repel freely the

assertion if it appear to you unjust: take it as a salutary humiliation

if it is not) it has led you to deceive the feeble and unfortunate, to

lie to your children!"

"This is the way of the world!" thought Don Abbondio again; "to this

devil incarnate," (referring to the Unknown,) "his arms around his neck;

and to me, for a half lie, reproaches without end! But you are our

superiors; of course you are right. It is my star, that all the world is

against me, not excepting the saints." He continued aloud,--"I have done

wrong! I see that I have done wrong. But what could I do in so

embarrassing a situation?"

"Do you still ask? Have I not told you? And must I repeat it? You should

have loved, my son, you should have loved and prayed; you would then

have felt that iniquity might threaten, but not enforce obedience; you

would have united, according to the laws of God, those whom man desired

to separate; you would have exercised the ministry these children had a

right to expect from you. God would have been answerable for the

consequences, as you were obeying His orders; now, since you have obeyed

man, the responsibility falls on yourself. And what consequences, just

Heaven! And why did you not remember that you had a superior? How would

he now dare to reprimand you for having failed in your duty, if he did

not at all times feel himself obliged to aid you in its performance? Why

did you not inform your bishop of the obstacles which infamous power

exerted to prevent the exercise of your ministry?"

"Just the advice of Perpetua," thought Don Abbondio vexed, to whose

mind, even in the midst of these touching appeals, the images which most

frequently presented themselves, were those of the bravoes and Don

Roderick, alive and well, and returning at some future time, triumphant,

and inflamed with rage. Although the presence, the aspect, and the

language of the cardinal embarrassed him, and impressed him with a

degree of apprehension, it was, however, an embarrassment and an

apprehension which did not subjugate his thoughts, nor prevent him from

reflecting that, after all, the cardinal employed neither arms nor

bravoes.

"Why did you not think," pursued Frederick, "that if no other asylum was

open to these innocent victims, I could myself receive them, and place

them in safety, if you had sent them to me; sent them afflicted and

desolate to their bishop; as therefore belonging to him, as the most

precious part, I say not of his charge, but of his wealth! And as for

you, I should have been anxious for you; I would not have slept until

certain that not a hair of your head would be touched; and do you not

suppose that this man, however audacious he may be, would have lost

something of his audacity, when convinced that his designs were known by

me, that I watched over them, and that I was decided to employ for your

defence all the means within my power! Know you not, that if man

promises too often more than he performs, he threatens also more than he

dare execute? Know you not that iniquity does not depend solely on its

own strength, but on the credulity and cowardice of others?"

"Just the reasoning of Perpetua," thought Don Abbondio, without

considering that this singular coincidence in judgment of Frederick

Borromeo and his servant, was an additional argument against him.

"But you," pursued the cardinal, "you have only contemplated your own

danger. How is it possible that your personal safety can have appeared

of importance enough to sacrifice every thing to it?"

"Because I saw them, I saw those frightful faces," escaped from Don

Abbondio. "I heard those horrible words. Your illustrious worship talks

well, but you should have been in the place of your poor priest, and

have had the same thing happen to you."

No sooner had he uttered these words than he bit his tongue, perceiving

that he had suffered himself to be overcome by vexation; he muttered in

a low voice, "Now for the storm!" and raising his eyes timidly, he was

astonished to see the cardinal, whom he never could comprehend, pass

from the severe air of authority and rebuke, to that of a soft and

pensive gravity.

"It is but too true," said Frederick. "Such is our terrible and

miserable condition! We exact rigorously from others, that which it may

be we would not be willing to render ourselves; we judge, correct, and

reprimand, and God alone knows what we would do in the same situation,

what we \_have\_ done in similar situations. But, woe be to me, if I take

my weakness for the measure of another's duty, for the rule of my

instruction! Nevertheless it is certain, that while imparting precepts,

I should also afford an example to my neighbour, and not resemble the

pharisee, who imposes on others enormous burthens, which he himself

would not so much as touch with his finger. Hear me then, my son, my

brother; the errors of those in authority, are oftener better known to

others than to themselves; if you know that I have, from cowardice, or

respect to the opinions of men, neglected any part of my duty, tell me

of it frankly, so that where I have failed in example, I may at least

not be wanting in humble confession. Show me freely my weakness, and

then words from my mouth will be more available, because you will be

conscious that they do not proceed from me, but that they are the words

of Him who can give to us both the necessary strength to do what He

prescribes."

"Oh! what a holy man, but what a troublesome one!" thought Don Abbondio.

"He censures himself, and wishes that I should examine, criticise, and

control even \_his\_ actions!" He continued aloud,--"Oh! my lord jests,

surely! Who does not know the courage and indefatigable zeal of your

illustrious lordship?" "Yes," added he to himself, "by far too

indefatigable!"

"I do not desire praise that makes me tremble, because God knows my

imperfections, and what I know of them myself is sufficient to humble

me. But I would desire that we should humble ourselves together; I would

desire that you should feel what your conduct has been, and that your

language is opposed to the law you preach, and according to which you

will be judged."

"All turns against me. But these persons who have told your lordship

these things, have they not also told you that they introduced

themselves treacherously into my house, for the purpose of compelling me

to perform the marriage ceremony, in a manner unauthorised by the

church?"

"They \_have\_ told me, my son; but what afflicts and depresses me, is to

see you still seeking excuses; still excusing yourself by accusing

others; still accusing others of that which should have formed a part of

your own confession. Who placed these unfortunates, I do not say under

the necessity, but under the temptation, to do what they have? Would

they have sought this irregular method, if the legitimate way had not

been closed to them? Would they have thought of laying snares for their

pastor, if they had been received, aided, and advised by him? of

surprising him, if he had not concealed himself? And you wish to make

them bear the blame; and you are indignant that, after so many

misfortunes, what do I say? in the very midst of misfortune, they have

suffered a word of complaint to escape before their pastor and yours?

that the complaints of the oppressed and the afflicted should be hateful

to the world, is not astonishing; but to us! and what advantage would

their silence have been to you? Would you have been the gainer from

their cause having been committed entirely to the judgment of God? Is it

not an additional reason to love them, that they have afforded you the

occasion to hear the sincere voice of your pastor; that they have

provided for you the means to understand more clearly, and quite as far

as may be in your power, the great debt you have contracted to them? Ah!

if they had even been the aggressors, I would tell you to love them for

that very reason. Love them, because they have suffered, and do suffer;

love them, because they are a part of your flock, because you yourself

have need of pardon and of their prayers."

Don Abbondio kept silence, but no longer from vexation, and an

unwillingness to be persuaded; he kept silence from having more things

to think of than to say. The words which he heard were unexpected

conclusions, a new application of familiar doctrine. The evil done to

his neighbour, which apprehension on his own account had hitherto

prevented him from beholding in its true light, now made a novel and

striking impression on his mind. If he did not feel all the remorse

which the cardinal's remonstrances were calculated to produce, he

experienced at least secret dissatisfaction with himself and pity for

others; a blending of tenderness and shame; as, if we may be permitted

to use the comparison, a humid and crushed taper at first hisses and

smokes, but by degrees receives warmth, and imparts light, from the

flame of a great torch to which it is presented. Don Abbondio would have

loudly accused himself, and deplored his conduct, had not the idea of

Don Roderick still obtruded itself into his thoughts; however, his

feeling was sufficiently apparent to convince the cardinal that his

words had at last produced some effect.

"Now," pursued Frederick, "one of these unfortunate beings is a fugitive

afar off, the other on the point of departure; both have but too much

reason to keep asunder, without any present probability of being

re-united. Now, alas! they have no need of you; now, alas! you have no

longer the opportunity to do them good, and our short foresight can

assure us of but little of the future. But who knows, if God in his

compassion is not preparing the occasion for you? Ah! do not let it

escape; seek it, watch for it, implore it as a blessing."

"I shall not fail, my lord--I shall not fail to do so, I assure you,"

replied Don Abbondio, in a tone that came from the heart.

"Ah! yes, my son, yes!" cried Frederick with affectionate dignity;

"Heaven knows that I would have desired to hold other converse with you.

We have both had a long pilgrimage through life. Heaven knows how

painful it has been to me, to grieve your old age by reproaches; how

much more I should have loved to occupy the time of this interview in

mutual consolation, and mutual anticipation of the heavenly hope which

is so near our grasp! God grant that the language I have been obliged to

hold may be useful to both of us! Act in such a manner, that He will not

call me to account on the great and terrible day, for having retained

you in a ministry of which you were unworthy. Let us redeem the time;

the night is far spent; the spouse will not linger; let us keep our

lamps trimmed and burning. Let us offer to God our poor and miserable

hearts, that he may fill them with his love!" So saying he arose to

depart; Don Abbondio followed him.

We must now return to Donna Prassede, who came, according to agreement,

on the following morning, for Lucy, and also to pay her duty to the

cardinal. Frederick bestowed many praises on Lucy, and recommended her

warmly to the kindness of Donna Prassede; Lucy separated herself from

her mother with many tears, and again bade farewell to her cottage and

her village. But she was cheered by the hope of seeing her mother once

more before their final departure, as Donna Prassede informed them that

it was her intention to remain for a few days at her villa, and Agnes

promised to visit it again to take a last farewell.

The cardinal was on the point of setting out for another parish, when

the curate of the village near which the castle of the Unknown was

situated, demanded permission to see him. He presented a small packet,

and a letter from that lord, in which Frederick was requested to present

to Lucy's mother a hundred crowns of gold, to serve as a dowry for the

maiden, or for any other purpose she might desire. The Unknown also

requested him to tell them, that if ever they should be in need of his

services, the poor girl knew but too well the place of his abode, and as

for him, he should consider it a high privilege to afford her

protection and assistance. The cardinal sent immediately for Agnes, and

informed her of the commission he had received. She heard it with equal

surprise and joy.

"God reward this signor!" said she; "your illustrious lordship will

thank him in our name, but do not say a word of the matter to any one,

because we live in a world--you will excuse me, I know a man like your

lordship does not tattle about such things, but--you understand me."

Returning to her house, she shut herself up in her chamber, and untied

the packet; although she was prepared for the sight, she was filled with

wonder at seeing in her own power and in one heap such a quantity of

those coins which she had rarely ever seen before, and never more than

one at a time. She counted them over and over again, and wrapping them

carefully in a leather covering, concealed them under one corner of her

bed. The rest of the day was employed in reverie and projects for the

future, and desires for the arrival of the morrow; the night was passed

in restless dreams, and vain imaginings of the blessings to be produced

by this gold; at break of day, she arose, and departed for the villa of

Donna Prassede.

The repugnance Lucy had felt to mention her vow, had not all diminished,

but she resolved to overcome it, and to disclose the circumstance to her

mother in this conversation, which would probably be the last they

should have for a long time.

No sooner were they left alone, than Agnes, with an animated

countenance, but in a low voice, said, "I have great news to tell you,"

and she related her unexpected good fortune.

"God bless this signor," said Lucy; "you have now enough to live

comfortably yourself, and also to benefit others."

"Oh! yes, we can do a great deal with this money! Listen, I have only

you, that is, I have only you two in the world, for from the moment that

Renzo first addressed you, I have considered him as my son. We will hope

that no misfortune has befallen him, and that we shall soon hear from

him. As for myself, I would have wished to lay my bones in my own

country, but now that you cannot stay here on account of this villain,

(oh! even to think that he was near me, would make me dislike any

place!) I am quite willing to go away. I would have gone with you to the

end of the earth before this good fortune, but how could we do it

without money? The poor youth had indeed saved a few pence, of which the

law deprived him, but in recompence God has sent us a fortune. So then,

when he has informed us that he is living, and where he is, and what are

his intentions, I will go to Milan for you--yes, I will go for you.

Formerly I would not have dreamt of such a thing, but misfortune gives

courage and experience. I have been to Monza, and I know what it is to

travel. I will take with me a man of resolution; for instance, Alessio

di Maggianico; I will pay the expense, and--do you understand?"

But perceiving that Lucy, instead of exhibiting sympathy with her plans,

could with difficulty conceal her agitation and distress, she stopped in

the midst of her harangue, exclaiming, "What is the matter? are you not

of my opinion?"

"My poor mother!" cried Lucy, throwing her arms around her neck, and

concealing on her bosom her face, bathed in tears.

"What is the matter?" said Agnes, in alarm.

"I ought to have told you sooner, but I had not the heart to do it. Have

pity on me."

"But speak, speak then."

"I cannot be the wife of that unfortunate youth."

"Why? how?"

Lucy, with downcast looks and flowing tears, confessed at last the vow

which she had made. She clasped her hands, and asked pardon of her

mother for having concealed it from her, conjuring her to speak of it to

no one, and to lend her aid to enable her to fulfil it.

Agnes was overwhelmed with consternation; she would have been angry with

her daughter for so long maintaining silence towards her, had not the

grave thoughts that the circumstance itself excited, stifled all feeling

of resentment. She would have blamed her for her vow, had it not

appeared to her to be contending against Heaven; for Lucy described to

her again, in more lively colours than before, that horrible night, her

utter desolation, and unexpected preservation! Agnes listened

attentively; and a hundred examples that she had often heard related,

that she \_herself\_ even had related to her daughter, of strange and

horrible punishments for violated vows, came to her memory. "And what

wilt thou do now?" said she.

"It is with the Lord that care rests; the Lord and the holy Virgin. I

have placed myself in their hands; they have never yet abandoned me,

they will not abandon me now that----The favour I ask of God, the only

favour, after the safety of my soul, is to be restored to you, my

beloved mother! He will grant it, yes, he will grant it. That fatal

day----in the carriage----Oh! most holy Virgin! Those men----who would

have thought I should be the next day with you?"

"But why not tell your mother at once?"

"Forgive me, I had not the heart----What use was there in afflicting you

sooner?"

"And Renzo?" said Agnes, shaking her head.

"Ah!" cried Lucy, starting, "I must think no more of the poor youth. God

has not intended----You see it appears to be his will that we should

separate. And who knows?----But no, no; the Lord will preserve him from

every danger, and render him, perhaps, happier without me."

"But, nevertheless, if you had not bound yourself for ever, provided no

misfortune has happened to Renzo, with this money, I would have found a

remedy for all our other evils."

"But, my mother, would this money have been ours if I had not passed

that terrible night? It is God's will that all should be thus; his will

be done!" And her voice became inarticulate through tears.

At this unexpected argument, Agnes maintained a mournful silence. After

some moments, Lucy, suppressing her sobs, resumed,--"Now that the thing

is done, we must submit cheerfully; and you, dear mother, you can aid

me, first in praying to the Lord for your poor daughter, and then it is

necessary that Renzo should know it. When you ascertain where he is,

have him written to, find a man,--your cousin Alessio, for instance, who

is prudent and kind, who has always wished us well, and who will not

tattle. Make Alessio write to him, and inform him of the circumstance as

it occurred, where I was, and how I suffered; tell him that God has

ordered it thus, and that he must set his heart at rest; that, as for

me, I can never be united to any one. Make him understand the matter

clearly; when he knows that I have promised the Virgin----he always has

been pious----And you, as soon as you hear from him, get some one to

write to me, let me know that he is safe and well----and, nothing more."

Agnes, with much emotion, assured her daughter that all should be done

as she desired.

"I would say something more; that which has befallen the poor youth,

would never have occurred to him, if he had never thought of me. He is a

wanderer, a fugitive; he has lost all his little savings; he has been

deprived of every thing he possessed, poor fellow! and you know why--and

we, we have so much money! Oh! mother, since the Lord has sent us

wealth, and since the unfortunate----you regard him as your son, do you

not? Ah! divide it, share it with him! Endeavour to find a safe man, and

send him the half of it. God knows how much he may need it!"

"That is just what I was thinking of," replied Agnes. "Yes, I will do it

certainly. Poor youth! And why did you think I was so pleased with the

money, if it were not----but--I came here well pleased,'tis true; but,

since matters are so, I will send it to him. Poor youth! he also----I

know what I mean. Certainly money gives pleasure to those who have need

of it; but this money--Ah! it is not this that will make him prosper."

Lucy returned thanks to her mother for her prompt and liberal accordance

with her request, so fervently, that an observer would have imagined her

heart to be still devoted to Renzo, more than she herself was aware of.

"And without thee, what shall I do--I, thy poor mother?" said Agnes,

weeping in her turn.

"And I, without you, my dear mother? and in a house of strangers, at

Milan? But the Lord will be with us both, and will re-unite us. In eight

or nine months we shall see each other again; let us leave it to him. I

will incessantly implore this favour from the Virgin; if I had any thing

more to offer her, I would not hesitate; but she is so compassionate,

she will surely grant my prayer."

The mother and daughter parted with many tears, promising to see each

other again, the coming autumn, at the latest, as if it depended on

themselves!

A long time elapsed before Agnes heard any thing of Renzo; neither

message nor letter was received from him; the people of the village were

as ignorant concerning him as herself.

She was not the only one whose enquiries had been fruitless; it was not

a mere ceremony in the cardinal Frederick, when he promised Lucy and

Agnes, to inform himself of the history and fate of Renzo; he fulfilled

that promise, by writing immediately to Bergamo for the purpose. While

at Milan, on his return from visiting his diocese, he received a reply,

in which he was informed that little was known of the young man; that he

had made, it was true, a short sojourn in such a place, but that one

morning he had suddenly disappeared; that a relation of his, with whom

he had lived while there, knew not what had become of him; he thought

that he had probably enlisted for the Levant, or had passed into

Germany, or, which was most likely, that he had perished in crossing the

river. It was added, however, that should any more definite intelligence

be received concerning him, his illustrious lordship should immediately

be informed of it.

These reports eventually travelled to Lecco, and reached the ears of

Agnes. The poor woman did her best to ascertain the truth of them; but

she was kept in a state of suspense and anxiety by the contradictory

accounts which were given, and which were, in fact, all without

foundation.

The governor of Milan, lieutenant-general under Don Gonzalo Fernandez de

Cordova, had complained bitterly to the lord resident of Venice at

Milan, that a robber, a villain, an instigator of pillage and massacre,

the famous Lorenzo Tramaglino, had been received in the Bergamascan

territory. The resident replied, that he knew nothing of the matter, but

that he would write to Venice for information concerning it, in order to

give some explanation to his Excellency.

It was a maxim at Venice to encourage the tendency of the Milanese

workmen in silk, to establish themselves in the Bergamascan territory,

by making them find it to their advantage to do so. For this reason,

Bortolo was warned confidentially, that Renzo was not safe in his

present residence, and that he would do wisely to place him in some

other manufactory, and even cause him to change his name for a while.

Bortolo, who was quick of apprehension, made no objections, related the

matter to his cousin, and taking him to another place fifteen miles off,

he presented him, under the name of \_Antonio Rivolta\_, to the master of

the manufactory, who was a native of Milan, and moreover his old

acquaintance. He, although the times were hard, did not require much

entreaty to induce him to receive a workman so warmly recommended by an

old friend. He saw reason afterwards to congratulate himself on the

acquisition, although, at first, the young man appeared rather heedless,

because, when they called \_Antonio\_, he scarcely ever answered.

A short time after, an order arrived from Venice to the captain of

Bergamo, to inform himself, and send word to government, whether there

was not within his jurisdiction, and particularly in such a village,

such an individual. The captain having obeyed in the best manner he

could, transmitted a reply in the negative, which was transmitted to the

resident at Milan, in order that he should transmit it to Don Gonzalo

Fernandez de Cordova.

There were not wanting inquisitive people, who enquired of Bortolo why

the young man had left him. The first time the question was put to him,

he simply replied, "He has disappeared." To relieve himself, however,

from the most persevering, he framed the stories we have already

related, at the same time offering them as mere reports that he had

heard; without, however, placing much reliance on them.

But when enquiry came to be made by order of the cardinal, or rather, by

order of some great person, as his name was not mentioned, Bortolo

became more uneasy, and judged it prudent to maintain his ordinary

method of reply, with this addition, that he gave to the stories he had

fabricated an air of greater verity and plausibility.

We must not conclude, however, that Don Gonzalo had any personal dislike

to our poor mountaineer; we must not conclude that, informed perhaps of

his disrespect and ill-timed jests upon his \_Moorish king enchained by

the throat\_, he wished to wreak his vengeance on him, nor that he

considered him a person dangerous enough to be pursued even in his

flight, as was Hannibal by the Roman senate. Don Gonzalo had too many

things to think of, to trouble himself with the actions of Renzo, and if

he appeared to do so, it was the result of a singular concurrence of

circumstances; by which the poor fellow, without wishing it, or even

knowing why, found himself attached, as by an invisible thread, to

numerous and important affairs.

CHAPTER XXVII.

We have had occasion to mention more than once a war which was then

fermenting, for the succession to the states of the Duke Vincenzo

Gonzaga, the second of the name; we have said that, at the death of this

duke, his nearest heir, Carlos Gonzaga, chief of a younger branch

transplanted to France, where he possessed the duchies of Nevers and

Rhetel, had entered into possession of Mantua and Montferrat; the

Spanish minister, who wished, at any price, to exclude from these two

fiefs the new prince, and wanted some pretence to advance for his

exclusion, had declared his intention to support the claims upon Mantua

of another Gonzaga, Ferrante, Prince of Guastalla; and those upon

Montferrat of Carlos Emanuel the First, Duke of Savoy, and Margherita

Gonzaga, Duchess dowager of Lorraine. Don Gonzalo, who was descended

from the great captain whose name he bore, had already made war in

Flanders; and as he was desirous beyond measure to direct one in Italy,

he made the greatest efforts to promote it. By interpreting the

intentions, and by going beyond the orders of the minister, he had, in

the mean time, concluded with the Duke of Savoy a treaty for the

invasion and division of Montferrat; and easily obtained the

ratification of it, by the count duke, by persuading him that the

acquisition of Casale, which was the point the best defended, of the

portion granted to the King of Spain, was extremely easy. However, he

still continued to protest, in the name of his sovereign, that he

desired to occupy the country only as a trust, until the decision of the

emperor should be declared. But in the meantime the emperor, influenced

by others as well as by motives of his own, had refused the investiture

to the new duke, and ordered him to leave in sequestration, the states

which had been the subject of contention; promising, after he should

have heard both parties, to give it to the one whom he should deem

justly entitled to it. The Duke of Nevers would not submit to these

conditions.

The duke had high and powerful friends, being supported by the Cardinal

Richelieu, the senate of Venice, and the pope. But the first of these,

absorbed at the time by the siege of Rochelle, embarrassed in a war with

England, thwarted by the party of the queen mother, Mary de' Medici,

who, for particular reasons, was hostile to the house of Nevers, could

only hold out hopes and promises. The Venetians would not stir in the

contest, until a French army arrived in Italy; and while secretly aiding

the duke, they confined themselves, in their negotiations with the court

of Madrid, and the government of Milan, to protests, offers, or even

threats, according to circumstances. Urban VIII. recommended the Duke

of Nevers to his friends, interceded for him with his adversaries, and

made propositions of peace; but he never afforded him any military aid.

The two powers, allied for offensive operations, could then securely

begin their enterprise; Carlos Emanuel entered Montferrat, and Don

Gonzalo gladly undertook the siege of Casale; but he did not meet with

the success he had anticipated. The court did not afford him all the

supplies he demanded; his ally, on the contrary, was too liberal in his

aid to the cause; for, after having taken his own portion, he also took

that which had been assigned to the King of Spain. Don Gonzalo,

inexpressibly enraged, but fearing, if he made the least complaint, that

Carlos, as active in intrigue, and as brave in arms, as he was fickle in

disposition, and false to his promises, would throw himself on the side

of France; was constrained to shut his eyes, to champ the bit, and to

maintain a satisfied appearance. Whether from the firm resistance of the

besieged, or from the small number of troops employed against them, or,

according to some statements, from the numerous mistakes of Don Gonzalo,

the siege, although protracted, was finally unsuccessful. It was at this

very period that the sedition of Milan obliged Don Gonzalo to go thither

in person.

In the relation that was there made to him, the flight of Renzo was

mentioned, and the facts, real or supposed, which had caused his arrest;

he was also informed that this man had taken refuge in the territory of

Bergamo. This latter circumstance attracted the attention of Don

Gonzalo; he knew that the Venetians had taken an interest in the

insurrection of Milan, and that, in the beginning of it, they had

imagined that, on that account alone, he would be obliged to raise the

siege of Casale, and thus incur a heavy disappointment to his hopes. In

addition to this, immediately after this event, the news was received,

so much desired by the senate, and so much dreaded by Gonzalo, of the

surrender of Rochelle. Stung to the quick, as a man and a politician,

and vexed at his loss of reputation, he sought out every occasion to

convince the Venetians, that he had lost none of his former boldness

and determination; he therefore ventured to make loud complaints of the

conduct of the senate. The resident of Venice, having come to pay his

respects to him, and endeavouring to read in his features and deportment

what was passing in his mind, Don Gonzalo spoke lightly of the tumult,

as a thing already quieted, making use, however, of the reception of

Renzo, in the Bergamascan territory, as a pretext for complaint against

the Venetians. The result is known to our readers. When he had answered

his own purposes, with the affair, it was entirely forgotten by him.

But Renzo, who was far from suspecting the little importance that was in

reality attached to him, had, for a long time, no other thought but to

keep himself concealed. It may well be supposed that he desired ardently

to send intelligence to Lucy and her mother, and to hear from them in

return. But to this, there were two very great obstacles. It was

necessary to confide in an amanuensis, as he himself was unable to

write,--an accomplishment in those days not very usual in his class; and

how could he venture to do this where all were strangers to him? The

other difficulty was to find a trusty messenger, to take charge of the

letter. He finally succeeded in overcoming these difficulties, and found

one of his companions who could write for him. But not knowing whether

Lucy and Agnes were still at Monza, he thought it best to enclose the

letter under cover to Father Christopher, with a few lines in addition

to him. The writer engaged to send it, and gave it to a man who was to

pass near Pescarenico, and who left it in an inn on the route, in a

neighbouring place to the convent, and with many injunctions for its

safe delivery. As the cover was directed to a capuchin, it was carried

to Pescarenico, but it was never known what farther became of it. Renzo,

not receiving an answer, caused another letter to be written, and

enclosed it to one of his relations at Lecco. This time the letter

reached its destination. Agnes requested her cousin Alessio to read it

for her; and to write an answer, which was sent to Antonio Rivolta, at

the place of his abode; all this, however, was not done so quickly as

we tell it. Renzo received the answer, and wrote a reply; in short,

there was a correspondence, however irregular, established between them.

But the manner of carrying on such a correspondence, which is the same,

perhaps, at this day, we will explain. The absent party who can't write,

selects one who possesses the art, from amongst his own class, in which

he can more securely trust. To him he explains with more or less

clearness his subject and his thoughts. The man of letters comprehends

part, guesses the rest, gives an opinion, proposes an alteration, and

finishes with "leave it to me." Then begins the translation of the

spoken into the written thoughts.--The writer corrects, improves,

overcharges, diminishes, or even omits, according to his opinion of the

graces of style. The finished letter is, accordingly, often wide of the

mark aimed at. But when, at length, it reaches the hands of a

correspondent, equally deficient in the art of reading running hand, he

is under the like necessity of finding a learned clerk of the same

calibre to interpret the hieroglyphics. Hereupon arise questions upon

the various meanings. Towards their elucidation, the one supplies

philological notices upon the text; the other, commentaries upon the

hidden matter; so that, after mature discussion, they may come to the

same understanding between themselves, however remote that may be from

the intention of the originator of the perplexity.

This was precisely the condition of our two correspondents.

The first letter from Renzo contained many details; he informed Agnes of

the circumstance of his flight, his subsequent adventures, and his

actual situation. These events, however, were rather hinted at, than

clearly explained, so that Agnes and her interpreter were far from

drawing any definite conclusions from the relation of them. He spoke of

secret information, of a change of name; that he was in safety, but that

he was obliged to keep himself concealed; further, the letter contained

pressing and passionate enquiries with regard to Lucy, with some obscure

references to the reports which had reached him, mingled with vague

expressions of hope, and plans for the future, and affectionate

exhortations to constancy and patience.

Some time after the receipt of this letter, Agnes sent Renzo an answer,

with the fifty crowns that had been assigned him by Lucy. At the sight

of so much gold, he did not know what to think; and, with his mind

agitated by reflections by no means agreeable, he went in search of his

amanuensis, requesting him to interpret the letter, and afford him a

clue to the developement of the mystery.

The amanuensis of Agnes, after some complaints on the want of clearness

in Renzo's epistle, described the wonderful history of \_this person\_ (so

he called the Unknown), and thus accounted for the fifty crowns; then he

mentioned the vow, but only periphrastically; adding more explicitly the

advice, to set his heart at rest, and not to think of Lucy any more.

Renzo was very near quarrelling with his interpreter; he trembled; he

was enraged with what he had understood, and with what he had not

understood. He made him read three or four times this melancholy

epistle, sometimes understanding it better, sometimes finding obscure

and inexplicable that which at first had appeared clear. In the delirium

of his passion, he desired his amanuensis to write an answer

immediately. After the strongest expressions of pity and horror at the

misfortunes of Lucy; "Write," pursued he, "that I do not wish to set my

heart at rest, and that I never will; that this is not advice to give

me; and that, moreover, I will never touch the money, but will keep it

in trust, as the dowry of the young girl; that Lucy belongs to me, and

that I will not abide by her vow; that I have always heard that the

Virgin interests herself in our affairs, for the purpose of aiding the

afflicted, and obtaining favour for them; but that I have never heard

that she will protect those who do evil, and fail to perform their

promises; say that, as such cannot be the case, her vow is good for

nothing; that with this money we can establish ourselves here, and that,

if our affairs are now a little perplexed, it is a storm which will soon

pass away."

Agnes received this letter, sent an answer, and the correspondence

continued for some time, as we have related. When her mother informed

Lucy that Renzo was well and in safety, she derived great relief from

the intelligence, desiring but one thing more, which was, that he should

forget, or rather, that he should endeavour to forget her. On her part

she made a similar resolution, with respect to him, a hundred times a

day; and employing every means of which she was mistress to accomplish

so desirable an end, she applied herself incessantly to labour,

endeavouring to give to it all the powers of her soul. When the image of

Renzo occurred to her mind, she tried to banish it by prayer; but, while

thinking of her mother, (and how could she avoid thinking of her

mother?) the image of Renzo intruded himself as a third into the place

so often occupied by the real Renzo. However, if she did not succeed in

forgetting, she contrived at least to think less frequently of him; and

in this she would have been more successful, had she been left to

prosecute the work alone; but, alas! Donna Prassede, who, on her part,

was determined to drive the poor youth from her mind, thought there was

no better expedient for the purpose than to talk of him incessantly;

"Well," said she, "do you still think of him?"

"I think of no one," said Lucy.

Donna Prassede, who was not a woman to be satisfied with such an answer,

replied, "that she wanted actions, not words." Discussing at length, the

tendencies of young girls, she said, "When they have once given their

heart to a libertine, it is impossible to withdraw their affections. If

their love for an honest man is, by whatever means, unfortunate, they

are soon comforted, but love for a libertine is an incurable wound." And

then beginning the panegyric of poor Renzo, of this rascal, who wished

to deluge Milan in blood, and reduce it to ashes, she concluded, by

insisting that Lucy should confess the crimes of which he had been

guilty in his own country.

Lucy, with a voice trembling from shame, grief, and from as much

indignation as her gentle disposition and humble station permitted her,

declared and protested, that in her village this poor youth had always

acted peaceably and honourably, and had obtained a good reputation.

"She wished," she said, "that one of his countrymen were present to bear

testimony to the truth." Even respecting the events at Milan, of which,

'twas true, she knew not the details, she defended him, and solely on

account of the acquaintance she had had with his habits from infancy.

She defended him (or rather, she \_meant\_ to defend him) from the pure

duty of charity, from love of truth, and as being her neighbour. But

Donna Prassede deduced, from this defence, new arguments to convince

Lucy, that this man still held a place in her heart, of which he was not

worthy. At the degrading portrait which the old lady drew of him, the

habitual feelings of her heart, with regard to him, and her knowledge

and estimate of his character, revived with double force and

distinctness. Her recollections, which she had had so much difficulty in

subduing, returned vividly to her imagination; in proportion to the

aversion and contempt manifested by Donna Prassede towards the

unfortunate youth, just in such proportion did she recall her former

motives for esteem and sympathy; this blind and violent hatred excited

in her heart stronger pity and tenderness. Such conversations could not

be much prolonged without resolving Lucy's words into tears.

If Donna Prassede had been led to this course of conduct by hatred

towards Lucy, the tears of the latter, which flowed freely during these

examinations, might have subdued her to silence, but as she was moved to

speak by the desire of doing good, she never suffered herself to be

softened by them; for groans and supplications may arrest the arm of an

enemy, but not the friendly lance of the surgeon. After having

reproached her for her wickedness, she passed to exhortations and

advice, mingling also a few praises, to temper the bitter with the

sweet, and obtain more certainly the effect she desired. These disputes,

which had nearly the same beginning, middle, and end, did not, however,

leave any trace of resentment against her severe lecturer in the gentle

bosom of Lucy; she was, in other respects, treated with much kindness by

the lady, and she believed her, even in this matter, to be guided by

good, though mistaken intentions. There did follow them, however, such

agitation, such uneasy awakening of slumbering thoughts, that much time

and effort were requisite to restore her to any degree of tranquillity.

It was a happiness for Lucy that Donna Prassede's sphere of usefulness

was somewhat extensive; consequently these tiresome conversations could

not be so frequently repeated. Besides her immediate household,

composed, according to her opinion, of persons that had more or less

need of correction and regulation; and besides all the other occasions

which presented themselves for her rendering the same office from pure

benevolence to persons who required not the duty at her hands; she had

five daughters, neither of whom lived at home, but they gave her the

more trouble from that very cause. Three were nuns; and two were

married. Donna Prassede consequently had three monasteries and two

families to govern; a vast and complicated machinery, and the more

troublesome, as two husbands, supported by a numerous kindred, three

abbesses, defended by other dignitaries, and a great number of nuns,

would not accept her superintendence. There was a continual warfare,

polite indeed, but active and vigilant; a perpetual attention to avoid

her solicitude, to close up the avenues to her advice, to elude her

enquiries, and to keep her in as much ignorance as possible of their

affairs. In her own family, however, her zeal could display itself

freely; all were governed by her authority, and submissive to her, in

every respect, with the exception of Don Ferrante; with him things were

conducted in a peculiar manner.

A man of study, he neither loved to obey nor command; he was perfectly

willing that his wife should be mistress in all things pertaining to

household affairs, but not that he should be her slave; and if, at her

request, he lent upon occasion the services of his pen, it was because

he had a particular taste for such employments. And, moreover, he could

refuse to do it, when not convinced of the propriety of her demand.

"Well," he would say, "do it yourself, since the matter appears so plain

to you." Donna Prassede, after vainly trying to induce him to

submission, took refuge in grumbling against him as an original, a man

who would have his own way, a mere scholar; which latter title,

however, she never gave him without a degree of complacency, mingling

itself with her displeasure.

Don Ferrante passed much time in his study, where he had a considerable

collection of choice books; he had selected the most famous works on

many different subjects, in each of which he was more or less versed. In

astrology he was justly considered more than an amateur, because he not

only possessed the general notions, and the common vocabulary of

influences, aspects, and conjunctions, but he could speak to the point,

and, like a professor, of the twelve houses of heaven, of the great and

lesser circles, of degrees, lucid and obscure, of exaltations, passages,

and revolutions; in short, of the principles the most certain and most

recondite of the science. For more than twenty years, in long and

frequent disputes, he had sustained the pre-eminence of \_Cardan\_ against

another learned man attached to the system of \_Alcabizio\_, "from pure

obstinacy," said Don Ferrante, who, in acknowledging voluntarily the

superiority of the ancients, could not, however, endure the prejudice

which would never accord to the moderns, even that which they evidently

deserved. He had also a more than ordinary acquaintance with the history

of the science; he could cite the most celebrated predictions which had

been verified, and reason very skilfully and learnedly on other

celebrated predictions which had \_not\_ been verified, demonstrating that

the failure was not owing to any deficiency in the science, but to the

ignorance which could not apply its principles.

He had acquired as much ancient philosophy as would have contented a man

of ordinary ambition, but he was continually adding to his stock from

the study of Diogenes Laertius; however, as we cannot adhere to every

system, and as, from among them all, a choice is necessary to him who

desires the reputation of a philosopher, Don Ferrante made choice of

Aristotle, who, as he was accustomed to say, was neither ancient nor

modern. He possessed many works of the wisest and most subtle disciples

of the school of Aristotle among the moderns; as to those of his

opponents, he would not read them, "because it would be a waste of

time," he said, "nor buy them, because it would be a waste of money."

In the judgment of the learned, therefore, Don Ferrante passed for an

accomplished peripatetic, although this was not the judgment he passed

on himself, for, more than once, he was heard to declare, with singular

modesty, that the essence, the universals, the soul of the world, and

the nature of things, were not matters so clear as people thought.

As to natural philosophy, he had made it more a pastime than a study: he

had rather read than digested the works of Aristotle himself on the

subject. Nevertheless, with a slight acquaintance with that author, and

the knowledge he had incidentally gathered from other treatises of

general philosophy, he could, when necessary, entertain an assembly of

learned persons in reasoning most acutely on the wonderful virtues and

singular characteristics of many plants. He could describe exactly the

forms and habits of the syrens, and the phoenix, the only one of its

kind; he could explain how it was that the salamander lived in fire, how

drops of dew became pearls in the shell, how the chameleon lived on air,

and a thousand other secrets of the same nature.

He was, however, much more addicted to the study of magic and sorcery,

as this was a science more in vogue, and withal more serviceable, and

the facts of which were of pre-eminent importance. It is not necessary

to add that, in devotion to such a science, he had no other purpose than

to obtain an accurate knowledge of the worst artifices of the sorcerers,

in order to guard himself against them. Guided by the great \_Martino

Delrio\_, he was able to discourse, \_ex professo\_, on the enchantment of

love, the enchantment of sleep, the enchantment of hatred, and on the

innumerable species of these three chief enchantments, which, alas! are

witnessed every day in their destructive and baneful effects.

His knowledge of history, especially universal history, was not less

vast and solid. "But," said he often, "what is history without politics?

a guide who conducts without teaching any one the way; as politics

without history, is a man without a guide to conduct him." Here was then

a small place on his shelf assigned to statistics; there, among others

of the second rank, were seen Bodin, Cavalcanti, Sansovino, Paruta, and

Boccalini. There were, however, two books that Don Ferrante preferred to

all others on the subject; two, which he called, for a long time, the

first of the kind, without deciding to which of the two this rank

exclusively belonged. One was \_Il Principe\_ and the \_Discorsi\_ of the

celebrated secretary of Florence. "A rascal, 'tis true," said he, "but

profound;" the other, \_La Ragion di Stato\_, of the not less celebrated

Giovanni Botero. "An honest man, 'tis true," said he, "but cunning."

But, a short time before the period to which our history belongs, a work

appeared which had terminated the question of pre-eminence; a work in

which was comprised and condensed a relation of every vice, in order to

enable men to avoid it, and every virtue, in order to enable men to

practise it,--a book of few leaves, indeed, but all of gold; in a word,

the \_Statista Regnante\_ of \_Don Valeriano Castiglione\_; of the

celebrated man upon whom the most learned men emulated each other in

bestowing praises, and for whose notice the greatest personages

contended; whom Pope Urban VIII. honoured with a magnificent eulogium;

whom Cardinal Borghese and the Viceroy of Naples, Don Pietro de Toledo,

solicited to write, the first, the life of Pope Paul V., the second, the

wars of the Catholic king in Italy, and both in vain; whom Louis XIII.,

King of France, with the advice of Cardinal Richelieu, named his

historiographer; upon whom the Duke Carlos Emanuel, of Savoy, conferred

the same office; and in praise of whom the Duchess Christina, daughter

to his most Christian majesty, Henry IV., added in a diploma, after many

other titles, "the renown he had obtained in Italy as the first writer

of the age."

But if Don Ferrante might be said to be well versed in all the above

sciences, there was one in which he deserved, and really obtained, the

title of professor, the science of chivalry. He not only spoke of it as

a master, but was often requested to interfere in nice points of honour,

and give his decision. He had in his library, and, we may add, in his

head also, the works of the most esteemed writers on this subject,

particularly Torquato Tasso, whom he had always ready; and he could, if

required, cite from memory all the passages of the Jerusalem Delivered,

which might be brought forward as authority in these matters. We might

speak more at large of this learned man, but we feel it to be time to

resume the thread of our history.

Nothing of importance occurred to any of the personages of our story

before the following autumn, when Agnes and Lucy expected to meet again;

but a great public event disappointed this hope. Other events followed,

which produced no material change in their destiny. Then occurred new

misfortunes, powerful and overwhelming, coming upon them like a

hurricane, which impetuously tears up and scatters every object in its

way, sweeping the land, and bearing off, with its irresistible and

mighty power, every vestige of peace and prosperity. That the particular

facts which remain to be related may not appear obscure, we must recur

for awhile to the farther recital of general facts.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

After the famous sedition on St. Martin's day, it may be said that

abundance flowed into Milan, as if by enchantment. The shops were well

stored with bread, the price of which was no higher than in the most

fruitful years; those who, on that terrible day, had howled through the

streets, and committed every excess in their power, had now reason to

congratulate themselves. But, with the cessation of their alarm, they

had not resumed their accustomed quiet; on the squares, and in the inns,

there were congratulations and boastings (although in an under tone) at

having hit on a mode of reducing the price of bread. However, in the

midst of these popular rejoicings, there reigned a vague apprehension

and presentiment that this happiness would be of short duration. They

besieged the bakers and vendors of flour with the same pertinacity as

during the period of the former factitious and transient abundance,

produced by the first tariff of Antony Ferrer. He who had some pence by

him converted them immediately into bread and flour, which was piled in

chests, in small casks, and even in vessels of earthen ware. In thus

attempting to extend the advantages of the moment, their long duration

was rendered, I do not say impossible, for it was so already; but even

their momentary continuance thus became still more difficult.

On the fifteenth of November, Antony Ferrer, "\_by the order of his

excellency\_," published a decree in which it was forbidden to any one,

having any quantity of grain or flour in his house, to purchase more;

and to the rest of the people to buy bread beyond that which was

necessary for two days, "\_under pecuniary and corporal penalties at the

discretion of his excellency\_." The decree ordered the \_anziani\_

(officers of justice), and invited every body, as a duty, to denounce

the offenders; it commanded the judges to cause search to be made in

every house which might be mentioned to them, issuing at the same time a

new command to the bakers to keep their shops well furnished with bread,

"\_under penalty of five years in the galleys, and still greater

punishment at the discretion of his excellency\_." A great effort of

imagination would be required to believe that such orders were easy of

execution.

In commanding the bakers to make such a quantity of bread, means ought

to have been afforded for the supply of the material of which it was to

be made. In seasons of scarcity, there is always an endeavour to make

into bread various kinds of aliment, which, under ordinary

circumstances, are consumed under other forms. In this way rice was

introduced into the composition of a bread which was called mistura.[33]

On the 23d of November, there was a decree issued, which placed at the

order of the vicar and twelve members of provision the half of the rice

that each possessed; under penalty for selling it without the permission

of those lords of the loss of the entire commodity, and a fine of three

crowns the bushel.

[33] Mixture.

But this rice had to be paid for at a price very disproportioned to that

of bread. The burden of supplying this enormous difference was imposed

on the city: but the council of ten resolved to send a remonstrance to

the governor, on the impossibility of sustaining such a tax; and the

governor fixed, by a decree of the 13th of December, the price of rice

at twelve livres the bushel. It is also probable, though nowhere

expressly stated, that the maximum price for other sorts of grain was

fixed by other proclamations. Whilst, by these various measures, bread

and flour were kept at a low price in Milan, it consequently happened

that crowds of people rushed into the city to supply their wants. Don

Gonzalo, to remedy this inconvenience, forbade, by another decree of the

15th of December, the carrying out of the city bread to the value of

more than twenty pence; the penalty was a fine of "\_twenty-five crowns,

and in case of inability, a public flogging, and greater punishments

still, at the discretion of his excellency\_."

The populace wished to procure abundance by pillage and conflagration,

the legal power wished to maintain it by the galleys and the rope. Every

method was resorted to to accomplish their purpose, but the reader will

soon learn the total failure of them all. It is, besides, easy to see,

and not useless to observe, that these strange means had an intimate and

necessary connection with each other; each was the inevitable

consequence of the preceding, and all, in fact, flowed from the first

error, that of fixing upon bread a price so disproportioned to that

which ought to have resulted from the real state of things. Such an

expedient, however, has always appeared to the populace not only

conformable to equity, but very simple and easy of execution; it is then

very natural that in the agonies and misery which are the necessary

effects of scarcity, they should, if it be in their power, adopt it. But

as the consequences begin to be felt, the government is obliged to

repair the evil by new laws, forbidding men to do that which previous

laws had recently prescribed to them.

The principal fruits of the insurrection were these; the destruction or

loss of much provision in the insurrection itself, and the rapid

consumption of the small quantity of grain then on hand, which should

otherwise have lasted until the next harvest. To these general effects

may be added, the punishment of four of the populace, who were hung as

leaders of the sedition, two before the baker's shop of the crutches,

and two at the corner of the street in which was situated the house of

the superintendent of provision.

The historical relations of this epoch are handed down to us with so

little clearness, that it is difficult to ascertain when this arbitrary

tariff ceased. But we have numerous accounts of the situation of the

country, and especially the city, in the winter of that year and the

following spring. In every quarter shops were closed; and the

manufactories were, for the most part, deserted; the streets afforded a

terrible spectacle of sorrow and desolation; mendicants by profession,

now the smallest number, were confounded with the new multitude,

disputing for alms with those from whom they had formerly been

accustomed to receive them; clerks and servants, dismissed by the

merchants and shopkeepers, hardly existing upon some scanty savings;

merchants and shopkeepers themselves failing and ruined by the stoppage

of trade; artificers wandering from door to door, lying along the

pavement, by the houses and churches, soliciting charity, and hesitating

between want and shame, emaciated and feeble, reduced by long fasting,

and the rigours of the cold which penetrated their tattered clothing;

servants, dismissed by their masters, who were incapable of maintaining

their accustomed numerous and sumptuous establishments; and the numerous

dependents upon the labour of these various classes, old men, women, and

children, grouped around their former supporters, or wandered in search

of support elsewhere.

Among the wretched crowds also might be distinguished, by their \_long

lock\_, by the remnants of their magnificent apparel, by their carriage

and gestures, and by the traces which habit impresses on the

countenance, many \_bravoes\_, who, having lost in the common misery their

criminal means of support, were reduced to an equality of suffering, and

with difficulty dragged themselves along the city that they had so often

traversed with a proud and ferocious bearing, magnificently armed and

attired; they now extended with humility the hand which they had so

frequently raised to menace with insolence, or to strike with treachery.

But the most dense, livid, and hideous swarm was that of the villagers.

These were seen in entire families; husbands with their wives, dragging

along their little ones, and supporting in their arms their wretched

babies, whilst their own aged and helpless parents followed behind,--all

flocked into the city in hopes of obtaining bread. Some, whose houses

had been invaded and despoiled by the soldiery, had fled in despair;

some, to excite compassion, and render their misery more striking,

showed the wounds and bruises they had received in defending their

homes; and others, whom this scourge had not reached, had been driven,

by the two scourges from which no corner of the country was exempt,

sterility and the consequent increase on the price of provisions, to the

city, as to the abode of abundance and pious munificence. The new comers

might be recognised by their air of angry astonishment and

disappointment at finding such an excess of misery where they had hoped

to be themselves the peculiar objects of compassion and benevolence.

Here, too, might be recognised, in all their varieties of ragged

habiliments, in the midst of the general wretchedness, the pale dweller

of the marsh, the bronzed countenance of the plain or hill countryman,

and the sanguine complexion of the mountaineer, all, however, alike in

the hollow eye, ferocious or insane countenance, knotted hair, long and

matted beard, attenuated body, shrivelled skin and bony breast,--all

alike reduced to the lowest condition of languor, of infantine debility.

Heaps of straw and stubble were seen along the walls, and by the

gutters, which appeared to be a particular provision of charity for

these unfortunate creatures; there their limbs reposed during the night;

and in the day they were occupied by those who, exhausted by fatigue and

suffering, could no longer bear the weight of their emaciated bodies;

sometimes, upon the damp straw a dead body lay extended; sometimes, the

miserable spark of life was rekindled in its feeble tenement by timely

succour from a hand rich in the means and in the disposition to do

good, the hand of the pious Frederick.

He had made choice of six priests of ardent charity and robust

constitution; and, dividing them into three companies, assigned to each

the third of the city as their charge; they were accompanied by porters,

laden with food, cordials, and clothing. Each morning these worthy

messengers of benevolence passed through the streets, approached those

whom they beheld stretched on the pavement, and gave to each their

kindly assistance. Those who were too ill to be benefited by temporal

succour received from them the last offices of religion.

Their assistance was not limited to present relief: the good bishop

requested them, wherever it was possible, to furnish more efficacious

and permanent comfort, by giving to those who should be in some measure

restored to strength money for their future necessities, lest returning

want should again plunge them into wretchedness and misery; and to

obtain shelter for others who lay exposed in the street in the

neighbouring houses, by requesting their inhabitants to receive the poor

afflicted ones as boarders, whose expenses would be paid by the cardinal

himself.

Frederick had not waited for the evil to attain its height, in order to

exercise his benevolence, and to devote all the powers of his mind

towards its amelioration. By uniting all his means, by practising strict

economy, by drawing upon the sums destined to other liberalities, and

which had now become of secondary importance, he endeavoured to amass

money, in order to employ it entirely for those who were suffering from

hunger and its consequences. He bought a quantity of grain, and sent it

to the most destitute parts of his diocese; but as the succour was far

from adequate to the necessity, he sent with it a great quantity of

salt, "with which," says Ripamonti[34], relating the fact, "the herbs of

the field and the leaves of trees were made food for men." He

distributed grain and money to the curates of the city; and he himself

travelled over it, administering alms, and secretly aiding many indigent

families. In the episcopal palace, rice was boiled every day, and dealt

out to the necessities of the people, to the extent of 2000 measures.

Besides these splendid efforts of a single individual, many other

excellent persons, though with less powerful means, strove to mitigate

the horrible sufferings of the people: of these sufferers, thousands

struggled to grasp the broth or other food provided at different

quarters, and thus prolong for a day, at least, their miserable lives;

but thousands were still left behind in the struggle, and these

generally the weakest,--the aged women and children; and these might be

seen, dead and dying from inanition, in every part. But in the midst of

these calamities not the least disposition to insurrection appeared.

[34] Historia Patriæ, decad. v. lib. vi. p. 386.

The void that mortality created each day in the miserable multitude was

each day more than replenished; there was a perpetual concourse, at

first from the neighbouring villages, then from the more distant

territories, and, finally, from the Milanese cities.

The ordinary spectacle of ordinary times, the contrast of magnificent

apparel with rags, and of luxury with poverty, had entirely disappeared.

The nobility even wore coarse clothing; some, because the general misery

had affected their fortune; others, because they would not insult the

wretchedness of the people, or because they feared to provoke the

general despair by the display of luxury at such a time.

Thus passed the winter and the spring; already had the Tribunal of

Health remonstrated with the Tribunal of Provision on the danger to

which such mass of misery exposed the city. To prevent contagious

diseases, a proposal was made to confine the vagabond beggars in the

various hospitals. Whilst this project was under discussion, some

approving and others condemning, dead bodies incumbered the streets. The

Tribunal of Provision, however, proposed another expedient as more easy

and expeditious, which was, to shut up all the mendicants, healthy or

diseased, in the lazaretto, and to maintain them there at the expense of

the city. This measure was resolved upon, notwithstanding the

remonstrances of the Tribunal of Health, who objected that, in so

numerous an assemblage, the evil to which they wished to apply a remedy

would be greatly augmented.

The little order that reigned in the lazaretto, the bad quality of the

food, and the standing water which was drank plentifully, soon created

numerous maladies. To these causes of mortality, so much the more active

from operating on bodies already exhausted or enfeebled, was added the

unfavourableness of the season; obstinate rains, followed by more

obstinate drought, and violent heat. To these physical evils were added

others of a moral nature, despair and wearisomeness in captivity, desire

for accustomed habits, regret for cherished beings of whom these

unfortunate beings had been deprived; painful apprehension for those who

were living, and the continual dread of death, which had itself become a

new and powerful cause of the extension of disease. It is not to be

wondered at that mortality increased in this species of prison to such a

degree as to assume the appearance and deserve the name of \_pestilence\_.

The number of deaths in the lazaretto soon amounted to a hundred daily.

Whilst within these wretched walls, grief, fear, anguish, and rage

prevailed, in the Tribunal of Provision, shame, astonishment, and

irresolution were equally apparent. They consulted, and now listened to

the advice of the Tribunal of Health: finding they could do no better

than to undo what they had done, at so much expense and trouble, they

opened the doors of the lazaretto, and released all who were well enough

to leave it. The city was thus again filled with its former cries, but

feebler, and more interrupted; the sick were transported to Santa Maria

della Stella, which was then the hospital for the poor, and the greater

part perished there.

However, the fields began to yield the harvest so long desired, and the

troops of peasants left the city for their long prayed for and

accustomed labours. The ingenious and inexhaustible charity of the good

Frederick still exerted itself; he made a present of a giulio[35] and a

sickle to each peasant, who solicited it at the palace.

[35] A coin worth about 6\_d.\_

With a plentiful harvest, scarcity ceased to be felt; the mortality,

however, continued, in a greater or less degree, until the middle of

autumn. It was on the point of ceasing, when a new scourge overwhelmed

the city and country.

Many events of high historical importance had occurred in this interval

of time. The Cardinal Richelieu, after having taken Rochelle, and made a

treaty of peace with England, had proposed, effected by his powerful

influence in the councils of the French king, that efficacious aid

should be sent to the Duke of Nevers; he had also persuaded the king to

lead the expedition in person. Whilst the preparations were in progress,

the Count of Nassau, imperial commissary, suggested to the new duke in

Mantua the expediency of replacing his states in the hands of Ferdinand;

intimating that, in case of refusal, an army would be immediately sent

by the emperor to occupy them. The duke, who in the most desperate

circumstances had rejected so hard a condition, encouraged now by the

promised succours from France, was determined still longer to defend

himself. The commissary departed, declaring that force would soon decide

the matter.

In the month of March, the Cardinal Richelieu with the king, at the head

of an army, demanded a free passage from the Duke of Savoy; he entered

into treaties for the purpose, but nothing was concluded. After a

rencounter, in which the French obtained the advantage, a new treaty was

entered into, in which the duke stipulated that Don Gonzalo de Cordova

should raise the siege of Casale, engaging, in case of his refusal, to

unite with the French, and invade the duchy of Milan. Don Gonzalo raised

the siege of Casale, and a body of French troops entered it, to

reinforce the garrison. The Cardinal Richelieu decided to return to

France, on business which he regarded as more urgent; but Girolamo

Soranzo, envoy from Venice, offered the most powerful reasons to divert

him from this resolution. To these the king and the cardinal paid no

attention; they returned with the greatest part of the army, leaving

only 6000 men at Suza to occupy the passes and maintain the treaty.

Whilst this army departed on one side, that of Ferdinand, commanded by

the Count of Collato, advanced on the other. It had invaded the country

of the Grisons, and the Valtelline, and was preparing to come down on

the Milanese. Besides the usual terrors which such an expectation was

calculated to excite, the report was spread, that the plague lurked in

the imperial army. Alessandro Tadino, one of the conservators of the

public health, was charged by the tribunal to state to the governor the

frightful danger which threatened the country, if this army should

obtain the pass which opened on Mantua. It appears from all the actions

of Gonzalo, that he was possessed by a desire to occupy a great place in

history; but, as often happens, history has failed to register one of

his most remarkable acts, the answer he returned to this Doctor Tadino;

which was, "that he knew not what could be done; that reasons of

interest and honour, which had induced the march of the army, were of

greater weight than the danger represented; that he would, however,

endeavour to act for the best, and that they must trust to Providence."

In order, then, to act for the best, their two physicians proposed to

the tribunal to forbid, under the most severe penalty, the purchase of

any articles of clothing from the soldiers who were about to pass. As to

Don Gonzalo, his reply to Doctor Tadino was one of his last acts at

Milan, as the ill success of the war, which had been instigated and

directed by him, caused him to be displaced in the course of the summer.

He was succeeded by Marquis Ambrosio Spinola, who had already acquired

the military celebrity in the wars of Flanders which still endures.

Meanwhile the German troops had received definite orders to march upon

Mantua, and in the month of September they entered the duchy of Milan.

At this epoch armies were composed, for the greater part, of

adventurers, enlisted by \_condottieri\_, who held their commission from

some prince, and who sometimes pursued the occupation on their own

account, so as to be able to sell themselves and followers together. Men

were drawn to this vocation much less by the pay which was assigned to

them, than by the hope of pillage, and the charms of licence. There was

no fixed or general discipline; and as their pay was very uncertain, the

spoils of the countries which they over-ran were tacitly accorded to

them by their commanders.

It was a saying of the celebrated Wallenstein's, that it was easier to

maintain an army of 100,000 men than one of 12,000. And this army of

which we are now speaking was part of that which in the thirty years'

war had desolated all Germany; it was commanded by one of Wallenstein's

lieutenants, and consisted of 28,000 infantry, and 7000 horse. In

descending from the Valtelline towards Milan, they had to coast along

the Adda, to the place where it empties into the Po; eight days' march

in the duchy of Milan.

A great proportion of the inhabitants retired to the mountains, carrying

with them their most precious possessions; some remained to watch the

sick, or to preserve their dwellings from the flames, or to watch the

valuable property which they had buried or concealed; and others

remained because they had nothing to lose. When the first detachment

arrived at the place where they were to halt, the soldiers scattered

themselves through the country; and subjected it at once to pillage; all

that could be eaten or carried off disappeared; fields were destroyed,

and cottages burnt to the ground; every hiding-place, every method to

which people had resorted, in their despair, for the defence of their

property, became useless, nay, often resulted in the peculiar injury of

the proprietor. Strict search was made throughout every house by the

soldiers; they easily detected in the gardens the earth which had been

newly dug; they penetrated the caverns in search of the opulent

inhabitants, who had taken refuge there, and dragging them to their

houses, forced them to declare where they had concealed their treasures.

At last they departed; their drums and trumpets were heard receding in

the distance, and a temporary calm succeeded to these hours of tumult

and affright; but, alas! the sound of drums was again heard, announcing

the arrival of another detachment, the soldiers of which, furious at not

finding booty, destroyed what the first work of desolation had spared;

burned the furniture and the houses, and manifested the most cruel and

savage disposition towards the inhabitants. This continued for a period

of twenty days, the army containing that number of divisions.

Colico was the first territory of the duchy that these demons invaded;

they then threw themselves on Bellano, from which they entered and

spread themselves in the Valsassina, whence they marched into the

territory of Lecco.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Here, among those who were expecting the arrival of the army in alarm

and consternation, we find persons of our acquaintance. He who did not

behold Don Abbondio on the day when the report was spread of the descent

of the army, of its near approach, and its excesses, can have no idea of

the power of fright upon a feeble mind. All sorts of reports were

afloat. They are coming--thirty, forty, fifty thousand men. They have

sacked Cortenova; burnt Primaluna; plundered Introbbio, Pasturo, Barsio.

They have been seen at Balobbio; to-morrow they will be here. Such were

the statements in circulation. The villagers assembled in tumultuous

crowds, hesitating whether to fly or remain, while the women lamented

aloud over their miserable fate.

Don Abbondio, to whom flight had immediately suggested itself, saw in

it, nevertheless, invincible obstacles, and frightful dangers. "What

shall I do?" cried he; "where shall I go?" The mountains, without

speaking of the difficulty of ascending them, were not safe; the foot

soldiers climbed them like cats, if they had the slightest indication or

hope of booty; the waters of the lake were swollen; it was blowing

violently; in addition to which, the greater part of the watermen,

fearing to be forced to pass soldiers or baggage, had taken refuge with

their boats on the opposite shore; the few barks that remained were

already filled with people, and endangered by the weather. It was

impossible to find a carriage or horse, or any mode of conveyance. Don

Abbondio did not dare venture on foot, incurring, as he would, the

probability of being stopped on the road. The confines of the

Bergamascan territory were not so distant, but that he could have walked

there in a little while; but a report had reached the village, that a

squadron of \_cappelletri\_ had been sent in haste from Bergamo, to guard

the frontiers against the German foot-soldiers. These were not less

devils incarnate than those they were commissioned to oppose. The poor

man was beside himself with terror; he endeavoured to concert with

Perpetua some plan of escape, but Perpetua was quite occupied in

collecting and concealing his valuables; with her hands full, she

replied, "Let me place this in safety; we will then do as other people

do." Don Abbondio desired eagerly to discuss with her the best means to

be pursued, but Perpetua, between hurry and fright, was less tractable

than usual: "Others will do the best they can," said she, "and so will

we. Excuse me, but you only hinder one. Do you not think they have skins

to save as well as we?"

Relieving herself thus from his importunities, she went on with her

occupation; the poor man, as a last resource, went to a window, and

cried, in a piteous tone, to the people who were passing, "Do your poor

curate the favour to bring him a horse or a mule; is it possible no one

will come to help me? Wait for me at least; wait till I can go with you;

abandon me not. Would you leave me in the power of these dogs? Know you

not that they are Lutherans, and that the murder of a priest will seem

to them a meritorious deed? Would you leave me here to be martyred?"

But to whom did he address this appeal? to men who were themselves

incumbered with the weight of their humble movables, or, disturbed by

the thoughts of what they had been obliged to leave behind, exposed to

the ravages of the destroyer. One drove his cow before him; another

conducted his children, who were also laden with burdens, his wife

perhaps with an infant in her arms. Some went on their way without

replying or looking at him; others merely said, "Eh, sir, do as you can;

you are fortunate in having no family to think of; help yourself; do the

best you can."

"Oh, poor me!" cried Don Abbondio, "oh, what savages! they have no

feeling; they give not a thought to their poor curate!" And he went

again in search of Perpetua.

"Oh, you are come just in time," said she, "where is your money?"

"What shall we do with it?"

"Give it to me; I will bury it in the garden with the plate."

"But----"

"But, but, give it to me; keep a few pence for necessity, and let me

manage the rest."

Don Abbondio obeyed, and drawing his treasure from his strong box, gave

it to Perpetua. "I will bury it in the garden, at the foot of the

fig-tree," said she, as she disappeared. She returned in a few moments,

with a large basket, full of provisions, and a small one, which was

empty; into the latter she put a few articles of clothing for herself

and master.

"You must take your breviary with you," said she.

"But where are we going?"

"Where every one else goes. We will go into the street, and then we

shall hear and see what we must do."

At this moment Agnes entered with a small basket in her hand, and with

the air of one about to make an important proposal.

She had decided not to wait the approach of the dangerous guests, alone

as she was, and with the gold of the Unknown in her possession; but had

remained some time in doubt where to seek an asylum. The residue of the

crowns, which in time of famine would have been so great a treasure, was

now the principal cause of her anxiety and irresolution; as, under the

present circumstances, those who had money were worse off than others;

being exposed at the same time to the violence of strangers, and the

treachery of their companions. It is true, none knew of the wealth which

had thus, as it were, fallen to her from heaven, except Don Abbondio, to

whom she had often applied to change a crown, leaving him always some

part of it for those more unfortunate than herself. But hidden

property, above all, to those not accustomed to such a possession, keeps

the possessor in continual suspicion of others. Now, whilst she

reflected on the peculiar dangers to which she was exposed, by the very

generosity itself of the Unknown, the offer of unlimited service, which

had accompanied the gift, suddenly occurred to her recollection. She

remembered the descriptions she had heard of his castle, as situated in

a high place, where, without the concurrence of the master, none dared

venture but the birds of heaven. Resolving to go thither, and reflecting

on the means of making herself known to this signor, her thoughts

recurred to Don Abbondio, who, since the conversation with the

archbishop, had been very particular in his expression of good feeling

towards her, as he could at present be, without compromising himself,

there being but little probability, from the situation of affairs, that

his benevolence would be put to the test. She naturally supposed, that

in a time of such consternation, the poor man would be more alarmed than

herself, and might acquiesce in her plan; this was, therefore, the

purpose of her visit. Finding him alone with Perpetua, she made known

her intentions.

"What do you say to it, Perpetua?" asked Don Abbondio.

"I say that it is an inspiration from Heaven, and that we must lose no

time, and set off immediately."

"But then----"

"But then, but then; when we have arrived safely there, we shall be very

glad, that's all. It is well known that this signor thinks of nothing

now but doing good to others, and he will afford us an asylum with the

greatest pleasure. There, on the frontiers, and almost in the sky, the

soldiers will not trouble us. But then--but then, we shall have enough

to eat, no doubt. On the top of the mountains, the provisions we have

here with us would not serve us long."

"Is it true that he is really converted?"

"Can you doubt it, after all you have seen?"

"And if, after all, we should be voluntarily placing ourselves in

prison?"

"What prison? With this trifling, excuse me, we shall never come to any

conclusion. Worthy Agnes! your plan is an excellent one." So saying, she

placed the basket on the table, and having passed her arms through the

straps, swung it over her shoulders.

"Could we not procure," said Don Abbondio, "some man to accompany us?

Should we encounter some ruffian on the way, what assistance would you

be to me?"

"Not done yet! always losing time!" cried Perpetua. "Go then, and look

for a man, and you will find every one engaged in his own business, I

warrant you. Come, take your breviary, and your hat, and let us be off."

Don Abbondio was obliged to obey, and they departed. They passed through

a small door into the churchyard. Perpetua closed it from custom; not

for the security it could now give. Don Abbondio cast a look towards the

church,--"It is for the people to guard it," thought he; "it is their

church: let them see to it, if they have the heart." They took the

by-paths through the fields, but were in continual apprehension of

encountering some one, who might arrest their progress. They met no one,

however; all were employed, either in guarding their houses, or packing

their furniture, or travelling, with their moveables, towards the

mountains.

Don Abbondio, after many sighs and interjections, began to grumble

aloud: he complained of the Duke of Nevers, who could have remained to

enjoy himself in France, had he not been determined to be Duke of

Mantua, in despite of all the world; of the emperor, and above all, of

the governor, whose duty it was to keep this scourge from the country,

and not invoke it by his taste for war.

"Let these people be, they cannot help us now," said Perpetua. "These

are your usual chatterings, excuse me, which mean nothing. That which

gives me the most uneasiness----"

"What is it?"

Perpetua, who had been leisurely recalling to mind the things which she

had so hastily concealed, remembered that she had forgotten such an

article, and had not safely deposited such another; that she had left

traces which might impart information to the depredators.

"Well done!" cried Don Abbondio, in whom the security he was beginning

to feel with regard to his life allowed his anxiety to appear for his

property; "well done! Is this what you have been doing? Where were your

brains?"

"How!" replied Perpetua, stopping for a moment, and attempting, as far

as her load would permit, to place her arms a-kimbo; "do you find fault,

when it was yourself who teased me out of my wits, instead of helping me

as you ought to have done? I have thought more of my master's goods than

my own; and if there is any thing lost, I can't help it, I have done

more than my duty."

Agnes interrupted these disputes by introducing her own troubles: she

was obliged to relinquish the hope of seeing her dear Lucy, for some

time at least; for she could not expect that Donna Prassede would come

into this vicinity under such circumstances. The sight of the

well-remembered places through which they were passing increased the

anguish of her feelings. Leaving the fields, they had taken the high

road, the same which the poor woman had travelled, in re-conducting, for

so short a time, her daughter to her home, after having been with her at

the tailor's. As they approached the village, "Let us go and visit these

worthy people," said Agnes.

"And rest a little, and eat a mouthful," said Perpetua, "for I begin to

have enough of this basket."

"On condition that we lose no time, for this is not by any means a

journey for amusement," said Don Abbondio.

They were received with open arms, and cordially welcomed; Agnes,

embracing the good hostess, wept bitterly; replying with sobs to the

questions her husband and she asked concerning Lucy.

"She is better off than we are," said Don Abbondio; "she is at Milan,

sheltered from danger, far from these horrible scenes."

"The signor curate and his companions are fugitives, are they not?" said

the tailor.

"Yes," replied, at the same time, Perpetua and her master.

"I sympathise with your misfortunes."

"We are going to the castle of----"

"That is well thought of; you will be as safe as in Paradise."

"And are you not afraid here?"

"We are too much off the road. If they should turn out of their way, we

shall be warned in time."

The three travellers decided to take a few hours' rest: as it was the

hour of dinner, "Do me the honour," said the tailor, "to partake of my

humble fare."

Perpetua said she had provisions enough in her basket wherewith to break

her fast; after a little ceremony, however, on both sides, they agreed

to seat themselves at the dinner table.

The children had joyfully surrounded their old friend Agnes; the tailor

ordered one of them to roast some early chestnuts; "and you," said he to

another, "go to the garden, and bring some peaches; all that are ripe.

And you," to a third, "climb the fig-tree, and gather the best figs; it

is a business to which you are well accustomed." As for himself, he left

the room to tap a small cask of wine, while his wife went in search of a

table-cloth. All being prepared, they seated themselves at the friendly

board, if not with unmingled joy, at least with much more satisfaction

than they could have anticipated from the events of the morning.

"What does the signor curate say to the disasters of the times? I can

fancy I'm reading the history of the Moors in France," said the tailor.

"What do I say? That even that misfortune might have befallen me,"

replied Don Abbondio.

"You have chosen an excellent asylum, however; for none can ascend those

heights without the consent of the master. You will find a numerous

company there. Many people have already fled thither, and there are

fresh arrivals every day."

"I dare to hope we shall be well received. I know this worthy signor:

when I had the honour to be in his company he was all politeness."

"And," said Agnes, "he sent me word by his illustrious lordship, that if

ever I should need assistance, I had only to apply to him."

"What a wonderful conversion!" resumed Don Abbondio. "And he perseveres?

does he \_not\_ persevere?"

The tailor spoke at length of the holy life of the Unknown, and said,

that after having been the scourge of the country, he had become its

best example and benefactor.

"And the people of his household--that band?" asked Don Abbondio, who

had heard some contradictory stories concerning them, and did not feel,

therefore, quite secure.

"The greater part have left him," replied the tailor, "and those who

have remained have changed their manner of life; in short, this castle

has become like the Thebaid. The signor curate understands me."

Then retracing with Agnes the visit of the cardinal, "What a great man!"

said he, "a great man, indeed! what a pity he remained so short a time

with us! I wished to do him honour. Oh, if I had only been able to

address him again, more at my leisure!"

When they rose from table, he showed them an engraving of the cardinal,

which he had hung on the door, from veneration to his virtues, and also

to enable him to assure every body that it was no likeness; he knew it

was not, as he had regarded him closely at his leisure in this very

room.

"Did they mean that for him?" said Agnes. "The habit is the same,

but----"

"It is no likeness, is it?" said the tailor; "that is what I always say,

but other things being wanting, there is at least his name under it,

which tells who it is."

Don Abbondio being impatient to be gone, the tailor went in search of a

vehicle to carry the little company to the foot of the ascent, and

returned in a few moments to inform them it was ready. "Signor curate,"

said he, "if you wish a few books to carry with you, I can lend you

some; for I amuse myself sometimes with reading. They are not like

yours, to be sure, being in the vulgar tongue, but----"

"A thousand thanks, but under present circumstances I have scarcely

brains enough to read my breviary."

After an exchange of thanks, invitations, and promises, they bade

farewell, and pursued, with a little more tranquillity of mind, the

remainder of their journey.

The tailor had told Don Abbondio the truth, with regard to the new life

of the Unknown. From the day that we took our leave of him, he had

continued to put in practice his good intentions, by repairing injuries,

reconciling himself with his enemies, and succouring the distressed and

unfortunate. The courage he had formerly evinced in attack and defence

he now employed in avoiding all occasion both for the one and the other.

He went unarmed and alone; disposed to suffer the possible consequences

of the violences he had committed; persuaded that it would be adding to

his crimes to employ any methods of defence for himself, as he was a

debtor to all the world; and persuaded also, that though the evil done

to him would be sin against God, it would be but a just retribution

against himself; and that he had left himself no right to revenge an

injury, however unprovoked it might be at the time. But he was not less

inviolable than when he bore arms to insure his safety; the recollection

of his former ferocity, and the contrast of his present gentleness, the

former exciting a desire of revenge, and the latter rendering this

revenge so easy, conspired to subdue hatred, and, in its place, to

substitute an admiration which served him as a safeguard. The man whom

no one could humble, but who had humbled himself, was regarded with the

deepest veneration. Those whom he had wronged had obtained, beyond their

hopes, and without incurring any danger, a satisfaction which they could

never have promised themselves from the most complete revenge, the

satisfaction of seeing him repent of his wrongs, and participate, so to

speak, in their indignation. In his voluntary abasement, his countenance

and manner had acquired, without his own knowledge, something elevated

and noble; his outward demeanour was as dauntless as ever.

This change, also, in addition to other reasons, secured him from public

retribution at the instigation of those in authority. His rank and

family, which had always been a species of defence to him, still

prevailed in his favour; and to his name, already famous, was joined the

personal esteem which was now due to him. The magistrates and nobility

had rejoiced at his conversion, as well as the people; as this

conversion produced compensations that they were neither accustomed to

ask nor obtain. Probably, also, the name of the Cardinal Frederick,

whose interest in his conversion, and subsequent friendship for him,

were well known, served him as an impenetrable shield.

Upon the arrival of the German troops, when fugitives from the invaded

countries fled to the castle, delighted that his walls, so long the

object of dread and execration to the feeble, should now be regarded as

a place of security and protection, the Unknown received them rather

with gratitude than politeness. He caused it to be made public, that his

doors would be open to all, and employed himself immediately in placing

not only the castle but the valley beneath in a state of defence:

assembling the servants who had remained with him, he addressed them on

the opportunity God had afforded them, as well as himself, to serve

those whom they had so frequently oppressed and terrified. With his old

accent of command, expressing the certainty of being obeyed, he gave

them general orders, as to their deportment, so that those who should

take refuge with him might behold in them only defenders and friends. He

gave their arms to them again, of which they had been deprived; as also

to the peasants of the valley, who were willing to engage in its

defence: he named officers, and appointed to them their duty and their

different stations, as he had been accustomed to do in his former

criminal life. He himself, however, whether from principle, or that he

had made a vow to that effect, remained unarmed at the head of his

garrison.

He also employed the females of the household in preparing beds, straw,

mattresses, sacks, in various rooms intended as temporary dormitories.

He ordered abundant provisions to be brought to the castle for the use

of the guests God should send him; and in the mean while he was himself

never idle, visiting every post, examining every defence, and

maintaining the most perfect order by his authority and his presence.

CHAPTER XXX.

As our fugitives approached the valley, they were joined by many

companions in misfortune, who were on the same errand to the castle with

themselves: under similar circumstances of distress and anguish,

intimacies are soon matured, and they listened to the relation of each

other's peril with mutual interest and sympathy; some had fled, like the

curate and our females, without waiting the arrival of the troops;

others had actually seen them, and could describe, in lively colours,

their savage and horrible appearance.

"We are fortunate, indeed," said Agnes; "let us thank Heaven. We may

lose our property, but at least our lives are safe."

But Don Abbondio could not see so much reason for congratulation; the

great concourse of people suggested new causes of alarm. "Oh," murmured

he to the females when no one was near enough to hear him; "oh, do you

not perceive that by assembling here in such crowds we shall attract the

notice of the soldiery? As every one flies and no one remains at home,

they will believe that our treasures are up here, and this belief will

lead them hither. Oh, poor me! why was I so thoughtless as to venture

here!"

"What should they come here for?" said Perpetua, "they are obliged to

pursue their route; and, at all events, where there is danger, it is

best to have plenty of company."

"Company, company, silly woman! don't you know that every lansquenet

could devour a hundred of them? and then, if any of them should commit

some foolish violence, it would be a fine thing to find ourselves in the

midst of a battle! It would have been better to have gone to the

mountains. I don't see why they have all been seized with a mania to go

to one place. Curse the people! all here; one after the other, like a

frightened flock of sheep!"

"As to that," said Agnes, "they may say the same of us."

"Hush, hush! it is of no use to talk," said Don Abbondio; "that which is

done, \_is\_ done: we are here, and here we must remain. May Heaven

protect us!"

But his anxiety was much increased by the appearance of a number of

armed men at the entrance of the valley. It is impossible to describe

his vexation and alarm. "Oh, poor me!" thought he; "I might have

expected this from a man of his character. What does he mean to do? Will

he declare war? Will he act the part of a sovereign? Oh, poor me! poor

me! In this terrible conjuncture he ought to have concealed himself as

much as possible; and, behold, he seeks every method to make himself

known. It is easy to be seen he wants to provoke them."

"Do you not see, sir," said Perpetua, "that these are brave men who are

able to defend us? Let the soldiers come; these men are not at all like

our poor devils of peasants, who are good for nothing but to use their

legs."

"Be quiet," replied Don Abbondio, in a low but angry tone, "be quiet;

you know not what you say. Pray Heaven that the army may be in haste to

proceed on its march, so that they may not gain information of this

place being disposed like a garrison. They would ask for nothing better;

an assault is mere play to them, and putting every one to the sword like

going to a wedding. Oh, poor me! perhaps I can secure a place of safety

on one of these precipices. I will never be taken in battle! I will

never be taken in battle! I never will!"

"If you are even afraid of being defended----" returned Perpetua; but

Don Abbondio sharply interrupted her.

"Be quiet, and take care not to relate this conversation. Remember you

must always keep a pleasant countenance here, and appear to approve all

that you see."

At Malanotte they found another company of armed men. Don Abbondio took

off his hat and bowed profoundly, saying to himself, "Alas, alas! I am

really in a camp." They here quitted the carriage to ascend the pass on

foot, the curate having in haste paid and dismissed the driver. The

recollection of his former terrors in this very place increased his

present forebodings of evil, by mingling themselves with his

reflections, and enfeebling more and more his understanding. Agnes, who

had never before trod this path, but who had often pictured it to her

imagination, was filled with different but keenly painful remembrances.

"Oh, signor curate," cried she, "when I think how my poor Lucy passed

this very road."

"Will you be quiet, foolish woman?" cried Don Abbondio in her ear. "Are

these things to speak of in this place? Are you ignorant that we are on

his lands? It is fortunate no one heard you. If you speak in this

manner----"

"Oh," said Agnes, "now that he is a saint----"

"Be quiet," repeated Don Abbondio: "think you we can tell the saints all

that passes through our brains? Think rather of thanking him for the

kindness he has done you."

"Oh, as to that I have already thought of it; do you think I have no

manners, no politeness?"

"Politeness, my good woman, does not consist in telling people things

they don't like to hear. Have a little discretion, I pray you. Weigh

well your words, speak but little, and that only when it is

indispensable. There is no danger in silence."

"You do much worse with all your----" began Perpetua. But "Hush," said

Don Abbondio, and, taking off his hat, he bowed profoundly. The Unknown

was coming to meet them, having recognised the curate approaching. "I

could have wished," said he, "to offer you my house on a more agreeable

occasion; but, under any circumstances, I esteem myself happy in serving

you."

"Confiding in the great kindness of your illustrious lordship, I have

taken the liberty to trouble you at this unhappy time; and, as your

illustrious lordship sees, I have also taken the liberty to bring

company with me. This is my housekeeper----"

"She is very welcome."

"And this is a female to whom your lordship has already rendered great

benefits. The mother of--of----"

"Of Lucy," said Agnes.

"Of Lucy!" cried the Unknown, turning to Agnes; "rendered benefits! I!

Just God! It is you who render benefits to me by coming hither; to

me--to this dwelling. You are very welcome. You bring with you the

blessing of Heaven!"

"Oh, I come rather to give you trouble." Approaching him nearer, she

said, in a low voice, "I have to thank you----"

The Unknown interrupted her, asking with much interest concerning Lucy.

He then conducted his new guests to the castle. Agnes looked at the

curate, as if to say, "See if there is any need of your interfering

between us with your advice."

"Has the army arrived in your parish?" said the Unknown to Don Abbondio.

"No, my lord, I would not wait for the demons. Heaven knows if I should

have escaped alive from their hands, and been able to trouble your

illustrious lordship!"

"You may be quite at ease; you are now in safety; they will not come

here. If the whim should seize them, we are ready to receive them."

"Let us hope they will not come," said Don Abbondio. "And on that side,"

added he, pointing to the opposite mountains, "on that side, also,

wanders another body of troops; but--but----"

"It is true. But, doubt not, we are ready for them also."

"Between two fires!" thought Don Abbondio, "precisely between two fires!

Where have I suffered myself to be led? And by two women! And this lord

appears to delight in such business! Oh, what people there are in the

world!"

When they entered the castle, the Unknown ordered Agnes and Perpetua to

be conducted to a room, in the quarter assigned to the women, which was

three of the four wings of the second court, in the most retired part of

the edifice. The men were accommodated in the wings of the other court

to the right and left; the body of the building was filled, partly with

provisions, and partly with the effects that the refugees brought with

them. In the quarter devoted to the men was a small apartment destined

to the ecclesiastics who might arrive. The Unknown accompanied Don

Abbondio thither, who was the first to take possession of it.

Our fugitives remained three or four and twenty days in the castle, in

the midst of continual bustle and alarm. Not a day passed without some

reports; at each account, the Unknown, unarmed as he was, led his band

beyond the precincts of the valley to ascertain the extent of the peril;

it was a singular thing, indeed, to behold him, without any personal

defence, conducting a body of armed men.

Not to encroach too far on the benevolence of the Unknown, Agnes and

Perpetua employed themselves in performing services in the household.

These occupations, with occasional conversations with the acquaintances

they had formed at the castle, enabled them to pass away the time with

less weariness. Poor Don Abbondio, who had nothing to do, was

notwithstanding prevented from becoming listless and inactive by his

fears: as to the dread of an attack, it was in some measure dissipated,

but still the idea of the surrounding country, occupied on every side by

soldiers, and of the numerous consequences which might at any moment

result from such a state, kept him in perpetual alarm.

All the time he remained in this asylum he never thought of going beyond

the defences; his only walk was on the esplanade; he surveyed every

side of the castle, observing attentively the hollows and precipices, to

ascertain if there were any practicable passage by which he might seek

escape in case of imminent danger. Every day there were various reports

of the march of the soldiers; some newsmongers by profession gathered

greedily all these reports, and spread them among their companions. On

such a day, such a regiment arrived in such a territory; the next day

they would ravage such another, where, in the mean time, another

detachment had been plundering before them. An account was kept of the

regiments that passed the bridge of Lecco, as they were then considered

fairly out of the country. The cavalry of Wallenstein passed, then the

infantry of Marrados, then the cavalry of Anzalt, then the infantry of

Brandenburgh, and, finally, that of Galasso. The flying squadron of

Venetians also removed, and the country was again free from invaders.

Already the inhabitants of the different villages had begun to quit the

castle; some departed every day, as after an autumn storm the birds of

heaven leave the leafy branches of a great tree, under whose shelter

they had sought and obtained protection. Our three friends were the last

to depart, as Don Abbondio feared, if he returned so soon to his house,

to find there some loitering soldiers. Perpetua in vain repeated, that

the longer they delayed, the greater opportunity they afforded to the

thieves of the country to take possession of all that might have been

left by the spoilers.

On the day fixed for their departure, the Unknown had a carriage ready

at Malanotte, and, taking Agnes aside, he made her accept a bag of

crowns, to repair the damage she would find at home; although she

protested she was in no need of them, having still some of those he had

formerly sent her.

"When you see your good Lucy," said he, "(I am certain that she prays

for me, as I have done her much evil,) tell her that I thank her, and

that I trust in God that her prayer will return in blessings on

herself."

They finally departed; they stopped for a few moments at the house of

the tailor, where they heard sad relations of this terrible march,--the

usual story of violence and plunder. The tailor's family, however, had

remained unmolested, as the army did not pass that way.

"Ah, signor curate!" said the tailor, as he was bidding him farewell,

"here is a fine subject to appear in print!"

After having proceeded a short distance, our travellers beheld

melancholy traces of the destruction they had heard related. Vineyards

despoiled, not by the vintager, but as if by a tempest; vines trampled

under foot; trees wounded and lopped of their branches; hedges

destroyed; in the villages, doors broken open, window-frames dashed in,

and streets filled with different articles of furniture and clothing,

broken and torn to pieces. In the midst of lamentations and tears, the

peasants were occupied in repairing, as well as they could, the damage

done; while others, overcome by their miseries, remained in a state of

silent despair. Having passed through these scenes of complicated woe,

they at last succeeded in reaching their own dwellings, where they

witnessed the same destruction. Agnes immediately occupied herself in

reducing to order the little furniture that was left her, and in

repairing the damage done to her doors and windows; but she did not

forget to count over in secret her crowns, thanking God in her heart,

and her generous benefactor, that in the general overthrow of order and

safety she at least had fallen on her feet.

Don Abbondio and Perpetua entered their house without being obliged to

have recourse to keys. In addition to the miserable destruction of all

their furniture, whose various fragments impeded their entrance, the

most horrible odours for a time drove them back; and when these

obstacles were at last surmounted, and the rooms were entered, they

found indignity added to mischief. Frightful and grotesque figures of

priests, with their square caps and bands, were drawn with pieces of

coal upon the walls in all sorts of ridiculous attitudes.

"Ah, the hogs!" cried Perpetua.--"Ah, the thieves!" exclaimed Don

Abbondio. Hastening into the garden, they approached the fig-tree, and

beheld the earth newly turned up, and, to their utter dismay, the tomb

was opened, and the dead was gone. Don Abbondio scolded Perpetua for her

bad management, who was not slack in repelling his complaints. Both

pointing backwards to the unlucky hiding place, at length returned to

the house, and set about endeavouring to purify it of some of its

accumulated filth, as at such a time it was impossible to procure

assistance for the purpose. With money lent them by Agnes, they were in

some measure enabled to replace their articles of furniture.

For some time this disaster was the source of continual disputes between

Perpetua and her master; the former having discovered that some of the

property, which they supposed to have been taken by the soldiers, was

actually in possession of certain people of the village, she tormented

him incessantly to claim it. There could not have been touched a chord

more hateful to Don Abbondio, since the property was in the hands of

that class of persons with whom he had it most at heart to live in

peace.

"But I don't wish to know these things," said he. "How many times must I

tell you that what has happened has? Must I get myself into trouble

again, because my house has been robbed?"

"You would suffer your eyes to be pulled from your head, I verily

believe," said Perpetua; "others hate to be robbed, but you, you seem to

like it."

"This is pretty language to hold, indeed! Will you be quiet?"

Perpetua kept silence, but continually found new pretexts for resuming

the conversation; so that the poor man was obliged to suppress every

complaint at the loss of such or such a thing, as she would say, "Go and

find it at such a person's house, who has it, and who would not have

kept it until now if he had not known what kind of a man he had to deal

with."

But here we will leave poor Don Abbondio, having more important things

to speak of than his fears, or the misery of a few villagers from a

transient disaster like this.

CHAPTER XXXI.

The pestilence, as the Tribunal of Health had feared, did enter the

Milanese with the German troops. It is also known that it was not

limited to that territory, but that it spread over and desolated a great

part of Italy. Our story requires us, at present, to relate the

principal circumstances of this great calamity, as far as it affected

the Milanese, and principally the city of Milan itself, for the

chroniclers of the period confine their relations chiefly to this place.

At the same time we cannot avoid giving a general though brief sketch of

an event in the history of our country more talked of than understood.

Many partial narratives written at the time are still extant; but these

convey but an imperfect view of the subject, historically speaking. It

is true they serve to illustrate and confirm one another, and furnish

materials for a history; but the history is still wanting. Strange to

say, no writer has hitherto attempted to reduce them to order, and

exhibit all the various events, public and private acts, causes and

conjectures, relative to this calamity, in a concatenated series.

Ripamonti's narrative, though far more ample than any other, is still

very defective. We shall, therefore, attempt, in the following pages, to

present the reader with a succinct, but accurate and continuous,

statement of this fatal scourge.

In all the line of country which had been over-run by the army, dead

bodies had been found in the houses, as well as on the roads. Soon

after, throughout the whole country, entire families were attacked with

violent disorders, accompanied with unusual symptoms, which the aged

only remembered to have seen at the time of the plague, which,

fifty-three years before, had desolated a great part of Italy, and

principally the Milanese, where it was and still is known by the name of

the Plague of San Carlo. It derives this appellation from the noble,

beneficent, and disinterested conduct of that great man, who at length

became its victim.

Ludovico Settala, a physician distinguished so long ago as during the

former plague, announced to the Tribunal of Health, by the 20th of

October, that the contagion had indisputably appeared at Lecco; but no

measures were taken upon this report. Further notices of a like import

induced them to despatch a commissioner, with a physician of Como, who,

most unaccountably, upon the report of an old barber of Bellano,

announced that the prevailing disease arose merely from the autumnal

exhalation from the marshes, aggravated by the sufferings caused by the

passage of the German troops.

Meanwhile, further intelligence of the new disease, and of the number of

deaths, arriving from all parts, two commissioners were sent to examine

the places where it had appeared, and, if necessary, to use precautions

to prevent its increase. The scourge had already spread to such an

extent, as to leave no doubt of its character. The commissioners passed

through the territories of Lecco, the borders of the lake of Como, the

districts of Monte-Brianza, and Gera-d'Adda, and found the villages

every where in a state of barricade, or deserted, and the inhabitants

flying, or encamped in the middle of the fields, or dispersed abroad

throughout the country; "like so many wild creatures," says Doctor

Tadino, one of the envoys, "they were carrying about them some imaginary

safeguard against the dreaded disease, such as sprigs of mint, rue, or

rosemary, and even vinegar." Informing themselves of the number of

deaths, the commissioners became alarmed, and visiting the sick and the

dead, recognised the terrible and infallible evidences of the \_plague\_!

Upon this information, orders were given to close the gates of Milan.

The Tribunal of Health, on the 14th of November, directed the

commissioners to wait on the governor, in order to represent to him the

situation of affairs. He replied, that he was very sorry for it; but

that the cares of war were much more pressing: this was the second time

he had made the same answer under similar circumstances. Two or three

days after, he published a decree, prescribing public rejoicings on the

birth of Prince Charles, the first son of Philip IV., without troubling

himself with the danger which would result from so great a concourse of

people at such a time; just as if things were going on in their ordinary

course, and no dreadful evil was hanging over them.

This man was the celebrated Ambrose Spinola, who died a few months

after, and during this very war which he had so much at heart,--not in

the field, but in his bed, and through grief and vexation at the

treatment he experienced from those whose interests he had served.

History has loudly extolled his merits; she has been silent upon his

base inhumanity in risking the dissemination of that worst of mortal

calamities, plague, over a country committed to his trust.

But that which diminishes our astonishment at his indifference is the

indifference of the people themselves, of that part of the population

which the contagion had not yet reached, but who had so many motives to

dread it. The scarcity of the preceding year, the exactions of the army,

and the anxiety of mind which had been endured, appeared to them more

than sufficient to explain the mortality of the surrounding country.

They heard with a smile of incredulity and contempt any who hazarded a

word on the danger, or who even mentioned the plague. The same

incredulity, the same blindness, the same obstinacy, prevailed in the

senate, the council of ten, and in all the judicial bodies. Cardinal

Frederick alone enjoined his curates to impress upon the people the

importance of declaring every case, and of sequestrating all infected or

suspected goods. The Tribunal of Health, prompted by the two physicians,

who fully apprehended the danger, did take some tardy measures; but in

vain. A proclamation to prevent the entrance of strangers into the city

was not published until the 29th of November. This was too late; the

plague was already in Milan.

It must be difficult, however interesting, to discover the first cause

of a calamity which swept off so many thousands of the inhabitants of

the city; but both Tadino and Ripamonti agree that it was brought

thither by an Italian soldier in the service of Spain, who had either

bought or stolen a quantity of clothes from the German soldiers. He was

on a visit to his parents in Milan, when he fell sick, and, being

carried to the hospital, died on the fourth day.

The Tribunal of Health condemned the house he had lived in; his clothes

and the bed he had occupied in the hospital were consigned to the

flames. Two servants and a good friar, who had attended him, fell sick a

few days after; but the suspicions from the first entertained of the

nature of the malady, and the precautions used, prevented its extension

for the present.

But in the house from which the soldier had been taken there were

several attacked by the disease; upon which all the inhabitants of it

were conducted to the lazaretto, by order of the Tribunal of Health.

The contagion made but little progress during the rest of this year and

the beginning of the following. From time to time there were a few

persons attacked, but the rarity of the occurrence diminished the

suspicion of the plague, and confirmed the multitude in their disbelief

of its existence. Added to this, most of the physicians joined with the

people in laughing at the unhappy presages and threatening opinions of

the smaller number of their brethren: the cases that did occur they

pretended to explain upon other grounds; and the account of these cases

was seldom presented to the Tribunal of Health. Fear of the lazaretto

kept all on the alert; the sick were concealed, and false certificates

were obtained from some subaltern officers of health, who were deputed

to inspect the dead bodies. Those physicians, who, convinced of the

reality of the contagion, proposed precautions against it, were the

objects of general animadversion. But the principal objects of

execration were Tadino and the senator Settala, who were stigmatised as

enemies of their country, men whose best exertions had been directed

towards mitigating the severity of the coming mischief. Even the

illustrious Settala, the aged father of the senator, whose talents were

equalled by his benevolence, was obliged to take refuge in a friend's

house from the popular fury, because he had constantly urged the

necessity of precautionary measures.

Towards the end of the month of March, at first in the suburb of the

eastern gate, then in the rest of the city, deaths, attended by singular

symptoms, such as spasms, delirium, livid spots and buboes, began to be

more frequent. Sudden deaths, too, were frequent, without any previous

illness. The physicians still perversely held out; but the magistracy

were aroused. The Tribunal of Health called on them to enforce their

directions; to raise the requisite funds for the growing expenses of the

lazaretto, as well as the helpless poor. The malady advanced rapidly. In

the lazaretto all was confusion, bad arrangement, and anarchy. In their

difficulty on this point the Tribunal had recourse to the capuchins, and

conjured the father provincial to give them a man capable of governing

this region of desolation. He offered them Father Felice Casati, who

enjoyed a high reputation for charity, activity, and kindness of

disposition, added to great strength of mind, and as a companion to him,

Father Michele Pozzobonelli, who, although young, was of a grave and

thoughtful character. They were joyfully accepted, and on the 30th of

March they entered on their duties. As the crowd in the lazaretto

increased, other capuchins joined them, willingly performing every

office both of spiritual and of temporal kindness, even the most menial;

the Father Felice, indefatigable in his labours, watched with unceasing

and parental care over the multitude. He caught the plague, was cured,

and resumed his duties even with greater alacrity. Most of his brethren

joyfully sacrificed their lives in this cause of afflicted humanity.

Not being able longer to deny the terrible effects of the malady, which

had now reached the family of the physician Settala, and was spreading

its ravages in many noble families, those medical men who had been

incredulous were still unwilling to acknowledge its true cause, which

would have been a tacit condemnation of themselves; they therefore

imagined one entirely conformable to the prejudices of the time. It was

at that period a prevailing opinion in all Europe, that enchanters

existed, diabolical operators, who at this time conspired to spread the

plague, by the aid of venomous poisons and witchcraft. Similar things

had been affirmed and believed in other epidemics; particularly at

Milan, in that of the preceding century. Moreover, towards the end of

the preceding year, a despatch had arrived from King Philip IV. giving

information that four Frenchmen, suspected of spreading poisons and

pestilential substances, had escaped from Madrid, and ordering that

watch should be kept to ascertain if by chance they had arrived at

Milan.

The governor communicated the despatch to the senate, and the Tribunal

of Health. It then excited no attention; but when the plague broke out,

and was acknowledged by all, this intelligence was remembered, and it

served to confirm the vague suspicion of criminal agency: two incidents

converted this vague suspicion into conviction of a positive and real

conspiracy. Some persons who imagined they saw, on the evening of the

17th of May, individuals rubbing a partition of the cathedral, carried

the partition out of the church in the night, together with a great

quantity of benches. The president of the senate, with four persons of

his tribunal, visited the partition, the benches, and the basins of holy

water, and found nothing which confirmed the ridiculous suspicion of

poison. However, to satisfy the disturbed imaginations of the populace,

it was decided that the partition should be washed and purified. But the

incident became a text for conjecture to the people; it was affirmed,

that the poisoners had rubbed all the benches and walls of the

cathedral, and even the bell-ropes.

The next morning a new and more strange and significant spectacle struck

the wondering eyes of the citizens. In all parts of the city the doors

of the houses and the walls were plastered with long streaks of whitish

yellow dirt, which appeared to have been rubbed on with a sponge.

Whether it was a wicked pleasantry to excite more general and thrilling

alarm, or that it had been done from the guilty design of increasing the

public disorder; whatever was the motive, the fact is so well attested,

that it cannot be attributed to imagination. The city, already alarmed,

was thrown into the utmost confusion; the owners of houses purified all

infected places; strangers were stopped in the streets on suspicion, and

conducted to prison, where they underwent long interrogatories which

naturally ended in proving none of these absurd and imaginary practices

against them. The Tribunal of Health published a decree, offering a

reward to whomsoever should discover the author or authors of this

attempt; but they did this, as they wrote to the governor, only to

satisfy the people and calm their fears,--a weak and dangerous

expedient, and calculated to confirm the popular belief.

In the mean time many attributed this story of the poisoned ointment to

the revenge of Gonsalvo Fernandez de Cordova; others to Cardinal

Richelieu, in order the more easily to get possession of Milan; others

again affixed the crime to various Milanese gentlemen.

There were still many who were not persuaded that it was the plague,

because if it were, every one infected would die of it; whereas a few

recovered. To dissipate every doubt, the Tribunal of Health made use of

an expedient conformable to the necessity of the occasion; they made an

address to the eyes, such as the spirit of the times suggested. On one

of the days of the feast of Pentecost, the inhabitants of the city were

accustomed to go to the burying ground of San Gregorio, beyond the

eastern gate, in order to pray for the dead in the last plague. Turning

the season of devotion into one of amusement, every one was attired in

his best; on that day a whole family, among others, had died of the

plague. At the hour in which the concourse was most numerous, the dead

bodies of this family were, by order of the Tribunal of Health, drawn

naked on a carriage towards this same burying ground; so that the crowd

might behold for themselves the manifest traces, the hideous impress of

the disease. A cry of alarm and horror arose wherever the car passed;

their incredulity was at least shaken, but it is probable that the great

concourse tended to spread the infection.

Still it was not absolutely the \_plague\_; the use of the word was

prohibited, it was a pestilential fever, the adjective was preferred to

the substantive,--then, not the true plague,--that is to say, the

plague, but only in a certain sense,--and further, combined with poison

and witchcraft. Such is the absurd trifling with which men seek to blind

themselves, wilfully abstaining from a sound exercise of judgment to

arrive at the truth.

Meanwhile, as it became from day to day more difficult to raise funds to

meet the painful exigencies of circumstances, the council of ten

resolved to have recourse to government. They represented, by two

deputies, the state of misery and distress of the city, the enormity of

the expense, the revenues anticipated, and the taxes withheld in

consequence of the general poverty which had been produced by so many

causes, and especially by the pillaging of the soldiery. That according

to various laws, and a special decree of Charles V., the expense of the

plague ought by right to devolve upon government. Finally, they

proceeded to make four demands: that the taxes should be suspended; that

the chamber should advance funds; that the governor should make known to

the king the calamitous state of the city and province; and that the

duchy, already exhausted, should be excused from providing quarters for

the soldiery. Spinola replied with new regrets and exhortations;

declaring himself grieved not to be able to visit Milan in person, in

order to employ himself for the preservation of the city, but hoping

that the zeal of the magistrates would supply his place: in short, he

made evasive answers to all their requests. Afterwards, when the plague

was at its height, he transferred, by letters patent, his authority to

the high chancellor Ferrer, being, as he said, obliged to devote himself

entirely to the cares of the war.

The council of ten then requested the cardinal to order a solemn

procession, for the purpose of carrying through the streets the body of

San Carlos. The good prelate refused; this confidence in a doubtful

means disturbed him, and he feared that, if the effect should not be

obtained, confidence would be converted into infidelity, and rebellion

against God. He also feared that if there really were poisoners, this

procession would be a favourable occasion for their machinations; and if

there were not, so great a collection would have a tendency to spread

the contagion.

The doors of public edifices and private houses had been again anointed

as at first. The news flew from mouth to mouth; the people, influenced

by present suffering, and by the imminence of the supposed danger,

readily embraced the belief. The idea of subtle instantaneous poison

seemed sufficient to explain the violence, and the almost

incomprehensible circumstances, of the disease. Add to this the idea of

enchantment, and any effect was possible, every objection was rendered

feeble, every difficulty was explained. If the effects did not

immediately succeed the first attempt, the cause was easy to assign: it

had been done by those to whom the art was new; and now that it was

brought to perfection, the perpetrators were more confirmed in their

infernal resolution. If any one had dared to suggest its having been

done in jest, or denied the existence of a dark plot, he would have

passed for an obstinate fool, if he did not incur the suspicion of being

himself engaged in it. With such persuasions on their minds, all were on

the alert to discover the guilty; the most indifferent action excited

suspicion, suspicion was changed to certainty, and certainty to rage.

As illustrations of this, Ripamonti cites two examples which fell under

his own observation, and such were of daily occurrence.

In the church of St. Antonio, on a day of some great solemnity, an old

man, after having prayed for some time on his knees, rose to seat

himself, and before doing so, wiped the dust from the bench with his

handkerchief. "The old man is poisoning the bench," cried some women,

who beheld the action. The crowd in the church threw themselves upon

him, tore his white hair, and after beating him, drew him out half dead,

to carry him to prison and to torture. "I saw the unfortunate man," says

Ripamonti; "I never knew the end of his painful story, but at the time I

thought he had but a few moments to live."

The other event occurred the next day; it was as remarkable, but not as

fatal. Three young Frenchmen having come to visit Italy, and study its

antiquities, had approached the cathedral, and were contemplating it

very attentively. Some persons, who were passing by, stopped; a circle

was formed around them; they were not lost sight of for a moment, having

been recognised as strangers, and especially Frenchmen. As if to assure

themselves that the wall was marble, the young artists extended their

hands to touch it. This was enough. In a moment they were surrounded,

and, with imprecations and blows, dragged to prison. Happily, however,

they were proved to be innocent, and released.

These things were not confined to the city; the frenzy was propagated

equally with the contagion. The traveller encountered off the high road,

the stranger whose habits or appearance were in any respect singular,

were judged to be poisoners. At the first intelligence of a new comer,

at the cry even of a child, the alarm bell was rung; and the unfortunate

persons were assailed with showers of stones, or seized and conducted to

prison. And thus the prison itself was, during a certain period, a place

of safety.

Meanwhile, the council of ten, not silenced by the refusal of the wise

prelate, again urged their request for the procession, which the people

seconded by their clamours. The cardinal again resisted, but finding

resistance useless, he finally yielded; he did more, he consented that

the case which enclosed the relics of San Carlos should be exposed for

eight days on the high altar of the cathedral.

The Tribunal of Health and the other authorities did not oppose this

proceeding; they only ordained some precautions, which, without

obviating the danger, indicated too plainly their apprehensions. They

issued severe orders to prevent people from abroad entering the city;

and, to insure their execution, commanded the gates to be closed. They

also nailed up the condemned houses; "the number of which," says a

contemporary writer, "amounted to about five hundred."

Three days were employed in preparation; on the 11th of June the

procession left the cathedral at daybreak: a long file of people,

composed for the most part of women, their faces covered with silk

masks, and many of them with bare feet, and clothed in sackcloth,

appeared first. The tradesmen came next, preceded by their banners; the

societies, in habits of various forms and colours; then the

brotherhoods, then the secular clergy, each with the insignia of his

rank, and holding a lighted taper in his hand. In the midst, among the

brilliant light of the torches, and the resounding echo of the

canticles, the case advanced, covered with a rich canopy, and carried

alternately by four canons, sumptuously attired. Through the crystal

were seen the mortal remains of the saint, clothed in his pontifical

robes, and his head covered with a mitre. In his mutilated features

might still be distinguished some traces of his former countenance, such

as his portraits represent him, and such as some of the spectators

remembered to have beheld and honoured. Behind the remains of the holy

prelate, and resembling him in merit, birth, and dignity, as well as in

person, came the Archbishop Frederick. The rest of the clergy followed

him, and with them the magistrates in their robes, then the nobility,

some magnificently clothed, as if to do honour to the pomp of the

celebration, and others as penitents, in sackcloth and bare-footed, each

bearing a torch in his hand. A vast collection of people terminated the

procession.

The streets were ornamented as on festival days: the rich sent out their

most precious furniture; and thus the fronts of the poorest houses were

decorated by their more wealthy neighbours, or at the expense of the

public. Here, in the place of hangings, and there, over the hangings

themselves, were suspended branches of trees; on all sides hung

pictures, inscriptions, devices; on the balconies were displayed vases,

rich antiquities, and valuable curiosities; with burning flambeaux at

various stations. From many of the windows the sequestrated sick looked

out upon the procession, and mingled their prayers with those of the

people as they passed. The procession returned to the cathedral about

the middle of the day.

But the next day, whilst presumptuous and fanatical assurance had taken

possession of every mind, the number of deaths augmented in all parts of

the city in a progression so frightful, and in a manner so sudden, that

none could avoid confessing the cause to have been the procession

itself. However, (astonishing and deplorable power of prejudice!) this

effect was not attributed to the assemblage of so many people, and to

the increase of fortuitous contact, but to the facility afforded to the

poisoners to execute their infernal purposes. But as this opinion could

not account for so vast a mortality, and as no traces of strange

substances had been discovered on the road of the procession, recourse

was had to another invention, admitted by general opinion in

Europe--magical and poisoned powders! It was asserted that these

powders, scattered profusely in the road, attached themselves to the

skirts of the gowns, and to the feet of those who had been on that day

barefooted: thus the human mind delights itself with contending against

phantoms of its own creating.

The violence of the contagion increased daily; in short, there was

hardly a house that was not infected; the number of souls in the

lazaretto amounted to 12,000, and sometimes to 16,000. The daily

mortality, which had hitherto exceeded 500, soon increased to 1200 and

1500.

We may imagine the agony of the council of ten, on whom rested the

weighty burden of providing for the public necessities, and of repairing

what was reparable in such a disaster: they had to replace every day,

and every day to add to the number of individuals charged with public

services of all kinds. Of these individuals there were three remarkable

classes; the first was that of the \_monatti\_: this appellation, of

doubtful origin, was applied to those men who were devoted to the most

painful and dangerous employment in times of contagion; the taking of

the dead bodies from the houses, from the streets, and from the

lazaretto, carrying them to their graves, and burying them; also,

bringing the sick to the lazaretto, and burning and purifying suspected

or infected objects; the second class was that of the \_apparitori\_,

whose special function was to precede the funeral cars, ringing a bell

to warn passengers to retire; and the third was that of the

commissaries, who presided over both the other classes, under the

immediate orders of the Tribunal of Health.

It was necessary to keep the lazaretto furnished with medicine,

surgeons, food, and all the requisites of an infirmary; and it was also

necessary to find and prepare new habitations for new cases. Cabins of

wood and straw were hastily constructed in the interior enclosure of the

lazaretto; then a second lazaretto, a little beyond, was erected,

capable of containing 4000 persons. Two others were ordered, but means,

men, and courage failed, and they were never completed: despair and

weakness had attained such a point, that the most urgent and painful

wants were unprovided for; each day, for example, children, whose

mothers had perished of the plague, died from neglect. The Tribunal of

Health proposed to found an hospital for these innocent creatures, but

could obtain no assistance for the purpose; all supplies were for the

army, "because," said the governor, "it is a time of war, and we must

treat the soldiers well."

Meanwhile the immense ditch which had been dug near the lazaretto was

filled with dead bodies; a number still remained without sepulture, as

hands were wanting for the work. Without extraordinary aid this calamity

must have remained unremedied. The president of the senate addressed

himself in tears to the two intrepid friars who governed the lazaretto,

and the Father Michele pledged himself to relieve in four days the city

of the unburied dead, and to dig, in the course of a week, another ditch

sufficient not only for present wants, but even for those which might be

anticipated in future. Followed by another friar, and public officers

chosen by the president, he went into the country to procure peasants,

and partly by the authority of the tribunal, partly by that of his

habit, he gathered 200, whom he employed to dig the earth. He then

despatched \_monatti\_ from the lazaretto to collect the dead. At the

appointed time his promise was fulfilled.

At one time the lazaretto was left without physicians, and it was only

after much trouble and time, and great offers of money and honours, that

others could be prevailed on to supply their place. Provisions were

often so scarce, as to create apprehensions of starvation, but more than

once these necessities were unexpectedly supplied by the charity of

individuals. In the midst of the general stupor, or the indifference to

the miseries of others, occasioned by personal apprehension, some were

found whose hands and hearts had ever been open to the wretched, and

others with whom the virtue of benevolence had commenced with the loss

of all their terrestrial happiness. So also, amidst the destruction of

the flight of so many men charged with watching over and providing for

the public safety, others were seen, who, well in body and firm in mind,

ever remained faithful at their post, and some even, who, by an

admirable self-devotion, sustained with heroic constancy cares to which

their duty did not call them.

The most entire self-devotion was especially conspicuous among the

clergy; at the lazarettos, in the city, their assistance was always at

hand; they were found, wherever there was suffering, always in

attendance on the sick and the dying; very often languishing and dying

themselves: with spiritual, they bestowed, as far as they could,

temporal succour. More than sixty clergymen in the city alone died from

the contagion, which was nearly eight out of nine.

Frederick, as might be expected, was an example to all; after having

seen all his household perish around him, he was solicited by his

family, by the first magistrates, and by the neighbouring princes, to

fly the peril, but he rejected their advice and their solicitations with

the same firmness which induced him to write to the clergy of his

diocese:--"Be disposed to abandon life rather than these sufferers, who

are your children, and your family; go with the same joy into the midst

of the pestilence, as to a certain reward, since you may, by these

means, win many souls to Christ." He neglected no precaution compatible

with his duty: he even gave instructions to his clergy on this point;

but he betrayed no anxiety, nor did he even appear to perceive danger,

where it was necessary to incur it, in order to do good. He was always

with the ecclesiastics, to praise and direct the zealous, and to excite

the lukewarm; he visited the lazarettos to console the sick, and

encourage those who assisted them; he travelled over the city, carrying

aid to the miserable who were sequestered in their houses, stopping at

their doors and under their windows, to listen to their complaints, and

to give them words of consolation and encouragement. Having thus thrown

himself into the midst of the contagion, it was truly wonderful that he

never was attacked by it.

In seasons of public calamity, when confusion takes the place of order,

we often behold a display of the sublimest virtue, but more frequently,

alas! an increase of vice and crime. Instances of the latter were not

wanting during the present unhappy period. The profligate, spared by the

plague, found in the common confusion, and in the slackening of the

restraints of law, new occasions for mischief, and new assurances of

impunity. And further, power itself had passed into the hands of the

boldest among them. There were scarcely found for the functions of

\_monatti\_ and \_apparitori\_ any, but those over whom the attraction of

rapine and licence had more sway than dread of the contagion. Strict

rules had been prescribed to them, and severe penalties threatened for

infringing them, which had some power for awhile; but the number of

deaths, and the increasing desolation, and the universal alarm, soon

relieved them from all superintendence, and they constituted themselves

(the \_monatti\_ in particular) the arbiters of every thing. They entered

houses as masters and enemies; and, not to mention their robberies, and

the cruel treatment which those unhappy persons experienced whom the

plague condemned to their authority, they applied their infected and

criminal hands to those in health, threatening to carry them to the

lazaretto, unless they purchased their exemption with money. At other

times they refused to carry off the dead bodies already in a state of

putrefaction, without a high price being paid them; it is even said,

that they designedly let fall from their carts infected clothing, in

order to propagate the infection from which their wealth was derived.

Many ruffians, too, assuming the garb of these wretches, carried on

extensive robberies in the houses of the sick, dying, and helpless.

In the same proportion as vice increased, folly increased; the foolish

idea was again revived of \_poisonings\_; the dread of this fantastic

danger beset and tormented the minds of men more than the real and

present danger. "While," says Ripamonti, "the heaps of dead bodies lying

before the eyes of the living made the city a vast tomb, there was

something more afflicting and hideous still--reciprocal distrust and

extravagant suspicion; and this not only between friends, neighbours,

and guests; but husbands, wives, and children, became objects of terror

to one another, and, horrible to tell! even the domestic board and the

nuptial bed were dreaded as snares, as places were poison might be

concealed."

Besides ambition and cupidity, the motives commonly attributed to the

poisoners, it was imagined that this action included an indefinable,

diabolical voluptuousness of enjoyment, an attractiveness stronger than

the will. The ravings of the sick, who accused themselves of that which

they had dreaded in others, were considered as so many involuntary

revelations, which rendered belief irresistible.

Among the stories recorded of this delirium, there is one which deserves

to be related, on account of the extensive credence it obtained.

It was said that on a certain day, a citizen had seen an equipage with

six horses stop in the square of the cathedral. Within it was a person

of a noble and majestic figure, dark complexion, eyes inflamed, and lips

compressed and threatening. The spectator being invited to enter the

carriage, complied. After a short circuit, it made a halt before the

gate of a magnificent palace. Entering it he beheld mingled scenes of

delight and horror, frightful deserts and smiling gardens, dark caverns

and magnificent saloons. Phantoms were seated in council. They showed

him large boxes of money, telling him he might take as many of them as

he chose, provided he would accept at the same time a little vase of

poison, and consent to employ it against the citizens. He refused, and

in a moment found himself at the place from which he had been taken.

This story, generally believed by the people, spread all over Italy. An

engraving of it was made in Germany. The Archbishop of Mayence wrote to

Cardinal Frederick, asking him what credence might be attached to the

prodigies related of Milan. He received for answer, that they were all

idle dreams.

The dreams of the learned, if they were not of the same nature as those

of the vulgar, did not exceed them in value; the greater part beheld the

forerunner and the cause of these calamities, in a comet which appeared

in 1628, and in the conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn. Another comet

that appeared in June in the same year announced the poisonous

anointings. All writings were ransacked that contained any passages

respecting poisons; amongst the ancients, Livy was cited, Tacitus,

Dionysius, even Homer and Ovid were searched. Among the moderns,

Cesalpino, Cardan, Grevino, Salio, Pareo Schenchio, Zachia, and lastly

the fatal Delrio, whose \_Disquisitions on Magic\_ became the text book on

such subjects, the future rule, and, in fact, the powerful impulse to

horrible and frequent legal murders.

The physicians yielded to the popular belief, and attributed to poison

and diabolical conjurations the ordinary symptoms of the malady. Even

Tadino himself, one of the most celebrated physicians of his day, who

had witnessed the entrance of the disorder, anticipated its ravages,

studied its symptoms, and admitted it to be \_the plague\_, even he, such

is the strange perversity of human reason, drew from all these facts an

argument in proof of the dissemination of some subtle poison, by means

of ointments. Nor was the enlightened Cardinal Frederick himself

altogether uninfected by the general mania. In a small tract of his on

the subject in the Ambrosian Library, he says, "Of the mode of

compounding and dispensing these ointments, various statements have been

made, some of which we hold for true, while others appear imaginary."

On the other hand, Muratori tells us, that he had met with well-informed

persons in Milan, whose ancestors were decidedly convinced of the

absurdity of this widely spread and extraordinary error, but whose

safety rendered it imperative on them to keep their sentiments on the

subject to themselves.

The magistrates employed the little vigilance and resolution which

remained to them in searching out the poisoners, and unhappily thought

they had detected them. A recital of these and similar cases would form

a remarkable feature in the history of jurisprudence. But it is high

time we should resume the thread of our story.

CHAPTER XXXII.

One night, towards the end of the month of August, in the very height of

the pestilence, Don Roderick returned to his house at Milan, accompanied

by his faithful Griso, one of the small number of his servants who still

survived. He had just left a company of friends, who were accustomed to

assemble together, to banish by debauchery the melancholy of the times;

at each meeting there were new guests added, and old ones missing. On

that day Don Roderick had been one of the gayest, and, among other

subjects of merriment which he introduced, he had made the company laugh

at a mock funeral sermon on Count Attilio, who had been carried off by

the pestilence a few days before.

After leaving the house where he had held his carousal, he was conscious

of an uneasiness, a faintness, a weariness of his limbs, a difficulty of

breathing, and an internal heat, which he was ready to attribute to the

wine, the late hour, and the influence of the season. He spoke not a

word during the whole route. Arriving at his house, he ordered Griso to

light him to his chamber. Griso, perceiving the change in his master's

countenance, kept at a distance, as, in these dangerous times, every one

was obliged to keep for himself, as was said, a medical eye.

"I feel very well, do you see," said Don Roderick, reading in the

features of Griso the thoughts which were passing through his mind,--"I

feel very well; but I have drank a little too much. The wine was so

fine! With a good sleep all will be well again. I am overcome by sleep.

Take away the light; I cannot bear it; it troubles me."

"It is the effect of the wine, signor," said Griso, still keeping at a

distance; "but go to bed, sleep will do you good."

"You are right; if I could sleep---- I am well, were it not for the want

of sleep. Place the little bell near me, in case I should want

something; and be attentive if I ring. But I shall need nothing. Carry

away that cursed light," added he; "it troubles me more than I can

tell."

Griso carried off the light; and, wishing his master a good night, he

quitted the apartment as Don Roderick crouched beneath the bed-clothes.

But the bed-clothes weighed upon him like a mountain; throwing them off,

he endeavoured to compose himself to sleep; hardly had he closed his

eyes when he awoke with a start, as if he had been roused by a blow, and

he felt that the pain and fever had increased. He endeavoured to find

the cause of his sufferings in the heat of the weather, the wine, and

the debauch in which he had just been engaged; but one idea

involuntarily mingled itself with all his reflections, an idea at which

he had been laughing all the evening with his companions, as it was

easier to make it a subject of raillery than to drive it away,--the idea

of the plague.

After having struggled a long time, he at last fell asleep, but was

tormented by frightful dreams. It appeared to him that he was in a vast

church, in the midst of a crowd of people. How he came there he could

not tell, nor how the thought to do so could have entered his head,

especially at such a time. Looking on those by whom he was surrounded,

he perceived them to be lean, livid figures, with wild and glaring eyes;

the garments of these hideous creatures fell in shreds from their

bodies, and through them might be seen frightful blotches and swellings.

He thought he cried, "Give way, you rascals!" as he looked towards the

door, which was far, far off, accompanying the cry with a menacing

expression of countenance, and wrapping his arms around his body to

prevent coming in contact with them, for they seemed to be touching him

on every side. But they moved not, nor even seemed to hear him: it

appeared to him, however, that some one amongst them, with his elbow,

pressed his left side near his heart, where he felt a painful pricking.

Trying to withdraw himself from so irksome a situation, he experienced a

recurrence of the sensation. Irritated beyond measure, he stretched out

his hand for his sword, and, behold, it had glided the whole length of

his body, and the hilt of it was pressing him in this very place. Vainly

did he endeavour to remove it, every effort only increased his agonies.

Agitated and out of breath, he again cried aloud; at the sound, all

those wild and hideous phantoms rushed to one side of the church,

leaving the pulpit exposed to view, in which stood, with his venerable

countenance, his bald head and white beard, Father Christopher. It

appeared to Don Roderick that the capuchin, after having looked over the

assembly, fixed his eyes upon him, with the same expression as on the

well-remembered interview in his castle, and, at the same time, raised

his arm, and held it suspended above his head; making an effort to

arrest the blow, a cry which struggled in his throat escaped him, and he

awoke. He opened his eyes; the light of day, which was already advanced,

pressed upon his brain, and imparted as keen an anguish as the torch of

the preceding night. Looking around on his bed and his room, he

comprehended that it was a dream; the church, the crowd, the friar, all

had vanished; but not so the pain in his left side. He was sensible of

an agonising and rapid beating of his heart, a buzzing in his ears, an

internal heat which consumed him, and a weight and weariness in his

limbs greater than when he went to bed. He could not resolve to look at

the spot where he felt the pain; but, finally gathering courage to do

so, he beheld with horror a hideous tumour of a livid purple.

Don Roderick saw that he was lost. The fear of death took possession of

him, and with it came the apprehension, stronger perhaps than the dread

of death itself, of becoming the prey of the \_monatti\_, and of being

thrown into the lazaretto. Endeavouring to think of some means of

avoiding this terrible fate, he experienced a confusion and obscurity in

his ideas which told him that the moment was fast approaching when he

should have no feeling left but of despair. Seizing the bell, he shook

it violently. Griso, who was on the watch, appeared immediately;

stopping at a distance from the bed, he looked attentively at his

master, and became certain of that which he had only conjectured the

night before.

"Griso," said Don Roderick, with difficulty raising himself in his bed,

"you have always been my favourite."

"Yes, my lord."

"I have always done well by you."

"The consequence of your goodness."

"I can trust you, I think. I am ill, Griso."

"I perceived that you were."

"If I am cured, I will do still more for you than I have ever yet done."

Griso made no answer, waiting to see to what this preamble would lead.

"I would not trust any one but you," resumed Don Roderick; "do me a

favour."

"Command me."

"Do you know where the surgeon Chiodo lives?"

"I do."

"He is an honest man, who, if he be well paid, keeps secret the sick. Go

to him; tell him I will give him four or six crowns a visit,--more, if

he wishes it. Tell him to come here immediately; act with prudence; let

no one get knowledge of it."

"Well thought of," said Griso; "I will return immediately."

"First, Griso, give me a little water; I burn with thirst."

"No, my lord, nothing without the advice of a physician. This is a rapid

disease, and there is no time to lose. Be tranquil. In the twinkling of

an eye, I will be here with the signor Chiodo." So saying, he left the

room.

Don Roderick followed him in imagination to the house of Chiodo, counted

his steps, measured the time. He often looked at his side, but,

horror-struck, could only regard it a moment. Continuing to listen

intently for the arrival of the surgeon, this effort of attention

suspended the sense of suffering, and left him the free exercise of his

thoughts. Suddenly he heard a noise of small bells, which appeared to

come from some of the apartments, and not from the street. Listening

again, he heard it louder, and at the same time a sound of steps. A

horrible suspicion darted across his mind. He sat up, listened still

more attentively, and heard a sound in the next chamber, as of a chest

carefully placed on the floor; he threw his limbs out of bed, so as to

be ready to rise; and kept his eyes fastened on the door; it opened,

and, behold, two \_monatti\_ with their diabolical countenances, and

cursed liveries, advancing towards the bed, whilst from the half-open

door was seen the figure of Griso, awaiting the success of his sordid

treachery.

"Ah, infamous traitor! Begone, rascals! Biondino, Carlotto, help!

murder!" cried Don Roderick, extending his hand under his pillow for his

pistol.

At his very first cry the \_monatti\_ had rushed towards the bed, and the

most active of the two was upon him before he could make another

movement; jerking the pistol from his hand, and throwing it on the

floor, he forced him to lie down, crying in an accent of rage and

mockery, "Ah, scoundrel! against the \_monatti\_! against the ministers of

the tribunal!"

"Keep him down until we are ready to carry him out," said the other, as

he advanced to a strong box. Griso entered the room, and with him

commenced forcing its lock. "Villain!" shouted Don Roderick, struggling

to get free: "let me kill this infamous rascal," said he to the

\_monatti\_, "and then you may do with me what you will." He then called

again loudly on his other servants, but in vain; the abominable Griso

had sent them far away with orders as if from his master, before he

himself went to propose this expedition, and a share of its spoils, to

the \_monatti\_.

"Be quiet, be quiet," said the man, who held him extended on the bed, to

the unhappy Don Roderick; then, turning to those who were taking the

booty, he said, "Behave like honest men."

"You! you!" murmured Don Roderick to Griso, "you! after---- Ah, demon

of hell! I may still be cured! I may still be cured!"

Griso spoke not a word, and was careful to avoid looking at his master.

"Hold him tight," said the other \_monatto\_, "he is frantic."

The unfortunate man, after many violent efforts, became suddenly

exhausted; but from time to time was seen to struggle feebly and vainly,

for a moment, against his persecutors.

The \_monatti\_ deposited him on a hand-barrow which had been left in the

outer room; one of them returned for the booty, then raising their

miserable burden, they carried him off. Griso remained awhile to make a

selection of such articles as were valuable and portable; he had been

very careful not to touch the \_monatti\_, nor be touched by them; but, in

his thirst for gain, his prudence forsook him; taking the different

articles of his master's dress from off the bed, he shook them, for the

purpose of ascertaining if there was money in them.

He had, however, occasion to remember his want of caution the next day;

whilst carousing in a tavern, he was seized with a shivering, his eyes

grew dim, his strength failed, and he fell lifeless. Abandoned by his

companions, he fell into the hands of the \_monatti\_, who, after having

plundered him, threw him on a car, where he expired, before arriving at

the lazaretto to which his master had been carried.

We must leave Don Roderick in this abode of horror, and return to Renzo,

whom our readers may remember we left in a manufactory under the name of

Antony Rivolta. He remained there five or six months; after which, war

being declared between the republic and the King of Spain, and all fear

on his account having ceased, Bortolo hastened to bring him back, both

because he was attached to him, and because Renzo was a great assistance

to the \_factotum\_ of a manufactory, without the possibility of his ever

aspiring to be one himself, on account of his inability to write.

Bortolo was a good man, and in the main generous, but, like other men,

he had his failings; and as this motive really had a place in his

calculations, we have thought it our duty to state it. From this time

Renzo continued to work with his cousin. More than once, and especially

after having received a letter from Agnes, he felt a desire to turn

soldier; and opportunities were not wanting, for at this epoch the

republic was in want of recruits. The temptation was the stronger, as

there was a talk of invading the Milanese, and it appeared to him that

it would be a fine thing to return there as a conqueror, see Lucy again,

and have an explanation with her; but Bortolo always diverted him from

this resolution. "If they go there," said he, "they can go without you,

and you can go afterwards at your leisure. If they return with broken

heads, you will be glad to have been out of the scrape. The Milanese is

not a mouthful to be easily swallowed; and then the question, my friend,

turns on the power of Spain. Have a little patience. Are you not well

here? I know what you will say; but if it is written above that the

affair shall succeed, succeed it will, without your committing more

follies. Some saint will come to your assistance. Believe me, war is not

a trade for you. It needs men expressly trained to the business."

At other times Renzo thought of returning home in disguise, under a

false name, but Bortolo dissuaded him from this project also.

The plague afterwards spreading over all the Milanese, and advancing to

the Bergamascan territory----don't be alarmed, reader, our design is not

to relate its history; all that we would say is, that Renzo was attacked

with it, and recovered. He was at death's door; but his strong

constitution repelling the disease, in a few days he was out of danger.

With life, the hopes and recollections and projects of life returned

with greater vigour than ever; more than ever were his thoughts occupied

with his Lucy: what had become of her in these disastrous times? "To be

at so short distance from her, and to know nothing concerning her, and

to remain, God knows how long, in this uncertainty! and then her vow! I

will go myself, I will go and relieve these terrible doubts," said he.

"If she lives, I will find her; I will hear herself explain this

promise; I will show her that it is not binding; and I will bring her

here, and poor Agnes also, who has always wished me well, and I am sure

does so still,--yes, I will go in search of them."

As soon as he was able to walk, he went in search of Bortolo, who had

kept himself shut up in his house, on account of the pestilence. He

called to him to come to the window.

"Ah, ah," said Bortolo, "you have recovered. It is well for you."

"I have still some weakness in my limbs, as you see, but I am out of

danger."

"Oh, I wish I was on your legs. Formerly, when one said, \_I am well\_, it

expressed all that could be desired; but now-a-days that is of little

consequence. When one can say \_I am better\_, that's the word for you!"

Renzo informed his cousin of his determination.

"Go now, and may Heaven bless you," replied he; "avoid the law as I

shall avoid the pestilence; and if it is the will of God, we shall see

each other again."

"Oh, I shall certainly return. If I were only sure of not returning

alone! I hope for the best."

"Well, I join in your hopes; if God wills, we will work, and live

together here. Heaven grant you may find me here, and that this devilish

disease may have ceased."

"We shall meet again, we shall meet again, I am sure."

"I say again, God bless you."

In a few days Renzo, finding his strength sufficiently restored,

prepared for his departure; he put on a girdle in which he placed the

fifty crowns sent him by Agnes, together with his own small savings; he

took under his arm a small bundle of clothes, and secured in his pocket

his certificate of good conduct from his second master; and having armed

himself with a good knife, a necessary appendage to an honest man in

those days, he commenced his journey towards the end of August, three

days after Don Roderick had been carried to the lazaretto. He took the

road to Lecco, before venturing into Milan, as he hoped to find Agnes

there, and learn from her some little of what he desired so much to

know.

The small number of those who had been cured of the plague formed a

privileged class amidst the rest of the population; those who had not

been attacked by the disease lived in perpetual apprehension of it; they

walked about with precaution, with an unquiet air, with a hurried and

hesitating step; the former, on the contrary, nearly certain of security

(for to have the plague twice was rather a prodigy than a rarity),

advanced into the very midst of the pestilence with boldness and

unconcern. With such security, tempered, however, by his own peculiar

anxieties, and by the spectacle of the misery of a whole people, Renzo

travelled towards his village, under a fine sky, and through a beautiful

country; meeting on the way, after long intervals of dismal solitude,

men more like shadows and wandering phantoms than living beings; or dead

bodies about to be consigned to the trench without funeral rites.

Towards the middle of the day he stopped in a grove to eat his meat and

bread; he was bountifully supplied with fruits from the gardens by the

road, for the year was remarkably fertile, the trees along the road were

laden with figs, peaches, plums, apples, and other various kinds, with

hardly a living creature to gather them.

Towards evening he discovered his village; although prepared for the

sight, he felt his heart beat, and he was assailed in a moment by a

crowd of painful recollections and harrowing presentiments: a deathlike

silence reigned around. His agitation increased as he entered the

churchyard, and became hardly supportable at the end of the lane--it was

there, where stood the house of Lucy--one only of its inmates could now

be there, and the only favour he asked from Heaven was to find Agnes

still living; he hoped to find an asylum at her cottage, as he judged

truly that his own roust be in ruins.

As he went on he looked attentively before him, fearing, and at the same

time hoping, to meet some one from whom he might obtain information. He

saw at last a man seated on the ground, leaning against a hedge of

jessamines, in the listless attitude of an idiot. He thought it must be

the poor simpleton Jervase, who had been employed as a witness in his

unsuccessful expedition to the curate's house. But approaching nearer,

he recognised it to be Anthony. The disease had affected his mind, as

well as his body, so that in every act a slight resemblance to his weak

brother might be traced.

"Oh, Tony," said Renzo, stopping before him, "is it you?" Tony raised

his eyes, but not his head.

"Tony, do you not know me?"

"Is it my turn? Is it my turn?" replied he.

"Poor Tony! do you indeed not know me?"

"Is it my turn? Is it my turn?" replied he, with an idiotic smile, and

then stood with his mouth open.

Renzo, seeing he could draw nothing from him, passed on still more

afflicted than before. Suddenly, at a turn of the path, he beheld

advancing towards him a person whom he recognised to be Don Abbondio.

His pale countenance and general appearance showed that he also had not

escaped the tempest. The curate, seeing a stranger, anxiously examined

his person, whose costume was that of Bergamo. At length he recognised

Renzo with much surprise.

"Is it he, indeed?" thought he, and raised his hands with a movement of

wonder and dismay. His wasted arms seemed trembling in his sleeves,

which before could hardly contain them.

Renzo, hastening towards him, bowed profoundly; for, although he had

quitted him in anger, he still felt respect for him as his curate.

"You here! you!" cried Don Abbondio.

"Yes, I am here, as you see. Do you know any thing of Lucy?"

"How should I know? nothing is known of her. She is at Milan, if she is

still in this world. But you----"

"And Agnes, is she living?"

"Perhaps she is; but who do you think can tell? she is not here.

But----"

"Where is she?"

"She has gone to Valsassina, among her relatives at Pasturo; for they

say that down there the pestilence has not made such ravages as it has

here. But you, I say----"

"I am glad of that. And Father Christopher?"

"He has been gone this long time. But you----"

"I heard that,--but has he not returned?"

"Oh no, we have heard nothing of him. But you----"

"I am sorry for it."

"But you, I say, what do you do here? For the love of Heaven, have you

forgotten that little circumstance of the order for your apprehension?"

"What matters it? people have other things to think of now. I came here

to see about my own affairs."

"There is nothing to see about; there is no one here now. It is the

height of rashness in you to venture here, with this little difficulty

impending. Listen to an old man who has more prudence than yourself, and

who speaks to you from the love he bears you. Depart at once, before any

one sees you, return whence you came. Do you think the air of this place

good for you? Know you not that they have been here on the search for

you?"

"I know it too well, the rascals."

"But then----"

"But, I tell you, they think no more about it. And \_he\_, does \_he\_ yet

live? is \_he\_ here?"

"I tell you there is no one here; I tell you to think no more of the

affairs of this place; I tell you that----"

"I ask you if \_he\_ is here;"

"Oh, just Heaven! Speak in another manner. Is it possible you still

retain so much warmth, after all that has happened?"

"Is \_he\_ here, or is \_he\_ not?"

"He is not. But the plague, my son, the plague keeps every one from

travelling at present."

"If the pestilence was all that we need fear--I speak for myself, I have

had it, and I fear it not."

"You had better render thanks to Heaven. And----"

"I do, from the bottom of my heart."

"And not go in search of other evils, I say. Listen to my advice."

"You have had it also, sir, if I am not mistaken."

"That I have, truly! most terrible it was! it is by a miracle I am here;

you see how it has left me. I have need of repose to restore my

strength; I was beginning to feel a little better. In the name of

Heaven, what do you do here? Go away, I beseech you."

"You always return to your \_go away\_. If I ought to go away, I would not

have come. You keep saying, \_What do you come for? what do you come

for?\_ Sir, I am come home."

"Home!"

"Tell me, have there been many deaths here?"

"Many!" cried Don Abbondio; and beginning with Perpetua, he gave a long

list of individuals, and even whole families. Renzo expected, it is

true, a similar recital; but hearing the names of so many acquaintances,

friends, and relations, he was absorbed by his affliction, and could

only exclaim, from time to time, "Misery! misery! misery!"

"And it is not yet over," pursued Don Abbondio. "If those who remain do

not listen to reason, and calm the heat of their brains, it will be the

end of the world."

"Do not concern yourself; I do not intend to remain here."

"Heaven be praised! you talk reason at last. Go at once----"

"Do not trouble yourself about it; the affair belongs to me. I think I

have arrived at years of discretion. I hope you will tell no one that

you have seen me. You are a priest, and I am one of your flock; you will

not betray me?"

"I understand," said Don Abbondio, angrily, "I understand. You would

ruin yourself, and me with you. What you have suffered, what I have

suffered, is not sufficient. I understand, I understand." And continuing

to mutter between his teeth, he proceeded on his way.

Renzo, afflicted and disappointed, reflected where he should seek

another asylum. In the catalogue of deaths given to him by Don Abbondio,

there was a family which had all been carried off by the pestilence,

with the exception of a young man nearly of his own age, who had been

his companion from infancy. The house was a short distance off, a little

beyond the village; he bent his steps thither, to seek the hospitality

which it might afford him. On his way he passed his own vineyard. The

vines were cut, the wood carried off. Weeds of various kinds and most

luxuriant growth, principally of the parasitical order, covered the

place, displaying the most brilliant flowers above the loftiest branches

of the vines, and obstructing the progress of the miserable owner. The

garden beyond presented a similar scene of varied and luxuriant

wildness. The house, that had not escaped the visitation of the

lansquenets, was deformed with filth, dust, and cobwebs. Poor Renzo

turned away with imbittered feelings, and moved slowly onwards to his

friend's. It was evening. He found him seated before the door, on a

small bench, his arms crossed on his breast, with the air of a man

stupified by distress, and suffering from solitude. At the sound of

steps he turned, and the twilight and the foliage not permitting him to

distinguish objects distinctly, he said, "Are there not others besides

me? Did I not do enough yesterday? Leave me in quiet; it will be an act

of charity."

Renzo, not knowing what this meant, called him by name.

"Renzo?" replied he.

"It is indeed," said Renzo, and they ran towards each other.

"Is it you indeed?" said his friend: "oh, how happy I am to see you! who

would have thought it? I took you for one of those persons who torment

me daily to help to bury the dead. Know you that I am left alone? alone!

alone as a hermit!"

"I know it but too well," said Renzo. They entered the cottage together,

each making numerous enquiries of the other. His friend began to prepare

the table for supper; he went out, and returned in a few moments with a

pitcher of milk, a little salt meat, and some fruit. They seated

themselves at table, at which the polenta was not forgotten, mutually

congratulating each other on their interview. An absence of two years,

and the circumstances under which they met, revived and added new vigour

to their former friendship.

No one, however, could supply the place of Agnes to Renzo, not only on

account of the particular affection she bore him, but she alone

possessed the key to the solution of all his difficulties. He hesitated

awhile whether he had not best go in search of her, as she was not very

far off; but recollecting that he knew nothing of the fate of Lucy, he

adhered to his first intention of gaining all the information he could

concerning her, and carrying the result to her mother. He learnt from

his friend, however, many things of which he was ignorant, others were

explained which he only knew by halves, with regard to the adventures of

Lucy, and the persecutions she had undergone. He was also informed that

Don Roderick had left the village, and had not returned. Renzo learnt,

moreover, to pronounce the name of Don Ferrante properly; Agnes, it is

true, had caused it to be written to him, but Heaven knows how it was

written; and the Bergamascan interpreter had given it so strange a

sound, that if he had not received some instruction from his friend,

probably no one in Milan would have guessed whom he meant, although this

was the only clue he had to guide him to Lucy. As far as the law was in

question his mind was set at rest. The signor Podestà was dead, and most

of the officers; the others were removed, or had other matters too

pressing to occupy their attention. He related, in his turn, his own

adventures to his friend, receiving in exchange an account of the

passage of the army, the pestilence, the poisoners, and the prodigies.

"Dreadful as are our afflictions," said he, as he led him for the night

to a little chamber which the epidemic had deprived of its inhabitants,

"there is a mournful consolation in speaking of them to our friends."

At the break of day they both arose, and Renzo prepared to depart. "If

all goes well," said he, "if I find her living--if--I will return. I

will go to Pasturo and carry the joyful news to poor Agnes, and

then--but if, by a misfortune, which may God avert--then, I know not

what I shall do, nor where I shall go; but you will never see me here

again."

As he stood on the threshold of the door, about to resume his journey,

he contemplated for a moment, with a mixture of tenderness and anguish,

his village, which he had not beheld for so long a time. His friend

accompanied him a short distance on his road, and bade him farewell,

prognosticating a happy return, and many days of prosperity and

enjoyment.

Renzo travelled leisurely, because there was ample time for him to

arrive within a short distance of Milan, so as to enter it on the

morrow. His journey was without accident, except a repetition of the

same wretched scenes that the roads at that time presented. As he had

done the day before, he stopped in a grove to make a slight repast,

which the generosity of his friend had bestowed on him. Passing through

Monza, he saw loaves of bread displayed in the window of a shop; he

bought two of them, but the shopkeeper called to him not to enter;

stretching out a shovel, on which was a small bowl of vinegar and water,

he told him to throw the money into it; then with a pair of tongs he

reached the bread to him, which Renzo put in his pocket.

Towards evening he passed through Greco, and quitting the high road,

went into the fields in search of some small house where he might pass

the night, as he did not wish to stop at an inn. He found a better

shelter than he anticipated; perceiving an opening in a hedge which

surrounded the yard of a dairy, he entered it boldly. There was no one

within: in one corner of it was a barn full of hay, and against the door

of it a ladder placed. After looking around, Renzo ascended the ladder,

settled himself for the night, and slept profoundly until the break of

day. When he awoke, he descended the ladder very cautiously, and

proceeded on his way, taking the dome of the cathedral for his polar

star. He soon arrived before the walls of Milan near the eastern gate.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Renzo had heard vague mention made of severe orders, forbidding the

entrance of strangers into Milan, without a certificate of health; but

these were easily evaded, for Milan had reached a point when such

prohibition was useless, even if it could have been put into execution.

Whoever ventured there, might rather appear careless of his own life,

than dangerous to that of others.

With this conviction, Renzo's design was to attempt a passage at the

first gate, and in case of difficulty to wander on the outside of the

walls until he should find one easy of access. It would be difficult to

say how many gates he thought Milan had.

When he arrived before the ramparts, he looked around him; there was no

indication of living being, except on a point of the platform, a thick

cloud of dense smoke arising; this was occasioned by clothing, beds, and

infected furniture, which were committed to the flames; every where

along the ramparts appeared the traces of these melancholy

conflagrations.

The weather was close, the air heavy, the sky covered by a thick cloud,

or fog, which excluded the sun, without promising rain. The surrounding

country was neglected and sterile; all verdure extinct, and not a drop

of dew on the dry and withering leaves. The depth, solitude, and

silence, so near a large city, increased the gloom of Renzo's thoughts;

he proceeded, without being aware of it, to the gate \_Nuova\_, which had

been hid from his view by a bastion, behind which it was then concealed.

A noise of bells, sounding at intervals, mingled with the voices of men,

saluted his ear; turning an angle of the bastion, he saw before the gate

a sentry-box, and a sentinel leaning on his musket, with a wearied and

careless air. Exactly before the opening was a sad obstacle, a

hand-barrow, upon which two \_monatti\_ were extending an unfortunate man,

to carry him off; it was the chief of the toll-gatherers, who had just

been attacked by the pestilence. Renzo awaited the departure of the

convoy, and no one appearing to close the gate, he passed forwards

quickly; the sentinel cried out "Holla!" Renzo stopping, showed him a

half ducat, which he drew from his pocket; whether he had had the

pestilence, or that he feared it less than he loved ducats, he signed to

Renzo to throw it to him; seeing it at his feet, he cried, "Go in,

quickly," a permission of which Renzo readily availed himself. He had

hardly advanced forty paces when a toll-collector called to him to stop.

He pretended not to hear, and passed on. The call was repeated, but in a

tone more of anger than of resolution to be obeyed--and this being

equally unheeded, the collector shrugged his shoulders and turned back

to his room.

Renzo proceeded through the long street opposite the gate which leads to

the canal \_Naviglio\_, and had advanced some distance into the city

without encountering a single individual; at last he saw a man coming

towards him, from whom he hoped he might gain some information; he moved

towards him, but the man showed signs of alarm at his approach. Renzo,

when he was at a little distance, took off his hat, like a polite

mountaineer as he was, but the man drew back, and raising a knotty club,

armed with a spike, he cried, "Off! off! off!" "Oh! oh!" cried Renzo; he

put on his hat, and having no desire for a greeting of this fashion, he

turned his back on the discourteous passenger and went on his way.

The citizen retired in an opposite direction, shuddering and looking

back in alarm: when he reached home he related how a poisoner had met

him with humble and polite manners, but with the air of an infamous

impostor, and with a phial of poison or the box of powder (he did not

know exactly which) in the lining of his hat, to poison him, if he had

not kept him at a distance. "It was unlucky," said he, "that we were in

so private a street; if it had been in the midst of Milan, I would have

called the people, and he would have been seized: but alone, it was

enough to have saved myself--but who knows what destruction he may not

already have effected in the city:"--and years after, when the

poisoners were talked of, the poor man maintained the truth of the fact,

as "he had had ocular proof."

Renzo was far from suspecting the danger he had escaped; and, reflecting

on this reception, he was more angry than fearful. "This is a bad

beginning," thought he; "my star always seems unpropitious when I enter

Milan. To enter is easy enough, but, once here, misfortunes thicken.

However--by the help of God--if I find--if I succeed in finding--all

will be well."

The streets were silent and deserted; no human being could he see; a

single disfigured corpse met his eye in the channel between the street

and the houses. Suddenly he heard a cry, which appeared addressed to

him; and he perceived, not far off, on the balcony of a house, a woman,

surrounded by a group of children, making a sign to him to approach. As

he did so, "O good young man!" said she, "do me the kindness to go to

the commissary, and tell him that we are forgotten here. They have

nailed up the house as suspected, because my poor husband is dead; and

since yesterday morning no one has brought us any thing to eat, and

these poor innocents are dying of hunger."

"Of hunger!" cried Renzo. "Here, here," said he, drawing the two loaves

from his pocket. "Lower something in which I may put them."

"God reward you! wait a moment," said the woman, as she went in search

of a basket and cord to suspend it.

"As to the commissary, my good woman," said he, putting the loaves in

the basket, "I cannot serve you, because, to tell truth, I am a stranger

in Milan, and know nothing of the place. However, if I meet any one a

little humane and tractable, to whom I can speak, I will tell him."

The woman begged him to do so, and gave him the name of the street in

which she lived.

"You can also render me a service, without its costing you any thing,"

said Renzo. "Can you tell me where there is a nobleman's house in Milan,

named \*\*\*?"

"I know there is a house of that name, but I do not know where it is.

Further on in the city you will probably find some one to direct you.

And remember to speak of us."

"Do not doubt me," said Renzo, as he passed on.

As he advanced, he heard increasing a sound that had already attracted

his attention, whilst stopping to converse with the poor woman; a sound

of wheels and horses' feet, with the noise of little bells, and

occasionally the cracking of whips and loud cries.

As he reached the square of San Marco, the first objects he saw were two

beams erected, with a cord and pulleys. He recognised the horrible

instrument of torture! These were placed on all the squares and widest

streets, so that the deputies of each quarter of the city, furnished

with the most arbitrary power, could subject to them whoever quitted a

condemned house, or neglected the ordinances, or by any other act

appeared to merit the punishment; it was one of those extreme and

inefficacious remedies, which, at this epoch, were so absurdly

authorised. Now, whilst Renzo was gazing at this machine, he heard the

sounds increasing, and beheld a man appear, ringing a little bell; it

was an \_apparitore\_, and behind him came two horses, who advanced with

difficulty, dragging a car loaded with dead; after this car came

another, and another, and another; \_monatti\_ walked by the side of the

horses, urging them on with their whips and with oaths. The bodies were

for the most part naked; some were half covered with rags, and heaped

one upon another; at each jolt of the wretched vehicles, heads were seen

hanging over, the long tresses of women were displayed, arms were

loosened and striking against the wheels, thrilling the soul of the

spectator with indescribable horror!

The youth stopped at a corner of the square to pray for the unknown

dead. A frightful thought passed over his mind. "There, perhaps, there,

with them--O God! avert this misfortune! let me not think of it!"

The funeral convoy having passed on, he crossed the square, and reached

the Borgo Nuovo by the bridge Marcellino. He perceived a priest standing

before a half-open door, in an attitude of attention, as if he were

confessing some one. "Here," said he, "is my man. If a priest, and in

the discharge of his duty, has no benevolence, there is none left in the

world who has." When he was at a few paces distance from him, he took

off his hat, and made a sign that he wished to speak with him, keeping,

however, at a discreet distance, so as not to alarm the good man

unnecessarily. Renzo having made his request, was directed to the hotel.

"May God watch over you now and for ever!" said Renzo, "and," added he,

"I would ask another favour." And he mentioned the poor forgotten woman.

The worthy man thanked him for affording him the opportunity to bestow

help where it was so greatly needed, and bade him farewell.

Renzo found it difficult enough to recollect the various turnings

pointed out by the priest, disturbed as his mind was by apprehensions

for the issue of his enquiries. An end was about to be put to his doubts

and fears; he was to be told, "she is living," or, "she is dead!" This

idea took such powerful possession of his mind, that at this moment, he

would rather have remained in his former ignorance, and have been at the

commencement of the journey, to the end of which he so nearly

approached. He gathered courage, however. "Ah!" cried he, "if I play the

child now, how will it end!" Plunging therefore into the heart of the

city, he soon reached one of its most desolated quarters, that which is

called the \_Carrobio di Porta Nuova\_. The fury of the contagion here,

and the infection from the scattered bodies, had been so great, that

those who had survived had been obliged to fly: so that, whilst the

passenger was struck with the aspect of solitude and death, his senses

were painfully affected by the traces of recent life. Renzo hastened on,

hoping to find an improvement in the scene, before he should arrive at

the end of his journey. In fact, he soon reached what might still be

called the city of the living, but, alas! what living! Every door was

closed from distrust and terror, except such as had been left open by

the flight of the inhabitants, or by the \_monatti\_; some were nailed on

the outside, because there were within people dead, or dying of the

pestilence; others were marked with a cross, for the purpose of

informing the \_monatti\_ that their services were required, and much of

this was done more by chance than otherwise; as a commissary of health

happened to be in one spot rather than in another, and chose to enforce

the regulations. On every side were seen infected rags and bandages,

clothes and sheets, which had been thrown from the windows; dead bodies

which had been left in the streets until a car should pass to take them

up, or which had fallen from the cars themselves, or been thrown from

the houses; so much bad the long duration and the violence of the pest

brutalised men's minds, and subdued every spark of human feeling or

sympathy. The customary sounds of human occupation or pleasure had

ceased; and this silence of death was interrupted only by the funeral

cars, the lamentations of the sick, the shrieks of the frantic, or the

vociferations of the \_monatti\_.

At the break of day, at noon, and at night, a bell of the cathedral gave

the signal for reciting certain prayers, which had been ordered by the

archbishop, and this was followed by the bells of the other churches.

Then persons were seen at the windows, and a confused blending of voices

and groans was heard, which inspired a sorrow, not however unmixed with

consolation. It is probable that at this time not less than two thirds

of the inhabitants had died, and of the remainder many were sick or had

left the city. Every one you met exhibited signs of the dreadful

calamity. The usual dress was changed of every order of persons. The

cloak of the gentleman, the robe of the priest, the cowl of the monk, in

short, every loose appendage of dress that might occasion contact, was

carefully dismissed; every thing was as close on the person as possible.

Men's beards and hair were alike neglected, from fear of treachery on

the part of the barbers. Every man walked with a stick, or even a

pistol, to prevent the approach of others. Equal care was shown in

keeping the middle of the street to avoid what might be thrown from

windows, and in avoiding the noxious matters in the road. But if the

aspect of the uninfected was appalling, how shall we describe the

condition of the wretched sick in the street, tottering or falling to

rise no more--beggars, children, women.

Renzo had travelled far on his way, through the midst of this

desolation, when he heard a confused noise, in which was distinguishable

the horrible and accustomed tinkling of bells.

At the entrance of one of the most spacious streets, he perceived four

cars standing; \_monatti\_ were seen entering houses, coming forth with

burthens on their shoulders, and laying them on the cars; some were

clothed in their red dress, others without any distinctive mark, but the

greater number with a mark, more revolting still than their customary

dress,--plumes of various colours, which they wore with an air of

triumph in the midst of the public mourning, and whilst people from the

different windows around were calling to them to remove the dead. Renzo

avoided, as much as possible, the view of the horrid spectacle; but his

attention was soon attracted by an object of singular interest; a

female, whose aspect won the regards of every beholder, came out of one

of the houses, and approached the cars. In her features was seen beauty,

veiled and clouded, but not destroyed, by the mortal debility which

seemed to oppress her; the soft and majestic beauty which shines in the

Lombard blood. Her step was feeble, but decided; she wept not, although

there were traces of tears on her countenance. There was a tranquillity

and profundity in her grief, which absorbed all her powers. But it was

not \_her\_ appearance alone which excited compassion in hearts nearly

closed to every human feeling; she held in her arms a young girl about

nine years of age, dead, but dressed with careful precision; her hair

divided smoothly on her pale forehead, and clothed in a robe of the

purest white. She was not lying, but was seated, on the arm of the lady,

her head leaning on her shoulder; you would have thought she breathed,

if a little white hand had not hung down with inanimate weight, and her

head reposed on the shoulder of her mother, with an abandonment more

decided than that of sleep. Of her mother! it was indeed her mother! If

the resemblance of their features had not told it, you would have known

it by the expression of that fair and lovely countenance!

A hideous \_monatto\_ approached the lady, and with unusual respect

offered to relieve her of her burthen. "No," said she, with an

appearance neither of anger nor disgust, "do not touch her yet; it is I

who must place her on the car. Take this," and she dropped a purse into

the hands of the \_monatto\_; "promise me not to touch a hair of her head,

nor to let others do it, and bury her thus."

The \_monatto\_ placed his hand on his heart, and respectfully prepared a

place on the car for the infant dead. The lady, after having kissed her

forehead, placed her on it, as carefully as if it were a couch, spread

over her a white cloth, and took a last look; "Farewell! Cecilia! rest

in peace! To-night we will come to you, and then we shall be separated

no more!" Turning again to the \_monatto\_, "As you pass to-night," said

she, "you will come for me; and not for me only!"

She returned into the house, and a moment after appeared at a window,

holding in her arms another cherished child, who was still living, but

with the stamp of death on her countenance. She contemplated the

unworthy obsequies of Cecilia, until the car disappeared from her eyes,

and then left the window with her mournful burthen. And what remained

for them, but to die together, as the flower which proudly lifts its

head, falls with the bud, under the desolating scythe which levels every

herb of the field.

"O God!" cried Renzo, "save her! protect her! her and this innocent

creature! they have suffered enough! they have suffered enough!"

He then proceeded on his way, filled with emotions of distress and pity.

Another convoy of wretched victims encountered him at a cross street on

their way to the lazaretto. Some were imploring to be allowed to die on

their own beds in peace; some moving on with imbecile apathy, women as

usual with their little ones, and even some of these supported and

encouraged with manly devotion by their brothers a little older than

themselves, and whom alone the plague had for a time spared for this

affecting office. When the miserable crowd had nearly passed, he

addressed a commissary whose aspect was a little less savage than the

rest; and enquired of him the street and the house of Don Ferrante. He

replied, "The first street to the right, the last hotel to the left."

The young man hastened thither, with new and deeper trouble at his

heart. Easily distinguishing the house, he approached the door, raised

his hand to the knocker, and held it suspended awhile, before he could

summon resolution to knock.

At the sound, a window was half opened, and a female appeared at it,

looking towards the door with a countenance which appeared to ask, "Is

it \_monatti\_? thieves? or poisoners?"

"Signora," said Renzo, but in a tremulous voice, "is there not here in

service a young villager of the name of Lucy?"

"She is no longer here; begone," replied the woman, about to close the

window.

"A moment, I beseech you. She is no longer here! Where is she?"

"At the lazaretto."

"A moment, for the love of Heaven! With the pestilence?"

"Yes. It is something very uncommon, is it not? Begone then."

"Wait an instant. Was she very ill? Is it long since?"

But this time the window was closed entirely.

"Oh! signora, signora! one word, for charity! Alas! alas! one word!" But

he might as well have talked to the wind.

Afflicted by this intelligence, and vexed with the rude treatment of the

woman, Renzo seized the knocker again, and raised it for the purpose of

striking. In his distress, he turned to look at the neighbouring houses,

with the hope of seeing some one, who would give him more satisfactory

information. But the only person he discovered, was a woman, about

twenty paces off, who, with an appearance of terror, anger, and

impatience, was making signs to some one to approach; and this she did,

as if not wishing to attract Renzo's notice. Perceiving him looking at

her, she shuddered with horror.

"What the devil!" said Renzo, threatening her with his fist, but she,

having lost the hope of his being seized unexpectedly, cried aloud, "A

poisoner! catch him! catch him! stop the poisoner!"

"Who? I! old sorceress! be silent," cried Renzo, as he approached her in

order to compel her to be so. But he soon perceived that it was best to

think of himself, as the cry of the woman had gathered people from every

quarter; not in so great numbers as would have been seen three months

before under similar circumstances, but still many more than one man

could resist. At this moment, the window was again opened, and the same

discourteous woman appeared at it, crying, "Seize him, seize him; he

must be one of the rascals who wander about to poison the doors of

people."

Renzo determined in an instant that it was better to fly than to stop to

justify himself. Rapidly casting his eyes around to see on which side

there were the fewest people, and fighting his way through those that

opposed him, he soon freed himself from their clutches.

The street was deserted before him; but behind him the terrible cry

still resounded, "Seize him! stop him! a poisoner!" It gained on him,

steps were close at his heels. His anger became rage; his agony,

despair; drawing his knife from his pocket, and brandishing it in the

air, he turned, crying aloud, "Let him who dares come here, the rascal,

and I will poison him indeed with this."

But he saw, with astonishment and pleasure, that his persecutors had

already stopped, as if some obstacle opposed their path; and were making

frantic gestures to persons beyond him. Turning again, he beheld a car

approaching, and even a file of cars with their usual accompaniments.

Beyond them was another little band of people prepared to seize the

poisoner, but prevented by the same obstacle. Seeing himself thus

between two fires, it occurred to Renzo, that \_that\_ which was an object

of terror to these people, might be to him a source of safety.

Reflecting that this was not a moment for fastidious scruples, he

advanced towards the cars, passed the first, and perceiving in the

second a space large enough to receive him, threw himself into it.

"Bravo! bravo!" cried the \_monatti\_ with one shout. Some of them were

following the convoy on foot, others were seated on the cars, others on

the dead bodies, drinking from an enormous flagon, which they passed

around. "Bravo! that was well done!"

"You have placed yourself under the protection of the \_monatti\_; you are

as safe as if you were in a church," said one, who was seated on the car

into which Renzo had thrown himself.

The enemy was obliged to retreat, crying, however, "Seize him! seize

him! he is a poisoner!"

"Let me silence them!" said the \_monatto\_; and drawing from one of the

dead bodies a dirty rag, he tied it up in a bundle, and made a gesture

as if intending to throw it among them, crying, "Here, rascals!" At the

sight, all fled away in horror!

A howl of triumph arose from the \_monatti\_.

"Ah! ah! you see we can protect honest people," said the \_monatto\_ to

Renzo, "one of us is worth a hundred of those cowards."

"I owe my life to you," said Renzo, "and I thank you sincerely."

"'Tis a trifle, a trifle; you deserve it; 'tis plain to be seen you're a

brave fellow; you do well to poison this rabble; extirpate the fools,

who, as a reward for the life we lead, say, that the plague once over,

they will hang us all. They must all be finished, before the plague

ceases; the \_monatti\_ alone must remain to sing for victory, and to

feast in Milan."

"Life to the pestilence, and death to the rabble!" cried another,

putting the flagon to his mouth, from which he drank freely, and then

offered it to Renzo, saying, "Drink to our health."

"I wish it to you all," said Renzo, "but I am not thirsty, and do not

want to drink now."

"You have been terribly frightened, it seems," said the \_monatto\_; "you

appear to be a harmless sort of a person; you should have another face

than that for a poisoner."

"Give me a drop," said a \_monatto\_, who walked by the side of the cars;

"I would drink to the health of the nobleman, who is here in such good

company--in yonder carriage!" And with a malignant laugh he pointed to

the car in which poor Renzo was seated. Then brutally composing his

features to an expression of gravity, he bowed profoundly, saying, "Will

you permit, my dear master, a poor devil of a \_monatto\_ to taste a

little wine from your cellar? Do now, because we lead rough lives, and

moreover, we are doing you the favour to take you a ride into the

country. And besides, you are not accustomed to wine, and it might harm

your lordship; but the poor \_monatti\_ have good stomachs."

His companions laughed loudly; he took the flagon, and before he drank,

turned again to Renzo, and with an air of insulting compassion said,

"The devil with whom you have made a compact, must be very young; if we

had not saved you, you would have been none the better for his

assistance."

His companions laughed louder than before, and he applied the flagon to

his lips.

"Leave some for us! some for us!" cried those from the forward car.

After having taken as much as he wanted, he returned the flagon to his

companions, who passed it on; the last of the company having emptied it,

threw it on the pavement, crying, "Long live the pestilence!" Then they

commenced singing a lewd song, in which they were accompanied by all the

voices of the horrible choir. This infernal music, blended with the

tingling of the bells, the noise of the wheels, and of the horses' feet,

resounded in the empty silence of the streets, echoed through the

houses, wringing the hearts of the very few who still inhabited them!

But the danger of the preceding moment had rendered more than tolerable

to Renzo, the company of these wretches and the dead they were about to

inter; and even this music was almost agreeable to his ears, as it

relieved him from the embarrassment of such conversation. He returned

thanks to Providence for having enabled him to escape from his peril,

without receiving or doing an injury; and he prayed God to help him now

to deliver himself from his liberators. He kept on the watch to seize

the first opportunity of quietly quitting the car, without exciting the

opposition of his protectors.

At last they reached the lazaretto. At the appearance of a commissary,

one of the two \_monatti\_ who were on the car with Renzo jumped to the

ground, in order to speak with him: Renzo hastily quitting the ear, said

to the other, "I thank you for your kindness; God reward you."

"Go, go, poor poisoner," replied he, "it will not be you who will

destroy Milan!"

Fortunately no one heard him. Renzo hastened onwards by the wall,

crossed the bridge, passed the convent of the capuchins, and then

perceived the angle of the lazaretto. In front of the inclosure a

horrible scene presented itself to his view. Arrived in front of the

lazaretto, throngs of sick were pressing into the avenues which led to

the building; some were seated or lying in the ditch, which bordered the

road on either side, their strength not having sufficed to enable them

to reach their asylum, or who, having quitted it in desperation, were

too weak to go further; others wandered by themselves, stupified, and

insensible to their condition; one was quite animated, relating his

imaginations to a miserable companion, who was stretched on the ground,

oppressed by suffering; another was furious from despair; a third, more

horrible still! was singing, in a voice above all the rest, and with

heart-rending hilarity, one of the popular songs of love, gay and

playful, which the Milanese call \_villanelle\_.

Already weary, and confounded at the view of so much misery concentrated

within so small a space, our poor Renzo reached the gate of the

lazaretto. He crossed the threshold, and stood for a moment motionless

under the portico.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

The reader may imagine the lazaretto, peopled with sixteen thousand

persons infected with the plague: the vast enclosure was encumbered with

cabins, tents, cars, and human beings. Two long ranges of porticoes, to

the right and left, were crowded with the dying or the dead, extended

upon straw; and from the immense receptacle of woe, was heard a deep

murmur, similar to the distant voice of the waves, agitated by a

tempest.

Renzo went forward from hut to hut, carefully examining every

countenance he could discern within--whether broken down by suffering,

distorted by spasm, or fixed in death. Hitherto he met none but men, and

judged, therefore, that the women were distributed in some other part

of the inclosure. The state of the atmosphere seemed to add to the

horror of the scene: a dense and dark fog involved all things. The disc

of the sun, as if seen through a veil, shed a feeble light in its own

part of the sky, but darted down a heavy deathlike blast of heat: a

confused murmuring of distant thunder might be heard. Not a leaf moved,

not a bird was seen--save the swallow only, which descended to the

plain, and, alarmed at the dismal sounds around, remounted the air, and

disappeared. Nature seemed at war with human existence--hundreds seemed

to grow worse--the last struggle more afflictive--and no hour of

bitterness was comparable to that.

Renzo had, in his search, witnessed, as he thought, every variety of

human suffering. But a new sound caught his ear--a compound of

children's crying and goats' bleating: looking through an opening of the

boards of a hut, he saw children, infants, lying upon sheets or quilts

upon the floor, and nurses attending them; but the most singular part of

the spectacle, was a number of she-goats supplying the maternal

functions, and with all the appearance of conscious sympathy hastening,

at the cries of the helpless little ones, to afford them the requisite

nutrition. The women were aiding these efficient coadjutors, in

rendering their supplies available to the poor bereft babies. Whilst

observing this wretched scene, an old capuchin entered with two infants,

just taken from their lifeless mother, to seek among the flock for one

to supply her place. Quitting this spot, and looking about on every

side, a sudden apparition struck his sight, and set his thoughts in

commotion. He saw at some distance, among the tents, a capuchin, whom he

instantly recognised to be Father Christopher!

The history of the good friar, from the moment in which we lost sight of

him until this meeting, may be related in few words. He had not stirred

from Rimini, and he would not now have thought of doing so if the plague

breaking out at Milan had not afforded him the opportunity, so long

desired, of sacrificing his life for the benefit of others. He demanded,

as a favour, permission to go and assist those who were infected with

the disease. The count, he of the secret council, was dead; and

moreover, at this time, there was a greater want of guardians to the

sick, than of politicians: his request was readily granted. He had now

been in the lazaretto nearly three months.

But the joy of Renzo at seeing the good father was not unalloyed. It was

he indeed; but, alas! how changed! how wan! Exhausted nature appeared to

be sustained for a while by the mind, that had acquired new vigour from

the perpetual demand on its sympathies and activity.

"Oh, Father Christopher!" said Renzo, when he was near enough to speak

to him.

"You here!" said the friar, rising.

"How are you, my father, how are you?"

"Better than these unfortunate beings that you see," replied the friar.

His voice was feeble--hollow and changed as his person. His eye alone

"had not lost its original brightness"--benevolence and charity appeared

to have imparted to it a lustre superior to that which bodily weakness

was gradually extinguishing.

"But you," pursued he, "why are you here? Why do you thus come to brave

the pestilence?"

"I have had it, thank Heaven! I come----in search of----Lucy."

"Lucy! Is Lucy here?"

"Yes. At least I hope so."

"Is she thy wife?"

"My dear father! alas! no, she is not my wife. Do you know nothing,

then, of what has happened?"

"No, my son. Since God removed me from you, I have heard nothing. But

now that he sends you to me, I wish much to know. And your banishment?"

"You know, then, what they did to me?"

"But you, what did \_you\_ do?"

"My father, if I were to say I was prudent on that day at Milan, I

should tell a falsehood; but I committed no bad action wilfully."

"I believe you; I have always thought so."

"Now then I will tell you all."

"Wait a moment."

He approached a cabin, and called "\_Father Victor\_."

In a few moments a young capuchin appeared. "Do me the favour, Father

Victor," said he, "to take my place in watching over our poor patients

for a little while. If, however, any should particularly ask for me, be

so good as to call me."

The young friar complied, and Father Christopher, turning to Renzo, "Let

us enter here," said he. "But," added he, "you appear much exhausted,

you have need of food."

"It is true. Now that you make me think of it, I have not tasted any

thing to-day."

"Wait, then, a moment." He soon brought Renzo a bowl of broth, from a

large kettle, the common property of the establishment, and making him

sit down on his bed, the only seat his cabin afforded, and placing some

wine on a little table by his side, he seated himself next him. "Now

tell me about my poor child," said he, "and be in haste, for time is

precious, and I have much to do, as you perceive."

Renzo related the history of Lucy; that she had been sheltered in the

convent of Monza, and carried off from her asylum. At the idea of such

treatment and peril, and at the thought, too, that it was he who had

unwittingly exposed her to it, the good friar was breathless with

attention; but he recovered his tranquillity when he heard of her

miraculous deliverance, her restoration to her mother, and her having

been placed under the protection of Donna Prassede.

Renzo then briefly related his journey to Milan, his flight, and his

return home; that he had not found Agnes there; and at Milan had learned

that Lucy was in the lazaretto. "And I am here," concluded he, "I am

here in search of her; to see if she yet lives, and if----she still

thinks of me----because----sometimes----"

"But what direction did they give you? Did they tell you where she was

placed when she came here?"

"I know nothing, dear father, nothing; only that she is here, if she

still lives, which may God grant!"

"Oh, poor child! But what have you done here until now?"

"I have searched, and searched, but have seen hardly any but men. I

think the females must be in another part by themselves; you can tell me

if this is the case?"

"Know you not that it is forbidden to men to enter there unless their

duty calls them?"

"Oh, well! what can happen to me if I should attempt?"

"The law is a good one, my dear son; and if our weight of affliction

does not permit us to enforce it, is that a reason why an honest man

should infringe it?"

"But, Father Christopher, Lucy should have been my wife; you know how we

have been separated; it is twenty months since I have suffered, and

taken my misfortunes patiently; I have come here, risking every thing to

behold her, and now----"

"I know not what to say," resumed the friar; "you are, no doubt, guided

by a praiseworthy motive; would to God that all those who have free

access to these places conducted themselves as well as I am sure you

will. God, who certainly blesses thy perseverance of affection, thy

fidelity in desiring and seeking her whom he has given thee, God, who is

more rigorous than man, but also more indulgent, will not regard what

may be irregular in this enquiry for one so dear."

So saying, he arose, and Renzo followed him. While listening to him, he

had been confirmed in his resolution not to acquaint the father with

Lucy's vow. "If he learns that," thought he, "he will certainly raise

new difficulties. Either I shall find her, and we can then disclose,

or----and then----what use would it be?"

After having conducted him to the opening of the cabin, towards the

north, "From yonder little temple," said he, "rising above the miserable

tents, Father Felix is about to lead in procession the small remnant who

are convalescent, to another station, to finish their quarantine. Avoid

notice, but watch them as they pass. If she is not of the number, this

side," added he, pointing to the edifice before them, "this side of the

building and a part of the field before it are assigned to the women.

You will perceive a railing which divides that quarter from this, but so

broken, in many places, that you can easily pass through. Once there, if

you do nothing to offend, probably no one will speak to you. If,

however, there is any difficulty, say that Father Christopher knows you,

and will answer for you. Seek her, then, seek her with confidence--and

with resignation; for remember, it is an unusual expectation, a person

alive within the walls of the lazaretto! Go, then, and be prepared for

whatever result----"

"Yes, I understand!" said Renzo, a dark cloud overshadowing his

countenance; "I understand, I will seek in every place, from one end of

the lazaretto to the other----And if I do not find her!"

"If you do not find her?" repeated the father, in a serious and

admonitory tone.

But Renzo, giving vent to the wrath which had been for some time pent up

in his bosom, pursued, "If I do not find her, I will find \_another\_

person. Either at Milan, or in his abominable palace, or at the end of

the world, or in the house of the devil, I will find the villain who

separated us; but for whom Lucy would have been mine twenty months ago;

and if we had been destined to die, at least we should have died

together. If he still lives, I will find him----"

"Renzo!" said the friar, seizing him by the arm, and looking at him

severely.

"And if I find him," continued Renzo, entirely blinded by rage, "if the

pestilence has not already done justice--the time is past when a

poltroon, surrounded by bravoes, can reduce men to despair, and laugh at

them! the time is come when men meet face to face, and I will do myself

justice."

"Unhappy youth!" cried Father Christopher, with a voice which had

suddenly become strong and sonorous, his head raised, and eyes darting

forth more than their wonted fire; "unhappy youth! look around you!

Behold who punishes and who judges; who punishes and pardons! But you,

feeble worm, you would do yourself justice! Do you know what justice is?

Unhappy youth! begone! I hoped----yes, I hoped that before I died, God

would afford me the consolation to learn that my poor Lucy still lived;

to see her, perhaps, and to hear her promise that she would send a

prayer to yonder grave where I shall rest. Begone, you have taken away

my hope. God has not left her on the earth for thee, and you certainly

have not the audacity to believe yourself worthy that God should think

of consoling you. Go, I have no time to listen to you farther." And he

dropped the arm of Renzo, which he had grasped, and moved towards a

cabin.

"Oh, my father!" said Renzo, following him with a supplicating look,

"will you send me away thus?"

"How!" resumed the capuchin, but in a gentler tone, "would you dare ask

me to steal the time from these poor afflicted ones, who are expecting

me to speak to them of the pardon of God, in order to listen to thy

accents of rage--thy projects of vengeance? I listened to you, when you

asked consolation and advice, but now that you have revenge in your

heart, what do you want with me? Begone, I have listened to the

forgiveness of the injured, and the repentance of the aggressor; I have

wept with both; but what have I to do with thee?"

"Oh, I pardon him! I pardon him! I pardon him for ever!" said the young

man.

"Renzo," said the friar, in a calmer tone, "think of it, and tell me how

often you have pardoned him?"

He kept silence some time, and not receiving an answer, he bowed his

head, and, with a voice trembling from emotion, continued, "You know why

I wear this habit?"

Renzo hesitated.

"You know it?" repeated the old man.

"I know it."

"I likewise hated, I, who have reprimanded you for a thought, a word.

The man I hated, I killed."

"Yes, but it was a noble, one of those----"

"Silence!" interrupted the friar. "If that were justification, believe

you I should not have found it in thirty years? Ah! if I could now make

you experience the sentiment I have since had, and that I now have for

the man I hated! If \_I\_ could \_I\_!--but God can. May he do it! Hear me,

Renzo. He is a better friend to you, than you are to yourself; you have

thought of revenge, but He has power enough, pity enough, to prevent it;

you know you have often said that he can arrest the arm of the powerful;

but learn, also, that he can arrest that of the vindictive. And because

you are poor, because you are injured, can he not defend against you a

man created in his image? Will he suffer you to do all you wish? No! but

he can cast you off for ever; he can, for this sentiment which animates

you, embitter your whole life, since, whatever happens to you, hold for

certain, that all will be punishment until you have pardoned, pardoned

freely and for ever!"

"Yes, yes," said Renzo, with much emotion, "I feel that I have never

truly pardoned him; I have spoken as a brute and not as a Christian; and

now, by the help of God, I pardon him from the bottom of my soul."

"And should you see him?"

"I would pray God to grant me patience, and to touch his heart."

"Do you remember that the Lord has not only told us to pardon our

enemies, but to love them? Do you remember that he loved them so as to

die for them?"

"Yes, I do."

"Well, come and behold him. You have said you would find him; you shall

do so; come, and you will see against whom you preserve hatred, to whom

you desire evil, against what life you would arm yourself!"

He took the hand of Renzo, who followed him, without daring to ask a

question. The friar led the way into one of the cabins. The first object

Renzo beheld was a sick person seated on a bed of straw, who appeared to

be convalescent. On seeing the father, he shook his head, as if to say

\_No\_. The father bowed his with an air of sorrow and resignation. Renzo,

meanwhile, gazing with uneasy curiosity around the cabin, beheld in the

corner of it a sick person lying on a feather bed, wrapped up in a

sheet, and covered with a cloak. Looking attentively, he recognised Don

Roderick! The unfortunate man lay motionless; his eyes wide open, but

without any cognisance of the objects around him; the stamp of death was

on his face, which was covered with black spots; his lips were swollen

and black: you would have thought it the face of the dead, if a violent

contraction about the mouth had not revealed a tenacity of life; his

respiration was painful, and his livid hand, extending on the outside of

the covering, was firmly grasping his cloak, and pressing it upon his

heart, as if conscious that \_there\_ was his deepest agony.

"Behold!" said the friar, in a low solemn voice; "the sentiment you hold

towards this man, who has offended you, such will God hold towards you

on the great day. Bless him, and be blessed! For four days he has been

here in this condition, without giving any sign of perception. Perhaps

the Lord is disposed to grant him an hour of repentance, but he would

have you pray for it; perhaps he desires that you should pray for him

with this innocent girl; perhaps he reserves this favour for thy prayer

alone, for the prayer of an afflicted and resigned heart. Perhaps the

salvation of this man and thine own depend at this moment upon thyself,

upon thy pity, upon thy love." He kept silence, and clasping his hands,

bowed his head as in prayer, and Renzo, completely subdued, followed his

example. Their supplications were interrupted in a short time by the

striking of a bell: they immediately arose and left the cabin.

"The procession is about to move," said the father; "go then, prepared

to make a sacrifice, to praise God, whatever may be the issue of your

search; and whatever that may be, return to me, and we will praise him

together."

Here they separated; the one to resume his painful duties, the other to

the little temple, which was close at hand.

CHAPTER XXXV.

Who would have told Renzo some moments before, that at the very time of

his greatest suspense and anxiety, his heart should be divided between

Lucy and Don Roderick? And nevertheless it was so. The thought of him

mingled itself with all the bright or painful images which hope or fear

called up as he proceeded. The words the friar had uttered by that bed

of pain, blended themselves with the cruel uncertainty of his soul. He

could not utter a prayer, for the happy issue of his present

undertaking, without adding to it one for the miserable object of his

former resentment and revenge.

He saw the Father Felix on the portico of the church, and by his

attitude comprehended that the holy man was addressing the assembled

convalescents. He placed himself where he could overlook the audience.

In the midst were the women, covered with veils; Renzo gazed at them

intently, but finding that, from the place where he stood, it would be a

vain scrutiny, he directed his attention to the father. He was touched

by his venerable figure; and listened with all the attention his own

solicitude would allow, to the reverend speaker, who thus proceeded in

his affecting address:--

"Let us think for a moment," said he, "of the thousands who have gone

forth thither," pointing to a gate behind him, leading to the burying

ground of San Gregory, which was then but one mighty grave. "Let us look

at the thousands who remain here, uncertain of their destiny; let us

also look at ourselves! May the Lord be praised! praised in his justice!

praised in his mercy! praised in death! praised in life! praised in the

choice he has made of us! Oh! why has he done it, my children, if not to

preserve a people corrected by affliction, and animated by gratitude?

That we may be deeply sensible that life is his gift, that we may value

it accordingly, and employ it in works which he will approve? That the

remembrance of our sufferings may render us compassionate, and actively

benevolent to others. May those with whom we have suffered, hoped, and

feared, and among whom we leave friends and kindred, may they as we pass

amidst them derive edification from our deportment! May God preserve us

from any exhibition of self-congratulation, or carnal joy, at escaping

that death against which they are still struggling! May they see us

depart, rendering thanks to Heaven for ourselves, and praying for them;

that they may say, \_Even beyond these walls they will remember us, they

will continue to pray for us!\_ Let us begin from this moment, from the

first step we shall take into the world, a life of charity! Let those

who have regained their former strength, lend a fraternal arm to the

feeble; let the young sustain the old; let those who are left without

children become parents to the orphan, and thus your sorrows will be

softened, and your lives will be acceptable to God!"

Here a deep murmur of sighs and sobs, which had been increasing in the

assembly, was suddenly suspended, on seeing the friar place a cord

around his neck and fall on his knees. All was intense attention and

profound silence.

"For myself," said he, "and for all my companions, who have been chosen

to the high privilege of serving Christ in you, I humbly ask your

forgiveness if we have not worthily fulfilled so great a ministry. If

indolence, or the waywardness of the flesh, has rendered us less

attentive to your wants, less prompt to your call than duty demanded;

if unjust impatience, or culpable disgust, have caused us sometimes to

appear severe and wearied in your presence; if, indeed, the miserable

thought that you had need of us, has led us to be deficient in humility

towards you; if our frailty has made us commit any action which may have

given you pain, pardon us! May God remit also your offences, and bless

you!"

We have here related, if not the very words, at least the sense of that

which he uttered; but we cannot describe the accent which accompanied

them. It was that of a man who called it a privilege to serve the

afflicted, because he really considered it such; who confessed not to

have worthily exercised this privilege, because he truly felt his

deficiency; who asked pardon, because he was persuaded he had need of

it. But his hearers, who had beheld these capuchins only occupied in

serving them, who had beheld so many of them die in the service, and he

who now spoke in the name of all, always the first in toil as he was the

first in authority, his hearers could only answer him with tears. The

good friar then took a cross which rested against a pillar, and holding

it up before him, took off his sandals, passing through the crowd, which

opened respectfully to give him a passage, and placed himself at their

head.

Renzo, overcome with emotion, drew on one side, and placed himself near

a cabin, where, half concealed, he awaited, with his eyes open, his

heart palpitating, but with renewed confidence, the result of the

emotion excited by the touching scene of which he had been a witness.

Father Felix proceeded barefooted at the head of the procession, with

the cord about his neck, bearing that long and heavy cross; he advanced

slowly but resolutely, as one who would spare the weakness of others,

but whose ideas of duty enabled him to rise above his own. The largest

children followed immediately behind him, for the most part barefooted,

and very few entirely clothed; then came the women, nearly all of them

leading a child, and singing alternately the \_miserere\_. The feeble

sound of the voices, the paleness and languor of the countenances, would

have excited commiseration in the heart of a mere spectator. But Renzo

was occupied with his own peculiar anxieties; the slow progress of the

procession enabled him to scan with ease every face as it passed. He

looked and looked again, and always in vain! His eye wandered from rank

to rank, from face to face--they came, they passed--in vain, in

vain--none but unknown features! A new ray of hope dawned upon his mind

as he beheld some cars approaching, in which were the convalescents who

were still too feeble to support the fatigue of walking. They approached

so slowly that Renzo had full leisure to examine each in turn. But he

was again disappointed; the cars had all passed, and Father Michael,

with his staff in his hand, brought up the rear as regulator of the

procession.

Thus nearly vanished his hopes, and with them his resolution. His only

ground of hope now was to find Lucy still under the power of the

disease; to this sad and feeble hope, he clung with all the ardour of

his nature. He fell on his knees at the last step of the temple, and

breathed forth an unconnected, but fervent prayer; he arose,

strengthened in hope; and passing the railing pointed out by the father,

entered into the quarter allotted to the women. As he entered it, he saw

on the ground one of the little bells that the \_monatti\_ carried on

their feet, with its leather straps attached to it. Thinking it might

serve him as a passport, he tied it to his foot, and then began his

painful search. Here new scenes of sorrow met his eye, similar in part

to those he had already witnessed, partly dissimilar. Under the weight

of the same calamity, he discerned a more patient endurance of pain, and

a greater sensibility to the afflictions of others; they to whom bodily

suffering is a lot and an inheritance, acquire from it fortitude to bear

their own woes, and sympathy to bestow on the woes of others.

Renzo had proceeded some distance on his search, when he heard behind

him a "Ho!" which appeared to be addressed to him. Turning, he saw at a

distance a commissary, who cried, "Go there into those rooms; they want

you there; they have not finished carrying all off."

Renzo perceived that he took him for a \_monatto\_, and that the little

bell had caused the mistake. He determined to extricate himself from it

as soon as he could. Making a sign of obedience, he hid himself from the

commissary, by passing between two cabins which were very near each

other.

As he stooped to unloose the strap of the little bell, he rested his

head against the straw wall of one of the cabins; a voice reached his

ear. O Heaven! is it possible? His whole soul was in his ear, he

scarcely breathed. Yes! yes! it was that voice! "Fear of what?" said

that gentle voice; "we have passed through worse dangers than a tempest.

He who has watched over us until now, will still continue to do so."

Renzo scarcely breathed, his knees trembled, his sight became dim; with

a great effort recovering his faculties, he went to the door of the

cabin, and beheld her who had spoken! She was standing, leaning over a

bed; she turned at the sound of his steps, and gazed for a moment

bewildered; at last she exclaimed, "Oh! blessed Lord!"

"Lucy! I have found you again! I have found you again! It is, indeed,

you! You live!" cried Renzo, advancing with trembling steps.

"Oh! blessed Lord!" cried Lucy, greatly agitated; "is it indeed you?

How? Why? the pestilence----"

"I have had it. And you?"

"Yes. I have had it also. And my mother?"

"I have not seen her yet; she is at Pasturo. I believe, however, that

she is well. But you are still suffering! how feeble you appear! you are

cured, however; you are, is it not so?"

"The Lord has seen fit to leave me a little longer here below," said

Lucy. "But, Renzo! why are you here?"

"Why?" said Renzo, approaching her, "do you ask me why I am here? Must I

tell you? Whom do I think of then? Am I not Renzo? Are you no longer

Lucy?"

"Oh! why speak thus! Did not my mother write to you?"

"Yes! she wrote to me! kind things, truly, to write to a poor

unfortunate man, an exile from his native land, one, at least, who never

injured you!"

"But Renzo! Renzo! since you knew--why come, why?"

"Why come! O Lucy! why come, do you say! After so many promises! Are we

no longer the same! Is all forgotten?"

"O God!" cried Lucy, sorrowfully clasping her hands, and raising her

eyes to heaven; "why didst thou not take me to thyself! O Renzo! what

have you done! Alas! I hoped----that with time----I should have driven

from my memory----"

"A kind hope indeed! and to say so to me!"

"Oh! what have you done! in this place! in the midst of these sorrows!

Here, where there is nothing but death, you have dared----"

"We must pray to God for those who die, and trust that they will be

happy; but their calamity is no reason why those who live must live in

despair----"

"But Renzo! Renzo! you know not what you say; a promise to the Virgin! a

vow!"

"I tell you, such promises are good for nothing."

"Oh! where have you been all this time? with whom have you associated,

that you speak thus?"

"I speak as a good Christian. I think better of the Virgin than you do,

because I do not believe vows to the injury of others are acceptable to

her. If the Virgin had spoken herself, oh! then indeed----but it is

simply an idea of your own!"

"No, no, you know not what you say; you know not what it is to make a

vow! Leave me, leave me, for the love of Heaven!"

"Lucy!" said Renzo, "tell me at least, tell me, if this reason did not

exist----would you feel the same towards me?"

"Unfeeling man!" said Lucy, with difficulty restraining her tears;

"would it satisfy you to hear me confess that which might be sinful, and

would certainly be useless! Leave me, oh! leave me! forget me! we were

not destined for each other. We shall meet again above; we have not

long to remain in the world. Go! tell my mother that I am cured, that

even here God has assisted me, that I have found a good soul, this

worthy woman who has been a mother to me; tell her we shall meet \_when\_

it is the will of God, and \_as\_ it is his will. Go! for the love of

Heaven! and remember me no more----except when you pray to God!"

And as if wishing to withdraw from the temptation to prolong the

conversation, she drew near the bed where the female was lying of whom

she had spoken.

"Hear me, Lucy, hear me!" said Renzo, without however approaching her.

"No, no; go away! for charity!"

"Hear me, Father Christopher----"

"How!"

"He is here."

"Here! where? how do you know?"

"I have just spoken with him; a man like him it appears to me----"

"He is here! to assist the afflicted, no doubt. Has he had the plague?"

"Ah! Lucy! I fear, I greatly fear----" As Renzo hesitated to utter his

fears, she had unconsciously again approached him, with a look of

anxious enquiry----"I fear he has it now!"

"Oh! poor man! But what do I say? poor man! he is rich, rich in the

favour of God! How is he? Is he confined to his bed? Has he assistance?"

"He is, on the contrary, still assisting others----but if you were to

see him! Alas! there can be no mistake!"

"Oh! is he indeed within these walls?" said Lucy.

"Here, and not far off; hardly farther than from your cottage to

mine----if you remember----"

"Oh! most holy Virgin!"

"Shall I tell you what he said to me? He said I did well to come in

search of you, that God would approve it, and that he would assist me to

find you----Thus, then, you see----"

"If he spoke thus, it was because he did not know--"

"What use would there be in his knowing a mere imagination of your own?

A man of sense, such as he is, never thinks of things of that sort. But

oh! Lucy! Shall I tell you what I have seen?"----And he related his

visit to the cabin.

Lucy, although familiarised in this abode of horrors to spectacles of

wretchedness and despair, was shocked at the recital.

"And at the side of that bed," said Renzo, "if you could have heard the

holy man! He said, that God has perhaps resolved to look in mercy on

this unfortunate--(I can now give him no other name)--that he designs to

subdue him to himself, but that he desires that we should pray together

for him--together! do you understand?"

"Yes, yes, we will pray each, there where the Lord shall place us. He

can unite our prayers."

"But if I tell you his very words----"

"But, Renzo, he does not know----"

"But can you not comprehend, when such a man speaks, it is God who

speaks in him, and that he would not have spoken thus, if it ought not

to be exactly so? And the soul of this unfortunate! I have prayed, and

will pray for him; I have prayed with all my heart, as if he were my

brother. But what, think you, will be his condition in the other world,

if we do not repair some of the evil he has done? If you return to

reason, all will be set in order. That which has been, has been--he has

had his punishment here below----"

"No, Renzo, no! God would not have us do evil that good may come. Leave

to him the care of this unfortunate man; our duty is to pray for him. If

I had died that fatal night, would not God have been able to pardon him?

And if I am not dead, if I have been delivered----"

"And your mother, poor Agnes, who desired so much to see us man and

wife, has she not told you it was a foolish imagination?".

"My mother! think you my mother would advise me to break a vow? Would

you desire that she should? But, Renzo, you are not in your right mind!"

"Oh! you women cannot be made to comprehend reason! Father Christopher

told me to return, and inform him whether I had found you--I will go,

and get his advice----"

"Yes, yes, go to the holy man! Tell him I pray for him, and that I

desire his prayers! But, for the love of Heaven! for your soul's sake,

and for mine, do not return here, to trouble, to----tempt me! Father

Christopher will explain matters to you, and make you return to

yourself; he will set your heart at rest."

"My heart at rest! Oh! don't encourage an idea of that sort! You have,

before now, caused such language to be written to me! and the suffering

it caused me! and now you have the heart to tell it to me! As for me, I

declare to you plainly, that I will never set my heart at rest. Lucy!

you have told me to forget you; forget you! how can I do it? After so

many trials! so many promises! Who have I thought of ever since we

parted? Is it because I have suffered, that you treat me thus? because I

have been unfortunate? because the world has persecuted me? because I

have been so long away from you? because the first moment I was able, I

came to seek you?"

"Oh! holy Virgin!" exclaimed Lucy, as the tears flowed from her eyes,

"come to my help. You have aided me hitherto; aid me now. Since that

night such a moment as this have I never passed."

"Yes, Lucy, you do well to invoke the Virgin. She is the mother of

compassion, and will take no pleasure in our sufferings. But, if this is

an excuse--if I have become odious to you--tell me, speak frankly----"

"For pity, Renzo, for pity, stop--stop. Do not make me die. Go to Father

Christopher; commend me to him. Do not return here--do not return here."

"I go, but think not I will not return. I would return from the end of

the world; yes, I would return!" and he disappeared.

Lucy threw herself on the floor near the bed, upon which she rested her

head, and wept bitterly. The good woman, who had been a silent spectator

of the painful scene, demanded the cause of her anguish and her tears?

But, perhaps, the reader will wish to know something of this benevolent

person: we will satisfy the desire in a few words.

She was a rich tradeswoman, about thirty years of age: she had beheld

her husband and children die of the plague. Attacked by it herself, she

had been brought to the lazaretto, and placed in the cabin with Lucy,

who was just beginning to recover her senses, which had forsaken her

from the commencement of her attack in the house of Don Ferrante. The

humble roof could only accommodate two guests, and there grew up, in

their affliction, a strict and intimate friendship between them. They

derived great consolation from each other's society, and had pledged

themselves not to separate, after quitting the lazaretto. The good

woman, whose wealth was now far more ample than were her desires, wished

to retain Lucy with her as a daughter: the proposition was received with

gratitude, and accepted, on condition of the permission and approval of

Agnes. Lucy had, however, never made known to her the circumstances of

her intended marriage, and her other extraordinary adventures; but now

she related, as distinctly as tears permitted her to do so, her sad

story.

Meanwhile Renzo went in search of Father Christopher: he found him with

no small difficulty, and engaged in administering consolation to a dying

man. The scene was soon closed. The father remained a short time in

silent prayer. He then arose, and seeing Renzo approach, exclaimed,

"Well, my son!"

"She is there; I have found her!"

"In what state?"

"Convalescent, and out of danger."

"God be praised!" said the friar.

"But----" said Renzo, "there is another difficulty!"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that----you know how good this poor girl is; but she is

sometimes a little fanciful. After so many promises, she tells me now

she cannot marry me, because on that night of fear she made a vow to the

Virgin! These things signify nothing, do they? Is it not true that they

are not binding, at least on people such as we are?"

"Is she far from this?"

"Oh no; a few steps beyond the church."

"Wait a moment," said the friar, "and we will go together."

"Will you give her to understand that----?"

"I know not, my son: I must hear what she will say." And they proceeded

to Lucy's cabin.

The clouds were gathering in the heavens, and a tempest coming on. Rapid

lightning, cleaving the increasing darkness, illumined at moments the

long roofs and arcades of the building, and the cupola of the little

church: loud claps of thunder resounded with prolonged echoes through

the heavens. Renzo suppressed his impatience, and accommodated his steps

to the strength of the father, who, exhausted by fatigue, oppressed by

disease, and breathing in pain, could, with difficulty, drag his failing

limbs to the performance of this last act of benevolence.

As they reached the door of the cabin, Renzo stopped, saying, in a

trembling voice, "She is there!" They entered. Lucy arose, and ran

towards the old man, crying--"Oh, what I do see! Oh, Father

Christopher!"

"Well, Lucy! through how much peril has God preserved you! you must be

rejoiced that you have always trusted in Him."

"Ah! yes.--But you, my father! how you are changed! how do you feel?

say, how are you?"

"As God wills, and as, through his grace, I will also," replied the

friar, with a serene countenance. Drawing her aside, he said, "Hear me,

I have but a few moments to spare. Are you disposed to confide in me, as

in times past?"

"Oh, are you not still my father?"

"Well, my child, what is this vow of which Renzo speaks?"

"It is a vow I made to the Virgin never to marry."

"But did you forget that you were bound by a previous promise? God, my

daughter, accepts of offerings from that which is our own. It is the

heart he desires, the will; but you cannot offer the will of another to

whom you had pledged yourself."

"I have done wrong."

"No, poor child, think not so; I believe the holy Virgin has accepted

the intention of your afflicted heart, and has offered it to God for

you. But tell me, did you ask the advice of any one about this matter?"

"I did not deem it a sin, or I would have confessed it, and the little

good one does, one ought not to mention."

"Have you no other motive for preventing the fulfilment of your promise

to Renzo?"

"As to that----for myself----what motive?--no other," replied Lucy, with

a hesitation which implied any thing rather than uncertainty; and a

blush passed over her pale and lovely countenance.

"Do you believe," resumed the old man, "that God has given the church

authority to remit the obligations that man may have contracted to him?"

"Yes, I believe it."

"Learn, then, that the care of souls in this place, being committed to

us, we have the most ample powers from the church; and I can, if you ask

it, free you from the obligation you have contracted by this vow."

"But is it not a sin to repent of a promise made to the Virgin?" said

Lucy, violently agitated by unexpected hope.

"Sin, my child," said the father, "sin, to recur to the church, and to

ask her minister to use the authority which he has received from her,

and which she receives from God! I bless him that he has given me,

unworthy that I am, the power to speak in his name, and to restore to

you your vow. If you ask me to absolve you from it, I shall not hesitate

to do so; and I even hope you will."

"Then--then--I ask it," said Lucy, with a modest confidence.

The friar beckoned to Renzo, who was watching the progress of the

dialogue with the deepest solicitude, to approach, and said aloud to

Lucy, "With the authority I hold from the church, I declare you absolved

from your vow, and liberate you from all the obligations you may have

contracted by it."

The reader may imagine the feelings of Renzo at these words. His eyes

expressed the warmth of his gratitude to him who had uttered them; but

they sought in vain for Lucy's.

"Return in peace and safety to your former attachment," said the father.

"And do you remember, my son, that in giving you this companion, the

church does it not to insure simply your temporal happiness, but to

prepare you both for happiness without end. Thank Heaven that you have

been brought to this state through misery and affliction: your joy will

be the more temperate and durable. If God should grant you children,

bring them up in his fear, and in love to all men--for the rest you

cannot greatly err. And now, Lucy, has Renzo told you whom he has beheld

in this place?"

"Yes, father, he has told me."

"You will pray for him, and for me also, my children. You will remember

your poor friar?" And drawing from his basket a small wooden box,

"Within this box are the remains of the loaf--the first I asked for

charity--the loaf of which you have heard; I leave it to you; show it to

your children; they will come into a wicked world; they will meet the

proud and insolent. Tell them always to forgive, always! every thing,

every thing! And let them pray for the poor friar!"

Lucy took the box from his hands with reverence, and he continued, "Now

tell me what you mean to do here at Milan? and who will conduct you to

your mother?"

"This good lady has been a mother to me," said Lucy; "we shall leave

this place together, and she will provide for all."

"May God bless her!" said the friar, approaching the bed.

"May he bestow his blessing upon you!" said the widow, "for the joy you

have given to the afflicted, although it disappoints my hope of having

Lucy as a companion. But I will accompany her to her village, and

restore her to her mother, and," added she, in a low voice, "I will give

the outfit. I have much wealth, and of those who should have enjoyed it

with me none are left."

"The service will be acceptable to God," said the father, "who has

watched over you both in affliction. Now," added he, turning to Renzo,

"we must begone; I have remained too long already."

"Oh, my father," said Lucy, "shall I see you again? I have recovered

from this dreadful disease, I who am of no use in the world; and

you----"

"It is long since," replied the old man with a serious and gentle tone,

"I asked a great favour from Heaven; that of ending my days in the

service of my fellow-men. If God grants it to me now, all those who love

me should help me to return him thanks. And now give Renzo your

commissions for your mother."

"Tell her all," said Lucy to her betrothed; "tell her I have found here

another mother, and that we will come to her as soon as we possibly

can."

"If you have need of money," said Renzo, "I have here all that you

sent----"

"No, no," said the widow, "I have more than sufficient."

"Farewell, Lucy, and you, too, good signora, till we meet again," said

Renzo, not having words to express his feelings at this moment.

"Who knows whether we shall all meet again?" cried Lucy.

"May God ever watch over you and bless you!" said the friar, as he

quitted the cabin with Renzo.

As night was not far distant, the capuchin offered the young man a

shelter in his humble abode: "I cannot bear you company," said he, "but

you can at least repose yourself, in order to be able to prosecute your

journey."

Renzo, however, felt impatient to be gone; as to the hour or the weather

it might be said that, night or day, rain or shine, heat or cold, were

equally indifferent to him; the friar pressed his hand as he departed,

saying, "If you find, which may God grant! the good Agnes, remember me

to her; tell her, as well as all those who remember Friar Christopher,

to pray for me."

"Oh, dear father, shall we never meet again?"

"Above, I hope. Farewell, farewell!"

CHAPTER XXXVI.

As Renzo passed without the walls of the lazaretto, the rain began to

fall in torrents. Instead of lamenting, he rejoiced at it: he was

delighted with the refreshing air, and with the sound of the falling

drops from the plants and foliage which seemed to have new life imparted

to them; and breathing more freely in this change of nature, he felt

more vividly the change that had occurred in his own destiny.

But much would his enjoyment have been increased, could he have surmised

what would be seen a few days after. This water carried off, washed

away, so to speak, the contagion. If the lazaretto did not restore to

the living all the living it still contained, at least from that day it

received no more into its vast abyss. At the end of a week, shops were

opened, people returned to their houses, quarantine was hardly spoken

of, and there remained of the pestilence but a few scattered traces.

Our traveller proceeded on full of joy, without having thought \_where\_

or \_when\_ he should stop for the night; anxious only to go forward to

reach the village, and to proceed immediately to Pasturo in search of

Agnes. In the midst of the reminiscences of the horrors and the dangers

of the day, there was always present the thought, "I have found her! she

is well! she is mine!"

And then again he recalled his doubts, his difficulties, his fears, his

hopes, that had agitated him that eventful morning! He fancied himself

with his hand on the knocker of Don Ferrante's house! And the

unfavourable answer! And then those fools who were about to attack him

in their madness! And the lazaretto, that vast sepulchre! To have

hurried thither to find her, and to have found her! And the procession!

What a moment! And now it appeared nothing to him! And the quarter set

apart for the women! And there, behind that cabin when he least

expected it, that voice! that voice itself! And to see her there! But

then her vow! It exists no longer. And his violent hatred against Don

Roderick, which had augmented his grief, and shed its venom over his

hopes! That also was gone. Indeed, had it not been for his uncertainty

concerning Agnes, his anxiety about Father Christopher, and the

consciousness that the pestilence still existed, his happiness would

have been without alloy.

He arrived at Sesto in the evening; the rain had as yet no appearance of

ceasing. But Renzo did not stop, his only inconvenience was an

extraordinary appetite, which the vicinity of a baker's shop enabled him

to mitigate the violence of. When he passed through Monza it was dark

night; he succeeded, however, in leaving it by the right road; but what

a road! buried between two banks, almost like the bed of a river, it

might then, indeed, have been called a river, or rather, an aqueduct; in

numerous places were deep holes, from which Renzo could with difficulty

extricate himself. But he did as well as he could, without impatience or

regret. He reflected that every step brought him nearer to the end of

his journey; that the rain would cease when God should please; that day

would come in its own time; and that in the mean time the road he had

passed over he should not have to travel again. At the break of day he

found himself near the Adda. It had not ceased raining; there was still

a drizzling shower; the light of the dawn enabled Renzo to see around

him. He was in his own country! Who can express his sensations? Those

mountains, the \_Resegone\_, the territory of Lecco, appeared to belong to

him, to be his own! But, looking at himself, he felt that his outward

aspect was rather at variance with the exuberant joyousness of his

heart; his clothes were wet and clinging to his body, his hat bent out

of shape and full of water; his hair hanging straight about his face;

while his lower man was encased in a dense covering of mud.

He reached Pescate; travelled along the Adda, giving a melancholy glance

at Pescarenico; passed the bridge, and crossed the fields, to the house

of his friend, who, just risen, was at the door, looking out upon the

weather. He beheld the strange figure, covered with mud, and wet to the

skin, and yet, so joyous and animated! in his life he had never seen a

man, so accoutred, appear so satisfied with himself.

"How!" said he, "already here! and in such weather! How have things gone

with you?"

"She is there! she is there! she is there!"

"Well and safe?"

"Convalescent, which is better! I have wonderful things to tell you."

"But what a state you are in!"

"A pretty pickle indeed!"

"In truth you might squeeze water enough from your upper half to wash

away the mud from the lower. But wait a moment; I will make a fire."

"I shall be glad to feel its warmth, I assure you. Do you know where the

rain overtook me? Precisely at the door of the lazaretto; but no matter,

the weather does its business, and I mine."

His friend soon kindled a bright blaze. "Now do me another favour," said

Renzo, "bring me the bundle I left above; for before my clothes dry----"

Returning with the bundle, his friend said, "You must be hungry; you

have had drink enough, no doubt, on the way, but as to eating----"

"I bought two loaves yesterday at dusk, but truly, I have not eaten

them."

"Well, I will provide for you." He poured some water in a kettle which

hung over the fire, adding, "I will go and milk the cow, and when I

return with the milk, the water will be ready, and we will have a good

\_polenta\_. You, in the mean while, change your clothes." After having

allowed him time to perform the troublesome operation, his friend

returned, and commenced making the \_polenta\_. "I have much to tell you,"

said Renzo. "If you were to see Milan! and the lazaretto! She is there!

you will soon see her here; she will be my wife; you shall be at the

wedding, and, pestilence or not, we will be happy for a few hours."

On the following morning Renzo set out for Pasturo. On his arrival, he

asked concerning Agnes, and learnt that she was in health and safety. He

approached her residence, which had been pointed out to him, and called

her by name from the street. At the sound of his voice, she rushed to

the window, and Renzo, without allowing her time to speak, cried, "Lucy

is well; I saw her the day before yesterday; she will be at home

shortly; oh, I have so many things to tell you."

Overcome by various emotions, Agnes could only articulate, "I will open

the door for you."

"Stop, stop," said Renzo. "You have not had the plague, I believe?"

"No. Have you?"

"Yes; but you ought to be prudent. I come from Milan; and have been for

two days in the midst of it. It is true I have changed my clothes, but

the contagion attaches itself to the flesh, like witchcraft; and since

God has preserved you until now, you must take care of yourself until

all danger is over; for you are our mother, and I trust we shall live

long together as a compensation for the sufferings we have endured, \_I\_

at least."

"But----"

"There is no longer any \_but\_; I know what you would say. You will soon

see there is no longer any \_but\_; come into the open air, where I may

speak to you in safety, and I will tell you all about it."

Agnes pointed to a garden adjoining the house. Renzo entered it, and was

immediately joined by the anxious and impatient Agnes. They seated

themselves opposite each other on two benches. The events he described

are already known to our reader, and we will leave to his imagination

the numerous exclamations of grief, horror, surprise, and joy, that

interrupted the progress of the narrative every moment. The result,

however, was an agreement to settle all together at Bergamo, where Renzo

had already an advantageous engagement; \_when\_ would depend on the

pestilence and other circumstances; Agnes was to remain where she was,

until it should be safe for her to return home; and in the interval she

should have regular information of all their movements.

He departed, with the additional consolation of having found one so dear

to him safe and well. He remained the rest of that day and the following

night with his friend, and on the morrow set out for the country of his

adoption.

He found Bortolo in good health, and in less apprehension of losing it,

as within a few days things had rapidly changed for the better. The

malignity of the distemper had subsided, and given place to fever

indeed, accompanied with tumours, but much more easily cured. The

country presented a new aspect; those who had survived the pestilence

began to resume their business; masters were preparing for the

employment of workmen in every trade; and, above all, in that of weaving

silk. Renzo made some preparations for the accommodation of his family,

by purchasing and furnishing a neat little cottage, from his hitherto

untouched treasure, which the ravages of the plague enabled him to do at

small cost.

After a few days' stay, he returned by the way of Pasturo, and conducted

Agnes to her village home: we will not attempt to describe her feelings

at beholding again those well remembered places. She found all things in

her cottage as she had left them: it seemed as if angels had watched

over the poor widow and her child. Her first care was to get ready with

all speed an apartment in her humble abode for that kind friend who had

been to her child a second mother. Renzo, on his side, was not idle. He

laboured alternately at the widow's garden, and in the service of his

hospitable friend. As to his own cottage, it pained him to witness the

scene of desolation it presented; and he resolved to dispose of it, and

transfer its value to his new country. His re-appearance in the village

was a cause of much congratulation to those who had survived the plague.

All were anxious to learn his adventures, which had given rise to so

many reports among the neighbours. As to Don Abbondio, he exhibited the

same apprehension of the marriage as before; the mention of which

conjured up to his affrighted fancy the dreaded Don Roderick and his

train on the one side, and the almost equally feared cardinal and his

arguments on the other.

We will now transport the reader for a few moments to Milan. Some days

after the visit of Renzo to the lazaretto, Lucy left it with the good

widow. A general quarantine having been ordered, they passed the period

of it together in the house of the latter. The time was employed in

preparing Lucy's wedding clothes; and, the quarantine terminated, they

set off on their journey. We could add, \_they arrived\_, but,

notwithstanding our desire to yield to the impatience of the reader,

there are three circumstances which we must not pass over in silence.

The first is, that while Lucy was relating her adventures more minutely

to the good widow, she recurred to the signora, who had afforded her an

asylum, in the convent of Monza, and in return learnt many things which

afforded her the solution to numerous mysteries, and filled her with

sorrow and astonishment. She learnt, too, that the unfortunate signora,

falling afterwards under the most horrible suspicions, had been, by

order of the cardinal, transferred to a convent at Milan; that there,

after having given herself up for a time to rage and despair, she had at

last made her confession and repented of her crimes; and that her

present life was one of severe and voluntary penance. If any one desires

to know the details of her sad history, it will be found in the author

we have so often quoted.[36]

[36] Ripamonti.

The second is, that Lucy, making enquiries concerning Father

Christopher, of every capuchin from the lazaretto, learnt with more

grief than surprise that he had died of the pestilence.

And the third is, that before quitting Milan, Lucy had a desire to know

something concerning her former patrons. The widow accompanied her to

their house, where they were informed that both had died of the plague.

When we say of Donna Prassede she \_died\_, we have said all that is

necessary; not so with Don Ferrante, he deserves a little more of our

attention, considering his learning.

From the commencement of the pestilence, Don Ferrante was one of the

most resolute in denying its existence, not indeed like the multitude,

with cries of rage, but with arguments which none could accuse of want

of concatenation. "In \_rerum natura\_," said he, "there are but two

kinds of things, substances and accidents; and if I prove that the

contagion can neither be one nor the other of these I shall have proved

that it does not exist; that it is a chimera. Thus, then: substances are

either material or spiritual; that the contagion is a spiritual

substance, is so absurd an opinion, that no one would presume to advance

it; it is, then, useless to speak of it. Material substances are either

simple or compound. Now, the contagion is not a simple substance, and I

will prove it in three words. It is not an aerial substance, because, if

it were, instead of passing from one body to another, it would fly off

to its sphere; it is not a watery substance, because it would be dried

up by the wind; it is not igneous, because it would burn; it is not

earthy, because it would be visible. Moreover, it is not a compound

substance, because it would be sensible to the eye, or to the touch; and

who has seen it? or touched it? It remains to see if it be an accident.

This is still less probable. The doctors say it is communicated from

body to body; this is their Achilles; the pretext for so many useless

regulations. Now, supposing it an accident, it would be a transferable

accident, which is an incongruity. There is not in all philosophy a more

evident thing than this, that an accident cannot pass from one subject

to another; so if, to avoid this Scylla, they are reduced to call it an

accident produced, they avoid Scylla by falling into Charybdis, because

if it be produced, it does not communicate itself, it does not

propagate, as they declare. These principles allowed, what is the use of

talking of botches and carbuncles?"

"It is folly," said one of his hearers.

"No, no," resumed Don Ferrante, "I do not say so. Science is science; we

must only know how to employ it. Swellings, purple botches, and black

carbuncles, are respectable terms, which have a good and proper

signification; but I say they have nothing to do with the question. Who

denies that there may be and are such things? We must only prove whence

they come."

Here began the vexations of Don Ferrante. So long as he laughed at the

contagion, he found respectful and attentive listeners; but when he came

to distinguish and demonstrate that the error of the doctors was, not in

affirming that there existed a general and terrible disease, but rather

in assigning its cause, then he found them intractable and rebellious,

then he no longer dared expose his doctrine, but by shreds and patches.

"Here is the true reason," said he, "and those even who maintain other

fancies are obliged to acknowledge it. Let them deny, if they can, that

there is a fatal conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn. And when has it been

said that influences propagate? And would these gentlemen deny the

existence of influences? Will they say there are no planets? or will

they say that they keep up above, doing nothing, as so many pins in a

pincushion? But that which I cannot understand from these doctors is,

that they confess we are under so malign a conjunction, and then they

tell us, don't touch this, don't touch that, and you will be safe! as

if, in avoiding the material contact of terrestrial bodies, we could

prevent the virtual effect of celestial bodies. And such a work in

burning rags! Poor people! will you burn Jupiter? will you burn Saturn?"

\_His fretus\_, that is to say, on these grounds, he took no precautions

against the pestilence; he caught it, and died, like Metastasio's hero,

complaining of the stars.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

One fine evening Agnes heard a carriage drive up to the door of her

cottage. It was Lucy and the good widow. We can easily imagine the joy

of the meeting.

The following morning Renzo made his appearance, at an early hour,

little expecting to find Lucy with her mother. "How are you, Renzo?"

said Lucy, with downcast eyes, and in a tone--oh how different from that

with which she addressed all besides! Renzo was conscious that it was

meant for him alone.

"I am always well when I see you," replied the young man.

"Our poor Father Christopher," said Lucy, "pray for his soul, although

we may be almost sure he is now in heaven, praying for us."

"I expected no less," said Renzo mournfully, "I expected to hear that he

was taken away from this world of sorrow and trouble."

Notwithstanding the sadness of their recollections, joy was the

predominant feeling of their hearts. The good widow was an agreeable

addition to the little company. When Renzo saw her in the miserable

cabin at the lazaretto, he could not have believed her to be of so

facile and gay a disposition; but the lazaretto and the country, death

and a wedding, are not at all the same things. During the evening Renzo

left them, for the purpose of visiting the curate. "Signor Curate," said

he, with a respectful but jocular air, "the headache, which, you said,

prevented you from marrying us, has it passed off? The bride is here,

and I am come to have you appoint an hour, but, I pray you, not to let

it be far distant."

Don Abbondio did not say he would not; but he began to offer excuses and

insinuations. "Why come forward into public view with this order for his

apprehension hanging over him? and the thing could be easily done

elsewhere, and then this, and then that."

"I understand," said Renzo, "you have still a little pain in your head,

but listen to me." And he described the state in which he had seen Don

Roderick.

"That has nothing to do with us," said Don Abbondio. "Did I say no to

you? However, while there is life there is hope, you know. Look at me; I

have also been nearer the other world than this, and here I am

nevertheless; and if new troubles do not fall upon me, I hope to remain

here a little longer."

The conversation was prolonged some time, without coming to any

satisfactory conclusion, and Renzo returned home to relate it. "I came

off," said he, "because I feared I should lose all patience. At times he

behaved exactly as he did before, and I verily believe if I had remained

a little longer, he would have spoken Latin again. I see that all this

portends a tedious business. It would be better to do as he says, and go

and be married where we intend to live."

"Let us go and see what we can do," said the widow, "perhaps he will be

more tractable to the ladies."

They followed this advice, and in the afternoon proceeded to the

parsonage. The curate evinced much pleasure on seeing Lucy and Agnes,

and much politeness towards the stranger. He endeavoured to divert the

discourse from that which he knew to be the purport of their visit. He

begged from Lucy a recital of all her woes, and availed himself of the

account of the lazaretto to draw the stranger into the conversation. He

then expatiated on his own miseries, which he detailed at full length.

The pause so long watched for came at last. One of the widows broke the

ice; but Don Abbondio was no longer the same man; he did not say \_no\_;

but he returned to his doubts and his difficulties, jumping like a bird

from branch to branch. "It would be necessary," said he, "to get free

from this unlucky order. You, signora, who live at Milan, you ought to

know the course of these things; if we had the protection of some

powerful man, all wounds would be healed. After all, the shortest way

would be to have the ceremony performed where these young people are

going, and where this proscription cannot affect them. Here, with this

order, which is known to every one, to utter from the altar the name of

Lorenzo Tramaglino is a thing I should be very unwilling to do. I wish

him too well; it would be rendering him an ill service."

While Agnes and the widow were endeavouring to reply to these reasons,

which the subtle curate as often reproduced under another form, Renzo

entered the room, with the air of one bringing important intelligence,

"The Lord Marquis \*\*\* has arrived!" said he.

"What do you mean? arrived! where?" said Don Abbondio, rising.

"He has arrived at his castle, which was Don Roderick's: he is the heir

by feoffment of trust, as they say. So that there is no longer a doubt

on the subject. And as to the marquis, he is a most worthy man."

"That he is," said Don Abbondio; "I have often heard him spoken of as an

excellent lord. But is it really true that----"

"Will you believe your sexton?"

"Why----"

"Because he saw him with his own eyes. Will you hear Ambrose? I made him

wait without expressly."

Renzo called the sexton, who confirmed the intelligence.

"Ah, he is dead then! he is really gone!" said Don Abbondio. "You see,

my children, the hand of Providence. It is a happy thing for this poor

country: we could not live with this man. The plague has been a great

scourge, but it has also been, as it were, a serviceable broom; it has

swept off certain people, of whom, my children, we could never have

delivered ourselves. In the twinkling of an eye they have disappeared by

the hundred. We shall no longer see him wandering about with that

haughty air, followed by his cut throats, and looking at every body as

if they were all placed on earth for his pleasure. He is gone, and we

are still here! He will send no more messages to honest people. He has

made us all pass a sad life; and now we are at liberty to say so."

"I pardon him," said Renzo, "with all my heart."

"And you do well; it is your duty; but we may also thank Heaven for

delivering us from him. Now, if you wish to be married, I am ready. As

to the \_order for your seizure\_, that is of little importance; the

plague has carried off that too. If you choose--to-day is Thursday--on

Sunday, I will publish the banns, and then I shall have the happiness of

uniting you."

"You know we came for that purpose," said Renzo.

"Very well; and I will send word of it to his Eminence."

"Who is his Eminence?" asked Agnes.

"His Eminence? our lord cardinal archbishop, whom may God preserve!"

"Oh, as to that, you are mistaken; I can tell you they do not call him

so, because the second time we went to speak with him, one of the

priests drew me aside, and told me I must call him your illustrious

lordship, and my lord."

"And now, if that same priest were to tell you, he would say you must

call him \_Your Eminence\_; the pope has ordered, that this title be given

to the cardinals. And do you know why? Because \_Most Illustrious\_ was

assumed by so many people who had no right to it. By and by, they will

call the bishops \_Your Eminence\_, then the abbots will claim it, then

the canons----"

"And the curates," said the widow.

"No, no, let the curates alone for that; they will be only \_Your

Reverence\_ to the end of the world. But to return to our affairs. On

Sunday, I will publish the banns at the church, and obtain, in the mean

time, a dispensation for omitting the two other publications. There will

be plenty of similar applications, if things go on elsewhere as they do

here; the fire has taken; no one will wish to live alone, I imagine; I

have already three marriages on hand besides yours; what a pity Perpetua

is dead, she might find a husband! And at Milan, signora, I imagine it

is the same thing."

"Yes, indeed. In my parish alone there were fifty marriages last

Sunday."

"Well, the world wo'n't end yet. And you, signora, has no butterfly

begun to fly around you?"

"No, no, I think not of it; I do not mean to think of it."

"Oh, yes, yes; would you be alone indeed? Agnes also, Agnes also----"

"You have a mind to jest," said Agnes.

"To be sure I have; it is high time. We may hope that the few days that

remain to us will be less sad. As for me, poor old man! there is no

remedy for years, as they say, \_Senectus ipsa est morbus\_."

"Oh, now," said Renzo, "you may speak Latin as much as you like; I don't

care about it now."

"You still quarrel with Latin, do you? Well, I will not forget you. When

you come before me with Lucy, to pronounce some little words in Latin, I

will say to you, You do not like Latin, go in peace. Eh?"

"Ah, it is not that Latin I dislike, pure and holy like that of the

mass; I speak of the Latin which falls on one as a traitor, in the very

midst of conversation. For example, now that we are here, and all is

past, the Latin you spoke there, in that corner, to make me understand

that you could not, and----I know not what. Tell me now in language I

can understand, will you?"

"Hush! you mischievous fellow, hush!" said Don Abbondio. "Do not stir up

old grievances: if we were to settle our accounts, I do not know which

of us would be in debt to the other. I have forgiven you, but you also

played me an ill turn. As for you, it did not astonish me, because you

are a good-for-nothing fellow; but I speak of this silent--this little

saint; one would have thought it a sin to distrust her. But I know who

advised her; I know I do," added he, pointing to Agnes.

It is impossible to describe the change which had come over him. His

mind, so long the slave of continual apprehension, was now emancipated

from its fetters, and his tongue, liberated from its bonds, recurred to

its former habits. He playfully prolonged the conversation, even

following them to the door, with some parting jest.

The following morning, Don Abbondio received a visit, as agreeable as it

was unexpected, from the lord marquis, whose appearance confirmed all

that report had said of him. "I come," said he, "to bring you the

salutations of the cardinal archbishop."

"Oh, what condescension in both of you!"

"When I took leave of that incomparable man, who honours me with his

friendship, he spoke to me of two young people of this parish who have

suffered much from the unfortunate Don Roderick. My lord wishes to hear

of them. Are they living? Are their affairs settled?"

"Their affairs are settled; and I had thought of writing to his Eminence

about it, but now that I have the honour----"

"Are they here?"

"Yes; and as soon as possible, they will be man and wife."

"I request you to tell me what I can do for them, and the best manner of

doing it. You will render me a service by enabling me to dispose of some

of my superfluous wealth for their benefit."

"May Heaven reward you! I thank you in the name of my children," said

Don Abbondio; "and since your lordship allows me, I have an expedient to

suggest which perhaps will not displease you. These good people have

resolved to establish themselves elsewhere, and to sell the little that

belongs to them here. The best charity you can render them, is to buy

their property, as otherwise it will be sold for little or nothing. But

your lordship will decide, I have spoken in obedience to your commands."

The marquis thanked Don Abbondio, telling him he should leave it to him

to fix the price, and to do so entirely to their advantage, as it was an

object with him to make the amount as large as possible. He then

proposed that they should go together to the cottage of Lucy.

On their way, Don Abbondio, quite overjoyed continued the

conversation,--"Since your lordship is so disposed to benefit this

people, there is another service you can render them. The young man has

an order for his apprehension out against him, for some folly he

committed two years ago at Milan, on the day of the great Tumult. A

recommendation, a word, from a man like yourself, might hereafter be of

service to him."

"Are there not heavy charges against him?"

"They made a great deal of noise about it; but really there was nothing

in it."

"Well, well; I will take it upon myself to free him from all

embarrassment."

We may imagine the surprise of our little company, at a visit from such

a guest. He entered agreeably into conversation with them and after a

while, made his proposal. Don Abbondio, being requested by him to fix

the price, did so; the purchaser said he was well satisfied, and, if he

had not understood him, in repeating it, doubled the sum. He would not

hear of rectifying the mistake, and ended the conversation by inviting

the company to dinner the day after the wedding, when the affair could

be settled with every necessary formality.

"Ah!" thought Don Abbondio when he returned home, "if the pestilence

acted everywhere with so much discrimination, it would be a pity to

speak ill of it. We should want one every generation."

The happy day at length arrived. The betrothed went to the church where

they were united by Don Abbondio. The day after, the wedding party made

their visit at the castle. We will leave the reader to imagine their

reflections on entering those walls! In the midst of their joy,

however, they felt that the presence of the good Father Christopher was

wanting to complete it. "But," said Lucy, "he is even happier than we

are, assuredly."

The contract was drawn up by a doctor, but not \_Azzecca Garbugli\_! He

was gone to \_Canterelli\_. For those who are not of this country, an

explanation of this expression may be necessary.

About half a mile above Lecco, and nearly on the borders of the other

territory, called Castello, is \_Canterelli\_. This was a spot where two

roads cross. Near the point of junction there is a small eminence, an

artificial hill, surmounted by a cross. This was a heap of bodies, dead

of this epidemic. It is true, tradition simply says, \_the dead of the

epidemic\_; but it must have been this one, as it was the last, and most

severe within the memory of man: and we know that tradition says very

little of itself, unless we render it some assistance.

On their return, no other inconvenience was felt, than the weight of the

money which Renzo had to sustain. However, he did not look upon this as

one of the greatest hardships he had had to encounter. There was,

however, one matter which perplexed him not a little. How should he

employ it? Should it be in agriculture? Should it be in business? Or why

choose at all? Were not both in turn, like one's legs, better than

either singly?

It will be asked, Did they feel no regrets on quitting their native

village--their native mountains? Don Roderick and his wretched agents

could no longer disturb them. Regrets they did feel; but the old

recollections of happiness enjoyed amidst its scenes, had been greatly

weakened by recent distresses and apprehensions, and new hopes had

arisen connected with their new country; so that they could look to

their change of abode without any feelings of grief.

The little company now thought only of preparing for their journey,--the

\_Tramaglino\_ family to their new country, and the widow to Milan. Many

tears were shed, many thanks given, and many promises to meet again. The

separation of Renzo and the friend who had treated him so hospitably,

was not less tender. Neither did they part coldly from Don Abbondio:

they had always preserved a certain respect for their curate, and he, in

his heart, had always wished them well. It is these unfortunate affairs

of the world which perplex our affections. But who would believe that,

in this new abode, where Renzo had expected such happiness, he should

find only vexation! This was the result of trifles, doubtless; but it

requires so little to disturb a state of happiness in this life!

The reports the Bergamascans had heard of Lucy, together with Renzo's

extraordinary attachment to her--perhaps, too, the representations of

some partial friend--had contributed to excite an extravagant idea of

her beauty. When Lucy appeared, they began to shrug their shoulders, and

say, "Is this the woman? We expected something very different! What is

she, after all? A peasant, like a thousand others! Women like her, and

fairer than she, are to be found every where!"

Unfortunately, some kind friends told Renzo these things, perhaps added

to what they had heard, and roused his indignation. "And what

consequence is it to you?" said he. "Who told you what to expect? Did I

ever do so? Did I tell you she was beautiful? She is a peasant,

forsooth! Did I ever say I would bring a princess here? She does not

please you. Do not look at her, then: you have beautiful women; look at

them." Thus did he make himself unhappy; and believing that all were

disposed to criticise his Lucy, he showed ill nature in return. It would

have gone ill with him, if he had been condemned to remain in the place;

but fortune smiled on him in this respect.

The master of another manufactory, situated near the gates of Bergamo,

being dead, the inheritor of it, a young libertine, was willing to sell

it half price, for ready money. Bortolo proposed to his cousin that they

should make the purchase together. They did so; and when they entered

into possession, Lucy was much pleased, and Renzo also, and not the less

so for having heard that more than one person amongst his neighbours had

said, "Have you seen this beautiful simpleton who is just come?"

Their affairs now went on prosperously. Before the year was completed,

a beautiful little creature made her appearance, as if to give them the

earliest opportunity of fulfilling Lucy's vow. Be assured it was named

Maria. In the course of time, they were surrounded by others of both

sexes, whom Agnes was delighted to carry about one after the other,

calling them little rogues, and loading them with kisses. They were all

taught to read and write; "for," said Renzo, "as this notion is in the

country, we may as well take advantage of it."

It was highly pleasing to hear him relate his adventures: he always

concluded by naming the great things he had learnt, by which to govern

his conduct for the future. "I have learnt," said he, "not to mix in

quarrels; not to preach in public; not to drink more than I want; not to

keep my hand on the knocker of a door, when the inhabitants of the place

are all crazy; not to tie a little bell to my feet, before I think of

the consequences."

"And I!" said Lucy, who thought that the doctrine of her moralist,

though sound, was rather confused, and certainly incomplete--"what have

I learnt?" said she. "I have not sought misfortunes, they have sought

me. Unless you say," smiling affectionately, "that my error was in

loving you, and promising myself to you."

They settled the question, by deciding that misfortunes most commonly

happen to us from our own misconduct or imprudence; but sometimes from

causes independent of ourselves; that the most innocent and prudent

conduct cannot always preserve us from them; and that, whether they

arise from our own fault or not, trust in God softens them, and renders

them useful in preparing us for a better life. Although this was said by

poor peasants, it appears to us so just, that we offer it here as the

moral of our story.

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