

CASA BRACCIO.

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XXVI.



ONNA FRANCESCA had put off her mourning, and went into the world again during that winter. The world said that she might marry if she so pleased, and was somewhat inclined to wonder that she did not. She could have made a brilliant match if she had chosen. But instead, though she appeared everywhere where society was congregated together, she showed a tendency to religion which surprised her friends.

A tendency to religion existed in the Braccio family, together with various other tendencies not at all in harmony with it, nor otherwise edifying. Those other tendencies seemed to be absent in Francesca, and little by little her acquaintances began to speak of her as a devout person. The Prince of Gerano even hinted that she might some day be an abbess in the Carmelite convent at Subiaco, as many a lady of the great house had been before her. But Francesca was not prepared to withdraw from the world altogether, though at the present time she was very unhappy.

She suspected herself of a great sin, besides reproaching herself bitterly with many of her deeds which deserved no blame at all. Yet she was by no means morbid, nor naturally inclined to perpetual self-examination. On the contrary, she had always been willing to accept life as a simple affair which could not offer any difficulties provided that one were what she meant by "good" — that is, honest in word and deed, and scrupulous in doing thoroughly and with right intention those things which her religion required of her, but in which only she herself could judge of her own sincerity.

Of late, however, she had felt that there was something very wrong in all her recent life. The certainty of it dawned by degrees, and then burst upon her suddenly one day when she was with Reanda.

She had long ago noticed the change in his manner, the harassed look, and the sad ring in his voice, and for a time his suffering was her sorrow, and there was a painful pleasure in being able to feel for him with all her heart. He had gone through a phase which had lasted many months, and the change was great be-

tween his former and his present self. He had suffered, but indifference was creeping upon him. It was clear enough. Nothing interested him but his art, and perhaps her own conversation, though even that seemed doubtful to her.

They were alone together on a winter's afternoon in the great hall. The work was almost done, and they had been talking of the more mechanical decorations, and of the style of the furniture.

"It is a big place," said Francesca; "but I mean to fill it. I like large rooms; and when it is finished, I shall take up my quarters here, and call it my boudoir."

She smiled at the idea. The hall was at least fifty feet long by thirty wide.

"All the women I know have wretched little sitting-rooms in which they can hardly turn round," she said. "I will have all the space I like, and all the air, and all the light. Besides, I shall always have the dear Cupid and Psyche to remind me of you."

She spoke the last words with the simplicity of absolute innocence.

"And me?" he asked, as innocently and simply as she. "What will you do with me?"

"Whatever you like," she said, taking it quite for granted, as he did, that he was to work for her all his life. "You can have a studio in the house, just as it used to be, if you please. And you can paint the great canvas for the ceiling of the dining-room. Or shall I restore the old chapel? Which should you rather do — oil-painting or fresco?"

"You would not want the altarpiece which I should paint," he said, with sudden sadness.

"Santa Francesca?" she asked. "It would have to be Santa Francesca. The chapel is dedicated to her. You could make a beautiful picture of her — a portrait, perhaps —" She stopped.

"Of yourself? Yes; I could do that," he answered quickly.

"No," she said, and hesitated. "Of your wife," she added rather abruptly.

He started, and looked at her, and she was sorry that she had spoken. Gloria's beautiful face had risen in her mind, and it had seemed generous to suggest the idea. Finding a diffi-

culty in telling him, she had thought it her duty to be frank.

He laughed harshly before he answered her.

"No," he said. "Certainly not a portrait of my wife. Not even to please you. And that is saying much."

He spoke very bitterly. In the few words he poured out the pent-up suffering of many months. Francesca turned pale.

"I know; and it is my fault," she said in a low voice.

"Your fault? No. But it is not mine."

His hands trembled violently as he took up his palette and brushes and began to mix some colors, not knowing what he was doing.

"It is my fault," said Francesca, still very white, and staring at the brick floor. "I have seen it. I could not speak of it. You are unhappy — miserable. Your life is ruined, and I have done it — I!"

She bit her lip almost before the last word was uttered; for it was stronger and louder than she had expected it to be, and the syllable rang with a despairing echo in the empty hall.

Reanda shook his head, and bent over his colors with shaking hands, but said nothing.

"I was so happy when you were married," said Francesca, forcing herself to speak calmly. "She seemed such a good wife for you — so young, so beautiful. And she loves you —"

"No." He shook his head energetically. "She does not love me. Do not say that, for it is not true. One does not love in that way — to-day a kiss, to-morrow a sting; to-day honey, to-morrow snake-poison. Do not say that it is love, for it is not true. The heart tells the truth, all alone in the breast. A thousand words cannot make it tell one lie. But for me — it is finished. Let us speak no more of love. Let us talk of our good friendship. It is better."

"Eh, let us speak of it, of this friendship! It has cost tears of blood!"

Francesca, in the sincerity of what she felt, relapsed into the Roman dialect. Almost all Romans do, under any emotion.

"Everything passes," answered Reanda, laying his palette aside, and beginning to walk up and down, his hands in his pockets. "This also will pass," he added, as he turned. "We are men. We shall forget."

"But not I; for I did it. Your sadness cuts my heart, because I did it — I — I alone. But for me you would be free."

"Would to Heaven!" exclaimed the artist, almost under his breath. "But I will not have you say that it is your fault," he cried, stopping before her. "I was the fool that believed. A man of my age — oh, a serious man — to marry a child! I should have known. At first, I do not say. I was the first. She thought she had paradise in her arms. A husband! They

all want it, the husband. But I, who had lived and seen, I should have known. Fool! fool! ignorant fool!"

The words came out vehemently in the strong dialect, and the nervous, heart-wrung man struck his breast with his clenched fist, and his eyes looked upward.

"Reanda, Reanda! What are you saying? When I tell you that I made you marry her! It was here, — I was in this very chair, — and I told you about her. And I asked her here with intention, that you might see how beautiful she was. And then, neither one nor two, she fell in love with you! It would have been a miracle if you had not married her. And her father, he was satisfied. May that day be accursed when I brought them here to torment you!"

She spoke excitedly, and her lip quivered. He began to walk again with rapid, uncertain strides.

"For that — yes!" he said. "Let the day bear the blame. But I was the madman. Who leaves the old way and follows the new knows what he leaves, but not what he may find. I might have been contented. I was so happy! God knows how happy I was!"

"And I!" exclaimed Francesca, involuntarily; but he did not hear her.

She felt a curious sense of elation, though she was so truly sorry for him, and it disturbed her strangely. She looked at him and smiled, and then wondered why the smile came. There is a ruthless cruelty in the half-unconscious impulses of the purest innocence, of which vice itself might be ashamed in its heart. It is simply humanity's assertion of its prior right to be happy. She smiled spontaneously because she knew that Reanda no longer loved Gloria, and she felt that he could not love her again; and for a while she was too simply natural to quarrel with herself for it, or to realize what it meant.

He was nervous, melancholy, and unstrung, and he began to talk about himself and his married life for the first time, pouring out his sufferings, thoughtless of what Francesca might think and feel. He, too, was natural. Unlike his wife, he detested emotion. To be angry was almost an illness to his over-finely organized temperament. In a way Griggs had been right in saying that Reanda seemed to paint as an agent in the power of an unseen, directing influence. Beauty made him feel itself, and feel for it in his turn with his brush. The conception was before him, guiding his hand, before a stroke of the work was done. There was the lightning-like correspondence and mutual reaction between thought and execution, which has been explained by some to be the simultaneous action of two minds in

man, the subjective and the objective. In doing certain things he had the patience and the delicacy of one for whom time has no meaning. He could not have told whether his hand followed his eye or his eye followed his hand. His whole being was of excessively sensitive construction, and emotion of any kind, even pleasure, jarred upon its hair-fine sensibilities. And yet behind all this there was the tenacity of the great artist, and the phenomenal power of endurance, in certain directions, which is essential to prize-winning in the fight for fame. There was the quality of nerve which can endure great tension in one way, but can bear nothing in other ways.

He went on, giving vent to all he felt, talking to himself rather than to Francesca. He could not reproach his wife with any one action of importance. She was fond of Paul Griggs. But it was only Griggs! He smiled. In his eyes the cold-faced man was no more than a stone. In their excursions into society she had met men whom he considered far more dangerous — men young, handsome, rich, having great names. They admired her, and said so to her in the best language they had, which was no doubt often very eloquent. Had she ever looked twice at one of them? No. He could not reproach her with that. The Duchess of Astradente was not more cold to her admirers than Gloria was. It was not that. There were little things, little nothings, but in thousands. He tried to please her with something, and she laughed in his face, or found fault. She had small hardnesses and little vulgarities of manner that drove him mad.

"I had thought her like you," he said suddenly, turning to Francesca. "She is not. She is coarse-grained. She has the soul of a peasant, with the face of a Madonna. What would you have? It is too much. Love is an illusion. I will have no more of it. Besides, love is dead. It would be easier to wake a corpse. I shall live. I may forget. Meanwhile there is our friendship. That is of gold."

Francesca listened in silence, thoughtful and with downcast eyes, as the short, disjointed sentences broke vehemently from his lips, each one accusing her in her own heart of having wrought the misery of two lives, one of which was very dear to her — too dear, as she knew at last. The scarlet shame would have burned her face if she had owned to herself that she loved this man whom she had married to another, believing that she was making his happiness. She would not own it. Had she admitted it then, she would have been capable of leaving him within the hour, and of shutting herself up forever in the convent at Subiaco to expiate the sin of the thought. It was monstrous in her eyes, and she would still refuse to see it.

But she owned that there was the suspicion, and that Angelo Reanda was far dearer to her than anything else on earth. Her innocence was so strong and spotless that it had a right to its one and only satisfaction. But what she felt for Reanda was either love or it was blasphemy against the holy thing in whose place he stood in her temple. It must not be love, and therefore, as anything else, it was too much. And the strange joy she felt because Gloria was nothing to him still filled her heart, though it began to torment her with the knowledge of evil which she had never understood.

There was much else against him, too, in her pride of race; and it helped her just then, for it told her how impossible it was that she, a princess of the house of Braccio, should love a mere artist, the son of a steward, whose forefathers had been bondsmen to her ancestors from time immemorial. It was out of the question, and she would not believe it of herself. Yet as she looked into his delicate, spiritual face, and watched the shades of expression that crossed it, she felt that it made little difference whence he came, since she understood him and he understood her.

She became confused by her own thoughts, and grasped at the idea of a true and perfect friendship with a somewhat desperate determination to see it and nothing else in it for the rest of her life, rather than part with Angelo Reanda.

"Friends," she said thoughtfully. "Yes — always friends, you and I. But as a friend, Reanda, what can I do? I cannot help you."

"The time for help is past, if it ever came. You are a saint — pray for me. You can do that."

"But there is more than that to be done," she said, ready to sacrifice anything or everything just then. "Do not tell me it is hopeless. I will see your wife often, and I will talk to her. I am older than she, and I can make her understand many things."

"Do not try it," said Reanda, in an altered tone. "I advise you not to try it. You can do no good there, and you might find trouble."

"Find trouble?" repeated Francesca, not understanding him. "What do you mean? Does she dislike me?"

"Have you not seen it?" he asked, with a bitter smile.

Francesca did not answer him at once, but bent her head again. Once or twice she looked up as though she were about to speak.

"It is as I tell you," said Reanda, nodding his head slowly.

Francesca made up her mind, but the scarlet blood rose in her face.

"It is better to be honest and frank," she said. "Is Gloria jealous of me?" She was so

much ashamed that she could hardly look at him just then.

"Jealous! She would kill you!" he cried; and there was anger in his voice at the thought. "Do not go to her. Something might happen."

The blush in Francesca's face deepened and then subsided, and she grew very pale again.

"But if she is jealous, she loves you," she said earnestly and anxiously.

He shrugged his high, thin shoulders, and the bitter smile came back to his face.

"It is a stage jealousy," he said cruelly. "How could she pass the time without something to divert her? She is always acting."

"But what is she jealous of?" asked Francesca. "How can she be jealous of me? Because you work here? She is free to come if she likes, and to stay all day. I do not understand."

"Who can understand her? God, who made her, understands her. I am only a man. I know only one thing, that I loved her, and do not love her. And she makes a scene for every day. One day it is you, and another day it is the walls she does not like. You will forgive me, princess. I speak frankly what comes to my mouth from my heart. The whole story is this. She makes my life intolerable. I am not an idle man, the first you may meet in society, to spend my time from morning to night in studying my wife's caprices. I am an artist. When I have worked I must have peace. I do not ask for intelligent conversation like yours. But I must have peace. One of these days I shall strangle her with my hands. The Lord will forgive me and understand. I am full of nerves. Is it my fault? She twists them as the women wring out clothes at the fountain. It is not a life; it is a hell."

"Poor Reanda! Poor Reanda!" repeated Francesca, softly.

"I do not pity myself," he said scornfully. "I have deserved it, and much more. But I am human. If it goes on a little longer, you may take me to Santo Spirito, for I am going mad. At least I should be there in holy peace. After her, the madmen would all seem doctors of wisdom. Do you know what will happen this evening? I go home. 'Where have you been?' she will ask. 'At the Palazzetto.' 'What have you been doing?' 'Painting—it is my trade.' 'Was Donna Francesca there?' 'Of course. She is mistress in her own house.' 'And what did you talk of?' 'How should I remember? We talked.' Then it will begin. It will be an inferno, as it always is. 'Leave hope behind, all ye that enter here!' I can say it, if ever man could! You are right to pity me. Before it is finished you will have reason to pity me still more. Let us hope it may finish soon. Either San Lorenzo or

Santo Spirito—with the mad, or with the dead."

"Poor Reanda!"

"Yes—poor Reanda, if you like. People envy me; they say I am a great artist. If they think so, let them say it. It seems to them that I am somebody." He laughed almost hysterically. "Somebody! Stuff for Santo Spirito! That is all she has left me in two years—not yet two years."

"Do not talk of Santo Spirito," said Francesca. "You shall not go mad. When you are unhappy, think of our friendship, and of all the hours you have here every day." She hesitated, and seemed to make an effort over herself. "But it is impossible that it should be all over so hopelessly and so soon. She is nervous, perhaps. The climate does not suit her—"

Reanda laughed wildly, for he was rapidly losing all control of himself.

"Therefore I should take her away and go and live somewhere else!" he cried. "That would be the end. I should tear her to pieces with my hands—"

"Hush! hush! You are talking madly—"

"I know it. There is reason. It will end badly one of these days, unless I end first, and that may happen also. Without you it would have happened long ago. You are the good angel in my life, the one friend God has sent me in my tormented existence, the one star in my black sky. Be my friend still, always, for ever and ever, and I shall live forever only to be your friend. As for love—the devil and his demons will know what to do with it—they will find their account in it. They have lent it, and they will take their payment in blood and tears of those who believe them."

"But there is love in the world, somewhere," said Francesca, gently.

"Yes—and in hell! But not in heaven—where you will be."

Francesca sighed unconsciously, and looked long away toward the great windows at the end of the hall. Reanda gathered up his palette and brushes with a steadier hand. His anger had not spent itself, but it made him suddenly strong, and the outburst had relieved him, though it was certain that it would be followed by a reaction of profound despondency.

All at once he came close to Francesca. She looked up, half startled by his sudden movement.

"At least it is true—this one thing," he said. "I can count upon you."

"Yes; you can count upon me," she answered, gazing into his eyes.

He did not move. The one hand held his palette, the other hung free by his side. All at once she took it in hers, still looking up into his eyes.

"I am very fond of you," she said earnestly. "You can count upon me as long as we two live."

"God bless you!" he said more quietly than he had spoken yet, and his hand pressed hers a little.

There could be no harm in saying as much as that, she thought, when it was so true, and so simply said. It was all she could ever say to him, or to herself, and there was no reason why she should not say it. He would not misunderstand her. No man could have mistaken the innocence that was the life and light of her clear eyes. She was glad she had said it, and she was glad long afterward that she had said it on that day, quietly, when no one could hear them in the great, still hall.

XXVII.

REANDA went home that evening in a very disturbed state of mind. He had been better so long as he had not given vent to what he felt; for, as with many Southern men of excitable temper and weak nerves, his thoughts about himself, as distinguished from his pursuits, did not take positive shape in his mind until he had expressed them in words. Among the Latin races the phrase 'he cannot think without speaking' has more truth as applied to some individuals than the Anglo-Saxon can easily understand.

For many months the artist had been most unhappy. His silence concerning his grief had been almost exemplary, and had been broken only now and then by a hasty exclamation of annoyance when Gloria's behavior had irritated him beyond measure. He was the gentlest of men; and even when he had lost his temper with her, he had never spoken roughly.

"You are hard to please, my dear," he had sometimes said.

But that had been almost the strongest expression of his displeasure. It was not, indeed, that he had exercised very great self-control in the matter, for he had little power of that sort over himself. If he was habitually mild and gentle in his manner with Gloria, it was rather because, like many Italians, he dreaded emotion as something like an illness, and could avoid it to some extent merely by not speaking freely of what he felt. Silence was generally easy to him; and he had not broken out more than two or three times in all his life, as he had done on that afternoon alone with Francesca.

The inevitable consequence followed immediately — a consequence as much physical as mental, for when he went away from the Palazzo his clear, dark eyes were bloodshot and yellow, and his hands had trembled so that he

had hardly been able to find the armholes of his greatcoat in putting it on. He walked with an uncertain and agitated step, glancing to right and left of him as he went, half fiercely, half timidly, as though he expected a new adversary to spring upon him from every corner. The straight lines of the houses waned and shivered in the dusk as he looked at them, and he saw flashes of light in the air. His head was hot and aching, and his hat hurt him. Altogether he was in a dangerous state, not unlike that which, with Northern men, sometimes follows hard drinking.

He hated to go home that evening. So far as he was conscious, he had neither misrepresented nor in any way exaggerated the miseries of his domestic existence; and he felt that it was before him now precisely as he had described it. There would be the same questions, to which he would give the same answers, at which Gloria would put on the same expression of injured hopelessness, unless she broke out and lost her temper, which happened often enough. The prospect was intolerable. Reanda thrust his hands deep into the pockets of his overcoat, and glared about him as he turned the corner of the Via degli Astalli, and saw the Corso in the distance. But he did not slacken his pace as he went along under the gloomy walls of the Austrian Embassy, — the Palace of Venice, — the most grim and fortress-like of all Roman palaces.

He felt as a poor man may feel when, hot and feverish from working by a furnace, he knows that he must face the winter storm of freezing sleet and piercing wind in his thin and ragged jacket to go home — a plunge, as it were, from molten iron into ice, with no protection from the cold. Every step of the homeward way was hateful to him. Yet he knew his own weakness well enough not to hesitate. Had he stopped, he might have been capable of turning in some other direction, and of spending the whole evening with some of his fellow-artists, going home late in the night, when Gloria would be asleep. The thought crossed his mind. If he did that, he was sure to be carried away into speaking of his troubles to men with whom he had no intimacy. He was too proud for that. He wished he could go back to Francesca, and pour out his woes again. He had not said half enough. He should like to have it out to the very end, and then lie down, and close his eyes, and hear Francesca's voice soothing him and speaking of their golden friendship. But that was impossible, so he went home to face his misery as best he could.

There was exaggeration in all he thought, but there was none in the effect of his thoughts upon himself. He had married a woman unsuited to him in every way, as he was unsuited

to her. The whole trouble lay there. Possibly he was not a man to marry at all, and should have led his solitary life to the end, illuminated from the outside, as it were, by Francesca Campodonico's faithful friendship and sweet influence. All causes of disagreement, considered as forces in married life, are relative in their value to the comparative solidity of the characters on which they act — a truism which ought to be the foundation of social charity, but is not. Reanda could not be blamed for his brittle sensitiveness, nor Gloria for a certain coarse-grained streak of cruelty which she had inherited from her father, and which had combined strangely with the rare gifts and great faults of her dead mother — the love of emotion for its own sake, and the tendency to do everything which might produce it in herself and those about her. Emotion was poison to Reanda. It was his wife's favorite food.

He reached his home, and went up the well-lighted marble staircase, wishing that he were ascending the narrow stone steps at the back of the Palazzetto Borgia, taper in hand, to his old bachelor quarters, to light his lamp, to smoke in peace, and to spend the evening over a sketch, or with a book, or dreaming of work not yet done. He paused on the landing before he rang the bell of his apartment. The polished door irritated him, with its brass fittings, and all that it meant of married life and irksome social obligation. He never carried a key, because the Roman keys of those times were large and heavy; but he had been obliged to use one formerly, when he had lived by himself. The necessity of ringing the bell irritated him again, and he felt a nervous shock of unwillingness as he pulled the brass knob. He set his teeth against the tinkling and jangling that followed, and his eyelids quivered. Everything hurt him. He did not feel sure of his hands when he wanted to use them. He was inclined to strike the silent and respectful man-servant who opened the door merely because he was silent and respectful. He went straight to his own dressing-room, and shut himself in. It would be a relief to change his clothes. He and Gloria were to go to a reception in the evening, and he would dress at once. 'n those days few Romans dressed for dinner very day.

He dropped a stud, for his hands were shaking so that he could hardly hold anything, and he groped for the thing on his knees. The stud went to his head, and hurt him violently, as though he had received a blow.

Gloria's room was next to his, and she heard him moving about. She knocked, and tried the door, but it was locked; and she heard him utter an exclamation of annoyance as he hunted for the stud. She thought it was meant for her,

and turned angrily back from the door. On any other day he would have called her, for he had heard her trying to get in. But he shrugged his lean shoulders impatiently, glanced once toward her room, found his stud, and went on dressing.

He really made an effort to get control of himself while he was alone; but to all intents and purposes he was actually ill. His face was drawn and sallow; his eyes were yellow and bloodshot; and there were deep, twitching lines about his mouth. His nostrils moved spasmodically when he drew breath, and his long, thin hands fumbled helplessly at the studs and buttons of his clothes. At last he was dressed, and he went into the drawing-room. Gloria was already there, waiting by the fireside, with an injured and forbidding expression in her beautiful face.

Reanda came to the fireside, and stood there, spreading out his trembling hands to the blaze. He dreaded the first word, as a man lying ill of brain fever dreads each cracking explosion in a thunderstorm. Strained as their relations had been for a long time, he had never failed to kiss Gloria when he came home. This evening he barely glanced at her, and stood watching the dancing tongues of the wood fire, not daring to think of the sound of his wife's voice. It came at least, cool and displeased.

"Are you ill?" she asked, looking steadily at him.

"No," he answered with an effort, and his outstretched hands shook before the fire.

"Then what is the matter with you?"

"Nothing." He did not even turn his eyes to her, as he spoke the single word.

A silence followed, during which he suffered. Nevertheless, the first dreaded shock of hearing her voice was over. Though he had barely glanced at her, he had known from her face what the sound of the voice would be.

Gloria leaned back in her chair and watched the fire, and sighed. Griggs had been with her in the afternoon, and she had been happy, quite innocently, as she thought. The man's dominating strength and profound earnestness, which would have been intolerably dull to many women, smoothed Gloria, as it were. She said that he ironed the creases out of her life for her. It was not a softening influence, but a calming one, bred of strength pressing heavily on caprice. She resisted it, but took pleasure in finding that it was irresistible. Now and then it was not merely a steady pressure. He had a sledge-hammer among his intellectual weapons, and once in a while it fell upon one of her illusions. She laughed at the destruction, and had no pity for the fragments. They were not illusions integral with her vanity, for he thought her perfect, and he would not have

struck at her faults if he had seen them. Her faults grew, for they had root in her vital nature, and drew nourishment from his enduring strength, which surrounded them and protected them in the blind wholeheartedness of his love. For the rest, he had kept his word. She had seen him turn white and bite his lip, sometimes, and more than once he had left her abruptly, and had not come back again for several days; but he had never forgotten his promise in any word or deed since he had given it.

It is a dangerous thing to pile up a mountain of massive reality from which to look out upon the fading beauty of a fleeting illusion. In his influence on Gloria's life, the strong man had overtopped the man of genius by head and shoulders. And she loved the strange mixture of attraction and repulsion she felt when she was with Griggs—the something that wounded her vanity because she could not understand it, and the protecting shield that overspread that same vanity, and gave it freedom to be vain beyond all bounds. She would not have admitted that she loved the man. It was her nature to play upon his pity with the wounds her love for her husband had suffered. Yet she knew that if she were free she should marry him, because she could not resist him, and there was pleasure in the idea that she controlled so irresistible a force. The contrast between him and Reanda was ever before her, and since she had learned how weak genius could be, the comparison was enormously in favor of the younger man.

As Reanda stood there before the fire that evening, she despised him, and her heart rebelled against his nature. His nervousness, his trembling hands, his almost evident fear of being questioned, were contemptible. He was like a hunted animal, she thought. Two hours earlier her friend had stood there, solid, leonine, gladiatorial, dominating her with his square, white face, and still, shadowy eyes, quietly stretching to the flames two hands that could have torn her in pieces—a man imposing in his stern young sadness, almost solemn in his splendid physical dignity.

She looked at Reanda, and her lip curled with scorn of herself for having loved such a thing. It was long since she had seen the gentle light in his face which had won her heart two years ago. She was familiar with his genius, and it no longer surprised her into overlooking his frailty. His fame no longer flattered her. His gentleness was gone, and had left, not hardness nor violence in its place, but a sort of irritable palsy of discontent. That was what she called it as she watched him.

"You used to kiss me when you came home," she said suddenly, leaning far back in her chair.

Mechanically he turned his head. The habit

was strong, and she had reminded him of it. He did not wish to quarrel, and he did not reason. He moved a step to her side, and bent down to kiss her forehead. The automatic conjugality of the daily kiss might have a good effect. That was what he thought, if he thought at all.

But she put up her hands suddenly, and thrust him back rudely.

"No," she said. "That sort of thing is not worth much if I have to remind you to do it."

Her lip curled again. His high shoulders went up, and he turned away.

"You are hard to please," he said, and the words were as mechanical as the action that had preceded them.

"It cannot be said that you have taken much pains to please me of late," she answered coldly.

The servant announced dinner at that moment, and Reanda made no answer, though he glanced at her nervously. They went into the dining-room and sat down.

The storm brewed during the silent meal. Reanda scarcely ate anything, and drank a little weak wine and water.

"You hardly seem well enough to go out this evening," said Gloria, at last; but there was no kindness in the tone.

"I am perfectly well," he answered impatiently. "I will go with you."

"There is not the slightest necessity," replied his wife. "I can go alone, and you can go to bed."

"I tell you I am perfectly well," he said, with unconcealed annoyance. "Let me alone."

"Certainly. Nothing is easier."

The voice was full of that injured dignity which most surely irritated him, as Gloria knew. But the servant was in the room, and he said nothing, though it was a real effort to be silent. His tongue had been free that day, and it was hard to be bound again.

They finished dinner almost in silence, and then went back to the drawing-room by force of habit. Gloria was still in her walking-dress, but there was no hurry; and she resumed her favorite seat by the fire for a time, before going to dress for the reception.

XXVIII.

THERE was something exasperating in the renewal of the position exactly as it had been before dinner. To make up for having eaten nothing, Reanda drank two cups of coffee in silence.

"You might at least speak to me," observed Gloria as he set down the second cup. "Or would almost think that we had quarreled."

The hard laugh that followed the words jarr upon him more painfully than anything that h

gone before. He laughed, too, after a moment's silence, half hysterically.

"Yes," he said; "one might almost think that we had quarreled!" And he laughed again.

"The idea seems to amuse you," said Gloria, coldly.

"As it does you," he answered. "We both laughed. Indeed, it is very amusing."

"Donna Francesca has sent you home in a good humor. That is rare. I suppose I ought to be grateful."

"Yes; I am in a fine humor. It seems to me that we both are." He bit his cigar, and blew out short puffs.

"You need not include me. Please do not smoke into my face."

The smoke was not very near her, but she made a movement with her hands as though brushing it away.

"I beg your pardon," he said politely, and he moved to the other side of the fireplace.

"How nervous you are!" she exclaimed. "Why can you not sit down?"

"Because I wish to stand," he answered, with returning impatience. "Because I am nervous, if you choose."

"You told me that you were perfectly well."

"So I am."

"If you were perfectly well you would not be nervous," she replied.

He felt as though she were driving a sharp nail into his brain.

"It does not make any difference to you whether I am nervous or not," he said, and his eye began to lighten as he sat down.

"It certainly makes no difference to you whether you are rude or not."

He shrugged his shoulders, said nothing, and smoked in silence. One thin leg was crossed over the other, and swung restlessly.

"Is this sort of thing to last forever?" she inquired coldly, after a silence which had lasted a full minute.

"I do not know what you mean," said Reanda.

"You know very well what I mean."

"This is insufferable!" he exclaimed, rising suddenly, with his cigar between his teeth.

"You might take your cigar out of your mouth to say so," retorted Gloria.

He turned on her, and an exclamation of anger was on his lips, but he did not utter it. There was a remnant of self-control. Gloria leaned back in her chair, and took up a carved ivory fan from among the knickknacks on the little table beside her. She opened it, shut it, and opened it again, and pretended to fan herself, though the room was cool.

"I should really like to know," she said presently, as he walked up and down with uncertain steps.

"What?" he asked sharply.

"Whether this is to last for the rest of our lives."

"What?"

"This peaceful existence," she said scornfully. "I should really like to know whether it is to last. Could you not tell me?"

"It will not last long if you make it your principal business to torment me," he said, stopping in his walk.

"I?" she exclaimed, with an air of the utmost surprise. "When do I ever torment you?"

"Whenever I am with you, and you know it."

"Really! You must be ill, or out of your mind, or both. That would be some excuse for saying such a thing."

"It needs none. It is true." He was becoming exasperated at last. "You seem to spend your time in finding out how to make life intolerable. You are driving me mad. I cannot bear it much longer."

"If it comes to bearing, I think I have borne more than you," said Gloria. "It is not little. You leave me to myself. You neglect me. You abuse the friends I am obliged to find rather than be alone. You neglect me in every way — and you say that I am driving you mad. Do you realize at all how you have changed in this last year? You may have really gone mad, for all I know; but it is I who have to suffer and bear the consequences. You neglect me brutally. How do I know how you pass your time?"

Reanda stood still in the middle of the room, gazing at her. For a moment he was surprised by the outbreak. She did not give him time to answer.

"You leave me in the morning," she went on, working her coldness into anger. "You often go away before I am awake. You come back at midday, and sometimes you do not speak a word over your breakfast. If I speak, you either do not answer, or you find fault with what I say; and if I show the least enthusiasm for anything but your work, you preach me down with proverbs and maxims, as though I were a child. I am foolish, young, impatient, silly, not fit to take care of myself, you say! Have you taken care of me? Have you ever sacrificed one hour out of your long day to give me a little pleasure? Have you ever once, since we were married, stayed at home one morning, and asked me what I would do — just to make one holiday for me? Never! Never once! You give me a fine house and enough money, and you think you have given me all that a woman wants."

"And what do you want?" asked Reanda, trying to speak calmly.

"A little kindness, a little love — the least

thing of all you promised me and of all I was so sure of having! Is it so much to ask? Have you lied to me all this time? Did you never love me? Did you marry me for my face or for my voice? Was it all a mere empty sham from the beginning? Have you deceived me from the first? You said you loved me. Was none of it true?"

"Yes; I loved you," he answered, and suddenly there was a dullness in his voice.

"You loved me—"

She sighed, and, in the stillness that followed, the little ivory fan rattled as she opened and shut it. To his ear the tone in which she had spoken had rung false. If only he could have heard her voice speaking as it had once sounded, he must have been touched.

"Yes," she continued; "you loved me, or at least you made me think you did. I was young, and I believed you. You do not even say it now—perhaps because you know how hard it would be to make me believe you."

"No; that is not the reason."

She waited a moment, for it was not the answer she had expected.

"Angelo—" she began, and waited; but he said nothing, though he looked at her. "It is not true; it cannot be true!" she said, suddenly turning her face away, for there was a bitter humiliation in it.

"It is much better to say it at once," he said, with the supernaturally calm indifference which sometimes comes upon very sensitive people when they are irritated beyond endurance. "I did love you, or I should not have married you. But I do not love you any longer. I am sorry. I wish I did."

"And you dare to tell me so!" she cried, turning upon him suddenly.

A moment later she was leaning forward, covering her face with her hands, and speaking through them.

"You have the heart to tell me so, after all I have been to you—the devotion of years, the tenderness, the love no man ever had of any woman! Oh, God! It is too much!"

"It is said now. It is of no use to go back to a lie," observed Reanda, with an indifference that would have seemed diabolical, even to himself, had he believed her outbreak to be quite genuine. "Of what use would it be to pretend again?"

"You admit that you have only pretended to love me?" She raised her flushed face and gleaming eyes.

"Of late—if you call it a pretense—"

"Oh, not that—not that! I have seen it—but at first. You did love me. Say that, at least."

"Certainly. Why should I have married you?"

"Yes—why? In spite of her, too—it is not to be believed."

"In spite of her? Of whom? Are you out of your mind?"

Gloria laughed in a despairing sort of way.

"Do not tell me that Donna Francesca ever wished you to be married!" she said.

"She brought us together. You know it. It is the only thing I could ever reproach her with."

"She made you marry me?"

"Made me? No! You are quite mad."

He stamped his foot impatiently, and turned away to walk up and down again. His cigar had gone out, but he gnawed at it angrily. He was amazed at what he could still bear, but he was fast losing his head. The mad desire to strangle her tingled in his hands, and the light of the lamp danced when he looked at it.

"She has made you do so many things!" said Gloria.

Her tone had changed again, growing hard and scornful when she spoke of Donna Francesca.

"What has she made me do that you should speak of her in that way?" asked Reanda, angrily, recrossing the room.

"She has made you hate me—for one thing," Gloria answered.

"That is not true!" Reanda could hardly breathe, and he felt his voice growing thick.

"Not true! Then, if not she, who else? You are with her there all day; she talks about me, she finds fault with me, and you come home and see the faults she finds for you—"

"There is not a word of truth in what you say—"

"Do not be so angry, then! If it were not true, why should you care? I have said it, and I will say it. She has robbed me of you. Oh, I will never forgive her! Never fear! One does not forget such things! She has got you, and she will keep you, I suppose. But you shall regret it! She shall pay me for it!"

Her voice shook, for her jealousy was real, as was all her emotion while it lasted.

"You shall not speak of her in that way!" said Reanda, fiercely. "I owe her and her family all that I am, all that I have in the world—"

"Including me!" interrupted Gloria. "Pay her, then—pay her with your love and yourself! You can satisfy your conscience in that way, and you can break my heart."

"There is not the slightest fear of that," answered Reanda, cruelly.

She rose suddenly to her feet, and stood before him, blazing with anger.

"If I could find yours,—if you had any, I would break it!" she said. "You dare to say that I have no heart, when you can see that every word you say thrusts it through like

knife, when I have loved you as no woman ever loved man! I said it, and I repeat it—when I have given you everything, and would have given you the world if I had it! Indeed, you are utterly heartless, and cruel, and unkind—”

“At least I am honest. I do not play a part, as you do. I say plainly that I do not love you, and that I am sorry for it. Yes—really sorry.” His voice softened for an instant. “I would give a great deal to love you as I once did, and to believe that you loved me—”

“You will tell me that I do not—”

“Indeed, I will tell you so, and that you never did—”

“Angelo—take care! You will go too far!”

“I could never go far enough in telling you that truth. You never loved me. You may have thought you did. I do not care. You talk of devotion, and tenderness, and all the like! Of being left alone and neglected! Of going too far! What devotion have you ever shown to me, beyond extravagantly praising everything I painted, for a few months after we were married? Then you grew tired of my work. That is your affair. What is it to me whether you admire my pictures, or Mendoza’s, or any other man’s? Do you think that is devotion? I know far better than you which are good and which are bad. But you call it devotion! And it was devotion that kept you away from me when I was working, when I was obliged to work,—for it is my trade, after all,—and when you might have been with me day after day! And it was devotion to meet me with your sour, severe look every day when I came home, as though I were a secret enemy, a conspirator, a creature to be guarded against like a thief,—as though I had been staying away from you on purpose, and of my will—instead of working for you all day long! That was your way of showing your love! And to torment me with questions, everlastingly believing that I spend my time in talking against you to Donna Francesca—”

“You do!” cried Gloria, who had not been able to interrupt his incoherent speech. “You love her as you never loved me—as you hate me—as you both hate me!”

She grasped his sleeve in her anger, shaking his arm, and staring into his eyes.

“You make me hate you!” he answered, trying to shake her off.

“And you succeed, between you—you and your—”

In his turn he grasped her arm with his long, thin fingers, with nervous roughness.

“You shall not speak of her—”

“Shall not? It is the only right I have left—that and the right to hate you—you and that infamous woman you love—yes—you and your mistress—your pretty Francesca!” Her laugh was almost a scream.

His fury overflowed. After all, he was the son of a countryman, of the steward of Gerano. He snatched the ivory fan from her hand, and struck her across the face with it. The fragile thing broke to shivers, and the fragments fell between them.

Gloria turned deadly white, but there was a bright-red bar across her cheek. She looked at him a moment, and into her face there came that fateful look that was like her dead mother’s.

Then, without a word, she turned, and left the room.

XXIX.

THE daughter of Angus Dalrymple and Maria Braccio was not the woman to bear a blow tamely, or to hesitate long as to the surest way of resenting it. Before she had reached the door she had determined to leave the house at once, and ten minutes had not passed before she found herself walking down the Corso, veiled, and muffled in a cloak, and having all the money she could call her own in her pocket, together with a few jewels of little value, given her by her father.

Reanda had sunk into a chair when the door had closed behind her, half stunned by the explosion of his own anger. He looked at the bits of broken ivory on the carpet, and wondered vaguely what they meant. He felt as though he had been in a dream of which he could not remember the distorted incidents at all clearly. His breath came irregularly, his heart fluttered and stood still, and fluttered again, and his hands twitched at the fringe on the arms of the chair. By and by the butler came in to take away the coffee-cups, and he saw that his master was ill. Under such circumstances nothing can equal the gentleness of an Italian servant. The man called some one to help him, and got Reanda to his dressing-room, and undressed him, and laid him upon the long leathern sofa. Then they knocked at the bedroom door, but there was no answer.

“Do not disturb the signora,” said Reanda, feebly. “She wishes to be alone. We shall not want the carriage.”

Those were the only words he spoke that evening, and the servants understood well enough that something had happened between husband and wife, and that it was best to be silent and to obey. No one tried the door of the bedroom. If any one had turned the handle, it would have been found to be locked. The key lay on the table in the hall, among the visiting-cards. Dalrymple’s daughter had inherited some of his quick instinct and presence of mind. She had felt sure that if she locked the door of her room when she left the house, her husband would naturally suppose that she had shut herself in, not wishing to be disturbed,

and would respect her desire to be alone. It would save trouble, and give her time to get away. He could sleep on the sofa in his dressing-room, as he actually did, in the illness of his anger, treated as Italians know how to treat such common cases, of which the consequences are sometimes fatal. Many an Italian has died from a fit of rage. A single blood-vessel in the brain, a little weaker than the rest, and all is over in an apoplexy. But Reanda was not of an apoplectic constitution. The calming treatment acted very soon; he fell asleep, and did not wake till daylight, quite unaware that Gloria was not in the next room sleeping off her anger as he had done.

She had gone out in her first impulse to leave the house of the man who had so terribly insulted her. Under her veil the hot blood scorched her where the blow had left its red bar; and her rage and wounded pride chased each other from her heart to her head, while with every beating of her pulse the longing for revenge grew wilder and stronger.

She had left the house with one first idea — to find Paul Griggs, and tell him what had happened. No other thought crossed her mind, and her steps turned mechanically down the Corso, for he still lived in his two rooms in the Via della Frezza.

It was early still. People dined at six o'clock in those days, and it was not yet eight when Gloria found herself in the street. It was quiet, though there were many people moving about. During the hours between dinner and the theater there were hardly any carriages out, and the sound of many footsteps and of many low voices filled the air. Gloria kept to the right, and walked swiftly along, never turning her head. She had never been out in the streets alone at night in her life, and even in her anger she felt a sort of intoxication of freedom that was quite new to her, a beginning of satisfaction upon him who had injured her. There was Highland blood in her veins as well as Italian passion.

The southeast wind was blowing down the street behind her, that same strange and tragic wind, tragic and passionate, that had blown so gustily down upon Subiaco from the mountains on that night long ago when Maria Addolorata had stood aside by the garden gate to let Dalrymple pass, bearing something in his arms. Gloria knew this wind by its sad whisper, and by the faint taste of it and smell of it through her close-drawn veil.

On she went, down the Corso, till she came to the Piazza Colonna, and saw far on her left, beyond the huge black shaft of the column, the brilliant lights from the French officers' club. She hesitated then, and slackened her speed a little. The sight of the club reminded

her of society, of what she was doing, and of what it might mean. As she walked more slowly the wind gained upon her, as it were, from behind, and tried to drive her on. It seemed to be driving her from her husband's house with all its might, blowing her skirts before her and her thick veil. She passed the square, keeping close to the shutters of the shops under the Palazzo Piombino — gone now, to widen the open space. A gust, stronger than any she had felt yet, swept down the pavement. She paused a moment, leaning against the closed shutters of the clockmaker Ricci, whose shop used to be a sort of landmark in the Corso. Just then a clock within struck eight strokes. She heard them all distinctly through the shutters.

She hesitated an instant. It was eight o'clock. She had not realized what time it was. If she found the street door shut in the Via della Frezza, it would be hard to get at Griggs. She had passed the house more than once in her walks, and she knew that Griggs lived high up in the fifth story. It might be already too late. She hesitated, and looked up and down the pavement. A young French officer of Zouaves was coming toward her; his high, wrinkled, and varnished boots gleamed in the gaslight. He had a black beard and bright young eyes, and was smoking a cigarette. He was looking at her, and slackened his pace as he came near. She left her place, and walked swiftly past him down the Corso.

All at once she felt in the gust that drove her a cool drop of rain just behind her ear, and a moment later, passing a gas-lamp, she saw dark round spots on the gray pavement. In her haste she had brought no umbrella. She hurried on, and the wind blew her forward with all its might, so that she felt her steps lightened by its help. The Corso was darker, and there were fewer people. The rain fell fast when she reached San Carlo, where the street widens, and she gathered her cloak about her as well as she could, and crossed to the other side, hoping to find more shelter. She was nearing the Via della Frezza, and she knew some of the ins and outs of the narrow streets behind the tribune of the great church. It was very dark as she turned the semicircle of the apse, and the rain fell in torrents; but it was shorter to go that way, for Griggs lived nearer to the Ripetta than to the Corso, and she followed a sort of crooked diagonal in the direction of his house. She thought the streets led by that way to the point she wished to reach, and she walked as fast as she could. The flare of an occasional oil-lamp swung out high at the end of its lever showed her the way, and showed her, too, the rush of the yellow water down the middle channel of the street. She looked in vain for the tur-

ing she expected on her right. She had not lost her way, but she had not found the short cut she had looked for. Emerging upon the broad Ripetta, she paused an instant at the corner, and looked about, though she knew which way to turn. Just then there were heavy splashing footsteps close to her.

"Permit me, Signora," said a voice that was rough and had an odd accent, though the tone was polite, and a huge umbrella was held over her head.

She shrank back against the wall quickly, in womanly fear of a strange man.

"No, thank you!" she exclaimed in answer.

"But yes!" said the man. "It rains. You are getting an illness, Signora."

The faint light showed her that she would be safe enough in accepting the offer. The man was evidently a peasant from the mountains, and he was certainly not young. His vast black cloak was turned back a little by his arm, and showed the lining of green flannel and the blue clothes with broad silver buttons which he wore.

"Thank you," she said; for she was glad of the shelter, and she stood still under the enormous blue cotton umbrella, with its battered brass knob and its colored stripes.

"But I will accompany you," said the man. "It is certainly not beginning to finish. Apoplexy! It rains in pieces!"

"Thank you. I am not going far," said Gloria. "You are very kind."

"It seems to be the act of a Christian," observed the peasant.

She began to move, and he walked beside her. He would have thought it bad manners to ask whither she was going. Through the torrents of rain they went on in silence. In less than five minutes she had found the door of Griggs's house. To her intense relief it was still open, and there was the glimmer of a tiny oil-lamp from a lantern in the stairway. Gloria felt for the money in her pocket. The man did not wait, nor speak, and was already going away. She called him.

"I wish to give you something," said Gloria.

"To me?" exclaimed the man, in surprise. "No, Signora. It seems that you make a mistake."

"Excuse me," Gloria answered. "In the dark I did not see. I am very grateful to you. You are from the country?"

She wished to repair the mistake she had made by some little civility. The man stood on the door-step, with his umbrella hanging backward over his shoulder, and she could see his face distinctly — a typical Roman face with small aquiline features, keen dark eyes, a square jaw, and iron-gray hair.

"Yes, Signora — Stefanone of Subiaco, wine

merchant, to serve you. If you wish wine of Subiaco, ask for me at Piazza Montanara. Signora, it rains columns. With permission, I go."

"Thank you again," she answered.

He disappeared into the torrent, and she was left alone at the foot of the gloomy stairs, under the feeble light of the little oil-lamp. She had thrown back her veil; for it was soaked with water, and stuck to her face. Little rivulets ran down upon the stones from her wet clothes, which felt intolerably heavy as she stood there, resting one gloved hand against the damp wall, and staring at the lantern. Her thoughts had been disturbed by her brief interview with the peasant; the rain chilled her, and her face burned. She touched her cheek with her hand where Reanda had struck her. It felt bruised and sore, for the blow had not been a light one. The sensation of the wet leather disgusted her, and she drew off the glove with difficulty, turning it inside out over her full white hand. Then she touched the place again, and patted it softly, and felt it. But her eyes did not move from the lantern.

There was one of those momentary lulling pauses in the rush of events which seem sent to confuse men's thoughts and unsettle their purposes. Had she reached the house five minutes earlier, she would not have hesitated a moment at the foot of the stairs. Suddenly she turned back to the door, and stood there, looking out. It looked very black. She gathered her dripping skirt back as she bent forward a little and peered into the darkness. The rain fell in sheets now, with the unquavering sound of a steadily rushing torrent. It would be madness to go out into it. A shiver ran through her, and another. She was very cold and miserable. No doubt Griggs had a fire up-stairs, and a pleasant light in his study. He would be there, hard at work. She would knock, and he would open; and she would sit down by the fire, and dry herself, and pour out her misery. The red bar was still across her face — she had seen it in the looking-glass when she had put on her hat.

To go back, to see her husband that night — it was impossible. Later, perhaps, when he should be asleep, Griggs would find a carriage and take her home. No one would ever know where she had been; and she would never tell any more than Griggs would. She felt that she must see him, and tell him everything, and feel his strength beside her. After all, he was the only friend she had in the world, and it was natural that she should turn to him for help in her father's absence. He was her father's friend, too.

She shivered again and again from head to foot, and she drew back from the door. For a moment she hesitated. Then with a womanly

action she began to shake the rain out of her cloak and her skirts as well as she could, wetting her hands to the wrists. As she bent down, shaking the hem of the skirt, the blood rushed to her face again, and the place Reanda had struck burned and smarted. It was quite a different sensation from what she had felt when she had touched it with her cool, wet hand. She straightened herself with a spring, and threw back her head, and her eyes flashed fiercely in the dark. The accidents of fate closed round her, and the hands of her destiny had her by the throat, choking her as she breathed.

There was no more hesitation. With quick steps she began to ascend the short, steep flights. It was dark beyond the first turning, but she went on, touching the damp walls with her hands. Then there was a glimmer again, and a second lantern marked the first landing, and shone feebly upon a green door with a thin little square of white marble screwed to it for a door-plate, and a name in black. She glanced at it, and went on; for she knew that Griggs lived on the fifth floor. She was sure-footed, like her father, as she went firmly up, panting a little, for her drenched clothes weighed her down. There was one more light, and then there were no more. She counted the landings, feeling the doors with her hands as she went by, dizzy from the constant turning in the darkness. At last she thought she had got to the end, and, groping with her hands, she found a worsted string, and pulled it, and a cracked little bell jangled and beat against the wood inside. She heard a pattering of feet, and a shrill, nasal child's voice called out the customary question, inquiring who was there. She asked for Griggs.

"He is not here," answered the child; and she heard the footsteps running away again, though she called loudly.

Her heart sank. But she groped her way on. The staircase ended, for it was the top of the house, and she found another door, and felt for a string like the one she had pulled; but there was none. Something told her that she was right, and with the sudden, desperate longing to be inside, with her strong protector, in the light and warmth, she beat upon the door with the palms of her hands, her face almost touching the cold painted wood studded with nails that smelled of wet iron.

Then came the firm, regular footsteps of the strong man, and his clear, stern voice spoke from within, not in a question, but in a curt refusal to open.

"Go away!" he said in Italian. "You have mistaken the door."

But she beat with her hands upon the heavy wood.

"Let me in!" she cried in English. "Let me in!"

There was a deep exclamation of surprise, and the oiled bolt clanked back in its socket. The door opened inward, and Paul Griggs held up a lamp with a green shade, throwing the light into Gloria's face.

xxx.

GLORIA pushed past Griggs, and stood beside him in the narrow entry. He shut the door mechanically, and turned slowly toward her, still holding up the lamp so that it shone upon her face.

"What has happened to you?" he asked slowly and steadily, his shadowed eyes fixed upon her.

"He has beaten me, and I have come to you. Look at my face."

He saw the red bar across her cheek. He did not raise his voice, and there was little change in his features, but his eyes glowed suddenly, like the eyes of a wild beast, and he swore an oath so terrible that Gloria turned a little pale, and shrank from him. Then he was silent, and they stood together. She could hear his breath. She could see him trying to swallow, for his throat was suddenly as dry as cinders. Very slowly his frown deepened to a scowl, and two straight furrows clove their way down between his eyes, his dark eyebrows were lifted evilly, upward and outward, and little by little the strong, clean-shaven upper lip rose at the corners and showed two gleaming, wolfish teeth. The smooth, close hair bristled from the point where it descended upon his forehead.

Gloria shrank a little. She had seen such a look in an angry lion—just the look, without a motion of the limbs. Then it all disappeared, and the still face she knew so well was turned to hers.

"Will you come in?" he asked in a constrained tone. "It is my work-room. I will light a fire, and you must dry yourself. How did you get so wet? You did not come on foot?"

He opened the door while he was speaking, and led the way with the lamp. Gloria shivered as she followed, for there was a small window open in the entry, and her clothes clung to her in the cold draft. She closed the door behind her as she went in. It was very little warmer within than without, and the small fire-place was black and cold. Instinctively she glanced at Griggs. He wore a rough pilot coat that had seen much service, buttoned to his throat. He set the little lamp with its green shade down upon the table amidst a mass of papers and books, and drew forward the only easy-chair there was, a dilapidated piece of furniture covered with faded yellow reps and ragged fringes that dragged on the floor. He

took a great cloak from a clothes-horse in the corner and threw it over the chair, smoothing it carefully with his hands.

"If you will sit down, I will try and make a fire," he said quietly.

She sat down as he bade her, wondering a little at his calmness, but remembering the awful words that had escaped his lips when she had spoken, and the look of the wild beast and incarnate devil that had been one moment in his face. She looked about her while he began to make a fire, not hindering him, for she was shivering. The room was large, but very poorly furnished. There were two great tables, covered with books and papers; there was a deal bookcase along one wall, and an antiquated cabinet between the two windows, one of its legs propped up with a dingy, faded paper. The coarse green carpet was threadbare, but still whole. There were half a dozen plain chairs, with green and white rush seats, in various parts of the room. On the narrow white marble mantel-shelf stood two china candlesticks, in one of which there was a piece of candle that had guttered when last burning. In the middle a cheap American clock of white metal ticked loudly, and the hands pointed to twenty minutes before nine. In one corner was the clothes-horse, with two or three overcoats hanging on it, and two hats, one of which was hanging half over on one side. It looked as though two cloaked skeletons in hats were embracing. In another corner by the door a black stick and an umbrella stood side by side. But for the books the place would have had a desolate look. The air smelt of strong tobacco.

Gloria looked about her curiously, though her heart was beating fast. The man was familiar to her, dear to her in many ways, and over much in her life. The place where he lived contained a part of him which she did not know. Her breath came quickly in the anticipation of an emotion greater even than what she had felt already; but her eyes wandered in curiosity from one object to another. Suddenly she heard the loud cracking of breaking wood. There was a blaze of paper from the fireplace, illuminating all the room, and some light pieces he was throwing on kindled quickly. He was breaking them — she looked — it was one of the rush-bottomed chairs.

"What are you doing?" she cried, leaning suddenly far forward.

"Making a good fire," he answered. "There happened to be only one bit of wood in my box, so I am taking these things."

He broke the legs and the rails of the chair in his hands, as a child would break twigs, and heaped them upon the blaze.

"There are five more," he observed. "They will make a good fire."

He arranged the burning mass to suit him, looked at it, and then turned.

"You ought to be a little nearer," he said; and he lifted the chair, with her in it, and set her before the fireplace.

It had all looked and felt desperately desolate half a minute earlier. It was changed now. He went to a corner, and filled a small glass with wine from a straw-covered flask, and brought it to her. She thanked him with her eyes, and drank half of it eagerly. He knelt down before the fire again; for as the paper burned away underneath, the light sticks fell inward, and might go out. When he had arranged it all again, he looked round, still kneeling, and met her eyes.

"Is that better?" he asked quietly.

"You are so good," said Gloria, letting her eyelids droop as she looked from him to the pleasant flame.

He put out his hand, and gently touched the hem of her cloth skirt.

"You are drenched," he said.

Then, before she realized what he was doing, he bent down, and kissed the wet cloth, and, without looking at her, rose to his feet, got another chair, and sat down near her. A soft blush of pleasure had risen in her cheeks. They were little things that he did, but they were like him, unaffected, strong, direct. Another man would have made apologies for having no wood, and would have tried to make a fire of the single stick. Another man would have made excuses for the disorder of his room, or for the poverty of its furniture, perhaps. The other man she thought of was her husband, and possibly she had her father in her mind, too.

"When you are rested, tell me your story," he said, and his face hardened all at once.

She began to speak in a low and uncertain voice, reciting almost mechanically many things which she had often told him before. He listened without moving a muscle. Her voice was dear to him, whether she repeated the endless history of her woes for the tenth or the hundredth time. Where she was concerned he had no judgment, and he had no criterion; for he had never loved another woman with whom he could compare her. All that was of her was of paramount interest and weighty importance. He could not hear it too often. But to-night her first words had told him of the violent crisis in her life with Re-anda, and he listened to all she said, before she reached that point, with an interest he had never felt before. But he would not look at her, for he must have taken her in his arms, as he had once, months before now. She had come for protection and for help, and her need was the life-spring of his honor.

As she went on, her voice took color from her emotion, her hands moved now and then in short, swift gestures, and her dark eyes burned. The marvelous dramatic power she possessed blazed out under the lash of her wrongs, and she found words she had only groped for until that moment. She described the miserably nervous feebleness of the man with scathing contempt, her tone made evil deeds of his shortcomings, her scorn made his weakness a black crime; her jealous anger fastened upon Francesca Campodonico, and tore her honor to shreds and her virtues to rags of abomination; and her flaming pride blazed out in searing hatred and contempt for the coward who had struck her in the face.

"He broke my fan across my face!" she cried, with the ascending intonation of a fury rising still and still more fiercely beautiful. "He slashed my face with it, and broke it, and threw the bits down at my feet! There, look at it! That is his work—oh, give it back to him, kill him for me, tear him to pieces for me—make him feel what I have felt to-day!"

She had pushed her brown hat and veil back from her head, and her wet cloak had long ago fallen from her shoulders. One straight, white hand shot out and fastened upon her companion's arm, as he sat beside her, and she shook it in savage confidence of his iron strength.

A dead silence followed, but the fire made of the broken chairs roared and blazed on the low brick hearth. The man kept his eyes upon it fixedly, as though it were his salvation, for he felt that if he looked at her he was lost. She had come to him not for love, but for protection, of her own free will. Yet he felt that his honor was burning in him with no longer life, if she stayed there, than the short, quick fire itself. His voice was thick when he answered, as though he were speaking through a velvet pall.

"I will kill him, if he will fight," he said, with an effort. "I will not murder him, even for you."

She started, for she had not realized how he would take literally what she said. She had no experience of desperate men in her limited life.

"Murder him? No!" she said, snatching back her hand from his arm. "No, no! I never meant that."

"I am glad you did not. If you did, I should probably break down, and do it to please you. But if he will fight like a man, I will kill him to please myself. Now I will go and get a carriage and take you home."

He rose to his feet, and, turning, turned

away from her, going toward the corner to get an overcoat. She followed him with her eyes, in silence.

"You are not afraid to be left alone for a quarter of an hour?" he asked, buttoning his coat, and looking toward his umbrella.

"Do not go just yet," she answered softly.

"I must. It is getting late. I shall not find a carriage if I wait any longer. I must go now."

"Do not go."

She heard him breathe hard once or twice. Then with quick strides he was beside her, and speaking to her.

"Gloria, I cannot stand it—I warn you. I love you in a way you cannot understand. You must not keep me here."

"Do not go," she said again in the deep, soft tone of her golden voice.

"I must!"

He turned from her, and went toward the door. Soft and swift she followed him, but he was in the entry before her hand was on his arm. It was almost dusk out there. He stopped.

"I cannot go back to him," she said, and he could see the light in her eyes, and very faintly the red bar across the face he loved.

"You should—there is nowhere else for you to go," he said; and in the dark his hand was finding the bolt of the door to the stairs.

"No—there is nowhere else—I cannot go back to him," she answered, and the voice quavered uncertainly as the night breeze sighing among reeds.

"You must—you must," he tried to say.

Her weight was all upon his arm, but it was nothing to him. He steadily drew back the bolt. He turned up his face so that he could not see her.

With sudden strength her white hands went round his sinewy dark throat as he threw back his head.

"You are all I have in the world!" she half said, half whispered. "I will not let you go!"

"You?" His voice broke out as through a bursting shell.

"Yes. Come back!"

His arm fell like lead to his side. Gently she drew him back to the door of the study. The blaze of the fire shot into her face.

"Come," she said. "See how well it burns."

"Yes," he said mechanically; "it is burning well."

He stood aside an instant at the door to let her pass. His eyelids closed, and his face became as rigid as the death-mask of a man dead in passion. One moment only; then he followed her, and softly shut the door.

(To be continued.)

F. Marion Crawford.



DRAWN BY A. CASTAIGNE.

STEFANONE AND GLORIA.

A BUSINESS TRANSACTION.

"IN THE DAYS OF VAN TROMP."

TO Amsterdam and its Commodore,
Over his pipe and his eau-de-vie,
A flibote skimming the Texel shore
Brought serious news for the Zuyder Zee:

Forty sail of the Channel fleet,
With a high-born Admiral of the Blue,
Holland's bravest had come to greet,
And settle an ancient score or two.

Frugal of speech was the Commodore.
"I will meet their wishes," he briefly said,
And straight to the offing his squadron bore,
With a broom at the flag-ship's mainmast-head.

Quickly to work, in a business way,
Went old Van Dam and his captains
strout,
Broadside for broadside, half the day;
But the sturdy foeman still held out;

Till about four bells in the afternoon
The English suddenly ceased their fire,
And Van Dam hailed: "Have you struck so
soon?
Is the score then settled, may I inquire?"

And the answer came: "No; we have not
struck,
But our powder is spent; we can fight no
more."
"Ah, that is a matter of evil luck,
In a case like this," said the Commodore.

Then he stroked his beard, and he closed his
eyes:
"T were a pity to mar so sweet a fight
On a beggarly question of supplies.
Diable! it spoils one's pleasure quite."

With the thrifty blood of his Holland sire
A stream of a warmer fluid ran,

From a Norman mother with heart of fire —
And the mother it is that makes the man.

"To win or to lose," said the blood of France,
"Were a problem simple as life or death;
But to win by an enemy's dull mischance!"
He damned the lubbers below his breath.

Then: "Send me your boat aboard," he cried,
"If you will not strike and you cannot fight,
Pity your stubborn bull-dog pride
Should bark so loud, with so small a bite!"

The Admiral came in his gig of state;
A captain by right of heritage,
Favor had made him all but great,
And Nature had never marred the page.

Dutchman all was the Commodore
At once when he saw his wondrous guest,
Marveling much and marveling more
As he listed the visitor's request.

Never was such proposal made
To sailor before, on land or sea:
"T is awkward to dabble in vulgar trade;
But have you some powder to sell to me?"

Dutch diplomacy struggled hard,
But Gallic chivalry won the day.
The sale was made, and the bill was paid,
And the guns went back to their pleasant
play.

Ill had it gone with the Commodore
Had pluck or fortune deceived him then;
But he fought as he never fought before,
And he brought his investment back again.

The great States-General, solemn folk,
When old Van Dam came home next day,
With his prizes in tow, forgave the joke,
Or never perceived it — who can say?

James Jeffrey Roche.