

## INDIAN SUMMER.

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### VIII.

IN that still air of the Florentine winter time seems to share the arrest of the natural forces, the repose of the elements. The pale blue sky is frequently overcast, and it rains two days out of five; sometimes, under extraordinary provocation from the north, a snow-storm whirls along under the low gray dome, and whitens the brown roofs, where a growth of spindling weeds and grass clothes the tiles the whole year round, and shows its delicate green above the gathered flakes. But for the most part the winds are laid, and the sole change is from quiet sun to quiet shower. This at least is the impression which remains in the senses of the sojourning stranger, whose days slip away with so little difference one from another that they seem really not to have passed, but, like the grass that keeps the hill-sides fresh round Florence all the winter long, to be waiting some decisive change of season before they begin.

The first of the Carnival sights, that marked the lapse of a month since his arrival, took Colville by surprise. He could not have believed that it was February yet if it had not been for the straggling maskers in armor whom he met one day in Via Borgognissanti, with their visors up for their better convenience in smoking. They were part of the chorus at one of the theatres, and they were going about to eke out their salaries with the gifts of people whose windows the festival season privileged them to play under. The silly spectacle stirred Colville's blood a little, as any sort of holiday preparation was apt to do. He thought that it afforded him a fair occasion to call at Palazzo Pinti, where he had not been so much of late as in the first days of his renewed acquaintance with Mrs. Bowen. He had at one time had the fancy that Mrs. Bowen was cool toward him. He might very well have been mistaken in this; in fact, she had several times addressed him the politest reproaches for not coming; but he made some evasion, and went only on the days when she was receiving other people, and when necessarily he saw very little of the family.

Miss Graham was always very friendly, but always very busy, drawing tea from the samovar, and looking after others.

Effie Bowen dropped her eyes in re-established strangeness when she brought the basket of cake to him. There was one moment when he suspected that he had been talked over in family council, and put under a certain regimen. But he had no proof of this, and it had really nothing to do with his keeping away, which was largely accidental. He had taken up, with as much earnestness as he could reasonably expect of himself, that notion of studying the architectural expression of Florentine character at the different periods. He had spent a good deal of money in books, he had revived his youthful familiarity with the city, and he had made what acquaintance he could with people interested in such matters. He met some of these in the limited but very active society in which he mingled daily and nightly. After the first strangeness to any sort of social life had worn off, he found himself very fond of the prompt hospitalities which his introduction at Mrs. Bowen's had opened to him. His host—or more frequently it was his hostess—had sometimes merely an apartment at a hotel; perhaps the family was established in one of the furnished lodgings which stretch the whole length of the Lung' Arno on either hand, and abound in all the new streets approaching the Cascine, and had set up the simple and facile housekeeping of the sojourner in Florence for a few months; others had been living in the villa or the palace they had taken for years.

The more recent and transitory people expressed something of the prevailing English and American æstheticism in the decoration of their apartments, but the greater part accepted the Florentine drawing-room as their landlord had imagined it for them, with furniture and curtains in yellow satin, a cheap ingrain carpet thinly covering the stone floor, and a fire of little logs ineffectually blazing on the hearth, and flickering on the carved frames of the pictures on the wall and the nakedness of the frescoed allegories in the ceiling. Whether of longer or shorter stay, the sojourners were bound together by a common language and a common social tradition; they all had a Day, and on that day there was tea and bread and butter for every comer. They had one another

to dine; there were evening parties, with dancing and without dancing. Colville even went to a fancy ball, where he was kept in countenance by several other Florentines of the period of Romola. At all these places he met nearly the same people, whose alien life in the midst of the native community struck him as one of the phases of modern civilization worthy of note, if not particular study; for he fancied it destined to a wider future throughout Europe, as the conditions in England and America grow more tiresome and more onerous. They seemed to see very little of Italian society, and to be shut out from practical knowledge of the local life by the terms upon which they had themselves insisted. Our race finds its simplified and cheapened London or New York in all its Continental resorts now, but nowhere has its taste been so much studied as in Italy, and especially in Florence. It was not, perhaps, the real Englishman or American who had been considered, but a *forestiere* conventionalized from the Florentine's observation of many Anglo-Saxons. But he had been so well conjectured that he was hemmed round with a very fair illusion of his national circumstances.

It was not that he had his English or American doctor to prescribe for him when sick, and his English or American apothecary to compound his potion; it was not that there was an English tailor and an American dentist, an English bookseller and an English baker, and chapels of every shade of Protestantism, with Catholic preaching in English every Sunday. These things were more or less matters of necessity, but Colville objected that the barbers should offer him an American shampoo; that the groceries should abound in English biscuit and our own canned fruit and vegetables, and that the grocers' clerks should be ambitious to read the labels of the Boston baked beans. He heard—though he did not prove this by experiment—that the master of a certain trattoria had studied the doughnut of New England till he had actually surpassed the original in the qualities that have undermined our digestion as a people. But above all it interested him to see that intense expression of American civilization, the horse-car, triumphing along the magnificent avenues that mark the line of the old city walls; and he recognized an instinctive obedience to an abstruse natural

law in the fact that whereas the omnibus, which the Italians have derived from the English, was not filled beyond its seating capacity, the horse-car was overcrowded without and within at Florence just as it is with us who invented it.

"I wouldn't mind even that," he said one day to the lady who was drawing him his fifth or sixth cup of tea for that afternoon, and with whom he was naturally making this absurd condition of things a matter of personal question; "but you people here pass your days in a round of unbroken English, except when you talk with your servants. I'm not sure you don't speak English with the shop people. I can hardly get them to speak Italian to me."

"Perhaps they think you can speak English better," said the lady.

This went over Florence; in a week it was told to Colville as something said to some one else. He fearlessly reclaimed it as said to himself, and this again was told. In the houses where he visited he had the friendly acceptance of any intelligent and reasonably agreeable person who comes promptly and willingly when he is asked, and seems always to have enjoyed himself when he goes away. But besides this sort of general favor, he enjoyed a very pleasing little personal popularity which came from his interest in other people, from his good-nature, and from his inertness. He slighted no acquaintance, and talked to every one with the same apparent wish to be entertaining. This was because he was incapable of the cruelty of open indifference when his lot was cast with a dull person, and also because he was mentally too lazy to contrive pretenses for getting away; besides, he did not really find anybody altogether a bore, and he had no wish to shine. He listened without shrinking to stories that he had heard before, and to things that had already been said to him; as has been noted, he had himself the habit of repeating his ideas with the recklessness of maturity, for he had lived long enough to know that this can be done with almost entire safety.

He haunted the studios a good deal, and through a retrospective affinity with art, and a human sympathy with the sacrifice which it always involves, he was on friendly terms with sculptors and painters who were not in every case so friendly with one another. More than once he saw the scars of old rivalries, and he might easily have been an adherent of two or

three parties. But he tried to keep the freedom of the different camps without taking sides; and he felt the pathos of the case when they all told the same story of the disaster which the taste for bric-à-brac had wrought to the cause of art; how people who came abroad no longer gave orders for statues and pictures, but spent their money on curtains and carpets, old chests and chairs, and pots and pans. There were some among these artists whom he had known twenty years before in Florence, ardent and hopeful beginners; and now the backs of their gray or bald heads, as they talked to him with their faces toward their work, and a pencil or a pinch of clay held thoughtfully between their fingers, appealed to him as if he had remained young and prosperous, and they had gone forward to age and hard work. They were very quaint at times. They talked the American slang of the war days and of the days before the war; without a mastery of Italian, they often used the idioms of that tongue in their English speech. They were dim and vague about the country, with whose affairs they had kept up through the newspapers. Here and there one thought he was going home very soon; others had finally relinquished all thoughts of return. These had, perhaps without knowing it, lost the desire to come back; they cowered before the expensiveness of life in America, and doubted of a future with which, indeed, only the young can hopefully grapple. But in spite of their accumulated years, and the evil times on which they had fallen, Colville thought them mostly very happy men, leading simple and innocent lives in a world of the ideal, and rich in the inexhaustible beauty of the city, the sky, the air. They all, whether they were ever going back or not, were fervent Americans, and their ineffaceable nationality marked them, perhaps, all the more strongly for the patches of something alien that overlaid it in places. They knew that he was or had been a newspaper man; but if they secretly cherished the hope that he would bring them to the *dolce lume* of print, they never betrayed it; and the authorship of his letter about the American artists in Florence, which he printed in the *American Register* at Paris, was not traced to him for a whole week.

Colville was a frequent visitor of Mr. Waters, who had a lodging in Piazza San Marco, of the poverty which can always be

decent in Italy. It was bare, but for the books that furnished it; with a table for his writing, on a corner of which he breakfasted, a wide sofa with cushions in coarse white linen that frankly confessed itself a bed by night, and two chairs of plain Italian walnut; but the windows, which had no sun, looked out upon the church and the convent sacred to the old Socinian for the sake of the meek, heroic mystic whom they keep alive in all the glory of his martyrdom. No two minds could well have been farther apart than the New England minister and the Florentine monk, and no two souls nearer together, as Colville recognized with a not irreverent smile.

When the old man was not looking up some point of his saint's history in his books, he was taking with the hopefulness of youth and the patience of age a lesson in colloquial Italian from his landlady's daughter, which he pronounced with a scholarly scrupulosity and a sincere atonic Massachusetts accent. He practiced the language wherever he could, especially at the trattoria where he dined, and where he made occasions to detain the waiter in conversation. They humored him, out of their national good-heartedness and sympathy, and they did what they could to realize a strange American dish for him on Sundays—a combination of stock-fish and potatoes boiled, and then fried together in small cakes. They revered him as a foreign gentleman of saintly amiability and incomprehensible preferences; and he was held in equal regard at the next green-grocer's, where he spent every morning five centesimi for a bunch of radishes and ten for a little pat of butter to eat with his bread and coffee: he could not yet accustom himself to mere bread and coffee for breakfast, though he conformed as completely as he could to the Italian way of living. He respected the abstemiousness of the race; he held that it came from a spirituality of nature to which the North was still strange, with all its conscience and sense of individual accountability. He contended that he never suffered in his small dealings with these people from the dishonesty which most of his countrymen complained of; and he praised their un-failing gentleness of manner: this could arise only from goodness of heart, which was perhaps the best kind of goodness, after all.

None of these humble acquaintance of his could well have accounted for the im-

pression they all had that he was some sort of ecclesiastic. They could never have understood—nor, for that matter, could any one have understood through European tradition—the sort of sacerdotal office that Mr. Waters had filled so long in the little deeply book-clubbed New England village where he had outlived most of his flock, till one day he rose in the midst of the surviving dyspeptics and consumptives and, following the example of Mr. Emerson, renounced his calling forever. By that time even the pale Unitarianism thinning out into paler doubt was no longer tenable with him. He confessed that while he felt the Divine goodness more and more, he believed that it was a mistake to preach any specific creed or doctrine, and he begged them to release him from their service. A young man came to fill his place in their pulpit, but he kept his place in their hearts. They raised a subscription of seventeen hundred dollars and thirty-five cents, and this being submitted to the new button manufacturer, who had founded his industry in the village, he promptly rounded it out to three thousand, and Mr. Waters came to Florence. His people parted with him in terms of regret as delicate as they were awkward, and their love followed him. He corresponded regularly with two or three ladies, and his letters were sometimes read from his pulpit.

Colville took the Piazza San Marco in on his way to Palazzo Pinti on the morning when he had made up his mind to go there, and he stood at the window looking out with the old man when some more maskers passed through the place—two young fellows in old Florentine dress, with a third habited as a nun.

"Ah," said the old man, gently, "I wish they hadn't introduced the nun! But I suppose they can't help signaling their escape from the domination of the Church on all occasions. It's a natural reaction. It will all come right in time."

"You preach the true American gospel," said Colville.

"Of course. That is the gospel."

"Do you suppose that Savonarola would think it had all come out right," asked Colville, a little maliciously, "if he could look from the window with us here and see the wicked old Carnival, that he tried so hard to kill four hundred years ago, still alive? And kicking?" he added, in

cognizance of the caper of one of the maskers.

"Oh yes; why not? By this time he knows that his puritanism was all a mistake, unless as a thing for the moment only. I should rather like to have Savonarola here with us; he would find these costumes familiar; they are of his time. I shall make a point of seeing all I can of the Carnival, as part of my study of Savonarola, if nothing else."

"I'm afraid you'll have to give yourself limitations," said Colville, as one of the maskers threw his arm round the mock-nun's neck. But the old man did not see this, and Colville did not feel it necessary to explain himself.

The maskers had passed out of the piazza now, and "Have you seen our friends at Palazzo Pinti lately?" said Mr. Waters.

"Not very," said Colville. "I was just on my way there."

"I wish you would make them my compliments. Such a beautiful young creature."

"Yes," said Colville, "she is certainly a beautiful girl."

"I meant Mrs. Bowen," returned the old man, quietly.

"Oh; I thought you meant Miss Graham. Mrs. Bowen is my contemporary, and so I didn't think of her when you said young. I should have called her pretty rather than beautiful."

"No; she's beautiful. The young girl is good-looking—I don't deny that; but she is very crude yet."

Colville laughed. "Crude in looks? I should have said Miss Graham was rather crude in mind, though I'm not sure I wouldn't have stopped at saying *young*."

"No," mildly persisted the old man; "she couldn't be crude in mind without being crude in looks."

"You mean," pursued Colville, smiling, but not wholly satisfied, "that she hasn't a lovely nature?"

"You never can know what sort of nature a young girl has. Her nature depends so much upon that of the man whose fate she shares."

"The woman is what the man makes her? That is convenient for the woman; and relieves her of all responsibility."

"The man is what the woman makes him, too, but not so much so. The man was cast into a deep sleep, you know—"

"And the woman was what he dreamed her. I wish she were!"



"In most cases she is," said Mr. Waters. They did not pursue the matter. The truth that floated in the old minister's words pleased Colville by its vagueness, and flattered the man in him by its implication of the man's superiority. He wanted to say that if Mrs. Bowen were what the late Mr. Bowen had dreamed her, then the late Mr. Bowen, when cast into his deep sleep, must have had Lina Ridgely in his eye. But this seemed to be personalizing the fantasy unwarrantably, and pushing it too far. For like reason he forbore to say that if Mr. Waters's theory were correct, it would be better to begin with some one whom nobody else had dreamed before; then you could be sure at least of not having a wife to somebody else's mind rather than your own. Once on his way to Palazzo Pinti, he stopped, arrested by a thought that had not occurred to him before in relation to what Mr. Waters had been saying, and then pushed on with the sense of security which is the compensation the possession of the initiative brings to our sex along with many responsibilities. In the enjoyment of this, no man stops to consider the other side, which must wait his initiative, however they mean to meet it.

In the Por San Maria, Colville found masks and dominoes filling the shop windows and dangling from the doors. A devil in red and a clown in white crossed the way in front of him from an intersecting street; several children in pretty masquerading dresses flashed in and out among the crowd. He hurried to the Lung' Arno, and reached the palace where Mrs. Bowen lived with these holiday sights fresh in his mind. Imogene turned to meet him at the door of the apartment, running from the window where she had left Effie Bowen still gazing.

"We saw you coming," she said, gayly, without waiting to exchange formal greetings. "We didn't know at first but it might be somebody else disguised as you. We've been watching the maskers go by. Isn't it exciting?"

"Awfully," said Colville, going to the window with her, and putting his arm on Effie's shoulder, where she knelt in a chair looking out. "What have you seen?"

"Oh, only two Spanish students with mandolins," said Imogene; "but you can see they're *beginning* to come."

"They'll stop now," murmured Effie,

with gentle disappointment; "it's commencing to rain."

"Oh, too bad!" wailed the young girl. But just then two mediæval men-at-arms came in sight, carrying umbrellas. "Isn't that too delicious? Umbrellas and chain armor!"

"You can't expect them to let their chain armor get rusty," said Colville. "You ought to have been with me—minstrels in scale armor, Florentines of Savonarola's times, nuns, clowns, demons, fairies—no end to them."

"It's very well saying we ought to have been with you; but we can't go anywhere alone."

"I didn't say alone," said Colville. "Don't you think Mrs. Bowen would trust you with me to see these Carnival beginnings?" He had not meant at all to do anything of this kind, but that had not prevented his doing it.

"How do we know, when she hasn't been asked?" said Imogene, with a touch of burlesque dolor, such as makes a dignified girl enchanting, when she permits it to herself. She took Effie's hand in hers, the child having faced round from the window, and stood smoothing it, with her lovely head pathetically tilted on one side.

"What haven't I been asked yet?" demanded Mrs. Bowen, coming lightly toward them from a door at the side of the salon. She gave her hand to Colville with the prettiest grace, and a cordiality that brought a flush to her cheek. There had really been nothing between them but a little unreasoned coolness, if it were even so much as that; say rather a dryness, aggravated by time and absence, and now, as friends do, after a thing of that kind, they were suddenly glad to be good to each other.

"Why, you haven't been asked how you have been this long time," said Colville.

"I have been wanting to tell you for a whole week," returned Mrs. Bowen, seating the rest in taking a chair for herself. "Where have you been?"

"Oh, shut up in my cell at Hôtel d'Atene, writing a short history of the Florentine people for Miss Effie."

"Effie, take Mr. Colville's hat," said her mother. "We're going to make you stay to lunch," she explained to him.

"Is that so?" he asked, with an effect of polite curiosity.

"Yes." Imogene softly clapped her

hands, unseen by Mrs. Bowen, for Colville's instruction that all was going well. If it delights women to pet an undangerous friend of our sex, to use him like one of themselves, there are no words to paint the soft and flattered content with which his spirit purrs under their caresses. "You must have nearly finished the history," added Mrs. Bowen.

"Well, I could have finished it," said Colville, "if I had only begun it. You see, writing a short history of the Florentine people is such quick work that you have to be careful how you actually put pen to paper, or you're through with it before you've had any fun out of it."

"I think Effie will like to read that kind of history," said her mother.

The child hung her head, and would not look at Colville; she was still shy with him; his absence must have seemed longer to a child, of course.

At lunch they talked of the Carnival sights that had begun to appear. He told of his call upon Mr. Waters and of the old minister's purpose to see all he could of the Carnival in order to judge intelligently of Savonarola's opposition to it.

"Mr. Waters is a very good man," said Mrs. Bowen, with the air of not meaning to approve him quite, nor yet to let any notion of his be made fun of in her presence. "But for my part I wish there were not going to be any Carnival; the city will be in such an uproar for the next two weeks."

"Oh, Mrs. Bowen!" cried Imogene, reproachfully. Effie looked at her mother in apparent anxiety lest she should be meaning to put forth an unquestionable power and stop the Carnival.

"The last Carnival, I thought there was never going to be any end to it; I was so glad when Lent came."

"Glad when *Lent* came!" breathed Imogene, in astonishment; but she ventured upon nothing more insubordinate, and Colville admired to see this spirited girl as subject to Mrs. Bowen as her own child. There is no reason why one woman should establish another woman over her, but nearly all women do it in one sort or another, from love of a voluntary submission, or from a fear of their own ignorance, if they are younger and more inexperienced than their lieges. Neither the one passion nor the other seems to reduce them to a like passivity as regards their husbands. They must apparently have a

fetich of their own sex. Colville could see that Imogene obeyed Mrs. Bowen not only as a protégée but as a devotee.

"Oh, I suppose *you* will have to go through it all," said Mrs. Bowen, in reward of the girl's acquiescence.

"You're rather out of the way of it up here," said Colville. "You had better let me go about with the young ladies—if you can trust them to the care of an old fellow like me."

"Oh, I don't think you're so very old, at all times," replied Mrs. Bowen, with a peculiar look, whether indulgent or reproachful he could not quite make out.

But he replied, boldly, in his turn: "I have certainly my moments of being young still; I don't deny it. There's always a danger of their occurrence."

"I was thinking," said Mrs. Bowen, with a graceful effect of not listening, "that you would let me go too. It would be quite like old times."

"Only too much honor and pleasure," returned Colville, "if you will leave out the old times. I'm not particular about having them along." Mrs. Bowen joined in laughing at the joke, which they had to themselves. "I was only consulting an explicit abhorrence of yours in not asking you to go at first," he explained.

"Oh yes; I understand that."

The excellence of the whole arrangement seemed to grow upon Mrs. Bowen. "Of course," she said, "Imogene ought to see all she can of the Carnival. She may not have another chance, and perhaps if she had, *he* wouldn't consent."

"I'll engage to get *his* consent," said the girl. "What I was afraid of was that I couldn't get yours, Mrs. Bowen."

"Am I so severe as that?" asked Mrs. Bowen, softly.

"Quite," replied Imogene.

"Perhaps," thought Colville, "it isn't always silent submission."

For no very good reason that any one could give, the Carnival that year was not a brilliant one. Colville's party seemed to be always meeting the same maskers on the street, and the maskers did not greatly increase in numbers. There were a few more of them after night-fall, but they were then a little more bacchanal, and he felt it was better the ladies had gone home by that time. In the pursuit of the tempered pleasure of looking up the maskers he was able to make the reflection that their fantastic and vivid

dresses sympathized in a striking way with the architecture of the city, and gave him an effect of Florence which he could not otherwise have had. There came by-and-by a little attempt at a *corso* in Via Cerratani and Via Tornabuoni. There were some masks in carriages, and from one they actually threw plaster *confetti*; half a dozen bare-legged boys ran before and beat one another with bladders. Some people, but not many, watched the show from the windows, and the footways were crowded.

Having proposed that they should see the Carnival together, Colville had made himself responsible for it to the Bowen household. Imogene said, "Well, is *this* the famous Carnival of Florence?"

"It certainly doesn't compare with the Carnival last year," said Mrs. Bowen.

"Your reproach is just, Mrs. Bowen," he acknowledged. "I've managed it badly. But you know I've been out of practice a great while there in Des Vaches."

"Oh, poor Mr. Colville!" cried Imogene. "He isn't altogether to blame."

"I don't know," said Mrs. Bowen, humoring the joke in her turn. "It seems to me that if he had consulted us a little earlier, he might have done better."

He drove home with the ladies, and Mrs. Bowen made him stay to tea. As if she felt that he needed to be consoled for the failure of his Carnival, she was especially indulgent with him. She played to him on the piano some of the songs that were in fashion when they were in Florence together before. Imogene had never heard them; she had heard her mother speak of them. One or two of them were negro songs, such as very pretty young ladies used to sing without harm to themselves or offense to others; but Imogene decided that they were rather rowdy. "Dear me, Mrs. Bowen! Did *you* sing such songs? You wouldn't let Effie!"

"No, I wouldn't let Effie. The times are changed. I wouldn't let Effie go to the theatre alone with a young gentleman."

"The times are changed for the worse," Colville began. "What harm ever came to a young man from a young lady's going alone to the theatre with him?"

He staid till the candles were brought in, and then went away only because, as he said, they had not asked him to stay to dinner.

He came nearly every day, upon one pretext or another, and he met them oftener than that at the teas and on the days of other ladies in Florence; for he was finding the busy idleness of the life very pleasant, and he went everywhere. He formed the habit of carrying flowers to the Palazzo Pinti, excusing himself on the ground that they were so cheap and so abundant as to be impersonal. He brought violets to Effie and roses to Imogene; to Mrs. Bowen he always brought a bunch of the huge purple anemones which grow so abundantly all winter long about Florence. "I wonder why *purple* anemones?" he asked her one day in presenting them to her.

"Oh, it is quite time I should be wearing purple," she said, gently.

"Ah, Mrs. Bowen!" he reproached her. "Why do I bring purple violets to Miss Effie?"

"You must ask Effie!" said Mrs. Bowen, with a laugh.

After that he staid away forty-eight hours, and then appeared with a bunch of the red anemones, as large as tulips, which light up the meadow grass when it begins to stir from its torpor in the spring. "They grew on purpose to set me right with you," he said, "and I saw them when I was in the country."

It was a little triumph for him, which she celebrated by putting them in a vase on her table, and telling people who exclaimed over them that they were some Mr. Colville gathered in the country. He enjoyed his privileges at her house with the futureless satisfaction of a man. He liked to go about with the Bowens; he was seen with the ladies, driving and walking, in most of their promenades. He directed their visits to the churches and the galleries; he was fond of strolling about with Effie's daintily gloved little hand in his. He took her to Giocosa's and treated her to ices; he let her choose from the confectioner's prettiest caprices in candy; he was allowed to bring the child presents in his pockets. Perhaps he was not as conscientious as he might have been in his behavior with the little girl. He did what he could to spoil her, or at least to relax the severity of the training she had received; he liked to see the struggle that went on in the mother's mind against this, and then the other struggle with which she overcame her opposition to it. The worst he did was to teach Effie

some picturesque Western phrases, which she used with innocent effectiveness; she committed the crimes against convention which he taught her with all the conventional elegance of her training. The most that he ever gained for her were some concessions in going out in weather that her mother thought unfit, or sitting up for half-hours after her bed-time. He ordered books for her from Goodban's, and it was Colville now, and not the Rev. Mr. Morton, who read poetry aloud to the ladies on afternoons when Mrs. Bowen gave orders that she and Miss Graham should be denied to all other comers.

It was an intimacy; and society in Florence is not blind, and especially it is not dumb. The old lady who had celebrated Mrs. Bowen to him the first night at Palazzo Pinti led a life of active question as to what was the supreme attraction to Colville there, and she referred her doubt to every friend with whom she drank tea. She philosophized the situation very scientifically, and if not very conclusively, how few are the absolute conclusions of science upon any point!

"He is a bachelor, and there is a natural affinity between bachelors and widows—much more than if he were a widower too. If he were a widower, I should say it was undoubtedly mademoiselle. If he were a little *bit* younger, I should have no doubt it was madame; but men of that age have such an ambition to marry young girls! I suppose that they think it proves they are not so very old, after all. And certainly he isn't too old to marry. If he were wise—which he probably isn't, if he's like other men in such matters—there wouldn't be any question about Mrs. Bowen. Pretty creature! And so much sense! Too much for him. Ah, my dear, how we are wasted upon that sex!"

Mrs. Bowen herself treated the affair with masterly frankness. More than once in varying phrase she said: "You are very good to give us so much of your time, Mr. Colville, and I won't pretend I don't know it. You're helping me out with a very hazardous experiment. When I undertook to see Imogene through a winter in Florence, I didn't reflect what a very gay time girls have at home, in Western towns especially. But I haven't heard her breathe Buffalo once. And I'm sure it's doing her a great deal of good here. She's naturally got a very good mind; she's very ambitious to be cultivated. She's

read a good deal, and she's anxious to know history and art; and your advice and criticism are the greatest possible advantage to her."

"Thank you," said Colville, with a fine, remote dissatisfaction. "I supposed I was merely enjoying myself."

He had lately begun to haunt his banker's for information in regard to the Carnival balls, with the hope that something might be made out of them. But either there were to be no great Carnival balls, or it was a mistake to suppose that his banker ought to know about them. Colville went experimentally to one of the people's balls at a minor theatre, which he found advertised on the house walls. At half past ten the dancing had not begun, but the masks were arriving; young women in gay silks and dirty white gloves; men in women's dresses, with enormous hands; girls as pages; clowns, pantaloons, old women, and the like. They were all very good-humored; the men, who far outnumbered the women, danced contentedly together. Colville liked two cavalry soldiers who waltzed with each other for an hour, and then went off to a battery on exhibition in the pit, and had as much electricity as they could hold. He liked also two young citizens who danced together as long as he staid, and did not leave off even for electrical refreshment. He came away at midnight, pushing out of the theatre through a crowd of people at the door, some of whom were tipsy. This certainly would not have done for the ladies, though the people were civilly tipsy.

#### IX.

The next morning Paolo, when he brought up Colville's breakfast, brought the news that there was to be a *veglione* at the Pergola Theatre. This news revived Colville's courage. "Paolo," he said, "you ought to open a banking house." Paolo was used to being joked by foreigners who could not speak Italian very well; he smiled as if he understood.

The banker had his astute doubts of Paolo's intelligence; the banker in Europe doubts all news not originating in his house; but after a day or two the advertisements in the newspapers carried conviction even to the banker.

When Colville went to the ladies with news of the *veglione* he found that they



had already heard of it. "Should you like to go?" he asked Mrs. Bowen.

"I don't know. What do you think?" she asked in turn.

"Oh, it's for you to do the thinking. I only know what I want."

Imogene said nothing, while she watched the internal debate as it expressed itself in Mrs. Bowen's face.

"People go in boxes," she said, thoughtfully; "but you would feel that a box wasn't the same thing exactly?"

"We went on the floor," suggested Colville.

"It was very different then. And, besides, Mrs. Finley had absolutely *no* sense of propriety." When a woman has explicitly condemned a given action, she apparently gathers courage for its commission under a little different conditions. "Of course, if we went upon the floor, I shouldn't wish it to be known at all, though foreigners can do almost anything they like."

"Really," said Colville, "when it comes to that, I don't see any harm in it."

"And you say go?"

"I say whatever you say."

Mrs. Bowen looked from him to Imogene. "I don't either," she said finally, and they understood that she meant the harm which he had not seen.

"Which of us has been so good as to deserve this?" asked Colville.

"Oh, you have all been good," she said. "We shall go in masks and dominoes," she continued. "Nothing will happen; and who should know us if anything did?" They had received tickets to the great Borghese ball, which is still a fashionable and desired event of the Carnival to foreigners in Florence; but their preconceptions of the *veglione* threw into the shade the entertainment which the gentlemen of Florence offer to favored sojourners.

"Come," said Mrs. Bowen, "you must go with us and help us choose our dominoes."

A prudent woman does not do an imprudent thing by halves. Effie was to be allowed to go to the *veglione* too, and she went with them to the shop where they were to hire their dominoes. It would be so much more fun, Mrs. Bowen said, to choose the dresses in the shop than to have them sent home for you to look at. Effie was to be in black; Imogene was to have a light blue domino, and Mrs. Bow-

en chose a purple one: even where their faces were not to be seen they considered their complexions in choosing the colors. If you happened to find a friend, and wanted to unmask, you would not want to look horrid. The shop people took the vividest interest in it all, as if it were a new thing to them, and these were the first foreigners they had ever served with masks and dominoes. They made Mrs. Bowen and Imogene go into an inner room and come out for the mystification of Colville, hulking about in the front shop with his mask and domino on.

"Which is which?" the ladies both challenged him, in the mask's conventional falsetto, when they came out.

With a man's severe logic he distinguished them according to their silks; but there had been time for them to think of changing, and they took off their masks to laugh in his face.

They fluttered so airily about among the pendent masks and dominoes, from which they shook a ghostly perfume of old carnivals, that his heart leaped.

"Ah, you'll never be so fascinating again!" he cried. He wanted to take them in his arms, they were both so delicious; a man has still only that primitive way of expressing his supreme satisfaction in women. "Now, which am I?" he demanded of them, and that made them laugh again. He had really put his arm about Effie.

"Do you think you will know your papa at the *veglione*?" asked one of the shop-women, with a mounting interest in the amiable family party.

They all laughed; the natural mistake seemed particularly droll to Imogene.

"Come," cried Mrs. Bowen; "it's time we should be going."

That was true; they had passed so long a time in the shop that they did not feel justified in seriously attempting to beat down the price of their dresses. They took them at the first price. The woman said with reason that it was Carnival, and she could get her price for the things.

They went to the *veglione* at eleven, the ladies calling for Colville, as before, in Mrs. Bowen's carriage. He felt rather sheepish, coming out of his room in his mask and domino, but the corridors of the hotel were empty, and for the most part dark; there was no one up but the porter, who wished him a pleasant time in as matter-of-fact fashion as if he were going out to an

evening party in his dress-coat. His spirits mounted in the atmosphere of adventure which the ladies diffused about them in the carriage; Effie Bowen laughed aloud when he entered, in childish gayety of heart.

The narrow streets roared with the wheels of cabs and carriages coming and going; the street before the theatre was so packed that it was some time before they could reach the door. Masks were passing in and out; the nervous joy of the ladies expressed itself in a deep-drawn quivering sigh. Their carriage door was opened by a servant of the theatre, who wished them a pleasant *veglione*, and the next moment they were in the crowded vestibule, where they paused a moment, to let Imogene and Effie really feel that they were part of a masquerade.

"Now, keep all together," said Mrs. Bowen, as they passed through the inner door of the vestibule, and the brilliantly lighted theatre flashed its colors and splendors upon them. The floor of the pit had been levelled to that of the stage, which, stripped of the scenic apparatus, opened vaster spaces for the motley crew already eddying over it in the waltz. The boxes, tier over tier, blazed with the light of candelabra which added their sparkle to that of the gas jets.

"You and Effie go before," said Mrs. Bowen to Imogene. She made them take hands like children, and mechanically passed her own hand through Colville's arm.

A mask in red from head to foot attached himself to the party, and began to make love to her in excellent pantomime.

Colville was annoyed. He asked her if he should tell the fellow to take himself off.

"Not on any account!" she answered. "It's perfectly delightful. It wouldn't be the *veglione* without it. Did you ever see such good acting?"

"I don't think it's remarkable for anything but its fervor," said Colville.

"I should like to see *you* making love to some lady," she rejoined, mischievously.

"I will make love to you, if you like," he said, but he felt in an instant that his joke was in bad taste.

They went the round of the theatre. "That is Prince Strozzi, Imogene," said Mrs. Bowen, leaning forward to whisper to the girl. She pointed out other people of historic and aristocratic names in the boxes, where there was a democracy of

beauty among the ladies, all painted and powdered to the same *marquise* effect.

On the floor were gentlemen in evening dress without masks, and here and there ladies waltzing who had masks but no dominoes. But for the most part people were in costume; the theatre flushed and flowered in gay variety of tint that teased the eye with its flow through the dance.

Mrs. Bowen had circumscribed the adventure so as to exclude dancing from it. Imogene was not to dance. One might go to the *veglione* and look on from a box; if one ventured further and went on the floor, decidedly one was not to dance.

This was thoroughly understood beforehand, and there were to be no petitions or murmurs at the theatre. They found a quiet corner, and sat down to look on.

The mask in red followed, and took his place at a little distance, where, whenever Mrs. Bowen looked that way, he continued to protest his passion.

"You're sure he doesn't bore you?" suggested Colville.

"No, indeed. He's very amusing."

"Oh, all right!"

The waltz ceased; the whirling and winding confusion broke into an irregular streaming hither and thither, up and down. They began to pick out costumes and characters that interested them. Clowns in white, with big noses, and harlequins in their motley, with flat black masks, abounded. There were some admirable grasshoppers in green, with long antennæ quivering from their foreheads. Two or three Mephistos reddened through the crowd. Several knights in armor got about with difficulty, apparently burdened by their greaves and breastplates.

A group of leaping and dancing masks gathered around a young man in evening dress, with long hair, who stood leaning against a pillar near them, and who underwent their mockeries with a smile of patience, half amused, half tormented.

When they grew tired of baiting him, and were looking about for other prey, the red mask redoubled his show of devotion to Mrs. Bowen, and the other masks began to flock round and approve.

"Oh, *now*," she said, with a little embarrassed laugh, in which there was no displeasure, "I think you may ask him to go away. But don't be harsh with him," she added, at a brusque movement which Colville made toward the mask.

"Oh, why should I be harsh with him?"

"We're not rivals." This was not in good taste either, Colville felt. "Besides, I'm an Italian too," he said, to retrieve himself. He made a few paces toward the mask, and said in a low tone, with gentle suggestion, "Madame finds herself a little incommoded."

The mask threw himself into an attitude of burlesque despair, bowed low with his hand on his heart, in token of submission, and vanished into the crowd. The rest dispersed with cries of applause.

"How very prettily you did it, both of you!" said Mrs. Bowen. "I begin to believe you *are* an Italian, Mr. Colville. I shall be afraid of you."

"You weren't afraid of *him*."

"Oh, he was a *real* Italian."

"It seems to me that mamma is getting all the good of the veglione," said Effie, in a plaintive murmur. The well-disciplined child must have suffered deeply before she lifted this seditious voice.

"Why, so I am, Effie," answered her mother. "and I don't think it's fair myself. What shall we do about it?"

"I should like something to eat," said the child.

"So should I," said Colville. "That's reparation your mother owes us all. Let's make her take us and get us something. Wouldn't you like an ice, Miss Graham?"

"Yes, an *ice*," said Imogene, with an effect of adding, "nothing more for worlds," that made Colville laugh. She rose slowly, like one in a dream, and cast a look as impassioned as a look could be made through a mask on the scene she was leaving behind her. The band was playing a waltz again, and the wide floor swam with circling couples.

The corridor where the tables were set was thronged with people, who were drinking beer and eating cold beef and boned turkey and slices of huge round sausages. "Oh, how *can* they?" cried the girl, shuddering.

"I didn't know you were so ethereal-minded about these things," said Colville. "I thought you didn't object to the salad at Madame Uccelli's."

"Oh, but at the veglione!" breathed the girl for all answer. He laughed again; but Mrs. Bowen did not laugh with him: he wondered why.

When they returned to their corner in the theatre they found a mask in a black domino there, who made place for them, and remained standing near. They be-

gan talking freely and audibly, as English-speaking people incorrigibly do in Italy, where their tongue is all but the language of the country.

"Really," said Colville, "I think I shall stifle in this mask. If you ladies will do what you can to surround me and keep me secret, I'll take it off a moment."

"I believe I will join you, Mr. Colville," said the mask near them. He pushed up his little visor of silk, and discovered the mild, benignant features of Mr. Waters.

"Bless my soul!" cried Colville.

Mrs. Bowen was apparently too much shocked to say anything.

"You didn't expect to meet me here?" asked the old man, as if otherwise it should be the most natural thing in the world. After that they could only unite in suppressing their astonishment. "It's extremely interesting," he went on, "extremely! I've been here ever since the exercises began, and I have not only been very greatly amused, but greatly instructed. It seems to me the key to a great many anomalies in the history of this wonderful people."

If Mr. Waters took this philosophical tone about the Carnival, it was not possible for Colville to take any other.

"And have you been able to divine from what you have seen here," he asked, gravely, "the grounds of Savonarola's objection to the Carnival?"

"Not at all," said the old man, promptly. "I have seen nothing but the most harmless gayety throughout the evening."

Colville hung his head. He remembered reading once in a passage from Swedenborg that the most celestial angels had scarcely any power of perceiving evil.

"Why aren't you young people dancing?" asked Mr. Waters, in a cheerful general way of Mrs. Bowen's party.

Colville was glad to break the silence. "Mrs. Bowen doesn't approve of dancing at vegliones."

"No?—why not?" inquired the old man, with invincible simplicity.

Mrs. Bowen smiled her pretty, small smile below her mask.

"The company is apt to be rather mixed," she said, quietly.

"Yes," pursued Mr. Waters; "but you could dance with one another. The company seems very well-behaved."

"Oh, quite so," Mrs. Bowen assented.

"Shortly after I came," said Mr. Waters, "one of the masks asked me to dance. I was really sorry that my age and traditions forbade my doing so. I tried to explain, but I'm afraid I didn't make myself quite clear."

"Probably it passed for a joke with her," said Colville, in order to say something.

"Ah, very likely; but I shall always feel that my impressions of the Carnival would have been more definite if I could have danced. Now, if I were a young man like you—"

Imogene turned and looked at Colville through the eye-holes of her mask; even in that sort of isolation he thought her eyes expressed surprise.

"It never occurred to you before that I was a young man," he suggested, gravely.

She did not reply.

After a little interval, "Imogene," asked Mrs. Bowen, "would you like to dance?"

Colville was astonished. "The veglione has gone to your head, Mrs. Bowen," he tacitly made his comment. She had spoken to Imogene, but she glanced at him as if she expected him to be grateful to her for this stroke of liberality.

"What would be the use?" returned the girl.

Colville rose. "After my performance in the Lancers, I can't expect you to believe me, but I really *do* know how to waltz." He had but to extend his arms, and she was hanging upon his shoulder, and they were whirling away through a long orbit of delight to the girl.

"Oh, why have you let me do you such injustice?" she murmured, intensely. "I never shall forgive myself."

"It grieved me that you shouldn't have divined that I was really a magnificent dancer in disguise, but I bore it as best I could," said Colville, really amused at her seriousness. "Perhaps you'll find out after a while that I'm not an old fellow either, but only a 'Lost Youth.'"

"Hush," she said; "I don't like to hear you talk so."

"How?"

"About—age!" she answered. "It makes me feel— Don't to-night!"

Colville laughed. "It isn't a fact that my blinking is going to change materially. You had better make the most of me as a lost youth. I'm old enough to be two of them."

She did not answer, and as they wound

up and down through the other orbiting couples he remembered the veglione of seventeen years before, when he had dreamed through the waltz with the girl who jilted him; she was very docile and submissive that night; he believed afterward that if he had spoken frankly then, she would not have refused him. But he had veiled his passion in words and phrases that, taken in themselves, had no meaning—that neither committed him nor claimed her. He could not help it; he had not the courage at any moment to risk the loss of her forever, till it was too late, till he must lose her.

"Do you believe in pre-existence?" he demanded of Imogene.

"Oh yes!" she flashed back. "This very instant it was just as if I had been here before, long ago."

"Dancing with me?"

"With you? Yes—yes—I think so."

He had lived long enough to know that she was making herself believe what she said, and that she had not lived long enough to know this.

"Then you remember what I said to you—tried to say to you—that night?" Through one of those psychological juggles which we all practice with ourselves at times, it amused him, it charmed him, to find her striving to realize this past.

"No; it was so long ago. What was it?" she whispered, dreamily.

A turn of the waltz brought them near Mrs. Bowen; her mask seemed to wear a dumb reproach. He began to be weary; one of the differences between youth and later life is that the latter wearies so soon of any given emotion.

"Ah, I can't remember, either! Aren't you getting rather tired of the waltz and me?"

"Oh no; go on!" she deeply murmured. "Try to remember."

The long, pulsating stream of the music broke and fell. The dancers crookedly dispersed in wandering lines. She took his arm; he felt her heart leap against it; those innocent, trustful throbs upbraided him. At the same time his own heart beat with a sort of fond, protecting tenderness; he felt the witchery of his power to make this young, radiant, and beautiful creature hang flattered and bewildered on his talk; he liked the compassionate worship with which his tacit confidence had inspired her, even while he was not without some satirical sense of the crude



sort of heart-broken hero he must be in the fancy of a girl of her age.

"Let us go and walk in the corridor a moment," he said. But they walked there till the alluring melancholy music of the waltz began again. In a mutual caprice, they rejoined the dance.

It came into his head to ask, "Who is *he*?" and as he had got past denying himself anything, he asked it.

"He? What he?"

"He that Mrs. Bowen thought might object to your seeing the Carnival?"

"Oh!—oh yes! That was the not impossible he."

"Is that all?"

"Yes."

"Then he's not even the not improbable he?"

"No, indeed."

They waltzed in silence. Then, "Why did you ask me that?" she murmured.

"I don't know. Was it such a strange question?"

"I don't know. You ought to."

"Yes, if it was wrong, I'm old enough to know better."

"You promised not to say 'old' any more."

"Then I suppose I mustn't. But you mustn't get me to ignore it, and then laugh at me for it."

"Oh!" she reproached him, "you think I could do that?"

"You could if it was you who were here with me once before."

"Then I know I wasn't."

Again they were silent, and it was he who spoke first. "I wish you would tell me why you object to the interdicted topic?"

"Because—because I like every time to be perfect in itself."

"Oh! And this wouldn't be perfect in itself if I were—not so young as some people?"

"I didn't mean that. No; but if you didn't mention it, no one else would think of it or care for it."

"Did any one ever accuse you of flattering, Miss Graham?"

"Not till now. And you are unjust."

"Well, I withdraw the accusation."

"And will you ever pretend such a thing again?"

"Oh, never!"

"Then I have your promise."

The talk was light word-play, such as depends upon the talker's own mood for its point or its pointlessness. Between

two young people of equal years it might have had meanings to penetrate, to sigh over, to question. Colville found it delicious to be pursued by the ingenuous fervor of this young girl, eager to vindicate her sincerity in prohibiting him from his own ironical depreciation. Apparently, she had a sentimental mission of which he was the object: he was to be convinced that he was unnecessarily morbid; he was to be cheered up, to be kept in heart.

"I must believe in you after this," he said, with a smile which his mask hid.

"Thanks," she breathed. It seemed to him that her hand closed convulsively upon his in their light clasp.

The pressure sent a real pang to his heart. It forced her name from his lips. "Imogene! Ah, I've no right to call you that."

"Yes."

"From this out I promise to be twenty years younger. But no one is to know it but you. Do you think you will know it? I shouldn't like to keep the secret to myself altogether."

"No; I will help you. It shall be *our* secret."

She gave a low laugh of delight. He convinced himself that she had entered into the light spirit of banter in which he believed that he was talking.

The music ceased again. He whirled her to the seat where he had left Mrs. Bowen. She was not there, nor the others.

Colville felt the meanness of a man who has betrayed his trust, and his self-contempt was the sharper because the trust had been as tacit and indefinite as it was generous. The effect of Mrs. Bowen's absence was as if she had indignantly flown, and left him to the consequences of his treachery.

He sat down rather blankly with Imogene to wait for her return; it was the only thing they could do.

It had grown very hot. The air was thick with dust. The lights burned through it as through a fog.

"I believe I will take off my mask," she said. "I can scarcely breathe."

"No, no," protested Colville; "that won't do."

"I feel faint," she gasped.

His heart sank. "Don't," he said, incoherently. "Come with me into the vestibule, and get a breath of air."

He had almost to drag her through the crowd, but in the vestibule she revived,

and they returned to their place again. He did not share the easy content with which she recognized the continued absence of Mrs. Bowen.

"Why, they must be lost. But isn't it perfect, sitting here and watching the maskers?"

"Perfect," said Colville, distractedly.

"Don't you like to make romances about the different ones?"

It was on Colville's tongue to say that he had made all the romances he wished for that evening, but he only answered, "Oh, very."

"Poor Mrs. Bowen," laughed the girl. "It will be such a joke on her, with her punctilious notions, getting lost from her protégée at a Carnival ball! I shall tell every one."

"Oh no, don't," said Colville, in horror that his mask scarcely concealed.

"Why not?"

"It wouldn't be at all the thing."

"Why, are *you* becoming Europeanized too?" she demanded. "I thought you went in for all sorts of unconventionalities. Recollect your promise. You must be as impulsive as I am."

Colville, staring anxiously about in every direction, made for the first time the reflection that most young girls probably conform to the proprieties without in the least knowing why.

"Do you think," he asked, in desperation, "that you would be afraid to be left here a moment while I went about in the crowd and tried to find them?"

"Not at all," she said. But she added: "Don't be gone long."

"Oh no," he answered, pulling off his mask. "Be sure not to move from here on any account."

He plunged into the midst of the crowd that buffeted him from side to side as he struck against its masses. The squeaking and gibbering masks mocked in their falsetto at his wild-eyed, naked face thrusting hither and thither among them.

"I saw your lady wife with another gentleman," cried one of them, in a subtle misinterpretation of the cause of his distraction.

The throng had immensely increased; the clowns and harlequins ran shrieking up and down, and leaped over one another's heads.

It was useless. He went back to Imogene with a heart-sickening fear that she too might have vanished.

But she was still there.

"You ought to have come sooner," she said, gayly. "That red mask has been here again. He looked as if he wanted to make love to *me* this time. But he didn't. If you'd been here you might have asked him where Mrs. Bowen was."

Colville sat down. He had done what he could to mend the matter, and the time had come for philosophical submission. It was now his duty to keep up Miss Graham's spirits. They were both Americans, and from the national stand-point he was simply the young girl's middle-aged bachelor friend. There was nothing in the situation for him to beat his breast about.

"Well, all that we can do is to wait for them," he said.

"Oh yes," she answered, easily. "They'll be sure to come back in the course of time."

They waited a half-hour, talking somewhat at random, and still the others did not come. But the red mask came again. He approached Colville, and said, politely,

"La signora è partita."

"The lady gone?" repeated Colville, taking this to be part of the red mask's joke.

"La bambina pareva poco bene."

"The little one not well?" echoed Colville again, rising. "Are you joking?"

The mask made a deep murmur of polite deprecation. "I am not capable of such a thing in a serious affair. Perhaps you know me?" he said, taking off his mask; and in further sign of good faith he gave the name of a painter sufficiently famous in Florence.

"I beg your pardon, and thank you," said Colville. He had no need to speak to Imogene; her hand was already trembling on his arm.

They drove home in silence through the white moonlight of the streets, filled everywhere with the gay voices and figures of the Carnival.

Mrs. Bowen met them at the door of her apartment, and received them with a manner that justly distributed the responsibility and penalty for their escapade. Colville felt that a meaner spirit would have wreaked its displeasure upon the girl alone. She made short, quiet answers to all his eager inquiries. Most probably it was some childish indisposition; Effie had been faint. No, he need not go for the doctor. Mr. Waters had called the doctor, who had just gone away. There was nothing else that he could do for her. She dropped her eyes,

and in everything but words dismissed him. She would not even remain with him till he could decently get himself out of the house. She left Imogene to receive his adieux, feigning that she heard Effie calling.

"I'm—I'm very sorry," faltered the girl, "that we didn't go back to her at once."

"Yes; I was to blame," answered the humiliated hero of her Carnival dream. The clinging regret with which she kept his hand at parting scarcely consoled him for what had happened.

"I will come round in the morning," he said. "I must know how Effie is."

"Yes; come."

# X.

Colville went to Palazzo Pinti next day with the feeling that he was defying Mrs. Bowen. Upon a review of the facts he could not find himself so very much to blame for the occurrences of the night before, and he had not been able to prove to his reason that Mrs. Bowen had resented his behavior. She had not made a scene of any sort when he came in with Imogene; it was natural that she should excuse herself, and should wish to be with her sick child: she had done really nothing. But when a woman has done nothing she fills the soul of the man whose conscience troubles him with an instinctive apprehension. There is then no safety, his nerves tell him, except in bringing the affair, whatever it is, to an early issue—in having it out with her. Colville subdued the cowardly impulse of his own heart, which would have deceived him with the suggestion that Mrs. Bowen might be occupied with Effie, and it would be better to ask for Miss Graham. He asked for Mrs. Bowen, and she came in directly.

She smiled in the usual way, and gave her hand, as she always did; but her hand was cold, and she looked tired, though she said Effie was quite herself again, and had been asking for him. "Imogene has been telling her about your adventure last night, and making her laugh."

If it had been Mrs. Bowen's purpose to mystify him, she could not have done it more thoroughly than by this bold treatment of the affair. He bent a puzzled gaze upon her. "I'm glad any of you have found it amusing," he said; "I confess that I couldn't let myself off so lightly in regard to it." She did not reply,

and he continued: "The fact is, I don't think I behaved very well. I abused your kindness to Miss Graham."

"Abused my kindness to Miss Graham?"

"Yes. When you allowed her to dance at the veglione, I ought to have considered that you were stretching a point. I ought to have taken her back to you very soon, instead of tempting her to go and walk with me in the corridor."

"Yes," said Mrs. Bowen. "So it was you who proposed it? Imogene was afraid that she had. What exemplary young people you are! The way each of you confesses and assumes all the blame would leave the severest chaperon without a word."

Her gayety made Colville uncomfortable. He said, gravely, "What I blame myself most for is that I was not there to be of use to you when Effie—"

"Oh, you mustn't think of that at all. Mr. Waters was most efficient. My admirer in the red mask was close at hand, and between them they got Effie out without the slightest disturbance. I fancy most people thought it was a Carnival joke. Please don't think of that again."

Nothing could be politer than all this.

"And you won't allow me to punish myself for not being there to give you even a moral support?"

"Certainly not. As I told Imogene, young people *will* be young people; and I knew how fond you were of dancing."

Though it pierced him, Colville could not help admiring the neatness of this thrust. "I didn't know you were so ironical, Mrs. Bowen."

"Ironical? Not at all."

"Ah! I see I'm not forgiven."

"I'm sure I don't know what you mean."

Imogene and Effie came in. The child was a little pale, and willingly let him take her on his knee and lay her languid head on his shoulder. The girl had not aged overnight like himself and Mrs. Bowen; she looked as fresh and strong as yesterday.

"Miss Graham," said Colville, "if a person to whom you had done a deadly wrong insisted that you hadn't done any wrong at all, should you consider yourself forgiven?"

"It would depend upon the person," said the girl, with innocent liveliness, recognizing the extravagance in his tone.

"Yes," he said, with an affected pensiveness, "so very much depends upon the person in such a case."

Mrs. Bowen rose. "Excuse me a moment; I will be back directly. Don't get up, please," she said, and prevented him with a quick withdrawal to another room, which left upon his sense the impression of elegant grace, and a smile and sunny glance. But neither had any warmth in it.

Colville heaved an involuntary sigh. "Do you feel very much used up?" he asked Imogene.

"Not at all," she laughed. "Do you?"

"Not in the least. My veglione hasn't ended yet. I'm still practically at the Pergola. It's easy to keep a thing of that sort up if you don't sleep after you get home."

"Didn't you sleep? I expected to lie awake a long time thinking it over. But I dropped asleep at once. I suppose I was very tired. I didn't even dream."

"You must have slept hard. You're pretty apt to dream when you're waking."

"How do you know?"

"Ah, I've noticed when you've been talking to me. Better not! It's a bad habit; it gives you false views of things. I used—"

"But you mustn't say you *used*! That's forbidden now. Remember your promise."

"My promise? What promise?"

"Oh, if you've forgotten already!"

"I remember. But that was last night."

"No, no! It was for all time. Why should dreams be so very misleading? I think there's ever so much in dreams. The most wonderful thing is the way you make people talk in dreams. It isn't strange that you should talk yourself, but that other people should say this and that when you aren't at all expecting what they say."

"That's when you're sleeping. But when you're waking, you make people say just what you want. And that's why day dreams are so bad. If you make people say what you want, they probably don't mean it."

"Don't you think so?"

"Half the time. Do you ever have day-dreams?" he asked Effie, pressing her cheek against his own.

"I don't know what they are," she murmured, with a soft little note of polite regret for her ignorance, if possibly it incommoded him.

"You will, by-and-by," he said, "and

then you must look out for them. They're particularly bad in this air. I had one of them in Florence once that lasted three months."

"What was it about?" asked the child.

Imogene involuntarily bent forward.

"Ah, I can't tell you now. She's trying to hear us."

"No, no," protested the girl, with a laugh. "I was thinking of something else."

"Oh, we know her, don't we?" he said to the child, with a playful appeal to that passion for the joint possession of a mystery which all children have.

"We might whisper it," she suggested.

"No; better wait for some other time."

They were sitting near a table where a pencil and some loose leaves of paper lay. He pulled his chair a little closer, and with the child still upon his knee, began to scribble and sketch at random. "Ah, there's San Miniato," he said, with a glance from the window. "Must get its outline in. You've heard how there came to be a church up there? No? Well, it shows the sort of man San Miniato really was. He was one of the early Christians, and he gave the poor pagans a great deal of trouble. They first threw him to the wild beasts in the amphitheatre, but the moment those animals set eyes on him they saw it would be of no use; they just lay down and died. Very well; then the pagans determined to see what effect the axe would have upon San Miniato; but as soon as they struck off his head he picked it up, set it back on his shoulders again, waded across the Arno, walked up the hill, and when he came to a convenient little oratory up there he knelt down and expired. Isn't that a pretty good story? It's like fairies, isn't it?"

"Yes," whispered the child.

"What nonsense!" said Imogene. "You made it up."

"Oh, did I? Perhaps I built the church that stands there to commemorate the fact. It's all in the history of Florence. Not in all histories; some of them are too proud to put such stories in, but I'm going to put every one I can find into the history I'm writing for Effie. San Miniato was beheaded where the church of Santa Candida stands now, and he walked all that distance."

"Did he have to die when he got to the oratory?" asked the child, with gentle regret.



"It appears so," said Colville, sketching. "He would have been dead by this time, anyway, you know."

"Yes," she reluctantly admitted.

"I never quite like those things either, Effie," he said, pressing her to him. "There were people cruelly put to death two or three thousand years ago that I can't help feeling would be alive yet if they had been justly treated. There are a good many fairy stories about Florence; perhaps they used to be true stories: the truth seems to die out of stories after a while, simply because people stop believing them. Saint Ambrose of Milan restored the son of his host to life when he came down here to dedicate the Church of San Giovanni. Then there was another saint, San Zenobi, who worked a very pretty miracle after he was dead. They were carrying his body from the Church of San Giovanni to the Church of Santa Reparata, and in Piazza San Giovanni his bier touched a dead elm-tree that stood there, and the tree instantly sprang into leaf and flower, though it was in the middle of the winter. A great many people took the leaves home with them, and a marble pillar was put up there, with a cross and an elm-tree carved on it. Oh, the case is very well authenticated."

"I shall really begin to think you believe such things," said Imogene. "Perhaps you *are* a Catholic."

Mrs. Bowen returned to the room, and sat down.

"There's another fairy story, prettier yet," said Colville, while the little girl drew a long deep breath of satisfaction and expectation. "You've heard of the Buondelmonti?" he asked Imogene.

"Oh, it seems to me as if I'd had *nothing* but the Buondelmonti dinned into me since I came to Florence!" she answered, in lively despair.

"Ah, this happened some centuries before the Buondelmonte you've been bored with was born. This was Giovanni Gualberto of the Buondelmonti, and he was riding along one day in 1003, near the Church of San Miniato, when he met a certain man named Ugo, who had killed one of his brothers. Gualberto stopped and drew his sword; Ugo saw no other chance of escape, and he threw himself face downward on the ground, with his arms stretched out in the form of the cross. 'Gualberto, remember Jesus Christ, who died upon the cross praying for his enemies.'

The story says that these words went to Gualberto's heart; he got down from his horse, and in sign of pardon lifted his enemy and kissed and embraced him. Then they went together into the church, and fell on their knees before the figure of Christ upon the cross, and the figure bowed its head in sign of approval and pleasure in Gualberto's noble act of Christian piety."

"Beautiful!" murmured the girl; the child only sighed.

"Ah, yes; it's an easy matter to pick up one's head from the ground and set it back on one's shoulders, or to bring the dead to life, or to make a tree put forth leaves and flowers in midwinter; but to melt the heart of a man with forgiveness in the presence of his enemy—that's a different thing; *that's* no fairy story; that's a real miracle; and I believe this one happened—it's so impossible."

"Oh yes, it must have happened," said the girl.

"Do you think it's so very hard to forgive, then?" asked Mrs. Bowen, gravely.

"Oh, not for ladies," replied Colville.

She flushed, and her eyes shone when she glanced at him.

"I'm sorry to put you down," he said to the child; "but I can't take you with me, and I must be going."

Mrs. Bowen did not ask him to stay to lunch; he thought afterward that she might have relented as far as that but for the last little thrust, which he would better have spared.

"Effie dear," said her mother, when the door closed upon Colville, "don't you think you'd better lie down awhile? You look so tired."

"Shall I lie down on the sofa here?"

"No; on your bed."

"Well."

"I'll go with you, Effie," said Imogene, "and see that you're nicely tucked in."

When she returned alone, Mrs. Bowen was sitting where she had left her, and seemed not to have moved. "I think Effie will drop off to sleep," she said; "she seems drowsy." She sat down, and after a pensive moment continued, "I wonder what makes Mr. Colville seem so gloomy?"

"Does he seem gloomy?" asked Mrs. Bowen, unsympathetically.

"No, not gloomy exactly. But different from last night. I wish people could always be the same! He was so gay and full of spirits; and now he's so self-ab-

sorbed. He thinks you're offended with him, Mrs. Bowen."

"I don't think he was very much troubled about it. I only thought he was flighty from want of sleep. At your age you don't mind the loss of a night."

"Do you think Mr. Colville seems so very old?" asked Imogene, anxiously.

Mrs. Bowen appeared not to have heard her. She went to the window and looked out. When she came back, "Isn't it almost time for you to have a letter from home?" she asked.

"Why, no. I had one from mother day before yesterday. What made you think so?"

"Imogene," interrupted Mrs. Bowen, with a sudden excitement which she tried to control, but which made her lips tremble, and break a little from her restraint, "you know that I am here in the place of your mother, to advise you and look after you in every way?"

"Why, yes, Mrs. Bowen," cried the girl, in surprise.

"It's a position of great responsibility in regard to a young lady. I can't have anything to reproach myself with afterward."

"No."

"Have I always been kind to you, and considerate of your rights and your freedom? Have I ever interfered with you in any way that you think I oughtn't?"

"What an idea! You've been loveliness itself, Mrs. Bowen!"

"Then I want you to listen to me, and answer me frankly, and not suspect my motives."

"Why, how *could* I do that?"

"Never mind!" cried Mrs. Bowen, impatiently, almost angrily. "People can't help their suspicions! Do you think Mr. Morton cares for you?"

The girl hung her head.

"Imogene, answer me!"

"I don't know," answered Imogene, coldly; "but if you're troubled about that, Mrs. Bowen, you needn't be; I don't care anything for Mr. Morton."

"If I thought you were becoming interested in any one, it would be my duty to write to your mother and tell her."

"Of course; I should expect you to do it."

"And if I saw you becoming interested in any one in a way that I thought would make you unhappy, it would be my duty to warn you."

"Yes."

"Of course, I don't mean that any one would knowingly try to make you unhappy."

"No."

"Men don't go about nowadays trying to break girls' hearts. But very good men can be thoughtless and selfish."

"Yes, I understand that," said Imogene, in a falling accent.

"I don't wish to prejudice you against any one. I should consider it very wrong and wicked. Besides, I don't care to interfere with you to that degree. You are old enough to see and judge for yourself."

Imogene sat silent, passing her hand across the front of her dress. The clock ticked audibly from the mantel.

"I will not have it left to me!" cried Mrs. Bowen. "It is hard enough, at any rate. Do you think I like to speak to you?"

"No."

"Of course it makes me seem inhospitable, and distrustful, and—detestable."

"I never thought of accusing you," said the girl, slowly lifting her eyes.

"I will never, never speak to you of it again," said Mrs. Bowen, "and from this time forth I insist upon your feeling just as free as if I hadn't spoken." She trembled upon the verge of a sob, from which she repelled herself.

Imogene sat still, with a sort of serious, bewildered look.

"You shall have every proper opportunity of meeting any one you like."

"Oh yes."

"And I shall be only too glad to take back everything!"

Imogene sat motionless and silent. Mrs. Bowen broke out again with a sort of violence: the years teach us something of self-control, perhaps, but they weaken and unstring the nerves. In this opposition of silence to silence, the woman of the world was no match for the inexperienced girl.

"Have you nothing to say, Imogene?"

"I never thought of him in that way at all. I don't know what to say yet. It—confuses me. I—I can't imagine it. But if you think that he is trying to amuse himself—"

"I never said that!"

"No, I know it."

"He likes to make you talk, and to

talk with you. But he is perfectly idle here, and—there is too much difference, every way. The very good in him makes it the worse. I suppose that after talking with him every one else seems insipid.”

“Yes.”

Mrs. Bowen rose and ran suddenly from the room.

Imogene remained sitting cold and still.

No one had been named since they spoke of Mr. Morton.

## Editor's Easy Chair.

IT is long since the bay and harbor of New York have seen a pleasanter sight than the entry of the French ship *Isère*, bringing the Bartholdi statue, and escorted by ships of war and other vessels of high and low degree. The June day was one of sun and mist, but it was not gloomy nor threatening, and the drifts of vapor only softened the scene. The *Isère* had anchored far down the lower bay, and the civic dignitaries and the members of the Pedestal Committee proceeded at an early hour to pay their respects to the French officers, and the waters were covered with large and small steamers and craft of every kind all moving in the same direction.

From the heights of Fort Wadsworth, upon Staten Island, at the point where the Narrows—the strait between Long Island and Staten Island—begins, the view is always beautiful. Standing upon the embankment high over the fort, the spectator sees toward the north the upper harbor, and the spires of the two cities, and the Brooklyn Bridge hung in air, and dimly, far away, the line of the Palisades over the Hudson River. Opposite, looking eastward, he sees the level wooded shores of Long Island opening suddenly toward the south from the Narrows into Gravesend Bay, of which the lower point, reaching out into the lower bay, is Coney Island. Toward the south lies the broad expanse of the bay, with the undulating New Jersey heights that stretch airily along the horizon, falling suddenly from the Highlands to the long point of Sandy Hook, and between Sandy Hook and Coney Island he sees the clear line of the ocean.

The historic associations of this scene are most interesting, from the hazy traditions of Verrazzano to the anchoring in September, 1609, of Henry Hudson's *Half-Moon*, near where the *Isère* anchored, and forward to the pageant of the June morning of this year. One hundred and nine years before, in the same month, the British fleet of one hundred and thirty sail, with Sir William Howe's army, was anchored in the same waters. Staten Island itself was the camp for his force of twenty-five thousand effective men. The wooded shores of Long Island opposite were the scene of the landing and the march to the battle of Long Island. Across the East River, where now stretches the slender line of the Brooklyn Bridge, Washington's army retired. Across

the Hudson River it still fell back, until upon the hills at Morristown—dimly surmised from the hills of Staten Island—it was finally encamped. On the hottest of June days, one hundred and seven years ago, the loiterer upon the high bluff over Fort Wadsworth might have heard the faint sound of the guns at Monmouth; while five years later a spectator standing upon the same spot looked down upon the British fleet sailing away with the British army, and as he and his companions laughed and cheered and shouted in triumph, one of the departing seventy-fours fired a shot, which fortunately struck the bank without damage.

Still a little later, through the Kill von Kull, on the north shore of the island, and over these same waters, passed the barge of George Washington, as he proceeded to New York to take the oath as President. Here, too, at the mouth of the Hudson, De Witt Clinton and an honorable official company, arriving on the canal-boat from Buffalo—our Knickerbocker Doge upon his *Bucentoro*—mingled the waters of Lake Erie with those of the Atlantic; and out of the mouth of the Narrows, where now the welcoming fleet of the *Isère*, harbinger of peace, is entering, the Easy Chair saw the fleet of Dupont sailing away to war.

It was a fitting scene, by natural beauty and by historic association, for the aquatic pageant of this year. Promptly at the hour the steamers were under way. The air was still, the water smooth, and the stately procession moved steadily forward, the long line of ships of war, surrounded by a vast flotilla of steam craft, all gayly decorated with flags and streamers, and swarming with people, while from every part of the advancing mass cheers and bursts of music broke the silence of the summer day. At the due distance below the forts at the Narrows, the war ships opened their thunder of salutation, and as they passed between the shore batteries on Long Island and Staten Island, the mighty answering cannonades roared their welcome, and the cities and the country for many a mile around knew that the French alliance of a century ago was renewed in the good-will of to-day.

The flotilla swept up the Narrows, and as it approached the city, the Frenchmen could see the pedestal upon Bedloe's Island, over which hung in amity side by side the tricolor and the Stars and Stripes. Then followed